THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

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...FROM THE EDITOR...

Greetings, and welcome back, everyone!

With this issue, we begin the newsletter's 25th year of publication, a good time for "Looking Backward and Forward." And so I've invited some people with impressive writing center experience to share their perspectives with us. Joan Mullin's essay begins this series, and I invite you to contribute too, whether your membership in our writing lab community is lengthy or brief. (See page 2 for information on sending in essays.)

While Joan Mullin raises questions about professionalizing ourselves, Ellen Mohr shares her concerns about another topic many of us are now dealing with—going online to tutor. Jason Palmeri confronts an older, perennial question, the tutor's position between student and teacher, and Ken Baake offers strategies for explaining concepts through the use of metaphor. New concerns and traditional ones—sounds like business as usual as we launch into a new academic year. I wish us all well as we plunge in. And try not to think about how *really* young the "freshpersons" look this year.

• *Muriel Harris, editor*

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Looking backward and forward:

"What hath writing centers wrought? A fifteen-year reflection on communication, community, and change"

My earliest recollection of the writing center community comes by way of the first Peer Tutoring Conference at Brown University. As a graduate student, I knew no one and hadn't a clue that the nice man I chatted with at breakfast was Ken Bruffee or the really cool woman that lunched with me was Muriel Harris. Luckily, I wasn't as intimidated by the force of these two as I should have been—as a result, once I did find out their stature in the field, I recognized that this intellectual community was much different, and much more welcome than the MLA. More than anything, these critical meetings signify the mentoring nature of our practice and our profession: despite our differences in opinions and personalities, people who become writing center professionals, I believe, have more of an opportunity to be mentored. This is probably the most positive factor that

has survived in our profession since I became a part of it over fifteen years ago.

But much has changed.

In the early years, when our community was struggling to identify itself, I also noticed a lot of hand-holding and hand-wringing—a practice not bad in itself, but problematic in excess. For so many I met, the cup was *always* half-empty, the sky was falling, the wine was running out of the cask. In some ways this was encouraging because I didn't feel so alone in my "battles": there was much commiserating about lack of position or recognition in the institution of choice—and lack of budget. But another result of the "half-empty speech" was the creation of a culture of victimization. As I went to each successive conference, I got tired of the complaints, tired of hearing the same stories of gloom year after year. I wanted to hear less words, words, words and more solutions. I wanted a different-looking cup.

As I struggled to find solutions in my own institution (as budgets were cut, administrators moved on through the assembly line and the English department continued to pretend the writing center wasn't successful), I actively and assertively chose to study the mission statement of the university, see how I fit in, became a part of committees, acted like faculty (when, at the time, I wasn't), published, taught and, ultimately, garnered the professional currency that gave me stature (and power) within the institution. Many of my new-found colleagues were engaging in the very same things in their institutions—and gaining position and place for their writing centers. I would be lying if I said that the writing center at the University of Toledo has blossomed unimpeded (some of you have heard my tales of the wicked queen)—and my successful colleagues all have horror stories to trade. But we agreed that in order to be understood in our communities, we each practiced a basic rhetorical principal: sensitivity to audience. It seemed too many of our colleagues in the writing center forgot that basic principal—and several others of those they profess to tutors and students.

In order to change perceptions, many of us identified adopting the "language" of the academy—publishing, service, and teaching—as central to how we would be heard. All of us had started in a service category—the least valued in the language hierarchy—and therefore immediately lost ground with colleagues, administrators and budget officers. That changed as we purposefully redefined—re-articulated—our service as teaching and faculty development. As a result, many writing center directors, seen as leaders in assignment design, faculty workshops, or using technology in the classroom, have become involved in Centers for Teaching Excellence, Academic Learning Centers, and WAC programs

Therefore, what I have seen change over the years more and more is a professionalization of writing centers. I know that writing centers exist without budgets, tied to soft money, subject to departmental whims, but there are also those that do not train their tutors, take on any work-study student as a tutor, are subject to paying minimum wage, dismiss a tutor—without pay—if a client doesn't show and engage in a rhetoric of despair. I would argue that professionalization goes a long way towards changing many of those conditions, that it has been a necessary step towards being recognized as part of an academic institution, one that speaks to particular sets of audiences and recognizes that we need to adopt the language—the genre—of our context. This is not news; we tell our student writers this all the time as we explain academic-speak. We train our tutors to recognize genres and explain the need for them. Yet, as we train tutors and work with writers, I think we forget to reflect on our own words.

And here is the final difference: that professionalization for some has not come at the risk of giving up what we are: it has come at the expense of the institutions' abilities to reconceptualize what it means to be professional. I have seen more writing center professionals involved in teaching composition, other writing courses on campus, theory courses, and WAC courses. We have influenced classroom teaching through faculty workshops, TA workshops and by our presence in our own classrooms—WHEN, that is, *we transfer our writing center pedagogy into classroom settings*. As writing centers

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Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is 10-15 double-spaced typed pages, 3-5 pages for reviews, and 4 pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. If possible, please send as attached files or as cut-and-paste in an e-mail to mjturley@purdue.edu. Otherwise, send a 3 and 1/2 in. disk with the file, along with the paper copy. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope with return postage not pasted to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g. August 15 for October issue).

change the teaching culture, so too the idea that a writing center is a place for talking nice to students (though we still do that) changes.

The increased visibility of colleagues in journals, on panels of various disciplines' conferences, in interdisciplinary and other-disciplinary publications draws recognition to the cross-disciplinary nature of our mission, our theories and our practices. There has been resentment in the ranks about the pressure to publish when we are already directing, training, workshopping, maintaining budgets; but we ARE academics: this is what we/they do. One might argue, well, we/they shouldn't because that keeps us from working with people. This is, however, a conversation that needs to be institutionalized, not just whispered within our ranks. Writing center professionals have brought such a conversation to their institutions, causing *institutional* changes in how they are evaluated, given merit, placed within the academic setting. The effects of these local conversations are strengthened as more of us are being recognized abroad for our work. As other countries catch on to the importance of rethinking their students' ability to write, they are turning to the experiences we have already faced with success: we're becoming an international resource. And that perhaps signals most eloquently the sum of the changes I have seen over the years.

We used to joke about being a writing *center*—while we stood on the periphery of the institution. We used to be proud of the fact that we *were* on the periphery and "not like them." But I have seen more and more writing centers move into the institution, become a part of their mission, be advertised by admissions, appear in promotional literature because of their grant-getting abilities, because of their savvy technological, high school or elementary school outreach. The difference between how these successful writing centers have grown to operate and writing centers of the past is that they have often moved into central locations by redefining institutional notions of teaching, learning, theory and practice. In a sense, the centrality has been redefined as the periphery. Institutions are finding that the ways in which we work, think, interact are successful because they are not traditional. This puts us at risk of being in the limelight—and therefore under a scrutiny we can avoid on the periphery. It obligates us to be professional and serious about all aspects of our work as well as about our ties to academe. It puts us in danger of becoming "like them"; however, if NWCA, regional conferences and WCenter are any indication of the liveliness, engagement and intellectual mentoring that still pervades our profession, I would say that the changes we have created are yet positive, the cup is half full, the sky is intact, and there is plenty of room for more wine.

