

**COOPERATIVE TUTORING: TRANSFORMING  
COLLABORATION IN THE WRITING CENTER**

A Dissertation

by

DAGMAR STUEHRK SCHAROLD

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2012

Major Subject: English

Cooperative Tutoring: Transforming Collaboration in the Writing Center

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Chair of Committee,	Valerie Balester
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## **ABSTRACT**

Cooperative Tutoring: Transforming Collaboration in the Writing Center.

(August 2012)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Valerie Balester

Cooperative tutoring in a writing center setting consists of two tutors who work collaboratively with one student. It is a variation of one method of training new tutors, where the novice tutor observes the expert tutor during a tutoring session and eventually participates with the expert tutor. This study focused on the interactions between the tutors. Through cooperative tutoring, tutors learn new or different tutoring approaches from each other, which in turn serves as ongoing professional development.

I explain the methodology used in the study, and I analyze the data. From the data analysis, I identify three preliminary categories, which are Equal Partners, New Alliance, and Trainer/Trainee.

Equal Partners sessions are characterized by a strong sense of camaraderie between the tutors and a willingness to share both tutoring and academic writing strategies with each other and the student. During an Equal Partners session, tutors acknowledge the other tutor's strategies and incorporate parts of it into their own

tutoring style. These sessions are more directive, and the tutors' focus is on teaching specific strategies for academic writing as well as passing on college survival lore.

New Alliance sessions occur when both tutors are more actively engaged with the overall topic of the student's paper. Both of the tutors and the student share experiences and ideas on a personal level, working towards understanding how to craft ideas through academic discourse. In this way an alliance is formed with the writing center tutors and the student.

During the Trainer/Trainee sessions, the tutors involved attempt to apply cooperative tutoring techniques but were unable to make the shift from the roles they once held as a trainer and a trainee.

Finally, I present a summary and interpretation of my findings. I also discuss the limitations of the study and indicate areas for further research.

## **DEDICATION**

To my daughters, Adele and Sabina Corrigan,

My husband, Joseph Scharold,

and

My parents, Hans and Ingeborg Stuehrk

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“stay in the game” and become someone who I could always talk to openly and honestly about race and radical pedagogy.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One-to-one tutoring is the pedagogical model on which all writing centers are founded and remains the one constant factor through all phases of writing center history, ranging from the current traditional approach of the late 1970s, where the focus was on grammar and the correctness of the text, to expressivism in the early 1980s when the writing process movement took shape (Murphy & Sherwood, 2008). Currently, the theories of social constructionism and post modernism in writing center scholarship serve as the basis for validating and interrogating the consistent practice of one-to-one tutoring. One-to-one tutoring in writing centers is thought to be exceedingly effective, is widely practiced, and is firmly immured in current practices.

However, the one-to-one model may not be the only or even the optimum model for tutoring in a writing center. While Kenneth Bruffee (1984) is credited with implementing one-to-one peer tutoring in both the writing center and in the composition classroom, he revisits the one-to-one model for the classroom to find there are other models for collaboration, identifying them as the working group models, alternatively known as conversation groups. Bruffee (2000) defines the working group or conversation group as a mix of novices and experts, which allow for members to talk

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This dissertation follows the style of *Teachers College Record*.

and engage in ideas in order to produce text. The composition of the conversation group and the number of members now becomes a key factor for effective collaboration.

Bruffee states that consensus can often occur too quickly within homogenous groups, as they fail to be aware of other cultures and/or groups. In fact, Bruffee (2000) warns that “ [dyads or]. . . groups of two . . . tend to sustain levels of stress sharply higher than those of any other group size. . . . [H]owever, working groups . . . seem to be most successful with three members” (p. 90). If we apply Bruffee’s critique of working groups found in the classroom environment to peer tutoring, we might question the one-to-one model. In fact, Nancy Grimm (2011) calls for a reexamination of the current practice of one-to-one tutoring in favor of adapting the principles based on Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger’s community of practice in which everyone involved with the writing center would become active participants to create and maintain that community.

Grimm writes:

In particular, I examine what is seemingly one of the least controversial statements a person can make about writing centers—that a writing center provides “individualized instruction” in academic writing. I argue that an ideology of individualism not only shapes writing center discourse but also races writing center practice, making it inhospitable to students who are not white. . . .

I examine the ways an ideology of individualism shapes discourse and practice of writing centers, and [offer] a different way to conceptualize the learning that happens in writing centers, a way that places less emphasis on individuals and

more emphasis on making changes to the social structure, particularly the social structure of the writing center itself. (2011, p. 76)

Would Grimm's call for a different social structure for the writing center be accepted?

Could a different collaborative model for writing center tutoring possibly be implemented in answer to her call?

I theorize that one way to bring Grimm's (2011) "different way" to fruition would be to implement what I call "cooperative tutoring." Similar to Bruffee's (2000) working group model of 3 group members, cooperative tutoring, as I conceive it, consists of two tutors who work collaboratively with one student. Theoretically, it could also be possible to imagine cooperative tutoring to include any variation, for example two tutors and two students from the same general course.

I conducted my study of cooperative tutoring at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD<sup>1</sup>). As the current writing and reading center director, I am fortunate to be able to work with a diverse student population and a diverse peer tutor staff<sup>2</sup>. My work there has led me to consider how race and agency play out in a writing center setting and what would happen if the one-to-one paradigm was changed to something that more closely resembles Bruffee's (2000) working group model, particularly as it relates to diversity.

Cooperative tutoring is a variation based on one typical component of the training of new tutors, where the novice tutor observes the expert tutor during a tutoring session (Gillespie & Lerner, 2000, p. 49). During the observation, the novice tutor takes notes and writes periodic reflections in order to track his or her development as a tutor.

Experienced tutors also gain from these interactions, learning from the “novice” tutor as they are reminded of the basic tenets of good tutoring and what that particular new tutor can bring to the writing center. Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner (2000) also advocate the use of mock tutorials for training, where novice tutors practice tutoring techniques with each other. In a mock tutorial, the novice tutor will bring a paper he or she has previously written and will engage in a tutoring session with another novice tutor. A third novice tutor will observe the session, too, and share the observations. The mock tutorials may seem overly idealized to the trainees because the new tutors have already begun to incorporate the practices of writing center tutoring. In other words, during a mock tutoring session, the new tutor is both the ideal tutor and the ideal student. Where cooperative tutoring diverges from Gillespie and Lerner’s methods is that cooperative tutoring draws on the collaborative energy that occurs between tutors in the training scenario and extends that into practice. In my study, I focused on two tutors and one student; however, a future study could include two tutors and a group of students, in order to create a working group.

Bruffee (2002) extends his idea of the working group to include a discussion regarding diversity and how it affects peer group interactions. In the 1970’s diversity in higher education was addressed by focusing on the uniqueness of the individual. However, Bruffee finds that most students want to identify outwardly with the larger American culture in order to cover their differences. Rather than focus on specific cultural differences, which could be perceived as exoticism, Bruffee advocates for universities to focus on the commonalities, and this is achieved through diverse peer



group interactions. These groups will teach students how to not only accept some of the cultural differences but also to depend on each other by learning to negotiate through other cultural differences. For writing centers, Harry Denny (2005) applies queer theory when he notes that cultural differences sometimes become generalized as the writing center helps students to blend in and lose their identities by upholding and enforcing certain expectations for writing in academia.

Writing center tutors may inadvertently make generalizations about race and literacy as Sarah Innes (2006) notes through her experiences as a white tutor working with two African American students. In their study regarding cross-racial interactions at the University of New Mexico, Kathryn Valentine and Monica F. Torres (2011) apply their findings to a writing center context. They demonstrate that in universities with diverse populations, the cross-racial interactions occur as expected in the classroom and in the social spaces of the university just by the composition of the student population. However, outside of the university environment, in private spaces, Valentine and Torres found most students rarely interact with others outside their race, and they interpret the lack of interaction to indicate that most of the relationships formed at the university are not meaningful enough to carry over into their private lives. Valentine and Torres then provide advice for writing centers based on their findings, which confirms, in part, what Grimm (1996a) also advocates: (1) Employ a diverse tutoring staff (2) Allow for reoccurring appointments so as to encourage consistent interaction between the tutors and the diverse student population (3) Encourage genuine interaction during each writing center session so as to better understand students as individuals, not as members of a

particular race. However, Valentine's and Torres's suggestion for encouraging genuine interaction between tutors and students still focuses on the one-to-one tutoring model, which, as Grimm (2011), notes continues to privilege academic writing.

Students, including peer tutors, are told that academic literacy practices and collaboration are similar to what is expected for success in the workplace, thereby placing the writing center in a position to privilege academic standards for English over other varieties (Bruffee, 1984; Richardson, 2003; Kinloch, 2010; Grimm, 1996b, 1999, 2011). Grimm (1999) argues for reexamining writing centers' basic assumptions regarding literacy and writing center theory and how students outside the mainstream view those assumptions: "Relentless reflection on how we know what we know and why we assume what we assume creates conditions for social transformation because it weakens the confidence derived from naturalizing the ways of the dominant group" (p. 109). She advocates for Freireian praxis in writing center scholarship so that writing center tutors can be positioned at the forefront of transformative literacy practices. Additionally, Grimm (1996a) offers a feminist critique of university culture and describes it as ". . . grounded as they are in masculine epistemology and hierarchical top-down decision-making and charged with the job of protecting knowledge and safeguarding traditions . . ." (p. 540). Grimm maintains that feminine silence as it applies to writing centers, in which it is better to be silent than to upset the status quo, to protect vulnerable populations, prevents any movement towards an honest discussion about literacy practices, especially when it affects students of color. Furthermore, she notes the potential that writing centers have for creating a dialogue with students about

the implications of how academic discourse “values and devalues” other literacies and how to manage this, especially with a diverse tutoring staff. Grimm goes on to recognize that it is neither the student’s nor the writing center’s position to “change minds” but to offer spaces where talk can occur about these issues, both safely and critically.

Marilyn Cooper (2008) draws on Antonio Gramsci and illustrates how writing centers can become places for critical inquiry into the literacy practices of the academy and the effects of the literacy practices on student writers. Cooper encourages tutors to help all students take a position of agency in their writing, negotiating the border spaces between the academic voice and other socially constructed voices. More specifically, Denny (2005, 2010), Cooper (2008), and Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (2008) encourage both tutors and student writers to be aware of what language choices say about what specific discourse communities value as knowledge and how to negotiate between the different communities. Extending Cooper’s (2008) and Grimm’s (1999) reexamination of the literacy practices in the academy with regards to diverse student populations, Bawarshi and Pelkowski draw on the works of Mary Louis Pratt and Gloria Anzaldúa to form the basis of their observations. Through Bawarshi and Pelkowski’s discussion of marginalized and basic writing students, these students assume a subject position within the academy by becoming aware of the choices to be made in their writing. Denny (2005) also focuses on assisting marginalized students to negotiate academic discourse by again applying queer theory to tutoring practice, focusing on identity and the political consequences of choices made when shifting identities in order

to participate in various discourse communities. He claims this awareness of agency is necessary if one is to work to subvert the dominant discourse or to survive within its realm.

In writing centers, peer tutors are inculcated into the literacy practices of the dominant discourse and are trained to uphold these practices while serving as models. Peer tutors are especially adept at mimicking the conversations valued by college teachers and in the professional world (Bruffee, 1984). However peer tutors may not be able to foster awareness of the rhetorical choices available or to begin a conversation about agency if they do not understand what academic discourse is or how academic writing is defined. If writing center staff members are to practice cooperative tutoring, having a basic definition of academic discourse allows them to enter into a conversation about how academic discourse privileges one language variety over another. Creating a succinct definition of academic discourse is difficult even among rhetoric and composition scholars because each discipline's conventions for academic writing vary widely.

Academic discourse, or academic writing, is defined by Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki (2006) in their cross disciplinary study of the characteristics of academic writing found at George Mason University. Based on their research, Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) find that academic writing can be defined as:

. . . [A]ny writing that fulfills a purpose of education in a college or university in the United States. For most teachers, the term implies student writing in response to an academic assignment, or professional writing that trained "academics"—

teachers and researchers—do for publications and conferences attended by other academics. ( p. 4 )

Thaiss and Zawacki discuss the difficulty in coming up with a generic definition of academic writing, which is complicated by the many different characteristics found within each academic discipline as well as personal preferences of individual instructors at the university level.

Nevertheless through their study, Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) found three characteristics common to all disciplines of academic writing. The first characteristic is, “[c]lear evidence in writing that the writer(s) have been persistent, open-minded, and disciplined in study (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006, p. 5). In their discussion of the first characteristic of academic writing, they focus on the word “disciplined” in order to stress the need for any university writer (student or professor) to demonstrate that they have done careful and thoughtful reading on their topic, which then should be translated into careful and thoughtful writing, appropriate to their level of study. Next, Thaiss and Zawacki found there is a strong preference in academic writing for “. . . the dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception” (p.6). This preference for a fair and balanced writing voice creates a dichotomy between a writer’s personal passion for the subject of study while maintaining the persona of an academic writer, who should come across as fair-minded and balanced in the presentation of the subject matter. Finally, Thaiss and Zawacki write that the audience also contributes to the definition of academic writing, who is usually “. . . [a]n imagined reader who is coolly rational, reading for information, and tending to formulate a reasoned response” ( p.7). They note that the

audience for academic writing is assumed to be a reader who is a fellow academic and usually a native speaker of Edited Standard American English.

Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) also identified cultural alternatives to academic writing found at the university that may follow cultural values, such as indirectness. These could include reflective journals, field notes, and personal disclosures. They also added new media or “alternative media (email, hypertext, blogs, digitized text and images, video)” . . . (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006 p. 12). In these types of writing, there is more tolerance for errors in syntax and mechanics as well as tolerance for different Englishes, especially found in writers from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

While Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) attempt to define alternative forms of academic writing assigned at the American college level, Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo (1994) take a historical approach to define writing in general, not just what is considered academic writing. Their work examines different, non-Western forms of communication in order to extend a definition of writing, thereby creating a more inclusive definition. Both Boone and Mignolo argue for a broader definition of writing, which they claim should focus more on the communication of a message. They also contend that a Western approach to writing corresponds with a limited definition of literacy, which in turn fuels an ethnocentric view of the world. Thaiss and Zawacki’s definition, by Boone and Mignolo’s standards, would fall under an ethnocentric view of literacy primarily because of the adherence to Edited Standard American English (ESAE), which continues to hold colonizing power over speakers of other Englishes in American school systems.

To counter this illusion that there is only one correct way of using the English language, especially in the classroom and by extension supported by the writing center, in 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication published “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL).

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (as cited in Kinloch, 2010)

SRTOL becomes important for writing center tutors to be aware of because, as an extension of the university, the writing center is the institutional place where students go to get help with writing. Elaine Richardson (2003) notes that since SRTOL has been in place, several studies on language awareness have demonstrated that the attitudes teachers hold about language use are directly related to their perception of the individuals and/or groups of people who use a particular dialect or variety of English, and in many instances have judged students negatively when they did not adhere to

ESAE. Tutors also become subjected to this negative perception as it is pervasive throughout the university, creating a domino effect as these perceptions begin with professors in their courses, move through their tutor training, and continue into their interactions with students in the writing center.

SRTOL awareness for writing center tutors also applies to their interactions with international speakers and speakers of other forms of English. Suresh Canagarajah's (2010) CCCC blog entry, "An Updated SRTOL?" notes that SRTOL does not apply to non-native speakers nor does it apply to those who come from countries whose dominant language is English; it only applies to "... the 'heritage of dialects' in this 'nation.' ... [and] is also framed in relation to dialects of English in the US" (para. 8). Victoria Cliett (2003) writes that there is a need for more awareness of language diversity; conversely, she claims though this is due to the larger issue of globalization rather than SRTOL. Cliett reminds Americans that while English is the dominant language of those in the United States, the form used in the United States should not be considered the "standard" form. There are other speakers of English, such as those in Great Britain, who use a form of English that may be considered non-standard to American teachers. This relates to Richardson's (2003) findings that while many English educators are aware of SRTOL, they still choose to focus on ESAE in their teaching. Richardson writes, "Another reason that many language educators may support the ideology of English monolingualism is that they may see themselves as guiding ... traditional college students (young adults) into financially secure and more profitable areas of the labor market ... " (p. 49). Richardson posits, however, that instructors who have more



experience teaching may see that monolingualism and the mastery of it does not affect a student's success after college; success instead may be attributed to race rather than language usage.

