



Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration : A Primer
by Margaret Shawn Snyder

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English
Montana State University

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Abstract:

Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer was written especially for new graduate students in English who tutor other masters or doctoral students from various disciplines. Many publications on writing centers focus on literacy tutoring, undergraduate tutoring, and writing center administration. Thus far, no text directly addresses the exciting, vulnerable, and controversial position of the graduate tutor. This text addresses issues concerning basic composition and writing center theories, different roles that tutors, tutees, faculty, and administrators play in the graduate tutoring program, and suggestions for Graduate Writing Center Administrators in designing and maintaining the tutoring program. Additionally, a brief history of the writing center demonstrates the changes that have occurred due to the tensions that the lab creates. These tensions include those that tutors experience when determining their roles in the writing center, applying theories to their practice, negotiating the multiplicity of meanings of the center, and combating ideal and remedial notions of the writing center. They also include tensions that might arise when administrators' theories and plans fail to work in a pedagogical practice or when the universities' goals seem to oppose the centers'. Instead of ignoring these tensions, writing center participants should use them to contend with issues surrounding the center, the graduate tutoring program, and their positions. Ultimately, Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer offers alternative tutoring pedagogies to assist graduate writing tutors in determining the roles and responsibilities they will have in the writing center.

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ADMINISTRATION: A PRIMER

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer was written especially for new graduate students in English who tutor other masters or doctoral students from various disciplines. Many publications on writing centers focus on literacy tutoring, undergraduate tutoring, and writing center administration. Thus far, no text directly addresses the exciting, vulnerable, and controversial position of the graduate tutor. This text addresses issues concerning basic composition and writing center theories, different roles that tutors, tutees, faculty, and administrators play in the graduate tutoring program, and suggestions for Graduate Writing Center Administrators in designing and maintaining the tutoring program. Additionally, a brief history of the writing center demonstrates the changes that have occurred due to the tensions that the lab creates. These tensions include those that tutors experience when determining their roles in the writing center, applying theories to their practice, negotiating the multiplicity of meanings of the center, and combating ideal and remedial notions of the writing center. They also include tensions that might arise when administrators' theories and plans fail to work in a pedagogical practice or when the universities' goals seem to oppose the centers'. Instead of ignoring these tensions, writing center participants should use them to contend with issues surrounding the center, the graduate tutoring program, and their positions. Ultimately, Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer offers alternative tutoring pedagogies to assist graduate writing tutors in determining the roles and responsibilities they will have in the writing center.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the past many English graduate students have had an opportunity to apply for teaching assistantships (GTA-ships). In addition to instructing one or two classes, Composition GTAs are typically responsible for tutoring undergraduates in the writing center. At some universities English graduate students have a choice between teaching composition and tutoring other graduate students. The positions differ mostly in the number of students the graduates instruct and the students' level of academic standing; for the most part, the responsibilities are very similar. Both types of GTAs educate students in writing, but often know little about the composition theories that can help guide them. Unfortunately, many graduate tutors and instructors find that they receive little or no training for their positions, and yet most would attest that no amount of training could fully prepare either the tutor or the instructor for the first day.

Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer was written especially for new graduate students in English who tutor other graduates from various disciplines. Many publications on writing centers focus on literacy tutoring, undergraduate tutoring, and writing center administration. However, no text directly addresses the exciting, vulnerable, and controversial position of the graduate tutor. This text may be read from cover to cover, or it may be used as a quick reference for basic composition and writing center theories; different roles that tutors, tutees, faculty, and administrators play in the writing center; and suggestions for Graduate Writing Center Administrators in designing and maintaining the tutoring program. Although I wrote this

for new graduate tutors who may have little or no working knowledge of the writing center or of their position, experienced tutors, writing center administrators, and undergraduate tutors may also find particular sections useful.

Before reading any theoretical discussions on writing centers, it is helpful to first understand the history of the Writing Center and how it has evolved over the last ninety years. The history may also help in understanding the reasons for the Writing Center debates and the conflicts that can occur during tutorials. Examining this background, new graduate tutors may find that their positions cannot be as easily negotiated as they may have previously thought.

The History of the Writing Center

The Writing Lab began as an *approach* to composition instruction and eventually became a *location* where students could receive assistance with their grammatical deficiencies. The center changed with the times and politics; its focus shifted from editing and proofreading to students' abilities to think critically. The lab changed from being product-centered to student-centered, where its focus became the students instead of their writing.

Some scholars have argued that the Writing Center originated in the first decade of the twentieth century. However, most composition scholars follow Stephen M. North's assertion that the 1930s marked the beginning of writing centers' movement into the academy. Regardless, until the 1940s the writing lab was an *approach* to writing instruction. In other words, the lab was not separate from the classroom, and the instruction involved a method of correcting grammatical errors. The students attempted

to write prose, following instructions that the teachers first provided. The lab instruction was typically necessary only for remedial students and was centered on the individual quality of each student's writing (Boquet 466-7).

During the 1940s, psychology began to influence the field of composition. In 1942 Carl Rogers published Counseling and Psychotherapy, a book that introduced the concept of client-centered therapy to the study of psychology. Writing centers appropriated Rogerian nondirective counseling as a pedagogical approach. The basis of this approach is that the tutor/therapist and tutee/client are viewed as equals. In the session the tutee selects the focus, and the tutor attempts to help the student achieve a self-awareness by questioning him or her concerning the topic of discussion. This questioning mirrors the tutee's responses and suggests a mutual respect between the tutor/therapist and the tutee/client. This approach supposes that the tutee already possesses the knowledge and ability to manage any difficulties he or she has with writing (Boquet 469-70).

Thanks to Rogers, the writing center became recognized as a *location* where not only remedial students, but also ordinary students, could obtain assistance with their writing. Along with the shift from writing center as *approach* to writing center as *location*, a change occurred among instructors and administrators in the *type* of approach they thought composition instruction should involve. In "Our Little Secret": A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions," Elizabeth H. Boquet states, "the writing on writing labs begins to show evidence of the tension emerging between the institutional space of the writing center and the individual pedagogies enacted in that space" (467). The conversations demonstrated a promising start of theoretical discussions.

Then something strange occurred in the 1950s: writing centers disappeared. They showed that they had potential early in the decade, according to Boquet, but the conversations stopped in the mid-50s. Various theories have been presented on why the centers vanished although none has been verified. Two of the main possibilities include the major shift in attention to scientific and mathematical studies due to the Cold War² and the linguistics' revival, which also brought a reappearance of objectivism and scientific thought (Boquet 471).

Writing centers slowly reappeared in the 1970s and, at this time, the tension in defining the writing lab thickened. Progressively, the discussions changed from talking and giving details about the *location* of the center to theorizing about the Writing Center's purpose. As a result, the different pedagogical approaches of writing centers became a major avenue of study. The three main classes of writing center instruction included the auto-tutorial sessions, one-on-one tutorials, and alternative instruction (Boquet 473). The first of these models promoted a self-learning approach to tutoring which often involved technological instruction. The second main model was the one-on-one tutorial with faculty that created a "caring" Rogerian nondirective counseling environment. The last of these methods was an alternative to the traditional methods of tutoring; Kenneth Bruffee presented his concept of peer tutoring, which provided an opportunity for both the students doing the tutoring and those receiving the tutoring to learn during the sessions. (Peer tutoring and collaborative learning will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2.)