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National Writing Centers Association/Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association

November 2-4, 2000
Baltimore, MD
Keynote speaker: Molly Wingate

For conference information: contact Terry Riley (riley@planetx.bloomu.edu, (570) 389-4736). For registration, contact Jon Olson, Center for Excellence in Writing, Penn State University, 206 Boucke Bldg, University Park, PA 16802-5900. Phone: 814-865-9243; fax: 814-863-9627; e-mail: writingcenter@psu.edu. Conference website: http://www.english.udel.edu/wc/mawca/nwcacon.html

National Writing Across the Curriculum Conference

Call for Proposals
May 31-June 2, 2001
Bloomington, Indiana
"Writing, Teaching, and Learning in New Contexts"
Keynote speakers: Gail A. Hawisher, Barbara E. Walvoord, Kathleen Blake Yancey

For additional information, see the conference website at http://www.indiana.edu/~wac2001/. Inquiries can be made by e-mail to wac2001@indiana.edu or by telephone at 812-855-4298, the Campus Writing Program at Indiana University. Deadline for proposals is October 13, 2000. Proposal forms are available on the conference website (http://www.indiana.edu/~wac2001/prop.html.)

Imagine yourself in a . . .

Imagine yourself in the writing center of the future. You set your alarm for 7 a.m. but then decide to sleep-in for an extra hour. You wake up leisurely, throw on a robe, and as you walk by your computer on your way to get your first cup of coffee, you flip the switch on the machine. Later, with a bagel in one hand and your coffee in the other, you begin reading your e-mail (student essays) and making on-line comments. At about 10:30 with you still in your robe you have a MUD meeting with a group of Composition 121 students working on the same essay. At noon you join your colleagues in a departmental meeting. This meeting requires being properly attired; you will be televised. Still later you do some on-line banking (payday) and a little shopping at Nordstrom's. Then you answer some e-mail messages, mainly grammar hotline questions that can be answered fairly easily. As evening falls your computer turns on lights, monitors your front door, and accesses your favorite television programs. The virtual writing center in which you tutor has closed for the night . . . for you. Yet for all its secure comfort and time flexibility, this writing center lacks the dynamics of a physical center. The 21st Century writing center is highly adaptive to individual needs, abreast of technological advancements, attuned to language diversity, and aware of the impact of the media on written communication. Yet, can it thrive in an isolated world—one where there is no body language to explain words, no eye contact to show understanding, no empathetic concern to authenticate the writer's views, and no challenging questions to prod the writer's meaning? The core of the "real" writing center is its humanistic quality and that characteristic may be lost in the "virtual" center.

After working in a writing center for close to twenty years, I am convinced that much of what happens is spontaneous. Because of its sociable environment and collaborative nature, the writing center is a great study in human interaction and behavior. Watching this social interaction has convinced me that writing is not and should not be a solitary act. From its moment of conception to its final revision, a paper benefits from the collaborative efforts of the writing center staff and the paper's author (Bruffee). I have often seen tutors turn to one another to find answers to hard questions, to get a second opinion, to seek support or reinforcement, and to share their own writing. I have seen students visiting the Center and waiting at a table for a tutor to begin talking about their writing with one another. I have seen students use resources, such as a thesaurus or specialized dictionary that they would never have used unless they had been browsing around the Center. I have watched tutors take a gentler path because they have witnessed misty eyes as a student tackled a challenging problem. I have observed students listening to writing conversations at the next table and tutors collaborating with one another and the student as the three work together to solve a rhetorical problem or challenge. I know tutors who are trained in listening use body language and eye contact to keep students talking about their writing. I know these same tutors read the cues given by the body language that their students use to identify problems in understanding, anger misdirected, or negative attitudes. Each of these wonderful interactions would not occur in an online conversation which is linear and less spontaneous. No discussions are overheard by members of the Center's community; no behavior is modeled by writing specialists and professionals.

Both of the writing centers described may have a place in the future. I continually try to stay open-minded to the possibilities of technologies' enhancement to the center's many services. Our center at Johnson County Community College has evolved with the changing technology. We have a bank of 16 computers which are networked to our computer composition classrooms, the rest of the college, the Internet, and, of course, to each other and a laser printer. We also have a scanner and a color printer. Our software ranges from tutorials on the rules of writing to writing prompts for organizing and revising writing, assessments for determining the needs of writers, and programs to practice editing. Specialized programs for international students, technical writing students, resume writing, and developmental students are available. In the beginning the computers tended to isolate students and allowed them to avoid the dialog of the center's community and protected them from revealing their real problems, such as finding their writer's voice, validating their authentic experiences, and discovering their process for writing and strategies for supporting their viewpoints. We were doing exactly what Neal Lerner refers to in his chapter "Drill Pads, Teaching Machines and Programmed Texts"—shifting the "dirty work" of teaching grammar rules to the computer (123). He goes on to remind us, "Importantly, this approach to learning in its attempts to individualize instruction is firmly at odds with writing as a social activity" (126). As we began using a combination of software plus dialog, we saw students respond with better writing. As we integrated the software into our courses and emphasized the writing along with learning the rules, we saw application

of the rules to the writing and a better understanding. Now tutors work with students at the computers as they revise and edit papers. Still, I wonder if we are making the best use of our computers. Lerner also talks about the "seduction appeal" of computers, and I know that is true as I constantly battle how we use our computers. Recently, I actually refused adding computers and requested that we budget only new software, upgrades of existing software, and hardware replacement.

When I read Clinton Gardner's account of Salt Lake City's online writing center, I marveled at his technology savvy. Students may enter the virtual writing center and get responses from the tutors or they may leave their drafts on an electronic bulletin board to get feedback from other students. They can get online in a chatroom for real time responses or they can simply attach their papers to an e-mail message and pick up the response later. Of course, students can also still bring their drafts to the real center for a traditional tutoring session. The SLCCC writing center web site provides clear directions for easy access to all of the center's services. Is this model the future of writing centers? Will our centers become more virtual than real? What do we lose when we tutor online? What do we gain?

The theme for a recent National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing was "Unmasking Writing: A Collaborative Process." The description asked that potential presenters explore the various personae that writers and tutors use to cover their real or perceived weaknesses. These masks sometime prevent the dialog from moving to what often needs to be discussed. An example of this problem is shown in the student who comes to the writing center to have his/her paper proofread. The tutor responds with the memorized prompt, "We do not proofread in the writing center." The student believing that errors in writing are the major complaint of his/her instructor is confused that the tutor will not help with this problem. The tutor has been trained to use a hierarchy of questions to get to the root of the writing problem with grammar and usage errors as the lowest on the pyramid. Those initial verbal exchanges are crucial to the tutoring session as the tutor prods the student to discover potential revision opportunities, not just look for mechanical errors. E. Goffman's discussion about social interaction can be applied to the tutoring session as the tutor seeks to conceal perceived inadequacies from the student while the student attempts to use the tutor to achieve his/her goal of a "perfect paper." Initially both are reluctant to move beyond this "false conversation" to the more open dialog necessary to achieve success in the writing center environment. This peeling away of preconceived attitudes and behaviors is the core of what happens in a writing center. How can trust and comfort levels be built online? Thomas Newkirk explains the roleplaying that takes place in a face-to-face conference as both teacher and student become members of the "closed community" with its own set of rules (194). As tutors we know one of our goals is to break down those rigid expectations to create a comfortable open community where ideas are valued.