Much of the work regarding SRTOL focuses primarily on the instructors, (Richardson, 2003); however, Valerie Kinloch's (2010) ethnographic study focuses on student perspectives of SRTOL, specifically African-American students. Kinloch outlines the history of Black English and its relationship to educational practices and linguistic diversity. She also identifies the degrees to which students' home languages are accepted at school. Kinloch writes about how Black English is often positioned in classroom practices as contrary to academic writing, thereby creating a hierarchy that privilege one over the other. In Richardson's (2003) work, instructors ignored SRTOL in favor of ESAE, claiming ESAE is the path to success. However, the subjects for Kinloch's study, who are two African American males, demonstrate their dilemma with this typical teacher stance as follows:

Khaleeq became concerned that if more people, particularly teachers, do not take SRTOL seriously and do not work to find ways to involve students in the classroom culture, "we'll always be privileging standardized English over all other languages." Phillip adds, "privileging White over everyone else like we always do is what you mean." Khaleeq then admits that he is caught in this privileging—"supposed to learn and know standardized English, but I have to know and use Black English, too." Although he knows that he has a right to his

own language, Khaleeq wonders if it is really a right if teachers in classrooms do not value it. (2010, p. 124)

Richardson's study proves that teachers who are aware of SRTOL do not seem to value it, and they interpret it to mean that SRTOL is only applicable in informal and/or alternative writing situations, prompting them to teach only ESAE in the classroom where the occasion for writing tends towards academic writing. Richardson concludes that this might be one of the reasons why "... many would feel it unnecessary to implement linguistically diverse teaching methods in their curricula" (p.59) because of the practical implementation and application of non-standard varieties. Canagarajah (2010) reasons that non-native students' use of English as "... a performative act of shuttling between languages. . . [and the current SRTOL policy] . . . is largely a policy of tolerance rather than promotion" (para. 9). Those who wish to be successful must master SEAE and use other forms for informal writing occasions. Contrary to Richardson and Canagarajah, Kinloch's study demonstrates that there is a desperate need to put into practice diverse teaching methods that are more sensitive and inclusive to speakers of non-standard varieties. Kinloch illustrates this point through one of the students in her study:

Thus, Khaleeq is caught in the middle of two distinct worlds: that of Black English, where he has a strong feeling of familiarity and acceptance, and Academic English, where he could possibly be judged as wanting membership into the 'White House.' Khaleeq's sense of language is connected to his sense of identity in a world in which he wants to be successful. (2010, p. 132)

Kinloch's study shows that students understand all too well the ramifications of “. . . shuttling between languages . . .” (Canagarajah, 2010, para. 9) and how language use not only affects the level of success they experience but also how it affects their overall identity. However, writing center tutors do not always understand how language affects identity, even if they are students of color. Peer tutors, because of their position in the university, are trained to support the notion of academic writing as the only path to success, just like the instructors in Richardson's study.

After more than thirty years of SRTOL, Richardson (2003) continues to call for further training, especially for White teachers who are primarily unaware of multilingual students due to lack of experience with this student population. I suggest we make the same call for writing center tutors. Cliett (2003) goes further and argues for a complete overhaul to teacher education. She calls for new, innovative pedagogies and methodologies, which include ESAE as only one of many varieties of Englishes so as to address the needs of a diverse population. Cliett believes these pedagogies will in turn improve overall attitudes towards speakers and writers of other varieties of English, by all stakeholders at the university. Kinloch (2010) goes beyond reforms to teacher education programs and revisions of language policy statements when she writes, “ If students do have a right to their own language and if educators are to truly affirm that right, then alternative assessment measures should be devised to evaluate student success and progress” (p. 134). Kinloch is seeking real changes, advocating for alternative assessment of writing, which would in turn also affect writing centers, as tutors would be exposed to other writing and variations of English beyond the scope of traditional

measures, enriching their experiences as students and as tutors. Cooperative tutoring is a potential site for enriching students' understanding of literacy because, as tutors and students, tutors also bring in their own stories and struggles to the session in order to create the connection with students that Valentine and Torres (2011), Denny (2005, 2010), and Grimm (1996a, 1999, 2010, 2011) recommend in order to further the conversation about race and academic discourse.

Canagarajah (2010) suggests that rather than focus solely on SEAE as it is taught in the classroom, students could also learn about the different varieties of English from their peers, which will in turn enrich everyone. Canagarah proposes that reciprocity could be a way to share and build alliances among speakers of other varieties of English. Also found in Malea Powell's (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2006) work is a focus on reciprocity, alliance building, and survivance. For tutors practicing cooperative tutoring, understanding reciprocity in terms of alliance building and survivance can inform the interactions between tutors and students involved with any given tutoring session.

In Powell's (2004) article, "Down by the River or How Susan La Flesche Picotte Can Teach us about Alliances as a Practice of Survivance," she introduces Native American rhetoric, specifically rhetoric of survivance, based in part on Gerald Vizenor's ideas<sup>3</sup>. Vizenor (1999) coins the term survivance as follows: "Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (p. vii). Powell (2002b, 2004, 2006) applies Vizenor's idea of survivance rhetorically as a way to examine 19<sup>th</sup> century Native American writers, like Sarah Winnamucca

Hopkins, Charles Eastman, and Susan LaFlesche Picotte. Powell (2002a) writes, “. . . those who encountered Euroamerican culture, learned the language of the colonizers, and negotiated the demands of ‘civilized’ life as they critiqued, resisted, and survived its impositions” (p.14). The 19<sup>th</sup> century Native American writers, who wrote in Standard English to a white audience, demonstrate how survivance, as a rhetorical strategy, has worked previously, and through survivance, Powell (2002b) calls for a new way of looking at language that does not polarize the dominant culture against the Other, as Kinloch (2010) shows through the moving between languages. A constant emphasis on difference creates more distance and is also related to what Bruffee (2002) claims. The search for individual differences, Powell (2004) notes, creates competitors rather than collaborators. Bruffee looks to peer groups formed in the classroom as a way to create solidarity; however, Powell (2004) turns to reciprocity as a way of coming together, of understanding and respecting each other’s beliefs. Powell (2004) defines her key terms, alliance and allies as follows: “. . . we become allies, not competing individuals, working toward the survival of our shared community, for if my scholarly survival depends upon you, then, surely, yours must also depend on me” ( p. 42). When tutors practice cooperative tutoring, perceiving students as allies changes the relationship between tutors and students as well as the social dynamic of the overall tutoring session. Reciprocity will allow tutors to share more of themselves, thereby reinforcing the practice of being allies.

Powell’s (2004) work contains ideas that are similar to the ideas found in Grimm (1996a). Grimm writes about four axioms for helping writing centers move towards

adopting postmodern theories and practices. Grimm (1996a) states that writing centers should, “give up the protection of old beliefs, understand history, focus change on the self, and share more” (p. 528). The last suggestion looks for writing centers to share more and is akin to Powell’s (2004) idea of reciprocity and creating alliances. The formation of allies is also mentioned in Bawarshi and Pelkowski (2008) when they suggest that a tutor could serve as “guide and translator” (pg. 93) into the world of academic discourse. Students will not be ushered into academic discourse during their classroom experiences; however, the authors are more hopeful and posit that the writing center can become the ideal place to do this because of the writing center’s own outsider status within the university community. Through cooperative tutoring and knowledge of rhetoric of survivance as part of their tutoring pedagogy, tutors could be perceived as allies with students, working together to find places in academic writing assignments for resistance and ultimately survival within the academe. When applied to writing center pedagogy, Powell’s idea of survivance may help tutors break from entrenched ways of thinking about one-to-one tutoring as the only way to work with students while at the same time grappling with the rhetorical strategies that might further resistance in both their own work and the work of students who come to the writing center.

### **The Research Question**

I first became interested in collaboration and especially writing center studies as a graduate student, peer tutor in 1993, and I wrote my master’s thesis about writing centers (“Creating a Tutor-Based Writing Center for the Community College”).

Currently, I am the director of the Writing & Reading Center (WRC) at the University of

Houston-Downtown (UHD) and have been since 2002. In my role as UHD's writing center director, I conducted a survey of UHD students in 2009, which fulfilled the university requirement for an assessment measure of UHD's WRC. The 2009 survey asked participants for their perceptions of writing center services. Perhaps the most surprising results showed that the diverse student population at UHD viewed the WRC as upholding white, middle class values as standards for college-level writing. UHD students' perceptions of writing center services are in accordance with the current literature regarding diverse student populations and writing centers, particularly through the work of Nancy Grimm (1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2010, 2011). In their article, Nancy Barron and Nancy Grimm (2002) write:

Like most writing centers, our program is strongly influenced by the mainstream values of the institutional structure. Most of the assignments that students bring to the writing center expect them to demonstrate the dominant group's values and practices, and most of the undergraduate writing coaches who work in our writing center take these expectations for granted. (p. 60)

Barron and Grimm's observations resonate even for my diverse staff of peer tutors at UHD, who are hired because they have mastered the moves necessary to be proficient in negotiating academic discourse. Since the diverse students and tutors at UHD share similar perceptions regarding academic discourse, I thought UHD would be a good place for my study of cooperative tutoring.

My research problem was to bring the theoretical model of cooperative tutoring to a practical stage. At UHD, peer tutors are trained through a three-credit, junior-level

course. In the course, the observation of experienced tutors and the mock tutorial method is used; however as the novice tutor becomes more comfortable with his or her abilities after observing sessions, she or he will begin to actively participate in the session with the experienced tutor. It is these occasional sessions where both novice and experienced tutors are active participants in the session that I am extending into practice.

As I began the study, I considered what would be the major objections to cooperative tutoring.

- Does cooperative tutoring work or does it further reify current practices?
- Will one tutor dominate over the other tutor and the session overall?
- Will the student be overwhelmed by either too much information or by conflicting information offered by the tutors?
- How will the different tutoring styles affect the relationship between the tutors and student?

While I would not advocate this as a replacement for one-to-one tutoring, cooperative tutoring can enhance and perhaps change the tutoring that occurs in any writing center. From a writing center director's point of administrating a writing center, cooperative tutoring can be instrumental in fostering team building that is genuine in its application. It helps to create allies between the tutors in ways that staff meetings or other team building exercises cannot do. Through cooperative tutoring, tutors learn from each other and can serve as ongoing professional development, but more importantly, can work as Grimm (2011) theorizes. Cooperative tutoring can be as a practical



application to the “communities of practice” approach Grimm advocates and does enhance the one-to-one tutoring model for the better.

### **Chapter Overviews**

Chapter II: Methods: In this chapter, I explain the method used to set up the study and to analyze the data. I identify the preliminary categories from the data for analysis.

Chapter III: Exchanging Strategies for Tactics Through Cooperative Tutoring: discusses the category of “Equal Partners” cooperative tutoring sessions. These sessions are characterized by a strong sense of camaraderie between the tutors. This is represented by a willingness to work together and share both tutoring and academic writing strategies with each other and the student. During an “Equal Partners” session, tutors acknowledge each other’s tutoring strategies and incorporate parts of it into their own tutoring style. These sessions are more directive than a one-to-one tutoring session. The tutors’ focus is on teaching specific strategies for academic writing as well as passing on college survival lore.

Chapter IV: Forming Alliances and Creating Opportunities for Survivance through Cooperative Tutoring: identifies the category, “New Alliances”. In this category, both tutors are more actively engaged with the overall topic of the student’s paper. The tutors help the student tease out ideas for the paper. Rather than asking questions of the student in a one-way question and answer session, both of the tutors and the student are mutually engaged in sharing experiences and ideas on a personal level, working towards understanding how to craft ideas through the medium of academic

discourse. In this way an alliance is formed with the writing center tutors and the student.

Chapter V: Maintaining the Status Quo: When Cooperative Tutoring Fails: identifies the category Trainer/Trainee. In this session, the tutors in the pairing attempted to apply cooperative tutoring techniques but were unable to make the shift from the roles they once held as trainer and trainee.

Chapter VI: Conclusion presents a summary and interpretation of my findings. I also discuss the limitations to the study and indicate areas for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

#### **Introduction**

The basic model for tutoring in most writing centers is the one-to-one collaborative paradigm. In this study, I introduce and observe a different model; cooperative tutoring, as I conceive it, consists of two tutors who work collaboratively with one student on a writing project. In this qualitative study, I focused primarily on the tutors' interactions with each other and as they worked with one student.

I applied for IRB approval of this study from both Texas A&M University and The University of Houston-Downtown because it involved human subjects. I received approval from both institutions to conduct the study in the fall of 2010. The study began on November 10, 2010 and ran through December 6, 2010. Twenty-one tutoring sessions were recorded. However, only 18 of the 21 tutoring sessions were usable in this study due to audiotape malfunctions and/or students who decided to opt out of the study. The study ended with tutor interviews, conducted on December 6, 2010 with 7 out of 12 tutors in the study participating.

#### **Setting**

All sessions took place in the Writing and Reading Center (WRC) at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD). Undergraduate peer tutors primarily staff the WRC. At the time of this study, a handful of lecturer faculty members from the English Department also served as WRC tutors. The WRC is one part of the university's

Academic Support Center, which also houses the math center and an open computer lab. Students who wish to use any of the tutoring services or the computers first check-in with their student ID at a reception desk, located at the entrance to the Academic Support Center. The facility has windows all along the left side and the back wall, providing a view of downtown Houston. Computers occupy the center section of the Academic Support Center; the Math Center is to the left of the computers, and the WRC is to the right. Students can move from the computers to the WRC with no physical barriers separating any of the tutoring areas from the computers. Students in the Academic Support Center can easily overhear tutoring sessions while using the computers.

The WRC has its own reception area and receptionists, who are different from the check-in desk staff at the entrance to the Academic Support Center. The reception area consists of the receptionist desk, several bookcases, a couch, and a coffee table. The walls of the WRC are decorated with student artwork. The primary tutoring area is located away from the computers of the Academic Support Center, where round tables and more bookcases along a wall create a cozy tutoring space. Closer to the computer area and near the windows along the back wall, moveable partitions are configured to create a temporary office for me, a tutor break area, and semi-private spaces for tutoring. Three round tables make up this semi-private tutoring area. For this study, tutors primarily held their sessions near the reception desk.

The WRC opens each semester during the second week of classes and closes on last day of classes. We offer both face-to-face consultations as well as synchronous

online consultations. We use online appointment scheduling software to organize appointments and keep track of walk-in tutoring sessions. Additionally, usage data of the WRC is also generated by the online appointment scheduling software. Students generally approach the reception desk and check-in for their appointment or to inquire whether a tutor is available. Students can make appointments themselves by accessing the online scheduler through the WRC website. Most writing center sessions are 30 minutes long; however, students have the option of choosing a 1-hour session. We also keep track of student demographic information through the online appointment scheduling software, which also holds the records of what occurred during each session. The tutor completes a carbon-less, paper form that describes the session and any other notes the student wants to add. In the case of face-to-face sessions, the top copy of the form is given directly to the student; the bottom copy is given to the receptionist. Once the receptionist enters the session data into the online appointment scheduling software, she or he also emails an electronic copy to the student. In the case of synchronous online appointments, only an electronic copy is emailed to the student, which summarizes the session.

Approximately half of the students who use the WRC are freshman, enrolled in Composition I and Composition II courses. The remainder of student usage consists of students from across the disciplines, ranging from undergraduates to graduate students, alumni, and occasionally university staff members.

## **Participants**

### *Peer Tutor Staff*

Registered students at UHD can become peer tutors after they pass the course, Theories of Collaborative Learning, with a grade of “A” or “B.” The course is a 3-credit, junior-level course, open to all students in the university. Those who are hired have a choice of becoming a peer tutor, a writing associate (writing fellow), or both. Since the course is open to any student at UHD, the result is not only an ethnically diverse staff but also a multi-disciplinary staff as well, representative of the university population. To illustrate the diverse, multi-disciplinary staff, Table 1: WRC Tutor Demographics shows specific information about the peer tutors who participated in the study. They are described by their major, length of time tutoring, self-identified ethnicity, and if they are employed as a writing associate. Most peer tutor participants selected his or her pseudonym; however, I chose the pseudonym for those who were unreachable after the conclusion of the study.

Table 1: WRC Tutor Demographics

<b>Tutor &amp; Major</b>	<b>Tutoring Experience</b>	<b>Self-Identified Ethnicity</b>	<b>Employed as Writing Associate</b>
Xavier (Philosophy)	3 years	Hispanic	No
Ann (Criminal Justice)	6 months	White	Yes
Mayra (Biology)	6 months	Hispanic	No
Ginger (Bilingual Education)	9 months	White & Asian	Yes
Lara (English)	6 months	Hispanic	No
Patrice (Psychology)	9 months	Black	Yes
Lee (English)	4 years	Asian	Yes
Corrine (English)	9 months	Black	Yes
Paul (History)	6 months	White	No
Gail (Professional and Technical Writing)	6 months	White	No
Angela (English)	2 years	Black	No
Pam (English)	2 years	White	Yes

In addition to the demographics presented in Table 1: WRC Tutor Demographics, peer tutors and writing associates are required to have a 3.0 GPA in their English courses.

The peer tutor and of writing associate positions are among one of the highest paying jobs for student workers on campus and are well regarded by the students and faculty.

### *Peer Tutor Participant Selection*

As the director of the WRC, I solicited tutor participants from my staff. Since I am their supervisor, I was very mindful about avoiding any type of coercion. A separate Letter of Informed Consent for Writing & Reading Center Tutors was distributed, stating that continued employment was not contingent upon participation in the study. The Letter of Informed Consent also stated that tutor performance would not be measured by the study. Currently, tutor performance is measured by a separate online survey, which is emailed to students after each tutoring session. Out of the 14 peer tutors on staff, only 2 tutors decided not to participate in the study. All tutors who agreed to participate were trained during a separate staff meeting on November 5, 2010. The training lasted approximately 30 minutes and began with a short discussion, having the tutors recall what it was like to observe and eventually participate in a tutoring session when paired with an experienced tutor during their first semester on the job. I then explained the protocol for a cooperative tutoring session. Tutors would be paired at random, and the pairing would depend on which tutor had an appointment and which tutor was available at the time a student was willing to participate in the study. Tutors were to begin the session together, introduce themselves to the student, and proceed with the tutorial, modifying the one-to-one tutoring guidelines. Since cooperative tutoring requires two tutors, they were instructed to make sure the student sat between the two tutors whenever possible. The training concluded with a mock session and a discussion of the possible



problems that could occur during a cooperative tutoring session. Since the tutors were fairly familiar with the concept of cooperative tutoring from their training, the main problem brought forth was how to avoid confusing the student with too much information. We resolved the issue by discussing the importance of paying attention to the body language of the student and being aware of when the other tutor was speaking.