Up until the 1980s the connection between composition and writing centers was implied and unclear. During this period, writing center theory gained a wider audience

and seemed to separate farther from the field of composition. The most accomplished essay of this time, which is still highly regarded today, was North's "The Idea of a Writing Center." According to Christina Murphy and Joe Law, within his essay North offers

a new interpretation of the role of the writing center within the academy and within academic politics. [...] The essay has had great appeal for writing center scholars both because it asserts the primacy of a student-centered pedagogy and because it chastises English department faculty for possessing a "second layer of ignorance" and "a false sense of knowing" about what the role of a writing center is within the department and the academy. (65)

It is North who reaffirms that the writing center is a *location* where students are the focus rather than their writing.

Ever since "The Idea of a Writing Center" was published, much of the writing center scholarship has focused on the relationship between writing centers and the academy and the power struggles between them. Theorists appear to have forgotten that they can excite and motivate thought about writing centers and composition. Nonetheless, possibly due to the tenure track publishing requirements, scholars continue to reproduce discussions about the "ethics" of writing center work and also concentrate on writing center administration. The writing center theorists who had the potential to stimulate intellectual scholarship have settled for addressing unproblematic concerns of the Writing Center.

Amazingly, even though the theoretical discussions appear to be stagnant, writing centers have become a university campus staple. According to Murphy and Law, more than ninety percent of American campuses have writing centers (70). Even more, the

growth of graduate tutoring programs on university campuses demonstrates the centers' success.

Yet the recent popularity of graduate writing center programs is problematic, and clearly graduate tutors have unique tensions to navigate. While writing center administrators may view the centers' development as advancement, many students, professors, and nonacademics view the new program as a mockery of universities and the advanced degrees they offer. In theory, graduates *should* already possess writing skills that demonstrate a higher intellectual capacity. Indeed, university administrators would prefer to ignore their acceptance of poor writers into their graduate programs. Nonetheless, when they invite or allow a graduate writing center tutoring program onto their campuses, they acknowledge that they make exceptions. In reality, though, graduate schools accept the majority of students for their expertise in other disciplines, and students might not even know how to write a thesis statement. Although the reality is painfully obvious to those who read students' professional papers, theses, or dissertations, ignoring their poor writing skills does not, has not, and will not create better writers.

Clearly, graduate tutors (and undergraduate tutors) and administrators cannot disregard the tensions they feel and even create. These tensions include those that tutors experience when determining their roles in the writing center, applying theories to their practice, negotiating the multiplicity of meanings of the center, and combating ideal and remedial notions of the writing center. They also include tensions that might arise when administrators' theories and plans fail to work in pedagogical practice or when the universities' goals seem to oppose the centers'. Instead of ignoring these tensions, writing center participants should embrace them and continually (re)negotiate the center,

the graduate tutoring program, and their positions. A brief history of the writing center demonstrates the changes that have occurred due to the tensions that the lab creates; without tension the writing center would crumble. According to Boquet, current writing center scholarship lacks

the excessive institutional possibilities that the writing center represents. The way the writing center exceeds its space, despite the university's best efforts to contain it; the way in which the writing center exceeds its method, with tutors going off-task, with students (more often than not) setting them back on-track, [and] negotiating academic demands [...]. (478)

While I am in full agreement with Boquet, I think writing center scholars and tutors need to discuss the tensions with one another, rather than avoid them.

Chapter Overview

I hope that graduate tutors, especially, will find Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer useful in choosing a stance on writing center politics. Before my experience working as the Graduate Writing Assistant at Montana State University, I was appalled at the thought of graduate students needing composition tutoring. However, I have since come to the realization that writing can always be improved. I have learned from composition and writing center theories that writing *is* a process and tutors can help students work through the process. For me, the theories have also suggested different roles that tutors, tutees, faculty, and administrators can play in the writing center. Moreover, from my experience as a graduate tutor I have discovered that the position also entails numerous administrative responsibilities.

Chapter 2 will provide graduate tutors with an understanding of composition and writing center theories and of how they affect tutoring practices at the graduate level.

This chapter is divided into two sections: composition theories and writing center theories. In each section, a brief history and description is provided for the main discussions that have influenced today's practices.

The two general composition theories that graduate tutors will find useful to their practice are the current-traditional and process models. The current-traditional theory, or product theory, was the main pedagogical method of teaching composition until the 1960s and 70s. This model stressed the importance of grammar and had a tremendous influence on how writing centers were perceived—as fix-it shops.

As early as 1910, process theory became the alternative choice for composition instructors. Expressive writing, the first of the process views to make headway, allowed students to express their original thoughts and to prove their integrity. Then composition theorists brought empirical research into the field by appropriating concepts from cognitive psychology. The largest benefit of the cognitive psychology influence was the view of writing as a three-stage process: pre-writing, writing, and rewriting. The last and currently most popular view of the composing process is the social model. In general, the social model considers writing to be a collective process that requires individuals to critique cultural influences and institutional powers. The different strands of study include ethnography, Marxism, and the poststructuralist theories of language.

The second section of Chapter 2 discusses the major writing center theories, which are based on the composition theories. The three main theoretical conversations about writing centers and tutoring discussed in this section are remediation, collaborative learning, and authority. The first of these topics, remediation, is closely related to the current-traditional model of composition. Writing center administrators' concern is that

many students and faculty members still view the center solely as a source for remedial aid.

The second of these theoretical conversations involves collaborative learning, Bruffee's contribution to writing center theory. This discussion is closely tied to the social view of the process model of composing, whereby tutors and tutees work together to create a text. Three major components stemming from the debate about collaboration are the concepts of peer tutoring, dialogue, and personal authority.

Lastly, Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical debate about institutional authority in the university's writing center and the "ethics" of tutoring. While some students view the center as a non-threatening environment where they talk about their papers with their peers, others view tutors as extensions of institutional authority. Another conversation that arises from the concern of institutional authority has to do with the way professors, and even tutors, use academic discourse as an instrument of power to withhold knowledge from those of "other" cultural backgrounds.

After having read the different theoretical discussions, graduate tutors will better understand the politics of their own university's writing center. Graduate tutors can use Chapter 3 as a reference when negotiating the responsibilities that their employers expect of them and when determining the role(s) they want to play in the center. While many tasks differ from one tutor to the next, all tutors should possess active listening and facilitating skills. They should also recognize their ethical responsibilities of keeping papers and sessions confidential, not allowing plagiarism, being on time, and being reliable. Basically, tutorial participants need to act responsibly and professionally.