Corporations stress the need for employees to have skills in technology, critical thinking, and collaboration. They often criticize higher education's inability to prepare students for the workplace. Colleges have responded by buying computers, training faculty, and putting the curriculum online. In fact, the rush to get courses online at universities and two- and four-year colleges across the country is apparent. When students are at a premium and money is the bottom line, it only stands to reason that administrators see distance learning as a means to attracting more students. Location and time become unimportant; access to any course, anywhere, anytime is attractive. JCCC's administrators began pushing in the early 1990's to provide an Associate Arts Degree online. It was this push that instigated some JCCC faculty to ask some questions about quality of curriculum, delivery of instruction, and exit competency. Did courses change when they were put online? Our Center for Teaching and Learning formed a learning community (team) to begin discussions about alternative courses, especially distance learning classes. We discovered that courses could be put online without any accountability check as to the integrity of the original course curriculum or on the rate of success of students' competency in the course. Many discussions revolved around student/instructor ratio, time and workload, etc. These discussions continue as instructors share the challenges of online courses. Have these courses addressed any of the corporations' criticisms? Are students more employable because of online courses?

Recently I asked several of our instructors who teach writing classes online about some of the challenges they face. All of them told me that students who take these courses must be incredibly self-motivated and goal-oriented. Furthermore, they noted a high attrition rate in these classes. They are also concerned about the high failure rate of students taking their distance learning class. The lack of structure in these courses seems to equate to increased procrastination, and students just do not seem to be motivated. Many fail because they don't feel the connection to the course or instructor that they have in a traditional class. Like telecourses and the correspondence courses before them, distance learning classes require unique characteristics in students. Another challenge is the technology itself. Compatibility and reliability of hardware and software for both student and instructor are consistent problems. One instructor told me he had yet to receive a readable attachment from one of his students this semester. Often his students' computers are not compatible with his

system. In the fall schedule of classes, he is adding a description of the basic necessary equipment which students must have before enrolling. So, what should be a course which is more accessible to students becomes inaccessible because they do not have the necessary technology available to them. Cynthia Selfe raised this issue in her keynote address at the 1998 Conference on College Composition and Communication. Does technology open doors or close them even more to the disenfranchised?

Furthermore, when I asked the distance learning instructor if teaching online had simplified his role, he said just the opposite had occurred. With no time or place constraints on them, his students e-mail him constantly which requires his spending as much as three to four hours on the computer daily. His course does not provide real time online for collaborative discussions, so messages are sent all of the time. In addition, to keep costs down administrators often increase class size. For example, at Florida Gulf Coast University distance learning enrollment accounts for 16% of enrollment with hopes of this figure rising to 25% soon, according to James McKinnon in his *Wall Street Journal* article. Yet when surveyed, faculty did not agree that more distance learning classes should be offered nor that distance learning was "an effective alternative to the traditional classroom." As we consider whether or not to offer our writing center courses online, we need to question their adaptability and effectiveness in this format.

Chris Anson also asks questions about the effectiveness of technology in changing the way teachers teach. Often lecture notes have merely become multimedia presentations and verbal discussions have moved online. Has technology changed what we do in the writing center? What happens when students send their papers for analysis online? Is the analysis as effective as the person-to-person session? Again, without the human interaction do students lose an important part of the writing conference? Technology is good at sending information in a straight line but loses the stereo effect of the traditional writing center environment. As mentioned earlier students online miss the shared experience—or as Anson defines it, the "innerconnectedness"—between staff members who share answers in sessions, and among students who miss out on the environment, stimuli, and interactions of the center.

Furthermore, online tutoring cannot address the issue of diversity in learning styles, multiple intelligence, or cultural background. In the physical writing center these issues are easily addressed as we choose examples relevant to the writing situation and the student. When teachers or tutors can recognize the diverse learning styles of their students, they can adjust their instruction to best fit those needs. Again, the one-dimensional aspect of the online tutoring session prevents that spontaneity and adaptability from happening.

Recently I have heard instructors talk about how email has students writing more, but errors in writing have increased. If we say that online tutoring and emailing are good because they create more opportunities to write, we must look at the quality of that writing. Robert Ochsner says that writing a lot, such as in journals or writing-to-learn exercises, does not mean that students will produce better writing or that students will do better in classes. "Students need to learn how to write before they can profitably write to learn. And to improve as writers they must have writing instruction" (18). One needs only to look at a few electronic messages to see that his theory can be applied here. In fact, some instructors are concerned that the carelessness of writers online is reinforcing bad habits, maybe even exacerbating them. Ochsner also talks about the disruptiveness of errors in writing. Often the meaning is lost when a student hands us a paper "with garbled word order, random affixing, bizarre language, the kind of unintelligible prose that defies analysis" (142). Our online grammar hotline has received some requests for help which have required lengthy back and forth messages as we try to get at the root of the question. If the session is face-to-face rather than online, we can attempt to prod the meaning from the student orally, getting much quicker successful results. Language development begins with speaking, then moves to "inner speech" or understanding, and finally to written language according to Vygotsky (99). Students, especially our non-native students who are learning language skills, need the opportunity to work through these stages of language development.

Peter Carino's "Computers in the Writing Center" should be read by all directors of writing centers. He cautions us about the role of technology—to not allow computers to define the center's mission and to not lose the social dynamics of the center. Carino quotes Healy who in 1995 also suggested directors be "reflective and self-critical while the opportunities before us are still fresh " (189). Have we been successful at that endeavor?

Still, we can see many benefits from technology in our writing centers. Many students who would never come to the center might access it electronically. Improved technology is allowing easier access and maneuverability. Students who do have the technology have choices in how they take courses and utilize services. Because of time and place constraints on them, students who might not otherwise be able to enroll in courses can do so online. People who travel, have small children at home, are disabled or confined to home with an illness can take advantage of online courses. I do believe that several of our writing courses would do well online. Several area businesses have sent their employees to us to work through our modules to improve their writing. With these courses online the employees could complete the work from their desks. For some indi-

viduals the comfort level increases when not having to share their drafts in person. Anonymity means less risk-taking for them, and on-line seems safer. The Internet and electronic databases have made resources available that would not be available in a physical site. Furthermore, students may access any online writing center anywhere. Johnson County Community College students could not only access JCCC's center but also Purdue's or UCLA's or Harvard's. If we are all providing online services, what difference would it make where students received feedback? So, is it possible that we might one day all be working from one universal writing center . . . from the comfort of our homes as the beginning scenario suggested? We don't have all the answers yet . . . in fact, we have not even asked all of the questions. Cynthia Selfe, Chris Anson, David Healy, Peter Carino, Neal Lerner, and others have begun the discussions. And, that's the point of my reflections and unanswered questions; we must continue to talk . . . stay open-minded to the possibilities but skeptical of replacing something we know works—the face-to-face writing conference.