### *Student Participant Selection*

Student participants were selected from the students who used the services of the WRC during the time of the study. I attempted to select a representative sample group, based on the student population documented in the *UHD Fact Book* for 2009-2010 semesters (see Notes for specific information regarding the student population at UHD). For my cooperative tutoring study, the students who participated were not required to self-disclose ethnicity; therefore, the numbers below are based on my observations and may not be completely accurate. I also based the representative sample of participants on gender from the yearlong survey on student perceptions of the WRC, which I conducted for an institutional assessment study from July 2009 until April 2010. From this study, 80.9% of WRC students who responded to the survey were female and 19.1% were male. In my dissertation study, I had a total of 18 students participate: 15 female students and 3 male students. Of the 18 students, 5 were Black, 7 were Hispanic, 4 were White, and 2 were International students. Therefore, the participants for this study are representative of the student population at UHD by ethnicity; however, they are not representative by gender. Since female students primarily use the WRC, as determined

by my assessment study, gender among WRC students is also accurately represented in this study.

I recruited the participants by either sitting on a couch, which is located near the receptionist desk, or I filled in as the receptionist. Being present in the reception area of the WRC provided me with the opportunity to introduce myself, explain the study, and describe what the participants would have to do. I was able to recruit enough participants using this method. I selected the pseudonyms for the student participants.

## **Data**

### *Data Collection*

Data for the tutoring sessions were collected by audio recordings, direct observations, and interviews, which began on November 10, 2010. During the 14 working days available for the study, 20 sessions were collected; however, only 18 sessions out of 20 were successfully audio-recorded. The number of sessions for this study was dependent on the number of tutors available and the number of students seeking WRC services during the time the study was conducted. Based on my experiences as a writing center director, 20 sessions constitutes a representative sample.

Since I recruited the student participants, I also inadvertently created the tutor pairings. This was done as randomly as possible, based on the availability of the tutors and the willingness of the students to participate in the study. For example, if one tutor had an appointment and another tutor was free at that time, I would match the free tutor with the tutor who had the appointment.

Each tutor who consented to participate in the study had an opportunity to tutor at least once. Table 2: Sessions by Tutor Ethnicity illustrates the composition of the sessions.

Table 2: Sessions by Tutor Ethnicity

<b>Number of Sessions by Tutor Ethnicity</b>	<b>Ethnicity of Tutor Pairings</b>
3	Black Female + Black Female
3	Hispanic Female + Black Female
2	White Female + Hispanic Male
2	Black Female + Asian Female
2	Hispanic Female + White Female
2	White Female + White Male
1	Hispanic Female + Hispanic Male
1	Hispanic Female + White Male
1	Black Female + Hispanic Male
1	Asian Female + Hispanic Female
Total = 18	

When broken down by self-disclosed ethnicity, 4 tutors were White, 3 tutors were Black, 3 tutors were Hispanic, and 2 tutors were Asian, as shown in Table 2: Sessions by Tutor

Ethnicity. There were 10 female and 2 male tutor participants. This table also accurately reflects the overall makeup of the staff by gender in that there are more female tutors employed than male tutors.

### *Field Notes*

As suggested by Barbara Johnstone (1999) in her book, *Qualitative Methods in Sociolinguistics*, Dell Hymes' SPEAKING (setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, genre) paradigm is recommended for use in structuring observations and is a “. . . heuristic, geared specifically to the analysis of communicative events . . .” (p. 96). I modified Hyme's heuristic for structuring my observations and field notes because by sitting in close proximity to the session, my physical presence plus the presence of the tape recorder did not produce workable results. My presence caused noticeable stress on the tutors who were already put in a different tutoring situation. I resolved the issue by sitting further away so that I could make field notes regarding the positions of the tutors and the student as they worked at the round, tutoring tables. In 15 out of 18 sessions, the student sat between the two tutors; in 3 out of 18 sessions, the two tutors sat side-by-side, with the student either to the right or left of one of the tutors.

When the portion of study that involved the tutoring sessions was over, I conducted follow-up interviews with 7 of the 12 tutors who consented to participate in the study. Both male tutors were available for an interview along with 5 female tutors. The remaining 5 tutors were not interviewed due to circumstances associated with the end of the semester, such as final exam scheduling conflicts and graduation. The 7

tutors interviewed, as indicated by ethnicity, were as follows: 3 Black females, 2 White females, 1 Hispanic male, and 1 White male. Each session was held in my office at UHD and was audio-recorded. The tutors were asked the same questions during each interview and were then offered time at the end to contribute additional commentary (see Appendix A for Tutor Interview Questions).

### *Transcription Conventions*

The tape recorder, a Phillips Digital Voice Tracer, model LFH0885, proved easy to use and had the appearance of a cell phone. The microphone was able to filter out the background noise and created superior recordings for this study. The recordings were saved as a MP3 audio file, and I used Transana to produce a transcript of selected files for analysis. For my transcriptions, I followed the conventions of Jeffersonian Transcript Notation, developed by Gail Jefferson (Edwards, 2007). Jane A. Edwards (2007) writes that Jeffersonian Transcript Notation is “. . . widely used in any area of discourse research concerned with coordination of turns across speakers ” (p. 12). Jeffersonian Transcript Notation is especially designed to note the coordination of turn taking and overlaps in conversation. More specifically, as Edwards explains, “. . . turn transition [which] include unusually short pauses between one speaker and the next (latching), interruption by the second speaker, and simultaneous talk (overlap)” (p. 12). In my study, I found Jeffersonian Transcript Notation especially useful when there was simultaneous talk (overlap) between all three of the participants in any given session; Jeffersonian Transcript Notation allowed me to show this visually for print (see Appendix B for Jeffersonian Transcription Notations used in this study).

In my transcriptions, I represented the participants in my study as authentically as possible. Since they attend an urban university, comprised of a diverse population, I did not note every nuance of speaking. According to Barbara Johnstone (1999), “Transcribers have to decide what information to include and what to leave out. These decisions have practical and theoretical consequences” (p. 117). In transcribing the sessions, there was the potential for researcher bias given that the subjects all attend the university where I am currently employed. In addition, all of the tutor participants were my employees. My goal in transcribing the sessions was to produce not only a readable document but also to create a document that accurately reflects the way students and tutors at UHD interact, especially during a writing center session. In order to protect against researcher bias and to contextualize my transcriptions around the intentions of SRTOL, I used standard spellings and colloquialisms in order to convey a fairly realistic representation of the interactions between the tutors and the student.

For the coding of the audiotapes as well as my field notes, I used Transana, which is qualitative analysis software for video and audio data. Transana facilitated the coding of the transcripts by coordinating the selected coded section with the actual audio file.

### *Data Analysis*

I applied grounded theory to analyze the data and to test my theories about cooperative tutoring. Grounded theory, as advocated by Joyce Magnotto Neff (2002), is especially useful for writing center work because it allows the researcher to draw on experience in a particular field while developing and interpreting findings. Developed

by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, grounded theory is used primarily by the social sciences and in education and is applicable for qualitative research (Neff, 2002, pp. 133-135). Neff defines grounded theory as “. . . an interpretive methodology . . . [which] simultaneously describe and theorize the complexities of human interactions” (p. 133). Data are coded in three phases, through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Neff likens open coding to invention strategies in the writing process where the researcher searches for emerging patterns and develops possible organizational categories for the data. In axial coding, she explains, the researcher returns to the data to refine the provisional categories and looks for relationships. Selective coding further refines the process by solidifying a primary category and demonstrating a relationship between the primary category and sub-categories. The limitation to grounded theory, as identified by Neff, is time and collaboration. As part of the theory’s recursive process, it is understood that the researcher may have to revisit the original study, make revisions, and gather additional data as preliminary categories, ideas, and theories emerge.

For this project, I was successful in working through two phases of grounded theory: open coding and axial coding. During the open coding stage, I listened to the tapes several times, creating an outline of each session and looking for patterns of tutor behavior in the sessions. I wanted to see if there were sessions that appeared to take on similar characteristics. I compared the sessions to what should happen during a typical tutoring session cycle, which consists of the following at UHD: greeting the student, asking what the student wants to focus on, asking for an assignment sheet, addressing

the student's concerns collaboratively, and ending the session by completing necessary paperwork. During open coding, I focused on which tutor started the session, spoke more, and/or explained writing-related strategies. I also listened for a demonstration of a particular tutoring style and how engaged the student was during the session.

At first, I looked at what the students' concerns were and created two possible organizational categories by dividing sessions into first draft sessions and revision sessions. A first draft can be defined as one that is in the early stages of completion or one in which the student is just beginning to work with the assignment and may have only notes or ideas. The revision sessions consisted of students who had a whole paper written and wanted feedback on how to finish the paper, or they had professor comments to guide a revision. Out of the 18 sessions, there were 12 sessions that focused on a student's first draft and six sessions that dealt with a revision. Out of the 18 sessions, there were also 3 sessions that were required by the professor; one was classified as a first draft session and 2 were classified as revision sessions. Finally, there was only 1 post-grading session, where the tutors clarified the professor's comments with the student, and I categorized it as a revision session. In this phase of open coding, I found that I focused too much on the students and not enough on how the tutors interacted.

I revisited the data and began axial coding. I found that focusing on the student's needs did initially show me that different tutoring strategies were required for each of the sessions described above. By focusing on the different tutoring strategies, this helped me to refine preliminary categories for further analysis. I examined more closely how the tutors specifically interacted with each other, and then what they did to



focus on the student's concerns. I used time codes in Transana to note the different episodes within each session, paying attention to who started the session and when the other tutor joined the session. From there, I looked at how the tutors engaged with each other in relation to the student by focusing on overlaps in conversation, interruptions, contradictions, and turn-taking. I was able to devise three provisional categories: the Trainer /Trainee, Equal Partners, and New Alliance. Of the 18 sessions, 6 fall into the Trainer /Trainee category, 10 as Equal Partners, and 2 as New Alliance.

## CHAPTER III

### EXCHANGING STRATEGIES FOR TACTICS THROUGH COOPERATIVE TUTORING

#### **Introduction**

Malea Powell (2002a) in “Listening to Ghosts: An Alternative (non)Argument” shares, through a series of stories, what it is like to be an academic as well as a mixed blood Native American and how her writing is situated both in the academic community and the Native American community. She applies Michel de Certeau’s (1984) theory of “use” to explain how those who are historically categorized as Other take the ideas and the language imposed upon them by the dominant culture and create alternatives. Powell (2002a) explains de Certeau’s two basic practices of “use,” which consist of strategies and tactics:

Strategies are “circumscribed as *proper*” [*sic*]. They are connected to the power of the dominant order, sustained by it. Tactics, contrarily, are not proper; . . . [t]hey don’t recognize the propriety of the system as binding. The place of the tactic, then, is “the space of the other,” able to insinuate itself into the systems of dominance. (p. 37)

For de Certeau, tactics subvert or reappropriate the power of the dominant culture from within for use in alternative ways by the Other, sometimes to gain agency and sometimes to create something new. Powell applies de Certeau’s tactics to her own writings and through her rhetorical analysis of Native American writers, stating these writers have

already created alternative discourses within the academic community. Their alternative discourses become tactics because these writers not only write in the language of the colonizer but also use that same language to critique, to subvert, and/or to change the dominant culture.

### *Writing Centers and Strategies*

In writing centers, tutors are trained to adhere to specific practices and strategies for use in tutoring academic writing. These conventional strategies for tutoring are oftentimes vetted through the research literature for writing centers, through the writing center community, or in individual writing centers where the strategies then become the norm for tutoring. For example, one primary strategy for tutoring maintains that tutors should avoid being directive in their tutoring sessions and instead practice a minimalist tutoring strategy, as suggested by Jeff Brooks (1991). Minimalist tutoring, according to Brooks, is a strategy that relies heavily on the Socratic method, where tutors ask leading questions that engage students in discussion about their papers. When tutors ask leading questions instead of being direct with advice or information, students maintain control over their paper thereby gaining agency in the session and ultimately over their final written products. Gillespie and Lerner (2000) also promote minimalist tutoring, suggesting tutors offer strategies based on what works for the writer rather than what they, as writers, would do in a similar situation. They remind tutors that this is the surest way to be directive or to dominate the session and recommend:

Rather than merely transmit strategies or even enact practices . . . the important thing is to approach a session with a curious and open mind, and once, again, to

develop control of the strategies that you might offer writers and the flexibility to know what's working in a session and what adjustments you need to make.

(Gillespie & Lerner, 2000, p. 48)

The goal is for tutors to learn and to control an array of general, established tutoring strategies and to be able to access those strategies during any given writing center session. The strategies can range from a resource consulted during a session to an accepted writing center practice, such as reading an essay aloud in the session. As tutors gain more experience, Gillespie and Lerner indicate that they will learn to become more versatile with the strategies they offer to students.

Oftentimes, tutors will learn new strategies during staff meetings, through a writing center listserv, interactions with tutors at conferences, or through *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. A regular feature in *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, "Tutor's Column," is where a tutor shares a strategy that has achieved successful results. For example, Peter Moe (2005) uses the tool belt as a metaphor to describe the varied tutoring strategies tutors often carry with them and rely on during a session. In the article, he advocates modeling a few strategies during a session and then allowing students time to practice each of the newly acquired strategies under the tutor's supervision. Moe's main point is for tutors to help students adapt and/or modify these strategies to make them their own. While it appears that Moe's ideas might be interpreted as tactics because the student is encouraged to amend the strategy, it is still a strategy because the *use* of the strategy was transmitted through a recognized system, that of the peer reviewed publication in the writing center field. It is also a strategy because the function of it is for students to

become proficient in academic discourse while under the supervision of the tutor, who in this case, represents the dominant culture. According to Grimm (1996a), tutors who apply only accepted strategies in writing center sessions limit what could otherwise become an opportunity for a discussion about the dominant discourse as part of the tutoring session. In some situations, developing tactics may be more desirable for providing access to academic discourse for students who are on the fringes of academia as beginners or who are marginalized by race or socio-economic status.

In Grimm's (2011) most recent article, "Retheorizing Writing Center Work," she moves beyond her previous argument about strategies and focuses on challenging the accepted practices of individualized tutoring in favor of moving towards viewing writing center work through a community of practice approach, developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Grimm reasons that the individual approach to tutoring fails to take into account the diversity at most universities, and it continues to privilege white students. Grimm writes:

Without an examination of tacit theories and an articulation of explicit theories, writing center practice does have the potential to hurt (or continue hurting) people, particularly if these theories support tutoring principles that sanction withholding information from students who may need it or if these theories suggest one-size-fits-all approaches. (2011, p. 79)

Tutoring strategies, as Grimm suggests, can function to reify the hegemonic practices of academic writing. A writing center strategy for tutoring becomes validated by the writing center community through publication in a peer-reviewed newsletter and/or

through the practice of the approved strategies, which are designed to maintain the status quo. Through the lens of Powell's (2002a) application of de Certeau's tactic (1984) and with de Certeau's concept of use, tutoring strategies have the potential to become tactics when the tutors do not maintain control over specific strategies, and they are modified by tutors and students together in ways that are unforeseen by the dominant culture.

### *Defining the "Equal Partners" Session*

In my study of cooperative tutoring, the category of "Equal Partners" exemplifies the potential for exchanging strategies for tactics during a tutoring session. In some sessions, it is the use of cooperative tutoring in and of itself that becomes the tactic. In other sessions, specific strategies become tactics when used in the cooperative tutoring environment. "Equal Partners" sessions are characterized by a strong sense of camaraderie between the tutors. This is represented by a willingness to work together and to share both tutoring and academic writing strategies with each other and the student. During an "Equal Partners" session, tutors acknowledge each other's tutoring styles and strategies and incorporate parts of these into their own tutoring style. These sessions are more directive in that tutors focus on teaching specific strategies for academic writing as well as passing on college survival lore.

The tutors in this segment of an "Equal Partners" session are Xavier (Hispanic, male, philosophy major), and Patrice (African-American, female, psychology major). Xavier has three years of experience while Patrice has nine months<sup>4</sup>. Patrice has also taken a newly required tutor training course and in addition to being a tutor is a writing fellow for a freshman composition course. Xavier participated in four cooperative

tutoring sessions, all of which fell under the category of Equal Partners. Patrice participated in three cooperative tutoring sessions, two were Equal Partners sessions and one was a Trainer/Trainee session (see chapter 5 for more on Trainer/Trainee sessions). The writing center session in this segment is required by the professor, and the student, Alma (Hispanic, female, non-traditional), has been to the WRC previously. The assignment is for a business course, and since Alma has worked with Xavier during her last visit, she is the one who starts the session, readily identifying her issues with writing introductions. In this session, she wants to look specifically at her paragraph structure, organization, and transitions. When Alma expresses her concerns about whether the paper makes sense or not, Patrice joins the session and immediately takes over by providing a specific tip on how to begin a paper that may help Alma with organization. This is Patrice's explanatory tutoring style, to listen to the concerns of the student and then to provide a detailed suggestion for addressing the writer's concern. Xavier's tutoring style is primarily non-directive, based on a Socratic questioning method to engage the writer in conversation.