Once graduate tutors understand the basics, they will need to decide what function(s) of their jobs are most important to them. After choosing whether they will be editors, educators, physicians, allies, peers, experts and/or conversationalists, they will want to consider the roles of their tutees: writers, adult learners, and/or active learners? Tutors also need to take into account the roles of the faculty and administrators. Graduate tutors need to acknowledge that faculty members are the backbone of the writing center; ultimately, without writing assignments and recommendations from them, the writing center would be nonexistent. Therefore, communicating with faculty about the writing center's purpose and goals is crucial. And finally, administrators, as planners and trainers, can also determine the success or failure of the writing center. Since graduate tutors are frequently accountable for the administrative duties in addition to the tutoring, an entire chapter is devoted to discussing the role of the Graduate Writing Center Administrator (GWCA).

Chapter 4 provides some suggestions for designing and maintaining graduate tutoring programs. First and foremost, novice tutors should talk with the employing department to determine expectations or requirements. During the design process, GWCA's must continually assess faculty members' and tutees' needs and then develop a way to meet those needs. Once the administrators develop a plan to provide the services, they must make it known to instructors and students that the program is available on campus. After they publicize the service, GWCA's then need to follow through with the plan by providing the services they have promised.

When graduate tutors are also made responsible for the administration of the graduate writing center program, maintenance becomes complicated. The position is temporary—

typically only one or two years—and tutors may find that they spend most of their time training for their position and determining ways to successfully manage the program. Suggestions offered in Chapter 4 include ways to assess the program's successes and failures, techniques to train graduate tutors, and types of records to keep and sorts of information to disseminate.

Following Chapter 4 are Appendices A, B, and C. The first appendix provides examples of questionnaires that graduate tutors can distribute to students and faculty to assess their needs. The third questionnaire can be used to determine individual students' needs for their upcoming tutoring sessions. Appendix B offers examples of flyers and brochures that can be distributed around campus. The last appendix provides examples of evaluation forms that GWCAAs can request faculty and students to complete.

Graduate tutors can benefit from the theoretical discussions and practical advice that Graduate Level Tutoring and Writing Center Administration: A Primer offers. Not only will graduate tutors get a better grasp of what their position entails, but also they will be able to determine for themselves what tutors' responsibilities should be. Making such decisions further enables graduate tutors to enter into the composition and writing center discussions to voice their own opinions.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Because scholars still recognize writing center theory as a component of composition theory, an understanding of both is crucial for writing center tutors. The following includes the basic underlying features that will help increase graduate tutors' awareness of what guides their practice. In effect, these tutors will be able to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of the theories and, as they deem fit, incorporate them into their own tutoring pedagogies. Of course, individual university writing centers may promote a specific view that tutors must follow. However, graduate tutors should be aware of the various theories so that they can better negotiate their position within the writing center. Then they can join the ongoing composition and writing center discussions.

Composition Theory

Composition theory is comprised of two basic models: current-traditional and process. Before either model was created, the art of rhetoric, i.e. argument and persuasion, was taught as the alternative to literary studies. Those outside the academy frequently view the current-traditional model as the only way composition should be taught. Theoretically though, the process theory proves to benefit students' creativity, cognitive thought, and social awareness.

Current-Traditional Model

The current-traditional theory of composition, also known as product theory, originated at the end of the 19th century. Two of the most influential reformers of teaching composition were Alexander Bain and Adams Sherman Hill. In his 1866 publication of English Composition and Rhetoric, Bain introduces the four modes of discourse that are still widely used today: description, narration, exposition, and persuasion. Bain also influenced the field of composition by identifying paragraph unity as a definitive characteristic of written discourse (Bizzell 861). Harvard's chair of rhetoric, Adams Sherman Hill, further developed Bain's concepts in his 1878 text The Principles of Rhetoric. In his book he contends that rhetoric is an art that is used to communicate thought (862). His method of teaching rhetoric focused on style, grammar, and usage (664).

Consequently, the current-traditional theory of composition emerged from the union of Bain's and Hill's rhetorical influences (Bizzell 664). This approach to teaching composition stressed the importance of communicating knowledge clearly, i.e. expository writing, and teaching grammar and usage skills. In composition classrooms, instructors presented students with ideal texts that the writers then imitated (McComiskey 42).

Also, during the transition from rhetoric as the formation of thought to rhetoric as the transmission of knowledge, composition changed from a public to a private discourse (Bizzell 860). While writing was required of student-rhetors, the intent was for students to memorize their compositions and to present them to an audience. Basically, rhetors used their "voice" (Joseph Harris's term) to publicly exchange views, while writers had to imagine an audience with whom to share their thoughts. Understandably, students

who *wrote* essays had difficulty imagining an audience when they knew their professor was their only reader. Not only that, but instructors also read their essays to determine whether students could convey their Knowledge, unlike the rhetors who used *speech* to formulate thought. Students no longer shared their ideas publicly, but instead they wrote either for themselves or their instructors. Robert Scholes indicates in The Rise and Fall of English that even in 1914 students frequently creatively spelled and misused grammar in the compositions they read aloud (5). When this change occurred, instructors realized the grammatical atrocities taking place in students' papers and maintained that by correcting the errors and teaching proper grammar, students' writing would improve. As a result, by the time the process model was introduced, students' grammar skills improved slightly, but their abilities to think critically were weakened.

Process Model

The current-traditional model dominated composition instruction until the 1960s and 70s (Bizzell 904). Alternative methods of teaching composition had been presented throughout the 20th century, but few proved to be successful. However, since the 1970s the process theory has become the dominant model of composing. The new method offered an alternative to the imitation-based methodology; instead, cultural texts were analyzed for their ideologies, values, and meanings (McComiskey 42). Three basic views of process make up the newest model of composing: the expressive view, the cognitive view, and the social view. While different eras are most notably recognized for a specific view, in today's theories all views are prevalent and often overlap.

Expressive View. In the 1910s and 20s, the first alternative to the current-traditional approach, the expressive view of composing, appeared at several elite colleges. Under this approach, writing was viewed as psychoanalytic therapy that enabled students to express themselves originally in thought and style (Faigley 43). Following this methodology, it was believed that students became better writers simply by writing texts (Bushman 31). Due to the attraction to expressive writing, it became an individual course called creative writing (Bizzell 903).

Although self-expressivism did not disappear, it was not until the 1960s and 70s that it gained strong recognition in composition courses. In 1964 D. Gordon Rohman and Albert Wlecke published the results of their pedagogical study on the effects that “pre-writing,” or thinking, had on writing performance. They defined pre-writing as “the stage of discovery in the writing process when a person assimilates his ‘subject’ to himself” (qtd in Crowley 198). During this stage, writers write about their experiences of their subject. Furthermore, Rohman and Wlecke described thinking as:

“that activity of mind which *brings forth* and develops ideas, plans, designs, not merely the entrance of an idea into one’s mind; an active, not a passive enlistment in the ‘cause’ of an idea; conceiving, which includes consecutive logical thinking but much more besides; essentially the imposition of pattern upon experience.” (qtd in Crowley 198, emphasis theirs)

Their chains of thoughts lead to the formation of an ideal plan or design.

Janet Emig had an even greater influence on composition studies than Rohman and Wlecke. She began contesting the current-traditional model as early as 1964 in “The Uses of the Unconscious in Composing” (Crowley 200). One of her most notable contributions was her assertion that all writers encounter similar difficulties when composing (202). By using a case study approach to studying the writing process, she

noted that individuals' composing processes are "recursive." She wrote, "instead of a process or processes inexorably made up of three 'stages,' there may be more or fewer components. Writing may be recursive, a loop rather than a linear affair—one can write, then plan; or one can revise, then write" (qtd in Crowley 203).