Meanwhile, imagine yourself in . . . a twenty-first century writing center.

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Book Review

Rabow, Jerome, Tiffani Chin, and Nima Fahimian. *Tutoring Matters: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About How to Tutor*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999. 188 pp.

Reviewed by Leigh Ryan (University of Maryland, College Park), Christa Ehmann (Smarthinking, Washington, DC), Dean A. Hinnen (University of North Carolina at Pembroke)

Tutoring Matters is probably an excellent manual for students preparing to tutor in conjunction with Jerome Rabow's Sociology of Education class at UCLA. Indeed, the book grew from students' experiences and journals within that class, and in their separate introductory sections, the three authors—Jerome Rabow, Tiffani Chin, and Nima Fahimian—consistently refer to the book as a "manual." Because these college students work with elementary and secondary students at off-site locations, the authors describe tutoring situations that more resemble the teacher-student relationship than the peer tutoring so commonplace in college writing centers, and they assume longer term relationships between tutor and student than occur in many writing centers. They discuss tutoring underprivileged or at-risk students, comment on dealing with socio-economic and educational gaps, and devote an entire chapter to "Goodbyes: Ending the Tutoring Relationship." They talk about quieting pre-site fears and refer to tutoring in a variety of subjects. But just as the manuals that guide tutors in most writing centers do not explain "everything you always wanted to know about how to tutor," neither does this text.

For most of us who read the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, the aspects of tutoring they describe are not characteristics of our tutoring situations. Most of us work with students/clients who come to us in our familiar surroundings—a writing center or lab in a college or high school. We deal with older stu-

dents and with a single subject—writing. Especially in larger writing centers, we often work with students we don't know and will likely never see again. As a result, much of the advice offered by Rabow, et al., including chapters on "Building Relationships," "Teaching Techniques," and "Other Adults: Parents, Teachers, Administrators" is of little practical use to writing center tutors.

The authors introduce their book as a tutoring manual based on the analysis of field notes from hundreds of tutors. These vivid and colorful comments from tutors' journals provide a particularly nice touch and are a strength of the book. So often in educational texts the voice of actual participants is lost or neglected, but this work highlights the words of individuals in the field with vignettes from over 75 different tutors. Because of their strong voices and candor, we found ourselves reading these parts more closely than the surrounding narrative.

Despite their very tutor-centered data, however, the authors make some extremely broad claims about students' learning, tutoring processes (Ch. 2), the value and efficacy of tutoring (Ch. 4), and issues of authority in tutorial relationships (Ch. 3). While the main conclusions seem to make sense on an intuitive level, we questioned the validity of some findings and the inclusion of some extraneous details. For example, Ch. 4, "Race, Gender, Class, and Background Differences," discusses the complexities that emerge in tutorial relationships when tutors and students with various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds work together. The authors conclude that despite the difficulties that can arise from tutoring those who are different, the benefits are generally greater for all parties involved. In this chapter, however, the only data presented comes from tutors. Without evidence from other potentially valuable sources, like observations of tutoring sessions or interviews with students, such a broad claim about the efficacy of tutoring seems overly ambitious. In addition, some information seemed unnecessary. In describing many tutoring situations, for example, students were often identified by ethnic background, even if the discussion was not about the ways in which background influences tutoring processes and relationships.

We also wondered about the ways in which the authors came to their conclusions. As a manual, a comprehensive methodology chapter would be inappropriate; however, the conclusions presented in this book might have been strengthened by providing more background about the research. For example, how did the authors choose their sample of tutors? how large was their sample size? what was the context of the tutor field notes? to what extent did the tutors know their words were going to be reviewed and used for research purposes? Furthermore, the authors introduce the book by stating: "Over the years, our feelings, intuitions, and hunches have been either confirmed or changed, based on the actual experiences of real tutors. It is this consensus that we have put together for you." We'd also have liked to know a bit more about the steps they took to reach that consensus: what were their principles and procedures for data analysis and how did they determine the themes that are central to this book?

We did appreciate the book's frankness. We were pleased to see advice on adjusting to organizational set-ups, for example, and acknowledgments that sometimes tutors put their foot in their mouth. Although the text's limited bibliography contains no books on tutoring writing, the valuable and well chosen references to other readings at the ends of chapters includes works by Mike Rose, Jonathon Kozol, Lisa Delpit, and Shirley Brice Heath. Each of these composition/literacy researchers, of course, uses ethnographic studies—a technique borrowed from anthropology and sociology—which makes their work a good fit with the discourse community in which Rabow, Chin, Fahimian exist.

Tutoring Matters views the world of tutoring through the lens of sociology. Although writing center tutors will learn little about peer tutoring from reading it, a writing center with a large library budget might want to purchase the book for another reason: it provides an excellent example of how disciplinary concerns and attitudes shape texts. *Tutoring Matters* treats tutoring as a sociological exercise, rather than an educational endeavor. As such, it provides more insight into sociology as a discipline and a discourse community than tutoring as practiced in most writing centers.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

Sept. 28-30, 2000: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Minneapolis, MN
Contact: either Suzanne M. Swiderski at sswiders@loras.edu or Larry D. Harred at larry.d.harred@uwrf.edu. Conference website: <http://www.macalester.edu/~mwca>.

November 2-4, 2000: National Writing Centers Association in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Baltimore, MD. Conference website: <http://www.english.udel.edu/wc/mawca/nwcacon.html>.

Feb. 16-18, 2001: Southeastern Writing Centers Association, in Auburn, AL
Contact: Isabelle Thompson, Auburn University (thompis@groupwise1.duc.auburn.edu) and Glenda Conway, University of Montevallo (conwayg@montevallo.edu).

TUTORS' COLUMN

Transgressive hybridity: Reflections on the authority of the peer writing tutor

In trying to arrive at a theoretical understanding of my practice as a peer writing tutor, I have come to realize that the role of the peer tutor cannot be reduced to either the position of the student or of the teacher. While my current location as a student in the university hierarchy prevents me from truly taking on the authority of the professor, my position as a tutor who has been empowered to help students master the writing skills which I have ostensibly already mastered prohibits me from functioning as a peer as well.

Rather than limiting my discussion of writing practice by trying to speak exclusively from the point of view of either a teacher or a student, I would like to claim the peer-tutor's hybrid position as a site from which I can garner a "situated knowledge" of the institutional hierarchy of the university.[1] While I discuss and critique the authority that professors have over students, I do not do this from the position of a marginalized, subordinated student. My ability to see the power of professors arises not from my "oppression" as a student, but from my dependence upon professorial power for the maintenance of my own authority as a tutor. With that caveat in mind, I will first try and outline the workings of authority in the images of professors held by beginning writers. While my position as a peer-tutor hybrid tends to make me view the notion that the professor is an all-knowing authority as a fiction, I cannot avoid the fact that this "fiction" significantly affects the way many beginning writers see their professors—and by extension their peer tutors.

