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An activity-theory analysis of how college students revise after writing center conferences

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AN ACTIVITY-THEORY ANALYSIS OF HOW COLLEGE STUDENTS REVISE

AFTER WRITING CENTER CONFERENCES

by

Samuel Alexander Van Horne

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning
(Language, Literacy, and Culture)
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Bonnie Sunstein

ABSTRACT

Although researchers in composition studies have examined the instructional conditions that help students revise successfully, there is little published scholarship about how college students use feedback from a peer tutor in the revising process. Thus, I designed a qualitative, collective case study to investigate how students revised after writing center conferences. I used the conceptual framework of activity theory to analyze the entire system of student revision. I used the concept of situation definition to examine how students' understanding of writing conferences and rhetorical concepts, such as revision, changed (or did not change) during the writing conference. I analyzed the revisions with a taxonomy from a study by Faigley and Witte (1981).

The findings of this study were centered on two different groups of students who had writing center conferences: those who had specific goals for their writing conferences and those who did not. Students who did not have specific goals for their conferences ceded authority to the writing consultant (the title that this writing center used instead of "peer tutor") who they believed could identify and correct sentence-level errors. When these students revised, they almost always integrated direct feedback about how to correct errors in grammar and mechanics because they believed that their instructors valued writing that was free of errors. But these students only integrated indirect feedback about microstructure revisions if they believed that the revisions were important to other aspects of the activity system such as their instructors. Students rarely made macrostructure revisions, but writing consultants rarely discussed this kind of revision.

The writing consultants and the students without specific goals for their conferences had different situation definitions of the purpose of a writing conference and how to meaningfully revise their writing. The writing consultants did not try to promote situation re-definition by moving the discussion away from the text toward a conversation about the strategies that the student used to produce the draft. The conducted the conference at the level of the student in order to fulfill the student's agenda. This

contradicted the main philosophy of the writing center, which was that a conference should be a productive conversation about the ideas in a piece of writing.

The second group of students, who had specific goals for their conferences, consisted of writing consultants who also had writing conferences with other writing consultants. Writing consultants shared the same situation definition of the purpose of a writing conference and this led to them having productive conversations that framed the act of revision in a more complex way than "revising for the instructor." However, their conferences were focused on how to revise the text, so the consultants also did not try to promote situation re-definition to help their peers develop new writing strategies.

The faculty in this research study had differing conceptions of the purpose of the writing center, but their situation definition was closer to that of the students who believed that the writing center was for helping students edit their texts. Instructors used the writing center as a resource to help their students revise their writing, but those who believed the writing center was only for basic writing assignments did not use the writing center or relied on writing consultants with specialized knowledge to help them.

An important implication of this research is that peer tutors should be trained to elicit the students' situation definitions of what a writing conference is for and what it means to meaningfully revise. In this way, peer tutors can structure an activity that focuses on helping students to develop situation definitions that are more appropriate for successfully revising their academic writing and for completing future writing projects. Writing centers can also work to help instructors develop more appropriate situation definitions of what a writing conference can do for their students.

Abstract Approved: _____
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                     Title and Department

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy, and
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                  Mary Trachsel

To Amanda

[T]he peer tutorial relationship ought not be considered in terms which ignore the multiple other collaborations which intersect in the peer tutorial encounter.

Alice Gillam, "Collaborative Learning Theory and Peer Tutor Practice"

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I would like to thank many people who helped me with this project. My committee—Dr. Bonnie Sunstein, Dr. Kathy Schuh, Dr. Carol Severino, Dr. Peter Hlebowitsh, and Dr. Mary Trachsel—has been gracious and quick to offer assistance at every stage of the process. I have learned much from all of you and am grateful for your time and effort on my behalf.

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Although researchers in composition studies have examined the instructional conditions that help students revise successfully, there is little published scholarship about how college students use feedback from a peer tutor in the revising process. Thus, I designed a qualitative, collective case study to investigate how students revised after writing center conferences. I used the conceptual framework of activity theory to analyze the entire system of student revision. I used the concept of situation definition to examine how students' understanding of writing conferences and rhetorical concepts, such as revision, changed (or did not change) during the writing conference. I analyzed the revisions with a taxonomy from a study by Faigley and Witte (1981).

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING CENTER

CONFERENCES AND HOW STUDENTS REVISE:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

<u>Background and Context</u>

My interest in the relationship between writing center conferences and how students revise grew out of my work as a tutor at a community college. In addition to teaching courses in the composition program, I tutored students several days a week in the small writing center that was located near the student commons, where students huddled over large textbooks or grabbed naps between classes. The small writing center had a small round table, a wall of composition textbooks, and a window that looked out at the Hardee's next door.

Tutoring writers quickly became one of my favorite things to do because students were engaged in finding ways to improve their writing. In thirty minutes the writer and I needed to make an agenda and decide the best way to approach the problem. I loved the challenge, the improvisation, and quick thinking that was part of the process. Sometimes I had students read papers aloud, and other times I read their papers because I knew that we had a limited amount of time. The need to be efficient (and be ready for the next student) conflicted with my desire to spend more time with students.

In the writing center I tutored a variety of students. I worked with 18-year-olds who had just finished high school and adult learners who had returned to college and had not written an essay in twenty years. Most of the students I worked with were motivated and eager to improve their writing, pass composition, and move on to a four-year degree program. Other students were in vocational tracks, and their instructors sent them to us to get the slip that was "proof" that they had visited the writing center for help. Students also brought writing that wasn't for school—I once worked with an African American

woman who brought a eulogy that she was going to read at a loved one's funeral. This, I recall, challenged me in a different way because I could not simply ask, "Where's your thesis?"

Working in the writing center let me participate in the lives of students in a way that was different from how I could as their classroom instructor. Sitting beside students in the writing center, I talked with them about their fears about writing, their successes, what they loved to write about and what they could not stand to write about. Sometimes, our discussions were fruitful—students scribbled notes while we talked with each other; other times, students mumbled a half-hearted "Thanks" while they walked out the door, leaving me to wonder what I could have done differently.

The more I tutored, the more interested I became in learning about the principles of effective tutoring. When I began tutoring I had had no training in tutoring and had not read important guides to tutoring such as Muriel Harris's (1986) *Teaching Writing One to One*. My qualification was that I was a teacher of composition, a lover of fiction and poetry, and a disciple of the maxims in my dog-eared *Elements of Style* ("Vigorous writing is concise." and "Be cagey plainly!").

When I was tutoring, I sometimes struggled to understand essays that had muddled ideas and choppy sentences, and I often did not know where to begin. Could I, in a half-hour session, help the student to fix every sentence, every paragraph, and collaborate with the student on writing a bright new thesis that any teacher would admire? No. We had to prioritize through negotiation—sometimes I found myself saying "We should" at other times "What do you…" I also tried to move the discussion away from the text to focus on the particular strategies and techniques that the students used to develop the current draft. I wondered why I took different approaches with different students, why I could joke with some and not with others, why I read their papers aloud or chose to read them silently.

I began to become interested in theories underlying the specific strategies in teaching writing one-to-one. When I tutored, I learned that the ability to actively listen to students, to care about them, and to collaborate with them in a conversation could result in a plan for revision. Sometimes I would talk to students I saw in the hallway and ask them how they did on that argumentative essay or narrative, and often they said that they did well. I held on to those moments when, at other times, working in the writing center seemed difficult and when I struggled with teaching in the classroom. My growing questions about the process of tutoring, and my need to know which ones most benefited student learning kept gnawing at me and helped me decide to pursue a Ph.D. in composition studies with an emphasis in writing center pedagogy.

<p style="text-align:center">Statement of the Problem</p>

Writing centers are commonplace on college and university campuses. They are found in libraries or in English departments and seek in their own ways to serve the missions of their respective institutions. Recent results from the National Survey on Student Engagement indicated that more than half of college faculty always recommended that their students use a writing center. Another finding was that first-year college students used the writing center to receive help with almost a third of their writing assignments (Addison & McGee, 2010).

Although many post-secondary students visit writing centers for help with their writing, there is little research about how students integrate multiple sources of feedback (from their teachers, tutors, and peers) in the revision process. Thus, I decided to undertake the present research study to learn about how students revise after writing conferences so that I could learn about what kinds of techniques facilitate strong student revisions. I also hoped that other tutors, writing center administrators, and instructors could benefit from learning more about the role that writing centers play in how students learn to write.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

In the year before I completed my comprehensive exams, I met the director of a writing center that employed dynamic peer tutors. A group of them presented a poster about their training program, and I spoke with them for a while about tutoring. They spoke eloquently about doing talk-based conferences in which they focused on helping a student think more clearly about his or her writing. These peer tutors impressed me, and when I decided to conduct a study of how students revise after their writing conferences, I chose to carry out my project at their writing center.

To conduct my research study, I asked the director if I could conduct my study at the writing center where he worked. After he agreed, I obtained permission from the Human Subjects Office at The University of Iowa and from the similar office at the institution where I wanted to conduct my study. I began my fieldwork in early February 2009 and continued visiting the site until early May of that year. My research was guided by a general research question: how do students revise after having a writing conference at the writing center?

I used procedures that enabled me to study how students participated in writing conferences and how they revised after (or during) the writing conference. I visited the writing center and recruited students who worked with writing consultants who were also participants in my study. After observing and recording each conference, I interviewed the consultant about why she used particular methods during the conference. I asked students to track their revisions, and I observed one revision session. I interviewed students' instructors to learn about their attitudes towards the writing center. I collected drafts from students when they revised so that I could examine the revisions, and I interviewed students to learn about why they made specific revisions.

In my analysis, the following questions emerged that I will answer in the upcoming chapters: How did students who had no specific textual goals participate in their writing conferences and how did they use the feedback from writing consultants in

the revision process? How did the students who had specific textual goals collaborate with their writing consultants, develop a plan for revision, and use feedback in the revision process? How did instructors use the writing center's services and what effect did the instructors' strategies have on their students who visited the writing center?

<u>Review of the Literature</u>

The Research on Revision in Composition Studies

The field of writing center pedagogy is situated in the larger field of composition studies. There is a rich tradition of research in composition studies that focuses on explaining the factors that promote successful, meaningful student revision (Allal, Chanquoy, & Largy, 2004; Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer (1963); Fitzgerald, 1987; Hillocks, 1984, 1986; Horning, 2002). Although the research in this field is informative about how students respond to different interventions or instruction in how to revise, it does not fully address the relationship of student revision to the practice of peer tutoring. (Note for the reader: I use the term "writing consultant" when I refer to the peer tutors in this research study, for they used that term instead of "peer tutor." I use "peer tutor" when I write about the general field of peer tutoring in writing.)

In the last half of the 20th century, composition researchers began to examine the nature of student revision in earnest. According to Braddock et al. (1963), researchers had demonstrated that students could improve their writing by revising, but the authors also wrote, "it has yet to be shown what effect revision has on such elements as organization and supporting details" (p. 36). In her comprehensive review of the research on revision, Fitzgerald (1987) argued that it was not until the 1970s that researchers in composition studies began to fully explore revision and move away from a "linear" model of writing that included "prewriting, writing, and postwriting" to a more nuanced view of revision as a recursive process of developing the meaning of a text.

Some researchers have found that students do not willingly revise their work or revise in a limited way. Student writers made textual changes at the word level—a strategy she named the "thesaurus philosophy" (Sommers, 1980, p. 381). Pianko (1979) also found that students revised to fix surface features in their writing. In her study of the writing processes of twelfth graders, Emig (1971) found that "[s]tudents do not voluntarily revise school-sponsored writing; they more readily revise self-sponsored writing" (p. 93). Beason (1993) found that students in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) courses followed most of the suggestions their instructors made and made few global revisions.

Researchers have shown that teaching students to revise globally can have positive results (Butler & Britt, 2011). The prompt to add and to add "unseen text" resulted in better revisions because students were able to move beyond seeing revision as only fixing surface errors (Matsuhashi & Gordon, 1985). College freshmen who were given directions on how to revise global concerns made better revisions than students who were just asked to improve the text (Wallace & Hayes, 1991). To effectively revise, student writers must learn to successfully address the "situational variables," such as the level of formality for a piece of writing and the definition of the writing task (Faigley & Witte, 1981, p. 411).

Researchers have not only conducted experimental studies to better understand how and why students revise, but also have examined how students revise in responding to comments from their instructors or peers. How students responded to instructors' comments was a complex process of combining their own goals with what their instructors wanted them to do (Prior, 1995). When students received feedback from multiple peers, they revised more successfully than students who had only received feedback from a single subject-matter expert (Cho & MacArthur, 2010).

Based on the research in composition studies about what kinds of instructional activities promote student revision, scholars have developed models for understanding

what constitutes successful revision. Horning (2002) claimed that expert writers "have a set of awarenesses that they bring to revision that enable them to weave readable texts" (p. 258). Horning then listed three "awarenesses" that successful writers employ: "metarhetorical awareness, metastrategic awareness, and metalinguistic awareness" (p. 258). Metarhetorical awareness is a characteristic of writers who are familiar with their own writing processes. Writers with metastrategic awareness have a well-developed ability to select different techniques for their purposes, and metalinguistic awareness involves being able to deftly work with the formal features of language in the revision process. (p. 258). Murray (1978) has described the process of revision as encompassing "internal" revision, in which the writer works out the main message of a piece of writing, and "external" revision, in which the author corrects the surface errors after the main parts of the message are completed. Instructors should provide feedback that is specific and includes positive criticism about how to make improvements (Sommers, 1982; Straub, 1997).

An important theme in the research on how students revise their writing is analyzing situational variables that affect how students respond to instructor feedback. Hillocks (1982) conducted an important study about how commenting styles affected the revision practices of students. In a study of how 278 seventh and eighth graders revised, Hillocks hypothesized that revision in conjunction with "observational activities" would result in greater gains than for observational activities alone and that the effects of extended comments would be greater than the effects of brief comments. Hillocks found that the longest comments did not always produce the greatest gains, challenging the notion that more feedback will always result in more revision. Instead Hillocks found that there was a significant interaction between the amount of instruction that students received about the writing assignment and the length of the comments students received from their instructor. Hillocks demonstrated that researchers need to consider not only the effect of teacher feedback on student revision, but on other factors related to the writing

assignment. Students found longer teacher comments to be useful when they received more instruction about how to do the assignment. He wrote, "Finally, in view of the number of studies which suggest that teacher comment has little or no effect on writing skill, the present research indicates the usefulness of examining variables in combination rather than individually" (p. 276).

The research on revision is vast and helpful, but it does not fully address how students revise after writing center conferences. Many of the experimental studies analyzed how students responded to a specific treatment, not how they responded to a whole cast of variables that are part of the system in which a student revises (e.g., Bernhardt, 1988). I assert that Hillocks's (1982) finding is critical for writing center researchers because of its strong claim that students' response to feedback depends on other variables. I now turn to the research on revision in the sub-field of writing center pedagogy to examine how researchers have students revise after writing center conferences.

Review of the Research on Writing Center Conferences and

Student Revision

Proponents of writing centers claim that teaching writing one-to-one benefits writers in ways that classroom instruction often cannot. For example, in writing conferences students receive individualized instruction and can collaborate with a tutor to develop strategies on how to revise their writing. According to scholars who have written about the tutoring process, writing center conferences help writers to develop better writing processes that can help them complete their academic writing assignments (Harris, 1983, 1986, 1995, 2005; North, 1982, 1984a, 1994). One of the most often quoted mantras in writing center pedagogy is that writing centers "produce better writers, not better writing" (North, 1984a, p. 438).

Much of the discourse about writing center pedagogy has centered on the kind of dialogue that happens between a peer tutor and a student. Writing center scholars have

typically argued in favor of one of two different tutoring methods for helping students improve their writing: directive and nondirective tutoring (Shamoon & Burns, 1995). Directive tutoring is a process of dictating changes to students rather than empowering students through dialogue to revise the text themselves (Brannon, 1982). Nondirective tutors act as guides and do not suggest specific changes to the student's draft. Rather, these tutors use conversation to help the student talk about his or her project and decide what should be changed. Harris (1986) wrote, "Asking questions is one way to help students find their own answers. … This ability to talk about writing is important to students' progress as writers" (p. 11). Brooks (1991) encapsulated nondirective tutoring in this statement: "[W]e need to make the student the primary agent in the writing center session" (p. 1).

Researchers have debated the effectiveness of these methods of tutoring. Scholars have argued that the concept of nondirective tutoring came about as a way to mollify professors and other academic administrators who were nervous about tutors giving too much help to students (Clark & Healy, 1996). Other scholars have argued in favor of directive tutoring because tutors can help students learn about academic writing by suggesting specific changes to a draft. Shamoon and Burns (1995) wrote, "Directive tutoring is based upon the articulation of rhetorical processes in order to make literate disciplinary practice plain enough to be imitated, practiced, mastered, and questioned" (p. 237). Shamoon and Burns also claimed that when tutors rewrite a weak portion of a student's text, they are demonstrating processes that writers can observe and internalize into their own writing process. More recently, scholars have proposed a model that is a sort of combination of directive and nondirective tutoring called asymmetrical collaboration. This is a method in which a student selects the topic to focus on while the tutor directs the activity that will help the student to accomplish the goal (Thompson et al., 2009).

For all the debate about whether tutors should be nondirective, directive, or some combination of the two, there is less research on how students integrate these kinds of feedback into their revision processes. North (1984b) wrote, "[I]t is all the more remarkable that in all the writing center literature to date, *there is not a single published study of what happens in writing center tutorials*" (p. 28, emphasis in original). In a review of research about writing centers and their effects on student writing, Jones (2001) stated, "The present author has not unearthed a single 'hard' empirical study of writing center instructional efficacy published since the late 1980s" (p. 10). Thonus (2002) noted in a report of a research study on writing center conferences, "Rarely is writing center assessment connected with assessments of the quality or change(s) in quality of students' writing" (p. 112).

This means that much of the discourse about how writing center conferences facilitate student revision after the student leaves the conference is not based on actual studies of how students revise. The field of writing center pedagogy can only benefit from a better understanding of how students revise after a writing center conference.

I now turn to a review of the quantitative and qualitative research studies that scholars have conducted to learn about the relationship between writing conferences and students' revision processes.

Quantitative Studies of Writing Center Efficacy

Researchers have conducted a variety of quantitative studies to analyze the kinds of revisions that students made after writing conferences and whether those revisions were successful. Although these studies helped writing center professionals to learn about the outcomes of tutorials, they often did not include analysis of the kind of activity that occurred in the conference or of the other factors that influenced how students revised their writing.

Some researchers have tried to assess the effect of writing center conferences on students' writing by collecting samples of writing before the conference and comparing

them to the revised drafts that students wrote after the conferences. Bell (2002) studied how students revised after writing center tutorials with peer and professional tutors. Students who worked with peer tutors made most of their revisions during the session. Students who had worked with professional tutors made only 32% of the in-line changes during the session, but the rest were made later, which Bell interpreted to mean that the students progressed as writers. Bell found that "[c]hanging the ideas in compositions did not happen if students revised on their own or with a peer tutor, but happened quite frequently if students revised with a professional tutor" (p. 17). There was not, however, a discussion of the kinds of conversation that were related to different revisions.

Niiler (2003, 2005) conducted two studies in order to determine whether writing center conferences had a positive effect on student writing. Niiler (2003) asked this question: "Were students 'better writers' after coming to the writing center than before?" (p. 6). Niiler (2003) collected data from six different courses. In each course, before returning the student's paper, the professor wrote the grade on an index card and showed each student the grade on the card. Students who were satisfied with their grades received their papers and accepted the grade that they had earned, but students who were not satisfied were given the option of visiting the writing center. This resulted in 51 sets of data (essays that were written before and after writing center intervention); the researcher also collected 12 papers from students who did not visit the writing center.

Although the Niiler (2003) found that students who visited the writing center improved in the categories of claims, development, organization, citation/format, punctuation, grammar, and spelling, Niiler (2005) later admitted several flaws in the 2003 study. For example, in the earlier study the raters were writing center tutors and the tutors knew which drafts were completed before the writing center visit and which were completed after the visit

When Niiler (2005) conducted the study again, he used instructors to rate the essays and he did not tell the raters which papers were the original drafts and which were

revised after the authors visited the writing center. (In this study the research reported results from a smaller sample—38 sets of two papers with no control sample.) The drafts that students wrote after visiting the writing center received higher scores, with results showing improvement in both local and global concerns. Students made greater gains in global meaning such as thesis and argument than they did in punctuation and mechanics.

These two studies involved populations that were motivated to visit the writing center to revise a paper for a better grade. Writing centers do work with students who are "sent" to the writing center, but in this case the students knew that visiting the writing center would give them a significant chance at receiving a better grade. And although Niiler (2005) claimed that his follow-up study confirmed the results of the original study, he stated that he would like to use more qualitative methods to better understand how students improved their outcomes.

Other quantitative studies did not show that writing center conferencing significantly improved the quality of student writing. In an unpublished study, Van Dam (1985) examined two populations of students who were enrolled in freshman composition—one group of students visited the writing center at least three times during the semester, and the other group did not visit the writing center at least three times. Each group had 63 students, so there was a total of 252 scored essays. The findings did not show that the overall scores of the treatment group were significantly better than the control group. The posttest mean scores were not significantly greater than the pretest scores at the .05 level. The author claimed that the treatment group experienced a greater overall increase (not a statistically significant finding) in scores for the narrative essay, but these findings are questionable because the author's own analysis showed that the two populations were significantly different at the beginning of the study, making it difficult to isolate the effect of the visits to the writing center (Van Dam, 1985). Although this study was focused on how writing center conferences affected the quality of student

writing, it also did not include an analysis of how students revised after their writing center visits.

Some researchers have evaluated the efficacy of group and individual instruction in writing centers. Roberts (1988) used a pre- and posttest design to compare the teaching of freshman composition in regular classrooms at Bluefield State College and Southern West Virginia Community College with individualized instruction at writing centers in satellite locations. The writing centers offered courses for credit instead of tutoring sessions that did not have college credit. There were 82 students in the study: 44 students received individualized instruction in a writing center and 38 students studied composition in the regular classrooms. Students at one of the writing centers (the SPICE center) organized flexible schedules in order to meet the course requirement of 40 contact hours with an instructor (not a tutor—the word tutor does not appear in the report). Results showed that the instruction in the writing center was as effective as classroom instruction.