Eleven years after Emig first publicly protested product theory, James Britton and his colleagues, the "London group," published the results of their study on the function of language skills in children's learning process. While the London group is most notably recognized for their contribution to the cognitive view, it was out of their comprehensive examination of the composing process that composition teachers extracted the group's three modes of discourse: expressive, transactional, and poetic (Crowley 204-5). This scheme mainly interested composition instructors because the group identified expressive writing as a separate form of composition—the exploration of ideas and relation of those ideas to emotions and intentions. However, transactional writing, the most widely used mode of discourse in schools, involves the transmission of knowledge and information, and poetic writing is the creation of beautiful images in prose or poetry. According to the results of the group's study, expressive writing should be used instead of transactional writing in schools since the former mode of composition gives form to a writer's thought and enhances other language skills.

In The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg maintain that this alternative method of teaching was introduced into the composition classrooms in response to the political concerns of the Vietnam War and civil rights movement (904). In their opinion, the current-traditional

approach to teaching composition was considered oppressive, and expressivism provided individual students with the opportunity to seek their “authentic voice” (904).

Other theorists consider expressivism to be a resurgence of the Romantic view of composition. The fundamental qualities of the Romantic era—integrity, spontaneity, and originality—were used to evaluate students’ expressive writing. However, students’ integrity proved difficult to measure: not only did instructors become judges of character and Truth, but students could also deceive their teachers with untruths. For example, students could fabricate stories of abuse that would evoke instructors’ sympathy and compassion, or they could compose essays expressing those values and politics they “shared” with their professors. As a result, professors would rate the students’ authenticity as “good” or “bad.” Free-writing exercises were at first used to measure integrity, but later became a valuable tool in measuring the spontaneity of students’ compositions. Peter Elbow appropriated the activity that was first used to discover truth; in effect, free-writing became an activity that could demonstrate students’ formation of meaning *through* their writing (an idea that contradicted Rohman and Wlecke’s understanding that thinking and writing were separate acts). In regard to originality, the notion of the Romantic *gènius* differed from the neo-Romantic notion of the unconscious potential of individuals’ creativity. For instance, instead of being born with a vision, people can learn to be better writers through personal development. Clearly these measurement devices had their faults, and some theorists decided that an empirical method to grading papers and studying composing processes would provide further advancement in composition studies. What resulted was the field’s appropriation of cognitive psychology.

Cognitive View. Another view observes students' cognitive development in the composing process. One type of cognitive psychology that influenced the field of composition was cognitive-developmental psychology. In addition to contributing to the expressive view, the London group played a role in the development of the cognitive view of composition theory. Britton and his colleagues introduced the concept of "decentering": they studied the composing process of children and maintained that children have difficulty imagining an audience.

Another category of cognitive psychology that was appropriated by composition studies was from American cognitive psychology. The most influential theorists were Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, who used the think-aloud approach to study the actual methods students use to compose written texts. According to Lester Faigley in "Competing Theories of Process," Flower and Hayes maintained "that composing processes intermingle, that goals direct composing, and that experts compose differently from inexperienced writers" (46). What motivated their model, however, was the cognitive science tradition. Flower and Hayes used Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon's notion of "programmability" that looks at the how the mind processes information (46). Moreover, they theorized that the composing processes are similar to a computer's central processing unit (46). While composing processes involve planning, translating, and reviewing, according to cognitive theorists, individual writers compose differently for each occasion. The social view does not deny this assertion of individuality but, instead, focuses on societal perspectives of culture and power.

Social View. Formed in the 1980s, the social view of the composing process has become the dominant theory. Underlying this model is the notion that writing can only be viewed from a societal perspective, not an individual one. The main objective of this view is for students to collectively critique culture and challenge institutional forces (McComiskey 41). This view borrows from previous work, but according to social theorists, writing once again becomes a public discourse. Faigley suggests that there are four schools of thought under this view, but I will concentrate on the main three: ethnography, Marxism, and poststructuralist theories of language.

The first of these approaches to composition is ethnography. The ethnographic approach studies writers' discourse communities, i.e. the bodies of knowledge, conventions, and strategies to which students belong. It differs from a sociological approach in that the study of culture and development of different ethnic groups takes a more historical and comparative approach. To look at the effects of the discourse communities on the writing process, researchers examine the immediate world around writers to show how different outlooks influence their writing (Faigley 49). Common communities that researchers look at are the classroom, the family, and the workplace.

Main issues of the ethnographic model of composition theory are class, power, and ideology. In general, followers of this approach maintain that institutional authority exists within the discourse of its community. Accordingly, discourse pressures individuals within society to conform to the institutional ideologies, subjects that I will address specifically in regards to the writing center in the latter section of Chapter 2. For instance, ethnographic theorists analyze the ways the composition classroom includes or

excludes students in learning, such as through the use of academic discourse (McComiskey 43).

Paulo Freire followed an ethnographic approach to literacy. He argued that in order for “oppressors” or “oppressed” (his terminology) to understand their plights, they must first analyze class and history. As an anti-essentialist, Freire rejected the propensity of simplifying subjects’ positions within a multifaceted history and culture to race, class, or gender. In literacy, and frequently in academia, the discourse that values high clarity in communication stifles “other” discourses. As Freire states in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, “Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (78). Indeed, Freire argues that in valuing one discourse over others, oppressors can ignore the otherwise apparent social differences.

A specific component of the ethnographic approach to composition studies (which Faigley designated as the fourth approach to the social view) is the sociology of science. This component looks at the culture surrounding a specific discipline of the science community. In this model, scientific texts are viewed as a separate literary genre. In the words of Charles Bazerman and Greg Myers, these texts are “active social tools in the complex interactions of a research community” (qtd in Faigley 48-9).

The second approach to studying composition using the social view, the Marxist methodology, is very comparable to the ethnographic approach. For an ethnographic-based approach, a class analysis can lead to an understanding of “oppression,” but from the analysis, Marxists envision a “true” social equality and an *end* to a class system. Moreover, this approach, which Bruce McComiskey calls the social-process rhetorical

inquiry, also examines the ways that power structures are involved in modes of production, distribution, and consumption of texts (42).

Specifically, McComiskey's method of invention focuses on "cultural production," "contextual distribution," and "critical consumption" in the classroom. First, he suggests that students examine the values that culture derives from texts and their contexts. Then he proposes that afterwards students must critically analyze and negotiate the ideal cultural values. Lastly, students should produce additional texts in response to their (con)textual analyses (42-3). Using his inquiry method, his students interpret societal interactions and then critique the ways institutions restrict individuals within various communities.

