

9 Writing Centers: An Infrastructural Hub for Transfer

The approaches to transfer reviewed across this book's chapters demonstrate the range of intellectual and material infrastructure that supports the transfer of writing knowledge. Writing centers are intriguing spaces for attention to transfer because they act as an infrastructural hub of transfer activity. Writing centers create a space—the tutoring session—where several approaches to writing transfer happen at once. Writing centers encapsulate the complex simultaneity of the transfer of writing knowledge, offering a uniquely “synchronic” window into the transfer phenomenon (Hagemann, 1995, p. 122). For example, writing center tutors transfer knowledge about writing even as they transfer knowledge about tutoring writing; tutors toggle between general writing skills instruction and disciplinary-specific approaches as they work. Working with tutors in sessions, student writers also transfer procedural knowledge about writing and specialized genre knowledge, all the while cultivating dispositions that affect their future writing practices. Stephen North's long-held writing center dictum to support better writers rather than better texts means that writing centers enable one-on-one attention, for both tutor and tutee, to eliciting prior knowledge, facilitating reflection on writing, attending to self-regulation and self-efficacy, and supporting transfer over time, sessions, courses, and texts (Bromley et al., 2016; Busekrus, 2018; Devet, 2015; Driscoll & Devet, 2020; Driscoll & Harcourt, 2012; Hill, 2016; North, 1984).

As Meade (2020) notes, writing centers' origin as a response to the specialization and division that characterizes much of the modern

university means that centers are “characterized by [their] inclination to speak back to the features of the university that leave some students behind, keep students from meeting certain expectations, or keep students from reaching their full potential” (para. 9). In other words, writing centers’ collaborative and low-stakes atmosphere outside of conventional classrooms, disciplines, and academic hierarchies invites tutors and writers to share and make connections among several forms of writing-related knowledge—discipline-specific writing knowledge, rhetorical knowledge that transcends disciplines, and writing center-informed knowledge about tutoring writing—all at once.

Research on the transfer of writing knowledge in writing centers reveals the vital role centers play not only in the college experience, supporting all students across disciplines over time, but also in lifelong education, as writers (including tutors) continue to transfer writing knowledge learned in writing centers long after graduation (Dinitz & Kiedaisch, 2009; Driscoll, 2015; Hughes et al., 2010; Mattison, 2020; Zimmerelli, 2015). This chapter on transfer in writing centers reviews the research and thinking that shows this unique potential. The majority of transfer-related writing center scholarship is focused on tutors—the writing knowledge they do or should transfer; how they do or do not support tutee transfer—with some research considering the transfer practices of other writers in centers, like student writers and administrative directors. Therefore, the sections below are organized by topics readers are likely to seek out in order to make decisions in their own contexts: (a) the writing knowledge that tutors transfer, including debates about specialist vs. generalist tutor knowledge; (b) the writing knowledge tutors *should* come to know and transfer through tutor education; (c) studies of writers, themselves, transferring knowledge in writing centers; and (d) the kinds of knowledge, writing and otherwise, tutors and teachers transfer beyond the center into classrooms, workplaces, or community contexts. The chapter includes studies that examine transfer both explicitly and implicitly, to best capture the extent of transfer-related thinking in writing center studies.

THE KNOWLEDGE TUTORS TRANSFER—WHAT TUTORS KNOW

Most writing center transfer research focuses on tutors rather than writers. In a way, this is a natural focus—directors often conduct research to assess the effectiveness of a center and its staff, give guidance

to the tutors, and make plans for future tutor hiring and education. For example, Kenzie (2013) conducted a descriptive study of three tutors' use of "transfer talk" (Nowacek, 2011) in 19 sessions, to understand how tutors might use genre pedagogy to support writers' transfer of writing knowledge during sessions. Mackiewicz (2004) conducted a linguistic analysis of four tutoring sessions about engineering writing to understand the impact of disciplinary expertise on the success of a session.

Broadening the scope of what might count as writing knowledge tutors gain and transfer in centers, Bruffee (1978, 2008) describes the personally enriching experience of being a peer writing tutor. Because peer tutoring shows tutors and writers that no one writes alone, that "writing is a form of civil exchange that thoughtful people engage in when they try to live reasonable lives with one another" (2008, p. 8), Bruffee argues that tutoring writing is definitively human, allowing tutors to practice a "helping, care-taking engagement" (2008, p. 6) that tutors take with them to other areas of their life. He names this engagement an "interdependence" (2008, p. 8) that tutors practice, model, hand off to writers, and then carry around to other communicative engagements. Bruffee's essays have shaped how writing center professionals and staff understand the potentials of peer tutoring; it is now assumed that something beyond writing knowledge is being learned in writing centers and carried elsewhere. Bruffee would say that that something is human interdependence, a defining piece of writing center knowledge that shows, if tutors do indeed carry and apply it elsewhere, that transfer might also not be a solitary phenomenon. That is to say, Bruffee's contribution to transfer is the reminder that transfer is deeply social, happening among people rather than solely in the heads of solitary writers.

But perhaps the most prominent presence of transfer in the scholarship on what tutors know is its presence in the debate over tutors' discipline-specific writing knowledge. When writing center directors and researchers discuss whether tutors lead more successful sessions when they have disciplinary knowledge of a tutee's paper—e.g., do they better support a student writing a biology lab report when they are biology majors themselves?—they are also discussing tutors' ability to transfer that disciplinary writing knowledge to the writing center session at hand. Similarly, when writing center professionals promote the merits of generalist tutors, saying that disciplinary specialty is un-

necessary or detrimental to the session's success, they assume that tutors are transferring generalized rhetorical knowledge among or outside of disciplinary contexts in that decision. Therefore, tracing transfer's underlying presence in the specialist/generalist tutor debate adds an important dimension to the transfer of writing knowledge in writing center contexts.