David and Bubolz (1985) evaluated a program of tutoring in grammar and mechanics for students who failed to meet the standards for grammatical correctness in their composition course. Students received one-to-one instruction or participated in group tutorials. After the treatment, the researchers found that students produced essays with more adverbial dependent clauses and more compound sentences, but they used shorter clauses and fewer t-units in their compositions. Students in the treatment group also had significantly fewer errors. David and Bubolz argued that the shorter clauses and smaller number of t-units were not indicative of oversimplified compositions—they attributed the decrease to a leaner writing style with clauses that were more exact.

In summary, these quantitative studies have defined writing center efficacy in different ways and have had mixed results. Many of the researchers found positive results in terms of the effect of writing center conferences on student revision (Bell, 2002; David & Bubolz, 1985; Niiler, 2003, 2005; Roberts, 1988), but Van Dam (1985) did not find a

difference in the quality of revisions by students who did have required conferences and those who did not. Also, students in several of these studies were required to visit the writing center or were motivated by the desire for a better grade (Niiler, 2003, 2005; Van Dam, 1985) Others were in the writing center to take a course (Roberts, 1988) and not for traditional, one-to-one writing conferences. Although these studies are important for understanding the outcomes of students who work with a writing center tutor, these studies did not include an analysis of the relationship between the type of conference conversation and how students revised their writing.

Qualitative Studies of Writing Center Efficacy

Several researchers have conducted qualitative studies of writing center conferences to examine how tutors and students interact in a writing center and how conferences affect students' writing.

Williams (2004) conducted a study of five English language learners (ELLs) who were enrolled in a freshman composition course and who visited a writing center for a conference. She video-taped the conferences, transcribed the conversations, and coded the transcripts. She collected both the draft that the student brought to the writing conference and the final draft. Within three days of the writing conference, both the tutor and the student were interviewed by the researcher (separately); to help the participants recall the tutorial, the researcher showed them the videotape of the tutorial. Williams found that surface errors (minor errors in grammar and mechanics) that were addressed during the tutorial were more likely to be revised than meaning-related changings. (This interpretation is interesting because the dominant model of nondirective tutoring suggests that discussion of text-based changes may result in student making more significant revisions.) When students negotiated text-based changes with their tutors, the students were more likely to make text-based revisions. Also, when tutors and students focused on the original goal of the conference, students were more likely to revise their work.

The study by Williams (2004) is an important contribution to writing center theory and practice, but the design did not enable her to collect information about how students integrated feedback from sources other than the writing tutor. For example, one of the students in the study (Winston) made no revisions as a result of the writing conference, and the report did not indicate why this happened.

Other researchers have conducted studies to analyze the effectiveness of tutor-student interactions in writing conferences. Thonus (2002) recorded conferences of six native-English-speaking students and six ELLs who had writing center conferences, and she also interviewed both the tutors and students to ask them what they thought about specific interactions in the conferences (the researcher did not collect samples of student writing). These methods were used to try to determine the characteristics of successful writing conferences. The author found that conferences were more likely to be successful when the tutor and student had symmetrical interactions (such as back-channel feedback and laughter). Tutor-student familiarity, subject-area match, gender, age, and student language proficiency were not effective ways to predict success. Thonus developed a profile of a successful conference: the peer tutor is writing in his or her own academic field; the "turn structure" is similar to actual conversation, not question-answer pairs; the tutor's and student's diagnoses of the problem match early in the tutorial; the tutor is not seen as an instructor "surrogate"; and tutor authority is not "openly negotiated" (p. 126). In addition the author found that the ESL students preferred the unmitigated polite directives more than the native speakers did. This study is one of the most in-depth analyses of how students and tutors talk to each other in conferences. Thonus focused on tutorial conversation and did not examine the drafts that students produced after the writing conferences.

In another study of tutor talk, Bowen (1988) analyzed eight randomly-selected conferences in a writing center and interviewed the students to discuss their reactions to the conference. She found that students rarely evaluated their own writing during the

conference and that the tutors played a leading role in defining problems in the piece of writing. Unlike Thonus (2002) who found that conversation in the tutorial was a sign of a successful tutorial, Bowen presented this interesting finding: "This study does not provide conclusive evidence that tutors surpass students in their ability to consider plans nor that talking with tutors encourages students to reflect on their plans more than they would otherwise have done" (p. 246). Bowen's finding that students did not self-evaluate their own work casted some doubt on North's (1984a) aphorism that conferences improve writers.

In a comprehensive, unpublished study of student revision, Stahr (2008) conducted a study of students in first-year composition who visited a writing center throughout the course of the semester. Her study was part of an analysis of 80 students in first-year composition at a small university in the Midwest. Seven of these students participated in the portion of the study that focused on the efficacy of writing center tutorials. She video-taped their conferences; obtained copies of the drafts that were brought to the writing center; and interviewed students at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Stahr noted that it was difficult to predict the outcome of writing conferences. She wrote, "[A] writing center session guarantees only that a student and a tutor have talked about the student's writing project" (p. 133). Stahr's interpretations echoed Williams's (2004) finding about how students tended to revise those sections of their writing that they actively discussed with their tutors: "As my analysis of these two sessions and the revised papers will show, the difference appears to be how invested the student is in the suggestions the tutor offers: the more collaborative the session, the more extensive the revision" (p. 134). Unlike Williams (2004), who studied students' revisions by measuring the changes in the number of t-units and by qualitatively analyzing significant revision, Stahr provided qualitative analyses of significant revisions to show how tutorials affected the revision process. Her analysis of the relationship between conferences and revision is one of the most detailed and shows how tutors helped

facilitate revision. For example, Stahr described in detail how Michelle used her conference with James to make meaningful revisions to her essay about a poem by Anne Sexton. The case study illuminated how writing tutors can intelligently use conversation to help students with their writing.

The results of some qualitative studies are difficult to interpret because of the methods that were used. For example, W. Wolcott (1989) conducted a study in which she observed 12 conferences during two six-week summer terms. (The tutorials were not recorded.) She also interviewed each of the tutors (all graduate students), gathered information from a questionnaire that was administered to all tutors, and used information from a tutoring log that some tutors filled out. The researcher found that tutors directed the agenda of the writing conferences, but wanted students to do most of the work. The conferences with technical writing students were focused on meeting the goals of the course; the conferences focused on writing about literature were focused on rhetorical principles. One common thread in the conferences was a "concern for diction" (W. Wolcott, p. 23). Interestingly, though the tutors were focused on diction, the students did not pay much attention to it. Tutors were also frustrated because the students seemed to expect proofreading.

In the only study I have found that focused on writing center efficacy by examining the relationship between time and students' satisfaction with writing center conferences, Morrison and Nadeau (2003) used both qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the satisfaction level immediately after the conference, after the student received the grade, and year after they received the grade. Students' satisfaction levels were initially high, but students lowered the ratings after they received their grades. (Students who received A's lowered their ratings less than the students who received B's, C's, and D's.) The second survey showed that ratings returned almost to the original levels. The authors claimed that students may rate tutorials poorly (even if the conference was apparently good) if the student receives a poor grade. Students who were satisfied

with the focus of their writing conferences received better grades, "rated the consultant as friendlier, showed higher levels of satisfaction with the writing center, and felt they learned more from the experience" (Morrison & Nadeau, p. 35). This study showed that grades can influence how a student perceives a writing conference, and that researchers examining conferences should consider the greater context of the assignment that a student brought to the writing center.

The question of how time influences the way that a student revises after a writing conference is important because usually writing tutors do not know what a student does after he or she leaves the writing center. The studies that have examined the relationship between conferences and revision have not explicitly addressed this question, and in these studies the researchers interviewed students at fixed points during the study (Stahr, 2008; Williams, 2004) not according to when a student would have finished revising on his or her own. After my analysis of the literature, I concluded that writing center tutors and directors could benefit from a study that examines how students revise after a conference without intervening too forcefully in the student's writing process. A better picture of this revising process—and of the role that the conference feedback plays in the revision process—could help tutors adapt their strategies to ensure that the conferences are as helpful to students as possible.

Review of Research on the Composing Process

To refine how instructors teach composition, researchers have used a variety of theoretical frameworks to analyze what happens when people write or revise. The cognitive, behavioral, and sociocultural approaches to composing each offer descriptive tools for examining the writing processes of student writers. Because I will be looking closely at how students revise after visiting a writing center, I will review different theories of the composing process to provide background on the trajectory of the research in this field and why more researchers are studying literacy in its sociocultural context.

Zoellner (1969) proposed a behavioral model of composition that he argued would place a higher importance on teaching the act of writing as opposed to how people thought about writing. According to Zoellner, students were often shown the standards they needed to achieve without receiving proper instruction on how to meet them. Zoellner disagreed with the idea that unclear writing was a symptom of unclear thought processes because writers could often state their meaning clearly in conversation even if a written explanation was unclear. Zoellner argued that student writers should write often and that the act of writing would precede clarity in thinking. In his model of teaching the writing process, students should be prompted to talk more during the writing process (and think less) because according to the principle of intermodal transfer, the ability to talk about a subject clearly would transfer to a writer's ability to write about it clearly. Students should receive feedback on their observable behaviors during the act of writing instead of only at the end of the composing process. By revising and making their writing clear for another person, students will be able to clarify what they think about a certain subject.

Some scholars studied the writing process from a cognitive perspective as they tried to understand the decision making process in the act of composing (Flower, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Perl, 1980). These researchers argued that the writing process should not be viewed as a series of discrete, linear stages, but rather as a complex process in which different sub-processes (such as revision or planning) can recur at different times in the act of composing. For example, Perl argued that writing is a recursive process: writers look backward at what they have written in order to move forward with the writing project. Writers rely on what she called "felt sense," which is a feeling that a writer has about what should happen next in a piece of writing. Perl wrote, "I have called this process of attending, of calling up a felt sense, and of writing out of that place, the process of *retrospective structuring*" (p. 4). Projective structuring is "the ability to craft what one intends to say so that it is intelligible for others" (Perl, p. 5). Revision, then,

involves noticing a mismatch between the meaning of the text and what the writer would like to say—in order to move forward, the writer must assess what the meaning presently is and proceed from there.

In "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," Flower (1979) rejected the notion that writing is simply a process of jotting down what you already know. Writing is much more difficult. Writer-based prose is "a verbal expression written by a writer to himself and for himself" (Flower, p. 1). Reader-based prose, in contrast, is "a deliberate attempt to communicate something to a reader" (Flower, p. 1). Writer-based prose is not without structure; its structure depends largely on the situational context (narrative or sequential). Writer-based prose is also similar to egocentric speech that was first described by Piaget and then by Vygotsky (1934/1986). According to Flower, producing writer-based prose is a good method for writers to work out ideas for themselves because their cognitive load is not increased by having to consider the demands of an audience. Teachers can help writers revise their reader-based prose by clarifying inexact meanings and developing a logical organization that will enable the reader to grasp the intended meaning without knowledge of the situational context.

Flower and Hayes (1981) described a model that consists of mental processes that recur at different points in the writing process. They contrasted this model with a linear, stage model of the writing process in which planning, drafting, and revising occur in order. The main parts of their model are the task environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing processes. As writers retrieve information from long-term memory, they need to adapt the information for the demands of the task environment. As writers compose, they set goals for themselves, and these goals can change based on the unfolding of the writing project. Basic writers will tend to look for ready-made goals to apply to their piece of writing, but advanced writers will compose according to an ordered group of goals that guide the writing process. When applying this theory, writing

tutors can seek to understand students' goals during the writing process and help them evaluate whether these goals are appropriate or if better ones exist. For example, in studies of students' revising processes, researchers have found that students apply their own task definition of revising to the task environment. Expert writers are more likely to view revision as a holistic process in which they make changes in meaning, argument, and organization, but basic writers tend to view revision as a process of changing words and fixing local errors (Hayes, Flower, Schriver, Stratman, & Carey, 1984; Sommers, 1980).

Researchers have also studied how writing plays a role in college education. Although some college freshmen may develop attitudes toward writing that reflect a willingness to develop and support arguments, these attitudes do not reflect changes in their actual writing (Sommers & Saltz, 2004).

Scholars have realized the importance of the context in which a writer composes and have begun to analyze literacy as a phenomenon that is situated in specific activities. According to Barton (1994), "Literacy is a social activity and can be best described in terms of the literacy practices which people draw upon in literacy events" (p. 34). Writing results from internalized conversation with others, so students need to participate in conversations and envision their writing as a contribution to an ongoing debate about a controversy (in the case of persuasive writing, for example) (Bruffee, 1984). Viewing literacy as a social practice enables researchers to examine the different literacies that writers use in different contexts, rather than assuming that these writers have one way of using literacy in all aspects of their lives. Gee (2004) argued that literacy educators should recognize that students will be members of various affinity spaces in which they will use different literacy practices. Gee emphasized that literacy education should help these students to develop abilities to recognize which ways of communicating are appropriate for the situational context because the 21st century economy will require

people to be able to move among different social networks and communicate in a variety of ways.

These different theoretical perspectives have informed my design of this study as I planned to examine not only the social context of a student's revising process, but also the decisions that students make in the act of revising their writing. I now turn to the conceptual framework to more fully explain the theoretical foundation for this study.

Conceptual Framework

To analyze not only how students engaged in writing conferences but also how their revision practices were mediated by social factors, I adopted two related conceptual frameworks for this research study. The first was Vygotskian social constructivism. I chose this framework because of its emphasis on how learners develop skills and knowledge through participation in activities with others (especially in dyadic activity) (Vygotsky, 1978). The second was activity theory, a framework based on the ideas of Vygotsky and appropriate for analyzing how social factors mediate an individual's activity (Engeström, 1999). In addition to these two larger frameworks, I used the conception of situation definition, which neo-Vygotskian scholars developed to describe how learners and tutors conceive of activities or ideas in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Wertsch, 1984, 1985). In this section I will describe the tenets of each of these theories, provide essential definitions for concepts that I used to situate my study, and argue for why these frameworks were a good fit for the research study.

Vygotskian Social Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1934/1986) argued that learning and development are inherently related to participation in sociocultural activities. Inner psychological processes develop through engaging in activities with others. Several key concepts in this framework are mediation, the ZPD, and the genesis of higher mental functions.

Several of Vygotsky's ideas about the genesis of higher mental functions are important for analyzing writing center conferences and student revision. One important

concept is the internalization of higher mental functions. Whereas elementary mental functions such as perception, memory, and attention are the result of natural biological development, higher mental functions such as verbal thought develop through social interaction (Kozulin, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), any higher mental function occurs twice: first, in a social interaction on an interpsychological plane and then internally on an intrapsychological plane. The process of internalization is an activity that occurs over a period of time. Writing center theorists have used this concept to describe how tutors can use guided questioning about topic exploration or planning of revision in activities that students can continue to use on their own (Bruffee, 1984).

Mediation is a key concept in Vygotskian social constructivism, which adherents of activity theory also integrated into their own theory (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky did not provide just one definition of mediation (Wertsch, 2007). Karpov and Haywood (1998) wrote, "According to Vygotsky, all specifically human psychological processes (so-called higher mental processes) are mediated by psychological tools such as language, signs, and symbols" (p. 27). Wertsch (2007) argued that Vygotsky's theory encompassed both implicit mediation and explicit mediation. According to Wertsch (2007):

> Explicit mediation involves the intentional introduction of signs into an ongoing flow of activity. In this case, the signs tend to be designed and introduced by an external agent, such as a tutor, who can help reorganize the activity in some way. (p. 185)

About mediation Wertsch (2007) continued, "Implicit mediation typically involves signs in the form of natural language that have evolved in the service of communication and are then harnessed in other forms of activity" (p. 185).

A student's learning activities can also be mediated by another person (Kozulin, 1998, 2003). In interaction with another person, a student can engage in activities that he or she could not successfully complete in solitary activity. Also, a tutor or teacher can

provide encouragement as well as different suggestions to keep a student engaged in a learning activity.

An important stage in child development is when the child engages in activity that is mediated by psychological tools and technical tools. For Vygotsky (1981), psychological tools are "artificial formations." "They are directed toward the mastery or control of behavioral processes—someone else's or one's own—just as technical means are directed toward the control of processes of nature" (Vygotsky, p. 137). He wrote that psychological tools were "language; various systems for counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes, diagrams, maps, and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs; etc." (p. 137). Technical tools are oriented outward; an individual (or group) uses them to change something in the environment. Both of these concepts are important for studying the interaction between students and tutors because they both use psychological tools (conventions of writing, heuristics, and plans) and technical tools (writing implements and computers) during writing conferences to plan their revision.

Figure 1 is a model of the Vygotskian concept of mediated action in which a subject (a person or group of persons) uses a mediating tool to act upon an object toward some goal. In the course of the action, the object is transformed to achieve some goal. Vygotsky's model of mediated action provides a helpful tool for examining the psychological tools such as writing processes and definitions of writing concepts that students use in their composing activities. It also is useful for examining the technical tools (such as computers or dictionaries) that are part of the composing process.

Figure 1. Vygotsky's Model of Mediated Action
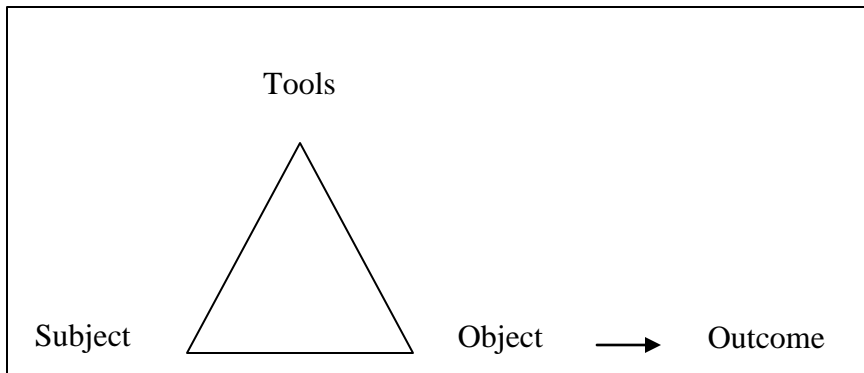
The ZPD was an appropriate theoretical lens for analyzing how students learned in writing conferences with writing consultants. The ZPD, which is created in joint activity, is the "distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Writing center researchers have described a writing conference as a process of intervening in the writing process of a writer to help him or her learn how to solve a problem that is impeding successful completion of the writing task (North, 1984b).

Vygotsky believed that researchers should examine the development of higher mental functions by examining four domains in human development: phylogenesis, sociocultural history, ontogenesis, and microgenesis (Wertsch, 1985). Most of Vygotsky's research in child development was conducted in the ontogenetic domain by analyzing the interaction of natural and cultural lines of development (Wertsch, 1985). I focused on analyzing behavior in the domains of ontogenesis and sociocultural history because I focused my analysis on how different psychological and technical tools mediated the writing processes of students who revised after writing conferences. The ontogenetic domain is useful for considering the interaction of cultural and natural forces

in human development, and the study of mediational means is the study of the sociocultural line of development (Wertsch, 1985).

Researchers have used Vygotsky's ideas to study how people develop literacy through participation in different cultural contexts. Gutierrez and Stone (2000) proposed a Vygotskian framework for analyzing literacy learning in classrooms. According to Wells (2000), "As Lave and Wenger (1991) insist, learning is not a separate and independent activity, but an integral aspect of participation in any 'community of practice'" (p. 56). Heath's (1983) long-term study of literacy acquisition in two communities is an illustration of how researchers have studied literacy as a social phenomenon that is dependent on its social context.

<div align="center">Activity Theory</div>

The conceptual framework of activity theory was important for this research study because activity theory extends the Vygotskian model of mediated activity to account for how social structures can also mediate a person's activity (Davydov, 1999; Engeström, 1999; Nardi, 1996). Thus, I was able to use the Vygotskian framework to examine the features of dyadic and mediated activity and activity theory helped me to analyze how aspects of the social context mediated a student's participation in a writing conference and revising process.

The unit analysis of activity theory is the activity system. It includes the original elements of the Vygotskian model of mediated action plus rules, community, and the division of labor. Rules are the guidelines or governing principles that may limit activity in a given setting (e.g., rules that consultants had for working with students). The community is the setting and the groups of people (e.g., classmates or, for writing consultants, other consultants). The division of labor is the system for determining who is responsible for which action. This framework enables researchers to analyze activity from different viewpoints and examine the tensions in an activity system (Engeström, 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Tensions in an activity system result from friction among

parts of the activity system and can influence how the subject is able to achieve the outcome of the activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Activity systems can be situated in networks of other activity systems, so this framework is helpful for analyzing how different contexts of activity can interact and influence each other (e.g., writing activities in a classroom vs. writing activities in a writing conference). According to this model, knowledge is not centered in an individual's mind, but distributed through the activity system. Thus, the writing center conference becomes part of the distributed knowledge that mediates the writing process. A writing center conference may result in new psychological tools that a student may use to mediate the writing process (such as new writing processes), and the writing tutor may become part of the community in this activity system. Figure 2 is a diagram of Engeström's (1999) model of the activity system. I used this model to explore how a student revises considering that the student is part of many contexts that could influence the writing process, such as the course, the writing center, and the students' peer relationships.

