THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY AND THE AUTHORITY OF ROLES IN PEER WRITING TUTORIALS

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> I wondered at the beginning why writers who were trying to figure out the right way to do things on the written page were exposed to tutors who were trying to figure out the right way to tutor. Seemed awfully unfair to the writers. But I think I had a skewed idea about what a tutor is. I think I saw tutoring as a type of one-to-one teaching, without the classroom. Never thought of it as a pair of sympathetic ears, never thought of tutoring as an exercise in listening.
>
> Charlene Benjamin, Peer Tutor

Like Charlene, most novice tutors are confused "about what a tutor is." Expecting to read for one part—the term *tutor*, after all, means "private teacher"—new tutors arrive at our writing center to find they have been cast in loosely defined roles for which they have no model or script. Instead of private teacher, the tutor is to be fellow writer, co-learner, "more capable peer"; instead of teaching a lesson, the tutor is to converse about writing.

Though peer tutors may question their qualifications to play the role of private teacher, the one who knows the "right way to do things on the written page," at least this role is familiar. Years of schooling offer a reservoir of role models and scripts for how to proceed. By contrast, the roles of fellow writer and co-learner are unfamiliar and cannot be simply invoked. To complicate matters further, tutors are likely to encounter student writers who are "conditioned to surrender total control [of their writing] to another," and who therefore want and expect them to take charge and play the role of teacher (Harris 40). If peer tutoring is to counteract such conditioning and "overturn" students' perceptions of writing and learning (Redfern 2), it is essential that the peer tutor not act as the teacher's understudy.

In the early years of the writing center movement, when tutoring programs were not in fact "centers" but clinics or labs specializing in error detection and grammar drills, peer tutorials were thought of as one-to-one supplements to classroom instruction with the tutor playing the part of what Bruffee calls the "little teacher" and the tutee the part of student ("Brooklyn Plan" 463). But since the mid-70s, this scenario and participants' roles have undergone radical revision. Rather than a clinic for ailing writers, the contemporary center provides assistance to all writers; and rather than a supplement to the classroom, the contemporary center offers an alternative context for learning, one in which the student writer shares responsibility for the learning and maintains authority over the writing. Key to this alternative context for learning are revised roles for tutor and writer which foreground the role of *peer* rather than the role of *tutor* and the role of *writer* rather than the role of *tutee*. Advocates of this alternative context, however, differ in their articulation of its goals (Hemmeter 40-41). For some, the goal is to "restore" authority to student writers, authority that is often denied them in traditional classroom settings (Warnock and Warnock 16-23). For others, the goal is not so much focused on the individual writer as on the collaboration between peer tutor and writer: "The point of peer tutoring . . . is not the delivery of knowledge from tutor to tutee but an experience of their powers as learners that will lead peers to discover authority in each other" (Kail and Trimbur 10-11).

As Charlene's journal entry suggests, first-time peer tutors frequently find these revised roles and these idealized goals

confusing. And as the above statements suggest, we who train and supervise peer tutors are not always consistent or clear in explaining how theoretical conceptions of the peer tutor's role ought to translate into practice. In the following essay, we briefly review current writing center debates about the peer tutor's role and authority, then turn to three case studies to investigate the ways in which first-time tutors and their clients enact role and authority in their tutorial relationships.

The Peer Tutor's Role in Theory

Not surprisingly, "defining the role of the peer tutor and helping tutors understand that role" becomes "perhaps the most critical problem writing center directors face" (Ashton-Jones 29). In theory, the *peer* dimension of the tutor's role is often defined in terms of what the peer tutor *is not* rather than in terms of what the peer tutor *is*. As Jay Jacoby explains, "The success of peer tutors in writing centers is contingent not so much on what peer tutors *are* but rather on what they *are not*" (1). Since peer tutors are not teachers with "grade-giving" power over other students, the assumption is that this absence of role-given authority and professional status translates into the presence of other, positive attributes: "[B]ecause they are not *English* teachers . . . peer tutors can be trusted. . . . Unlike English teachers, they are normal, 'real people,' *peers*. . . . We [tutor trainers] must help them to realize that their greatest strength may lie in their vulnerability, their nonprofessional, nonauthoritarian status" (Jacoby 1-2).

Others, of course, define peer tutors in terms of what they are: "the social equals of the students they tutor" (Bruffee, "Brooklyn Plan" 463). Since peer tutors are fellow students, status equals of the students they tutor, they presumably have much in common with their tutees. Accordingly, peer tutors and their tutees can identify with and understand one another, thereby creating an "open" and "intimate" context for learning: "Tasks are accomplished because there is a mutual effort between friends, a situation of closeness, not distance, that fosters a sense of community in which the language learner *can take risks without fear of penalty*" (Hawkins 29-30). Similarly, Kenneth Bruffee contends that this congeniality and intimacy cures students of the "intellectual paralysis" they so often experience

in traditional classrooms and lecture halls: "Given the opportunity to talk with sympathetic peers, these same students seemed to discover knowledge they did not know they had. They could identify and examine issues in these subjects, take positions on them, and defend their positions in ways they . . . had not thought possible" ("Brooklyn Plan" 450-51). In short, the intimacy and openness of the peer tutorial puts the student writer at ease, enabling her to take the risks necessary both to intellectual growth and the development of writing abilities.

However, defining the role of the tutor as peer only acknowledges half of the equation. Defining the other half of the equation—the *tutor* dimension of the peer tutor's role—has created controversy among writing center theorists and practitioners. Some question whether there exists such a person as a *peer tutor*, implying that one role cancels out the other (North 33); others argue that while the tutor is usually a "more advanced" student or "more accomplished" writer, the tutor is "still living the undergraduate life" and therefore able to identify readily with the writer: "The tutor is further along than the tutee, but both know that the tutor is not so far along as to have forgotten what learning how to cope with the system is like" (Hawkins 30). Still others avoid the idea of the tutor as expert writer or more advanced student by defining the distinction between tutor and writer in terms of training: "We define peer tutoring as two students, one trained as a writing tutor and another seeking feedback or help with writing" (Matsuhashi et al. 298).

Those who make a theoretical case for the tutor's role as "more capable" peer do so in socio-cognitive and/or social constructionist terms. As "more capable peer," the tutor draws on experience and training to manage the conversation in ways that promote intellectual growth in general and academic ways of thinking, conversing, and writing in particular. Acting as what we might call cognitive facilitator, the tutor offers "the intellectual scaffolding" necessary to help the writer "get to higher ground mentally" (Matsuhashi). Put differently, the peer tutor, through a "loan of consciousness" (Matsuhashi), enables the writer to operate in her "zone of proximal development," which Vygotsky defines as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving

under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (*Mind in Society* 86). The socio-cognitive model, then, does not posit the writer as ignorant and the tutor as knowledgeable, but rather posits the writer as having relevant knowledge and skills which she can more readily and fully tap with a more capable peer's encouragement and assistance.

From a social constructionist perspective, the peer tutor helps initiate fellow students into academic discourse communities by translating the codes and conventions of these communities into understandable terms. As one tutor explains, "I want to stress the accessibility of these language skills, not grant them some kind of elitist status" (Hawkins 28). "From the tutee's point of view," writes Hawkins, the tutor is "both an insider and an outsider," someone who has learned to manage successfully the demands of academic writing and who can help the tutee learn to do the same (30). Moreover, the peer tutor provides this "inside" information and practice in conversing like an "insider" in a context similar to the one in which most students will eventually learn the specialized discourses of the professions, that is, in the company of "knowledgeable peers" ("Bruffee Peer Tutoring" 8-9). In describing this aspect of the peer tutor's role, theorists are careful to attribute equal knowledge and authority to the writer. Although the tutor brings knowledge of academic discourse conventions to the tutorial conversation, the writer brings knowledge of the subject and assignment (Bruffee, "Peer Tutoring" 10).

The Peer Tutor's Role in Practice

In practice, however, peer tutors find problematic their double role as fellow student and "more capable" peer. As fellow student, the tutor feels conflicting social allegiances. On the one hand, the tutor identifies with and feels loyal to her fellow student; on the other hand, she identifies with and feels loyal to the academy which has designated her a "good student" and invested her with "a certain institutional authority" in its appointment of her as tutor (Trimbur, "Peer Tutoring" 23). And as more capable peer, the tutor is aware that despite theory's claims for the writer's "separate but equal" knowledge and authority, the tutor's knowledge counts for more in the context of the writing tutorial. Such differences between tutor and writer

in relationship to the institution and in knowledge and experience threaten the balance of roles and shared authority envisioned in theory.