Lastly, the poststructuralist theory of language, also called post-process theory, began in the 1980s when theorists began vocalizing their dissatisfaction with the notion of writing as process (McComiskey 40). Following the poststructuralist concept that defining terms limits their meanings, post-process theorists reject the idea of defining "post-process." Along these same lines, a main topic of discussion among post-theorists is the concept of interpretative communities where readers and writers interpret texts from what meanings the words encompass from society's (re)appropriations. For example, in Invention as a Social Act, Karen Burke LeFevre maintains that invention is a social act whereby interpretations and uses of texts determine the textual meanings (qtd in, 41).

David Bartholomae, one of the most influential poststructuralist composition theorists, discusses the composition classroom's role in the academic community. He contends that students find college composition courses difficult because they are

unfamiliar with academic discourse. According to Bartholomae, students most frequently use “off-stage voices”—experts and authors cited in bibliographies—to legitimate texts. Bartholomae further suggests that students go through a transition from “writer-based” to “reader-based” prose. He maintains that reading is an essential part of the composing process: it is the final process where the reader forms meaning from the written text, and the reader also situates the author within the text and within society (McComiskey 42).

In my own tutoring practice, I use several of the composition theories with which I have experimented. When I first began teaching undergraduates I did not completely agree with the process model. I found that correcting grammatical deficiencies met students’ expectations and proved to be much easier than facilitating discussions about students’ writing processes. Once I discovered for myself that writing *is* a process that begins and ends with the students, I was able to assist students with their *thinking*, not only their *products*. Yet, if students consistently make the same grammatical errors throughout their compositions, I educate them about the “rules.” Of the approaches used by process theorists, for me the most useful and compatible approach is the cognitive view, which recognizes writing as a staged progression, comprised of planning, translating, and reviewing. What I find least appealing about the expressive view are the immeasurable qualities that teachers use to evaluate students’ compositions. Likewise, I do not completely agree with the notion that teachers (and tutors) can only look at writing from a societal perspective, which often stresses political correctness. Instead, both the individual *and* societal perspectives are essential in the composing process. By combining the different composition theories with some of the writing center theories, I

have constructed a practical method of tutoring that allows me to comfortably follow the university's and writing center's policies.

Writing Center Theory

Many writing center theories are based on the composition theories discussed above. North's 1984 article, "The Idea of the Writing Center," was the first theoretical discussion of its kind, dedicated solely to writing centers. Unfortunately, though, much of the writing center scholarship since has focused on descriptions of the writing centers' locations and public relations and typically lacks theoretical grounding. What follows are three of the major ongoing, overlapping discussions about writing centers and tutoring: remediation, collaborative learning, and authority.

Remediation

In his 1984 article, North questioned writing centers' roles within the university and their politics, specifically examining the opposing views of the writing center within the academy. Although the article is somewhat dated, the same issues concern scholars today. According to North, writing center tutors and administrators view the writing center as a location for all students to discuss their writing and to become better writers. Since composition and writing center theorists study writing as a process, rather than product, these scholars realize that all students' writing skills need improvement and that students become better writers when they improve their critical thinking skills. Therefore, the writing center tutors commit to helping create better students.

Nevertheless, many faculty members and students view the center as a place to send students to “fix” their poorly written papers, even though some professors have become aware of the benefit of North’s “idea of a writing center.” Moreover, because the academy views the writing center as a university *service*, students perceive the center to be a place for remedial students to receive aid. Some composition instructors require all of their students to visit the center, but these tutees typically consider this a demeaning practice. As a result, students recognize “being sent to the writing center” as a punishment for writing poorly.

Collaborative Learning

Now many theorists and composition instructors view the writing center as a place where students can collaborate with writing tutors. The concept of collaborative learning is viewed as an alternative to traditional classroom learning. In “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Kenneth Bruffee describes the model of the tutoring process where “students learn to describe the organizational structure of a peer’s paper, paraphrase it, and comment both on what seems well done and what the author might do to improve the work” (396). The goal of the session, with the tutor’s guidance, is to create cohesiveness, clarity, and coherence in a structurally sound paper.

According to theorists, students benefit from writing center collaboration in several ways. First, they have the opportunity to have an “expert” outside reader to critically read their papers. Hence, writing center tutors should be authorities of the language, and likewise, the tutees should ideally be the authorities on their subjects. Collaboration also allows students to think more critically about their subjects, by explaining or elaborating

unclear ideas to tutors who may know nothing about the topic. For instance, writing students frequently assume that their readers understand their "logical" progression, but in reality, their papers lack the cohesiveness that is crucial for comprehension.

Furthermore, collaboration permits students to formulate their ideas more concretely and to question their organization. Lastly, collaborative learning requires active participation in the session by both the tutor and the tutee, which leads to the notion of peer tutoring.

Peer Tutoring. According to Kenneth Bruffee, peer tutoring is a type of collaborative learning where the tutors and tutees benefit from the session: both students develop and improve their confidence and their writing skills. Tutors gain a critical awareness of their own writing skills while helping students to understand ways to improve their texts.

Many tutors, or "writing experts," share similar anxieties with tutees: they, too, often lack confidence in their writing. Judith Fishman notes in "On Tutors, the Writing Lab, and Writing" that many tutors have difficulties "transforming" their thoughts into writing and fear that their writing will be "misunderstood" or that they will fail to effectively communicate their thoughts (86). If this is true, what qualifies peers to tutor fellow students? Joyce A. Kinhead contends that tutors' writing anxieties make them helpful to their peers since they can share these commonalities during the sessions (243). Yet, Bruffee contends that simply by sharing ideas and thoughts, together peers can talk about the assignment and about writing in general (94). In the writing center they share with each other the knowledge they each possess.

Theorists advise that peer tutoring makes tutees more comfortable in the writing center. Bruffee states, "It did not seem to change what people learned but, rather, the social context in which they learned it" (87). In this form of collaboration, trained undergraduates or graduates from the same institution tutor other undergraduates who share, in Jacob S. Blumner's words, "a common institutional status, that of student" (40). Indeed tutors generally are close in age and social status. The writing center offers students the opportunity to converse and to practice disciplinary standards with someone other than the professor who evaluates them.

The graduate tutors' position varies from other GTAs since, theoretically, they have a more collaborative relationship with their graduate tutees. Based on John Trimbur's vague definition of "peership" as possessing similar educational knowledge or experiences, i.e. their educational levels are equal, undergraduate students consider graduate students as "little teachers," but graduate tutees view graduate tutors as peers (Mick 36). Yet, Connie Snyder Mick indicates that tutors' educational level does not exclusively determine "peership" (40). Graduate tutors' demeanor with their graduate students, their knowledge of composition, and their writing skills determine whether tutees perceive them to be more like peers or professors. Tutors and their tutees may both be graduate students; more often than not their specialty areas differ, and problems with the "peership" concept arise when comparing students' knowledge of the varied disciplines. Graduate tutors are more knowledgeable and experienced in composition discourse, while their graduate tutees are experts in other areas. According to Mick:

The relationship is collaborative in the sense that both tutee and tutor are working together on a project. Furthermore, there is no indication that the tutor's expertise in writing takes precedence over the tutee's expertise on the

subject matter (at least in comparison to the tutor who, not being a peer, may not be familiar with the topic). (41)

An alternative way to look at the tutor-tutee relationship is to view the participants as constructors of knowledge who work together through dialogue.