The debate generally falls into two categories: (a) essays by writing center directors promoting generalist tutors based on their professional experience (Brooks, 1991; Devet et al., 1995; Healy, 1991; Hubbuch, 1988; Luce, 1986; Pemberton, 1995; Walker, 1998) and (b) empirical research finding that some disciplinary knowledge can support better tutoring (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014; Kiedaisch & Dinitz, 1993; Kohn, 2014; Mackiewicz, 2004; Powers & Nelson, 1995; Shamon & Burns, 1995; Thonus, 1999; Tinberg & Cupples, 1996). Hubbuch's essay, for example, relies on her decade of direct experience to argue that generalist tutors are better listeners because their job is simply to understand a writer's ideas. She says a tutor who is "ignorant" of subject matter is better able to point to missing information or jumps in logic. Hubbuch worries that there are too many modes for tutors to master even within singular disciplines, "each with an attendant style and rhetorical conventions" (1988, p. 24). She believes specialized disciplinary knowledge also promotes singular understandings of "good" writing (1988, p. 24). Both Hubbuch and others (Brooks, 1991; Kiedaisch & Dinitz, 1993) argue that tutors with disciplinary expertise tend to appropriate a student's text, becoming too invested in its form and substance and act more as an expert evaluator than a "fellow inquirer" (Hubbuch, 1988, p. 24). Thus, Hubbuch concludes that it is more important that tutors develop rhetorical flexibility, recognizing the relationship between discursive conventions and epistemology no matter the discipline, developing an awareness that the "universe of discourse has a varied and diverse terrain," and that they rely on that general rhetorical knowledge for their practices (1988, p. 24).

Seeking to verify and complicate these beliefs, which critics say are based more in lore than research, writing center scholars have sought empirical understandings of how disciplinary knowledge affects the tutoring of writing. Three studies in particular (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014; Kiedaisch & Dinitz, 1993; Mackiewicz, 2004) provide evidence that fluency in the rhetorical norms of a discipline help tutors work more successfully on global (rather than local) issues and give them

confidence to gently push a tutee's thinking. While none of these studies evokes transfer explicitly, the studies' data suggest that tutors with disciplinary knowledge are also transferring that knowledge, acting as Nowacek's (2011) "agents of integration" as they tutor.

In the first study, Kiedaisch and Dinitz (1993) recorded twelve tutoring sessions about literature essays, showed them to three English faculty, and gave questionnaires to both the sessions' writers and the faculty who viewed the sessions. While none of the writers saw a connection between the quality of their session and their tutors' disciplinary knowledge, the faculty did, identifying high tutor disciplinary knowledge in sessions they rated excellent and low disciplinary knowledge in weak sessions (p. 64). Based on the faculty's notes and their own analysis, Kiedaisch and Dinitz found that tutors without disciplinary knowledge struggled to move writers beyond summary and struggled to help them find a controlling insight, fully respond to the assignments, move beyond sentence-level concerns, or work on global problems in general. On the other hand, Kiedaisch and Dinitz found that tutors with disciplinary knowledge of literature better understood writers' assignments, could lead writers to fully respond to them, and could identify insights that were not supported, especially through close reading. They provide the important caveat, though, that knowledgeable tutors also took more authoritative stances in sessions by being invested in the papers more than other tutors, confirming other writing center professionals' hunches on the matter.

A decade later in 2004, Mackiewicz designed a study focusing on tutor expertise specifically in engineering. She situates her study in Thonus' (1999) and Kiedaisch and Dinitz's (1993) findings that disciplinary knowledge leads to more successful tutoring. However, she looks explicitly for "how the extent of tutors' familiarity with engineering writing influences the extent to which their tutoring is effective" (p. 326). Mackiewicz conducts a linguistic analysis of four tutoring sessions about engineering writing, three with tutors (two undergraduate, one graduate) with no expertise in engineering and one with a graduate tutor with two decades of disciplinary familiarity. Because writing center professionals worry that tutors with expertise tend to be overly directive in their tutoring, she codes for tutoring topics and politeness strategies to gauge tutors' assertions of expertise and control. Mackiewicz found that the tutors with no disciplinary knowledge gave inappropriate advice, which they stated with certainty, while

the experienced tutor gave “appropriate and specific” advice that also helped build tutee rapport (p. 316). The non-expert tutors steered sessions toward topics they were familiar with in order to speak with certainty and ended up focusing on surface features in the writing, violating tutoring best practices (p. 320). The expert tutor on the other hand focused on purpose and audience; engaged the tutee’s text holistically, including visual components; modulated her suggestions; and built rapport through politeness strategies, praising discipline-appropriate textual strategies like the use of imperative verbs. Importantly, Mackiewicz makes a distinction between tutors’ disciplinary rhetorical knowledge and their disciplinary subject matter knowledge, which all the tutors lacked. In other words, Mackiewicz’s argument is that it is disciplinary rhetorical knowledge that matters in a session—this is the kind of knowledge the most successful tutor was able to wield.

A decade after Mackiewicz’s (2004) study, Dinitz and Harrington (2014) revisited Kiedaisch and Dinitz’s (1993) study. Dinitz and Harrington note that tutor “expertise” is used very generally in research, often conflating content knowledge, genre knowledge, and disciplinary knowledge. Like Mackiewicz, they assume that tutor expertise is valuable and thus also seek to understand the *how* of expertise—how it appears in and shapes sessions. Dinitz and Harrington (2014) replicate the methods of Kiedaisch and Dinitz’s (1993) study, collecting student papers and session transcripts from seven tutoring sessions (three on political science writing, four on history writing), asking three faculty members from each discipline to view and rate the sessions in terms of the role of disciplinary knowledge and the likelihood of the session resulting in revision. Faculty members made strong connections between “sophisticated” disciplinary knowledge, the quality of a session’s agenda, and a session’s overall effectiveness (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014, p. 80). These faculty contributions and their own code-based analysis lead Dinitz and Harrington to conclude that disciplinary expertise supports more effective tutoring, “in part because it allows [tutors] to be more directive in ways that enhance collaboration” (p. 74). While tutors lacking disciplinary expertise focused on local issues, moved linearly (rather than recursively) through tutee’s texts, and rarely pushed back on tutee thinking, tutors with disciplinary expertise (as evidenced by having taken several courses in the discipline or being majors) were able to accomplish nearly the exact opposite, working at

the global level recursively, directing the session agenda, and helping writers draw general rhetorical lessons.