To downplay these complications and reduce the confusion knotted into the peer tutor's role, many writing centers have replaced the title with other designations such as *consultant*, *assistant*, or *advisor*.[1] However, a recent study of the experiences of high school "writing assistants" suggests that a change in title neither eliminates the confusion nor the authority associated with the tutor's role (Smulyan and Bolton). Based on the responses of twenty-three writing assistants, Smulyan and Bolton conclude that by both title and training, the peer tutor's role, however designated, confers a certain kind of authority, and as a result, "students must work to overcome the disparity of authority inherent in their given roles of tutor and tutee" (43).

At the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Writing Center, which is staffed primarily by peer tutors, we are keenly aware of the ambiguities and double binds implicit in the peer tutor's role. Like most contemporary centers, we encourage our tutors to act both as fellow student, specifically as fellow writer, and "more capable" peer. Inevitably, these two aspects of the peer tutor's role offer a somewhat mixed message about how to proceed. Tutors are told to "keep the authority for the writing with the writer;" then they are told to manage the session and to employ their expertise in helping the writer interpret the meaning of the task and the text at hand. As a result, tutors frequently evaluate their tutoring effectiveness in terms of their use of authority. "I think I was too directive and ended up telling the writer what seemed to be wrong," confesses one tutor. Or alternately, as another worries, "Perhaps I wasted too much time beating around the bush, trying to get the writer to identify the problem. I should have just told him what was wrong."

To learn more about tutors' negotiation of role and authority within peer tutorial conferences, we audiotaped the conversations of three tutorial pairs during the first semester of their work together.[2] We also interviewed each participant near the beginning and toward the end of the semester and collected journals, tutor evaluations, and course essays. All three tutors were novices, enrolled in our peer tutoring practicum; and all three

writers were enrolled in the same section of first-year composition, which met once a week in our university's computer lab. Most tutorial sessions took place in the lab immediately following class.

We began our study with several open-ended questions: 1) What preconceptions about role and authority do tutors and writers bring to the peer tutorial encounter? 2) What roles emerge in particular tutorial relationships and do these roles resemble those imagined in theory? 3) How do role and authority affect the interaction between tutor and writer? In each of the analytical narratives which follows, we explore these questions, as well as others which emerged from these particular cases.

Suzanne and Kari: Tutor as Exorcist

I've never really tutored anyone before—at least not in English. Most of my experience is from a few years ago when I was an education major and had to help first graders with mathematics. . . . Little first graders need help. It's only natural. These are children who are learning things for the very first time. But these are college students. . . . Here I am, helping people write—something they've been doing all of their lives.

Suzanne, Journal Entry

Writing has not always been glorious. It has also been the demon in my heart, expository writing being the prime example.

Kari, Essay #1 ("Mixed Emotions")

As Suzanne's journal entry and Kari's essay suggest, both tutor and writer bring various anxieties to their first tutorial conversation. Each is uncertain about her ability to perform her assigned role successfully, Suzanne as a tutor of college writers, Kari as a writer of expository essays. To Suzanne, a junior with a double major in English and Mass Communications, tutoring is a variant of teaching, and teaching means helping students acquire *new* skills and information. Tutoring students in writing, "something they've been doing all their lives," seems somehow "unnatural." If the student is still a poor writer after all these

years, Suzanne implies, then how can Suzanne be knowledgeable enough to help? If the student is competent, then why does the student need a tutor? Despite her tutor instructor's attempt to characterize the tutorial conversation as a "natural" activity for all writers, Suzanne, at least at this early juncture, is not convinced.

For her part, Kari, a freshman majoring in pre-med, brings "mixed emotions" (the title of her first essay) to her first-year composition course. Writing for Kari falls into two categories: "stories" over which she has authority and control and expository essays over which she feels neither authority nor control. In the former, she writes from personal experience, using subjects about which she is knowledgeable; moreover, she can be "creative" and comparatively free of teacher-imposed constraints. Conversely, she feels entirely out of control when she writes school essays. Forced to write on subjects about which she has little knowledge, often under a time constraint and in compliance with conventions that she only partially understands, she feels her efforts are futile: "The feeling of emptiness I have after writing an essay can be compared to the feeling you get after running a race in which you tried your hardest but still lost" (Mixed Emotions").

Little wonder, then, that Kari dreads her first-year composition class where she will have to face her nemesis head-on. "I call expository writing 'my so-called death'," she writes in "Mixed Emotions," "because I always feel the same two emotions of scariness and emptiness when I am writing a paper as I do when I think of my own death." However we interpret the melodramatic images of the lost race and death—as unconscious or conscious rhetorical ploys to elicit her teacher's sympathy and aid—they explain her enthusiastic acceptance of the help offered through peer tutoring and her inclination to regard her tutor as a possible savior, someone who can help her exorcise this "demon" from her heart.

To their mutual relief, Suzanne and Kari's first session goes smoothly, in part, because of their similarity in background and age. Both came directly from high school to college; both are white, middle-class Wisconsin natives; and perhaps most important, both are highly motivated, successful students who agree during their first session that anything less than an A is unacceptable. Kari's intense anxiety about her first-year college course

stems not from a sense of inadequacy born of past failures but rather from a need to live up to the high standards of academic performance that she and her parents have come to expect from her.

Instead of waiting for Suzanne to take the lead, Kari initiates the conversation with a question: "I had a basic question for Suzanne . . . I wanted to know if my paper was collegey or if it was a simple high school paper." As it turns out, Kari's "basic question" offers a fruitful point of departure. For one thing, it establishes her as an active participant in the conversation from the outset. For another, it elicits an answer from Suzanne that alleviates some of Kari's fears:

> I wasn't sure how to answer Kari's question about college writing. When you first start writing, things are a little scary, and I think she's still in that shell. She mainly does step one, step two, step three, which seems a little drab. She needs to open up, and put more of herself in her papers, add more pizzazz to her writing. I just told her an advanced paper is more developed. (Journal Entry)

Having made the transition from high school to college only two years earlier, Suzanne identifies with Kari's fears and offers a shorthand answer which is both tactful and reassuring. She collapses what she has learned about college writing, notions of voice, style, and substance, into a one-sentence explanation: "An advanced paper is more developed." By simply defining college writing and ignoring Kari's request for evaluation, Suzanne avoids what might be a discouraging assessment. At the same time, she eases some of Kari's anxiety by defining college writing in familiar and manageable-sounding terms. As Kari puts it, Suzanne's answer "relieved some of the fear I had about college writing."

Summing up her response to this first session, Kari writes in her journal: "It was a break from the usual teacher-student relationship. It wasn't all just her talking or just me talking." Not only is their conversation a break from the "usual" monologue Kari has come to expect from talks with teachers, but also their conversation breaks down the "usual" formal language of teacher and textbook talk about writing. As Thom Hawkins explains, peer tutors "break down the distance between persons, a dis-

tance students perceive as between language systems" (28). Had Kari not been talking to a peer, a fellow student, it seems unlikely she would have revealed her sense of inadequacy or her fear that her paper might be a "simple high school paper." And had Suzanne not been talking to an anxious younger peer, in the "intimate," informal context of a tutorial conversation, it seems unlikely that she would have offered such an uncompli- cated definition of college writing. In effect, Suzanne "translates" the intimidating phrase "college writing," a phrase undoubtedly made more intimidating by well meaning high school teachers, into disarming, familiar terms, thereby "relieving" some of Kari's fears. Rather than a foreign, unfamiliar type of writing, a college paper is just "an advanced" version, an older relative, of the already familiar high school essay. And rather than a task involving unfamiliar vocabulary and knowledge beyond Kari's grasp, college writing is just "more developed."

In addition to reassuring Kari, Suzanne's off-the-cuff answer sets the stage for future tutorials in a variety of other ways, by establishing Suzanne as an "authority" on college writing in Kari's eyes; by offering an agenda for subsequent sessions; and by providing a procedure for carrying out that agenda. Through- out the rest of the semester, they work on "development" in the following manner. Kari brings a rough draft which she reads aloud; they then decide what the draft lacks—details, examples, explanations, or transitions—and proceed to add the missing features. Occasionally, they decide that the draft is developed enough and move on to editing. But perhaps most important, this agenda and way of proceeding offer mutually acceptable roles, Suzanne's as critical reader and interlocutor, Kari's as supplier of additional content.