In my work as a writing tutor, I often encounter students who view their professors (and academic authors in general) as unquestionable authorities—as the very origin of knowledge. In talking with students during sessions, I have found that lack of clarity and analysis in students' papers often has more to do with students' fears of sounding simple or obvious to an authoritative, all-knowing professor than it does with their own lack of analytical insight or confusion about what they mean to say. For example, one student came to me with a very convoluted paper, filled to the brim with unexplained quotes and lists of theoretical positions. In talking to her, however, I discovered that she actually had a strong analytical argument in mind. When I encouraged her to put her verbal explanation of her argument into her paper, I encountered resistance. Worrying about sounding simple in the face of an authoritative professor, the student told me that she didn't want "to say anything too obvious. . . . The professor already knows about what I'm saying anyway."[2] Explaining why she feels she cannot go to a professor to discuss her ideas, the student told me that "professors just have this aura about them . . . like they already know everything." Viewing the professor as both the origin of and the authority on the knowledge taught in the course, the student assumed that any ideas or critiques which she came up with must have originated from the professor and therefore did not need to be elaborated for him or her.

In this way, the beginning writer's image of the professor as authoritative and all knowing actually holds him or her back from writing the type of clear, analytical paper which the professor requires. By granting authority to their professors rather than to themselves as writers, students fail to develop the ability to write in the authoritative academic style that will give them recognition within the university system. Although the image of the professor as the "origin of knowledge" appears to grant total control to the professors, it actually decreases teachers' ability to teach students to write the analytical, academic prose expected of them.

Significantly, however, a beginning writer's image of the professor as an all-knowing being does not necessarily arise from professorial intention; rather, the image of the omniscient professor results from the disparate structural positions of teachers and students within the university. To the extent that the professor is institutionally obligated to create a syllabus and to evaluate a student's mastery of the material, the professor is placed in the role of the master authority or "origin of knowledge." Despite a professor's intention of creating a classroom conducive to dialogue among teacher and students, the professor's institutional role as the creator of the syllabus and the arbiter of class time makes him or her the ultimate author(ity) of the course.

Recognizing the ways in which professorial authority often works to impinge upon students' development of analytical thinking skills, many peer tutors seek to define themselves in total opposition to professorial authority. Arguing that peer tutors should act as supportive counselors rather than as

evaluators, many peer tutors often assume that peer tutor-tutee relationships are egalitarian interactions based on the tutor and tutee's shared status as students.

This notion of the egalitarianism of peer tutoring depends upon a simplistic, binary view of power relations which constructs "teacher" and "student" as the only subject positions which can be occupied within the university. By viewing the university as a complex web of power relations rather than as a binary hierarchy, however, we can come to see that the peer tutor's and the tutee's shared status as students does not necessarily mean that they are on equal footing within the institutional hierarchy of the university. Ultimately, the majority of peer tutors received their position because, unlike the tutees, the tutors have met the academic standards of the institution by consistently producing the kinds of writing products demanded of them by their professors. The tutees, on the other hand, have often sought out or been referred to the tutor because they have failed to produce the kinds of writing expected of them. In this way, the discipline of composition establishes a hierarchical opposition between those students institutionally mandated to seek help (tutees) and those students empowered to give assistance (peer tutors).

While the tutor may place primary emphasis on writing as process, most tutees are ultimately concerned with modifying their writing products in order to gain recognition within the academic system. As improving the professor's evaluations of her or his work constitutes the tutee's primary motivation, the tutee will often want the tutor to play a somewhat evaluative role as well. In other words, the tutee expects the tutor to anticipate the professor's reaction and to help him or her modify the paper in order to improve the professor's final evaluation of it. In this way, peer tutors come to stand in for the authoritative role of the professor.

While peer tutors may play the professorial role, however, the peer tutor's wielding of authority in the writing conference does not depend upon the student's perception of him or her as the "origin of knowledge." Unlike the perceived originary authority of the professor, the peer tutor's authority is clearly derived from his or her ability to meet the institutional demands of the professor—to write his or her papers using the discourse of analytical, academic, standard English. In the minds of beginning writers, peer tutors are not the origins of knowledge; they merely pass on the knowledge they have learned from the professors. Ironically, in order to take on the authority of the professor in tutoring situations, the peer tutor has to play the role of the good student—a person who has learned so much from (and about) professors that he or she can anticipate "what the prof is looking for" and come up with strategies to help the tutee give professors the kinds of papers they desire.

Demonstrating the way in which the tutor's authority derives from the professor, I have found that the peer tutor loses her or his authority to function as a tutor on an assignment if the advice ends up conflicting with that of the professor. Seeing a student before she had discussed her paper on Bataille and Sartre with her professor, I had given her an opportunity to express her dislike of Sartre and approval of Bataille. Careful not to try and get her to change the content of her analysis, I primarily worked with her on ways to translate her personal response into the language of an academic argument. When the student spoke with the professor, however, he suggested that she take a totally different point of view on Sartre. When I later met with the same student, she didn't want to discuss her Sartre paper with me anymore. As my point of view had conflicted with that of the professor, she could no longer trust my advice that she build her argument from her own personal reading of the work.

My loss of authority had paralyzed my ability to act as a tutor. Even though I did not want to use my authority to modify or to change her analytical ideas, I still needed some semblance of evaluative authority to be able to tell her convincingly that her ideas were worthwhile. In this way, I came to realize that authority is a central part of peer tutoring. Paradoxically, my ability to validate and encourage students' attempts to take ownership of their own texts directly depends upon the evaluative authority invested in my position. If my words have no authority, why would students believe me when I tell them they are smart enough and capable enough to pick and choose only those bits of my advice that help them say what they want to say?

If the beginning writer views my comments on her work as no more authoritative than her own, she will tend to disregard both my comments and her own opinions and place all reliance on the professor's evaluation. In this way, a peer tutor's loss of authority does not necessarily lead to a liberatory experience for the tutee. In fact, the divestment of authority from the peer tutor actually serves to increase professorial authority by making the professor's opinion the only one that can act on a student text. If the professor is seen as the only person with a valid opinion on the student text, beginning writers' image of the professor as the ultimate authority on/origin of knowledge is further reinforced.

Having realized that the total divestment of authority from the peer tutor is neither desirable nor easily accomplished, I find myself left with the question: how can I use my authority in ways that encourage students' self-confidence, independent thought, and ability to manipulate academic discourse in order to make their voices heard within the university system? Acknowledging that beginning writers' conflation of the authority figure with

the origin of knowledge hinders their ability to think independently and write analytically, I would like to use my position of power to reveal the non-originary, socially constructed character of academic authority/knowledge.