Dialogue. Rather than looking at the writing center as a location of exterior knowledge, or as Andrea Lunsford's "Center as Storehouse," collaborative learning presents the writing center as a place where knowledge is "always contextually bound, as always socially constructed" (113). Neither tutors nor tutees possess the knowledge, but knowledge is created through conversations and dialogue, what Lunsford calls the "Burkean Parlor Center." If possible, writing tutors should converse with tutees about their writing as often as possible during their writing process, since the dialogue between the two creates and forms each student's knowledge. Clearly, entering into dialogue is a crucial element of the writing center.

The tutor's role is similar to the role of the dialogical teacher that Freire discusses in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Ideal students entering the writing center have an invested interest in their topic of study, especially at the graduate level, and for this reason, graduate tutors expect tutees to be prepared to enter into dialogue (in the Freirian sense). Unlike the "banking" model of teaching, which implies that tutors "deposit" information into the students' minds, tutors of the "problem-posing" model seek to help students perceive reality and then critically intervene in that reality. Additionally, when tutors paraphrase what is said in the paper, students have an opportunity to hear how an Other interprets their words. In the dialogue, tutors question tutees about their perceptions of the subject's reality. Tutors also ask questions, as teachers do, to elicit responses that

enable students to think more critically about their subject. In "The Nature of Writing-Laboratory Instruction for the Developing Student," Rudolph Almsy states that the tutor engages in dialogue "over the written [text, which] allows the writer to test the direction of his or her thoughts and allows the reader to react to partially articulated ideas and to matters of coherence and development" (14). Through dialogue, tutors help writers talk about the subject and discover for themselves what they want to say. Indeed, the purpose in this sense is to support students in the act of internalizing the dialogue (14). By allowing for dialogue, tutees will not feel threatened by the tutor's authority; the students should always feel that they are in control of and have full authority over their papers.

Personal Authority. The term "collaboration" has negative connotations for individualists. It implies a direct relationship between tutors and tutees and a mutual ownership of and responsibility for the paper. Yet, tutors do not claim ownership of, nor do they claim responsibility for, the text that results. Some theorists would argue that the relationship between the "collaborators" need not be equal. Their expertise lies in different areas, and the purpose of the writing center is to provide a (not remedial) service to the students. The service implies a type of "genius" of the tutors, and that the tutors' goal is to help students locate their "authentic voice."

A major conflict can arise when tutors use the "banking" model of tutoring. Even though tutors often see a better way to word students' texts, they need to be careful not to write sentences, paragraphs, or entire papers for tutees. Not only could professors claim that the students plagiarized or "cheated," but morally conscious students could also become resentful of the tutors' written words. Although the students' names are on the

texts, they (and sometimes their professors) become aware of an "other" in the text. More importantly, students do not and cannot learn from tutors who write their papers for them; instead they become dependent on the tutor and the writing center. Finally, opponents who argue that the tutors are the possessors of knowledge believe that the educators' goal is to provide tutees with the tools to tackle their own papers in the future without assistance. When tutors fail to provide their students with these tools, students do not learn what it means to "author" and own a text. Even if tutors have institutional authority over their tutees, students must realize the personal authority they have over their texts.

Institutional Authority

Even in a collaborative learning situation, writing centers can imitate the teacher-student hierarchical relationship. Many writing center scholars view the center as a non-threatening environment where students are not graded on their writing abilities, unlike classrooms where professors evaluate them. Yet, tutors still have a responsibility to the university that employs them and to the faculty who instruct their practice. Opponents of collaborative learning maintain that the tutor-tutee relationship can never be equal because tutors possess institutional authority. Whether or not tutors recognize their power, tutees cannot ignore the facts that, first, an appointment must be made with a university employee, and second, the session is held in the institution's "Writing Center."

According to Lunsford, though, true collaboration *can* occur in the writing center. Yet because tutors often merely act as if they are *not* the authority but still believe they have institutional authority, they enable the power struggle to subsist. She further argues that tutors who pretend to be equal are simply trying to eliminate diversity within the

institution (112). Like Freire, in Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times Nancy Maloney Grimm contends that modernists who argue for individual autonomy attempt to erase differences by making students learn a common singular discourse. By following the agreed-upon discourse (of white, middle-class Americans), writing center tutors allow for discrimination against other races and cultures (105). The results are “institutional oppression,” which Grimm describes as the suppression of minorities’ experiences and emotions and the coercion to accept the dominant culture’s views (104). One way that tutors enable the oppression is by *not* acknowledging its existence within the writing centers and within the academy. Postmodern writing centers should accept students from all races and cultures for the knowledge and experiences they have to offer (108). In essence, Grimm suggests that complete change is not necessary, but tutors need to reconsider their roles in the writing center to reflect on the “other.”

Yet modernists, with whom I agree, would retort that writing is a form of communication, and writing centers enable students to converse effectively within and outside the academy. While tutors do have institutional authority, their role is to help students learn how to communicate their knowledge to their professors by using academic discourse.

Academic Discourse. Like Grimm, some theorists argue that one of the ways that the academy prevents tutees from possessing authority is by using academic discourse—the language of intellectuals. Professors use the language of their field when teaching and ask their students to use that discourse when they write. However, learning “normal

discourse” (Richard Rorty’s terminology) of a particular community is similar to learning a new language, and students are bound to misuse or misinterpret the language. Students use their knowledge of the specialized language, which professors characteristically simplify to sound bites, to make associations and to solve problems within their discipline. However, as Bruffee states, “Not to have mastered the normal discourse of a discipline, no matter how many ‘facts’ or data one may know, is not to be knowledgeable in that discipline. Mastery of a ‘knowledge community’s’ normal discourse is the basic qualification for acceptance into that community” (93). Grimm perceives professors as the gatekeepers of the knowledge community since they evaluate students’ understanding of the normal discourse; they prevent students who fail to learn the discourse and do not move beyond the language of their own cultures from becoming a part of the community. Therefore, in Grimm’s views, the university itself oppresses students by refusing them membership into the academy, which clearly defies the institution’s purpose.

Nevertheless, some writing center scholars perceive the center to be an area where students may practice academic discourse. Within this community students come together, collectively or individually, to practice academic discourse so that they may become members of the “knowledge community” to which their professors belong. Through the act of “pooling resources” (Bruffee’s terminology), tutors and tutees may learn the language that is necessary for them to gain membership. The benefit of discussing discipline-specific issues with a peer from another discipline is that by explaining terms that are unfamiliar to the tutor, the students gain a better understanding of their subjects. The disadvantage, of course, is that misunderstandings and misinterpretations of disciplines other than English may go unrecognized by tutors.

As in teaching, I find that the theories are many times difficult to apply to my practice in the writing center. Notions of equality among teachers and students and among tutors and students are idealistic but, in reality, one always has authority over the other. In my opinion, true collaboration and peership do not and cannot exist in the writing center (or anywhere else for that matter). Writing center tutors specialize in writing and in language skills and the majority of their tutees belong to other disciplines. The graduate writing center, however, is a place for all writers to dialogue about their subjects; through conversation they gain a new understanding and a "critical consciousness" (Freire's terminology) of their subjects.