Behind this consensus about agenda, however, are contrary interpretations of what it means to develop an essay. To Kari, "development" initially means simply adding information, an- other step in her already formulaic writing process. As a pre- med student, Kari feels she must earn A's in every course; however, she knows from past experience that earning high grades in writing classes can be tricky. Unlike science and math with their set formulas and right answers, the "correct" response in a writing class is often elusive and unpredictable, a matter of psyching out the teacher. Such situations make the achievement- oriented Kari very uneasy and explain the appeal of her step-

by-step approach to writing, which at least offers some sense of control.

To Suzanne, however, "development" is much more than just the addition of information. An advanced writer, fresh out of several creative writing classes, Suzanne thinks of development in terms of voice and originality. Working on development, as she explains in her journal, is an attempt to wean Kari away from her formulaic approach and enable her "to put more of herself" in her writing. In the writing profile written for her peer tutoring practicum, Suzanne recalls "hating" writing in high school, particularly a class in which the teacher measured margins and counted off for contractions. Advanced college writing courses, by contrast, have encouraged her "to break the rules sometimes in order to make it interesting." In short, she has learned to trust her own judgments and to feel a sense of authority over her writing: "One [teacher] says to do an outline; another says to scrap the outline . . . I say scrap it *all* and just start writing." What Suzanne means by "development"—a willingness to experiment with style, to push ideas beyond the obvious, to search for a fresh angle—however, requires confidence in one's own judgments and such confidence comes from successful experience. It is this "knowledge" which allows Suzanne to "put more of herself" in her writing, and it is this knowledge which she hopes to pass on to Kari. Unfortunately, such knowledge cannot be directly taught or transferred to another.

Nevertheless, Suzanne and Kari's established procedure appears to be a means to both of their ends. Suzanne's location of "omissions" or gaps in Kari's papers and her prompts for elaboration offer Kari the concrete guidance she desires. And despite her differing goals for their sessions, Suzanne also finds this procedure appealing because it keeps in check her impulse to take over and simply direct Kari's revisions. Though she wishes for Kari to be more "creative" in her writing, Suzanne knows that asserting one's writerly authority entails risk. Since she understands Kari's concern about grades, she is hesitant to give advice that might jeopardize Kari's grade. Consequently, she feels pulled between acting the part of "little teacher," who translates the teacher's expectations for the tutee and thus enables the student to earn a better grade, and the part of fellow

writer, who encourages independence and creativity, even if it means rebelling against teacher expectations.

Her probe and prompt strategy offers a solution to this dilemma. Through it, she can guide and encourage revision without directly telling Kari what to do, thereby insuring that any changes made and risks taken are at Kari's initiative. Furthermore, this strategy appeals to Suzanne because it appears to conform to the ideal of shared authority set forth in her tutor preparation class. As critical reader, Suzanne can identify omissions or gaps in the text, and as tutor, she can prompt additional content through questions. At the same time, Kari remains the author, the generator of this new material. The following session, which occurred during the middle of the semester, illustrates the probe and prompt strategy at work and reveals both its limitations and benefits.

Given the opportunity to choose her own topic, Kari has decided to try a re-run of a high school essay after unsuccessfully trying to write one on dieting. Her topic for this essay was *love*, a topic about which Suzanne expresses uncharacteristic dissaproval: "I would never choose a topic like that." Behind this comment is the message that this kind of topic is unsuitable for college writers. Such an overdetermined term cannot possibly be defined adequately, and choosing such a term marks one as a naive newcomer to academic discourse. Ignoring this hidden message or perhaps unaware of it, Kari explains, the essay received an A in high school—"One teacher liked it"—and besides she is now short of time having abandoned her original topic idea.

Written in the "definition" mode, the essay discusses love between parent and child first, then romantic love which she subdivides into puppy love and true love. What they together diagnose as "lacking" are transitions and clear distinctions between types or stages of romantic love. "Can you think of a way to tie together parental love with romantic love?" Suzanne asks. Kari replies: "I could say, 'You grow and survive on the parental love and this sort of teaches you how to love other people.' " Continuing in interlocutor fashion, Suzanne queries Kari about her definition of puppy love. This leads Kari to make a distinction between puppy love, which she defines as peculiar to very young children, and infatuation, which she defines as adolescent crushes: "I could say 'Puppy love grows and then

the next step is infatuation as you grow into the high school years, and then, you know, when you grow older, you eventually experience true love.' " Although this prompt and probe strategy appears rather mechanical, in actuality, their conversation is lively, punctuated with laughter about episodes of *The Brady Bunch* and stories of adolescent crushes. Instead of the isolated, onerous task described in "Mixed Emotions," the writing which occurs during this session is social, even enjoyable.

Not only does this esay, social conversation offer a new context for writing, but also it encourages Kari to explore and complicate her simplistic, slogan-like definitions of love. The "tricky part" (Suzanne's phrase) of Kari's revision involves distinguishing "true love" from infatuation. Several comments both in the draft and in their conversation suggest that this difficulty prompted the original high school version. In her original essay, Kari writes, "No one person has the right or wrong philosophy of love. We are all individuals with different concepts of what love is. No person has the right to tell another he or she is not in love." Elaborating on this passage, Kari says, "You know, like right now I feel like I'm in love. People say I'm only infatuated but I *know* [her emphasis to me] I'm in love." Though she doesn't say so, those "people" are undoubtedly her parents, and this essay is, in part, a declaration of her right to define her own experience. Unlike Kari's parents or other adults, Suzanne does not discount or question her interpretation of her experience, and this sense of being understood enables Kari to think aloud and interrogate her own experience.

Specifically, Suzanne and Kari try to resolve a key contradiction that both have experienced in their romantic relationships. On the one hand, they agree that trust is a defining characteristic of in "true love;" on the other hand, they have both found that jealousy also accompanies the experience of being in love. This contradiction forces Kari to begin to question the sufficiency of popular sentiments about love. The shift which occurs as a result of this discussion is, in part, a shift in audience. Rather than a defensive retort aimed at parents, this section of her essay becomes an attempt to explain her experience to herself: "Love is complicated to explain. It involves jealousy and trust levels and although they seem like opposites, they aren't." To illustrate this point, Kari includes an abbreviated version of a personal experience which Suzanne relates during their conversation, an

incident in which Suzanne struggles between trust and mistrust of a boyfriend who is rumored to be involved with a co-worker.

Although the final version of this essay offers slender evidence for any claims of writing "growth," this essay coupled with the "text" of the tutorial conversation represents a change in Kari's relationship to her writing. In the context of this trusted and "intimate" tutorial relationship, Kari begins to see her writing as something more than the perfunctory fulfillment of a task imposed by an external authority; she begins to see it as an occasion to analyze her own experience. In so doing, she struggles with the unsettling, unresolvable conflicts implicit in serious writing which, as Jasper Neel explains, "poisons the internal security" of one's beliefs about a subject by revealing the "insufficient basis" for one's beliefs and the impossibility of "finishing" or achieving neat closure about any subject (83). In the final version of her paper, Kari discards both social platitudes—"True love is a body and soul commitment"—and claims of purely subjective truth—"No one person has the right or wrong philosophy of love"—admitting, instead, that "love is complicated to explain." Further, she exposes her inability to explain by leaving the following contradiction unexplained: "Trust and jealousy . . . seem like contradictions [but] aren't." Both her admission of uncertainty and her inclusion of an unfinished thought signal the beginning of a more mature perspective, one that recognizes the insufficiency of both "received" popular ideas about human experience and the notion that writing is simply a process of transcribing neatly formulated, unproblematic ideas.

Though we are reluctant to make claims about the effects of this tutorial relationship on Kari's writing development, Kari feels no such reluctance: "I wouldn't be at this place in my writing without her. When Suzanne said college writing was just more developed than high school writing, that inspired my confidence because I knew I could do that" (Final Interview). On a somewhat more tentative note, Suzanne sums up their work during her final interview by saying that although Kari is still "pretty clinical," that is "uncreative," in her writing, "her attitude toward writing changed. I think she feels a bit more secure." This increased sense of security and confidence, Suzanne goes on to explain, led Kari to play an increasingly active

role in the tutorial conversation as the semester progressed: "She wasn't afraid to say 'What do you mean?' and 'I knew you were going to say that.'"