Dinitz and Harrington conclude that contrary to Kiedaisch and Dinitz's 1993 finding (as well as worries from Hubbuch and Brooks), tutor disciplinary knowledge does not always lead to tutors dominating sessions or appropriating tutee texts. Rather, type of directive tutoring matters as much as type of disciplinary expertise. Sophisticated knowledge of writing in a discipline allows tutors to "push back and push forward," being directive by asking writers relevant and complex questions, pushing them to fully respond to an assignment (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014, p. 90). Appropriating tutee texts was an issue of knowledge of disciplinary content, not of disciplinary rhetorical conventions. Kohn (2014) similarly argues for this distinction, citing research from technical communication (i.e., Devitt, 2004; Kain & Wardle, 2005), writing center/science writing collaboration (Hollis, 1991), and transfer studies to claim that rhetorical knowledge, particularly recognition of genres, is the expertise that writing centers can gather in conversation with local disciplinary faculty and that tutors can put into practice.

Walker's (1998) observation that tutors can be simultaneously specialists and generalists foregrounds how the social construction of knowledge helps reframe tutor writing knowledge as adaptable and always in-the-making. She suggests tutors use genre theory, as many practitioners have in genre pedagogies (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Clark, 1999), as an analytic tool to navigate discipline-specific discourse alongside their writers, in a way becoming specialists in that navigation. She recommends genre theory in tutor education as textual analysis, interviewing professors, and using disciplinary models. Anticipating what Nowacek and Hughes (2015) later term the *expert outsider*—tutor generalists who are specialists in the rhetorical functions of writing no matter the discipline—Walker calls for generalists with specialist knowledge in several fields.

Therefore, the tension in specialist/generalist tutor knowledge is less a debate about the efficacy of disciplinary expertise than the evidence of directors' struggle to enact research-based best practices in light of logistical barriers like time, hiring cycles, and professional development budgets. More to the point of this chapter, the conversation mapped above also reveals implicit assumptions about tutors' (and writers') transfer of knowledge. The empirical studies trace enact-

ments of transfer, as tutors and writers engage with papers and with each other by drawing on a wide range of discipline-specific and generalized rhetorical knowledge. The studies seem to show that the interplay of these transfer moves—sifting among specific and general writing knowledge—support the best tutoring: “Disciplinary expertise seemed to permit interplay between general tutoring strategies and disciplinary discourse, leading to more effective sessions” (Dinitz & Harrington, 2014, p. 93). What this implies about transfer is that effective tutors aren’t simply transferring disciplinary writing knowledge to sessions depending on the discipline being discussed, but are rather tacking between WID knowledge and WAC knowledge, putting these in conversation for writers to draw both course-specific and generalizable lessons.

Several writing center professionals have acted on the intuition shared by many writing center administrators that working in a writing center impacts the writing knowledge tutors carry elsewhere, especially into their classrooms as teachers (Busekrus, 2018; Moneyhun & Hanlon-Baker, 2012; Shapiro, 2014; Van Dyke, 1997; Weaver, 2018). Scholars wonder how writing knowledge transfers from tutoring to teaching (Shapiro, 2014) or from teaching to tutoring, or even how the teaching of that writing knowledge changes when tutoring begins (Moneyhun & Hanlon-Baker, 2012). For example, Van Dyke (1997) observes that writing center pedagogy is invaluable training for the classroom, arguing that teaching assistants should be exposed to the individualized and formative pedagogical focus of writing centers and be encouraged to transfer these skills to their composition classrooms. In a reflective blog post, Shapiro (2014) agrees, describing a transfer moment—using a tutoring-informed collaborative activity in his own classroom to enliven his students’ research process—to show how he transferred into his classroom the kinds of writing-related knowledge tutoring hones: that students can become their own tutors as well as tutors for each other in any given location. As a “teacher in tutor’s clothing,” Shapiro calls his experiential belief that writing can’t really be taught without the focused individualization and flexibility of tutoring as the singular knowledge that he has indeed transferred from tutoring to teaching. Similarly, Busekrus (2018) suggests that teachers can learn feedback-giving strategies—particularly those that promote transfer—from oral feedback that tutors give during writing center sessions. She notes that because tutors are positioned as peer-readers

and interlocutors rather than graders and engage directly in students' process of learning, tutor feedback supports intentional goal-setting, increases self-understanding and reflection, and promotes metacognition through a conversational and dialogic dynamic.

Providing empirical backing to the intuitions and reflections above, Weaver (2018) surveyed thirteen graduate tutors who were also teachers; he finds that tutors self-report many benefits of tutoring for teachers, including increased empathy for students and communicative strategies, as well as transfer. He also found that not all participants believed that transfer was conscious or intentional—and concludes by encouraging writing center directors to ask their staff to reflect more regularly on how abilities developed as a tutor might influence classroom teaching. Moneyhun and Hanlon-Baker (2012) examined how five writing teachers' knowledge about giving feedback on writing transferred (which they describe variously through verbs like changed, influenced, translated, and transformed) among teaching and tutoring contexts. The teachers reported transferring the following tutoring-based understandings of writing and learning: assuming less about students' understanding, providing more direct comprehension checks, and writing more explicit assignment prompts. But Moneyhun and Hanlon-Baker found, in analysis of the teachers' interview transcripts and written feedback on texts, that while their tutoring was student-led or student-centered, their teaching for the most part was not. Moneyhun and Hanlon-Baker conclude that while writing-related knowledge can transfer from tutoring to the writing classroom, these moves have to be active and intentional, and likely take time to occur.