Figure 2. Engeström's Model of the Activity System
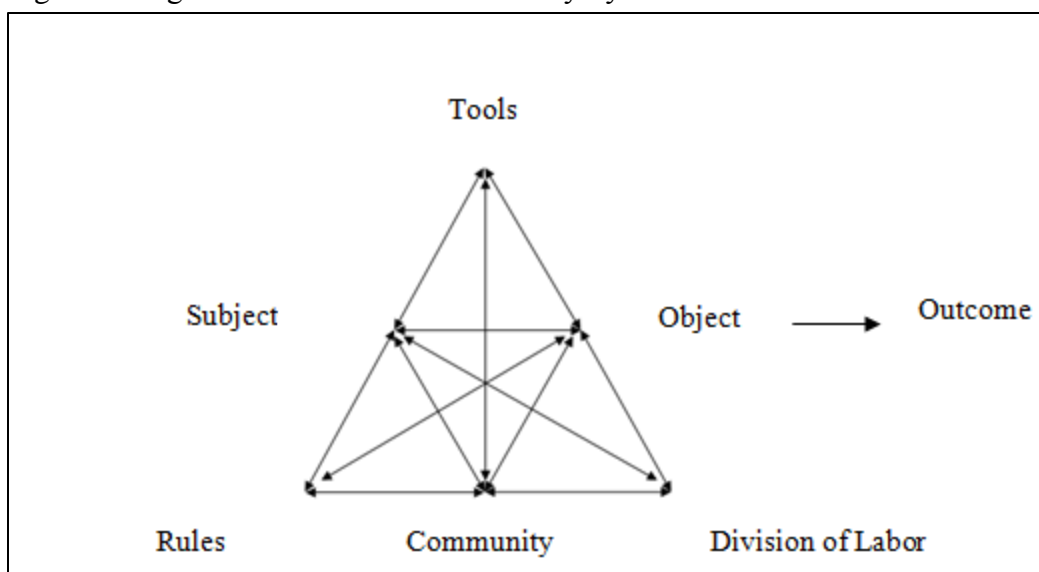
In addition to the model of the activity system, I also used Leontiev's three-level model of activity: activity, action, and operation (Leontiev, 1981). An activity has a motive, and actions are concerned with specific goals (Leontiev, 1981). Operations are "routinized", the "means judged to be appropriate for attaining the action goal in the conditions that obtain in the situation" (Wells, 2007, p. 162). Thus, a student's activity in a certain class may be motivated by a desire to learn a subject or to obtain a passing grade. Individual actions that are part of this activity may include going to the writing center to try to prepare a piece of writing for final submission. The operations are what happens in the particular conditions of the writing conference such as how a writing consultant and a student writer discuss what and how to revise.

<div align="center">Situation Definition</div>

An important concept for this research study is situation definition, which researchers developed in order to better define how a learner progresses through the ZPD (Wertsch, 1984, 1985). According to Wertsch (1984), "A situation definition is the way in which a setting or context is represented—that is, defined—by those who are operating in that setting" (p. 8). Thus, two interlocutors in an instructional setting may have very different ideas about what is happening in an activity even though both individuals appear to be taking part in the same activity. Situation definition applies to the ways that the interlocutors represent the activity and objects (such as concepts) that are part of that activity. Wertsch (1984) described an example of two children who are consulting a model to build a shape with blocks. One child used the model, and the other doid not. Even though both children are engaged in the same activity, they have different conceptions of what the purpose of the activity is. Wertsch (1984) described how an adult could use specific types of conversation to help the child develop a new definition for the activity and consult the model.

According to Wertsch (1984), a learner's progress in the ZPD can be characterized by how he or she develops a new conception of the activity or objects in

that activity. To facilitate this goal, a tutor may temporarily adopt the student's situation definition to engage the student in a discussion or an activity that can help the student to construct a definition that is more appropriate for the task at hand. For example, a tutor may ask the student to define his or her concept of "conclusion" before they begin discussing the text. After eliciting this definition, the tutor can then consider whether it is appropriate for the task at hand. When student and tutor share the same situation definition and know that they share identical definitions, they have achieved intersubjectivity. When this happens, the student no longer requires assistance from a tutor. Wertsch (1984) does not state whether such a situation means that there is no ZPD, but the fact that he suggests that tutor guidance is no longer needed does suggest that a continuation of the instructional situation may be something other than a ZPD.

If the definition may be contributing to problems in the writing process, the tutor may then try to facilitate an interaction in which the student develops a new situation definition of "conclusion" and, therefore, a better tool in the writing process that can be used in the revision session and afterwards. The tutor may do this by temporarily adopting a situation definition that is closer to the student's and structure an activity that helps the student to develop a better definition. Improving a student's situation definition can help students apply their improved conception in the revision process (Van Horne, in press). This perspective on tutoring—in which a tutor facilitates situation redefinition—complements the ideas of writing center scholars (e.g., North, 1984a) who have stressed that a conference should focus on the student rather than on correcting the text.

The student's situation definition corresponds to his or her actual level of development, but the tutor's situation definition may or may not correspond to the student's potential level of development. If the tutor's situation definition is beyond the student's potential level of development, then the two subjects may carry out an activity based on a third situation definition. In order to facilitate the instructional activity, the tutor may, for the period of the activity, adopt a third situation definition that is closer to

the student's potential level of development. But this adoption is only for helping the student learn by progressing through the ZPD.

Definitions of Key Terms

<u>Activity theory</u>: Activity theory is a framework for analyzing how a person's goal-oriented actions are mediated not only by psychological and technical tools, but also by social structures, such as the community, rules, and division of labor. Adherents to this theory hold that activity and consciousness are interrelated (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999).

Community: The group of people that the subject belongs to.

Subject: The actor or actors who are engaged in object-oriented activity.

Object: The material (tangible or intangible) is the focus of the activity.

Tools: There are two types: one is psychological tools, such as mental concepts, symbols, and heuristics that subjects use to achieve an outcome. The other type is technical tools (writing implements and computers, for example), that change something in the environment.

Transformation: The process of changing an object to an outcome (e.g., refining a plan for revision so that it is a new plan).

Division of Labor: The different expectations that a person or a group of people have for completing certain tasks that are part of an activity.

Outcome: The tangible or intangible product of the activity. It is what happens to the object during the activity.

Mediation: In the Vygotskian perspective, mediation is the process by which higher-order mental functions are facilitated by cultural elements such as cultural tools, physical tools, or another person. Elementary mental functions are memory, perception, and attention; higher-order mental functions, such as verbal speech, involve complex thought process (Kozulin, 1998).

"Incestuous" Conference: A writing conference in which both parties are writing consultants. Writing consultants and Professor Grant used this term freely.

Peer tutoring: "A system of instruction in which learners help each other and learn by teaching" (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990, p. 1).

Higher order concerns: (HOCs) make up the aspects of a text that are intrinsic to the main meaning, such as "thesis, focus, development, structure, organization, and voice" (McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001). Higher-order concerns are sometimes referred to as "global" concerns because they are intrinsic to the entire piece of writing. They include the main meaning, organization, and development of ideas.

Lower-order concerns: (LOCs) are important for completing a piece of writing and comprise aspects such as "surface appearance, correctness, and standard rules of written English" (McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001, p. 56). Some researchers refer to lower-order concerns as "later concerns" (Gillespie & Lerner, 2008).

Revision: A revision is any change that a writer makes to a text at any point in the writing process. This change may or may not affect the meaning of the text; it can be as small as a minor small edit or as significant as a rewriting (Fitzgerald, 1987)

Situation definition: According to Wertsch (1984), "A situation definition is the way in which a setting or context is represented—that is, defined—by those who are operating in that setting" (p. 8).

Research Methods

Rationale for Using a Qualitative Design

I used a qualitative-research design because it suited my research question: How do students revise after writing conferences? Qualitative methods were appropriate because according to Merriam (1998), "Qualitative researchers *are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6, emphasis in original). I was interested in researching the way that students who visit a writing center revise their texts

and how students integrate feedback from their peer tutors, instructors, and others who give them feedback. I wanted to examine the complexity of the revision process and learn about it in as much detail as possible.

I designed my research study according to principles of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I needed to carry out the research in a natural setting to observe students in writing conferences and while they revised their writing. I wanted to reduce my imposition as the researcher and observe the participants in as natural a setting as possible.

Another reason why naturalistic inquiry was the appropriate method was because I knew that important themes would emerge during the study. I did not predict at the outset how students would use their writing conferences in the revision process, but as certain themes emerged (such as how some students revised to meet the goals of their instructor) I explored these themes in all of the writing conferences I observed. Then I developed dimensions for categories in order to provide the best picture of the data.

Also in accordance with naturalistic inquiry, I realized that as a participant I had my own conceptions of writing center pedagogy and how to successfully revise, and that my perceptions both informed my research and were possible biases. As the primary instrument for gathering data, I accepted that my own work as a writing tutor would influence my process of building assertions so I needed to keep track of my own biases and discuss them with a co-researcher to prevent my biases from interfering with clearly portraying the important themes.

I decided to use a collective case-study design so that I could apply my research question to a variety of students who visited the writing center and, therefore, obtain different descriptions of the ways that students revised after visiting the writing center (Stake, 1995). This method was appropriate for my conceptual framework because it enabled me to obtain rich descriptions of individuals' activity systems and of how the writing center functioned as a key part of the greater activity system of teaching writing

on the college campus. One particular advantage of a case-study design is that researchers can study a case, such as a writing center, by examining the individual units to determine what they say about the case itself (Platt, 2007).

The primary research methods I used were interviews, observations, and document analysis. I analyzed the data with the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I also used coding procedures from grounded theory to categorize the data and develop assertions about the cases (Creswell, 1998).

The selection of cases for this study was an important process because all students who visit the writing center may not bring a draft that they want to revise. Of course, because my research question was about revision, I wanted to enroll students who were looking for help revising their texts. I recognized, however, that some students may visit the writing center with a goal other than finding out how to revise their text. But I also sought to enroll these students who did not bring a draft because the director of this site told me that students often had multiple conferences with a tutor about a writing project. I did not want to lose the data about a conference that played a role later on in the revision process.

Selection of Research Site

I selected a writing center at a small college in the Midwest for my research study because I had met some peer tutors who worked at this writing center. They were presenting a poster at a conference, and I was impressed with their knowledge of writing center theory. One consultant spoke about only facilitating what she called "talk-based" conferences in which she did not use the draft that the student composed. I had met the director of the writing center, and asked him if I could conduct my research study for my dissertation at the writing center. Before I could conduct my research study at this site, I applied for and received approval from this school's Institutional Review Board. I also received approval from the Institutional Review Board at The University of Iowa, which is in APPENDIX A.

Procedures

I developed procedures that enabled me to not only learn about how students revised after a writing conference, but also how other people in the activity system (such as the tutor, course instructor, and peers) mediated the revision processes of students. Adherents to activity theory hold that a researcher can examine the activity from the different vertices of the activity system—e.g., a researcher may study how a student revises not only from that student's point of view, but from the perspective of the writing consultant who participates in a writing conference that has the goal of facilitating revision (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999).

To gather information about the writing center, such as the training of consultants, the mission and philosophy of the writing center, and the ways the writing center cooperated with other campus offices, I interviewed the writing center director.

These questions guided the interview with the writing center director:

1. Tell me about the history of this writing center.

2. How long have you been the director of this writing center?

3. How are consultants hired at this writing center?

4. How are consultants trained at this writing center?

5. Do consultants undergo any kind of professional development activities? If so, what are they and why do they do them?

6. What kinds of activities do the consultants do together outside of the writing center?

7. What is the relationship between this writing center and the college community?

8. How do faculty and students, in general, perceive this writing center?

9. What is your own philosophy of writing center conferencing and do you expect the consultants to share this philosophy?

10. What happens at your staff meetings?

11. What are your short- and long-term goals for the writing center?

To learn about how the writing consultant perceived the writing conference and how he or she used specific strategies in the conference, I first recruited consultants for the research study. I put a letter and consent form in each writing consultant's mailbox at the writing center, and 15 consultants signed the forms and returned them to in the self-addressed stamped envelopes that I provided. (This was about one fourth of the consultants who worked in the writing center that semester.)

Once I had consent from some of the consultants, I obtained a schedule from the director and waited at the writing center during the shift of at least one of the consultants who agreed to participate in the research study. When a student visited the writing center and was going to work with a consultant who agreed to participate in the study, I tried to recruit the student for my research study. (Although I primarily recruited students who dropped in for walk-in appointments, I had prior knowledge of three of the conferences because the consultants told me when they would happen—the first conference between Maureen and Tim and the two conferences between Alicia and Brynna.)

I visited the writing center in the morning, afternoon, and evening on different days, and spent most of my time waiting for students to arrive. The writing center did not seem busy to me. Indeed, the director said that most writing conferences happened outside the writing center (personal interview, February 4, 2009). In the first month of the research study, the director e-mailed me a list of upcoming appointments so that I could meet the student at the conference and try to secure his or her consent.

In total, I recruited 11 students, including one student who was an ELL. These students had a total of 10 conferences in the writing center. (Two students co-authored a lab report and attended the writing conference together.) By waiting in the writing center during the shifts of writing consultants who agreed to participate in the research study, I recruited eight students for this research study. As to the other three students, I was aware of their appointments before they happened, so I went to the writing center to ask them to participate in the study. Three conferences in this research study were writing

conferences between writing consultants, which the participants labeled "incestuous" conferences.

Several writing consultants participated in more than one writing conference in this study. In addition to being a tutee in a conference, Brynna also was a writing consultant who facilitated three writing conferences in the study and also answered questions from a student who had finished working with a different writing consultant. Alicia, who discussed her writing with Brynna, also was a writing consultant for the conference in which Brynna talked about her short piece of nonfiction. Nancy was the writing consultant for three different writing conferences.

After a student agreed to be in the research study, I first observed and recorded the writing conference. I was a passive participant to try to learn about the writing conference from the sidelines (Spradley, 1980). I took notes about their nonverbal communication strategies, how the consultant and student used the draft, and what kind of activity went on around them in the writing center.

At the end of the conference, I made copies of the draft that the student brought to the writing center, assignment directions, and any other notes that the student made during the writing conference. I instructed the student on how to carry out the procedures that would enable me to track their revision process without affecting how they decided to revise. First, I gave the student a digital voice recorder and provided directions on how to record any follow-up conference that they might decide to have. This would enable me to capture any other conferences that students had to help them revise their writing, whether they happened in or outside of the writing center. Second, I gave the student a structured journal that he or she was to fill out after a revision session. The purpose of this was to tell me how much time he or she spent revising and a summary of how he or she revised the text. Third, I provided instructions on how to use "Track Changes" in Microsoft Word 2008 (for the Macintosh) and Microsoft Word 2007 (for Windows). By using "Track Changes," the file would keep track of all revisions so that I could examine

them more easily. I asked the students to e-mail me copies of revisions and to inform me when they had turned in their last revision to their instructor. Fourth, I scheduled a time to observe the student revise so that I could learn about the decision-making process during their revision sessions. Fifth, I asked the student to tell me the name of their instructor. (During this research study, I did not inform the students that I was specifically studying how they revised; instead, I told students that I was studying interactions between students and writing consultants.)

After the student left the writing center, I interviewed the consultant about his or her participation in the writing conference. I wanted to learn about how the consultant perceived of the purpose of the writing conference and the specific psychological tools that mediated his or her techniques. These semi-structured interviews, which I recorded and transcribed, usually took place in an unoccupied conference room near the writing center so that the consultant could speak freely. One happened in a hallway because the conference room was closed. The consultant also gave me a copy of the conference summary form that consultants usually filled out after writing conferences. I included this summary form in my data analysis.

These questions guided the interviews with the writing consultants:

1. Tell me in your own words what happened during this conference.
2. What did the student want to accomplish during the conference?
3. What were your own goals for the conference?
4. Did your goals differ from the student's? If so, why do you think that is?
5. What did you do during this tutorial to help the student with his or her writing?
6. Were there parts of the tutorial that you thought were successful? Why were they successful?
7. Were there parts of the tutorial that were not as successful? Why were those parts not as successful?

8. Were there moments in the conference when you weren't sure what to do? How did you handle those moments?

9. Are you going to follow up with the student about what happened in this conference?

I also interviewed the student's instructor about his or her perceptions of the writing center. This information helped me to understand how the instructor may have influenced the student's decision to visit the writing center. Because I used a conceptual framework that situated writing center conferencing as an activity system that was mediated by societal structures, learning about the instructor's views of the writing center was essential for understanding how the role of the course in the activity system. I recorded and transcribed these interviews.

These questions guided the interviews with the instructors:

1. What is the purpose of a writing center on campus?

2. What would you like your students to get out of visiting a writing center?

3. Do you require your students to visit a writing center? Why, or why not?

4. Do you recommend that your students attend a writing center? Why, or why not?

I compensated students for their participation in this study because I asked them to complete a variety of tasks. I paid each participant $10 for the recording of all writing conferences, $15 for e-mailing me all the drafts that they wrote with "Track Changes" turned on, and $10 at the final interview. Students who sent me four or more drafts received an extra $10 for their work, but this information was not included in the consent form because I did not want students to write for more money.

After the student turned in the final draft of the paper to the instructor, I scheduled a debriefing interview to talk about the revising process. In these semi-structured interviews, I asked students questions about their general revision process and what feedback they integrated into their final drafts. I also asked students about specific revisions in their text so that they could explain why they made them. I did not select

each revision for discussion during the interview; rather, I selected one or two examples of the kinds of revisions that characterized the final draft. (E.g., if a student added explanatory information several times, I selected two or three examples instead of each addition.)

These questions guided the interviews with the students:

1. Tell me about why you decided to visit the writing center.

2. What is the purpose of a writing center conference?

3. Have you visited a writing center before this visit? If so, could you please tell me about the visit?

4. What did you and your consultant do in the writing center tutorial?

5. Did the consultant make any corrections or additions on any of your drafts? If so, did you keep them for your final draft?

6. Can you talk about how this paper developed from draft to draft?

7. How did the writing center conference influence the revisions you chose to make?

8. Did feedback from other people help you to revise this paper? If so, could you tell me about the feedback and why you decided to integrate it?

I used vertical transcription to transcribe the recorded writing conferences, observation sessions, and interviews (Gilewicz & Thonus, 2003). (The notation for vertical transcription is in APPENDIX B.) Vertical transcription enables the researcher to not only collect the language in a conversation, but also other features of speech (such as pauses and interruptions) that may be significant for studying the conversation. It is useful for portraying speech as it actually happens as opposed to a method that "forces" utterances into neat sentences and paragraphs. These are the elements of speech that vertical transcription can capture:

1. Back-channel feedback – A brief utterance that the listener says (such as uh-huh, or mhm) to let the speaker know that he or she is listening;

2. Overlapping speech – A conversational turn in which both parties talk at the same time;

3. Pauses – Moments in a conversation where no one is speaking. (E.g., when one is waiting for the other to answer a question.);

4. Interruptions – Moments in a conversation when one speaker cuts off another one in mid-utterance. (E.g., when one speaker urgently wants to say something and does not wait for the natural pause.); and

5. Other paralinguistic elements such as laughter, sighing, or physical gestures (such as knocking on the table).

I triangulated my interpretations to reduce the chance of incorrectly portraying the way that the participants constructed their realities (Stake, 1995). I conducted member checks with participants throughout the research process by sending students, instructors, writing consultants, and the writing center director my interpretations of their participation and requesting their comments or corrections (Merriam, 2002). These comments were treated as data and became part of my analysis.

Using multiple sources of data in this study also helped me to triangulate my research findings (Janesick, 1994). I collected different drafts that were part of the writing process in addition to examining the interview transcripts and transcripts of writing conferences. This enabled me to compare what students told me about their revision processes with how they revised their writing. I did not make inferences about how the conference affected the students' writing processes based only on transcripts of the conferences.

I also kept track of my own researcher biases in a journal because it was important for me to understand that I have certain ideas about writing center conferencing that could impede my position as an outside observer. For example, as a writing center tutor I adhered to certain methods of tutoring and working with students; I recognized that participants in this research site had different tutoring methods and that my purpose

as a researcher was to provide an honest picture as possible of the different cases—not to prove that one way of tutoring was better than others. By identifying these biases I ensured that they did not hamper my analysis and construction of assertions.

I was able to collect enough data about "incestuous" conferences and regular conferences. The "incestuous" conferences between consultants had a distinct character; the consultants who brought their writing to the writing center had specific textual goals for their conferences. They also focused more on discussing meaning-related concerns in their writing. In this way, all three "incestuous" conferences were similar. In the other conferences the students did not have specific textual goals, and they usually ascribed authority to the consultant and took a passive role during sessions that emphasized editing. I also did not see any students make large-scale global revisions. The consultants used remarkably similar techniques during writing conferences, so I obtained an accurate picture of how they facilitated conferences.

Toward the end of data collection, I was close to achieving saturation but I did not gather data about all kinds of writing conferences that occurred in this writing center. A key problem that prevented me from achieving saturation was that I could not collect data about how the student who was an ELL revised after a writing conference. Although I did observe and record the writing conference of one student who was an ELL, this student did not complete any other procedures. (She seemed to not understand me well during the consent process, so she may have not understood what I was asking at the time, and she did not respond to my e-mails about the research study.)

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data analysis began as soon as I observed and recorded the first writing conference because data collection and analysis can proceed simultaneously (Merriam, 1998). I analyzed the data in several stages that enabled me to gain a deep understanding of the data and draw relationships across cases. During the data collection process I reflected on what I learned in the field in my research journal. After I finished data

collection in the field, I had collected data about 11 different cases. I decided not to use one case (the student who was an ELL) in my analysis because the student did not respond to my e-mail messages after her writing conference even though she had consented to be in the study; this was the only student from whom I did not collect a final draft.

I conducted this collective case study to provide rich descriptions of how students revise after writing conferences, so I used a process of coding that is part of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I conducted open coding with a co-researcher to develop sound categories, dimensions, and themes. After open coding, I planned to conduct axial coding to more closely examine vital categories of interest to describe them in more detail. Selecting these categories and important themes was essential for limiting the study and excluding data that was not intrinsic to my research questions.

I conducted the data analysis in several stages. I read the data as I gathered it and made notes about possible categories, shared my interpretations with participants, sorted the data for coding, collaborated with a co-researcher on developing final categories and on coding reliably, and constructed assertions based on themes that were grounded in the data.

Initial Analysis

First, as I conducted the research procedures, I wrote down my reflections in my research journal and in memos about each participant so that I could keep track of the emerging themes, the main ideas that encompassed the particular bits of data that I collected. For example, a theme that emerged early in my collecting data—and which was not predicted—was how the "incestuous" conferences differed in terms of the kinds of discussions the writing consultants had and how they revised after the conference. In this journal, I also noted possible coding categories early in the process of collecting data that I returned to later during the more formal coding process. Categories are abstractions

grounded in the data, not the data themselves (Merriam, 1998). Dimensions represent the variation within a specific category.