Clearly, Suzanne played many roles in their tutorial relationship, some of which enact the roles imagined by theory. As fellow student, Suzanne offered friendship, support, and understanding, which, in turn, allowed Kari to test and expand ideas without threat of penalty. As "more capable" peer or veteran college writer, Suzanne tried to translate her knowledge of college writing into practical, nonthreatening terms. Additionally, she offered Kari an accessible role model of the college writer who is concerned simultaneously with success in traditional academic terms and insistent on her ultimate authority and responsibility for her writing. No role, however, was more important than Suzanne's role as exorcist. With her incantations to elaborate and to put "more of herself in her writing," Suzanne helped Kari de-mystify the demon of "expository college writing" and drive away the forces of self-doubt and fear.

Lauren and Alana: Tutor as Efficiency Expert

I am really looking forward to tutoring because I like to help others. . . . A new analogy for a tutor could be a guidance counselor. I feel somewhat unsure of how to start, [but] I'm certain that things will just take off naturally.

Lauren, Journal Entry

Going back to college, the thing I dreaded most was a writing course. I thought everyone else would be such a good writer and here I am at the beginning. I think I can do it with the proper guidance, but I do need a lot of tutoring though. A lot.

Alana, Initial Interview

Despite Alana and Lauren's initial optimism, things do not "just take off naturally." Although they both refer to tutoring as a kind of "guidance," what each means by this term differs. To Alana, a guide is an expert who can properly instruct and direct a beginner's development; to Lauren, a guide is a counselor who listens and facilitates, not directs, another's growth. This

contrast in expectations coupled with a number of other factors—
their difference in age and ethnic background, Lauren's shy and
reticent personality—results in a series of unproductive sessions
which are frustrating to both. Summing up her response to their
first session, Alana writes in her first tutorial evaluation, "I have
to say I was somewhat disappointed at first with the tutor
assigned to me. It took us a while to get started. I felt a little
bit uncomfortable waiting for her to start things off."

Alana comes to English 101 as a thirty-one-year-old night
student, married with two small children. By day she works as
a secretary in one of Milwaukee's largest urban high schools,
coincidentally her alma mater. She had moved to Milwaukee
from Mexico at thirteen, learning both a new language and new
customs. In her thirteen years as a secretary, she has had to
write business letters and memos regularly. Writing in this con-
text, under the pressure of deadlines, has revealed to Alana
certain weaknesses in her writing and produced a concern for
efficiency:

> What I most dislike and fear about writing is when I'm
> under pressure and my boss tells me, 'I need you to
> respond to Mr. So and So's letter,' and rushes me into
> getting it completed immediately inquiring every minute or
> so if it's ready. This makes me feel and look very ineffi-
> cient. . . . It's not only the pressure of creating a letter in
> such limited time but it's also my weakness in not being
> able to quickly come up with the right word choice and
> properly organizing it. (Initial Interview)

These "weaknesses"—her slowness in coming up "with the right
word choice" and in organizing "properly"—cause Alana anxiety
about college writing which will not only involve deadlines but
also require her to generate all of the content. As she goes on
to explain, she is already experiencing an increased sense of
"inefficiency" in her first-year writing course:

> I do like, what you call brainstorming, right? And I have
> so many ideas in my head and just start writing. But then
> I don't know how to organize it, you know? I have all
> different types of writing all over the place. . . . I have no
> idea what I am doing. I spend hours just trying . . . I'd

say from maybe 2:00 in the afternoon till about 10:00 at night, just sitting there writing until I get tired of it and then continue the next day.

If such long, relatively unproductive writing stretches weren't frustrating enough for Alana, the spectre of the university's impromptu writing exam adds to her concern about efficiency. As her first-year instructor has been reminding the class, all students must pass a ninety-minute writing exam to gain junior standing, and Alana is already worried that her "inefficiency" will make it impossible to write a passing essay in the time allowed. Understandably, Alana hopes that her tutor will be a knowledgeable writer, someone who can teach her how to write efficiently and competently.

Lauren, however, a quiet twenty-one-year-old college senior, is inclined neither by temperament nor by early tutor training to see herself as an expert or teacher. Though her area of concentration within the English major is creative writing, she is hesitant to think in terms of a writing career: "I think about it [becoming a writer]. It's like a little dream, but I don't know if I'll ever do it" (Initial Interview). Also contributing to her uncertainty about a writing career is her mother's overt discouragement: "My mother says it's so risky. The only way you'd make any money is if you're really good." Following her mother's advice, Lauren plans to pursue a more practical career in library science as her "day job" and work on creative writing by night.

Not surprisingly, given the difference in their expectations, Alana and Lauren's first session is "a little shaky" as Lauren puts it. When Lauren arrives in the computer lab where Alana's class met once a week, she finds Alana sitting at a computer working on a writing assignment she had started during class. She introduces herself to Alana but then feels at a loss as to how to proceed. In the sample tutorial transcripts she'd read in her tutor texts, the student always has questions and problems; Alana, on the other hand, is simply typing away, waiting for Lauren to offer assistance but not giving her any indication of what type of assistance she needs.

In addition, Lauren is surprised and intimidated by Alana's age: "My tutee was at least ten years older than me, and I think she thought at first that I really wouldn't be too competent. I felt like she looked at me like, 'Oh, no. A young girl is trying

to teach me how to write.' Kind of doubtful" (Journal entry). For Alana, the issue is not so much age as it is tutoring style. When Lauren fails to project the authority which she expects from a tutor, Alana becomes quickly disappointed: "I was expecting something different," says Alana in her first interview. "I was expecting the tutor to open up and originate the whole session, but it didn't seem to work out that way. I had to really start things off." To make matters worse, Alana asks Lauren how to change the line spacing on the computer screen from single to double spacing. Relatively unfamiliar with the computer at that point in the semester, Lauren attempts to make the change but erases Alana's text from the screen instead and has to ask someone else for help. Alana's text is retrieved but not her initial optimism about tutoring.

"After that [the text retrieval] was taken care of," reports Alana, "my tutor asked if I had any ideas for my essay and what the topic was about. I had been revising my essay and needed help in organizing my paragraphs. I wondered if I was making any sense in my writing and if I was getting my point across." To begin work on the paper, Lauren asks Alana to read part of her essay aloud, a tutoring strategy which Lauren at first thought pointless. Nonetheless, she suggests this highly recommended procedure, and to her surprise and relief Alana agrees, giving them a working format and a potential role for herself as conference manager.

Unfortunately, her sense of success is short-lived. After Alana reads her paper aloud, Lauren asks Alana what she thinks of the paper, relying on a question recommended in her tutoring class. Getting little response, Lauren next tries to engage Alana's participation by pointing out some weaknesses in word choice and by asking Alana to think of more examples which might support her argument. These tentatively-posed questions and prompts, however, prove ineffective at drawing out Alana's ideas:

> Lauren: You want to start your next sentence with 'for example' and then have an example. [Silence, and then in a doubtful tone]: Well, can you think of anything right now?
> Alana: [laughs uncomfortably] I can't think of anything. [Writes at the keyboard, murmuring aloud]: 'For instance . . . .'

Lauren: For some reason I think of your bus example, but then you want to use that later.

[Long silence]

Alana: I know if I sit home for a while I'll think of something.

This procedure, with its focus on "local" editing and elaboration, plainly fails to address Alana's global concerns about organization and "getting her point across." Nevertheless, this procedure sets the pattern for several sessions to come: Alana reads her draft aloud; Lauren asks Alana open-ended questions about her concerns and assessment of the draft which Alana dodges or ignores; Alana proceeds to revise her text on-screen with Lauren looking on and making occasional editorial comments and recommendations.

Both Lauren and Alana express their frustration and dissatisfaction with this procedure in their journals. Alana describes Lauren's tutoring style as "passive" and complains that "sometimes with Lauren I don't know what I'm doing." Sensing Alana's dissatisfaction with their sessions, Lauren writes: "It is difficult to work with Alana because she doesn't seem to listen [to my suggestions for editorial change] . . . She seems to brush me off at times as not really being competent as a tutor by the way she turns things around that I say." Alana cancels a couple of their appointments, preferring to struggle at home to produce a rough draft which she can then type into the computer, revising as she goes. Lauren's scatter-shot attention to various "local" problems does not seem to Alana an "efficient" use of her limited time in the computer lab.