Significantly, peer tutors' position as teacher-student hybrids makes them particularly suited to reveal the ways in which academic authority is dynamic and constructed. Rather than gaining their authority by being perceived as the "origin of knowledge," peer tutors acquire authority by learning how to produce the type of writing expected of them in the university system. Far from being originary and natural, the peer tutor's authority is always under the process of (de)construction. Although I cannot fully divest myself of authority within a peer tutoring situation, I can reveal the ways in which my authority has been and continues to be constructed through the process of manipulating academic discourse.

For example, I could show a tutee a series of drafts of one of my papers. In the first draft, I could point out that I may have had good ideas, but that that I had not presented them in a way that was convincing for my particular academic audience. I could then show the tutee how, through the process of gaining peer feedback and revising, I came to modify the form of my paper to better suit the expectations of my particular academic audience. In this way, I would demonstrate that my "success" at academic writing is not based upon "natural," intuitive knowledge, but upon the ongoing process of revising my work to increase its rhetorical power for diverse academic audiences.

Rather than attempting to completely remove myself from an authority position, I seek to use my limited position of authority to give tutees strategies that will help them gain academic authority for themselves. With the help of peer tutors, tutees can begin to transcend the confining role of the receiver of knowledge and come to claim the empowering position of a person who can use rhetorical skills to generate knowledge within the university system.

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[1] I employ Haraway's concept of situated knowledge in order to suggest that my experience as a peer tutor allows me a partial, limited view of the university hierarchy that is dependent upon my positioning within it. For a further discussion of situated knowledges, see Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

[2] This quote is an impressionistic reconstruction of comments a particular student made to me over the course of seven weeks of tutoring. The student gave me permission to quote her anonymously in this paper.

Learning Assistance Association of New England

October 27, 2000
Burlington, MA
"Interacting Voices: Many Faces Within Development"
Keynote speaker: Linda Thompson

For conference information, contact Crystal Bickford, Nichols College, Dudley, MA. Phone: 508-943-1560; e-mail: crystal.bickford@nichols.edu

Date change for NCPTW

The National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing has been rescheduled to October 13-15, 2000. For further information, contact Kathleen Cain by e-mail: kscain@hotmail.com or kcain@merrimack.edu, and see the NCPTW conference page at <http://www.chss.iup.edu/wc/ncptw/>.

Metaphor in the writing center: How to place enthymemes in the solar system

College writing tutors occasionally are bamboozled by the senior undergraduate who walks into the writing center asking for help with a paper in electrical engineering, where terms like impedance and inductance mix with strange symbols to confuse the uninitiated. But tutors now are finding their own discipline has become more complicated and imbricated with complex terminology, so much so that tutoring a student writing a first-year English essay can seem as challenging as tutoring an advanced engineering student. Writing instruction has come a long way from the five-paragraph essay, which means that people who tutor writers find themselves explaining ever more sophisticated rhetorical concepts to their students. As more composition programs evolve into programs of "rhetoric and composition," tutors are having to coach writers in classical rhetorical techniques and other composition theory concepts that may be almost as foreign to the tutor as to the students. Consultants who once could have told a student that her essay lacked a strong thesis sentence now have to maneuver the more meaningful, but more difficult Greek "enthymeme" or the related Toulminean concepts of "data, warrant, and claim." A paper that may have been labeled "too emotional" is now critiqued as being "overly dependent upon pathos." Textbooks such as Ramage and Bean's *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings* offer a composition liturgy that provides sophisticated systems for writing by modeling ancient rhetorical concepts. Other textbooks borrow modern psychological terms such as "cognitive dissonance" to help students plan their writing.

The new terminology enriches writing instruction, but it can challenge both the writing tutor and student, and can make a consulting session awkward—even unsuccessful. Writing instructors and tutors now almost universally reject the concept of a banking style of education, described by Paulo Freire as a pedagogy that treats the instructor as a kind of divine authority who feeds knowledge to the intellectually naive student. The more enlightened college composition pedagogies today treat students with far more respect; they envision the tutoring situation as a collaborative process, whereby tutors and students engage in a dialogue that encourages the student to draw knowledge from the situation, not just from the tutor. The tutor and student participate in an equal and respectful relationship; most tutors would agree that this "I-Thou ethos," as first described by Martin Buber, should be the *modus operandi* of any consulting session (MacLennan 125). Yet, a consultation that forces the tutor to spend a lot of time explaining rhetorical terms to a struggling student invariably creates an unequal relationship, where the tutor again becomes the purveyor of knowledge and the student its receptor. Even the basic rules of grammar and punctuation, which do not involve ancient words, can be daunting. It is easy for tutors to bombard student writers with concepts such as "exordium," "fallacy," "rhetorical triangle," "subject-verb agreement," and "comma splice" without realizing that terminology overload can cause a young writer to freeze up. Tutors must find a way to convey rich rhetorical concepts and basic writing rules without inflicting jargon intimidation.

One method I have found to be invaluable in my writing center tutoring has been the use of individual metaphors (and related metaphors grouped as an extended analogy) as means of instruction. Let the thesis statement, or whatever it is referred to at your university, become "the center of gravity for an essay," for example, or let arrangement become a system of "organizing clothes into a chest of drawers." Metaphor has been popular for years among proponents of expressionist composition pedagogy as a means by which writers can create new ideas from old ones. Students of expressionist instructors are told to rephrase ideas they have encountered metaphorically, which then brings those students to a unique understanding of the ideas. In writing about expressionist theories, James Berlin notes that "to present truth language must rely on original metaphors in order to capture what is unique in each personal vision" (241). My call for metaphor in the writing center draws from such insights, but it de-emphasizes the idea of a unique personal vision. Instead, I imagine metaphor to be a technique for helping tutor and student make sense collectively of concepts that are part of a well-established general writing canon.

Metaphor theorists define metaphor in various ways, but most convey the idea that metaphor is a rhetorical device for transporting knowledge by using a word that brings connotations from one field of knowledge into play in another field. If we say, for example, that "love is a game of dice," we are bringing all the connotations of gambling (risk, high stakes, unpredictability, etc.) into the field of a human emotion, "love." A metaphor "has the power to 'redescribe' reality" (Ricoeur 6). The origins of "metaphor" suggest a transportation or transference of ideas (Lanham 100), derived from the Greek root word *phora*, which means "locomotion" (Peters 155). Because metaphor involves linguistic signs in play off of each other ("love" and "dice game" in our previous example), the use of metaphor invites the audience to participate in an implied dialogue between various concepts.

A writing instructor, then, who uses metaphor to redescribe composition

terminology is helping to transport knowledge to the student by means of a dialogue between the tutor and student, and also between the ideas moving through the metaphor. The use of metaphor in a session avoids the dangers of a monologic banking pedagogy because metaphor is a form of dialogue. Metaphors also permit the student and tutor to find images that best suit the student's learning style. Education theorists hold that individuals process information via three learning channels; each person has a channel that works best. These channels are (1) visual, where the learner benefits from information she can see; (2) auditory, where she benefits most from hearing information; and (3) kinesthetic, where she benefits most from tangible information presented in a way that is almost palpable (Konstant 109). By searching for metaphors in the writing center, the tutor and student can strike a comparison that allows the student to see the concept, hear it, or touch it—whichever channel is clearest.