Similarly, graduate tutors can become critically aware of their practice when they enter into theoretical discussions. Tutors should consider the tensions they find in their practice and in the composition and writing center theories. Since the graduate tutors work with students, and many scholars do not, they should involve themselves in the conversations to provide insight into their practice.

CHAPTER 3

THE WRITING CENTER PLAYERS

The main players in the writing center are the tutors (specifically graduate tutors), tutees, faculty members, and administrators. Depending on the policies and politics of individual universities and writing centers, the members' roles will differ. Employers can help beginning tutors in determining each participant's role in the center. The following are some of the various skills and responsibilities for which each member might be responsible.

Tutoring Skills and Ethics

Two basic skills expected of tutors are active listening and facilitating. While the roles they choose are frequently optional, all tutors should have these skills. Additionally, tutors need to follow some ethical guidelines to demonstrate their professionalism and their respect for their tutees and faculty.

Active Listening

For the tutor, active listening requires listening, questioning, and paraphrasing. One of the tutors' main goals for the sessions should be to encourage tutees to do most of the talking. Simply by listening, tutors can determine students' writing deficiencies, misunderstandings, or specific areas of concern. At the beginning of the consultations, graduate tutors should have students paraphrase the assignment. Afterward, tutors should read the actual assignment sheets, if available, to verify that students correctly understand

the purpose of the project. Also, to further demonstrate their attentiveness to the students, tutors should maintain eye contact throughout the session.

At any point during the session when clarification becomes necessary, tutors need to ask open-ended questions to urge students to elaborate. If writing tutors use closed questions, they limit the possibility for students to speak. Questions such as, "What does this statement mean?" are always preferable to, "Does this statement mean *A* or does it mean *B*?" Using the first method of questioning allows students to use their own words to explain or clarify. In "Using Conferences to Support the Writing Process" Betsy Bowen contends that tutors can help students become more aware of their knowledge and their learning by asking them questions (192). Tutors need to listen carefully since the tutees' responses to questions typically lead to further questions.

Tutors also need to be aware of the different information that they can discover by questioning tutees and by listening to their responses. From students' responses to questions regarding their likes and dislikes about their assignment and their text, tutors can discover their intentions for the paper. Students seldom feel comfortable with more direct questions, such as, "what is it that you intend to do here?" This question puts students on the spot and they can interpret the question to mean that their papers do not effectively communicate their thoughts. However, graduates, whose confidence levels are characteristically higher than undergraduates, are generally more comfortable with such questions; they are more confident about their subject and about writing because of their academic standing. Instead of asking direct questions, tutors may paraphrase their understanding of the points made in students' papers, which can let students know that they have been heard and understood. Moreover, if tutors have become confused, tutees

have the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings. Through questioning tutors may determine which components are essential to the draft. John Roderick states in "Problems in Tutoring," that tutors can also "tactfully and diplomatically convince students to change their prose in a way that is constructive rather than destructive [by] indirectly lead[ing] the students to discover that their written expressions do not say what they intended" (34).

Like undergraduate tutors, graduates need to actively listen to their students. Typically, the subjects of and discourse used in graduates' papers are foreign to the tutors, and therefore, graduate tutors find that their listening skills need to be more acute and refined. Paraphrasing becomes more complex when, for instance, the paper discusses econometrics in labeling or polyploidization of plants and the tutor is unfamiliar with economic or scientific discourse. Paraphrasing and questioning, then, can determine the success or failure of the session. Regardless of the subject, though, graduate tutors can recognize students' writing achievements and deficiencies.

Facilitating

As facilitators, tutors read students' papers and respond to them as an audience. Fishman states that the tutors' main value to writers is to become their audience; "Students, however, feel uncomfortable with this notion of seeking a reader, for they have generally traveled their writing along a one-way street—to one reader alone—the instructor. They think that seeking a tutor is unnatural, even shameful or dishonest" (89). Graduate students similarly feel this discomfort, but since they characteristically invest more interest in their education in general, they realize that their writing skills, or lack

thereof, can determine whether they will graduate or not. As a result, graduate students will seek an audience to complete their degree. Yet when students share their texts with tutors, they benefit from the experience. Not only do the students form a greater understanding of their subject through making clarifications, but they also benefit from seeing how a reader reacts to their work *at the moment*.

Graduate tutors must possess these facilitating skills for tutees to fully benefit from their consultations. Almsy contends that during this “sharing process” (Kenneth Burke’s terminology), tutors develop into “objective, inquisitive, helpful, non-threatening reader[s]” (14). The dialogue that forms through facilitation is an essential part of the writing process. The ultimate goal is to assist writers in the process of “internaliz[ing] this dialogue” that occurs between tutors and tutees (15). In other words, tutors should help students learn to become their own readers: to be objective and inquisitive of their own compositions. Ideally, tutees should become independent writers.

Ethics

Following some basic ethical guidelines will keep tutors from having any unwanted or unnecessary confrontations with other tutors, tutees, faculty members, or administrators. Possibly the most important ethical guideline to follow is to keep tutees’ work confidential. Many papers that graduate tutors read are works in progress that will either lead to students’ theses or dissertations, will become published, or will be presented at conferences. Revealing any information discussed within the paper to anyone other than the students themselves breaks the students’ confidentiality. Furthermore, tutors should only speak to students’ instructors about assignments or

papers with the students' permission. Basically, students should remain anonymous, and tutors should be the only people to read or discuss their papers in the writing center.

Other main concerns are plagiarism, punctuality, and reliability. The biggest concern of professors and administrators is that when students visit the writing center, someone other than the student who is accountable for the paper is actually writing it. Plagiarism has become an even more vocalized concern since many tutors call themselves collaborators. (For more information on plagiarism and collaboration, see Chapter 2 under the subheading Collaborative Learning.)

Other main concerns of students are that tutors be punctual and reliable. Graduate students have busy lives, and they expect to have a portion of tutors' time at the time of their appointments. Showing up late or not showing up at all demonstrates tutors' irresponsibility and lack of concern for their tutees.

Tutors' Roles

Tutors have numerous responsibilities and, depending on the university, the various roles that tutors adopt are what I call the editor, the educator, the physician, the ally, the peer, the expert, and the conversationalist. Graduate tutors may choose to take on more than one role, especially when tutoring at different stages of the writing process. As discussed earlier, however, some writing centers may require tutors to engage in specific practices to comply with university policies or procedures.

The Editor

Tutors who take on the role of editor follow the current-traditional model of teaching composition. Inexperienced tutors invariably rely on this approach because identifying students' mistakes is much easier than directing students to critically think about their subject. Besides, tutors will find that focusing on the grammatical details is much less complicated than concentrating on structure and content. Too, editing is much easier than confronting unfamiliar discourses. Instead, tutors may want to consider Roderick's idea of "put[ting] the burden of the correction upon the student's shoulders, where it belongs, and avoid[ing] succumbing to the temptation of playing the answerer who identifies all problems at the drop of a punctuation mark" (38).