Their impasse results from a vicious circle. Alana doubts Lauren's ability to help her, and Alana's obvious lack of confidence in Lauren discourages Lauren from taking charge and recommending a shift in procedure. Although Lauren realizes Alana's frustration with her "inefficient" writing process and suspects that planning strategies might help, her one attempt at offering this kind of help seemed to fizzle. During their second session, Lauren had suggested that they outline Alana's rough draft as a step toward organizational revisions. But as Lauren comments in her journal, Alana "didn't seem too crazy about the idea." Actually, Alana reports in her journal that she did try

outlining at home but with little success: "I haven't really had too much experience with this type of system." Too easily discouraged by Alana's apparent lack of enthusiasm and too unassertive to explain directly the process of informal outlining or planning, Lauren returns to her "passive" sideline role of occasionally commenting on word choice and trying in vain to engage Alana in conversation about her writing. Finally, frustrated after a second canceled appointment, Lauren vows in her journal that next time she will be "a little more assertive about outlining, maybe starting out outlining before even getting into the paper."

And indeed this next meeting, their fourth of six, proves to be a turning point. Prior to this meeting, Alana's class had written a practice proficiency essay during class on the topic "Why Worry?" Although she has filled six blue book pages, Alana is unhappy with what she has written. Frustrated, she decides to scrap what she has written and start over to try to write a better essay. When Lauren arrives, Alana is just beginning this new draft. Their established pattern would have been for Alana to continue writing with Lauren sitting beside her and offering occasional suggestions. Instead, Alana turns to Lauren and expresses her concern about failing the proficiency exam if she continues to write as "inefficiently" as she has so far this semester:

> I expressed my frustration and worry over my assignment. I also stated my worry of not passing the proficiency exam if I continued writing in the manner I have been. I have been revising many times, over and over, which is very time consuming, until I finally get good results in my opinion. Since Lauren has gone through the proficiency exam, I asked her for suggestions on how to best approach it so that I can succeed in the ninety minutes allowed (Journal entry).

This admission of insecurity on Alana's part finally gives Lauren the opportunity to offer direct advice based on her own writing expertise. What follows is the collaborative construction of an informal outline, punctuated by friendly, personal conversation which had heretofore eluded them. Both the "ice-breaking" personal talk and Lauren's approach seem to account for

the success of this session. Unlike her first attempt at introducing outlining, this time Lauren directly models the process, demonstrating to Alana how her ideas fall in certain categories—worries about school, job, and family. A quick study, accustomed to "procedural" learning and knowledge, Alana catches on to this organizational method quickly.[3]

Contributing to this breakthrough, almost serendipitously, is the subject of Alana's essay, her worries. For the first time that semester Lauren actually enjoys herself during their session: "Alana and I had a really good time tonight working on her 'Worrying' paper. We talked about all our worrying and had sort of a 'shrink session' " (Journal entry). For the first time, the two of them relate as peers, talking with each other about the pressures in their lives outside of school—Alana's family and job responsibilities, Lauren's difficulties in making career decisions.

Equally important, for the first time Lauren feels that she has some authority as a tutor and that Alana respects her expertise as a writer. Alana is so impressed with the "outline" Lauren helped her create that she submits a photocopy of it with her tutorial report to her instructor. Lauren accepts Alana's praise modestly, noting in her journal: "She seemed impressed with the way I outlined, but really my style is pretty primitive. I didn't use numbers or Roman numerals or letters for the outline, just some underlining and print and cursive writing to make a little order. She seems to have this idea that an outline is a real laborious, elaborate task, which it isn't."

What may have impressed Alana the most in this session, however, was not the outline itself but rather Lauren's straightforward presentation of it as a planning strategy. Lauren's approach this time seems more authoritative to Alana: "She said I should first state my position in the writing and go from there and list my causes for worrying as a college student, family member, etc. . . . I believe this session is the best one of all as it helped me better approach my assignment." Alana's acknowledgement of Lauren's knowledge and expertise gives Lauren the confidence she needs to assert managerial authority. For their next meeting, Lauren asks Alana to bring brainstorming notes and a rough outline for her upcoming assignment.

As a result of the breakthrough, their final two sessions focus on planning and outlining, offering Alana practice in procedures that seem to make her writing process more efficient.

Moreover, the two of them finally become friends—friends in a limited sense, in that they talk with each other only at their weekly tutorials, but friends nonetheless. Their sessions become "really relaxed," according to Lauren; "We talk about everything." To their last session, Alana brings Lauren a gift, a plastic ring-binder she had gotten from work for Lauren to put her computer disks in, an efficiency tool, perhaps, in exchange for Lauren's "gift" of an efficiency "tool" for writing. Lauren was touched, mentioning the incident both in her journal and in her final interview: "I thought that was *really* nice of her. She noticed the way I keep my disks in my messy folder."

Unlike Suzanne and Kari, Lauren and Alana do not immediately establish the "intimate" peer bond described by Thom Hawkins and assumed by Bruffee. Moreover, difference in age, ethnicity, personality, and assumptions about tutoring initially thwart the establishment of a productive working relationship. Alana's preconceived notions about the tutor's role and authority coupled with Lauren's prescriptive application of her teacher's warnings against assuming too much "teacher-like" authority result in an impasse that demonstrates common misunderstandings about tutor role and authority.

Eventually, almost by accident, Lauren finds an opportunity to play the role of "more capable" peer, offering Alana the "scaffolding" of the informal outline. Both Alana and Lauren ultimately assess their tutorial relationship as positive. Alana attributes her increased writing efficiency to Lauren's tutoring: "When we formed outlines, I could generate ideas with my tutor's help. [Before that] I couldn't even get started." As a result of this tutorial experience, Lauren rethinks her initial notions of the tutor's role and authority: "In the beginning I don't think I took enough control. I think if I tutor again, I would go into my sessions with more control. And by that I mean having a person do more thinking on their own, somehow inspiring that." In other words, Lauren realizes that fostering the writer's sense of authority is not a matter of denying the tutor's. But rather it is a matter of managing the session in a manner that allows the writer to gain a new perspective on and sense of control over her writing.

Johanna and Cassie: Tutor as Double Agent

I am extremely aware of the role of compassion, intuition, and tolerance [in tutoring]. One must allow for expression

rather than force it, watch it rather than coerce it. . . . The emphasis on dialogue, a dialogic relationship, strikes me as apt since I'm always engaged in a dialogue within my own mind when I'm writing.

Johanna, Journal Entry

This is an awkward and alarming feeling, being afraid to write. . . . For me writing is a release . . . a tool I use to remember feelings or to purge them. . . . If I were upset by something in the news or impressed by a sunset, I could sit and write pages of coherent material, but give it the title ASSIGNMENT and I'm blank. I freak out.

Cassie, Essay #1 (Untitled)

Nothing in these initial comments about tutoring and writing anticipates the highly charged, deeply vexed relationship that followed. Indeed, at first glance Johanna and Cassie seem remarkably well matched. Both are experienced and dedicated creative writers, and both are "nontraditional" students, who have been disaffected in one way or another by schooling. In theory, Johanna's eagerness to regard her clients as fellow writers, and Cassie's clearly established identity as a writer should result in just the sort of dialogue Johanna imagines. However, according to Johanna, their first session "went horribly," leaving her "shaken and embarrassed." Cassie's assessment, though less dramatic, offers little hope for future sessions: "Personally, I don't think my writing skills will benefit from the peer tutorial sessions." Unfortunately, subsequent sessions do not go much better than the first, at least if one looks only at their "official," on-the-record tutoring sessions.

So "embarrassed" is Johanna and so tense are the sessions that Johanna decides not to tape the first two and at times turns off the tape recorder during later sessions. Therefore, our only accounts of what went on during some of these sessions come from Johanna's journal, Cassie's tutor evaluations, and our initial and final interviews with them. Nevertheless, these accounts, along with the taped sessions, yield a provocative narrative of misunderstanding and conflict coupled with persistence and ultimately, friendship.

Cassie, a twenty-eight-year-old African-American woman, is both resolute and ambivalent about her return to the university.

Having worked ten years in various entry-level jobs, most recently as a hospital technician monitoring heart patients, Cassie is determined to achieve her goal of a career in advertising and/ or film-making. In either case, she "want[s] to be able to take an idea or concept, write it up, and then do all the camera work and editing." However, in order to achieve that goal, she has to contend with a long-time adversary—the educational system.

Although she does not go into detail, Cassie's interview remarks suggest that any confidence she has in her intellectual abilities has been achieved in spite of, not because of, her school experiences. Even before her first, unsuccessful try at college, she viewed learning as separate from formal education: "I graduated from high school with the knowledge but not the grades to prove it." To some extent she blames herself for past failures: "It's my fault for screwing up the first time. . . . I haven't been satisfied myself that I'm doing the best that I feel I can do. What it boils down to is the procrastination and laziness. It's easier to take the low road." But at the same time, she also blames the university for pigeon-holing her as a DEO, "academically at-risk" student and thereby discounting her capability:[4]

> DEO is a psychological trip. . . . I think that's why I didn't succeed the first time around because I got very frustrated with the label and with the limitations. [It was as if they were saying,] "Well, you really don't have the ability to grasp what we're trying to show you here because of what it says on this paper." No attention is given to your capability. So I came in with this enforced handicap which developed into a chip on my shoulder which I had to get rid of.