At the end of the data collection process, I assembled copies of interview transcripts, field notes, student writing, reflections, conference-summary forms, and participants' responses to my interpretations. After I took notes about my initial impressions of the data, I then sorted the data to organize it for coding and theory development (H. F. Wolcott, 2001). I sorted data differently based on the kind of document. For transcripts of writing conferences, I sorted the data according to the textual aspect or specific topic that the student and consultant discussed. For example, when they discussed a punctuation change, I counted as one section the part of the transcript in which they identified the problem, talked about how to correct it, and discussed the revision. For the interview transcripts, I sorted the data based on each discrete topic that the instructors, students, consultants, or writing center director discussed. This helped to make the data more manageable for coding.

I began the formal analysis by comparing pieces of data to each other using the constant comparative method and writing memos about what I learned (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Shank (2002), themes do not emerge from the data—rather, researchers become aware of different "patterns of order" that are found across different segments of data (p. 129). In the margins of my data I made notes about what I observed and possible coding categories that I could use. I later assembled these notes into lists and grouped like items together. I consolidated each group to form tentative categories and their dimensions that I discussed with a co-researcher. For example, one category was that the writing center supported faculty who taught writing. The dimensions of this category included ways in which faculty felt the writing center could help them (e.g., by requiring students to attend the writing center or by using writing fellows with subject-specific knowledge) and how some faculty believed that the writing center could not help students with advanced writing. In this way, I began to develop abstractions about the

data that were essential for building assertions. An assertion is an inference about the case based on the data.

To prepare the revisions for coding, I examined each revision and typed the revision into a table in a new document. For this study, I considered a revision to be any change made to the text, major or minor, which may or may not have affected the meaning (Fitzgerald, 1987). The table consisted of four columns: one each for the text that included the revision, the code, the line number in the transcript where the student discussed the change with the consultant (if applicable), and the code that was applied to the section in the conference transcript. This enabled me to compare the revision codes to the codes in the conference and interview transcripts and develop an accurate picture of how different parts of the activity system (i.e., consultant, instructor, or peers) mediated the revision process.

In the planning phase of this study, I decided to examine student revision in two ways: 1) by using a taxonomy to quantify and examine the specific revisions that students made and 2) by assessing the overall strength of revisions by considering how the revision either strengthened or weakened the text.

Although I knew that the analysis of the data would generate categories, I decided on a coding scheme for the revisions before I collected data. The coding system for the revisions, which is in Table 1, was based on the taxonomy developed by Faigley and Witte (1981). (APPENDIX C includes Table C1, a detailed description of the taxonomy.) The detailed enabled me to count the frequency of specific kinds of revisions that students made.

In this taxonomy, the two main categories of revisions are surface and text-based revisions. Surface revisions, which are revisions that do change the meaning, are divided into two categories, formal revisions and meaning-preserving revisions. Formal revisions comprise edits to grammar, spelling, and mechanics, and meaning-preserving revisions are revisions to wording that improve the fluency of a passage or clarify the existing

meaning at the sentence level. Text-based changes consist of microstructure textual revisions and macrostructure textual revisions. Microstructure revisions are changes to the text that result in a change in the semantic meaning of a local section of the text (i.e., on the sentence or paragraph level). Macrostructure revisions are changes that result in a change in the global meaning that results in a new main meaning (i.e., the summary of the piece of writing would be different after such a revision). (I added one category to the taxonomy, misperception, which was for revisions that students made based either on a misunderstanding of what the writing consultant said during the writing conference or on a misreading of notes on a draft.)

After going through the data I realized that I needed to develop more procedures for using the taxonomy. I decided to not "count" an identical revision more than once because I was interested in the decision process of making a certain revision, not whether a student was able to revise every problem in a piece of writing. For example, when Carolyn and Andrea removed the parentheses around their super-script notes, I labeled that as one revision.

Table 1. Taxonomy for Student Revisions (Based on Faigley & Witte, 1981)

Surface Revisions		Text-Based Revisions	
Formal	Meaning-Preserving	Microstructure	Macrostructure
Spelling	Addition	Addition	Addition
Punctuation	Deletion	Deletion	Deletion
Format	Substitution	Substitution	Substitution
Tense, Number, Modality	Distribution	Distribution	Distribution
Abbreviation	Permutation	Permutation	Permutation
	Consolidation	Consolidation	Consolidation

Data Analysis with a Co-Researcher

Consistent with the principles of naturalistic inquiry, I discussed my initial interpretations with a co-researcher to identify salient themes regarding how students revised after visiting the writing center. After sorting the data, I met with a co-researcher and debriefed him about my initial analysis of the data. This co-researcher was also a doctoral student in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program and had extensive experience teaching college-level composition classes. Examining the data with a co-researcher, or "investigator triangulation," is a useful technique for ensuring that the interpretations are reliable (Janesick, 1994). While discussing the data with the co-researcher, I presented the taxonomy for analyzing student revisions and discussed other categories that we could apply to the writing conference transcript, interview transcripts, and field notes. For example, I observed that there was a theme about how faculty and students believed the writing center was for getting help with editing. Thus, it was important to have codes that I could use not only for the interview data but for the conference transcripts.

After meeting with the co-researcher, I refined the list of categories and codes to use in the coding process. I constructed a list that had the definitions of each code and examples of the code from the data. Before the co-researcher and I began coding the data, we discussed the categories because I wanted to ensure that they were properly abstract and not merely descriptions of the data (Merriam, 1998). The co-researcher confirmed that they were abstract, so we proceeded to code the data. APPENDIX D contains Table D1, a list of the coding categories, codes, and examples of how codes were applied to the data.

The co-researcher analyzed a representative sample of the data that reflected the range of writing conferences, and we discussed how our interpretations were similar in most cases and different in others. First, we both coded two full sets of data for Janelle's and Brynna's writing conferences. We discussed the categories and codes, especially

focusing on how to code the different revisions that students made after, or during, the writing conferences.

We mostly agreed on our interpretation of the data, but we struggled on coming to agreement on the differences between "meaning-preserving" and "microstructure" changes and how to use the "punctuation" code. Initially, I had provided the co-researcher with a copy of the Faigley and Witte (1981) article that contained descriptions of the categories. I hoped that the definitions in this article would enable us to code the data together reliably. Faigley and Witte described meaning-preserving revisions as "changes that 'paraphrase' the concepts in the text, but do not alter them" (p. 403). The co-researcher and I discussed definition and compared how we coded to achieve a similar understanding of this category. After this discussion of how we defined these codes, we came to a better agreement on how to use them in the analysis.

We also did not agree on how to use the formal-punctuation code, meaning-preserving distribution code, and the meaning-preserving consolidation code. We decided that punctuation changes that were not made to correct an error would be coded as "meaning-preserving" rather than "surface" changes because the writer was intentionally trying to alter the presentation of the meaning of the text.

We discussed these codes and selected several revisions from the transcript of Janelle's writing conference to code together. I compared his coding to mine and found that for Janelle's revisions, we agreed on most of the codes. (I did not measure this exactly; this seemed to be our level of agreement.) He agreed that Janelle's conference was one in which no substantial changes were made to the text. Next, he coded two of the writing conferences on his own. His verification of my analyses helped to enhance the reliability of the study.

The co-researcher also analyzed a full set of data (for Carmen) that I had not coded. Instead, I re-visited this data set later in the data-analysis process to ensure that I was still using the codes in the way I did at the beginning of the process. When I re-

visited the data, I found that only a few revision codes differed, but the co-researcher and I still had broad agreement on how to code the revisions, the conference transcript, and the interview transcripts. His overall interpretation of the nature of her revision was also in line with my interpretation.

Analysis of the Remaining Data

After I coded two full datasets with the co-researcher, I manually coded the remaining eight datasets, including Carmen's. To look for specific relationships across codes, I used Atlas.ti 6.2 to examine the co-occurring codes. Using research software can enable a researcher to track relationships among codes and examine more complex code networks (Saldaña, 2009). Using Atlas.ti enabled me to analyze codes across different kinds of data. For example, for each section of the writing conference that was related to a specific student revision, I added the code for the kind of revision. Atlas.ti 6 enabled me to more easily examine which kinds of conference conversation co-occurred with specific kinds of revision. This software program became indispensable for developing assertions because there were simply too many codes to count by hand.

Descriptive Statistics

At the outset of the study, I did not plan to use inferential or descriptive statistics because I was interested in proving rich descriptions of the activity systems of student revision. My initial research design did not account for the possibility of using statistical procedures in the data analysis. But after counting the numerous revisions, I computed descriptive statistics to look for relationships among the kinds of revisions that students made. I determined which revisions were related to the writing conference and which revisions the student completed independently of the writing conference for each of the four main categories in the taxonomy. I used SAS 9.2 to compute a zero-order correlation matrix to examine the correlations among these eight variables. But after realizing that many of the values had a range of 0-3, I realized that correlation would not be an appropriate tool for this study.

<u>Construction of Assertions</u>

After coding the data and exploring the dimensions of categories, I developed and tested assertions about the cases in this research study. Throughout the process of constructing assertions, I shared them with the co-researcher and my dissertation advisor who provided feedback and helped me to revise them. The assertions provide the structure for the body of the report.

An important assertion in the research study is about how students who did not have specific textual goals for their conferences revised their writing. These students ceded authority to their consultants because they wanted the consultants to identify and correct the errors in their text. These students almost always integrated suggestions about formal and meaning-preserving revisions because they believed their instructors wanted writing that was free of errors. But these students only integrated suggestions about microstructure revisions if it was a revision that they believed their instructors wanted to see.

<div align="center">The Research Site</div>

<div align="center">Rationale for Selecting This Site</div>

I selected this writing center because I had met the director and several of the consultants at a regional writing center conference. At this conference I talked to several of the consultants, and one of them talked at length about how she preferred to use talk-based conferencing when she worked with students. She said that she worked with students without having to read their papers because they talked about the ideas without being limited to discussing what was on the page. I was impressed and became interested in learning more about them. These were peer tutors, undergraduates, but they appeared to know a lot about writing center pedagogy and certainly knew much more than I did when I began working in a writing center after I received my Master's degree.

A Description of the Writing Center

Visiting the Site

When I first visited the writing center to talk to the director about conducting a research study on his campus, I became aware of some of my biases. When I drove onto the campus, I needed to ask directions to the building that houses the writing center. When I found the building, I remember walking down hallways lined with posters for presentations at chemistry and physics conferences. One room had a dry-erase board with all kinds of equations scrawled over it. The building did not seem like a natural home for a writing center because I was used to visiting writing centers that were embedded in English departments or located in the neutral academic terrain of a campus library.

When I entered the writing center, I quickly observed the writing center's casual and quirky character. Beside the door was a manikin's torso on a low table and an aquarium with a label that read, "Our fishy friends." There were several consultants in the writing center, and a young woman at the front desk told me that I could wait for the director to return. The only place to sit was in an old green recliner that seemed to want to swallow me once I was sitting in it. The student said, "Yes, that one will try to eat you up." There was a yellow recliner and other soft chairs, none of which matched. It had the ambiance of a college student's living room. The consultants who were there were talking about classes and genuinely seemed to like each other. It became clear to me that if I were going to try to blend in and observe the writing center, I would need to avoid wearing suits.

The writing center occupied two rooms on the ground floor in a building that housed the biology and chemistry departments, offices for faculty of other disciplines, and classrooms. In the room with the main entrance, the ceiling was low because the writing center was beneath a lecture hall. To the right of the main entrance, there was a desk with two computers. On the far side of the desk there were a round table in the corner and several more computers. On the far wall behind the receptionist's desk, there

was a pin-up calendar of male models with excellent physiques. To the left of the main entrance, there were mailboxes for all of the writing consultants, the manikin's torso, and a large bookcase with writing manuals and textbooks. Next to the bookcase, there was a small desk with one computer.

After several minutes the writing center director, Professor Grant, came into the writing center wearing jeans, a long-sleeved flannel shirt, and sneakers. He took me to the other room, which was deeper but narrower. It contained a long wooden table, several couches, and a small kitchenette. There was also a table with a coffee grinder, mugs, and a variety of teas. There were also several press pots and a sign that explained how much it cost to purchase coffee by the cup or for the entire semester. In the back of this room was the entrance to the Speaking Center, which occupied one room. The director's office was in a small room adjacent to this second room.

Professor Grant invited me back to this tiny office and motioned for me to sit in a chair that prevented the door from opening all the way. He told me that this wasn't his main office and that he did not spend a great deal of time in this office. At this meeting with the writing center director, I learned more about this writing center (personal interview, February 4, 2009). I learned that many conferences did not happen in the writing center, and that the director would try to help me to know about scheduled conferences by e-mailing me a list of appointments (which he did for the first several weeks of my study). He gave me a code for the copier machine and told me that I could store my lunch in the small fridge under his desk. In short, he made me feel welcome and did not ask very many questions about the purpose of my research study. He was satisfied to know that my study was for my dissertation, and he explained that his school's Institutional Review Board would also need to approve my research study. After the visit ended, I did not return again until after I received approval from both The University of Iowa's and the research site's Institutional Review Board.

In this section, I will provide background information about the writing center where I conducted my research study and explain how the writing center director conceived the philosophy of the writing center, hired writing consultants, and facilitated their development. I also will describe the different services that the writing center provided to the college faculty. The ideas that influenced the writing center consultants in this study had their origins in how the writing center was founded more than twenty years ago. Professor Grant was the first (and only) director that this writing center had ever had, and the notions he had of how a writing center should work in 1986 were essential for understanding the cases in this research study.

Origins of the Writing Center

Because the philosophy of the writing center was an important factor in how the writing consultants facilitated conferences, I want to explain how the philosophy evolved under Professor Grant. I obtained information about the founding of this writing center not only from the writing center director whom I interviewed, but also from a faculty member, Professor Simpson, who was part of the committee that founded the writing center. Both the director and the faculty member indicated that in the early 1980s the institution formed committees that were tasked with redesigning the entire college curriculum. At the time that this committee convened, Professor Grant was an adjunct faculty member in the English department who taught courses for ESL students. According to Professor Simpson, one outcome of this project to redesign the curriculum was that the institution founded a WAC program. Professor Simpson also said that the writing center was founded to support the faculty who had not taught writing before:

> One of the things we concluded was if you're going to have a writing across the curriculum program and have it work, you need a support institution for it. And the writing center was born by realizing that we needed that kind of institution. Largely because if everybody across the college is going to help students with their writing, you need something that helps people who feel like they're not writing teachers feel as if they could still help their students improve their writing in the classroom. So that's where it came from. (personal interview, April 7, 2009)

The institution began a search for someone to direct the new writing center in the spring of 1986. By that time he had been teaching part time at the institution for five years and knew a lot of people on the campus. Professor Grant said that he did not know anything about writing centers when the institution advertised the position, but he decided to go ahead and apply because several people encouraged him to apply for the position (personal interview, February 4, 2009).

When Professor Grant was hired to direct the writing center he began to learn about writing center pedagogy and peer tutoring. To develop his philosophy for the writing center, he read Stephen North's (1984a) "Idea of the Writing Center" and Kenneth Bruffee's (1984) "Peer Tutoring and the Conversation of Mankind," articles that emphasize a style of tutoring that focused on the development of the student rather than the correcting of student writing. These articles, he claimed, were his only introduction to writing center pedagogy, but they were enough to get him started in developing a writing center that emphasized conversation between a writing consultant and a student.

The Hiring of Writing Consultants

When the writing center first opened in the 1986, Professor Grant hired seven consultants who had been holding work-study positions in other offices on campus. At that time, Professor Grant could only hire students on work study. The third student that he hired, however, was previously working at another work-study position in the religion department. The director recalled meeting this student's former supervisor on campus who remarked that he knew that this student was leaving his current position to work for the writing center. Professor Grant realized that if he were to continue to hire staff this way, he would always be poaching student workers from another campus office. This was a key moment for the writing center director that shaped his plans for expanding the writing center because he knew that if he was going to hire students on campus, then he would always be taking someone else's work-study student (personal interview, February 4, 2009).

In his first year as director of the writing center, he decided that he wanted a writing center that could operate with minimum supervision. (He was still teaching 4-5 courses a semester, which may also have influenced this decision.) One way to achieve this was to reduce the amount of turnover in the writing center so that he would not always be hiring and training writing consultants. He also realized that the skills that consultants needed to be successful (being a good writer and reader) were skills that high school seniors had, so he determined that he could hire consultants before they enrolled by recruiting them during their senior year in high school. This, he concluded, would give him access to the best incoming students and also prevent him from having to continually hire and train students who were hired in their sophomore or junior years in college (personal interview, February 4, 2009).

But in order to fund the growth of the writing center he needed to find a different source of payment for consultants because not all of the students would be eligible for work-study positions. He developed the idea of the writing center fellowships in which writing consultants would be paid for their work with financial-aid monies. The director claimed that the institution gave away "millions" of dollars in financial aid to attract good students, and the Vice President for Admission and Financial Aid approved of the plan to give scholarships to writing consultants (personal interview, February 4, 2009).

In 1987, the writing center began recruiting new consultants by inviting to a competition the top tier of incoming students. The writing center still used this process at the time of my research study. Each February the admissions office mailed invitations to 100-125 students based on their GPA and SAT or ACT scores. These incoming students arrived on campus in the spring to participate in a competition in which they engaged in social mixers with working consultants and engaged in writing conferences with them. It was a whirlwind process, and the director admitted that he was often making decisions based on limited interactions with students. (The current consultants made recommendations about to whom Professor Grant should offer a fellowship, but it was his

decision about who to hire.) The applicant pool was undoubtedly strong. (The director claimed that the average ACT score was 30 or 31.) Although the writing center valued conversation and the ability to help a writer improve, the invitations for competing were based solely on grades and writing ability. The writing center director seemed to want accomplished students working in the writing center. Every year the writing center offered fellowships to a maximum of 22 students, but some students (at the time of the research study) were on work study (personal interview, February 4, 2009).

In his comments on my interpretations, the director addressed the issue of whether only the top students at the institution could work at the writing center. In my letter to him, I wrote, "[I]t is not clear if students who do not have exceptionally high GPAs or test scores would have a chance to work in the writing center if they were excellent at talking to students…." He wrote in reply that a few writing consultants were hired at the institution as work-study student employees. He also wrote that two were "probationary admits" to the school. He added, "Work-study plays a major role in diversifying the staff, including the recruitment of under-represented minorities" (personal communication, September 1, 2009).

This program enabled the writing center to grow to about 60-70 students, which helped the writing center director to enact his goal to create a culture of writing on the campus. Indeed, writing consultants made up about 5% of the student body. The director said that having a large staff not only created an environment in which the consultants could learn about being a writing consultant from each other, but also made it possible for just about everyone on campus to know a writing center consultant. Writing center consultants represented a wide variety of majors and interests and lived in the dormitories, fraternities, and sororities.

Training Writing Consultants

Professor Grant emphasized that his staff could learn more from each other than they could from him. In fact, when I asked him about how he trained consultants, he

immediately responded that he has a staff development program that he didn't consider a "training" program per se. Also, Professor Grant believed that he did not need to teach new consultants anything because they arrived on campus as accomplished readers and writers. They already had many of the skills that were necessary for being effective writing consultants (personal interview, February 4, 2009).

As part of their development, writing consultants took a one-credit class about writing center pedagogy called Topics in Composition. (The writing consultants referred to this class as "Topics.") All consultants took the class in each of their first three semesters and once during their last year of school. The class included a variety of consultants, so younger consultants could learn from ones who had more experience.

In this class, the writing consultants completed a variety of assignments about writing center pedagogy. The students had one assignment per week that was often a reading assignment. (The syllabus included important articles about composition and writing centers, such as North's (1984a) "Idea of a Writing Center," Harris's (1995) "Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors," and Bartholomae's (1985) "Inventing the University.") The writing consultants posted reactions to their readings in an online discussion forum and the director often printed out several of the comments to spur class discussion. The writing consultants recorded one of their conferences and analyzed it. According to Professor Grant, tutoring in grammar and mechanics were not addressed in this class. In his comments on my interpretations, he said that "such issues are only addressed when discussing a specific paper/context" (personal communication, September 1, 2009).

The director also emphasized to the consultants that they could learn about conferring with students by bringing their own writing to the writing center for "incestuous" writing conferences. The writing center director believed that consultants who worked in the writing center should value the kind of conversation that happens in a writing conference. The director said, "[I]f you don't believe in using the writing center,

then I would prefer you not work in a writing center. I don't care how good of a consultant you are" (personal interview, February 4, 2009). In his comments on my interpretations, he said that he expected each consultant to have conferences with 25-30 other consultants (personal communication, September 1, 2009).

The director believed that the writing center existed just as much for the development of consultants as it did to help students with their writing. During the interview, the director said:

> One of our goals is to try to guarantee that each year [the school] will graduate a group of students who've had broad and interesting experiences working at the writing center. And that's one of the reasons why we have such a large writing center. {?} pretty strongly committed to the belief that even if we can't do anything for people that come in seeking our services, uh, have a much better chance of guaranteeing that that we will graduate a number of people each year that know a lot about writing process, know a lot about pedagogy. (personal interview, February 4, 2009)

But I did not realize the degree to which the writing center director envisions the writing center as a place that helps students develop. Consultants attended national writing center conferences and conferences related to college composition. Consultants managed the newsletter for a regional writing center organization. When Professor Grant saw this interpretation in his member check, he wrote that in spring 2009 two seniors, who were both writing consultants, won Fulbright scholarships. He also claimed that in the past 20 years, over half of the students graduated Phi Beta Kappa or Phi Kappa Phi (personal communication, September 1, 2009).