Two studies also approach tutors as life-long writers worthy of research attention, examining how writing center work provides a powerful context for a deepening understanding of prior learning about writing. Hall, Romo, and Wardle (2018), for instance, work together to analyze the experience of Mikael (Romo), who was a student in Wardle's advanced writing class, then later became a tutor in the writing center Hall directed. "Mikael's experiences in the center," they report, "deeply impacted his ability to move through the liminal space on some of the most difficult threshold concepts" (para. 17). In particular, they focus on how both the designed curriculum and Mikael's own dispositions and identity influenced his learning over time. Because the writing center "required constant reflection and connection-mak-

ing” over multiple semesters, it proved a particularly powerful component of learning in his writing studies major (para. 61). Nowacek et al. (2020) similarly conducted research with undergraduate tutors in the writing center, examining how undergraduate tutors who studied threshold concepts of writing may transfer and transform that knowledge over the years they work in a writing center. Their conclusions emphasize how continued engagement with threshold concepts of writing is supported by the activity of tutoring, but how some tutors seem to internalize threshold concepts over time, growing less able to name these. This work thus contributes to showing the variety of ways that writing centers are sites with great potential for the transfer of writing-related knowledge, with tutor education a prime site for discovering this potential.

TRANSFER IN TUTOR EDUCATION— WHAT TUTORS SHOULD KNOW

As Devet’s (2015) primer on transfer for writing center directors states, a more intentional focus on transfer in teaching and research could reveal much about what is accomplished in writing centers. She suggests that deliberately teaching tutors transfer concepts from psychology—near and far, lateral and vertical, conditional and relational, declarative and procedural—and from composition—prior knowledge, dispositions, context, genre—could help tutors become more strategic in their practice, better naming what happened in a session or more thoughtfully anticipating a session to come. Several scholars follow Nowacek’s (2011) suggestion that tutors make for especially appropriate “handlers” or “agents of integration” for the transfer of writing knowledge in the writing center (Alexander et al., 2016; Devet, 2015; Kenzie, 2013). By virtue of their location on campus and in conversation with students from across disciplines, tutors become experts not only of tutoring writing but also of generalized writing knowledge, discipline-specific writing knowledge, and sometimes of writing transfer itself.

Many writing center professionals point to tutor education to realize this potential. Primarily, this work is motivated by Bowen and Davis’ (2020) important question regarding transfer in writing centers: “How do we best educate tutors to build on and transfer what they know about writing into the tutorial, and to do so in ways that

help support transfer for the writers with whom they work?” (para. 37). This section conceives of responses to this question as the what, how, and why of transfer-focused tutor education. That is to say, this section explores (a) *what* might be taught to tutors: transfer- and learning-related concepts such as genre, context, reflection (Bowen & Davis, 2020; Devet, 2015; Hahn & Stahr, 2018; Hill, 2016, 2020; Wells, 2011); (b) *how* or through what pedagogical means that content might be taught (Cardinal, 2018; Clark, 1999; Driscoll, 2015; Driscoll & Harcourt, 2012; Hastings, 2020; Johnson, 2020; Kenzie, 2013; Kohn, 2014; Mackiewicz, 2004); and (c) *why* a focus on transfer in tutor education is appropriate and might matter (Mattison, 2020; Rose & Grauman, 2020; Zimmerelli, 2015). These three conceptions overlap, of course, but this division offers potential inroads for tutor educators to incorporate the transfer-focused approaches to tutor education that are most appropriate to their local constraints and possibilities.

What: Transfer and Writing Theory as Content

Several scholars suggest that tutor education that explicitly uses transfer or writing studies theory as the content of tutor education can support effective tutoring for transfer. Wells (2011) describes a hybrid tutor education and writing studies course she designed to train her tutors in a high school writing center. She taught three units using writing about writing (WAW) content: (a) What is good writing—teaching about writing as dependent on rhetorical situation using rhetorical analysis; (b) WID unit on discourse communities and the future writing expectations in college majors through genre analysis; and (c) creating new knowledge for the field of writing studies through a primary research paper. Her hope was that peer tutoring would support the learning of WAW content, but she also previews how that knowledge transferred both ways, into their tutoring as well. Hahn and Stahr (2018) similarly encourage writing center directors to share concepts related to transfer with tutors in specific and intentional ways. They suggest focusing tutor education to help tutors identify with writers “the rhetorical elements shared by different assignments” (13) and to emphasize how writers’ dispositions may influence receptivity to considerations of transfer. They also recommend readings for tutor education (such as Nelms & Dively, 2007, and Wardle, 2007) and advise that tutors prime writers to think and talk about transfer through intake forms

that ask writers to articulate connections to previous writing experiences as well as through conversation.

Offering a full description of a tutor education course, Bowen and Davis (2020) argue that a teaching for transfer (TFT) curriculum can be profitably taken up as a frame to support tutors' explicit use of transfer theory for three main reasons: First, they follow Bruffee (1978, 2008) and Ede (1989) in noting that tutoring is highly social in its dependence on collaboration and thus tutors need to develop a social theory of writing to tutor effectively; second, they note that because tutoring requires high-road mindful transfer, tutors' awareness of their own transfer must be raised; and third, they foreground what they call "the dual lens of tutor education . . . an occasion to see, interpret, and act dually, as both students of and tutors of writing" to highlight tutors' "toggl[ing]" between tutor and writer subjectivities, an agility helpfully supported with a TFT lens (para. 21). Their chapter thus describes the features of a TFT-focused tutor training course that can support these aspects of tutoring. Following the central tenets of Yancey et al.'s (2014) TFT curriculum, Bowen and Davis say reflection must be central to the course to teach tutors mindfulness and active self-monitoring of how writing transfers across contexts. They also explain that course content must include key terms from writing studies and transfer theory so that tutors engage in evolving conceptual frames of these key terms. They suggest the course culminate in an assignment in which tutors explain not only their theory of writing and their theory of tutoring, but also how these theories work together.

Extending descriptions of tutor courses or workshops, Hill (2016, 2020) studied the effects of such transfer-focused tutor education on the practices of tutors themselves. Building on research findings that claim that transfer needs to be made explicit to be successful, Hill (2016) traces the implicit and explicit uses of transfer talk in tutoring sessions following a one-hour tutor training on transfer theory. Hill's class taught tutors about several techniques that facilitate transfer such as recognizing similarities and differences between learning situations, understanding abstract principles about writing that transcend individual writing situations, and using metacognitive reflection (pp. 79–80). Studying this class, then, Hill used a comparative approach—recording 30 hours of tutoring sessions three months later from those who had attended the workshop vs. those who hadn't—to analyze the viability of this transfer training with Nowacek's (2013) discussion of

“transfer talk,” which Hill calls “moments when tutors engaged students in talking about their previous knowledge or in talking about how their current learning connected to future tasks” (p. 85). Hill’s analysis found that even a one-hour class on transfer theory can support tutors’ ability to facilitate transfer for writers: the tutors who had attended explicitly evoked transfer while tutoring far more than tutors who had not attended (2016, p. 88).