Understandably, Cassie's mixed feelings breed both determination and anxiety. When she blames past failures on herself, she is filled with resolve: "If I'm going to succeed in achieving what I want from this attempt at higher education, I think it had better come from within me." When she blames past failures on the educational system, she feels anxious and vulnerable: "If I just keep hanging on as much as I can, maybe I won't fall completely off."

Particularly "at risk" in this return to school is her identity as a writer. "Writing screenplays and stories," as Cassie tells us

in her first interview, "has been the one thing that's been consistent with me from grade school, [so it is] the most natural part to go after as far as making a living." But as her comments in her initial essay suggest, her fluency and confidence as a creative writer do not translate into fluency and confidence when it comes to school writing assignments. Unlike her personal writing, which is internally timed and motivated ("I write to remember . . . in times of emotional turmoil"), school assignments are externally assigned and controlled by deadlines. Rather than a "release," school writing is a chore; rather than producing pleasure, such writing produces anxiety and "alarm." Ostensibly, Cassie is retaking first-year composition to erase the "F" she received ten years ago, but her comments suggest that she is also retaking it to set the record straight in another sense, to prove to herself that she has the self-discipline and persistence to write successfully and take control even in the alien and threatening environment of the academy.

For Johanna, a junior majoring in English, writing is also profoundly important. Johanna opens her journal with a quotation from Antonin Artaud: "All writing is garbage. All writers are pigs." Continuing, Johanna explains: "Antonin Artaud said this about writing because he loved it so much. He expected so much from writing that failures of language became receptacles of his hate and frustration. . . . I identify, I agree. I write." Like Cassie, Johanna bifurcates her writing life. However, instead of separating creative writing from school writing as Cassie does, Johanna separates her creative writing from her professional writing. The former, which includes poetry, fiction, and literary critical writing, is "sacred" and "akin to prayer;" the latter, specifically technical writing, is a tool for employment. In her journal, Johanna wryly comments that at first she was afraid that technical writing might "corrupt me and my (ha) pristine radiant creativity," but "on the contrary, I am finding that *any* writing is liberating . . . and deepens my understanding of the writing process." A more significant difference, however, between Johanna's and Cassie's writing experiences is that Johanna has had personally meaningful writing experiences within the school context, particularly in her creative writing and literature classes while Cassie reports no meaningful experiences with school writing. To her, personally meaningful, creative writing is entirely separate from school writing.

Another significant difference between them is their relationship to the educational system. After attending an alternative junior high school, which she loved, Johanna dropped out of high school at fifteen, took the G.E.D. exam, and because of high test scores began attending classes at the university. Thus, though she, like Cassie, has been disaffected by schooling, it is for almost diametrically opposed reasons. Cassie distrusts the educational system because it has marginalized her and failed to recognize and affirm her abilities. Nevertheless, she feels a need to prove herself in the eyes of the academy because it is the social agency which certifies intellectual ability and achievement: "I had to come in a side door and [I have to] play the game until I can get out of this little box [the university has put me in by labelling me DEO]" (Final Interview). By contrast, Johanna distrusts the educational system, not because it failed to recognize her abilities, but because it failed to accommodate and challenge them adequately. Therefore, it is the academy which needs to prove itself as acceptable and worthy to Johanna, whose abilities have already been certified by the academy in its willingness to offer her progressive, alternative schooling and early admittance to the university. For Johanna, the university, then, has been a haven from unchallenging and dull high school classes; for Cassie, the university, like high school, is hostile territory where she must struggle for recognition and fair treatment. Mistakenly, Johanna interprets Cassie's disaffection and rebellion against schooling as similar to her own in both source and nature: "I feel in a way like I'm working with a younger version of myself—fighting everything, contradicting everything, showing everything up to be a sham" (Journal entry).

This misreading of Cassie's relationship to schooling is at least one of the sources of their tutorial conflicts. Because Johanna sees Cassie as a fellow rebel, she expects that Cassie will respond as enthusiastically to the progressive "libertarian" model of tutoring as she has. Johanna's experience at an alternative junior high has convinced her of the value of student-centered, nonauthoritarian education: "In junior high I went to an alternative school, so I was exposed to these alternative teaching methods that had a lot of respect for a student's freedom and their own decisions and their abilities" (Initial Interview). Therefore, she readily embraces the facilitative, non-directive tutor role advocated both in the readings for class and

by her teacher. To Johanna, the process approach to teaching writing is "refreshing" with its emphasis on expressive writing and its respect for all writers' innate language abilities: "I don't know why the process view hadn't taken hold before, but I believe it might have something to do with fear of the unknown. That is, it's much easier to teach *rules* than it is to teach a process; it's easier to ask someone to trust directions than it is to ask them to trust themselves" (Journal entry). When Johanna discovers during their first session that Cassie is an "excellent writer" (her words), she is even more determined to enact an egalitarian dialogue about writing. The problem is, such a dialogue requires a willing partner.

From the very first session, there is misunderstanding. Cassie interprets Johanna's indirect compliment about her writing as confirmation that tutoring is linked to remediation, another sign that the academy finds her abilities' wanting. As Cassie reports in her initial tutor evaluation, "[Johanna] told me that she was more experienced with students who had less developed writing skills [than me] and didn't quite know what to do." Late in the semester, she tells Johanna that she believed she was chosen as one of the three case study subjects over other volunteers in her class because she was African-American and therefore probably in need of special help (Johanna's Journal Entry). Consequently, Johanna's nondirective, "libertarian" approaches seem part of the "sham" to Cassie, a pretense that Cassie has authority over her writing when they both know that she does not, at least not in this context. In addition, Cassie views Johanna's supportive comments about her writing as a "sham," reminiscent of the uncritical positive feedback she received from her DEO composition teacher ten years ago: "[She tells me] 'Oh, this paper is good, this is great, this is wonderful.'" However, to Cassie this hastily written paper was not "wonderful." not even "good": "It's like, shit, next time I can write the paper right *before* class" (Final Interview). As she explains to Johanna later, "I came back to school for a classical education, not to be told that I write well. I don't even know the parts of speech, so how can I be writing well?" (Johanna's Journal Entry). Clearly, Cassie associates a "classical education" with rigorous instruction in the "basics" and feels that she has been cheated out of such an education, perhaps because the academy has not believed she was up to it.[5] Praise for her considerable

writing talents, then, is interpreted by Cassie not as genuine praise but as condescension, evidence that teachers expect little of her. In short, the tutoring strategies idealized in the texts and put into practice by Johanna—offering positive feedback, asking questions rather than passing judgment, insisting on the writer's authority—backfire with Cassie.

Although any tutor might be dismayed and frustrated by the obvious failures of her best efforts, Johanna, as a novice, is particularly distressed. In her journal, Johanna expresses her hurt and dismay: "She didn't want to see me—she wanted to work on her draft. I, mistakenly, took it personally. . . . She didn't want to talk about anything. She kept saying she had no writing concerns, no problems, no issues." As Johanna rightly surmises in this journal entry, part of the problem is Cassie's admitted procrastination: "I received the distinct impression that it was just a bad time for her since she was working on the rough draft she was supposed to already have done." During their first session, Cassie tells Johanna that she wants Johanna to help her with essay "structure" and coherence, a concern she has previously expressed in her initial essay: "I feel like I'm not going to do well because all of my papers . . . are going to be these rambling accounts." However, since most of the drafts Cassie brings to the tutorial are, in Cassie's words, "too new," "only a list of ideas," "just a beginning," or "not developed enough" to be "worthy" of structural analysis, they are left with no clearcut agenda.

Nevertheless, Johanna continues to try a variety of approaches, none of which seems to work. When Johanna attempts to engage Cassie in conversation about the content of her essays, Cassie resists:

> Cassie: You should have seen the expressions on your face: real disagreement on the content [of her essay on capital punishment].
> Johanna: You believe in deterrence?
> Cassie: I was pressured [by the teacher] to make a decision one way or the other. I really don't care to go into a discussion of the death penalty right now. (Taped Session #3)

When Johanna attempts to discuss Cassie's writing process, Cassie prefers not to:

Cassie: I'm going to rewrite this paper. I don't know exactly how I'm going to do it. I'll have to look at it again.