Alma then reads her paper aloud. At first, Patrice and Xavier take turns stopping her after each paragraph to address lower-order concerns. The focus on lower order concerns so early in the reading of the paper is not a recommended strategy in writing center practices. It is discouraged and according to Grimm (2011):

In many writing centers, tutors are prohibited from writing on students' papers and encouraged to focus only on HOCs (higher order concerns). The LOCs (lower order concerns), which are often markers of identity, race, and class, are

thus overlooked, creating a situation where individuals whose writing exhibits these markers are not able to make decisions about whether they want to comply with the dominant discourse. (p. 83)

However, as a cooperative tutoring tactic, when Patrice and Xavier focus on lower order concerns at the beginning of the session, they are doing two things. First, they share their knowledge of writing directly with the student. Patrice explains specific issues at length more so than Xavier, but both offered Alma explanations for the corrections. Both Patrice and Xavier offer praise when Alma finds her own errors as she reads aloud. Second, when the tutors focus on lower order concerns first, it allows both tutors to use it as a way to gauge the tutoring style of the other tutor. The initial focus on lower-order concerns help the tutors make modifications to their individual tutoring style in order to accommodate the other tutors' style so they can work cooperatively to move the session forward. This also creates a relaxed atmosphere.

In this segment, Patrice and Xavier establish their working relationship.

Patrice: And there was one more thing. . . .

Xavier: Was it the customer thing?

Patrice: I think it was the customer thing.

Xavier: Right here. *((reads from student's paper))*

"Provides the best to each customer, which also creates values to its customers."

Alma: OK

Patrice: Right.



Alma: Let's see. <giggles>

((continues to read her paper aloud, works out wording of the sentence))

Alma: Creates value?

Xavier & Patrice: ((together)) But what kind of value? ((all laugh ))

At this point, Patrice and Xavier begin to focus on higher-order concerns of idea development, and the session is noticeably more collaborative and relaxed. Alma's giggling in the session demonstrates that she is comfortable working out her sentence structure issues aloud with both tutors present rather than taking notes on what Patrice and Xavier were saying for her to correct. When Alma self-corrects her error, the tutors simultaneously shift the direction of the tutorial. They both adopt Xavier's non-directive approach as they, in unison, ask Alma to elaborate on her idea. This causes laughter among all three, further creating an environment of trust as Alma now enters into the session as a peer. At this point, she has also learned how to gauge the tutors' style and how to respond accordingly.

A synergy develops as the group discusses an organizational issue that appears in the paper. In this next segment of the tutoring session, Patrice and Xavier refer to each other's suggestions, demonstrating an acknowledgment of each other's tutoring expertise and tutoring style.

Xavier: And does it sort of, like, what Patrice was saying about, sort of [organized paragraphs.]

[Alma: Um-hmm.]

around similar topics, right? Is outsourcing relating to, I guess,

bargaining power of the buyer? Like, and if it does, how might that relate?

Alma: Outsourcing? It ties in with the suppliers.

Xavier: Um-hmm.

Alma: But not necessarily with bargain power of the buyer.

Xavier: OK.

Alma: Because outsourcing is what RM is doing.

Xavier: Um-hmm.

Alma: You know, by outsourcing to the [suppliers.]

[Xavier: OK.]

[Patrice: OK.]

Alma: I mean it ties in, but [not with this specific topic.]

[Xavier & Patrice: OK! ((*together, enthusiastically*)))]

In this interaction, Alma reacts positively to Xavier's non-directive questioning method and to the affirmative responses of both Patrice and Xavier as she works out the problem of too many topics in one paragraph. Xavier acknowledges Patrice's style as a tutor and as a peer at the beginning of this segment when he makes a reference to her specifically by name and her suggestion for paragraph organization. Xavier demonstrates that he was listening to Patrice's explanatory style of lengthy explanations and incorporates that reference into his Socratic method of tutoring. Xavier asks a question about the two topics that appear in the single paragraph of Alma's paper and

whether she thinks they should be separated out. Xavier asks Alma to provide more information and in doing so, she realizes that she needs two paragraphs. Again, an affirmation is said in unison by both tutors when Alma has come to an understanding of the issue herself. Additionally, Xavier and Patrice further confirm their solidarity as tutors working collaboratively, while maintaining their individual tutoring styles.

In this segment from the session, it is Patrice who refers to Xavier's previous explanation of transitions. Patrice senses that Alma may not have grasped the concept fully in order to bring it into her own writing.

Alma: Like, if you can, give me an example of, you know, [the wording.]

[Xavier: Right.]

Xavier: Just focus on the link, right? The connection right here. Or, what is the connection? Like this, that relationship between suppliers?

Alma: That they have a relationship, an outsourcing relationship between the supplier?

Patrice: Alma, maybe, let's brainstorm about it. What would you say about that?

Alma: Their relationship, maybe?

Xavier: Maybe that's what the beginning of the sentence, and then, so, or what would the rest of the sentence look like, right?

Alma: OK?

Xavier: No, actually, you don't have to, like, /give/ the answer right now, but I mean, you know, when you're thinking about it, think those things.

Alma: OK.

Patrice: Like what a transition sentence does is bridges the gap, between two, so you want to bridge the gap between the [outsourcing.]

[Alma: Um-hmm.]

I'm sorry, the suppliers and the bargain power. Like Xavier said, it's like a leap, kind of, so you want something that's going to bridge the gap, so Xavier suggested, you know, looking into the fact that they have relations. It has to do with their relationship of the consumer, I'm assuming.

Alma: Um-hmm.

Patrice: And the buyer?

Alma: And the buyer. [OK.]

[Patrice: OK.]

Patrice: Where you're saying, OK, it's gonna move. Now, you're telling the reader, basically you're telling the reader, I'm moving forward now. From here to [here.]

[Xavier: Right.]

Alma: OK. I just talked about one topic and [I'm going to move forward to another topic.]

[Patrice: I'm going to move to another topic.]

[Xavier: Yeah, yeah.]

Patrice: But they have something to do with each other.

Alma: OK.

Alma asks that Xavier provide her with what the sentence should look like.

Rather than give her the words, as he would craft the sentence, Xavier moves back to his Socratic questioning approach and asks her to describe the link between the two ideas.

This is Xavier's primary tutoring style; however, Grimm (2011) rethinks the wisdom of this writing center practice when she points out her observations:

This regular reminder (often internalized) to "make the student do all the work" does harm because it discourages tutors from offering useful information, even ideas, to a writer who is working to bridge the literacy he or she brings from home with the literacy expected in the academy. (p. 84)

Xavier attempts to assist Alma in creating her own sentence or to at least to see that there is a connection and to create a sentence later on, when she's had a chance to think about how the ideas are related. In this case, Xavier holds on to his non-directive strategy; this, as Grimm notes, prevents Xavier from helping Alma. His strategy only serves to confuse her, and Alma does not understand where he is trying to lead her with his questions.

Patrice sees Alma is struggling with creating a transition and that perhaps she does not understand the purpose of transitional sentences. Patrice enters the discussion and tries to help by first suggesting they brainstorm and taking her cues from Xavier's style, she begins by asking specific questions about how the ideas are related. Patrice's suggestion to start brainstorming at this point is unconventional and becomes a tactic because the strategy of brainstorming is usually something that is done as the writer

begins an assignment; brainstorming usually employs strategies like free writing or talking about ideas aloud. In this part of the tutorial, Patrice uses the principles inherent to brainstorming as a way to ask questions and draw on what Alma has already said previously. When Alma is unsuccessful in coming up with her own sentence, Patrice provides an explanation of what a transition is and how it functions. In her explanatory style, Patrice provides the function of a transition, while referring to what Xavier said previously. Patrice brings in key terms from the paper that Alma is trying to connect together, while providing an explanation of transitions. At that point, Xavier re-enters with affirmations that Patrice is correct. Once Xavier re-enters the discussion, Alma shows that she now understands how a transition functions and will probably be able to craft her own sentence once the session has ended.

By taking cues from each other's tutoring styles and recognizing what each brought to the tutoring session by verbally acknowledging each other's input, Patrice and Xavier were able to utilize cooperative tutoring in a way that complemented and enhanced each other's tutoring style without overwhelming the student with too much information. When tutoring one-to-one, Patrice's primary tutoring style is to be explanatory. Through cooperative tutoring, Patrice was exposed to Xavier's non-directive tutoring style and by synthesizing parts of his tutoring with hers, turned a standard tutoring strategy for getting ideas, brainstorming, into a tactic. Patrice and Xavier created the tactic together, in the moment of the session. The tactic helped Alma to understand an essential skill, forming effective transitions, for writing in academic

discourse in a way that would not appear in any composition textbook, thus giving Alma agency and access.

*Agreeing to Disagree as a Tactic*

In this next example of an Equal Partners session, Xavier is again one of the tutors in the segment. Ann (White, female, criminal justice major), who could be considered a new tutor with three months experience, joins Xavier. Ann has taken the tutor training course during the summer of 2010. During the hands-on portion of Ann's training, she observed Xavier many times and participated in cooperative tutoring sessions. Through this relationship as well as other common interests, they have become friends and socialize outside of tutoring. Ann's tutoring style can also be very directive and explanatory, similar to Patrice's. Ann participated in 2 cooperative tutoring sessions: 1 Equal Partners session, and 1 Trainer/Trainee session. The student, Grace (African-American, female), is seeking help with her introductory philosophy paper on utilitarianism. She is having problems developing her paper and seems to lack self-confidence in her knowledge of the subject matter. Throughout the session, Grace tells the tutors repeatedly, "This paper intimidates me." Since this is Xavier's third cooperative tutoring session, he takes the lead, greets the student, introduces Ann, and asks for the assignment. After the formalities, Grace settles in and starts reading her paper aloud. As she reads the paper, Grace stops periodically to ask questions about her concerns with repetition and if her understanding of utilitarianism is correct. In this segment, Grace is wondering if she needs to develop her paragraph after she has heard it read aloud.

Grace: Should I go more into depth?

Xavier: I was going to suggest that. It seems to be a little too sharp of a drop between the quote and the last [sentence].

[Grace: Doesn't make sense].

Xavier: Well, it makes sense, but it is, like, makes sense in the way that going from A to D makes sense but only because I sort of filled in going to B and C, like, for myself. Do you see that?

Grace: Yeah.

Xavier: Does that make sense?

Grace: That makes sense.

Ann: Yeah, I would extend on this last sentence, actually.

Xavier: Yeah.

Ann: Because you can tie that in to what utilitarianism is. Kinda like, why would she kill the entire town but she's thinking about saving society? I would kinda extend on that.

Xavier: Um- hmm.

Ann: Because I studied utilitarianism a lot in criminal justice and I think you could definitely extend on that last sentence, too.

Grace: OK. ((*Long pause. Grace writing on her paper*)) I'm sorry.  
<*hesitatingly*> I don't know.> Just go more into detail? As far as, should I start speakin' about one in particular or because this is talking about being justified, should I go into just this work or kinda . . .



Ann: Kinda say why that's important, like, why is it so important to save  
[society?]

[Xavier: Right].

Ann: You know, even though, just one little town. [What's that?] Killing one  
town?

[Xavier: Right].

Xavier: And then, in doing that, you'll be discussing how that relates to  
utilitarianism.

Grace: ((*Grace writing notes on her paper*)) <*happily*> OK! >

Xavier and Ann seem to work in tandem in this segment. Each one speaks with such precision through turn taking to affirm and echo each other's statements that their discussion resembles lines spoken in a play. Through his non-directive tutoring method, Xavier provides a generic explanation in answer to Grace's question about the development of her paragraph. When he checks for understanding, Grace understands his generic explanation but cannot apply it to her paper. It is only until after Ann chimes in by providing a more direct, concrete statement about where Grace can specifically develop her paper is when Grace tells Xavier and Ann that she realizes she needs more direction. The back-and-forth utterances between Ann's directive style and Xavier's confirmation of Ann's explanation provide Grace with what she needs. This segment also demonstrates another adaptation of cooperative tutoring where the student is exposed to two different tutoring styles and can choose which one she can relate to best at any point in the given discussion.

When Ann refers to her knowledge of utilitarianism through her coursework as a criminal justice major, it is at first to provide her with credibility on the subject matter. Ann's academic familiarity with Grace's topic also serves to reassure Grace, that Grace knows the topic well and is capable of writing about it. By promoting herself as having experience with the topic, Ann is no longer a generalist peer tutor in Grace and Xavier's eyes. When Ann demonstrates that she has expertise, she utilizes a strategy Gillespie and Lerner (2000) recommend for content area peer tutors in a different way. Gillespie and Lerner recommend that ". . . depending on your major and your experience, you might have specific knowledge about the writing conventions of particular majors and disciplines. . . . As a tutor, . . . your job isn't to offer content expertise" . . . (25). On the one hand, Ann adheres to the strategy because she does not provide any content to Grace about utilitarianism directly. On the other hand, Ann is undermining the strategy by using the announcement of her expertise as a tactic to help promote self-confidence in Grace and to give Grace agency. Because Grace is unsure of herself, Ann reassures Grace that she is also a part of the discourse community. Ann reminds Grace of this when Ann identifies content examples from Grace's work. This proves to Grace that she does understand utilitarianism; she's just having a difficult time organizing her paper. Rather than use her expertise to build herself up, Ann uses it instead to build Grace up. As the session proceeds and Grace finishes reading her paper, she voices concerns about being repetitive.

- Grace: And then also it seems almost, like, it does seem like I'm being repetitive because I'm saying, it seems as though I'm just saying the same things over and over. She was treated unkindly.
- Xavier: Um- hmm.
- Grace: But is that, like, is that relevant? Does that seem like it's relevant for each paragraph almost for me to include that [because] she was.
- [Xavier: No, not in every paragraph].
- Grace: <*frustrated*> But that is what it seems as though I'm doin'. . . . >
- Xavier: Well, you're...Do you begin? Well no. Not the intro, but sort of after the intro. Are you then beginning on, like, sort of the build up of what leads to the dilemma? Or are your summarizing a little and then getting to the dilemma? How is the organization going?
- Grace: Initially, I speak about the theory. Then I talk about...Yes, then I think I summed up what happened /in the story/.
- Xavier: OK. So then after that, you're going to, sort of, where the dilemma is?
- Grace: Yes. Yes, I think I said that a couple of times.
- Xavier: Yeah.... Because I don't think, and maybe I missed it, but I don't think I heard specifically what the dilemma is yet. Right?
- Ann: <*incredulous*> You don't think so?> I thought she put it in there.
- Grace: That she . . . ((*shuffling of papers*)).

Ann: It's in there somewhere, whether she didn't know to [kill somebody or ].

Xavier: [That wasn't just the thesis?]

Ann: ((*to Grace*)) Do you know where I'm talking about?

Grace: ((*reads from paper*)) "She was adamant about forgiving as opposed to killing and harming people as her father did." Oh. Oh, I see. ((*continues to read from paper*))

As this segment shows, Ann and Xavier are no longer in sync as before. They have a minor disagreement about whether or not Grace discusses the dilemma in the case study in her paper. The disagreement, as a tactic, shows that in a cooperative tutoring session, the tutors do not have to consistently show consensus or solidarity. They, instead, react as readers, sometimes with different perceptions. Ann remembers hearing the dilemma, and in asking Grace to find it, reminds her in what part the passage appears. However, Xavier does not remember hearing if she added it while Grace read her paper aloud. Through a minor disagreement between the tutors, Grace can take the information regarding the section with the dilemma and decide if she wants to strengthen that aspect of her paper or leave it as is. When tutors disagree, the potential for opening up a discussion, in this case about audience, can occur. The tutors do not have to work to achieve consensus nor do they need to because the session is not about whether they agree or disagree; it is about the writer's agency over his or her work.

*Synthesizing Tutoring Styles as a Tactic*

In this final segment of an Equal Partner's session, Xavier is once again the tutor who is now paired with Lara (Hispanic, female, English major). Lara was in the same tutor training class in the summer of 2010 with Ann, and Lara also socializes with the other tutors outside of the workplace. Lara participated in 6 sessions, 5 of which fell under the Equal Partner category. Lara's 6th session fell under the New Alliances session. Lara's tutoring style is more like Xavier's non-directive tutoring style, and they have similar conversation styles as well. The student, Harriett (African-American, female, non-traditional), is working on a paper for her sociology class on the topic of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is Harriett who actually begins the session since she has used the writing center on many occasions. She is very clear on the direction of the session and sets the agenda by wanting to work first on her abstract and then on her conclusion. They move quickly through her abstract; however, her paper is in APA style, which presents a minor problem for Xavier and Lara since they are not very familiar with that style. They resolve the issue by consulting the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* during this portion of session. The segment below focuses on Harriett's conclusion and how she should use a rhetorical question in her paper.

Xavier: State that, not like in a rhetorical question, but, like, you know. . . do you intend on answering that question later in the paper? Or is that?

Harriett: I did. But it wasn't a lot, but I did address it.

- Xavier: Ok. So, if you addressed it, like, you know, so far you say this paper is gonna talk about this, X, Y, Z, right?
- Harriett: Uh, huh. But it's not like the main thing.
- Xavier: Right.
- Harriett: About the Katrina victims.
- Xavier: Right, but it is just something to explore, right?
- Harriett: Yeah.
- Xavier: So, if you say it is not a big deal then, maybe don't mention it. But if you wanted to mention it, then, maybe just sort of, have that as a statement and not a rhetorical question.
- Harriett: *<understanding>* Ohhhh.> OK.
- Xavier: So also it would explore [sort of]
- [Harriett: because what a question,] like, mainly does is, what is the paper going to be about, if it's a question?
- Xavier: It might seem that way, but also just like for anyone, for a question that you don't answer, right here, is, like, but [then why?]
- [Harriett: *<understanding>* Ohhhh>].
- Lara: Yeah, cause then you jump into something different as soon as you get down [the page].
- [Harriett: OK].
- Xavier: Especially after you've done all of this explaining what you are going to [talk about].