I first started using metaphor in the writing center to explain the concept of "thesis sentence" to student writers. A persuasive expository essay should have a sentence (or several grouped together) that summarizes the main argument and evidence, and makes clear the purpose of the essay. At my university, we borrow from Aristotelian rhetorical theory and refer to this sentence as an "enthymeme." But whether it is called "data, warrant and claim," as in the Toulmin system, or "thesis sentence," as in the old current-traditional system—or some other term—is less important than that it be clearly present in the essay. Metaphor can help students realize they should not become hung up on the specific terminology that a composition course uses to describe the thesis sentence, but rather they should become skilled in writing such a sentence and letting it center their essays.

First-year students at my university encounter our version of a thesis sentence in the Ramage and Bean text book, where they read that an enthymeme is "an incomplete logical structure that depends for its completeness on one or more unstated assumptions (values, beliefs, principles) that serve as the starting point of the argument" (97). Built into each enthymeme is a claim, stated reasons of support for the claim, and an unstated assumption (known as a "warrant" in Toulmin's system). Take the sentence, "Rabbits make good pets because they are gentle," one example in the Ramage and Bean text (98). This makes the claim that rabbits are good pets and offers gentle behavior as the reason. The unstated warrant that the writer assumes is shared by the reader is that gentle pets are good pets, (which would not be true, of course, for someone who was buying a pet for personal protection). This enthymeme concept can seem clear enough in theory, but student writers still fumble with it when trying to apply it to a paper. Students wonder how to build a whole essay around one sentence, they get tangled up with the notion of an incomplete logical structure, and, in general, they allow the terminology to be so intimidating as to cause severe writer's block. The Toulminean system of "data, warrant, and claim" invites similar confusion. "I am just writing about how my ballet teacher influenced my life," a student might say to a writing tutor. "Why do I need an enthymeme or a warrant?"

Here is where metaphor can come to the rescue. Metaphor can show students that some kind of thesis sentence is necessary to lend structure and momentum to an essay. Metaphor works because it diverts perplexed students from an unproductive obsession with composition terminology and allows them to focus on the act of writing. As a tutor, I first would diffuse the jargon intimidation by reassuring the student that an enthymeme, for example, is not much different than the old-fashioned thesis statement. I would then tell the student that she encounters such thesis statements all the time; whenever she tells a friend that a movie was good because it was funny, for example, she is using a thesis statement in the form of an enthymeme. She is stating a claim that she liked the movie and offering its humor as the reason, and she is assuming that her friend shares her belief that funny moves are good movies. Once the student becomes less frightened of the thesis statement concept, I might then try various metaphorical approaches to help her engage in a dialogue with me about thesis statements—a dialogue that I hope would carry a workaday meaning to the student.

For example, I often use algebraic expressions as a form of metaphor or analogy when talking about thesis statements because almost all early college students have recently studied algebra. I suggest that one example of a thesis statement is a sentence that says, "I think X because of A, B,C, etc." Then I tell the student that the bulk of her paper will be spent amplifying the reasons A,B,C, which were stated in the thesis. The student then can fill in the letters to match the essay's main argument and points of support. Here is an example: "My ballet teacher was the greatest influence in my life (X) because she (A) gave me a love for music and dance, (B) she taught me that practice pays off, and (C) she believed in my ability to succeed." Of course, a tutor must be sensitive to the learning styles of particular students; a student with a mathematics phobia or one who is not a visual learner, for example, might find my algebraic analogy more disconcerting than the Ramage and Bean definitions. An auditory learner might respond better to a musical analogy. The support paragraphs in an essay could be compared to the different parts of a symphony, in which all relate to the common musical motif. Certainly a tutor should have a few stock metaphors ready, but he or she must develop and modify those metaphors according to the specific conditions of each consulting session.

The students I have tutored have helped me fine tune various metaphors to convey the importance of a thesis statement in an expository essay. For ex-

ample, "The claim in a thesis statement is like the sun," I recall saying at various times to student writers. "It forms the gravitational center of the paper, and all of the supporting reasons orbit it like the planets. If you do not have an obvious sun as the center of gravity in your solar system essay, all the planets will fly off into space." Kinesthetic learners perhaps can almost feel the gravitational pull of the thesis statement when they consider it in light of this metaphor. The solar system metaphor works especially well with writers who have assembled a lot of ideas in a paper, but who have not selected the ideas with a coherent claim in mind. For example, I tutored one student who argued on and off that not having a father in the house can emotionally damage children. His support paragraphs were somewhat contradictory; in one he offered statistics showing an increase in juvenile crime among children without fathers at home, but in another he offered reasons why the presence of any authority figure in the house, not necessarily a father, is sufficient to provide a healthy upbringing. We agreed that his "planets" did not appear to be in orbit around the same "sun," and he found a way to modify the initial claim to deal more with authority figures and less with fathers in specific. His new claim better controlled all of his support paragraphs.

A similar metaphor refers to a claim as the locomotive in a train, which carries all of the reasons (box cars) along the tracks. It must be strong enough to pull along all the reasons, but not so strong (overstated) as to pull them off the track When I encounter papers that seem to have a lot of well-developed support paragraphs in the body of the paper, but a weak initial thesis statement, I often use a wedding analogy. Brides and bridesmaids become the metaphors for parts of the argument. The thesis statement as the bride has the most stunning dress. I then tell student writers to never let their bridesmaids (support paragraphs) wear nicer dresses than the bride. For writers who appear to be sports fans, a baseball or football metaphor works to a similar effect. A writer who brings up points in the body of his essay that are not related to the thesis statement is like a baseball team that gets runners on base, but cannot hit them home. That writer also is like a quarterback who throws an incomplete pass. Only ideas that relate to the thesis statement can "score" with the reader.

Sometimes students show up in the writing center with the opposite problem: their support paragraphs are not strong enough to hold up the thesis statement. We have all seen papers that make a powerful claim that is not sufficiently backed up in the body of the paper. One student I recall working with made the claim that radical right wing hate groups were threatening to turn the United States into a type of Third Reich fascist state. His evidence pointed to a few hate groups sprinkled across the country, but certainly did not portend the outcome he predicted. Using a visual image, I told him that an argument is like a architectural blue print of a house. It may look impressive, but it requires strong support beams to turn the drawing into a real structure. In this case, his "beams" (support paragraphs) were not strong enough to hold up the house he was trying to build. Here the Greek concept of "invention," which we often refer to as "brainstorming," becomes clear when it is redefined as a process of gathering the necessary lumber before framing a house.