Johanna: What would you like to talk about, the structure in it? . . . What do you think you'll do?

Cassie: I don't know. I haven't really thought about it . . . I'll start over from scratch. (Taped Session #6)

When Johanna offers editorial advice, Cassie rejects and resents it: "The second time I met Johanna I thought I'm not gonna like this one because she was suggesting changes in wording to make it flow easier. I said, 'Hey, I chose those words—that's what I wanted to say. How dare you tell me about my words?' " (Final Interview). And when Johanna tries to direct the conversation to Cassie's personal, out-of-school writing, Cassie makes it clear that she has no intention of sharing this writing with Johanna: "[Writing] is rather personal . . . I don't think I'll be sharing this with you because it is about work and I feel that I really should not be writing it for a class but it is something that I really want to do" (Taped Session #2).

Increasingly frustrated, Johanna vents her anger in her journal: "I'm a little angry and I'm not proud of that. I'm angry at Cassie because she seems so intractable, so unwilling to allow our sessions to work . . . I feel like screaming, 'Why the *#!$ did she volunteer to participate in tutoring?' " Even more galling to Johanna than Cassie's resistance, however, is Johanna's sense that Cassie is "mocking" her, "laughing" at her suggestions, and generally writing her off as a double agent, someone who pretends to be Cassie's ally but is really an agent of the academy:

> I feel that she's wary of me because she believes I'm a system monger constantly kissing the system's ass. What a strange position to be in—me—arch-anarchist—accused of being a part of a slime system. What a twist. . . . Is this a cost of being a person in supposed authority? The cost of assumed complicity?

To Johanna, avant garde poet and political radical, this misperception is particularly disconcerting: "Little does she know . . . I'm as suspicious of the 'system' as she is. . . . How can I get her to trust me, to see I'm not completely sold out, or brain dead, or soul dead?"

What Johanna does in order to win Cassie's trust is try various new approaches, all, however, within the parameters of

the "ideal" tutor role she has abstracted from her reading, her class, and her own writing experience. She suggests that they leave the computer lab to work in an empty classroom; she suggests that Cassie tutor her instead of vice versa; she suggests that they talk in a "lazy, unproductive way" about "writing in general" instead of school assignments; she volunteers to take a bit part in a film Cassie is making. Nothing, however, seems to work until Cassie takes Johanna up on her repeated invitation to go out for a beer after their session. Johanna joyfully describes this encounter in her journal: "We talked for hours about every-thing. I told her honestly how hurt [and] insulted I was by her not taking our sessions seriously. . . . She explained why she doesn't like the whole English class, the whole English depart-ment for that matter." Not only do they communicate honestly for the first time, something that Cassie clearly respects, but also, Johanna finally shows Cassie some of her creative writing, a move which also gains Cassie's respect: "She was really shocked. She said 'And I thought you were a born again Christian or ex-hippie or something.' She's been very friendly and 'respectful' of me ever since. She doesn't mock me as if I'm the dumb kid on the block; she talks to me as if I'm a new friend. Yippee!" So successful is this get-together that Cassie calls Johanna two days later and suggests another social get-together. This time, as Johanna reports, "we talk[ed] about our past, families, etc. Cassie . . . asked me not to write about some of the things we discussed, so I can't." Clearly, the trust Johanna has so desperately sought in the tutorial context is finally emerg-ing in this "off-the-record" social context.

However, their new-found friendship and trust does not automatically transfer back to their tutoring relationship. After the "off-the-record" social get-togethers, they try several more "on-the-record" tutoring sessions. Although the first, in which Johanna gives Cassie some practical advice about how to pre-pare for the university's proficiency essay exam, seems relatively productive, it is their next-to-the-last session which Cassie deems the only successful session of the semester: "Until November 30th, the sessions felt non-productive. . . . [In this session] we discussed weaknesses and areas of possible confusion for the reader. We worked on the paper for about 90 minutes. I enjoyed the challenge and the help" (Final Tutor Evaluation). However, whether or not this final, only partially "on-the-record" session

is a success or not is a matter of opinion. It certainly does not start out fortuitously. They begin by focusing on Cassie's paper on worry. To Johanna's various questions about her revision plans, Cassie replies evasively: "I don't know. I haven't really thought about it." Finally, in exasperation Cassie says, "You're stressing me out here. . . . I'm getting a headache." Then calmer, Cassie says, "I'll probably just start over. That's the way I do things . . . I don't know how I would know what to say. What do you . . . [You] talk about it, I'll listen." At this point, the tape recorder is turned off. When the recording resumes, the two are in the midst of discussing Cassie's most recent paper in which she explores the literacy crisis and the importance of reading and writing in her own life. Cassie's "You're giving me a headache," is replaced by "I understand what you're saying, but I have a problem with that in that it seems—it feels like to me it's getting away from the paper's power." What happened while the recorder was off? What allowed the turnaround in their conversation?

Our only accounts of what transpired when the tape was turned off come from Johanna's journal and a tape she recorded at home in her kitchen while she made tea and tried to collect her thoughts later that evening. She entitles the tape "Ranting":

> I wanted to talk about it on the tape because most of what I've just described was not taped. And I feel bad about that, but I also feel like I didn't want it taped because I was doing everything that you guys [the research team which included her teacher] have told me not to. Every- thing. I was being extremely directive. I felt bad—like I had brutalized my way into becoming one of the authority figures she secretly hates. And secretly loves. Now she'd listen to me. I had to be ruthless before she'd admit that I might have something there.

In her journal, Johanna writes that she dropped any pretense of nondirectiveness and instead "took authority over the text," saying, " 'Look, here's what I would do if I had this rough draft in front of me. This long paragraph here talks about two completely different things without an adequate connection be- tween them. I'd either develop the connection or, better yet, separate it into two paragraphs.' " Although Cassie responded

defensively at first, saying "*I* see the connections. What do you mean there isn't a connection?" Eventually, after "about fifteen minutes of arguing, Cassie sat back and said, 'This is the first session where you've given me something to think about.'" Because Johanna is preoccupied with guilt over her appropriation of authority over Cassie's text, she fails to see that Cassie has also asserted authority here. By forcing Johanna to abandon her facilitative role and assume a more authoritative one, Cassie has asserted authority over their tutoring process.

In another sense, of course, Johanna earns a small victory in that she finally gets Cassie to listen to her advice, but Johanna is in no mood to see it this way. Her use of hyperbole and violent imagery—"I had to pound her over the head 50 times before she recognized what I said was a viable option!"—suggest that Johanna feels as if she has violated an honor code or committed some immoral act. In actuality, she has done nothing so terrible; she has only acted as critical reader or perhaps editor, neither role a sin in tutoring catechism. Trying to be kind and to sympathize with Johanna's obvious distress over this session, Cassie says, "Teaching in a facilitative manner might be appropriate with younger, more impressionable students, but with my own strong personality, force might be the only way" (Johanna's Journal Entry). Put less politely, Cassie seems to be saying, "You can fool some of the people some of the time with your pretense of not passing judgment and uncritically accepting everything the tutee writes, but you can't fool me." Johanna's willingness in this last session to assess Cassie's paper honestly and critically results, according to Cassie, in a new sense of reader awareness: "I learned a lot from her. I was able to approach the paper as if I didn't have the insight of knowing what I was trying to say" (Cassie's Final Tutor Evaluation).

Perhaps the most important lesson we learn from the case of Johanna and Cassie (and the case of Lauren and Alana for that matter) is that it is naive to assume any immediate identification and "intimacy" between peer tutor and writer. Such an assumption ignores and underestimates differences among students in terms of ethnicity, class, educational opportunity, gender, and age.[6] Despite Johanna and Cassie's shared identity as writers and shared suspicion of schooling, neither the role of fellow writer nor the role of fellow student initially offers common ground because Johanna and Cassie have experienced each of

these roles so differently. Eventually they do establish a peer bond based on their shared unconventionality and artistic sensibility, but significantly this bond is established literally and figuratively outside the school context.

Similarly, none of the various permutations of the *tutor* role, as "academic insider," "more capable peer," or "facilitator," initially offers an acceptable basis for their relationship. Neither of the first two roles is acceptable to Johanna, and the latter is unacceptable to Cassie. Actually, it is Johanna's refusal to accept her role as "academic insider" that arouses Cassie's suspicion and contributes to their impasse over agenda. Eventually, Johanna resigns herself to playing the more directive role of "academic insider" and "more capable peer," and the result is a successful session, at least in Cassie's eyes.