Harriett: [Um- hmm].

Xavier: And then you say, oh, well, what about this? And, you know, it is, like, wait, what happened?

Harriett: <laughs> Like, what was the question again? <laughs>

Lara: Yeah.

Harriett: So, just put a period there?

Xavier: Well, you say ((*reads from paper*)). If you just put a period there, it won't make sense. So maybe rephrase this so you aren't asking, you're restating. Hey look, you know, I'm gonna explore this, too, right?

Harriett: OK. I see.

Lara: Maybe you can say, let's see ((*reads from paper*)). Instead make this a statement instead of a question.

Xavier has augmented his tutoring style, as can be seen through the three example sessions presented. He demonstrates that he has incorporated the directive, more explanatory style from Patrice and Ann into his non-directive tutoring style when he is engaged in a cooperative tutoring session. He begins this segment by telling Harriett what to do but then backs off a bit and turns the rest of his statement into a question that will help Harriett understand the purpose for using a rhetorical question. Xavier's question will also help Harriett decide if she really wants to use the question as she has written it in her paper. With Harriett, Xavier's use of a generic example helps her to see the affect her use of a rhetorical question will have on an audience. Harriett follows along with Xavier's line of logic and responds accordingly as in a conversation

rather than simply agreeing with Xavier without really understanding in order to prevent being embarrassed. In this segment, Lara adds to the discussion by clarifying Xavier's statement and providing affirmation that Harriett understands what Xavier is trying to convey.

Xavier moves between the two tutoring styles as he gauges Harriett's understanding and responds with the style that best meets her needs. Xavier's evolving tutoring style might be considered a tactic because he synthesizes two separate tutoring strategies to create something new that works for him. For Xavier, his tactic not only provides access to academic discourse for the student but also provides opportunities for Xavier to become a better tutor.

In the individual interviews after the study with Patrice, Xavier, and Ann, all of these tutors remarked on feeling an initial hesitation or awkwardness when getting started in the session. There was some question as to which tutor should start the session and that aspect of the tutoring cycle could have been worked out before the session began. Xavier remarked that it was much easier to figure out who would start the session when the student knew one of the tutors previously. Ann expressed apprehension regarding the possibility of the tutoring styles not being the same. Patrice was nervous about overstepping her boundaries with the other tutor. Both Patrice and Ann found that once they got into the session, they were able to blend their tutoring styles with the other tutor very well. Patrice remarked that they would "piggy-back" ideas for tutoring off of each other, which helped her to learn different tutoring techniques. Xavier also remarked about "piggy-backing" in the same way as Patrice.



He noticed that it took effort, though, to achieve a balance between the two different tutoring styles. Xavier also noticed that cooperative tutoring really works best when the two tutors have a good rapport with each other. Cooperative tutoring, for him, added to his confidence as a tutor.

Since 10 out of the 18 sessions were classified as Equal Partners in the study, it appears that the pre-study training meeting along with the tutor's previous experience with cooperative tutoring during their initial training lent itself to the tutors being able to adapt to cooperative tutoring more easily. The tutors knew what to expect when another tutor joined them in a tutoring session. The only difference from the training sessions was that everyone had some experience tutoring one-to-one on his or her own. The tutors learned how to be better tutors from each other. Overall, I can conclude that cooperative tutoring in and of itself can become a tactic since it challenges the one-to-one tutoring model and expands the scope of writing center practices.

## CHAPTER IV

### FORMING ALLIANCES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SURVIVANCE THROUGH COOPERATIVE TUTORING

#### **Introduction**

Malea Powell (2004) introduces the concept of alliance building and survivance through her rhetorical analysis of the writings and the life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Native American doctor, Susan Picotte La Flesche (Omaha). Powell focuses on La Flesche's work because of La Flesche's unique positioning in both the Native American community and the European-American community, as evidenced through her early activist writings on behalf of Native Americans and later through her work as the first female Native American doctor and temperance advocate, employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Powell frames alliance building based in part on LaFlesche's ability to bring both these cultures together in a way that not only ensured the survival of the Omaha community but also contributed to the knowledge base of Western medicine.

Alliance building also occurs earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became critical at a time when both Native Americans and Europeans had to count on each other for survival. Both groups, Powell (2004) informs, had to modify their cultural traditions to not only live together but also to survive separately. Alliances are, Powell points out, “. . . reciprocal relations . . . and became a way through which Europeans and Natives could imagine a *nomos* [*sic*] – a ‘normative universe of shared meanings’ . . .” (p. 42). *Nomos* is a starting point for creating alliances and could be easily imagined as what,

theoretically, writing centers are supposed to create between students and tutors and by extension, students and greater university community at large. In most writing center settings, the writing center occupies a position within the university as that of promoting and upholding the standards for academic discourse while at the same time serving as an advocate for the student who is working to become part of that community. Instead of straddling both of these different communities and utilizing one to better the other, as LaFlesche did in her life, writing centers can work to create opportunities that forge alliances between the overall curriculum and students' shared experiences, both of tutor and student and through the academic essay, to the professor.

The opportunity for *nomos* and alliance building, as Powell (2004) describes it, is, theoretically, what many writing center directors want to occur during a writing center session through the interactions between students and tutors. However, interactions between tutors and students may not be conducive to creating an opportunity for alliance building, given the current model of one-to-one tutoring. Writing center scholars, like Grimm (2011), are beginning to examine current writing center practices and theories in relation to race and diversity. Grimm argues, "Because our primary articulated theories support individualized instruction, our focus on the individual hinders our ability to address racism that operates structurally" (p. 79). Grimm critiques current writing center practices and claims that most of the foundational theories are focused on the individual and seem to privilege those who are already acculturated to the university. Through a reexamination of basic tutoring maxims, in particular, the maxim that claims, "a good tutor makes the student do all the work" (p. 81), Grimm illustrates

how writing center maxims could be misguided, given the changing demographics of the university student population. From the administrative perspective, notes Grimm, this maxim assures faculty and administrators that students will do the work themselves and that there are clear guidelines for interacting with students. Tutors are trained to follow specific practices that ensure they act as collaborators and not as corroborators during a writing center session.

From the tutor perspective Grimm (2011) emphasizes that the maxim of “making the student do all the work” (p.81) is further underscored by tutoring policies set by writing center directors, some of which prevent tutors from writing on the student’s paper and offering proofreading during a writing center session. Grimm further contends that this maxim for the tutor functions “. . . to regularly remind peer tutors of their position in the academy, a not-quite-to-be-trusted position . . .” (p. 83).

Subsequently, rather than becoming an ally or to work towards building a reciprocal relationship with the student, the tutor is oftentimes put into the position of gatekeeper by writing center policies put in place that are meant to assist tutors to be good tutors. Instead, policies can work against both the tutor and the student. For students who are not privileged, the maxim of “making the student do all the work” (p.81) can, as Grimm attests, “. . . be perceived as insulting, frustrating, and patronizing” (p.84). For such students, a more direct tutoring tactic where the unspoken rules for academic writing are made more transparent or an alternative tutoring method may be more beneficial. The current policies that support the maxim, “make the students do all the work,” (pg.81)

serve to further reinforce of the type of assistance successful students respond well to and will continue to receive, according to Grimm.

### *Defining the “New Alliance” Session*

In my study of cooperative tutoring, I found two sessions, which I categorized as “New Alliance.” Both sessions involved a student who was in the early phases of the writing process and wanted clarification of ideas for a paper yet to be written. In a New Alliance cooperative tutoring session, both tutors are more actively engaged with the overall topic of the student’s paper, helping the student develop and tease out ideas for the paper and then help bring those ideas within the boundaries of what is acceptable for academic discourse. In these two sessions, the tutors participated in the general discussion of the students’ ideas rather than primarily assisting students with what they had already written and/or addressed very specific issues, as was the case with the other sessions in the study. In New Alliance sessions, tutors and students engage in discussion in a way that is very different from Grimm’s (2011) identified writing center maxim of “making the students do all the work” (p.81). Rather than asking questions of the student in a one-way question and answer session, both of the tutors along with the student are mutually engaged in sharing experiences and ideas on a personal level, working towards understanding how to craft ideas through the medium of academic discourse, which for many students can be difficult to manage. It is Gerald Graff (2007) who supports a more open and democratic approach to the college curriculum and underscores how important it is to unveil the conventions of academic discourse to all students. Graff contends that there is a “. . . serious lack of transparency in the

academic intellectual world, a world in which the criteria of success seem mysterious, undefined, and perhaps unexplainable” (p.128). In creating an alliance with writing center tutors, the tutors and students use their shared knowledge and experiences to work through the seemingly impenetrable characteristics of academic discourse in order to make it more transparent and accessible. To become allies, Powell (2004) explains we, “. . . must share some understanding of one another’s beliefs. We don’t have to *believe* [*sic*] one another’s beliefs, but we do have to acknowledge their importance, understand them as real, and respect/honor them in our dealings with one another” (42). In a New Alliances session, the tutors work differently together. Both of the tutors and the student become personally involved by sharing their experiences that are oftentimes outside the realm of academia thereby validating each other as individuals who just so happen to be students attending the same institution.

#### *Forming Alliances through Sharing Knowledge*

In this particular New Alliances session, the student is initially seeking help to create an outline and does not know how to start paper. In this session, it is the student who brings his specific course materials, class discussions, and personal experiences into the session; it is the tutors who bring primarily their personal experiences to the conversation in the session. Using *nomos*, the session worked to enhance, verify, solidify, and/or validate all the participants’ knowledge. They shared relations and shared responsibilities. The session participants consisted of one tutor, Ginger, who is female, late 20’s, and self-identifies as Korean and White; the other tutor, Lara, is female, early 20’s, and self-identifies as being specifically from Spain; the student, Luis,

is male, early 20's, and self-identifies as Latin. The paper is for a sociology course, and the topic is to compare and contrast European immigrants with current immigrants who came to the United States. Students were required to base their paper on the readings from the course text and the course discussions. Luis first lets the tutors know that he has never written this type of paper before and then clarifies by specifically mentioning that the paper has to be in ASA style. The tutors ask Luis if he knows what ASA style is or if the professor provided any information. Luis reveals that he is familiar with MLA style only. Luis' confusion that there is more than one documentation style for academic writing and the assumption on the professor's part that Luis knows this information only serves to further Graff's (2007) claims regarding the disparate college curriculum and by association that academic discourse is fundamentally different in other disciplines (p.129). Luis' inability to transfer his knowledge of MLA to that of another documentation style has Luis doubting his abilities to write the paper. Luis' self-doubt can also be echoed by Graff's observations of his college students: "I've found that students in my composition courses see them not as a guide to their other courses but as one more hurdle among others to get over" (p. 130). For Graff, students who are successful in college are the ones who can make these course connections for themselves; for others, college courses become a series of unrelated requirements one has to get through on the way to graduation and with graduation, the belief in a better future.

The tutors, Ginger and Lara, draw on their knowledge of academic discourse and through their experiences as tutors; they know there is more than one documentation

style. They share research tactics with Luis that will also help him to figure out what is required from ASA style and how his knowledge of MLA can be of use. Rather than adhere to the writing center maxim of “making the student do all the work,” (Grimm, 2011, p.81) in this New Alliances session, Ginger and Lara are willing to take the lead in the pursuit of figuring out what constitutes ASA style. As Grimm (2011) notes:

. . . the bigger the gap between the real background and the imagined background of a particular student, the ‘more’ work a *tutor* [*sic*] needs to do both to understand the perspective the student brings to the writing task and to clearly articulate the tacit values, beliefs, assumptions, methods, genres, and citation practices of the task at hand. (p. 85)

In this session, it is not only Luis who needs to find out what ASA style entails but also Lara and Ginger are curious and want to learn about it as well for future tutoring sessions or their own academic coursework. Lara retrieves one of the handbooks and begins to search for the information. Ginger uses her personal laptop, and with Luis, they all work together to search online for an explanation of ASA style. Ginger and Lara start off the session by doing some of the work. They know what resources the Writing & Reading Center has on hand and where to locate them. Lara and Ginger begin to form an alliance through their respect for Luis and his belief that finding out about ASA style has to be addressed first rather than beginning to create a plan for the paper.

### *Forming Alliances through Sharing Identities*

Once the question of formatting is answered, Ginger, Lara, and Luis settle into the main focus of the session; Luis wants to create an outline for his paper. Ginger



directs the discussion, acting like a moderator for most of the session. She takes notes during the session and primarily asks the questions that start the various threads of the conversation that lead to the outline of the paper. Lara's role adds to the ensuing discussion when she either agrees with whoever is speaking or when she interjects her personal experiences into the discussion. Lara keeps the discussion moving but does not guide it in any direction. This segment is from the middle of their discussion about one section of Luis' paper:

Ginger: So let's talk about where, OK, where they are from, both of them. Old are from Europe.

*((sounds of Ginger writing))*

Luis: OK, so new are basically from Southeast Asia and Central South America. *((sounds of Ginger writing))*

Ginger: OK.

Luis: Old immigrants, they assimilated more into the new culture, I mean, yeah, they assimilated faster, adopted more American culture once they came in, but not losing.

Ginger: Assimilated faster without losing their identity?

Luis: Um-hmm.

Lara: Yes, OK.

Ginger: *(( speaking to Lara))* We were just talking about this, weren't we?

Lara: Yeah, we were.

Ginger: Because neither one of us are first, English is not our first [language],

[Lara: Yeah].

[Luis: Oh, wow].

but both of us were talking about this earlier how we worked really hard to lose that, you know, [the accent],

[Lara: Yeah, the /need/]

and to become, you know, [Americanized.]

[Lara: Americanized.]

Luis: What is your first language?

Ginger: ((*looking at Lara*)) Spanish, right? ((*pointing to herself*))

Korean.

Lara: Spanish and Korean. <*whispers*> Awesome.

Luis: Well in the new immigration mostly don't want to adopt a lot of their new American culture. They still want to hold on [once]

[Lara: I've experienced that myself.]

Ginger: ((*writing*)) Wants to keep their culture.

Luis: Wants to [keep their culture], not really assimilate

[Lara: I remember that about keeping culture.]

Ginger: Um, so are they resisting the American?

Luis: They are resisting a lot of the Western, I mean, there are, you could go to Chinatown, there are [Asian letters]

[Ginger: Yeah. ((*agreeing*))]

[Lara: Yeah.]

instead of regular [names.]

[Ginger: Yeah. ((*agreeing*))]

[Lara: On the buildings, it is amazing.]

Ginger: < *loudly, excited* > On the street signs! >

Lara: [Yeah! ]

[Ginger: Yeah.] Right below it.

At this point, the three begin to establish a rapport, which is necessary for most tutoring sessions and is usually done when the student and the tutor first meet, through initial greetings and an exchange of pleasantries. However in this case, it seems Ginger, Lara, and Luis are establishing a conversation, initially based in part by the course content and Luis' ideas for his paper; however, the conversation is also punctuated with personal information and experiences. Luis begins the discussion with his classroom knowledge about old and new immigrants, and Ginger and Lara quickly interject their personal experiences with being second-language speakers. This connects the tutors and the student together through a common variable; they are all second-language speakers and first generation students. When the discussion turns to the topic of immigrants holding onto their culture, all three, beginning with Luis, add their local Houston-area experiences with the topic. At this point in the session, they further establish *nomos*, a

commonality with each other and to the topic through their experiences, both from the classroom and from their personal experiences. Their overlapping conversation shows an increasing personal connection to the session and with each other, as the tutors are genuinely interested in the topic and about sharing their experiences.

As the session goes on, another sign that this could be an opportunity to build an alliance occurs when the discussion turns to a movie that the student wants to use as evidence to support one of his claims in his paper. While on the topic of the difficulty that some immigrants have in assimilating into American culture, Luis wants to use a particular film as evidence in his paper. The conversation moves from the topic of the paper and information gained from the course to the personal experiences of the tutors and the student.

Luis:           And, *Namesake*. I don't know if you ever seen, *Namesake*? That's with, remember that movie, *Harold and Kumar*?

Ginger:        Um-hmm.

Luis:           The Indian guy?

Ginger:        Kumar!

Luis:           Yeah, Kumar, there you go. Well, he's in the movie. It's about how his parents come from India and he was born and raised. This is actually a serious film <laughs> surprisingly, by him.

Ginger:        Really?

Lara:           I'm gonna rent that.

Luis:           Yeah, and he comes here and it's

Ginger: <loudly, excited> Great!> Hold on! Let me make myself a note.

< laughs>

Luis: He is really serious and it's pretty good.

Ginger: ((writing)) and watch it.

Lara: What's it called?

Luis: *Namesake*.

Lara: ((writing)) mmmm.

Luis: And it is pretty interesting. And it is pretty good. And he.

Lara: I'm gonna /get it/ next weekend.

In this part of the conversation, both of the tutors react positively and naturally. They are genuinely interested, as friends would be, when a suggestion is made about a film one had seen. This is indicated by the excitement of Ginger when she interrupts Luis so that she can write down the title of the film. Lara also shows her enthusiasm when she tells both that she, too, is interested and wants to rent the film. They are building alliances through shared stories and experiences. But they are also building identities apart from that of student and tutors. Denny (2005) discusses how writing centers can serve to help students see how language constructs identity and to come to terms with the many identities students bring with them to the university. Denny brings this to light when he writes, “Tutorials become spaces where students and tutors alike shore up, build anew, and deconstruct identities and the ways of knowing that are sutured to them” (p. 269). Luis, at this point, is no longer providing information for his paper as the expert on the topic; he now becomes a person who wants to share his

interests. Luis engages Lara and Ginger in a conversation much as friends would do, often talking about movies they had seen and making recommendations to each other. Ginger and Lara reciprocate by also shifting identities as they move from tutors who are trying to see the scholarly relevance in the film Luis is discussing to becoming more like friends.