Because many tutors fall back on the current-traditional model of tutoring, most tutees and faculty members expect the center to offer a free editing service. As discussed in Chapter 2, many students are "sent" to the writing center to "fix" their papers. If tutors decide to edit, they will only promote this idea of the writing center as a place of remediation. Hopefully, at the graduate level, students should have a better comprehension of the English language and of grammar, and therefore, editing should be less of an issue for graduate tutors. Unfortunately, in my experience, many graduate students equate the writing center to a fix-it grammar shop and are disappointed when I notify them of the writing center's purpose. Informing students before or at the time they make their appointments about what really occurs during a session can help to eliminate these expectations.

The Educator

The role of the educator is to teach students to write well, not to locate symptoms of poor writing as the editor does. The educator follows the process model of teaching composition. Informing students about the writing process enables students to recognize the “repeatable” acts they perform each time they compose (Fishman 89). Once they become familiar with their own practices, they can refine them to improve their writing. For example, many students’ composing process involves two steps: writing a draft and then proofreading it. Many view proofreading as an equivalent to revision and do not realize the importance of content revision. In short, tutors can educate students on the actual processes of prewriting, writing, and rewriting by focusing on those general issues of clarity, organization, cogency, and coherence, even at the graduate level.

This is not to say that grammar and spelling are not important, but as David Price Moore and Mary A. Poppino state in Successful Tutoring, “These features will become important when the paper is in the finished draft, but they are the ‘frosting’ which should be attended to only after the ‘pastry’ is properly baked” (120-1). When graduate tutors become educators, they encourage the intellectual development of their students.

The greater the graduate educator-tutors’ active listening, facilitating, and dialoguing skills, the more helpful they will be in eliciting good writing. I have found that most students at the graduate level realize that “rewriting” involves content revision and are welcome to suggestions for that revision. Nevertheless, some students, realizing the complexity that can be involved in the revision process, are resistant to and hesitant about making drastic changes. From my experience, talking about the writing process in

general and my own composing process specifically helps to reduce some of the students' anxieties.

The Physician

Unlike the editor, the tutor-as-physician does not "fix" papers. Rather, the physician diagnoses the tutees' writing deficiencies: tutors must identify the students' needs.

Muriel Harris's "Individual Diagnosis: Searching for Causes, Not Symptoms of Writing Deficiencies" suggests that the session's success depends on the efficiency of the analysis

(53). She proposes that the following are three areas of concern:

- 1) the diagnosis which identifies the deficiencies in the student's writing, 2) the on-going diagnosis during instruction which reveals what the student does not know or is confused about, and 3) the diagnosis which reveals those attitudes, apprehensions, and perhaps hostilities which can keep writers from learning what they need to know. (53)

Moreover, Harris recommends using questionnaires to search for the causes. While this is not a bad idea, questionnaires should only be used as supplementary tools to identify deficiencies, since students often do not know where their problems originate. Carefully listening to their comments during the session though should help tutors detect the source of the errors.

In general, graduate students submit lengthy papers, such as professional papers or theses, for the tutors to read prior to their sessions. Besides benefiting from reading texts before sessions, tutors can discover errors that writers otherwise might not have exposed in shorter texts. With the help of questionnaires that are completed prior to the session, physician-tutors have the opportunity to begin making a diagnosis before meeting with students.

The Ally

The tutor who accepts the responsibility of the ally ensures students' comfort and increases their confidence. Some scholars, such as Lil Brannon, would argue that tutors' written skills are not as crucial as their interpersonal skills. Yet she contends that these skills are very similar, in that, "to be effective one must always be aware of audience, purpose, and craft" (105).

To be certain that students are comfortable, tutors should briefly introduce themselves at the beginning of the tutoring session. Also, they should ask the students about their writing background and the degree they are seeking. At this time, tutors can ask questions pertaining to the paper or thesis that the student is currently writing. Graduate tutors have a responsibility to be tactful when discussing writing deficiencies with their tutees, and also, to inform tutees about their positive writing abilities. Being friendly alone will help to make tutees comfortable during the session. Further, tact and positivism will enhance students' levels of confidence.

At the beginning of sessions, I introduce myself and ask students to introduce themselves. I do not waste too much time getting to know the students; rather, throughout the session we get to know each other by exchanging knowledge and experiences. In my opinion, graduate tutors' responsibilities do not include becoming friends with their students, nor do they entail "siding" with them against professors or the university. This, of course, is not to say that blunt comments about students' writing deficiencies are appropriate; tactfulness and consideration are essential whenever working with others.

The Peer

The peer tutor agrees with the notion of collaborative learning. As discussed in Chapter 2, collaborative learning involves two or more people who both gain knowledge and/or experience through the equal contribution to a project. As such, both peers gain knowledge from the tutorial. In order for tutors to be peers, though, they must first view themselves as writers and then as students. Bruffee indicates that when tutors portray themselves as writers to their peers and then present similarities between them, they can eliminate students' feelings of "intellectual paralysis" (qtd in Fishman 88). In addition to sharing experiences and knowledge with tutees, tutors share their writing anxieties. Since most students lack confidence in their writing and actually fear criticism, peer tutors must be sensitive to students' anxieties. Peer tutors may likely learn more about writing than their peers, since they invariably become more aware of their own writing processes and practices when helping others. Yet, to create the equality in learning, tutees may gain more knowledge of their discipline or paper topic when explaining their subject to their peers. Tutoring allows for peers to become included in each other's intellectual growth.

Peer tutors can create a collaborative learning environment by making students comfortable in the writing center, as the ally does. Tutors should sit beside their peers, rather than across from them as an authority figure would. This simple act demonstrates to students that together they will collaborate on the project. Also, sitting next to the tutee on the same side as the tutor's dominant hand allows tutees to see the peer tutor's written comments more clearly. These acts also demonstrate that the students, not the tutors, are responsible and accountable for the text.

I partially agree with Bruffee's concept of peership. I have learned and become more critically conscious of my writing skills from helping others with their writing. I disagree with the term "peer," in which I have already expressed disbelief; equality cannot exist in the writing center. Graduate tutors will always have more institutional authority and more knowledge of composing, and graduate tutees will most likely possess greater knowledge about their subjects than their tutors. The inevitable inequality, though, does not mean that the graduate tutors and tutees cannot actively participate in the tutorials.

The Expert

Writing experts acknowledge that they have a greater understanding of the English language than other students. They often view themselves as others do. In effect, by perceiving themselves as experts, they also view themselves as authority. One responsibility of authority figures is to evaluate others. As Fishman states:

The core of the tutors' work will be to evaluate writing by learning to respond, primarily, to the whole piece of writing, studying the structure—overt or implicit—of a given piece; noting how the parts fit (or do not fit); what the support is and how it works; how the sentences move; how the language works; where the communication falters; where a hint of an idea emerges, pointing the way to what the writer may be trying to say. (90)

Because of tutors' ability to perform as such, tutees value and respect tutors' expertise of the language.

A problem may arise, however, when tutors communicate with students who are unfamiliar with academic discourse. Surprisingly, graduate tutors must confront this issue when tutoring first-year graduate students or ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Some scholars, such as Moore and Poppino, advise student-tutors to