Work Load for Writing Consultants

According to the writing center's own materials, the writing consultants conducted a total of 2,500- 3,000 conferences each year with 400-500 different students. This was notable, considering that the school's enrollment was about 1,200 students. Writing consultants were expected to give thirty conferences during the academic year, which averaged about one a week. If a consultant gave a writing conference outside of the writing center, he or she was supposed to record it in order to receive payment (for

work-study consultants) or time credit (for those on fellowships). The manual for consultants stated that consultants who worked when the writing center was not busy needed to "take special steps" to meet the requirement of thirty conferences. Thus, consultants needed to work with students outside of the writing center or have conferences with their own friends and classmates. One reason why few writing center conferences happened in the writing center may have been because consultants sought out conferences with friends and classmates outside of the writing center. Students who needed help may not have needed to visit the writing center when they could just knock on a consultant's door down the hall. Indeed, when I was recruiting consultants, one told me that all of his conferences happened outside of the writing center, so he did not think he could participate in my study because I could not follow him to observe a spontaneous conference.

Conference Report Forms

After every conference, consultants were supposed to complete a summary form in which they summarize what happened in the conference. The summary form was a comprehensive form in which students included identifying features about the writer, such as year in school, gender, whether English is the native language; information about the assignment, including the course, name of the instructor, and type of assignment; and information about the draft the student has brought to the writing center and the writer's perceived attitude toward the draft. In addition to including features about the background of the writer and the origin of the piece of writing, the form also enabled consultants to record the approximate length of the conference, who directed the conference, whether the conference was draft- or talk focused, and the consultant's level of satisfaction with "achievement of conference goals." Consultants could either fill out a paper form or enter it directly into the database. I collected nine summary forms out of the 11 conferences that I observed. A copy of the paper form is in APPENDIX E.

Philosophy of the Writing Center

The underlying philosophy of the writing center was similar to social

constructivism, whose adherents believe that students learn through participating in

cultural activities with others (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). In these activities, students

internalize skills and knowledge that they first use in these interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Researchers on peer tutoring have acknowledged that this theoretical perspective is

particularly useful for framing the activities that happen in peer tutoring (Falchikov,

2001).

Although Professor Grant emphasized that consultants could facilitate

conferences to help students revise their writing, he was more enthusiastic about the

actual conversation between a student and a writing consultant. He realized that a student

may not use helpful ideas from even a good writing conference. In our interview,

Professor Grant said:

> I want the staff to be always having, working within a context of revision, and
> getting students to clarify and develop their thinking, enrich their thinking. And
> even when we got editing conferences, and we certainly did do a lot of editing
> conferences, we've always got that in the back of our mind. (personal interview,
> February 4, 2009)

As to whether students should revise their writing based on the discussion in the

writing conference, Professor Grant said, "Don't worry about controlling the student,

don't worry about, you know, trying to ensure that that paper's gonna get revised or get

edited. That's the student's choice" (personal interview, February 4, 2009). A successful

conference, then, was a good conversation about the ideas in a student's piece of writing,

not necessarily a well-revised paper. Professor Grant also said, "You can have a fantastic

conference, dynamite, wonderful things can occur and the student walks out of that

conference and doesn't change a word, and we can't control that, so don't worry about

that ((laughs))" (personal interview, February 4, 2009). Some writing consultants

employed the strategy of playing the role of a naïve reader who could give feedback from the perspective of someone who was unfamiliar with the subject matter (Gibson, 1979).

Figure 3 illustrates how, according to the writing center director, a writing conference could help a student in the revision process. Because the writing emphasized conversation that could help a student think more clearly about his or her topic, conversation was a key tool in the ideal writing conference for this writing center. This conversation could mediate the student's action upon the object, which was his or her ideas about the topic. These refined ideas could then help a student think more clearly and revise effectively.

Figure 3. Activity Systems of the Writing Conference and Revision Session
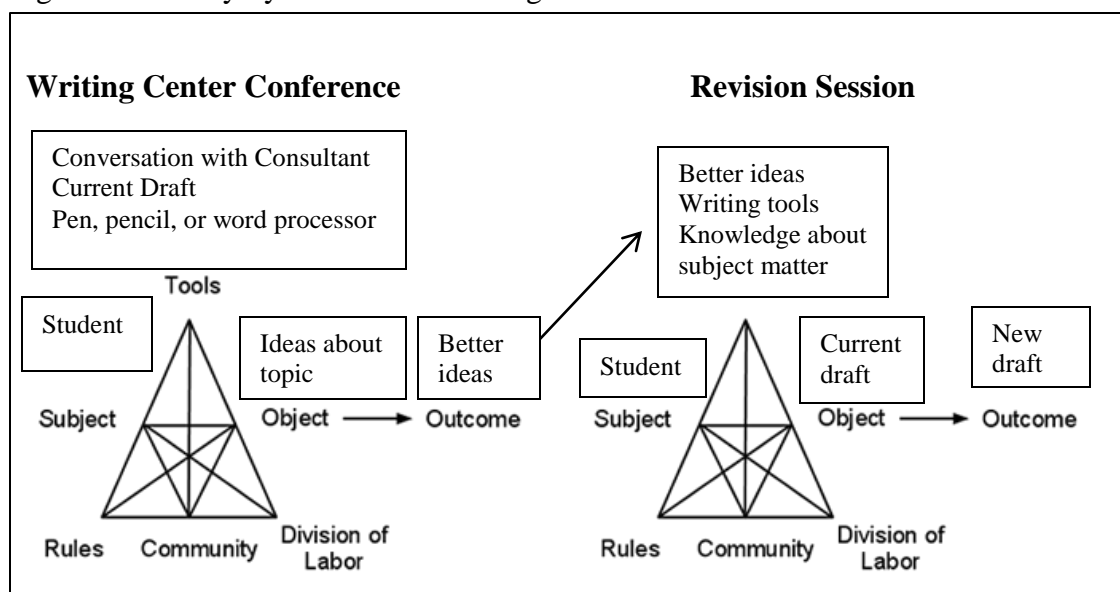
Although the consultants I observed in this study used very similar techniques in their writing conferences, such as reading student work aloud, there was only one "rule" that the consultants adhered to: consultants did not write on student papers. I first learned about this rule from the director, who said "…there are almost no rules that the consultant

staff have with regard to their work in the writing center, except for one: we never write on a student's paper" (personal interview, February 4, 2009). In all of my observations of writing conferences, I only saw a consultant write on a student's paper once when she initialed a draft for a student who wanted to show proof that she had been to the writing center. Professor Grant also said, however, that there could be "many instances" in which writing on a student's paper would be "beneficial." When I asked him to comment on this some more, he replied that writing on a student's paper could help the consultant clarify what he or she wants to say, save time, and model a writing process for a student (personal communication; September 1, 2009).

This rule complemented the value that the writing center director placed on the act of conversation, but it also mediated the kinds of feedback a consultant could provide to a student. Consultants focused on conversing with the students and not marking up a draft with corrections, but they avoided taking notes on a student's paper or demonstrating a way to compose something by modeling behavior. If the rule was supposed to prevent consultants from assuming ownership of a student's paper or making too directive suggestions to students, the rule was not effective. I observed consultants tell students exactly which word to use or which punctuation mark to use. The writing center director's observation that writing on a student's paper would save a consultant time is appropriate. Consultants may not have written directly on a student's paper, but with their voices they made quite specific suggestions that students were eager to assimilate into their writing.

The Writing Center's Services

In addition to offering writing conferences by appointment on a walk-in, the writing center offered many other services to college faculty to help them teach writing. (The writing center advertised these services on a flier that it sent to college faculty each semester; I obtained this flier from one of the professors who participated in this research study.) Faculty could invite writing center consultants to give workshops on one of eight

topics: brainstorming, revising, writing process, copy editing, reading strategies, drafting the argumentative paper, the preface and the portfolio, and academic citation practices and plagiarism. The writing center also offered a special writing fellows program in which a consultant could be paired with a class and be responsible for having conferences with students in that class. Instructors could also request help from a consultant who could assist with teaching an assignment by leading a series of writing exercises to help students begin writing. Writing consultants could also work with a faculty member to help him or her with a piece of writing if the faculty member were willing to have a conference with a writing consultant.

Hours of Operation

From Sunday to Thursday the writing center was open from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. On Friday, the writing center was only open in the morning hours. It was closed on Saturday. Usually there were three consultants on duty at all times, but I often observed writing consultants, who were not on duty, congregating there to socialize or to do schoolwork. The writing center did not offer online appointments by way of e-mail or online chat. The consultants worked in hour-long shifts approximately three-to-four hours a week. Because of my schedule, I most often visited the writing center during the early morning and afternoon shifts. The result was that only two out of the 11 observed conferences occurred in the evening.

Consultants participated in the day-to-day operation of the writing center because the director taught up to four classes per semester and directed the WAC program in addition to directing the writing center. On many days when I observed activity in the writing center, the director was not there. Consultants sat at the front desk, answered the phone, and welcomed students who were looking for help with their writing. Consultants also made coffee that was sold by the cup to students and faculty. (Students who had a conference could have one free cup of coffee.) Consultants also played a big role in planning the activities that take place during the competition in the spring. Occasionally,

consultants completed writing-center-related tasks for the director, such as updating records in a database.

Early in the study it was apparent that there were not going to be a lot of conferences for me to observe. I had assumed that because this writing center employed many consultants that there were many students coming to the writing center for help. But I spent a lot of those early days at the writing center sitting in one room of the writing center where I could keep an eye on the front desk and see if anyone came inside for a conference. Most of the time, though, I sat and read, graded student papers, and chatted with consultants who came to the back room for coffee. A few of them asked me how my study was going. Some knew that I was having a difficult time finding conferences to observe, and a few of those said that they were even trying to get their friends to come into the writing center so that there would be a conference for me to observe. By waiting patiently over several months, I gathered data from ten separate cases for my research study.

Before I present my assertions, I now turn to providing summaries of the cases that I will discuss in the upcoming chapters. These summaries are divided into two groups, conferences that were focused on surface-level issues and conferences that were focused on deeper level of meanings.

Description of the Students and Their Writing Conferences

Conferences That Were Focused on Surface-Level Issues

Janelle and Nancy

Janelle, a second-semester freshman who was considering majoring in either Biology or Psychology, brought to the writing center an extra-credit assignment that she had written for Organismal and Ecological Biology. To complete her assignment, Janelle had attended two presentations by seniors who were talking about their senior thesis projects; each presentation was related to the content that was discussed in her class. She also attended a talk by a researcher who had visited the campus. The symposiums were a

couple of weeks before her visit to the writing center, and Janelle said that she began drafting her paper two days before her writing center conference on April 28 (a week before final exams). She did not make an appointment; she dropped in to meet with a consultant, and the consultant at the front desk assigned her to Nancy, a senior chemistry major who was planning to begin her doctoral work in environmental engineering next year. During the consent process, Janelle told me that she did not plan to do much revising, and she asked me if she could still participate in the research study.

To compose the draft that she brought to the writing center, Janelle took notes during the symposiums so that she could summarize them later. Janelle also talked to her roommate about how to best describe the symposiums. She also said that her roommate helped her to remember other aspects of the presentations because they both attended the same presentations (personal interview, April 29, 2009). Janelle said that her friend's help was with the content of the paper, not with the form or language-related issues. Her summary of her discussion with her classmate sounded oddly like a writing conference about the main meaning of her writing:

> I talked to her a lot about what she had in her notes and what she remembered in different areas of the presentation. Um, but it wasn't just like specifically about the paper. It was just kind of writing the whole paper. (personal interview, April 29, 2009)

Janelle spent about five or six hours total working on her initial draft, watching television while she wrote.

Janelle decided to visit the writing center because she felt like she had not written very much that semester. In our interview, she said she felt "out of practice" with writing because she had no writing-emphasis classes that semester. The previous semester (her first in college) she had met with a writing fellow several times, but she had not been to the writing center during the semester of my research study (personal interview April 29, 2009).

Janelle thought the writing center was a helpful resource with a welcoming atmosphere. In our interview, she said, "There's couches and food and everything everywhere. It's nothing intimidating at all, and, I don't know, I really like it there. It's a nice, comfortable spot for kids to go" (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

Her three-page draft consisted of three discrete sections. Each section summarized one presentation and contained a brief statement that connected the presentation to her course. (The first page of her draft is in APPENDIX F.) At the end of the second two sections, she included parenthetical statements that were reminders that she needed to add a statement that connected the material in the symposiums to her course. One statement was "(Connection to Organismal and Ecological Biology – Organism itself is essential to creating its environment)". She wanted help from a writing consultant on deciding where to insert a statement that connected the course to the presentation. Janelle did not claim that there was a specific deadline for her assignment, but she said that it needed to be submitted before final exams. She admitted, also, that she wanted to turn it in soon after her writing conference.

Nancy decided to sit beside Janelle, so they each sat in two old recliners that were next to the front desk. Nancy told me in our interview that when she sat next to a student, she felt like they were both "on the same page" (personal interview April 29, 2009). While Nancy read the paper aloud, Janelle followed along intently with an open notebook on her lap and a pencil in her hand.

For the first part of the writing conference, Nancy assumed the role of reader and mostly made direct suggestions about how to fix small errors. However, she also did suggest additional content that Janelle could integrate into her revision. Nancy was familiar with the content of Janelle's course, and used her knowledge of the subject matter to suggest ways that Janelle could improve the science content of her writing.

When I observed their writing conference, I watched Nancy hold onto the paper while she first read the entire text aloud without stopping. In our interview, Nancy later

told me that reading it aloud helped her to notice the "flow" and any mistakes in grammar and mechanics (personal interview, April 29, 2009). After she read the entire text, Nancy began to make suggestions about how Janelle could expand her ideas. When Nancy was finished with suggesting meaning-related revisions, she then read the essay aloud again as she pointed out corrections to spelling, grammar, and punctuation. When Nancy made the transition to helping Janelle with grammar and mechanics, I observed her hand the paper back to Janelle. Janelle then wrote down notes for correcting punctuation, and when they had finished discussion one page, she put the page underneath her notebook.

Janelle revised immediately after the writing conference in the college library. Janelle revised for 13 minutes on her laptop computer. She used her left hand to keep her place in the draft while she fixed the smaller changes. She also made one-sentence statements to connect the symposiums to the content of her course.

During her interview with me, I asked Janelle about her writing conference and she asked whether I was referring to "this" conference or the other one. She thought our discussion was a writing conference (perhaps because I talking about her writing and asking her why she made certain decisions). I had also asked her about what she learned about grammar and mechanics, so she may have associated me with someone in the role of teacher. For example, she said that I helped her to learn that she needed to proofread after she goes to the writing center (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

In our interview, Nancy said that this conference was not unusual and she did not really learn from the process. She said that it was a "pretty standard conference" (personal interview, April 29, 2009). She also said:

> Like the student came in, wanted help with something, and I gave her the help. Um, and then she went and fixed it, so think that was pretty like, there wasn't anything that was particular, exceptional, that I thought stood out.

<u>Carmen and Nancy</u>

Carmen, a studio art major who focused on painting, came to the writing center on April 14 to discuss a short paper that she wrote for Concepts in Chemistry, a chemistry

course for non-majors that helped students learn about the role of chemistry in everyday life. She had not made an appointment; she stopped by with a friend of hers and had a walk-in appointment. Carmen was a studio art major who focused on painting. In her paper, Carmen was supposed to describe the chemistry and chemical processes in an everyday item; the paper was also supposed to be written for the average person (not a chemist). She chose engine oil because cars were a hobby of hers; she enjoyed working on cars in her spare time.

Carmen did not go to the writing center willingly because she did not like the kind of feedback that she received there. Carmen had been to the writing center before because it was a requirement in her first-year seminar (FYS). She only attended the writing center when she was required to. About the conference in this research study, Carmen told me in our interview that she went to the writing center "because it was assigned by our professor that you had to go at least once" (personal interview, April 21, 2009). Carmen preferred very blunt feedback, which, according to her, writing center consultants could not provide because they wanted students to like being there and to return for future appointments. For this reason, she liked to get feedback from friends or family who would not "sugar-coat" the truth (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

During the writing conference, Carmen listened to the consultant read her paper out loud twice. Nancy first read the paper to focus on the main ideas about the chemistry of engine oil. Nancy read without stopping except to ask a question about engine oil; she suggested that Carmen include more information about chemical processes because the professor might want to see more chemistry. When she talked about this, Carmen said that she was thinking about going into more details about synthetic oils.

After the discussion about how Carmen presented the chemistry of engine oil, they proceeded to edit the paper, which meant that Nancy identified problems and suggested corrections. Sometimes, Carmen would be able to identify an error because she could hear it, but she spent most of the time marking the corrections the consultant made.

Carmen later told me that she was impatient to go to lunch with her friend and was hoping for a fast conference like her friend had (personal communication, April 21, 2009).

Carmen worked on her revision on Wednesday night (from 10 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. on Thursday) and Thursday morning (April 15 and 16). Carmen fixed errors in punctuation, spelling, and diction; she also added larger sections of additional text that she described to me as "filler" (personal interview, April 21, 2009). As to the larger sections of added text, one was a quote from a magazine about what happens to your car if it is given the wrong engine oil, and she also added a conclusion that increased the length of her paper to four pages.

The corrections that she made to spelling, punctuation, and wording were the ones that were identified in the conference. However, several of the corrections that Nancy suggested were not integrated into the final draft, perhaps because she did not see the mark on the page or changed her mind about the correction.

Although Carmen believed that the writing center did not help her as much as her sister did, the writing center at least helped her to correct many surface errors. And Carmen did add additional information about the chemistry of oil, so the writing center did have a tangible effect on her revising process. Her sister did help her to think about whether the paper answered the questions she asked in the first paragraph, and the discussion with her sister helped her to be more specific by stating which kinds of oils she was going to be describing in the paper (conventional and synthetic). Carmen refused to switch the order of the second and third paragraphs because she believed that the reader needed to know what oil is before he or she understands why it is important.

Her final draft was improved over the previous draft in that it included more chemistry, had fewer surface errors, and had a conclusion. However, a significant portion of the paper was direct quotes from different sources that might have been paraphrased in order to preserve her voice. She corrected some of the grammatical errors, but not all

(and her new sections included additional errors in grammar and mechanics). These errors included adding the possessive s to plural words. This kind of error was corrected by Nancy in the conference, but Carmen still made the error herself when she added new text to the essay.

Other problems with organization remained in the final draft. For example, related information was not presented sequentially: the discussion of whether synthetic oil was better than conventional oil did not occur in the fourth paragraph with the information about choosing the right oil for the car. Also, one added section on page three reiterated the same basic differences (albeit with more detail) between conventional and synthetic oils. The conclusion was rather vague in that it just underscored the importance of oil without emphasizing important differences between conventional and synthetic oils. Since the introduction stated that the paper would be about conventional and synthetic oils, and which type was best for a car, it seems strange that the conclusion referred to price (which is an aspect that is not addressed in the body of the paper).

In my interview with her, Nancy said that she believed she helped Carmen both with the content of her paper and with fixing sentence-level errors. She said she was glad that she could "contribute [her] chemistry-major aspect to things" by suggesting ways that Carmen could discuss more of the chemical principles of engine oil. She also said she helped Carmen fix punctuation errors, but also admitted that Carmen may not have understood the "reasons" for each change. As to what she learned in the conference, Nancy said that she tried to be more positive in this conference by affirming for Carmen that the essay had the right tone. However, Nancy also said that she did not learn anything about her techniques for facilitating conferences (personal interview, April 14, 2009).

Carmen was still not enthusiastic about the writing center after this visit, and she said that she still would not willingly have another writing conference there even though

she admitted that Nancy helped her with some aspects of revising (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

David, Ann, Lisa, and Brynna

David visited the writing center on March 17 for a walk-in, voluntary consultation that lasted almost two hours. David began the conference with Ann, worked with Lisa after Ann left for class, and finished with Brynna after Lisa had to leave for class.

I observed David enter the writing center, and when he went to the front desk, he asked if he could have his paper "proof-readed." David, a student in Entrepreneurship, had a flash drive that contained a copy of his analysis of a case study (entitled "Frank Addante, Serial Entrepreneur") from the *Harvard Business Review*. He later told me in our interview that he had received the assignment two weeks before he came to the writing center. According to the guidelines, he was supposed to make an argument about the case and support it with evidence. The assignment also indicated that he was supposed to cite the sources in APA format (personal interview, March 18, 2009).

David viewed the writing center as a helpful resource to help him fix errors in his writing. He had never been to the writing center at this institution, but did visit the writing center at a community college that he attended (personal interview, March 18, 2009).

David had already received some help with revising his case study before he visited the writing center. In our interview, he said that his parents had already helped him to proofread his writing. If he had not gone to his parents for help with fixing sentence-level mistakes, David said that there "would have been more work for the writing center to do" (personal interview, March 18, 2009).

Ann, a sophomore writing consultant who majored in neuroscience, facilitated the conference for the first hour. They began the conference at a computer workstation that was beside the front desk. She offered to read the essay so that she could understand the meaning; while she read the paper out loud, she stopped at the end of each paragraph to

identify a sentence-level mistake. She then would suggest a revision or prompt David to correct the problem on his own. For example, she stopped to question David about whether it was appropriate to refer to Frank Addante only by his first name, and David consulted with his case study to see how the authors referred to Addante. When he realized that the authors used the surname, David changed the references in his paper to "Addante" or "Frank Addante." Together, David and Ann covered all but the last page of a three-page essay.

Because the conference took place at a computer, David entered the changes at the computer as soon as they discussed them. Later in our interview, Ann told me that she called this conference an "editing" conference. Ann also said, however, that she was glad that David was willing to participate in correcting errors (personal interview, March 17, 2009). Ann worked with David for about an hour before she had to go to class.

Lisa stepped in for Ann and helped him to go over the last few paragraphs in the paper until she had to leave for class. Lisa was a senior who had a double-major in psychology and creative writing. (I may have interfered with this case because I encouraged Ann to ask Lisa to step in for her; I did not want Ann to ask one of the other consultants who had not agreed to participate in the research study.) When Ann asked Lisa to take over for her, Lisa was barefoot and sitting on a couch chatting with other students in the writing center. Ann did not explain to Lisa what she and David had accomplished up until that point, and this bothered Lisa. She said that she did not know what David and Ann had accomplished, so she felt there was a lot of "uncertainty" when she took over (personal interview, March 17, 2009). When Lisa took over for Ann, she began by reading the entire paper silently; she did not want to just begin "editing" the last two paragraphs on the last page, which was where David directed Lisa's focus.