In this next segment, all three engage in a frank and open discussion about ethnicity and immigrants. Some information in the discussion is based on the course material supplied by Luis and some of the discussion is based on everyone's experiences. They all lend their insights to what could be defined as a sensitive topic. At this point, all participants in the session seem to be very comfortable with each other. Ginger and Lara help the student tease out his understanding of the topic.

Ginger: Ok. Different ethnicities hate each other?

Luis: Basically. Don't really . . .

Ginger: Dislike each other?

Luis: Not really hate, but . . .

Lara: I think different ethnicities want to keep.

Ginger: Want to be superior?

Lara: Want to be?

Luis: Not superior but

Lara: No, want to keep their ethnicity?

Luis: Pure.

Lara: Without being? (*understanding*) Ohhh.

Ginger: Wanting to stay pure.

Luis: Because that's true, because I mean

Ginger: [That is true.]

[Lara: That's a good /point there/. I like that. ]

Luis: Because I know like, for example, with an old minorities, like when you see blacks and Latinos. Latinos and blacks sometimes they don't

[Lara: Want to cross]

they don't [want to cross.] Their parents won't let them.

[Ginger: Um-hmm.]

[Lara: Um-hmm.]

Especially more [on one end.]

[Ginger: Um-hmm.]

The same thing with [Asian culture, or especially Middle Eastern culture]

[Lara: and Ginger: ((*together, enthusiastically*)) Um-hmm!]

They usually stick / that's it/.

[Ginger: Definitely, definitely.]

[Lara: Yeah.]

Ginger: OK.

Luis: Even though they still, I mean, even though they are in the same American society, they aren't inferior, but even with that I think, OK

Ginger: OK. Very cool. Alright.

Luis: But, yeah, that's basically how immigrants get accepted. Eventually they might but [they won't 100 percent]

[Lara: ((*whispers*)) Yeah.]

be accepted. You know what I mean?

Ginger: Um-hmm.

Luis: Act, or dress, talk, to write, to speak, but you will never be 100, fully 100 percent accepted.

Ginger: It is a pretty

Luis: Because if you don't look it

Ginger: Dismal

Luis: I mean

Ginger: Conclusion to your paper. It is pretty depressing.

Luis: Yeah, basically, because in this class we actually, and this rings true, because if you talk to a lot of the ummm ((*hesitant, uncomfortable, laughter*)) how do I, um, yeah, they don't accept you that much. No matter.

Ginger: Now, do you think it's, the old, the older?

Luis: If it comes, it comes.

Ginger: The older generation?

Luis: It is always gonna be.

Lara: Um-hmm.



In this segment, Luis is comfortable sharing his viewpoints about being a minority in America and discussing the topic of ethnicity. Ginger, Lara, and Luis all have a shared understanding about immigration. While each may not ‘believe,’ as Powell (2004) notes, they all show that they understand and respect each other’s point of view. This groundwork for an open and trusting conversation is laid earlier through their previous, causal conversation. Luis talks freely and openly about his experiences with interracial relationships between Blacks and Hispanics as well as how he perceives overall acceptance of minorities by the dominant race. This is indicated by his hesitant speech and uncomfortable laughter when identifying the dominant race in America, probably Caucasian, indicated by the pronoun, “they.” Both Ginger and Lara show Luis that they understand his point of view and tacitly agree with him through their overlapping acknowledgement in key areas of Luis’ speech about interracial interactions. Lara consistently validates his ideas by her agreement throughout the conversation. While Lara’s role seems minimal, it becomes more crucial in that she provides the validation of ideas for both Luis and Ginger. Lara is like the supportive, best friend. While she may not actually agree with Luis and Ginger, she is willing to consider their points of view. This is important in building alliances, as Powell (2004) previously noted, and sees our stories of who we are, our identities, as relying on each other’s stories as being interconnected. Powell (2004) adds:

. . . we must be willing to adapt to different beliefs, different practices. That means that we must be willing to go beyond the page upon which our scholarly

essays are printed, we must be willing to forego the pretense that each story exists all by itself. . . . (p. 57)

All participants in this session tell stories about themselves. Some stories, like Luis' is integrated with what he is learning in his course. In this writing center session, Luis is able to say aloud his ideas and see how they resonate against the polyphonous identities he carries with him -- as a college student, a Latino, a first-generation son, a second-language speaker.

Through stories, Denny (2005) emphasizes, we “. . . seek to render visible those practices that enforce marginalization of minority identities . . .” (p. 267). The discussion becomes a safe place which helps Luis make sense of what he has been taught in a classroom setting, which generalizes information about immigration, how that information can play into his own identities, and what ‘rings true’ for him. When Ginger steers the conversation momentarily to the writing of the conclusion, she voices her opinion that his ending for the paper could be perceived as depressing, but not by the professor; her opinion reflects her world view. However, Luis feels comfortable enough to defend his position, but not in a hostile way. Rather, he opens himself up as he builds trust and continues to build the alliance with the tutors by expressing his personal observations about how he has experienced immigrants are treated in America. He provides justification for his viewpoint by referring to what he’s learned in the course as well as his personal observations and experiences. This allows for the ideas to circulate and play off of more than one person, in an atmosphere of trust and genuine interest in talking about what otherwise might be perceived as a sensitive topic.

In this final segment, Luis reveals his delight in the cooperative tutoring session. During the one-hour conference, they were able to create a workable outline and a thesis for the paper. Luis expresses his appreciation and wants to return for another session:

Ginger: You like?

Lara: ((*giggles*))

Luis: ((*enthusiastically*)) Very much!

Ginger: [Awesome!] ((*laughs*))

[Lara: Yeah]

Luis: Are you always here? Both of 'ya all? Or um?

Lara: ((*laughing*)) Yeah.

Ginger: ((*laughing*)) On Saturdays, both of us work together. ((*Lara and Ginger laugh* ))

Luis: Saturdays where I be com'in in ((*all laugh* )) Cause I gotta work!

Ginger: Awesome. Yay!

Luis: Awesome. Yeah, cause 'ya all got some ideas out that I probably would never.

Lara: Really, you thought of them yourself.

Ginger: Really, you did.

Luis: Yeah, but 'ya all got them out, you know what I mean? ((*Ginger laughs* ))  
Cause, if I would've been at [home trying to]

[Lara: Exactly.]

Luis: If I would've been at home doing it by myself, I would have been, like, why did I chose this? ((*Ginger laughs*))

Ginger: It's good to talk things out.

Lara: Um-hmm.

Ginger: And we like to talk so.

Lara: Yeah, we like to talk.

Luis: I do too, so . . .

At the end of the session, Luis continues talking to Lara as Ginger completes the paperwork. Luis returns to his role of student and Ginger and Lara to their roles as tutors as they wrap up the session. Luis shows his appreciation by indicating that he wants to return to work again with Ginger and Lara. He feels connected and very comfortable with the tutors as demonstrated by his language as it shifts to a more peer-to-peer vernacular, using slang and non-standard English. They have built an alliance through the sharing of ideas and beliefs, and this alliance helped to make academic discourse a little less intimidating. Luis demonstrates that he understands the value of the alliance when he realizes how difficult writing the essay would be if he were to accomplish this on his own, by his own means.

In the New Alliance session, tutors and students come together to work through the challenges presented by academic discourse, and in some cases, without the foreknowledge of what it takes to be successful. The assumption that all college students are well-versed in academic discourse is a myth, according to Graff (2007) when he argues, “The one subject not offered in school is the one all the others

presuppose, how to do school itself; the one thing the academic curriculum fails to cover is what it means to be academic” (p.129). It is entirely within the scope of writing center practices to become not only an integral part of helping all students learn what it takes to be successful in academia but also to challenge and expose those assumptions, if writing centers, according to Grimm (2011), forego the maxims that keep academic discourse out of reach for disadvantaged students. Within writing center practices, it is Grimm who suggests how writing centers can bring about change by applying Etienne Wenger’s ideas from his book, *Communities of Practice*. Grimm (2011)suggests,

. . . writing centers can be understood as the social structures designed to facilitate deeper learning and fuller participation in the academic community rather than the places for students who ‘need help.’ Making the tacit explicit, promoting conversation and dialogue, sharing stories, coaching revision and editing, even losing track of whose ideas is whose—all of this can be understood as the essential practices of writing center work. (p. 90)

The New Alliance session, through cooperative tutoring, can become one practical application of what Grimm is suggesting should happen in writing centers if they are going to address the issues of race and social justice. In this session, students and tutors opened up possibilities for a deeper discussion of ideas. But also in this session, something larger occurred. In creating alliances, in making academic discourse just a little more transparent, the participants also engaged in survivance practices. As Powell (2004) writes:

Maybe we can learn to take hold of one another and emerge at the beginning of a new story about ourselves, not a 'prime' narrative held together by the sameness of our beliefs, but a gathering of narratives designed to help us adapt and change as is necessary for our survival. (p. 57-58)

The tutors and the student also brought in their personal connections to mainstream ideas conveyed through a college course; the cooperative tutoring session offered different perspectives that refracted hegemonic ideas instead of reflected them, and through forming an alliance, participants discovered in what ways those ideas resonated for them.

## CHAPTER V

### MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO: WHEN COOPERATIVE TUTORING FAILS

#### **Introduction**

In my study of cooperative tutoring, one category to emerge is the Trainer/Trainee session, and as the name of the category implies occurred when the tutors in the pairing were unable to make the shift from the roles they once held as trainer and trainee to the cooperative tutoring method. The Trainer/Trainee session imitates one of the initial sessions I use for training new tutors. During one of the first hands-on training sessions for the new tutor, he or she is invited to sit in on a live session and observe what occurs. The tutor in training is usually silent, watching how the experienced tutor works with the student during a writing center session. As the new tutor becomes more comfortable with his or her abilities to tutor, he or she is invited to become a more active participant in the session. The observation method for training new tutors is based on Gillespie and Lerner's (2000) peer tutor book, *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. The training method can also be grounded in Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) study of masters and apprentices. In their study of five different types of apprenticeships, Lave and Wenger analyze the social dynamics of the master and apprentice relationship, with regards to the communities of practice in which they function. They create the term, legitimate peripheral participation, to encompass a

new way of studying the modern form of apprenticeships. Lave and Wenger define legitimate peripheral participation as follows:

Learning viewed as situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process we call *legitimate peripheral participation* [sic]. By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community.

(p. 29)

For Lave and Wenger, the learning that takes place in a master/apprentice relationship is determined by the production of knowledge through a given activity. They characterize modern-day apprenticeships as a divergence from the European craft-making model, through which there was a production of material goods. In the modern-day apprenticeships they studied, Lave and Wenger found there was some degree of formal organization to the formation of the apprenticeships, which entailed recruiting new members, establishing social norms for the relationship between the apprentice and the master, and determining how learning is transmitted, specifically the specialized knowledge that is transmitted, within a specific discourse community.

In the case of how tutoring training is done at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) specifically, the specialized knowledge of tutoring is controlled by and is transmitted through the director, who teaches the theory portion of the training course, and a more experienced tutor is assigned to facilitate the observation phase of the training. Lave and Wenger (1991) note, “In short, the form in which such legitimate



access is secured for apprentices depends on the characteristics of the division of labor in the social milieu in which the community of practice located” (92). During tutor training, when the experienced tutor shares the “labor” of the tutoring session, she allows the apprentice-tutor an opportunity to participate in hands-on, guided practice. In an ideal cooperative tutoring session, the social hierarchy of master and apprentice must to be erased in order for cooperative tutoring to work; both tutors are considered master tutors. When the hierarchy of master and apprentice remains in a cooperative tutoring session, then the trainer/trainee model is perpetuated, which in turn promotes the kind of tutoring that is not collaborative either. Instead, the tutorial session can become oppressive to both the other tutor in the session as well as the student as the master-tutor dominates the session as the “little teacher” and applies the “banking” model for teaching, as defined by Paulo Freire (1974). While the trainer/trainee category shows what happens when tutoring is not cooperative, it also demonstrates how a more experienced tutor might impede the growth and development of a tutor with less experience.

The characteristics of a trainer/trainee session consists of a dominant tutor, the trainer-tutor, who not only leads the session but also determines the direction of the session for both the other tutor, as the trainee-tutor, and the student. Since these sessions are more instructional rather than collaborative, the student engages in conversation only when prompted by the trainer-tutor. Additionally when the student does respond, it is primarily directed to the trainer-tutor, giving the impression that the student is ignoring the trainee-tutor. For the trainee-tutor, she is also quiet during this session. When the

trainee-tutor is given an opportunity to speak during the session by the trainer-tutor, it is in answer to a question posed by the trainer-tutor. The two tutors will then at times engage in conversation between themselves, excluding the student for the most part. In some sessions, the trainer-tutor answers the student's questions with specific, detailed explanations and advice; other times the responses are very specific as to what works for the trainer-tutor as a writer, or she refers to the content she learned in a similar course which happens to be the subject of the tutorial. In most of the sessions, the trainee-tutor addresses the lower-order concerns, such as grammar and mechanics. Occasionally, when prompted, she will offer an explanation or advice. However, the trainee-tutor is not completely ineffectual. In some of the sessions, she takes on an assistant role to the trainer-tutor by performing most, if not all, of the ancillary tasks of a writing center session. In some of the sessions, the trainee-tutor completed writing center forms, took notes for the student, and/or obtained reference materials for the session. During one session in particular, the trainee-tutor was asked to get water for everyone in the session.

Out of the 18 sessions in the study overall, 6 sessions were of the trainer/trainee type. In each of the trainer/trainee sessions, the dominant tutor had more experience than the other tutor in the pairing. In addition, in 3 out of the 6 trainer/trainee sessions, the dominant tutor was the most experienced tutor of all tutors on staff. In my analysis of this category, I turn to Lave and Wenger (1991) as a theoretical model for what should transpire in an apprentice-master relationship.

*Denying Legitimacy as Master-Tutors*

In this first example of a trainer/trainee pairing, Lee (Korean, female) and Corrine (African-American, female), both have similar, strong conversation styles; they excel at academic writing, plan to go to graduate school and present papers at regional conferences. Lee is the most experienced tutor on the tutoring staff, with more than four years of experience and has had many tutor-trainees observe her sessions. Lee is very familiar with our observation training and has, to some degree, helped to shape the method. Corrine, on the other hand, has nine months experience as a tutor. Lee was the writing associate (writing fellow) in Corrine's sophomore American literature class, and it was Lee who encouraged Corrine to become a tutor. Consequently, Corrine is more versed in writing center theory than Lee since Corrine recently completed the newly required tutor-training course. Corrine has also presented at a regional writing center conference. During the time of this study, both Lee and Corrine were also writing associates and here also Lee has more experience than Corrine.

This session begins with the student, Shauna (African-American, female), explaining the essay assignment for her sophomore American literature course, and showing the tutors what she has written so far. Shauna wants general feedback and lets the tutors know that the essay is due the same day. The following segment begins after Lee reads the paper aloud, and they begin discussing the work.

Shauna:       Because as far as the story, he said not to do plot summary, whatever,  
                  because I've read these stories hundreds of times, so he's, like, I know

what it's about and it's for him, so I didn't know if, like, I should explain Naturalism because he knows what it is and I'm writing for him so..

Lee: Exactly. But what is the intent of your writing it, though? What are you trying to demonstrate to him?

Shauna: That this is an *((shy laughter))* account of what *((voice fades, very softly))* Naturalism is?

Lee: Right! So you are demonstrating your [familiarity with]

[Shauna: Oh, OK.]

what naturalism is [so ]

[Shauna: that I know.]

Right! So you do want to explain it because if that is what he's looking for, then he wants to understand how you [understand it].

[Shauna: OK.]

Does that [make sense?]

[Shauna: um-hmm.]

So, yeah, definitely stay away from plot summary because he's read these stories a million gazillion times but he's trying to figure out, he's trying to make sure that you know what Naturalism is. Then you have to define it for him or your readers about that.

Shauna: OK.

Lee: *((to Corrine ))* Any input? *((snickers))*

Corrine: ((*surprised*)) Oh, um ... The only thing I would add to that is in your thesis statement, it is really not clear that you define what it is that you plan to demonstrate to your reader as elements of Naturalism within the story.

Shauna: OK.

Lee: Yeah, um, . . . it almost, reads almost like a summary of what's going on in the story and there's actually, you're still missing the claim, the argument you are making about Naturalism.

Shauna: OK.

As the “trainer,” Lee does most of the talking in this portion of the segment as she explains what she believes the teacher wants from the assignment. Lee talks directly to Shauna without attempting to engage her in a dialogue about the topic through collaborative techniques. Shauna only affirms what Lee is saying with “OK” and “um-hmm,” possibly putting Shauna in the role of apprentice or near apprentice and leaving Lee in complete control of the session. Lee then attempts to draw Corrine in by asking for her contribution on the topic of how much plot summary to include. When Lee snickers after inviting Corrine to join the session and participate, Lee sends an unstated message indicating that Lee does not have confidence in Corrine to participate effectively. When forming the social relationship between the master and apprentice, Lave and Wenger (1991) advise, “It should be clear that, in shaping the relation of masters to apprentices, the issue of conferring legitimacy is more important than the issue of providing teaching” (92). When Lee failed to recognize Corrine as her peer, Lee

did not legitimize Corrine's role in the session as a fellow master or even as an apprentice. Corrine was not allowed to enter into the conference as a "master," denying her any way of offering legitimate advice or advice that would be perceived as such by Shauna. When Corrine does finally add her input to the discussion, she is unsure, as indicated by her surprise at being asked to participate and her hesitation ("Oh, um"). However, Corrine then demonstrates her master skills by identifying the weak thesis statement and makes mention of it to Shauna. Shauna acknowledges Corrine's suggestion with the same acknowledgement, "OK," that was given to Lee. However, Shauna is not given a chance to respond nor is Corrine able to further her point because Lee immediately jumps in and takes control, elaborating on the need for a thesis statement without acknowledging that it was Corrine, who brought it up in the first place.