While Hill acknowledges that more training than a one-hour class could bring about more explicit transfer talk during tutoring, she suggests in a 2020 follow-up chapter other educational opportunities that might exist. Explaining that her context allows for a one-credit course, rather than the more conventional three-credit model, Hill argues that even courses that mirror a series of workshops could effectively introduce tutors to transfer and genre theory to help them effectively facilitate the transfer of writing-related knowledge for their tutees. She does this not only by assigning scholarly readings on genre, discourse communities, writing across the curriculum, and the rhetorical situation, but also by leading tutors to explicitly apply the readings’ concepts to tutoring sessions. For example, she asks tutors to generate questions they might ask tutees about their experience with a particular genre. Along the way, she assigns four short reflection papers to concretize in-class activities and connect readings to their long-term tutoring practices. Hill’s (2020) larger point is that even when writing center directors have only small amounts of time for tutor education, a familiarity with transfer, genre, and learning theory can make them better tutors as well as help them become better writers with a more “sophisticated understanding of how writing works” (para. 4).

How: Activities and Strategies for Tutor Education

Other writing center scholars focus more on the active doing of transfer in their tutor education courses and ongoing professional development. In her descriptions and study of transfer-focused tutor education, Driscoll (2015) considered both the content to be taught and activities that help tutors engage with it. For example, Driscoll describes a tutor education course that uses transfer pedagogy to teach writing center and writing studies content (see both Driscoll & Harcourt, 2012 and Driscoll, 2015). Due to the course fulfilling upper-division general education requirements, students enroll not only to prepare for tutoring writing but also to prepare for teaching or writing careers or just for

what they perceive as an “easy” gen. ed. credit (Driscoll, 2015, p. 159). Their divergent goals led Driscoll to design a course that focused less on tutor preparation and more on the “knowledge applications” component of the general education requirement, which asked students “to take a course from outside their major and apply that knowledge to their major” (p. 159). To support this knowledge transfer, Driscoll (2015) designed the course around Bransford and Schwartz’s (1999) *preparation for future learning*, which emphasizes not specific knowledge or tasks but forward-looking concepts like *adaptability* or *resource use*, and Perkins and Salomon’s (2012) *detect-elect-connect model* that relies on three mental bridges: detecting connections between previously learned knowledge/skills/approaches and a new situation, electing to explore that connection, and connecting that knowledge in some way (p. 158; also see this book’s chapter “Cognitive Psychology and Situated Learning” for a review of these concepts). Class activities and assignments thus aimed to build connections across prior, current, and future learning contexts with readings about writing and learning research. Frequently assigned reflections brought learning connections to the fore of student thinking.

Driscoll evaluated the course through student writing and retrospective student interviews, one of which is featured in Driscoll and Harcourt (2012). Her thematic analysis showed that the vast majority of her students could build connections among multiple contexts, engage in transfer-focused thinking during the course, and use detect-elect-connect processes after the course (Driscoll, 2015, p. 163). Harcourt, a former student from Driscoll’s course, reflects how the course taught her techniques that “became useful as I moved into my student teaching” (Driscoll & Harcourt, 2012, p. 5). As a new first-grade teacher, she transferred what she had learned in the tutor preparation course in new ways, enacting the values of collaboration, reflection, and metacognitive self-monitoring. Therefore, Driscoll deems the transfer-focused pedagogy effective not only for tutoring preparation but for 21st century general education curriculum (Driscoll, 2015, p. 154). She joins Hughes et al. (2010) in arguing that peer tutoring coursework and experiences, taught through transfer-focused pedagogy, can support the “learning of writing, interpersonal, and metacognitive skills that can transfer to broad educational, professional, civic, and personal contexts” (Driscoll, 2015, p. 154).

Writing center scholars also use transfer-related concepts such as genre to structure activities and assignments in their tutor education courses (Clark, 1999; Kenzie, 2013; Kohn, 2014; Hill, 2016). For example, Clark (1999) recommends a focus on genre in tutor training so that genre analysis can become a central component of writing center sessions, claiming that genre knowledge can help students understand writing's social situatedness and "enabling them to understand, deconstruct, and creatively expand upon the requirements of their writing assignments" (1999, p. 13). Clark follows Miller (1984), Devitt (1993; 1997), and Johns (1997) to build a genre pedagogy, in which tutors learn to

- Approach assignments with students in terms of genre, asking about a genre's purpose and features, how its features serve its purpose and whose interests that purpose serves;
- Foster students' awareness of genres in general, making clear their historical and social situatedness, helping students learn to question them and make creative choices;
- Evaluate student texts in terms of function, relating function to a genre's context; and
- Relate genres to discourse communities and the group membership that certain genres enable, turning students' attention to their own discourse communities and familiar genres. (1999, p. 26–27)

Similarly, Kohn (2014) and Mackiewicz (2004), addressing science writing and engineering writing respectively, recommend teaching tutors disciplinary rhetorical norms and genres so that tutors more intentionally transfer that knowledge to their writing center sessions. For example, Mackiewicz recommends introducing tutors to common purposes and conventions of engineering writing like writing intended to inform (instructions and process descriptions) versus writing intended to persuade (recommendation reports); and conventions for numerals, imperative mood, and active voice (p. 327). Kohn recommends not only incorporating rhetorical knowledge like this into tutor education, but folding it into larger writing center functions, like writing across the curriculum conversations with faculty (that would supply the disciplinary knowledge and drive faculty buy-in to the center) and center materials development like handouts that offer tutors disciplinary checklists to review with writers in sessions.