Some of the aspects of the text that Lisa focused on were sections that Ann and David had not discussed when Ann was reading the essay out loud. For example, while Lisa was silently reading a section in which David wrote that Addante's decision to hire a

certain executive was a good decision, she stopped and suggested to David that he support his assertion. As a consultant, Lisa was reluctant to dictate corrections. She preferred to ask David questions and prompt him to revise. About editing in a conference, Lisa told me in our interview, "I mean, if you want someone to edit you just have to ask one person to read it through and just make corrections. And that's, that's not a conference" (personal interview, March 17, 2009). Lisa also helped him cite sources by providing him with a handout on how to use APA format. Lisa stayed with David while he finished revising until she had to leave for class.

Lisa later told me that this was an unusual writing conference for her because she was used to exclusively having writing conferences with her friends or other writing consultants. She also said that one reason she rarely had conferences with people she did not know was because she worked in the writing center over the lunch hour when few students stopped by for walk-in appointments (personal interview, March 17, 2009).

After talking with these two consultants, David worked alone at the same computer in the writing center, fixing the format of his paper. (For example, I observed him as he added page numbers to the document.) When I asked David a question about his revising process and the sources he was using, he realized that he had not cited the case study in his references page, so he turned to another consultant for help, Brynna, who was working at a computer terminal by herself.

David asked Brynna how to cite a case study in APA format, and Brynna tried to find the answer to David's question by looking through several sources. While David sat beside her, Brynna went to the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab and looked for the answer. Brynna was unable to locate the answer, and she did not consult *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, which was on a shelf behind the front desk.

After Brynna tried unsuccessfully to find out how to cite a case study, David decided that his paper would be acceptable even if he did not cite it correctly. He told

Brynna that he did not expect to get an A in the class, and he also said that his instructor should have told them how to cite the case study in the first place.

In my interview with David, he said that the conference helped him to edit his essay and he appreciated how the consultants allowed him to suggest revisions. David was not specific about what he learned in the conference, but he said that he did feel more capable of effectively integrating quotes into his writing (personal interview, March 18, 2009).

<u>Carolyn, Andrea, and Nancy</u>

Carolyn and Andrea were both junior biology majors who were lab partners in Professor Jones's section of Organic Chemistry. This class was required for Andrea, who was hoping to attend chiropractic school after she graduated. Andrea was a student athlete, a softball player, who was competing for the school. A few days after the writing conference, she was to leave with the school team for a major tournament. Carolyn also considered this class a requirement, and she was hoping to attend medical school. Carolyn was soft-spoken, and seemed to be the more assertive student (e.g., she asked more questions of the writing consultant and completed the revisions after the conference). When they came to the writing center they had been working on their main project of the class during the last three weeks of the semester, a lab report of their synthesis of the Beta-blocker propranolol. At one point in our interview after their conference, Carolyn said that they had been working on the assignment for the whole semester, but then she corrected herself to say that the semester was spent developing lab skills that they needed to use in the synthesis project (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

There were many indications that Carolyn and Andrea took this assignment seriously. The assignment sheet contained copious notes about deadlines and plans on how to organize their information. It also included, in abbreviated script, the availability of a writing fellow (who did not participate in this study) who had taken the course previously and whom the instructor had asked to help his students with the project.

Prior to coming to the writing center, Carolyn and Andrea had already written several drafts of the report and had received feedback from the writing fellow and Professor Jones. Carolyn and Andrea, however, never did refer to their discussions with the writing fellow as "writing conferences." The writing fellow showed Carolyn and Andrea her own write-up of the synthesis project and helped them to organize their own writing. To them, this was seeking feedback from someone who had written this assignment before. This kind of conference, however, was exactly what the writing center director referred to when he talked about how the majority of the conferences happen outside of the writing center (personal interview, February 4, 2009). In this respect, the writing center did help them to shape their ideas and organization at the outset of their project. They only decided to visit the writing center, however, when they believed they needed a consultant to read their complete, nearly finished draft and look for surface errors.

Carolyn and Andrea also sought feedback from their professor so that they could revise their report. Revision was a word that they used freely: when talking about writing multiple drafts to show their professor, Andrea said, "I think we were the only group that had like multiple revisions of it" (personal interview, April 29, 2009). They showed drafts to their instructor and received feedback about how to revise their writing. First, Carolyn typed an introduction and showed it the professor for feedback about two weeks before the visit to the writing center. According to Carolyn, Professor Jones told her that the introduction was "too specific" and that it should rather begin with a discussion of the class of drugs to which propranolol belongs, not a detailed description of the particular qualities of propranolol (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

It was in the days preceding the writing conference that Carolyn and Andrea wrote two more drafts of the report and received more feedback from their instructor. After they showed Professor Jones the introduction, they typed a complete draft of the write-up and talked about it with their professor for about half an hour. Professor Jones

told me in our interview that he was willing to talk to students in the advanced classes about their writing because he believed the assignments were too difficult for peer-review activities (personal interview, April 23, 2009). In about a half-hour conference, their professor told them that the first complete draft was too technical. This draft had an introduction, a diagram of the chemical reaction that produced propranolol, and a detailed description of the synthesis procedure that included the specific amounts of chemicals.

Whereas the draft that Carolyn and Andrea brought to the conference was much more like an essay that was separated into different sections, this earlier draft had a one-page list with exact details about each step of the synthesis process such as, "Weigh 2.5 g (0.017 mol) of 1-naphtol and 1 gram KOH. Combine the two compounds in a round-bottom flask. Add enough 90 % ethanol and swirl until completely dissolved." In the draft they brought to the writing center, this step was described without specific measurements, so as to enable a layperson to understand in general what they did: "The synthesis process will be carried out by dissolving 1 naphthol in potassium hydroxide and ethanol."

During the writing conference, Carolyn read the draft aloud and stopped to ask Nancy if she noticed anything wrong with their writing. Nancy identified many sentence-level errors and suggested direct corrections, like she did with Carmen and Janelle. Nancy also made suggestions about how to clarify some of the lab procedures.

Immediately after the conference, Carolyn and Andrea revised in a computer lab for students in chemistry courses. Carolyn entered the surface-level changes that were discussed in the writing conference; Andrea sat beside her and went through the draft pointing out the sections that needed to be revised. They only made the changes that they discussed in the writing conference with Nancy. Later that night, Carolyn made a few more small changes in word selection before printed out the final version of the lab report.

In my interview with Nancy after the conference, she said that this was an interesting and engaging conference for her because it required her to use her expertise in chemistry. She believed that a consultant without her level of knowledge would not have been able to help Carolyn and Andrea refine their lab report and explain their procedures clearly. For example, in one section of their report, Carolyn and Andrea had a detailed discussion about R- and S-enantiomers, Nancy helped them to revise how they described that part of the procedures. Nancy also had experience taking courses from Professor Jones and welcomed an opportunity to help other students meet his standards (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

<div align="center">Conferences Focused on Deeper Levels of Meaning</div>

<u>Tim and Maureen</u>

Tim was a senior studio-art major who was taking an introductory poetry workshop as an elective in his last semester. He wanted to learn more about a different art form (his main medium was drawing) (personal interview, May 19, 2009). He had written three poems ("Canyon," "Second Floor Reading Room," and "Drawing") for the weekly assignment in which he was supposed to write 30 lines of poetry.

He visited the writing center on February 18 to have a conference with Maureen, a friend that he had met when they both spent a semester in New York City. He had writing conferences with her several times before, and he considered her a friend. Tim valued going to the writing center because it gave him an "outside perspective" on how a reader interpreted the meanings in his writing (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

Their writing conference was a conversation in which Maureen asked questions about why he made certain decisions in writing his poems. Maureen did not make suggestions about corrections or revisions, which was not the reason that Tim came to the writing center. In our interview later, Tim said that his conversation with Maureen helped him to think about "specific words and their meanings" more closely than he did on his own (personal interview, May 19, 2009). For example, one of his poems was a short

piece about a student asleep in the library. The speaker in the poem referred to the student as a "gentleman," and Maureen engaged him in a discussion of why he chose that word and the connotations of that choice.

The day after his writing conference, Tim took the poems (in the same form) to class and then e-mailed me a revision of one of them.

He had a follow-up conference in the library with Maureen on February 25 to discuss the comments that the instructor had written on his drafts. He recorded the conference on the recorder that I gave him. Whereas Maureen and Tim discussed the meanings of his poems in the first conference, in this second conference, they talked about Professor Cranston's written comments. This professor had, for example, written "not clear" beside the last stanza of "Canyon." This comment, among others, puzzled Tim because he was not sure what was not clear and how to clarify the problem. Maureen not only discussed the sections that the professor referred to in in her comments, but she also suggested that Tim discuss any unclear comments with Professor Cranston before he began revising his poems.

I observed him revise the poems on February 26, a day after his follow-up conference with Maureen. "Canyon" and "Drawing" were revised after his second writing conference and during the observation. He revised these poems at the computer, making small changes to each of them. Regarding "Canyon," he made a considerable change to the end of the poem to tighten the focus on the image of the canyon as dry "lines of hands." He did not revise "Second Floor Reading Room" because he was happy with the poem the way it was, even though his instructor seemed to question his word selection. Tim was cheerful during this observation and seemed to genuinely enjoy writing and revising poems. Before he came to the revising session that I observed, he had been at a reading that was sponsored by one of the school's literary magazines.

He turned in his final portfolio during the first week in May. Of the three poems he originally brought to the writing center, only "Second Floor Reading Room" was

included in the final portfolio, and it was the same version that he brought to the writing center. Even though the instructor had a comment that questioned a word choice in the poem, Tim decided to leave the poem alone. Tim had many poems to choose from for his final portfolio, and he said that he may not have included poems like "Canyon" and "Drawing" in the final portfolio because he wrote them early in the semester and he felt like he had written better poems as the semester progressed (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

In our interview, Tim stressed how the conference gave him strategies to use in his next writing tasks. He said that the conference helped him to think more closely about the meanings in his writing and about how a reader could interpret words differently than the way he intended them to mean. I may have observed his last writing conferences at the writing center since he was planning to graduate at the end of that semester.

Brynna and Alicia

Brynna was a freshman—and a first-year writing consultant—who was enrolled in Topics in Composition. Although Brynna facilitated three conferences in this research study, she was also a writer in a conference that was facilitated by Alicia, a senior political-science major.

The assignment that she discussed with another writing consultant, Alicia, was a piece of creative nonfiction for *The Sun* magazine that had to be fewer than 300 words. Brynna chose to write about how rain was a common theme in bad times of her life, especially around the times of deaths in the family. In the beginning of the piece, she described how it rained at her grandmother's funeral, and then she focused on how her uncle had stopped attending family functions and had become estranged from her family after a divorce. Towards the end, she described how she and her family learned about how her uncle, in what might have been a suicide, had died from exposure after apparently becoming injured in a park in winter.

Brynna had the conference with Alicia on February 18. I observed her revise on February 22, when she was supposed to turn in the next in a series of drafts. On March 22, Brynna e-mailed me the final draft after a revision session that I did not observe. She reported that she revised for 1.5 hours on February 22 and for 25 minutes on March 22.

Having this conference with another writing center consultant was a requirement in her class. Alicia suggested that she consult with Brynna because this senior consultant was interested in winning the prize for most conferences. (Brynna did not have a follow-up conference with this consultant.) Brynna had experience working with Alicia, because Alicia was her writing fellow for her FYS class (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

Before Brynna had this conference, she discussed her writing with two other consultants in the Topics class and this discussion helped her to determine what she wanted to discuss with Alicia. In our interview, Brynna said that she first discussed the timeline of events with one of these other consultants. In her conference with Alicia, Brynna again brought up the timeline so that she could ensure that it was appropriate and easy to understand.

The focus of the conference developed during their conversation. In our interview, Alicia told me that beginning of a writing conference was difficult for her because she did not know how to start discussing ideas in a piece of writing (personal interview, February 18, 2009). Alicia also said, "My goal always tends to develop as the conference develops."

Brynna and Alicia discussed a variety of aspects of the piece that could be revised, such as the role of rain, word selection, the timeline of events from her grandmother's to her uncle's death, and how the narrative presented the occasion at which she learned about her uncle's death. During the conference Brynna realized that she had the incorrect ages for her and her sister, which she cleared up by talking to her family after the conference (personal interview, March 24, 2009). Brynna also asked Alicia about the arrangement of the narrative, such as whether the reader needed to know

that she and her family had heard about the uncle's death on the news beforehand. So the conference, in this way, helped Brynna to begin thinking about how she could revise in the face of the tight word limit. Brynna did not accept all ideas from Alicia. Alicia seemed to want Brynna to discuss the rain in "positive" ways, which Brynna seemed to agree to, but she rejected this suggestion during her revision process because she felt it would be too contrived and not a natural addition. Brynna wanted her revision to reflect her decisions and her goals, not necessarily what another person believed was best for her work.

I observed Brynna revise the essay on February 22 in her dormitory room. She began revising by printing a clean draft of her essay that she made notes on while she read over the draft she took to the writing conference. After a period of time, she threw away the draft she took to the writing center and referred to the new draft as she revised on the computer. She indicated that it was now "her turn" to revise the draft and that while some comments from Alicia were helpful, others were not as helpful. For example, Brynna did not want to describe the rain in "positive" ways because that suggestion, she believed, was too contrived. Alicia, on the other hand, told me in our interview that this suggestion was one of the best moments of the conference because she believed Brynna was interested in taking this advice (personal interview, February 18, 2009). Brynna was keen to revise her writing the way that she wanted to, and she claimed that although the conference helped her, she needed to make sure she revised according to what she thought was best for her writing. In our interview, she also said that it was important for her to do a good job to honor the memory of her uncle (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

Brynna revised her writing a second time in March before the final draft was due. In this second revision, Brynna made more additions, such as descriptions of what happened on the day she learned about her uncle's death. She also recast some of the sentences to increase their immediacy. Although she felt positive about the draft, she told

me in our interview that she was not sure if she would submit it to *The Sun* (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

<u>Alicia and Brynna</u>

Alicia was a senior political-science major who brought her résumé to the writing center to have a writing conference with her fellow consultant Brynna. Alicia and Brynna had decided to participate in the research study, so they each decided to have conferences with each other. Brynna stated that it was Alicia's desire to exchange writing conferences (personal interview, February 19, 2009).

Although Alicia wanted to win a prize at the end of the semester, she also had rhetorical goals in her writing conferences. She did enjoy having conferences about her writing because she believed that they helped her to clarify her thinking. At this conference she wanted to compose additional descriptions of her experience and refine the existing ones.

Alicia needed to revise her résumé because she wanted to find a job at a nearby organic farm. She told Brynna in the conference that the potential employer needed Alicia to submit a résumé that described her "experience with sustainable and local food systems." Thus, she tailored her résumé for her job application for this position. Alicia considered herself an environmentalist and to be very interested in "green" causes. She was devoted to sustainable living and told me that she justified printing her own writing because she liked to interact with her writing and to mark it up with ideas and possible revisions (personal interview, February 26, 2009). As a consultant, Alicia valued the feedback she received in writing conferences. In our interview, she told me, "What I'm really looking for is basically a second perspective. You know, like a different insight on my paper that I wouldn't have thought of on my own" (personal interview, February 26, 2009).

Before Alicia had her writing conference with Brynna, she visited the Campus Career Center for help with her résumé. Alicia's meeting at Career Services helped her to

plan how to edit the formal elements of her résumé so that she could focus on the descriptions of her position in her writing conference. At the Career Center, Alicia learned about what kinds of information to include, such as the location of her experience, and how to present the specific dates of her experience in the headers. Brynna later noted in her conference report that Alicia had already received help with the "look and professionalism" of the résumé.

At her meeting with a professional in Career Services, Alicia took copious notes about how to revise the format of the résumé (personal interview, February 26, 2009). The professional and Alicia had discussed using a different font size for the contact information at the top of the résumé, so Alicia had written "5-6" in the top right corner. Alicia had also crossed out the dates that she had included in the items beneath the header entitled "Environmental Club: Executive Board Member," because she suggested that Alicia just use the date on the main header. She also suggested that Alicia include the location in the main headers, so the name of the school, city, and state were written next to the main headers. Alicia had also written "Spell this!" next to an acronym in her résumé after the professional recommended spelling it out.

In addition to suggesting minor changes to the date and location information, the professional also made suggestions about how Alicia could improve the descriptions of her experience. She told Alicia that the two items without descriptions ("Environmental Law" and "Cook's Assistant") at the top of her résumé needed more information (personal interview, February 26, 2009). Thus, Alicia decided—partly because she procrastinated and partly because she wasn't sure what to include—to discuss these two items with Brynna in the conference. The professional also suggested that Alicia include some kind of work experience because Alicia did not have any in the résumé. (Her position of "Cook's Assistant" was not work experience per se; she helped the cook at during a summer term at her school's wilderness field station.) Since her work experience was not related to sustainability and environmentalist causes, Alicia did not think that it

would be relevant for the position at the organic farm (personal interview, February 26, 2009).

Brynna read the résumé silently and stopped during each section to ask questions or make indirect suggestions about how Alicia could refine her descriptions. Brynna preferred not to give direct suggestions about how to correct something, but considered herself to be a consultant who could suggest revisions that the student could choose from. For example, Brynna suggested that Alicia be more specific about a proposal that she had worked on to establish environmentally-friendly student housing on campus.

During the conference, however, Alicia admitted to Brynna that she had embellished her résumé to make herself seem like a strong candidate for the position. For example, she indicated on her résumé that she was the "Eco House Director," a title that she had made up because she felt like she was doing the tasks that a director would do. Even though ethical problems such as this one were raised in the conference, Brynna did not suggest that Alicia remove the titles that Alicia made up.

Alicia was an active participant in the conference who also directed the focus of the aspects that they discussed. At the beginning of her résumé, for example, were two elements that she did not describe. Both involved her time at a wilderness field station where she studied environmentalism in a summer semester. Toward the end of the conference, after Brynna had asked questions about the existing descriptions, Alicia said that she wanted to spend some time writing the new descriptions. Alicia talked through the changes she wrote and Brynna provided some feedback about what she heard Alicia say.

I observed Alicia revise her résumé in the writing center several days after the writing conference. Alicia used the notes from the writing conference and from her meeting at Career Services to revise the résumé and draft her cover letter. To follow the feedback from Career Services, Alicia fixed the headers of the document so that only the main headers contained the relevant dates. She also added location information to the

main headers. The most substantial revision was her addition of a "Work" section, which Alicia was able to copy and paste from a different résumé.

Alicia also tried to change the format of her résumé to make it fit the format of an earlier draft. She spent considerable time changing the size of the font and the margins, but she ended up keeping the original design because she could not keep the entire résumé on one page.

Alicia was satisfied with the assistance that she received from Brynna. She was mostly sure that Brynna had not facilitated a conference about a résumé before, but Brynna was a close reader and the two appeared to have worked together effectively.

<u>Cindy and Brynna</u>

Cindy, a junior elementary-education major, made an appointment to visit the writing center because her instructor wanted the students in the class, Gender Studies: American Women, to ensure that they had strong thesis statements in their literary-analysis essays. In the assignment, Cindy was supposed to advance a claim about certain stories by Kate Chopin and make the argument relevant to current topics in society. She argued that Kate Chopin portrayed female sexuality in controversial ways that were not always accepted by society, breaking a "glass ceiling" that had existed for women writers. Cindy primarily focused on the themes in two stories: "The Storm" and "The 'Cadian Ball." In our interview, Cindy told me that she typed out the draft in about thirty minutes (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

Before Cindy came to the writing center she had already received feedback from other students and the instructor on the course's Moodle site. Her peers' comments, however, were not helpful to her in considering how she would revise her essay (personal interview, May 19, 2009). The students' comments were not about how Cindy could make meaningful revisions to her writing; they were about how her essay enabled them to see a story in a new way. I did not learn the nature of the comments from her instructor because Cindy did not send them to me after I requested them.

Cindy arrived at the writing conference solely to meet the requirement set by the instructor, so she was willing to sit through the conference and listen to suggestions but besides talking about her thesis, she did not seek out assistance with other aspects of her essay.

At the beginning of the writing conference, Nancy and Brynna briefly debated who should work with Cindy, which, Cindy later told me, made her feel unwelcome. Although Cindy had called to make her appointment, she was not assigned to a specific consultant. Nancy was at the front desk when Cindy arrived, and she asked Brynna to take the conference. Brynna balked because she was not the consultant who was designated to take walk-in conferences. Also, Brynna did not want to take the conference because she had already fulfilled her quota for the semester, so she believed that she was offering it to Nancy so that Nancy could meet her quota. Brynna later admitted that she wished that she and Nancy had not had this conversation in front of the student (personal interview, March 26, 2009). Cindy later told me that she did not want to ever go back to the writing center (personal interview, May 19, 2009). She also said that she had decided to ask her professor for more help with a different paper because he was "paid" to help her.

During the conference, Brynna determined the focus by reading the paper silently and stopping to ask questions about the background information related to Kate Chopin's stories and her career as a fiction writer. Cindy sat still while Brynna pored over the paper. Cindy answered the consultant's questions and talked to her about the life of Kate Chopin, but Cindy was not very interested in the writing conference because it was a required conference.

Although they did discuss the thesis at the beginning of the conference, Brynna focused more on the ideas in the body of the essay. Brynna made suggestions such as how Cindy could improve the essay by adding more background information about Kate Chopin and by describing some of the characters in more detail.

Cindy integrated some of Brynna's suggestions, such as breaking up a large paragraph into two paragraphs, omitting the use of the first-person singular "I," and tying the end of the essay back to the "glass ceiling" concept at the beginning of the essay. Cindy wrote down many notes of things that the consultant suggested, but she did not integrate most of them in the final draft. Some of the consultant's suggestions were helpful in that they helped Cindy decide which direction not to take in the revision process (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

Cindy revised her essay several weeks after her writing conference, after she received additional feedback from her instructor and read some secondary sources that the instructor suggested she read. I did not observe this revision session. Most of her revisions were not explicit corrections suggested by the consultant. Instead, she used the feedback from the consultant and the instructor to produce her final draft. The main idea of the essay (that Chopin's stories illustrated the sexuality of women in a manner that was not widely accepted at the time) was unchanged. The thesis was expanded (but the thesis was not discussed in detail during the conference). She did make more explicit in her thesis that extramarital relationships are beneficial. She also added more information about the social context of Chopin's writing. For example, at her professor's request she read several books about the role of women and added several quotations to the text about the historical role of women. Cindy also tried to clear up formal elements of her paper by adding quotation marks to the story titles and fixing subject-verb agreement.