Lee is not inviting Corrine to become part of the discourse community of writing center tutors. This causes a problem with the relationship between master and apprentice. As noted by Lave and Wenger (1991), "Gaining legitimacy is also a problem when masters prevent learning by acting in effect as pedagogical authoritarians, viewing apprentices as novices who 'should be instructed' rather than as peripheral participants in a community engaged in its own reproduction" (p.76). In this interchange, Lee further asserts her role as the master or expert by acting as the authority figure in the session; she becomes the "little teacher" both to Corrine and Shauna. By silencing Corrine, it is Lee who is acting as the instructor, modeling for her what to say to a student about thesis statements. For Shauna, it is a lesson in creating a thesis

statement. Lee's inability to relinquish control of the information about thesis statements causes a missed opportunity to engage in a dialogue with Corrine and Shauna about the rhetorical purpose of a thesis statement within academic discourse. Lee prevents Shauna from gaining agency over her paper and her ideas. Lee also prevents Corrine from gaining agency as a fellow master tutor. In this way, Lee maintains her role as "trainer"; it serves to reinforce her role as expert.

A similar situation of failing to legitimize the other tutor as a master tutor occurs in this next example of a trainer/trainee session. In this session, the tutors, Ann (White, female) and Mayra (Hispanic, female) are fairly new tutors and have been tutoring for three months. They both took the required theory course and participated in hands-on training over the summer of 2010. They both were ready to tutor in the fall. Ann is a criminal justice major and Mayra is a pre-nursing student. Mayra was also my student in a freshman composition course, where I invited her to enroll in the training course after she passed her sophomore literature course. Both tutors were in the middle of their sophomore year, are in their early twenties, and have different conversation styles. Ann appears to be more outgoing while Mayra is reserved and shy. However despite these conversation style differences, they have formed a friendship and together, with other tutors who were in the same summer course, carry that friendship over to other activities outside of the work environment. As a tutor, Ann is more comfortable with sessions that focus on idea generation and organization. Mayra, on the other hand, speaks Spanish and possess much better editing skills than Ann. Mayra is much more comfortable with tutoring sessions that focus on lower order concerns.

This session begins when the student, Reeca (Hispanic, female) explains that she wants the tutors to go over her research paper for her composition class and to make sure she has a thesis and she also needs help with her conclusion. Ann is the first to speak, greets Reeca but fails to introduce Mayra. Ann then asks Reeca if she wants to read the paper aloud or if she wants Mayra to read the paper aloud. Ann does not offer to read the paper aloud, giving the impression from the start of the session that Ann is the master-tutor. Ann further asserts her position as master tutor by taking charge of the direction of the session and assigning tasks to Mayra. Once Mayra finishes reading the paper aloud, Mayra notices that the introduction is very long. She attempts to regain her master-tutor status by asking the first question to Reeca about the introduction and the placement of the thesis in the paper.

Mayra:           So this is your introduction? So you know the thesis is the last sentence of your introduction?

Reeca:           Oh. No.

Mayra:           <quietly> Really?> So where is it?

Ann:                                 Ok, [so]

Mayra:           ((*speaking to Reeca*)) [So] is this ALL your [introduction?]

[Reeca: No.]

Ann:                                 [No, it ends here] OK. OK, so just this first page is her introduction. OK. And this is the thesis? ((*reads thesis aloud*)) OK. Do you think it would be OK to just move it? We can read through and maybe it will still flow even if we just moved it to the



bottom because you don't want the instructor to be like searching for your thesis, you know, you want them to just look at your paper and know exactly what you are saying in it.

Reeca: Um-hmm.

Ann: So, let's see if we can maybe just move it.

Mayra: And then another thing. Are you, do you know if it is MLA or APA?

Reeca: Yeah. It's MLA.

Mayra: Yeah? So your margins are supposed to be

Reeca: Yeah. Close to some line, right?

Mayra: Oh, OK, so that's just how it printed out?

Reeca: Yeah. Um-hmm.

Mayra: Oh, OK. OK. So just let me finish reading her introduction.

In this session, Ann becomes the “pedagogical authoritarian” as she asserts her knowledge of where the placement of the thesis should go in her lengthy explanation. She further legitimizes her status as the master tutor thorough the disclosure of her insider knowledge of what professors want or expect but more importantly, how to please them. Mayra again tries to assert her role as master tutor when she attempts to engage Reeca in a discussion by first asking if she knows where her thesis is; however, when Reeca fails to identify if she has a thesis, which is the reason she came for help, Mayra is incredulous when she asks, “Really?” Mayra’s attitude could be her way of conferring legitimacy onto herself as a master tutor, but this backfires and instead brings Ann into discussion to show both Reeca and Mayra how an introduction is supposed to

be structured. After Ann decides it is best to move the thesis statement, Mayra re-enters the conversation by asking a question that has nothing to do with the thesis. Since Mayra is more comfortable with lower order concerns, she attempts to engage Reeca in a discussion of MLA formatting. When it turns out to be a printer issue that caused the formatting error, Mayra's focus on lower order concerns so early in the session puts her back in the role of apprentice-tutor. It could be considered a novice mistake to not recognize that higher order concerns should be addressed first, and Mayra is further delegitimized as a master tutor when she confesses she has to re-read the introduction in order to focus on the higher order concerns.

This session differs slightly from the session with Corrine and Lee in that Mayra and Ann appear to be wrestling for control over what gets addressed in the paper at the beginning of the session. Where Corrine stays in the background of the session and starts in the role of apprentice-tutor, Mayra is engaged from the beginning and attempts to steer the session in the direction where she is most comfortable. Both Mayra and Ann attempt to present themselves as master tutors at first, but Ann, like Lee, end up taking over through authoritative-like explanations to both the student and the other tutor in the session.

#### *Problematic Cases and Learning to "Talk the Talk" of a Master-Tutor*

In the next segment, Lee continues the discussion about how to create an effective thesis statement for this particular paper. She talks specifically to Corrine, referring to Corrine's experiences as a student, in the sophomore American literature class where Lee was the writing associate.

Lee: Um, let me ask you ((*to Corrine*)), do you remember that Dr. R's analysis essay, about Realism or Naturalism? Where he asked you guys to kinda do something similar? You were to pick [four characteristics of  
 naturalism]

[Corrine: Um-hmm, um-hmm]. Do you think that would apply here, too? That that would be one way to do it?

Corrine: I think so? ((*hesitant*)) Yeah, I think so. And I actually, when we did the analysis, I actually defined in my thesis statement the characteristics that the story addressed or the story used.

Lee: Ahh. So, you used the characteristics in [your thesis].

[Corrine: Yes.]

And then, used them as your topic sentences.

Corrine: Exactly.

Lee: OK. Yeah, that's one way of doing it. ((*to Shauna* )) So, what we're talking about is that there is a similar assignment where if you understand the characteristics [of Naturalism and there's several, like, there's no God],

[Corrine: I can't even remember at this point. Oh, gosh.]

Lee draws Corrine into the session but again not as a fellow master tutor. Lee monopolizes the conversation and excludes Shauna as Lee turns to Corrine to recall how a similar assignment was handled when Corrine was a student and Lee was her writing

associate. It seems as if Lee is attempting to build common ground between Shauna and Corrine; instead she further delegitimizes Corrine's role in the session by referring to something in the past that Corrine had written, as Lee's student. In the ideal master and apprentice relationship, Lave and Wenger (1991) found that

. . . apprenticeship learning is supported by conversations and stories about problematic and especially difficult cases. . . . For newcomers then the purpose is not to learn *from* [*sic*] talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* [*sic*] talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation. (p.108-109)

In this segment, Lee brings up a similar writing prompt and uses it as a story of what transpired in the course. Corrine's experience as Lee's student who once wrote an essay on a similar prompt becomes the problematic case, and the purpose in telling it is supposed to be for Shauna's benefit, to show Shauna how Corrine approached the essay and to bring Shauna into the realm of participation. However, the reminder that Corrine once struggled with the same assignment does not create solidarity between Lee and Corrine or with Shauna, as would be the expected outcome. Instead, the telling of the story keeps Corrine on the outside of the conversation, which is further underscored by Corrine's flustered response ("Oh gosh") when she is unable to recall the specifics of Naturalism. Towards the end of this segment, Lee does not offer an opening in the conversation for Corrine to elaborate or to relate to Shauna as some one who has written a similar paper; instead, Lee provides an explanation of the context for their discussion to Shauna in order to draw her back in. As "Trainer," Lee demonstrates her expertise

regarding the characteristics of Naturalism while Corrine's response of not being able to remember the characteristics keeps her in her "Trainee" role. For the rest of the session, Lee maintains her "Trainer" position; she dominates the session by talking through most of it, fails to recognize Corrine as a tutor of equal standing, and overlooks Shauna as a participant in the session.

Through the next segment with Ann and Mayra, learning to "talk the talk" of the master tutor, which is essential for legitimate peripheral participation, as emphasized by Lave and Wenger (1991), is highlighted when Ann and Mayra engage in a discussion of how to organize an introduction and to avoid repetition found in Reeca's paper.

Ann:           Because when I write my introductions, I just kinda introduce like the main points that I have, like, I noticed that you did have main points ((*talking to Reeca*)), like you did have a theme to this paragraph and this paragraph, and um, like how it's new in this generation, like that's one point. So, I'd just usually, just kinda, introduce that in a sentence and maybe include another point in there. But in here, you kinda talk about a lot and I think could be, maybe, in your paper. Like in your body. You know what I mean?

Reeca:       Yeah, I know.

Ann:           So maybe you could move some of it that isn't just the main point into your body, if it is just, you know like, factual information, or whatever it is, could be moved. So, that's what I noticed just first looking at it. What about you, Mayra? What do you?

Mayra: ((*startled*)) Oh. I think, like, you do get all your ideas out, but I noticed like, like, I think right here, in the beginning where you were talking about if you tell somebody not to do that, they're gonna wanna do it, right? Out of curiosity? And then you move on and then back over here you start mentioning it again. ((*reads from paper*)) "If people censor it, they're gonna want to hear it again."

[You repeat.]

Ann: [You don't wanna repeat.]

Ann: [Yeah, you don't want to repeat ideas.]

Mayra: [It's what you said already] So, maybe, like, just get it all out in that one paragraph where you are talking about that point.

Reeca: Um, hmm.

Ann: And sometimes when you write so many pages, because it is a long research paper, that you kinda loose track of, well, have I mentioned this before? . . . or I don't [really know], so I go through and actually like highlight.

[Reeca: Right]

Ann: Cause you know you're outlining your paper if it's, you know. In the beginning, you are talking about how it's now, like how it was introduced to adults, and they just don't understand. You know, highlight things that just only go with that. And if you see, maybe in another paragraph, that you've included something that should be in there, or that you might

repeat it, <forcefully> just take it out.> Or, you know, just cut and paste, whatever you have to do, because you don't want to repeat. ((*speaking to Mayra*)) And that was a really good point.

At the beginning of this segment, it is Ann who is telling the story of a similar situation, the struggle with writing introductions; however, this is not a problematic story in which she refers to her own experiences from a specific class or with a specific paper. Lave and Wegner (1991) recommend a way to bring the apprentice into the discourse community is through the telling of a problematic story and disclosing how the master resolved it. Instead, Ann creates a story about her own technique, so that the learning for the apprentice, which is now both Mayra and Reeca, becomes more teacherly. Ann completely dominates the session by describing her personal strategies for writing. When she turns to Mayra to get her input, Mayra is at first startled. Unlike Corrine, who became flustered when the master-tutor, Lee, called for her participation, Mayra recovers quickly and jumps into the discussion by referring to a specific section of Reeca's paper that showed signs of repetition; it is also something that Ann did not catch thereby briefly elevating Mayra's status to master-tutor. Through Mayra's input, she demonstrates that she can be a legitimate participant in the session by demonstrating she can "talk the talk" of a master-tutor, when given the opportunity. Mayra's master-tutor status is, unfortunately, short-lived. Even though Ann acknowledges Mayra's contribution about the issue of repetition in Reeca's paper, it occurs as a side comment only after Ann returns to dominating the session by focusing on finishing the teaching of her strategy for how to look for repetition and disorganization through the use of

highlighting markers. Similar to Lee, Ann also overlooks the student in this segment. However, Mayra is also complicit in ignoring Reeca when Mayra has her brief role as master-tutor. As both Mayra and Ann are eager to make their points, Reeca is scarcely given an opportunity to participate in the discussion other than through passive affirmation. This relegates Reeca, like Shauna and even Corrine, to the status of non-participant and as a result is also silenced.

### *Opportunities for Practice*

This segment from Ann and Mayra's session is focused on one of the lower order concerns that have come up in the paper. They are working on clarity of a sentence, and it is Mayra who appears to take the lead, given that lower order concerns is her comfort zone.

Mayra: Oh, right here. *((reads from student's paper))* "But how can I help the environment be created by prohibiting something that adolescents like in fact" . . . *((stops reading student's paper))* Oh. [That's the end.]

Ann: [Oh, yeah. Just put that in here  
/to/remember. ]

Mayra: "In fact." And then there is a comma, right? After the "fact"? *((reads from student's paper))* "Adolescents will be against the censoring of music." *((stops reading from student's paper))* Yeah. Like she starts with all these questions but then it doesn't sound [like a question.]

[Ann: Well, how, where does this start?]

Mayra: Right here.



Ann: But, the sentence starts [right here.]

[Mayra: Oh. Yeah.]

Ann: So that's even kinda like a bit of a run-on sentence? ((*looks at Reeca*)) Do you think that maybe you could split it up into two sentences or two separate thoughts? ((*reads from student's paper*)) "Because they want to create a healthy environment for the youth." ((*stops reading from student's paper-- talking to both Mayra and Reeca*)) Maybe you could end it there?

Mayra: Um, hmm. Um, hmm.

Ann: And say, but how can /I/ help the [environment.]

Mayra: [or just how, right?]

Ann: <*sharply*> Yeah. > Or you don't even have to put "but," ((*speaking to Reeca*)) <*softly, in confidence*> because we try not to do that.> ((*reads from student's paper*)) "How can I help the environment be created by prohibiting something that adolescents like in fact."

Mayra: So there could be a question right there, right? Because right here, "in fact," she's like stating a point?

Ann: Yeah, I think that would be good. ((*speaking to Reeca*)) Do you think so?

Reeca: Um, hmm.

Ann: OK. Cool.

Mayra: <*proudly*> So you have three sentences instead of one.>

Ann: Yeah. Looks good. And it flows better too.

At this point, it appears that Ann has provided an opportunity for Mayra to practice her area of expertise, which is working with lower order concerns. Mayra points out that a comma is necessary or that perhaps there is more than one sentence nested in the one Reeca wrote. In spite of this opportunity to reassert herself as a master-tutor, Mayra shows that she has lost some of her confidence. While Mayra picks up on the errors and suggests how to correct them, she constantly has to be validated by Ann that the suggestions are correct. Lave and Wegner (1991) comment on this aspect of the apprenticeship as they discuss the necessity for the apprentice to practice. They found that newcomers have to be given access to the community in order learn the work. In some apprenticeships, Lave and Wegner establish, “ A newcomer’s tasks are short and simple, the costs of the errors are small, the apprentice has little responsibility for the activity as a whole” (p. 110). In this case, Ann has deferred to Mayra at the beginning of the segment to provide her with an opportunity to show her skills, but when Mayra appears to have trouble deciding whether Reeca meant to write a question or a statement, Ann steps in and takes over the responsibility of the session. Her sharp tone to Mayra indicates that Ann is losing patience with her apprentice and her inability to do a seemingly simple task. Mayra retreats even further from her role of apprentice by asking Ann for more validation about the same issue.

Both tutors become so engrossed in figuring out what Reeca has written and how to correct it, they completely ignore her presence. They do not attempt to draw her into the conversation and speak of Reeca in the third person, she, as if Reeca was not there. When Ann decides that they have figured out what should be done with the sentence, she

finally brings Reeca into the discussion but only to ask if she approves of how they corrected her sentence. Mayra and Ann are pleased with their accomplishment in their roles of master and apprentice; however, Reeca has lost any agency she may have had as a writer.

### *Tutor Reflections and Perceptions*

Ann participated in 2 cooperative tutoring sessions. One session fell into this initial category of Trainer/Trainee. The other session fell into the Equal Partner category when she was paired with a tutor who had more experience. Ann was interviewed after the study and her feedback about her experiences resonate with what the other tutors said about cooperative tutoring. Ann felt cooperative tutoring provided a way to “bounce ideas off of one another” and to learn from the other tutor. Ann also provided insight into how she perceived the pairings could go awry by mentioning that it was important to avoid tutoring style clashes. She felt her sessions worked well because she got along with both tutors and socialized with them outside of work.