Arrangement of an essay also invites confusion among writers. Many papers seem to have enough support research, but often it seems to be scattered about haphazardly in a way that confuses the reader. We have all read papers arguing for the legalization of marijuana, for example, that seem to jump around even in a single paragraph from points relating to its medical use to those relating to the economic cost of prohibition to those dealing with the rights of users to the pursuit of happiness. One metaphor that I have found effective here is to describe an essay as a chest of drawers that holds clothing. Each drawer should have related clothing items in it. "You do not want socks in the underwear drawer," I tell students, "because you will be confused when trying to find them." This metaphor is not entirely satisfactory because it implies that an essay is a container of ideas rather than a deliverer of ideas, but it is still effective for those students who suffer from essay clutter.

Students who have trouble moving from one idea to another often correctly identify the problem as one of transition. In asking for advice on words to use to carry the reader from one paragraph to the next, student writers are recognizing a real exigency in writing; a poorly connected paper is jolting and unpleasant to read. Yet students often see transition as merely a matter of formula, as if a few properly distributed "howevers," "moreovers" and "as we can sees" will fix the problem. Transition literally is a means of helping the reader move through an essay without getting lost, and a metaphor that reveals this helping function is often effective in showing students the reason for being concerned with transition. For example, I have had a lot of success with a metaphor where transition sentences are "stepping stones in a river." The writer is leading the reader on a path that crosses a river, and therefore, the writer must provide enough stepping stones (transition sentences) to keep the reader dry and on the path. A paper that jumps too far from one idea to the next requires the reader to step too far to the next stone, and the reader may fall in the river and never reach the end of the path. When I first developed this metaphor, I actually walked around the writing center taking pronounced strides to help a student visualize the effect of forcing a reader to make transition leaps. A writer who comes to see her paper as a journey will come to see the importance of helping the reader with his footing, and intuitively will develop effective transitions that are not formulaic.

A similar problem is found in new writers who are using quoted source material in their essays. Many student essays—especially when the student is not comfortable with his topic—employ a liberal use of quotations to lend authority to the text. Often times these quotations seem to drop into the paper from nowhere. They seem awkwardly phrased and jarring because the writer did not use his own words to lead up the quotation. I had great success with one student writer when together we developed the analogy of writing a paper to sewing a quilt—using patches of many designs. Here, the idea of patches was a metaphor for all of the source material the writer might quote. The writer as seamster must be the person who collects all of the patches and sews them in a way that is aesthetically pleasing and useful. He cannot simply toss a bunch of quotations into his paper haphazardly, any more than the seamster can randomly sew patches together. The seamster must join the patches and place them in context of the whole sewing project by using his own fabric (his own words). A similar metaphor, effective for kinesthetic learners, likens the use of quotations that are not put in context by the writer's own words to a builder who constructs a house of many stories and does not provide enough steps from one story to the next.

Invariably any writing tutor will encounter students who have papers that are almost unreadable because of poor grammar. Grammar issues always present a problem at our writing center because current composition theory has led tutors to the conclusion that grammar is a superficial concern, and that it should not dominate a consulting session. Implicit in this philosophy is the idea that grammar is incidental to the real work of constructing meaning in an essay. I believe, to the contrary, that grammar is intrinsic to any system of constructing knowledge, and that without a command of grammar, a writer is hindered in his efforts to develop ideas. Yet, I agree with our writing center philosophy of not browbeating students about grammar because such admonitions can discourage writers from practice, which is what they need to improve. I try to convince students in my classes and in the writing center that standard grammar usage is important even though the students may have good ideas. Here I use a clothing metaphor, where a student's ideas in writing are like an attractive shirt or blouse. I say to a student, "You may be wearing a beautiful designer blouse or shirt, but if you have spilled ketchup all over it, what is the first thing people will notice?" Poor grammar then becomes a food stain on an attractive garment. This metaphor acknowledges that the student owns attractive clothes (smart ideas), but it also cautions her about the need to keep those clothes, or ideas, clean—free of poor grammar stains. This metaphor acknowledges a genuine respect for student writing, but also recognizes the responsibility that the student has to keep it looking its best. Students can have fun modifying the metaphor to fit specific grammar issues: A subject-verb agreement problem, for example, can be made less intimidating by likening it to wearing a tie that does not match the shirt.

Punctuation also can be made clear by a well-thought-out analogy, which calls attention to the underlying reasons for choosing certain punctuation according to specific needs. Too often punctuation rules, like those of grammar, seem arbitrary until the learner understands how punctuation affects meaning by placing boundaries on sentences. Sentence boundary issues are a constant problem among students who come to our writing center because students often do not fully understand the way ideas should be ordered. When tutors elaborate on the "boundary" metaphor, students can learn to avoid fragments, run ons, and comma splices. Students come to recognize that punctuation marks are like the "signs" that delineate an idea property line.

A related series of metaphors can have punctuation functioning as symbols for how ideas are related, the way a wedding ring indicates the marriage relationship between two people. I have had a lot of success helping students fix comma splices by using the following relationship metaphors:

- "Two independent clauses separated by a period are just friends," I say. Then I give this example: "It rained today. The baseball game was canceled." Here the sentences are near each other and express ideas about things that happened at the same time, the way two friends might have a conversation about something they have in common. But the two sentences are separate, in the same way the friends are separate.

- I then move to the next level of relationship—engagement. "If independent clauses are separated by a semicolon, they are engaged to be married," I explain. "It rained today; the baseball game was canceled." In the engagement metaphor, the clauses are still separate, but they are deeply involved with each other in a way that makes a period and new sentence arrangement seem too distant.

- "A way to marry two independent clauses and make them one sentence is by using a conjunction word like 'and,' 'but,' or 'so,'" I then tell students. "It rained today, so the baseball game was canceled." The word "conjunction" literally means to "join together," so the marriage metaphor is a natural fit.

- Finally, I explain that using a comma alone (or no punctuation) is similar to an unmarried couple living together. "It rained today, the baseball game was canceled." The relationship is not bound by law. "In your personal lives you are free to have any relationship you want," I then say, usually with a smile. "But your sentences should all be legal. A comma alone is not sufficient to legally bind two sentences."

In this essay I have offered some of the metaphors and analogies I have developed while working with students in

the writing center and in the class room. Such techniques of comparison are useful for explaining classical rhetorical concepts and other composition theory concepts that may be new to students. These techniques are equally useful for explaining grammar and punctuation rules that students probably have studied, but may not have fully mastered. When writing coaches use comparative tropes with their students, they can help those students understand concepts that otherwise might be difficult to grasp. In some cases, this enlightenment comes because a new metaphor better flows along a student's learning channel than the original concept did. In other cases, a metaphor works simply because it is more like real life to the student than was the original concept.

Metaphor is especially useful in teaching classical writing concepts because we are not concerned that the student learn the terminology as much as that she be able to use the concepts in her writing. Most undergraduate students do not move through a series of courses that build on the knowledge of a vocabulary of classical rhetoric, or on knowledge of the specific reasons for the rules of grammar and punctuation, although we all hope they will continue to develop writing skills that employ that knowledge. Substituting terms through metaphor can make the rules of writing less mysterious and intimidating, while allowing those rules still to serve as effective writing heuristics.

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