She also tried to make her ideas more "explicit"—an idea that she took from the Brynna's comments about explaining the sexual intensity of the relationship between Alcee and Calixta. Interestingly, the consultant's comments about this matter were about describing the explicit nature of Chopin's writing, but Cindy instead decided that she should make her ideas more explicit. For this reason, Cindy added several statements to comment on the quotations from the text; she did not add new material from Chopin's stories. In sum, Cindy used the writing center feedback to help her refine the paragraph

structure, explain things more clearly, and draw connections between ideas in the text (especially the conclusion and the thesis). She did not return to the writing center for a second conference because she did not feel welcome; she sought out the feedback of the instructor instead.

Cindy did not take up all of the consultant's suggestions: for example, she did not explain in more detail the character of Clarissa, who is mentioned once in the essay, and who the consultant said should be described in more detail. And Cindy did not add the background information about why Kate Chopin became an author because it would take her in a direction that she did not want to go (personal interview, May 19, 2009). Cindy did not consider the writing center to be the main authority in how she should best revise her essay, or she did not remember all of the suggestions from the writing conference.

Cindy took responsibility for revising by developing her own revisions and consulting with her instructor on information that could be added to the paper. But Cindy was not challenged by this project; she told me that she put in "C" effort for an A paper (personal interview, May 19, 2009). She did the work that was necessary in order to get the grade she desired, but was disappointed that she was not challenged further. College writing assignments for her were often exercises in which minimal effort got her good results, so she wondered what it would mean to be challenged.

Dan and Brynna

Dan was a freshman in Film Analysis who visited the writing center for a walk-in conference because his professor required him to have a conference. Dan had received a low grade on a paper in which he analyzed the production of the film "Magnolia," which starred Tom Cruise. He was supposed to discuss his revising process with a consultant before resubmitting the essay to his instructor.

Dan's professor, Professor Bower, wrote many comments to illustrate why Dan had received a low grade on the paper. For example, he wrote, "No comments about camera movement and placement?" at the end of a paragraph in which Dan had described

the cinematography of the film. A comment on the last page seemed to sum up Professor Bower's feelings about how the draft lacked enough support for Dan's claim that the film was well-produced: beside a sentence in which Dan argued that the elements of the film worked together well, Professor Bower, wrote, "You haven't made a very strong case for this."

Dan already had revised his paper before he came to the writing center, so he brought the draft with Professor Bower's comments and his revised draft to the writing center. He had mixed feelings about going to the writing center. In our interview he said that going to the writing center was helpful because it enabled him to get "fresh eyes" on the paper. He was, however, not enthusiastic at first about having to visit the writing center. He recalled thinking to himself, "Why do I have to do this? Why can't I just revise my paper and hand it back to [Professor Bower]" (personal interview, March 31, 2009).

Since Dan brought to the conference his revised draft and the draft with the professor's comments, Brynna was able to read both drafts and discuss Dan's revisions with him. In our interview, she later told me that she liked being able to refer to both drafts and see how Dan made different revisions (personal interview, March 24, 2009). But Brynna realized that Dan's main goal for the conference was just to "get the requirement stamp out of the way."

The conversational pattern of the conference was simple: Brynna read the draft with the professor's comments and asked Dan how he had addressed the comments in his revision. Brynna later told me that she specifically used the strategy of "playing the dumb reader" because she liked films and was familiar with cinematography. Thus, when she asked Dan what cinematography was during one part of the conference, she was trying to adopt the perspective of an uninformed reader who acts as if she has no prior knowledge of the subject in the paper (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

Brynna enjoyed having this conference, but had conflicted feelings about the purpose of their conversation. On one hand, Brynna believed the conference was successful because they had an interesting conversation about the ideas in the paper. Brynna liked movies herself, and she was intrigued by "Magnolia" and by some of the scenes that Dan discussed (such as the scene in which frogs rain down on the characters). Since Dan had already revised his work, they were free to focus on having a conversation. But Brynna also thought the conference was not a success because she knew that Dan would not use ideas from their conversation in his revising process. For this reason, she said the conference was at once a "failure" and also one of her "top five" conferences (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

Garrett and Paula

Garrett was a junior political science major in Religion and World Politics who had a writing conference on the morning of the day that his political science paper was due. Paula was a senior who majored in studio art. The conference took place in the morning when both of them worked in the writing center. Garrett later told me in our interview that he often had conferences with Paula because they both worked the early morning shift in the writing center. About the benefits of having writing conferences, Garrett said, "Our papers just always turn out better after I conference, 'cause like I go up, um, a letter grade, honestly" (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

Garrett discussed a complete draft that outlined the Likud's positions on issues related to the Israel − Palestine conflict, such as whether the Palestinian refugees had the right to return to land that they previously occupied and whether Jerusalem should be the capital of a Palestinian state. Garrett was required to write the paper in order to prepare for a "simulation"—a mock debate in which students advocated different positions on a controversy. The assignment prompt indicated that he needed to use at least 12 good scholarly resources and that the paper should be five-to-seven pages long.

Garrett had specific sections that he wanted to work on, so he did not read the paper from beginning to end. He wanted to discuss the sections he had not discussed with a consultant and refine his introduction and conclusion. It did not seem to matter that he was also "on duty" at the time of this conference; he took his time so that he could address all of the issues that he wanted to correct in his paper. (Since he and the other consultant worked in the morning, the writing center was not very busy during their conference.)

Garrett's instructor, Professor Edwards, recommended that her students visit the writing center, but Garrett had the conference because he frequently discussed his writing with other writing consultants not because she recommended having a conference. In the assignment sheet for this paper, she included a reference to how the writing center could be a helpful resource. Professor Edwards believed that the writing center could help students with formulating and organizing their ideas, not with grammar and mechanics (personal interview, May 11, 2009).

On the morning of his conference, Garrett was tired because he had stayed up late working on the draft. During the conference he sipped his coffee from a mug. In our interview, Garrett told me that he sometimes liked to have a writing conference for the free coffee (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

This conference was different from the other conferences in that they did not read the entire text. Rather, Garrett directed the focus of the conference toward those sections of the paper that he wanted to talk about. Garrett had a conference with another writing consultant in which he discussed the History section of his paper, so he skipped over that section at the beginning of his conference with Paula.

During the writing conference, Garrett first explained a lot of the background information to the consultant, and then he proceeded to read the paper out loud and make changes as he went through the paper. And the consultant asked many questions about the Israel – Palestine conflict so that she could provide good feedback. Because he read

the paper out loud, he was able to stop and address sentence-level issues and problems with his meaning. For this reason, the conference was focused on the specific draft and how to finish the paper so that he could turn it in later that day. At the end of the writing conference, however, they discussed general writing techniques such as how to use sentence fragments to emphasize meaning.

Often, however, Paula and Garrett co-revised small sections of the paper to enhance the sentence fluency and clarify his meaning. The revisions did not address the global meaning of his paper because he had already put the main meaning in place; instead, he wanted to improve meaning at the sentence level and ensure that punctuation was not a problem. As the conference progressed, the consultant did less prompting about how to fix problems as much as she made direct suggestions about how to change something in the draft. Especially toward the end, she provided several phrases and sentences that Garrett inserted directly into his essay. Although the rules of the writing center prohibited the consultant from writing directly on the paper, Garrett seemed to welcome the direct suggestions. Garrett thought that this conference was mutually-directed because of how they both participated actively in revising the paper (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

Paula's perspective on the conference was similar to Garrett's. In our interview, she told me that his main goal was to ensure that his sentences flowed well and that his introduction and conclusion were strong. Paula also said that they worked on adding "entertaining things" such as dashes and semicolons to the text. Paula liked complex sentences with punctuation, and she enjoyed having the opportunity to help a writer use them (personal interview, April 7, 2009).

Paula, however, did not have an accurate perception of how she directed Garrett to make specific revisions. She said in our interview, "I tried to avoid saying, 'You should say this'" (personal interview, April 7, 2009). But in fact, Paula did make specific suggestions during the conference while Garrett was revising. Garrett, though satisfied

with the conference, said that he did not learn anything specific from this conference (personal interview, April 9, 2009) because he had already learned from other consultants about how to conduct conferences.

Prelude to the Next Chapter

In this chapter, I provided an introduction to the research study by describing the purpose the study, summarizing the relevant literature about how students revise after writing center conferences, discussing the conceptual framework, and outlining the research methods. I also provided summaries of the cases to familiarize the reader with the students who were part of the study.

The next chapter is an analysis of the writing conferences of the students who did not have specific textual goals for their writing conferences. Before describing how these students revised their writing, I discuss how the participated in their conferences to develop tools that mediated their revision processes.

CHAPTER II:

HOW STUDENTS WITHOUT SPECIFIC GOALS PARTICIPATED IN

THEIR WRITING CONFERENCES

<u>Introduction</u>

I now turn to the first of two chapters that describes the writing conferences and revision processes of a group of students who did not have specific textual goals for their writing conferences. The lack of specific textual goals was an important factor that influenced how they participated in the conference, and it also influenced how the consultant facilitated the conversation. The outcomes of these conferences became tools that the students would use when they revised their writing.

<u>Assertions</u>

The students who visited the writing center without specific textual goals for their writing conferences ceded authority to their consultants because they wanted the consultants to take responsibility for identifying and correcting errors in their writing. These students, most often, wanted to make changes in grammar, mechanics, or word selection, so they paid close attention to these kinds of corrections that the consultants suggested. When the consultants, however, made meaning-related suggestions about aspects of the texts that students did not intend to revise, the students wrote down a note about the change so that they could return to focusing on grammar and mechanics.

This chapter is important for understanding how students revised after their conferences because these conferences developed tools that students used to revise their writing. Since these students either did not know what was wrong with their writing or did not want to learn how they could improve their writing, they sought to give authority for identifying errors to their consultant. Consultants assumed authority by reading student work and controlling the process of identifying and fixing errors, and students controlled the process by reading and stopping to ask the consultants if something needed to be corrected.

The students without specific textual goals for their conferences had situation definitions of writing conferences and revision that were different from the definitions that their writing consultants held. The students felt that the consultant should identify and correct errors, but the consultants believed that a conference should be a conversation about meaning. The consultants in these conferences facilitated the conferences according to the situation definitions of students who visited the writing center. The consultants also did not try to negotiate an intersubjective situation definition about the purpose of a writing conference or of a specific rhetorical concept. These consultants usually gave the students what they wanted, which was specific help in how to edit sentence level mistakes in grammar and mechanics.

The students who visited the writing center without specific goals for revising their texts can be separated into two groups: one group (Carolyn and Andrea, Carmen, Janelle, and David) did not internalize new psychological tools that they could use in their revising processes; the outcomes of these conferences were marked-up drafts that students then used to make mostly sentence-level changes in their writing. (David, however, revised at the computer and so was able to change his text during the conference.) Although the writing center consultants hoped that students could develop some of the tools that the former used in their writing, the conference interaction did not promote the uptake of those tools.

Cindy and Tim (who also did not have specific goals for their conferences) seemed to internalize psychological tools in their writing conferences that they used in their revision processes. In these conferences, the consultants focused on asking questions about the higher-level meanings in their writing and did not focus on making corrections in grammar and mechanics. My interpretation is that their conference interactions seemed to change their situation definitions of revising and of writing in general. The consultants in these cases did not explicitly elicit their students' situation definitions in order to promote situation redefinition; rather, these changes in situation

definition happened as a result of how the student applied the ideas from the conference in his or her revision process.

<p align="center">Conferences in Which the Outcomes Were Marked-up</p>

<p align="center">Drafts</p>

In this section, I explore the writing conferences of Carmen, Janelle, Carolyn and Andrea, and David—students who visited the writing center but did not have specific textual goals for their writing conferences. The outcomes of their conferences were psychological tools (i.e., marked-up drafts) that they could use to correct their writing. (In David's case, the outcome was a revised draft because he had his writing conference at the computer.) These students were interested in having the writing center consultants identify and correct mistakes because although these students were willing to participate in a conference, they did not know what their errors were. David's comment about why he went to the writing center was illustrative about why he decided to have a conference. David told me in our interview, "like it just kind of felt like there were some small little things, probably grammatically that would be wrong with it, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what they were" (personal interview, March 18, 2009). Carmen also was not interested in taking an active role in the conference but rather having someone else locate and suggest corrections. She said that the writing center could spot grammatical errors and help with "flow" of the paper. She told me in our interview, "[Nancy] read my paper aloud and then we went back through and, um, fixed grammatical errors and she told me where she felt it was a little bit confusing and things she thought I should work on" (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

<p align="center">Ceding Complete Authority to the Consultant: How Janelle</p>

<p align="center">and Carmen Sought Help from Nancy</p>

Both Carmen and Janelle wanted help from a writing center consultant in finding and correcting errors in grammar and mechanics, so they ceded authority to Nancy, who was willing to read their work and correct sentence-level mistakes. When Nancy read a

student's paper, she read the entire work aloud once without stopping (except once or twice to point out a glaring error or to ask a question). She then read the work aloud a second time to identify sentence-level mistakes and suggest corrections.

My interpretation of these students' situation definitions of a writing conference is that they both believed that they could have a writing consultant identify and correct sentence-level mistakes because they were both eager to have writing that was free of mistakes. Janelle told me in our interview that she went to the writing center because she felt "out of practice" with writing since she did not have any writing-emphasis classes that term (personal interview, April 29, 2009). Carmen, too, emphasized that the purpose of a conference was to help her with sentence-level concerns: She told me in our interview: "I know that they'll [the writing center] help with, uh, grammatical errors and, uh, give you their opinion on how, I don't know, smoothly your paper flows" (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

Both students were vague when they explained what they needed help with in the conference, and both expressed an interest in receiving help with sentence-level problems in their writing. Janelle told Nancy at the outset of the conference that she wanted an "overview of, um, if I got all the punctuations right or re-wording sentences and that kinda thing." When Carmen and Nancy discussed what to focus on during the conference, Carmen seemed to suggest that she wanted help with both higher- and lower-order concerns. In the next passage, Nancy and Carmen discussed the agenda for the conference:

Nancy: So you want like grammar or content or
Carmen: Um, yeah and then just if it, I feel like there's a couple areas where it's
         not going by as smoothly.
Nancy: Okay, sure. Um, do you want me to read it aloud, or you to read aloud,
         or?
Carmen: It doesn't matter to me.
Nancy: Okay, I'll just do that.

Reading aloud was an important tool that Nancy used to understand a student's writing and to identify errors. She told me about the importance of this technique in one of our interviews:

> I think I read it out loud because that's usually what we do in the writing center, and that's what I was trained to do. And even though I learned it in, um, I first learned that concept in high school in my sophomore year from my English teacher, um, but I didn't really take it to heart as how important it was until I came to the writing center. And then I heard people say it and then after that I started reading my own papers out loud when I was editing my own, just because I'm looking for natural pauses to put commas and like I think things when you read them out loud, you start to notice that really doesn't sound right or this is a run-on sentence and I didn't even notice it. But mostly because that's almost standard, like right away we say, "Would you like me to read it out loud or would you like to?" (personal interview, April 14, 2009)

Although these students wanted similar kinds of help from Nancy, their attitudes toward the writing center differed considerably. Janelle had expressed an overall appreciation for the writing center, calling it "laid back" and "comfortable" (personal interview, April 29, 2009). But Carmen seemed to believe that the writing center was not a place where she could receive meaningful feedback. Carmen later told me in her interview that she preferred very direct, blunt feedback that she thought the writing center could not give her. She said in our interview:

> I'd rather have somebody I actually know give me their feedback 'cause it goes back to that honesty thing again. Nancy's not gonna give me her brutal honest opinion about my paper because they don't want to be steering people away from the writing center. (personal interview, April 21, 2009)

After asking Carmen and Janelle what kind of help they wanted, Nancy read the entire essay out loud without stopping, except to make one or two minor suggestions. Nancy told me in our interview that the first reading helped her focus on the ideas in the piece of writing (personal interview, April 14, 2009). In her conference with Carmen, Nancy stopped briefly to discuss a small error during the section in which she was reading for ideas. (In the second sentence in the first paragraph, Carmen had written "there" instead of "these.") While Nancy read out loud, Carmen did not take notes. She sat passively and waited for Nancy to finish. Carmen would later tell me in our interview

that she was eager to finish as quickly as possible because she was going to lunch with a friend who had accompanied her to the writing center (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

Nancy believed that the first part of a writing conference should be a discussion about meaning, so she first talked to Janelle and Carmen about how they could enhance their meanings. She gave suggestions to Janelle about how she could add information to connect the ideas in her Organismal and Ecological Biology course to the research presentations she attended. And Nancy suggested to Carmen ways that she could add more information about the chemical processes of engine oil. Both students listened to Nancy's suggestions and took some notes, but since they were most interested in receiving help with identifying and correcting errors, they did not actively participate in discussing ideas.

When Nancy discussed the main ideas, she needed to explain to Janelle that she did not want to delve into grammar and mechanics first. Nancy explained that her first reading was about the main ideas, and she preferred to not edit an essay before she talked about the main meanings.

Janelle: Um, were there any grammar or punctuation?
Nancy: Yeah. I think, um, what I usually like to do is just kind of like go
             through what you're saying first.   'Cause usually if I'm looking for
Janelle: okay
Nancy: grammar then I get distracted by what you're saying.   And so
Janelle: oh, okay
Nancy: then I go back [and do that, and then, since I'm not allowed to, like,
Janelle: [okay
Nancy: write on the paper [then I just point things out.   So is that okay?
Janelle: [right   okay
             Yeah, no, no, that's fine.

My interpretation is that Nancy facilitated the beginning of the conference based on her own situation definition of how a writing conference should primarily be for a discussion of ideas. Because Nancy told Janelle that she would be soon getting to the errors that Janelle wanted to discuss, Janelle stopped trying to negotiate the agenda and waiting for Nancy to get to addressing sentence-level errors.

Once Nancy knew that Janelle needed to find out where to insert the connections between her class content and the research presentations, Nancy began to suggest ways to make the connections in the three sections. Interestingly, one of Nancy's suggestions was for Janelle to develop a substantial connection supported by a "bunch of reasons" that would constitute their own paragraph. The excerpt below is from the moment in the conference where they discussed how to make this connection. Nancy made several indirect suggestions, but Janelle's brief responses may have indicated that she was not enthusiastic about those changes. She only responded with back-channel feedback.

Nancy: So do you wanna figure out like how to tie in there?
Janelle: How and where, like how I can   how I can word the sentence and
Nancy: okay
Janelle: how I can, or where, I guess I can stick it.
Nancy: Well, you could do a few things. I mean, the first thing you could do is
          like just say exactly how {?} you have it. Just start a new paragraph and
          say this is related to Organismal and Ecological Biology by—and then
          have a bunch of reasons as to how it's connected? [You could have a
Janelle: [okay
Nancy: separate paragraph that way.   Or, um you can be more discrete
Janelle: yeah
Nancy: about it   if you wanted to do it that way. [And so your main point
Janelle: mhm   ['kay
Nancy: is the organism is essential to creating its environment. You can find the
          part in the paper where, hm, she might have talked about that. (3s) *Like
          it lives in the tube systems of coral reefs. Um, and this particular worm
          is able to secrete a kind of cement which helps construct the tubes in the
          coral reef.* So right here is kind of where you say exactly that. [It's
Janelle: [okay
Nancy: essentially creating its own environment. Um, you might be able to say
          this particular worm is important because of this and then maybe even
          go further into saying how what would happen if the tube, um, the tubes
          in the coral reef weren't there. How certain organisms wouldn't be even
          able to exist because they rely on that worm to create their homes.
Janelle: okay
Nancy: And stuff like that.

Janelle was interested in using sentence-long connections as opposed to the more detailed ones that Nancy suggested. Janelle completed her revision by including, in essence, the same sentence that she had used to mark her place: "This relates to Organismal and Ecological Biology in that the organism is essential to creating its environment." Nancy, who believed that the connection could be a substantial addition,

gave Janelle a large variety of suggestions on how to integrate the connection. It is my interpretation that this stage of the conference reflected how Nancy and Janelle had different situation definitions of revising—definitions that they did not explicitly discuss in the conference. While Nancy believed that the revisions could be whole new sections, Janelle was more interested in just brief, one-sentence connections.

Nancy also gave similar kinds of suggestions about how Carmen could expand how she discussed the chemical processes of engine oil. After Nancy read the essay to examine the ideas, she looked to see how Carmen could write more about the chemistry of engine oil. In this excerpt after Nancy's first reading, Nancy explained that Professor Jones may have wanted to see more about chemistry in the paper.

Nancy: Right. (.) But I'm thinking, I mean you could ask Professor Jones what
          more he wants, 'cause I've only had him for, like, organic chemistry,
          [but like, I think if he said, like chemical aspects, he would probably
Carmen: [mhm
Nancy: {?} looking for, like, as much chemistry as possible.
Carmen: Yes. [((laughs))
Nancy: [So ((laughs)), um I would just, like, the only thing I would think
          of if I was thinking of, like, the chemistry aspects of oil would probably
          be like well, what exactly is going on. Like, what kind of reactions are
          going on that make oil so important   and stuff like that, 'cause you
Carmen: okay
Nancy: like definitely explained the other ways, like, you need to {?} sludge and
          all this other stuff, [and.
Carmen: [That's what I was gonna more into, for
          [synthetic oils, 'cause [like, of what the additives do and how the
Nancy: [mhm   [yeah
Carmen: synthetic oils actually change, [um
Nancy: [Right, and that would be really, really
          useful, like that was the other thing I was gonna say, was that, what are
          the differences between the oils chemically and that makes 'em so
          important, too? So, that would be [a really good addition, like what
Carmen: [okay
Nancy: the additives are, too.