Active-learning and play also have been explored as strategies for teaching tutors about transfer. Cardinal (2018) analyzes the consequences of two transfer-focused tutor education sessions, arguing for the value of active learning about transfer (vs. lecture). She also argues that tutors' self-reports indicate positive changes in both their feelings of preparedness and their willingness to implement those transfer-oriented concepts in their conversations with writers. An extended demonstration of such active learning can be found in Hastings' (2020) description of incorporating play into a tutor education course. Seeking to incorporate conceptions of transfer from learning theory, Hastings describes the domino game "42" that she teaches tutors to help them become more aware of their metacognitive processes while learning something familiar but mostly new. The activity includes a period of time discussing concepts such as novice/expert learning as a group, another period learning and attempting to play the game, and another reflecting backward on the experience and forward to potential tutoring applications. Hastings describes her goals in such active learning (about learning) as supplying to tutors learning-base vocabulary they will hopefully pass on to tutees, engaging in reflection together around a specific learning experience, and modeling for tutors how learning transfer can both succeed and "fail."

Other scholars conceive of tutor education on transfer in theoretical terms, using an adaptive (Alexander et al., 2016) or transformative (Johnson, 2020) lens to organize particular strategies that teach tutors about transfer. Focusing on tutors in multiliteracy centers, Alexander et al. (2016) use one case study to elaborate a theoretical framework for adaptive transfer that provides a set of strategies that could be included in tutor education. Admitting a close alignment with Bolter and Grusin's (1999) remediation, Alexander et al. suggest tutors need knowledge of a particular kind of transfer—adaptive, dynamic reuse of existing knowledge, with adaptive transfer highlighting what knowledge exists or is prior. They offer four concrete approaches to adaptive remediation that tutors could learn and use with writers in sessions: (a) charting, or rhetorical analysis that focuses on what sections of a text are doing or performing; (b) inventorying, or listing of the range of semiotic resources, across modes and media available to them; (c) coordinating, or a rhetorical analysis of the situation around a remediated text (beyond the text itself), inventing additional rhetorical strategies or semiotic resources to be drawn on; and (d) literacy

linking, or a consideration of how networks of literacies are connected among domains and could be drawn on for a meaningful integration of multiple literacies.

Using a synthesized theoretical lens of transformation (see her Table 1), Johnson (2020) draws on her practitioner expertise in directing a disciplinary writing center to offer tutoring scenarios in which transfer as transformation occurs. Her scenarios show how tutors discuss genres that are novel to students, leading them to experience “dissonance they must reconcile,” which she marks as a kind of transformation (para. 10). She also shows how tutors guide students through adapting concepts or processes from their general knowledge to their immediate projects while also connecting students’ subject-based ideas to contexts beyond the course. According to Johnson, these tutor strategies help students transform their knowledge in transfer-supporting ways, blending knowledge across contexts and preparing students to engage their prior knowledge in future situations. Johnson’s ultimate point about transfer in tutor education is to demonstrate the small transformations of language and understanding that reveal transfer at work (para. 7). That is, she aims to stress that transfer can be taught through almost incidental opportunities (rather than planned lessons that require longer periods of time) when transfer is recognized more as knowledge transformation than “clear cut moments of knowledge application” (para. 24). In this way, Johnson is in conversation with Alexander et al. (2016) and many transfer scholars who agree that moments of transfer are dynamic and thus need to be taught to tutors as such.

Why Focus on Transfer in Tutor Education

A small set of scholarship on tutor education considers why focusing on transfer in preparing tutors might matter beyond their immediate work in sessions. In a similar manner to Bruffee (1978, 2008), Driscoll (2015), and Hughes et al. (2010), these scholars consider how a focus on transfer-related concepts during tutor education might reverberate beyond writing centers. For example, Rose and Grauman’s (2020) study shows that if tutors are explicitly taught to use motivational strategies to support writers’ self-efficacy and self-regulation, writers might feel more confident in taking charge of their future writing situations. Rose and Grauman argue that when tutors are equipped to intentionally create an engaging and collaborative tutoring space by

using praise, showing empathy, and reinforcing writers' ownership and control, the writers they work with might be more likely to create those spaces for themselves elsewhere. Mattison (2020) similarly argues for making explicit the collaborative and interpersonal skills of tutoring not only to support tutees' and tutors' future endeavors. Noting that professions increasingly value such "soft skills," he suggests that tutor education should intentionally name and foreground the dispositions tutors develop and inevitably transfer to work contexts simply because it makes them more employable.

Claims about the importance of focusing on transfer in tutor education are mainly these: that such a focus can improve tutors' skills, tutees' experiences in and beyond the center, and tutors' future writing lives as well. An interesting demonstration of this last reason is Zimmerelli's (2015) study of her service-learning approach to tutor education, in which she examined a community partnership for its impact on tutors' engagement with social justice. While her course did not focus on transfer, transfer was a theme that arose in her descriptive coding analysis of tutors' final reflective essays. Zimmerelli's coding of tutors' written reflections captured their increased capacity for connection and identification, their recognition of reciprocal and mutual learning, their development of a civic identity, and finally, the prospect of transfer, as tutors described how community tutoring experiences altered their writing center tutoring. Because 83% of tutors' reflection essays displayed features that Zimmerelli said signified transfer—captured in phrases such as "will easily be carried over" or "is applicable to"—she argues that transfer is a central feature in community-engaged tutoring (p. 73). In other words, because tutors articulated how community experiences changed their approaches to tutoring in general, Zimmerelli argues that incorporating more mindfulness about transfer into tutor education, supported by transfer-friendly reflection, might heighten tutors' tendencies to be open and generous, adaptable, empathetic and caring writing collaborators (Bruffee 1978, 2008).

A FOCUS ON STUDENT WRITERS

Studies that trace student writers' transfer of writing-related knowledge through the lens of the writing center remain sparse, although there are several recent indications of a growing research interest in this area (Bromley et al., 2016; Kenzie, 2013; Nowacek et al., 2019;

Rose & Grauman, 2020). For example, Nowacek et al. (2019) examine the “transfer talk” of writers in 30 writing center tutorials. By transfer talk, they mean “the talk through which individuals make visible their prior learning (in this case, about writing) or try to access the prior learning of someone else” (para. 7). Ultimately their article claims that the transfer of learning may be more collaborative and may include more automatized transfer than is generally recognized (para. 2).