Although Johanna may have begun her work with Cassie as an unwitting double agent, believing herself to be a disinterested advocate for Cassie and failing to acknowledge her "complicity" in an institutionally-sponsored practice, she ultimately reverses her loyalties and puts her loyalty to Cassie above her loyalty to the institution, or more specifically to the Writing Center. She does so by enacting a tutor role which she believes the program disapproves of but which Cassie desires, and she does so by removing their relationship from our research "gaze." Johanna turns off the tape recorder at key moments, honors Cassie's request for privacy in her journal entries, and privileges their evolving personal friendship over their institutionally-sponsored relationship.

Conclusion

Although these cases defy simple conclusions, they offer some insight into the ways in which role and authority affect tutorial encounters. To varying degrees, all three relationships were influenced by traditional preconceptions about the tutor's role and authority. Specifically, all three writers expected the tutor to take charge, and this expectation shaped each encounter in one way or another.

Because the three writers brought particular writing concerns to the tutorial sessions, the tutors' ability to address those concerns affected the writer's confidence in the tutor. When Suzanne inadvertently established herself as an expert on college writing

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by offering Kari a shorthand definition of "collegey" writing, this inspired Kari's confidence in her and laid the groundwork for their congenial and productive tutorial relationship. By contrast, when Lauren initially failed to fulfill Alana's expectation that she take charge of the session, their tutorial relationship sputtered and temporarily stalled. It was only when Lauren demonstrated her expertise by teaching Alana something Alana regarded as useful—how to outline—that their sessions began to be productive. And plainly part of the impasse between Johanna and Cassie resulted from Johanna's refusal to acknowledge her ties to institutional authority. When Johanna finally acquiesced to the more authoritative role of critical reader, or representative of the academy, they had what Cassie deemed a successful session. Thus, even when the tutor wishes to reject the traditional notion that the tutor is an expert, a "teacher writ small," she may find herself playing these traditional roles in order to gain the writer's confidence and respect.

Moreover, the tutors' efforts to be nondirective and to reshape the tutorial interaction along collaborative lines can be interpreted as another way of taking charge and asserting tutorly authority. These cases, we would argue, expose a hidden paradox in the collaborative learning model of peer tutoring. By insisting that peer tutors reject traditional roles and eschew traditional authority, writing center directors ask, in effect, that peer tutors assert their authority by refusing to play the authority and direct the learning by indirection. Although this paradoxical message may be unavoidable, it is understandably confusing to new tutors, especially when we fail to acknowledge this contradiction openly. We suspect that Johanna's acute sense of failure in relation to Cassie was partly due to this contradiction. Because Johanna was unable to take charge of the tutorial relationship and shape it along the lines idealized in collaborative learning theory, she felt failure as a tutor. Alluding to this same paradox, Lauren says in her final interview, "If I were to tutor again, I would go into my sessions with more control. And by that I mean having the person do more thinking on their own." In other words, she would "take control" by insisting that the writer take more control and responsibility.

Although tutor preparation courses must continue to critique traditional notions of the tutor's role and authority and to offer alternative roles, we who teach such courses must acknowledge

the power and persistence of traditional assumptions about teaching and learning. Further, we must prepare tutors to recognize and engage with traditional forms and definitions of role and authority as they work to construct alternative roles. To pretend that the former are not operative is to ignore the cultural assumptions both tutor and writer bring to the conversation. Furthermore, we must acknowledge that collaborative learning models of peer tutoring also ask the tutor to assert authority and control over the conversation, albeit in different terms. The leadership and authority traditionally assumed to be part of the tutor's role are not simply erased in the collaborative model but rather they are displaced and transformed. What is crucial about tutorial authority is not its presence or absence but its deployment.

Also contributing to tutor confusion about role and authority has been our tendency to represent collaborative learning roles for the tutor in prescriptive, either/or terms. Or at least that is how some novice tutors have interpreted our presentation of these alternative roles. First-time tutors, like novice writers, desire clearcut rules and guidelines for how to proceed with the complex, ill-defined task of peer tutoring. And sometimes, as in the cases of Lauren and Johanna, this results in a counterproductive, prescriptive enactment of a nondirective, facilitative role. To reduce new tutors' tendency to apply tutoring guidelines prescriptively, we need to encourage tutors to develop a repertoire of flexible roles which respond to the needs and expectations of individual writers. We need to ask tutors to reflect continually on how theory translates into practice in the context of particular tutorial relationships. And further, we need to present complex tutorial vignettes for class discussion, situations where there is no clearcut "right" tutoring approach. Just as the Ideal Text has paralyzed and disempowered many a student writer, so, too, the image of the Ideal Tutor can mislead and paralyze novice tutors (Ashton-Jones 32).

Although some of the roles imagined in theory emerge in practice, the roles that emerge in practice are far more complex, diverse, and idiosyncratic than anything imagined in theory. Partly a matter of chance, the roles which emerge in practice take unexpected turns and evolve in unpredictable fashion. Suzanne's ability quickly to establish a peer bond with Kari was more a matter of the coincidental similarities in their backgrounds

and personalities than a matter of their common status as students. Yet it was this peer bond which enabled Suzanne to act as Kari's exorcist, talking her through her fears about college writing. Conversely, the differences in ethnicity and background which kept Johanna and Cassie from establishing a peer bond set in motion a battle of wills which in itself was evidence of their equality. That is, Johanna and Cassie struggled with equal determination to influence the nature of their relationship though hardly in the spirit of cooperation idealized in collaborative learning theory. And out of their contentiousness grew a bond of respect and friendship.

Ultimately, these cases raise questions more than they provide answers. What constitutes a successful tutorial relationship? The quality of the peer bond? Changes in the writer's attitude, writing process, or text? The tutor's increased self-awareness or successful use of various tutoring strategies? Perhaps the literal contradiction at the heart of peer tutoring is apt, an appropriate figure for this richly complex activity which requires every tutor and writer to somehow negotiate this contradiction anew. The cases of Suzanne and Kari, Lauren and Alana, and Johanna and Cassies testify eloquently to students' ability to do just that— to mediate difference, to discover and create common ground, and to rewrite abstractly conceived institutional roles and practices.

NOTES

[1]For further discussion of the relationship between the peer tutor's title and the peer tutor's role and authority, see Albert DeCiccio's "Is Gentran Taking the Peer Out of Peer Tutor?" (The Writing Lab Newsletter 11 [February 1987]: 1-5); Harvey Kail's "The Third Annual Conference on Writing and Peer Tutoring: A Review," (The Writing Lab Newsletter 11 [February 1987] 8-9); and Lex Runciman's "Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word Tutor?" (The Writing Center Journal 11.1 [Fall/Winter 1990]: 27-34).

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[3]In Women's Ways of Knowing, Belenky et al. describe some of the women they interviewed as "procedural knowers," who look for procedures and methods as a way

of acquiring new knowledge and skills. For such women "form predominates over content" as they seek to control and manage their learning in a new and intimidating situation (95-96). Since Alana's previous work experience involved procedural modes of learning, it is not surprising that she approaches college writing in this manner.

⁴The Department of Educational Opportunity (DEO) at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee offers students whose high school GPA is below the normal cut-off a chance to attend college in a probational status. A student enrolled through DEO is given intensive one-on-one advising regarding the student's course selection and progress. In addition, DEO students are offered special coursework and tutoring. Once the student achieves a college GPA of 2.75 or better (on a 4.0 scale), she or he is free to transfer to another classification.

⁵Interestingly, black educators have also expressed suspicion of "progressive," process-oriented approaches to teaching writing. In a 1986 article in *Harvard Educational Review*, Lisa Delpit suggests that "progressive" notions of writing instruction which emphasize "fluency" at the expense of any instruction in basic "skills" ill serve many minority students and ignore the objections of black teachers: "A certain paternalism creeps into the speech of some of our liberal colleagues as they explain that our children must be 'given voice.' . . . It is vitally important that non-minority educators realize that . . . many of the teachers whom they seek to reach have been able to conquer the educational system *because* they received the kind of instruction that their white progressive colleagues are denouncing" (384).

⁶Both Greg Myers and John Trimbur also note the failure of collaborative learning theorists, particularly Bruffee, to account adequately for the ways in which various social differences inscribe learners and affect the encounters between them (Myers, "Reality" 167; Trimbur, "Consensus" 610).

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