Mayra only participated in 1 cooperative tutoring session, which was categorized as Trainer/Trainee, and she was not available to be interviewed after the study. While Mayra is friends with Ann, it is my assumption that her quiet conversation style did clash with Ann’s outgoing and dominant conversation style. This led Mayra to assume the role of apprentice.

Lee participated in 3 cooperative tutoring sessions. All of her sessions fell into this initial category of Trainer/Trainee. Lee was not interviewed during this study, but her sessions revealed the same pattern of interaction with the student and the other

tutors. Since Lee has been a tutor for so long, I would surmise that her tutoring style and techniques are firmly entrenched, with little possibility of accommodating another tutor in her session.

Corrine participated in 3 team-tutoring sessions, only 1 of which fell into the initial category of Trainer/Trainee. The session with Lee was her first cooperative tutoring session. In an interview with Corrine after the cooperative tutoring sessions were completed, she revealed that during her session with Lee, she felt intimidated because of Lee's experience as a tutor and their past relationship as student and writing associate. When the master is too revered, notes Lave and Wenger (1991), the apprentice and master relationship will become ineffective, especially when “. . . an apprentices' own master is too distant, an object of too much respect, to engage in awkward attempts at a new activity” (p. 92). Corrine perceived Lee as the master and in her interview claimed that she purposefully pushed herself back. Corrine also revealed that the topic of the session influenced her lack of participation, causing her to defer to Lee because Lee recently presented a paper at an undergraduate, American literature conference. By allowing Lee to be the distant, revered master, Corrine was prevented from taking her rightful place in the cooperative tutoring relationship. Cooperative tutoring was a new activity only in that Corrine, who is now a master, ended up trying very awkwardly to participate in the session. Corrine and Lee reverted back to their old relationship of trainer/trainee, where their roles are solidified by previous experiences.

While the sessions in the category, Trainer/Trainee, demonstrate one of the possible negative outcomes of cooperative tutoring, what can be learned from the

Trainer/Trainee category is akin to what is reported by Lave and Wenger's (1991) observations of apprentices:

An apprentice's contributions to ongoing activity gain value in practice- a value which increases as the apprentice becomes more adept. As opportunities for understanding how well or poorly one's efforts contribute are evident in practice, legitimate participation of a peripheral kind provides an immediate ground for self-evaluation. (p. 111)

Lave and Wenger stress that practice allows the apprentice to become better, but more importantly, the quality of contributions the apprentice makes to the community of practice provides an opportunity for reflection. In the case of Mayra and Ann, there were opportunities for Mayra to make a significant contribution to the session and stay in the role of master-tutor, but because of Ann's dominant tutoring style and overall control over the session, Mayra stayed in the role of trainee. In Ann's post-study interview, she did not perceive that she dominated the session perhaps in part because of the friendship she has with Mayra outside of working in the writing center.

Corrine's role in the Trainer/Trainee session qualifies her as a legitimate peripheral participant no matter how badly the session seemed to have gone. Corrine notes there was a positive lesson that she learned through her position as trainee and provides the following self-evaluation from her experience: "Listening to a more experienced tutor motivates me to be a better tutor, to 'step up my game' in order to be a better tutor overall."

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

*Students discover that writing and identifying never stand alone outside a context or community; they are always already constructed in relation to both. Mentoring students toward that realization is among our better offerings to academic communities.*

-- Harry Denny, "Queering the Writing Center"

#### **Introduction**

Through this study of cooperative tutoring in a writing center, which for this study I defined as 2 trained tutors working with 1 student, I explore whether this method could offer an alternative to the current model of one-to-one tutoring. I audio-recorded and observed 20 sessions at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), where I currently direct the Writing & Reading Center (WRC). I found that cooperative tutoring, as a practice, brings tutors and students together in ways that disrupt the current one-to-one model for tutoring. This study demonstrates that cooperative tutoring allows for both tutors and students to forge alliances as a community, creating new spaces for members by drawing on their stories and struggles with identity and academic discourse as well as devising rhetorical strategies that may further resistance and promote survival in the academe. As Grimm (2011) theorizes, when writing centers move from individualized instruction to a community-based approach, they become “. . . places where the academic community actively recruits new members, welcomes the creativity of those with multimemberships, and studies the reconciliation work that occurs on the

boundaries of communities . . . ” (p.91). One way for writing centers to become the kind of writing center Grimm envisions is through the practice of cooperative tutoring.

### **Summary of Findings, Study Limitations, and Further Research**

I found 3 types of tutor- to-tutor categories emerge from this study and was focused on examining how the tutors in each of the pairings negotiated the tutoring situation. One type of interaction, the Trainer/Trainee sessions, upheld one aspect of the training technique used to train tutors at UHD, where the novice tutor remains as the observer in the session. There were 6 out of 18 sessions of this type, and in these sessions, I found that the tutor who assumed the role of the trainer tutor dominated the session completely, not allowing either the other tutor or the student any agency in the session. The trainer tutors dominated the sessions so much so that they went against one-to-one tutoring protocol, and in 3 of the 6 sessions, turned the tutoring sessions into a classroom lecture.

The second category, the Equal Partners sessions, was delineated by how the tutors interacted with each other and occurred most frequently in this study, in 10 out of 18 sessions. These sessions were dependent on what the student wanted to focus on during the session. If a student had a partial draft or one fully completed, this created a different focus for the tutors and was one of the characteristics of an Equal Partners session. The tutors in these sessions interacted with each other by not only drawing on individual tutoring strengths but also synthesizing the other tutor’s techniques into his or her own.

The third category, The New Alliances sessions, occurred in 2 out of 18 sessions and only when a student was in the early stages of the writing assignment. These sessions occurred when the student wanted to generate ideas, create a plan for a writing project, and/or talk through course related concepts to gain greater clarity on a writing topic. The tutors in the New Alliances sessions were primarily engaged at the inception level, working collaboratively to tease out ideas through conversation and the sharing of personal experiences.

I applied grounded theory to analyze the data and to test my theories about cooperative tutoring. I was able to work through two of the three processes of grounded theory, open and axial coding. The data generated by this study is limited and still needs to be analyzed further, through selective coding. To move through selective coding, more sessions would need to be recorded and analyzed. Currently, my study is only focused on the tutors and their interactions with each other. For further research, the student's perspective obtained through individual interviews or small focus groups must be added to this study and analyzed through all phases of grounded theory. Finally, collaboration with another colleague is an essential part of using grounded theory. To complete this study, I would share my findings with a colleague and work collaboratively to review the data to further test my theory.

### **Research Questions**

Below, I address the research questions that prompted this study.



*Does Cooperative Tutoring Work or Does it Reify Current Practices?*

After I conducted this study, the data indicate that cooperative tutoring does work, but only under specific circumstances. Tutors have to agree to support working with another tutor in the same session and both have to be willing to accommodate and adjust their tutoring styles to include the other tutor in the interactions with the student. Tutors have to make a conscious effort to allow the collaboration to occur. This may not always be easily accomplished, especially if a tutor is resistant or entrenched in his or her tutoring process, as was demonstrated through the cases of Lee and Ann during the Trainer/Trainee sessions. If carried out as intended, cooperative tutoring shows a direct benefit to the tutors involved. It builds camaraderie amongst the tutors and serves as immediate professional development. Tutors are able to reflect on their tutoring performance from two sources of feedback, self-reflectively and from a peer's outsider perspective.

The larger issue of whether cooperative tutoring reifies the current one-to-one practices still deserves further study, especially from the student's perspective. There is concern regarding student agency in cooperative tutoring sessions. With 2 tutors in the same session student agency could be impacted negatively through a strict adherence to one-to-one practices by both tutors. Nevertheless, I can infer from the data of the Equal Partners sessions that current one-to-one practices are modified rather than reified. During a cooperative tutoring session, tutors were able to adjust their individual tutoring styles to create new ways to work with students. Both of the tutors synthesized some methods from the current one-to-one practices with the other tutor's tutoring style to

create new tutoring practices. If cooperative tutoring were to become more of an accepted practice within the scope of the daily operation of a writing center, tutors would have the potential to create tutoring tactics by altering the use of directive and nondirective tutoring methods thereby working to give agency to both tutors and students.

*Will One Tutor Dominate Over the Other Tutor and the Session as Well?*

In the study, I also found that the degree to which tutors get along with each other and how adaptable their tutoring styles are with regards to the other tutor determines whether one tutor will dominate over the other in a cooperative tutoring session. The Trainer/Trainee sessions confirm what occurs when one tutor dominates over the other. Even with additional training in cooperative tutoring techniques and protocol, there were 6 sessions where this occurred. In 3 of the 6 sessions, the tutor who consistently dominated each of her sessions was inflexible in her tutoring style, which could be attributed to her being the tutor with the most experience and tenure on staff. I found that tutoring styles seem to have an impact on the success of a cooperative tutoring session and this became a factor in all of the Trainer/Trainee sessions.

*Will the Student be Overwhelmed by Either too Much Information or Conflicting Information Offered by the Tutor?*

Overall, students appeared not to be overwhelmed by too much information, with the exception of the Trainer/Trainee sessions, where the tutors did not follow the protocol for cooperative tutoring; however, my data here is limited. The tutors in the

New Alliances and Equal Partners sessions learned to watch for both verbal and visual cues from each other so as not to confuse the student. The data indicate that when it appeared to the student that one tutor was not communicating a concept effectively, the other tutor would enter into the conversation, providing an alternative way of explaining the concept. When tutors disagreed, it showed the student that there can be many interpretations to any given text and that to always achieve consensus will not allow for other ideas to be heard, as was the case with Xavier and Ann in an Equal Partners session. When conflicting information was given, it was discussed amongst the tutors and with the student so that ultimately, it was the student who had the choice to follow what would work best for him or her.

*How Will the Different Tutoring Styles Affect the Relationship Between the Tutors and Students?*

In most of the Equal Partners and New Alliances sessions, the different tutoring styles served to complement each other. This study also showed how tutors could adopt specific components of each other's tutoring style into their own. Through working together, the tutors who were interviewed claimed that the experience helped them grow and develop as tutors. They learned techniques from each other as well as alternative ways to explain academic writing to the student. In the New Alliances sessions in particular, the relationship between the student and the tutors was strengthened and changed from a hierarchical relationship that can sometimes occur in a one-to-one tutoring session to a relationship that was more egalitarian. For the students, both the Equal Partners and New Alliances sessions presented an opportunity to receive feedback

from two tutors during one session, and for some students, receiving feedback from two tutors could become a timesaving feature.

### **Modifications**

If I were to use cooperative tutoring again, I would modify the training somewhat. Given what I've observed through my study of cooperative tutoring, I believe it holds many possibilities for creating awareness of the issues regarding language diversity amongst the tutors and also to the university community. The method I used to train tutors to participate in cooperative tutoring sessions was to hold a separate staff meeting and outline the protocols for incorporating another tutor into the session. Tutors participated in mock sessions as well as discussed how to pay attention to the body language of the student to be sure the tutors were not overwhelming the student with too much information. The tutors also discussed how to be aware of turn taking when speaking so as not to talk over each other during the session.

To expand the current method of training for cooperative tutoring so that it addresses the issues of language diversity, tutors need to be exposed to the current research literature on this issue, such as the articles included in the reference section of this dissertation. After reading the selected articles, tutors and directors would meet to discuss the content. Then the tutors and the director would work together to determine what best practices within cooperative tutoring might be developed to address the issues of language diversity within their particular writing center and in relation to the student population at their university. Finally, writing center directors would invite the director of freshman composition and/or the writing across the curriculum coordinator to the

discussion sessions on language diversity so as to further writing center practices to the university community at large.

### **Implementation of Cooperative Tutoring**

The feasibility of cooperative tutoring is difficult to determine because it is not designed to be a replacement for the one-to-one tutoring model. Therefore, I cannot recommend cooperative tutoring as a direct replacement for the one-to-one model. It would not be economically responsible to pay two tutors where one tutor has already proven to be effective through the current practice of one-to-one tutoring. However, where cooperative tutoring can become part of a writing center is to complement the current practice of one-to-one tutoring by augmenting the training of tutors in cooperative tutoring techniques, adding cooperative tutoring to the daily operation of the writing center to maximize tutoring resources, and developing cooperative tutoring for ongoing professional development and/or mentorship. Cooperative tutoring could be enacted as a part of a tutor training program because it helps tutors to be more aware of a wider variety of tutoring styles as well as language diversity issues and how to address those issues collaboratively with other tutors and students. Once tutors are trained in cooperative tutoring techniques, directors could add cooperative tutoring to the daily operation of the writing center to utilize tutor resources more effectively. For example, cooperative tutoring sessions can be organized to optimize tutoring resources during the times in the semester when few students use writing center services, which usually takes place at the beginning of the semester. Another instance of using cooperative tutoring to optimize tutoring resources can occur when a student does not show up for his or her

appointment, leaving a scheduled tutor with unexpected free time. If there is another session scheduled at the same time with another tutor, the tutor with the cancelled appointment could join the session, thereby utilizing tutoring resources more effectively. Finally, cooperative tutoring can be used to create professional development opportunities and/or mentorship programs, which could work to retain tutors. Frequent use of cooperative tutoring sessions could facilitate a mentorship program by connecting tutors to each other in ways that build solidarity amongst tutors and goes beyond team building exercises or staff meetings. However, writing center directors have to be aware that pairing friends or tutors who have similar conversation styles together might not always produce a workable situation, as this study has demonstrated. This can be resolved by asking for the tutors' input when creating the tutoring pairs, as suggested by both Xavier and Ann. Cooperative tutoring could provide more opportunities for tutors to gain further agency and become stakeholders in the growth and development of their writing center.

Cooperative tutoring, as presented in this study, is not the only way to move beyond the one-to-one tutoring model; I envision other models of cooperative tutoring being applied to different configurations, such as two tutors and two students, lending itself to a group tutoring session. I find that cooperative tutoring can be used by specialized groups of students who are working on larger projects over longer periods of time, such as a thesis-writing group or a dissertation-writing group. Cooperative tutoring could also afford continuity among the pairings of tutors who work with the

same student over the course of the semester or with groups of students on larger projects.

Through cooperative tutoring, tutors can also become active participants in the current movement in writing center scholarship to bring issues of race and language diversity to the fore. Together, tutors and directors could design research studies using cooperative tutoring to further interrogate race and language awareness issues at the university level. The discussion about language diversity amongst writing center tutors and staff is encouraged by Grimm (2011) when she writes, “ Within the social model of learning, writing centers can be understood as the social structures designed to facilitate deeper learning and fuller participation in the academic community rather than as places for students who ‘need help’ (p. 90). She calls for moving writing centers beyond the current practices to become a place where writers and tutors can both learn how best to negotiate academic discourse while at the same time understand how language can shape identity through the rhetorical choices writers make. If writing centers are going to move in the direction of taking the lead regarding the issues surrounding language diversity, as Grimm advocates, then new models for tutoring must be considered. Cooperative tutoring is one of those new models, creating opportunities for tutors to start thinking about how this discussion might be incorporated into the work they do with students to further awareness of language diversity and academic discourse. Cooperative tutoring is versatile and offers a practical approach to what current writing center scholars advocate as the future for writing centers, a community of practice approach, which will re-theorize writing centers.

## NOTES

1. According to the UHD Fact Book for the 2009-2010 semester, the Total Student Headcount Enrollment by Gender & Ethnicity, including both undergraduate and graduate students, is as follows: 61.5 % female, 38.5% male, 22% White, 28.7% Black, 36.7% Hispanic, 9.8% Asian or Pacific Islander, .3% American Indian, 2.2% International, and .3% Unknown. In addition, UHD is federally designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution.
2. UHD's Writing & Reading Center's 2009-2010 semester tutor staff, by self-identified gender & ethnicity, is as follows: 86 % female, 14% male, 36% White, 29% Black, 21% Hispanic, and 14% Asian or Pacific Islander.
3. Qwo-Li Driskill notes that when using Native rhetoric to be mindful of the fact that the land on which universities are built is land stolen from Native Americans, and that the workers who built the buildings had little to no access to higher education.
4. In order to protect against researcher bias and to contextualize my transcriptions around the intentions of SRTOL, I used standard spellings and colloquialisms in order to convey a fairly realistic representation of the interactions between the tutors and the student.
5. Transcription conventions and definitions from: Tannen, D., Kendall, S., & Gordon, C. (Eds.). (2007). *Family talk: Discourse and identity in four American families*. New York: NY: Oxford University Press.



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **TUTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Tell me about your cooperative tutoring session.
2. How did you feel about working with another tutor during your session?
3. Would you have preferred to work with another tutor? Why/why not?
4. What did you perceive to be the student's reaction to your cooperative tutoring session?
5. What did you think went well with your cooperative tutoring session?
6. What do you think could have improved your cooperative tutoring session?
7. What would you recommend to your "team mate" to make your next cooperative tutoring session better?

## APPENDIX B

### JEFFERSONIAN TRANSCRIPT NOTATION CONVENTIONS <sup>5</sup>

(( <i>words</i> ))	Double parenthesis enclose transcriber's comments, in italics.
/words/	Slashes enclose uncertain transcription.
. .	Dots indicate silence (more dots indicate a longer silence).
CAPS	Capitals indicate emphatic stress.
< <i>manner</i> >words>	Angle brackets enclose descriptions of the manner in which an utterance is spoken, e.g., <i>high-pitched</i> , <i>laughing</i> , <i>incredulous</i> .
< <i>laughs</i> >	Angle brackets enclose descriptions of vocal noises, e.g., <i>laughs</i> , <i>coughs</i> .
words [words]	
[words]	Square brackets enclose simultaneous talk.

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