Other research focuses on student writers’ transfer of learning in more depth. For example, Hagemann’s (1995) case study seeks to understand one tutee’s transfer of writing knowledge among courses and over time. Arguing that transfer research is too “diachronic,” too focused on disconnected singular classrooms, semesters, and courses, Hagemann grounds her transfer study instead in a “synchronic” frame to understand the “synchronous, that is, simultaneous, experiences” of learning to write among multiple academic discourses all at once (p. 122). To accomplish this, Hagemann studies the writing experiences of one undergraduate writer from Taiwan, Lih Mei, who is a fifth-year senior negotiating writing from five courses in three disciplines. Hagemann analyzes tutor records from one fall semester to reconstruct Lih Mei’s writing experiences from the point of view of her writing center sessions. Hagemann tracks Lih Mei’s courses, assignments, and “writing roles” required in each, reconstructing a timeline of 44 visits and 19–20 assignments.

The tutoring records—notes that tutors write to record what transpired in a session—describe Lih Mei’s negotiation of varying expectations for writing in her courses in which writing is assigned to measure content mastery, but also gauge her grasp of disciplinary rhetorical knowledge. The records show Lih Mei negotiating the writing roles of “text processor, decision-maker, debater, counselor and researcher” all in one semester (p. 123). Hagemann also traces which rhetorical strategies Lih Mei could and could not transfer among specific disciplinary genres: Lih Mei easily transferred knowledge of summary writing among summary assignments but struggled with the disciplinary genre of the “tourism plan,” which asked for summary writing that Lih Mei did not recognize as such. Similarly, Lih Mei struggled to transfer summary writing knowledge to an assigned reading response, especially struggling to take on the role of conversation contributor. Hagemann finds this bumpy knowledge transfer to be primarily a result of Lih Mei struggling to negotiate too many writing roles simultaneously,

suggesting that tutors might best help writers think through types of writing roles or the range of authority being asked of them to support writers' transfer of writing knowledge among tasks and courses.

Rose and Grauman (2020) studied recordings of tutoring sessions to understand how tutors might facilitate transfer-enabling dispositions in writers. Collecting six video-recorded tutoring sessions, they trace when tutors used motivational scaffolding and how those strategies led to writers' self-regulation and self-efficacy. They use Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2018) talk-based motivational scaffolding in tutoring—showing concern, praising, reinforcing student writers' ownership and control, being optimistic or using humor, giving sympathy or empathy—as indications of specific motivational strategies to link to writers' dispositions (p. 58). In the six sessions, they observed tutors using motivational strategies to support transfer-supporting dispositions in several ways. When tutors used praise and empathy, they opened up space for writers to practice self-regulation by choosing what to work on, asking questions, using language that implied confidence, and starting new topic episodes in the session. Tutors who used optimism and humor in developing rapport with writers allowed writers to feel increased comfort in the session and with their text, paving the way for more active involvement in the session that encouraged self-regulation and self-efficacy. And when tutors reinforced writers' ownership and control of their texts and of the session, writers sometimes made different revision decisions than the tutor suggested, which Rose and Grauman claim indicated self-efficacy. About their study, Rose and Grauman conclude that “the most productive moments are conversations where the writers actively engage in collaborative dialogue, demonstrating self-efficacy and self-regulation, rather than letting or expecting tutors to lead” (para. 26). They conclude that incorporating transfer theory into tutor education may heighten the results they witnessed in writers' changed dispositions.

With a slightly different lens, Bromley et al. (2016) examined how student visitors to three centers at different institutions describe the writing knowledge that transferred during and after sessions. The researchers collected students' self-reported perceptions that writing center visits increased their confidence and their meta-awareness through reported acts of writing transfer. Guided by a theoretical framework that incorporated Wardle's (2012) problem-exploring dispositions, Reiff and Bawarshi's (2011) boundary crossers, and Perkins and Sa-

lomon's (2012) high-road transfer, they especially focused on writing centers' ability to provide low-stakes contexts to explore and expand problems. Their survey and focus group data from three campuses allowed for a cross-institutional analysis of student transfer, showing most student visitors engaging in transfer, with a "large majority" engaging in far transfer. Their inclusion of focus group quotes shows students' perceptions of how their next steps in an assignment were guided by what they learned in a session as well as of the writing "breakthroughs" they experienced in sessions and continued to call on in later contexts (Bromley et al., 2016, pp. 7–10). Because of the depth and rigorous presentation of the data, their study convincingly shows not only that writing centers do indeed support students' transfer of writing knowledge, but also that writing centers play a central and singular role as a hub of transfer learning and teaching on campus.

TRANSFER BEYOND THE CENTER

The Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Project (PWTARP), conducted by Hughes et al. (2010), takes Bruffee (1987, 2008) seriously by aiming to demonstrate empirically what the impact of tutoring writing looks like on tutors' lives long after graduation. Setting out to understand "what peer tutors take with them" after leaving college, Hughes et al. conducted a large-scale electronic survey of 126 tutor alumni from their three institutions. The survey collects thoughts from alumni who tutored as far back as 1982 (finding former tutors ranging in age from 22 to 77) and thus were able to include a lifespan perspective on the impact of tutoring writing. By relying on the construct "take with them," the survey assumes the presence of knowledge transfer, but moves beyond writing knowledge.

Following Bruffee's notion that tutors practice the kinds of socially-situated communication skills that will serve them in work, family, and civic contexts long after college, the researchers rely on Bruffee (1978) and Cronon's (1998) essay "Only Connect" to structure an analysis of participant reflections that highlighted not only tutors' learned writing knowledge but the kind of learning Cronon characterizes as a liberal education: they "listen and they hear"; "they read and they understand"; "they can talk with anyone"; "they can write clearly and persuasively and movingly"; "they practice humility, tolerance, and self-criticism" and "they nurture and empower the people

around them” (pp. 76–78). Like Bruffee, Cronon folds human connectedness into college learning. Hughes et al.’s (2010) findings highlight the presence of these “soft skills,” as Mattison (2020) calls them, in tutor alumni, with implications for how tutors transfer intellectual, professional, social, and personal knowledge into other areas of their lives. Specifically, the survey reveals that tutoring writing helped tutors develop intellectual knowledge like deeper revision practices, a willingness to seek out critical conversation around writing, critical reading skills, and a heightened awareness of writing processes in general with a metalanguage to describe them (p. 24–27). But tutoring also led tutors to develop what the researchers call “a listening presence,” in which participants describe the active listening and questioning skills they took “with them across the border of graduation and into further studies and into careers, as well as into their family and social lives” (p. 28). Hughes et al. were surprised not that listening was the most frequently reported skill learned but that so many alumni tutors described that listening and writing mattered for them in professions like “sales, social work, acting, management, development work, legal work, and medicine” (p. 32) and in family situations like connecting with their children and in other social relationships. The researchers surmise that this extension of social knowledge stems from tutors’ first-hand experience of the impact of collaborative talk. As tutors they have learned “how crucial it is to learning for writers to know that someone cares about, listens to, respects, and empathizes with them” (p. 37).

Hughes et al.’s important research project empirically supports Bruffee’s (2008) descriptions of what peer tutoring “can do” for college students, showing not just that tutors develop particular kinds of general and disciplinary-specific writing knowledge, but they develop particular kinds of social knowledge that changes how they move through the world and connect with other humans in it. Similarly, when Dinitz and Kiedaisch (2009) take up PWTARP’s framing (available online prior to Hughes et al.’s 2010 publication) to survey 135 tutor alumni on how their tutoring experiences affected their career development in particular, they find that tutor alumni took “interpersonal skills” with them to post-college professional settings (71%). Alumni respondents also report that they carried writing skills such as sophisticated revision practices, awareness of writing and reading habits, and meaningful incorporation of feedback (58%); collaborative and dynamic

mentoring and teaching skills (57%); and critical and creative thinking skills (31%). Among their respondents, 73% said tutoring writing in college influenced their choice of profession or graduate work, and when asked to rank “the importance for your occupation of the skills, qualities, or values you developed as a tutor,” 90% designated it as “highly important” (p. 4).

Hughes et al. (2010) say that peer tutoring is a “form of liberal education for peer tutors themselves” (p. 14). They mean that tutors aren’t just educating others but are experiencing an especially complex and multifaceted form of education themselves. Transfer is an important layer in this tutor-knowledge complex, supporting the connections tutors make among the spaces in which they learn, the disciplines and rhetorical norms they encounter, and the empathetic dispositions that apply elsewhere in life. Hughes et al. say, and other scholars above concur, that all this knowledge, writing and otherwise, “persists” for decades beyond the writing center (p. 38). The persistence or endurance of tutor knowledge is certainly a question of transfer, one that highlights not only the range of knowledge that is gained, or the human-interdependent quality of transfer, but also that tutor knowledge, itself, is particularly durable. Writing center professionals continue to try to understand why this is, and how this knowledge might change or solidify if transfer is explicitly named as one mechanism that supports this knowledge.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY AND METHODOLOGY

As a distinct infrastructural hub for transfer, writing centers are positioned in the midst of the multidirectional transformation of knowledge (Barron & Grimm, 2002). The scholarship above shows both the complexity and the potential for locating pedagogical and methodological questions about transfer in this spot. Both the instance of the tutoring session, and the ongoing tutor education that envelopes it, together make writing centers a uniquely rich site in which to pursue dynamic, longitudinal, and transdisciplinary treatments of the transfer of writing knowledge.

The scholarship reviewed in this chapter reveals the beginnings of a few patterns of pedagogical insights about transfer from the point of view of the writing center, more as confirmation of existing rather than brand new observations. Most of all, scholars suggest that trans-

fer is already occurring all the time in tutoring, but explicit teaching about transfer can make a difference: teaching tutors about writing studies, learning, and transfer theory as the content of tutor education might shift what tutors become cognizant of and their resulting tutoring practices. From this, writing center directors should not then treat transfer theory as yet another topic to attend to in an already-packed course, but should rather take the cue of many scholars above and refocus a course on a learning concept or two, or reframe the good and important content that likely already exists. For example, if transfer is one theoretical frame for the course, then tutors could analyze the readings in the *St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* for their implications about the transfer of writing knowledge in the tutoring session. Beyond the writing center, expanding the notion of when and where tutoring might occur—peer review, planned or incidental student collaboration—in turn expands the pedagogical potential of teaching for transfer. Teaching student writers to support each other's writing transfer might heighten writers' considerations of themselves as writer-tutors. Such an expansion could move beyond colleges to also consider tutoring interactions in community-based writing centers, professional or job-related writing centers, and more.

When it comes to methodological insights, research on transfer phenomena in writing centers has so far captured isolated pieces of the transfer puzzle. Due to collection methods commonly used—tutor reflections or records, surveys and focus groups, observations and audio/visual recordings of sessions—a single perspective of a collaborative interaction of a session most often is captured. Either a study follows what a tutor transfers, and then usually only one type or strand of knowledge, or what a student transfers, and again usually only their writing knowledge or dispositional performances. Because of the potential of writing centers for revealing the multifaceted nature of transfer, researchers could consider how different methodologies might capture the interaction of multiple study participants, both tutor and tutee, treating both as collaborative writers making knowledge together simultaneously. Research also might center the interaction of strands of knowledge being transferred like tutors' writing and tutoring knowledge. While a focused unit of analysis lends to study clarity, a tight lens on transfer tends to treat the phenomenon somewhat statically. Therefore, future research could profitably ask what data collection methods might best capture the interactivity and synchronicity

of transfer that naturally occurs in writing centers? How can studies document both tutors' and tutees' mutually evolving theories of writing based on their transfer of writing knowledge alongside each other? How might study designs account for the other types of knowledge present and potentially being transferred in a writing center space—on the walls, incidentally overheard from other sessions? (See Driscoll & Devet, 2020 for another forward-looking set of questions for a research program on transfer in writing centers.) Here, methods based in complexity, like ethnography, discourse-based interviews, corpus studies, longitudinal studies of writing development, and participatory action research might support study designs that get at the heart of what writing centers can reveal about transfer.

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