Nancy enjoyed using her own subject knowledge, which she demonstrated again when she was reading aloud the third summary entitled "Road Back: Conservation Challenges in Costa Rica." Nancy suggested that Janelle integrate something about endemic species into this section and discussed how such an addition could highlight the

research report's connection to biodiversity. In her written summary of the conference,

Nancy indicated that she thought Janelle would integrate that suggestion:

> I also provided even more examples of why her subject related to O&E by offering information I learned in my Ecology class (endemic species). She actually took me up on that offer and made a side note about it in her paper.

But Janelle did not add any information about endemic species to her final draft

because she was not interested in developing ideas. Her responses in this part of the

writing conference were not enthusiastic and may have been a sign of her unwillingness

to want to delve into that idea in great detail.

> Nancy: Okay, um, let's see. Then that point I think would go, like I said, directly right here where it's talking about how there are many conservation areas and all the different types of animals. Um, have you ever heard the term endemic species?
> Janelle: The endemic species?
> Nancy: Endemic species. [Yeah.   It's actually a term that is used
> Janelle: [m-hm ((meaning, no))
> Nancy: for, like, species that are specific to a certain area. I think there's only seventeen places in the world where there are certain species that are only found in that area. I'm pretty sure Costa Rica   is one of
> Janelle: oh, okay
> Nancy: them. And so one of the reasons why Costa Rica is so important is because it's got very specific species, where if something were to happen to their environment and wipe them out, they would be wiped out from the earth, [because that's where they're only located.
> Janelle: [oh, that's

It is not that Janelle did not want help with integrating a connection between her

class and the research projects—she stated at the beginning of the conference that one of

her remaining tasks was to add those connections—but Janelle admitted in her interview

that she did not have time to do any research about endemic species and that this extra

credit assignment was worth only "one point" (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

Nancy's techniques were reminiscent of the writing center director's admission that

although the consultants can do editing conferences, an editing conference can become a

conference about ideas at any time. Janelle, however, was working in the activity system

of a class in which each assignment had a certain value, and the amount of revision she

did was mediated by her assessment of that value. It is my interpretation that Janelle

considered the sentence-long connections, grammar, and punctuation to be the most important concerns in the writing conference, so she focused on them.

After the discussion of ideas in her conferences with Carmen and Janelle, Nancy read their writing out loud to identify errors in grammar and mechanics and suggest corrections. Nancy was up front with the students about how she could help them edit their writing. For example, she told Carmen that she would identify the errors:

> Nancy: So do want to just, like, go through reading with me reading [and then
> Carmen: [sure
> Nancy: I'll just point things out?

Nancy's main conversational "tool" for helping students with mechanics was to make direct suggestions, with or without reasons. My analysis of other conferences in which the focus was on editing revealed that consultants preferred to make direct suggestions about grammar and mechanics. This may have been because the consultants tacitly understood rules of punctuation. For example, when Nancy read this sentence aloud, she stopped to suggest a correction because "on the other hand" was not enclosed in commas: "Synthetic oil on the other hand has different additives that make the oil stay thicker for longer…." She paused after the read the parenthetical phrase, and Carmen picked up where she left off to begin to ask whether commas were needed.

> Nancy: Um, *synthetic oil* {?} *on the other hand*. Um, on the other hand is kind
>   of like a (.)
> Carmen: good eye (.) Should I put
> Nancy: Yeah, two.   {?} yep. (.) *Synthetic oil, on the other hand, has different*
> Carmen: yeah
> Nancy: *additives that make the oil stay thicker for longer and that also help with*
>   {?} *build*, hm, I think the build up

Later, when Nancy talked to me about this time in the conference, she said that she knew there was a mistake in the sentence, but did not know how to explain it. She told me, "I was trying to think about why, but I couldn't really think of it. I just knew that they [the commas] had to be there" (personal interview, April 14, 2009).

Other writing consultants in this study frequently told me that they were not experts in grammar and did not understand the rules of grammar. Two of David's

consultants expressed these views to me. Ann told me in our interview, "I admittedly am not very good with grammar and so when people ask me grammar questions, it takes me a while of looking at it, and sometimes I'm still uncertain…" (personal interview, March 17, 2009). Lisa told me after her conference with David, "I make mistakes in my papers just like they do, so that can be, that can be an issue, too, when they expect you to know everything an English professor does" (March 17, 2009).

When Nancy made direct suggestions, she usually offered brief reasons for the suggested change or no reason at all. Nancy did provide reasons for many of the punctuation or phrasing changes that she suggested, as in this example in which she suggested a punctuation change instead of letting the student decide how to fix the mistake. She was referring to these sentences: "Do nothing is an option that is pretty self-explanatory, it lets the issues and regulations currently in place stay the same." Nancy may have been trying to teach Janelle about how to recognize situations where she might correct such errors in the future.

Nancy:	Okay, so did you hear kinda like how I said that is was kinda like two sentences. So, um, just because it's kinda like one, kind of topic
Janelle:	okay
Nancy:	altogether, I'd probably put another semicolon ['cause that way they're
Janelle:	[okay
Nancy:	still connected.
Janelle:	right

Nancy made mostly direct suggestions about formal or meaning-preserving concerns after she had identified "problems" in the writing to discuss. Nancy made these direct suggestions after her initial reading of the entire paper because Nancy wanted to discuss the ideas first. She said, "And I kind of figured that I would focus on the grammar at the end 'cause I felt like grammar is something that you should do at the end" (personal interview, April 14, 2009). (This "end" of the conference, however, began at the ten-minute mark of a conference that lasted more than twenty minutes.) Nancy also said that she had wanted Carmen to play a more active role in identifying and correcting her own mistakes, but it was easier to just directly say how to fix a certain error:

…couple things she picked up on her own, but most of the stuff I was just kind of pointing out, so. Then I tried to explain as much as I could but sometimes it was just like, there's a natural pause here, comma. (personal interview, April 14, 2009)

It was this efficiency that Nancy valued in writing conferences in which she assumed responsibility for editing student papers. Even though she felt like she was adhering to the writing center's rule of not writing on a student's paper, her dictated corrections were noted by Carmen and Janelle.

During the editing portion of the conference, Janelle's responses were mostly back-channel feedback, not responses that began a dialogue with Nancy about how to develop ideas or better understand the principles of editing. This excerpt was a typical section of the conference that illustrates how Janelle's back-channel feedback signaled to Nancy that she had noted the suggestion so that Nancy could continue identifying errors:

Nancy: I would probably say "that helps construct the tubes in the coral reef" instead of "which" [just because it's {?} over there. Um, *the secretion*
Janelle: [oh
Nancy: *was found to be a new bacterial slash microbe so Davison.* You don't need a comma there. {?} I think it'll be fine if you just keep going
Janelle: okay
Nancy: *Davison tried to identify the isolates that make up the cement-like secretions.* This, uh, "cement-like," if you're gonna have something that is {?} like something usually you wanna put like a hypoth, or a hyphen
Janelle: okay
Nancy: between it.

It was in the editing portion of the conference that Nancy facilitated the conference according to what I believe was Janelle's situation definition of a writing conference because Nancy identified and corrected mistakes for her.

Most of the editing portion of Janelle's conference involved Nancy making direct suggestions to Janelle, but later in the conference, Janelle would sometimes supply her own corrections to the text. She may have begun to be more comfortable correcting her own punctuation after watching Nancy do it for most of the essay. In this excerpt, they discussed this sentence, which was missing punctuation before the coordinating conjunction: "There are many opinions on the matter but something needs to be done to reduce gas pollution emissions." Nancy read the text out loud began to direct Janelle's

attention to a mistake. Without being told how to fix the problem, Janelle jotted down a

note to place a comma before "but."

> Nancy: *Um, there are many options on the matter, but something needs to be done to reduce gas pollution emissions.* You just, yeah on the, the matter there. 'Kay.

In her writing conference with Carmen, Nancy also took responsibility for

identifying and correcting errors:

> Nancy: Um, and then, like there was just grammar stuff, I figured we could go back   and go through that, but like, um, there was just one
> Carmen: okay
> Nancy: paragraph that (.) I wasn't quite so sure if you should switch them, or not. [So, I'll le—I'll leave that up to you, but, um, it was this one, and
> Carmen: [okay
> Nancy: this paragraph.

However, it is important to note that when Nancy read out loud—even in the

editing stage—she did not identify each error. At the time of my initial analysis, I did not

notice that she had overlooked some errors, so I was not able to ask her about it. Twice

during her conference with Carmen, she did not stop to point the kind of error she seemed

to always point out in other circumstances. Once, Nancy was reading this sentence out

loud: "It's because they think that as long as there is oil in their engine their

fine…WRONG." Nancy read it aloud and did not stop to point out that Carmen had used

"their" instead of "they're" at the end of the sentence. And Carmen did not correct the

mistakes that Nancy herself failed to integrate. It may have been that Janelle and Carmen

believed that whatever Nancy read had been checked for mistakes, and if Nancy had not

found a mistake in a sentence, it meant that there was not a mistake there. Nancy may

have hoped that having students follow along would help them identify mistakes, but

Nancy took most of the responsibility for correcting errors.

By moving toward these students' situation definitions of a writing conference,

Nancy facilitated the discussion based on what the students wanted to achieve. Although

she believed that her discussions about ideas were very important to the students, the

students paid more attention to the corrections that Nancy suggested regarding grammar and mechanics. The students did not have to negotiate a new situation definition, and left with the same conception that they had arrived with.

Even though Nancy spent most of these conferences discussing editing concerns, she believed that the primary focus of these conferences was discussion of ideas. In the conference summary forms, she said that the secondary focus of both conferences was "Proofing/Copy Editing." However, the students both took away with them drafts that were marked with how to fix comma splices, fused sentences, misspellings, and they used these drafts to correct their sentence-level errors.

How Students Directed a Consultant in a Conference:

Carolyn and Andrea's Conference with Nancy

In the two conferences I just discussed, the students ceded authority to Nancy, who read their work out loud and identified errors that they discussed. The students were more interested in correcting their sentence-level mistakes in grammar and mechanics because they could not identify these errors on their own. In the next conference with Carolyn and Andrea, however, the students also did not have specific goals for their conference, and they also ceded authority to their consultant, Nancy. But unlike Carmen and Janelle, they asserted themselves and tried to take authority when they believed that Nancy was trying to correct sections that Professor Jones, their instructor, had already approved. By taking the role of reader, Carolyn could direct Nancy's attention to the aspects of the text that she wanted to discuss and take an active role identifying questions for Nancy. Nancy still, however, took more responsibility for suggesting changes to their lab report than Carolyn and Andrea did.

Like Janelle, Carolyn and Andrea brought a complete draft of their report that they were eager to complete and submit to their instructor. And like Janelle, they did not have specific goals that they wanted to address in the conference. Indeed, they had already written several drafts and had shown two of them to Professor Jones, and they

believed that they were mostly finished with their writing. When I asked them in our interview why they visited the writing center, Carolyn told me that they were looking for an overall assessment of their lab report:

> I think because we, we've gone over our paper a few times ourselves already and we'd kind of cut and pasted things around and we just wanted someone with, like, fresh eyes to read over it and see if there's any like weird wording or if it, if it flowed, I guess. (personal interview, April 29, 2009)

And unlike Carmen and Janelle, who did not seek out a specific consultant, these students wanted to work with a consultant with advanced knowledge of chemistry to help them with their writing. When they went down to the writing center, they were looking for their writing fellow, but decided to stay when they saw Nancy working there. In our interview, they told me that they had seen her a lot around the chemistry department, so they knew that she would be helpful (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

At the outset of the conference, Carolyn talked about she was comfortable receiving feedback from a knowledgeable consultant:

> Carolyn: I mean it's nice having you read it 'cause you obviously, like, know what an IR   is and stuff.   So like saying an IR spectro is performed
> Nancy: yeah
> Carolyn: as opposed to obtained, like, kind of things like that.

Even though the students agreed to read their writing out loud, there was no discussion about the purpose of reading their work aloud. From the outset of the conference, Carolyn directed the agenda by stopping where she wanted to Nancy to approve of a change or suggest a new correction altogether. Unlike in her conferences with Carmen and Janelle, Nancy was willing to discuss sentence-level problems from the very beginning of the conference because that is what Carolyn stopped reading to focus on. This, however, was a different practice for her because with Carmen and Janelle she insisted on discussing the ideas in their essays first. Although Nancy did not have trouble reading aloud and concentrating on suggesting corrections in the conferences with Carmen and Janelle, she did have trouble in the role of listener while Carolyn read aloud. She later told me in the interview that Carolyn mumbled, which made it difficult to

follow. She also said that reading a technical report out loud was difficult because her

attention was divided between listening to Carolyn and trying to understand the content:

> I almost feel like scientific papers, I would do, I wouldn't event want to read them aloud because I think if I'm allowed to just like read them in my own mind and focus on them better, um, I'll catch things even more. (personal interview, April 29, 2009)

Several times in the conference, Carolyn suggested a possible revision to the lab

report in the form of a question to Nancy, who either approved the suggestion or tried to

alter it. In the excerpt below, Carolyn stopped reading to ask Nancy about a possible

change in word selection after reading the first few sentences in the report. This exchange

was a typical example of how Carolyn could control the focus of the discussion by

stopping reading to ask Nancy if she approved of a specific change.

> Nancy: All right, do you want me to read it aloud, or you guys read it aloud, or?
> Carolyn: You can read it, I guess.
> Nancy: Okay.
> Carolyn: Uh, wait. I, we can read it. Or you can read it since you have it, and {?} can follow along or something, or, I don't know. {?} I'll read it.
> Nancy: ((laughs))
> Carolyn: Um, *beta blockers are a class of drug primarily used to treat a variety of heat and heart-related ailments, including heart attaches, heart failure, blood presser, blood pressure, angina, (.) and arrhythmia.* Should we put angina pectoris up her and say angina down   here?
> Nancy: yeah   Probably.

While Carolyn read the lab report out loud, she knew that she could stop and ask

Nancy about a specific question about the text. Carolyn admitted later that she did not

know if writing consultants were only supposed to help students with the problems that

students stopped reading to discuss, or if consultants were supposed to interrupt you to

ask you specific questions. Carolyn wanted consultants to intervene and tell her when

something was wrong. She said in our interview, "I would like them to interrupt me, but I

don't know, maybe that's not the protocol" (personal interview, April 29, 2009). Carolyn

said that when she "edited" other students' papers she stopped and pointed things out to

her friends, so she was unsure why consultants did not do the same. Thus, to ensure that

she could get help with what she wanted, she asserted her own authority by stopping

reading and getting Nancy to discuss an aspect that Nancy may not have discussed had she been reading the text out loud. Carolyn's situation definition of a conference and the role of reading were not openly discussed, but she was still able to receive help with what she wanted. My interpretation is that Carolyn's situation definition of a writing conference was that Nancy would interrupt and suggest corrections.

Since Carolyn could not identify problems in many sections of the report, she sometimes stopped reading to ask if Nancy had noticed any problems. She wanted to ensure that her text was correct, so she stopped her reading periodically to ask Nancy to evaluate what she had read. In this excerpt, Carolyn stopped reading because she wanted Nancy to either approve of the text she had just read, or suggest a fix.

> Carolyn: *Recent studies are investigating other uses for the drug, such as treating the symptoms of post-traumatic-stress disorder.* Does everything in there sound (.) okay? Anything that sounds weird? 'Cause we've read it a billion times so to [us
> Andrea: [yeah ((laughs))
> Nancy: This one where it says recent studies investigating under, other uses for the drug. (.) I would probably say, I don't know, it seems like, um, either recent studies have investigated, um, or you can say current studies are investigating.

Sometimes, when Carolyn stopped to ask a question about word selection, Nancy started a discussion about the correctness of the science and what their professor might want to read. In this excerpt five minutes into the conference, Carolyn asked Nancy about how best to write a phrase, but Nancy tried to steer the direction of the discussion to the science:

> Carolyn: *The structure of propranolol contains a chirality center with the possibility of either the R or S enantiomer of the compound. Both enantiomers are biologically active. However, S-propranolol has a higher affinity for the beta receptors, making it more pharm—much more pharmaceutically desirable.* Should we just say more pharmaceutically (.) instead of much [more?
> Andrea: [or much more
> Nancy: Yeah. Also, right up here when you say the structure of propanol, propanolol, contains a chirality center with the possibility of either the R, S enantiomer of the compound?

Their discussion then focused on how the R or S enantiomer is present when there is a chirality center, so Nancy said that the section was redundant. But Carolyn tried to say that Professor Jones liked this section as it was:

Carolyn: He said this was good, this is like a good part to have, but and
Andrea: We just didn't [know if it was worded
Carolyn: [Yeah, but he, but we're just worried that, like, you know,
        I'll turn it in and then I'll be like, you [know, this sounds weird   [and
Nancy: [right, right   um
Andrea: [yeah
Carolyn: just [like
Nancy: [I'm actually, um, I'm not saying like you have to not worry about
        the paper but I think (.) he makes sure that you have the information
??????:   mhm
Nancy: in [there first.
??????:   [okay

When Nancy wanted the emphasis of the conference to be on the chemistry, she encountered resistance from the students who were reading their paper to ensure that that they did not "sound weird." But the result of this extended negotiation was that one of the students suggested a revision:

Student: Maybe say the structure of propranolol contains a chirality center with
        both enantiomers being biologically active period however (.)
        [That okay?
Nancy: [yes   Yes, that would make it a lot better because this, like you
        said, it just sounds a little too redundant
Carolyn: yeah
Andrea: Like, obviously, if there's a [chirality center you can have an R or S
Carolyn: [{?}   so,
Nancy: yeah
Carolyn: like just saying   with both, however?   Okay, (.) that works.
Nancy: mhm   yes

When Nancy made a suggestion about a section of the text that Carolyn and Andrea believed was already acceptable to Professor Jones, they referred to him in order to keep from having to discuss revising the section. In the next example, Nancy seemed to respond on her own to the pause as a cue that it was her turn to identify a possible problem and suggest a revision, as in this example below in which they discussed the presentation of a part of the laboratory process:

Carolyn: Um, (.) yeah, *as illustrated in the reaction scheme below, Step 1 will*
        produce Epoxide 1. In Step 2 the, in Step 2 ring opening of Epoxide 1

with isopropylamine will occur in an S-N-2 reaction. After the addition of isopropylamine, an aqueous work-up is performed. The purity of the final product (propranolol) will be determined by obtaining a melting point range and an IR spectrum. (.)

Nancy: 'Kay, 'um (.) right here a ring opening. (.) A little weird.
Carolyn: [yeah
Andrea: [yeah
Nancy: I mean even just flipping around and saying the opening of the—which ring is gonna be opened?
Carolyn: [This   This one
Andrea: [This one
Nancy: Okay, [yeah. (5s) ((clicks her tongue)) Kay, you might also want to be
Carolyn: [yeah
Nancy: specific about it, just because I mean when I first saw the ring I thought of the, um, two benzenes together.   So (.) you might want to be
Andrea: okay
Nancy: specific about which one. I don't know if you were {?}
Carolyn: Well, when we, did he say that was okay when we had
Nancy: Oh, that was fine?
Andrea: That was kind of [how we worded it, [yeah
Carolyn: [I don't know,   [that's yeah, ['cause he {?}
Nancy: [I guess it makes sense with the diagram, [too, so
Carolyn: [Yeah, he was kind of like annoyed when we're, we tried to do it like this [{?}   and he wanted it really general.
Nancy: [Oh, okay.

Some suggestions that Nancy made were interesting to Carolyn and Andrea because they were not sure what their professor would think about it. For example, in this section, Nancy suggested that they include the name of the spectrometer, and Carolyn agreed that the professor would probably want to see it. The excerpt begins with Nancy interrupting Andrea to bring up the idea of including details about the machine.

Andrea: [We just needed [help with {?}
Nancy: [Um,   [did he say anything about like putting what the actual instrument, like, the specs of it were? Because I [know, I know in
Carolyn: [oh
Nancy: analytical in P-chem, it's like very important that you put, like, [it was
Carolyn: [what
Nancy: an IR, like the numbers of the machine and stuff like that
Carolyn: {?} Oh, yeah,   that's like what we had to do for Bio, we used mini
Andrea: um
Carolyn: tab blah, blah, blah to analy ((trails off))
Andrea: yeah
Nancy: Yeah, so I would just ask him   if you need to get that because, I know
Carolyn: okay
Nancy: in analytical and p-chem and advanced analytical, it's like very strict, like you need to put the specs.
Carolyn: I'm sure [because if we ask, he'll probably say it won't hurt and then if
Andrea: [the exact instrument {?}

Carolyn: we don't put it in, he'll [be like, why didn't you put it in, [so, might as
Andrea: [((laughs))   [((laughs))
Carolyn: well.

Like Carrmen and Janelle, Carolyn took notes in the text about what to correct.
She crossed out the parentheses that were around the superscript notes and she crossed
out words and phrases and wrote the substitution over the lined-out section. Thus, the
outcome of the conference was mainly the marked-up draft with ideas that they received
from Nancy about how to edit the report.

<center>David's Writing Conference with Three Consultants</center>

In this section, I continue to describe how some students came to the writing
center without specific goals by presenting the case of David. David was similar to
Carmen and Janelle in that he came to the writing center to have a writing center
consultant help him correct his writing. He later told me in our interview that he was
pretty sure that there were problems in grammar and mechanics but he did not know what
they were (personal interview, March 18, 2009). He, like Carmen and Janelle, wanted to
cede authority to the consultant who, he believed, could spot and correct his mistakes.
But whereas Carmen and Janelle used a pencil to write down corrections to make later,
David loaded his draft onto one of the computers in the writing center, and this
contributed to a different kind of conference interaction and process of revising. David
could revise during the conference, and have the consultant approve his corrections as
soon as he made them.

David emphasized making formal and meaning-preserving revisions, and having
the conference at a computer enabled David to make all of his revisions during and
immediately after the writing conference. Whereas Janelle's conference was focused
heavily on editing punctuation mistakes, David focused on clarifying and improving the
local meanings in his essay. Also, the consultants did not just use direct suggestions but
used prompts, indirect suggestions, and periods of negotiation to draw David into taking

an active role in the revision process. Writing consultants helped him not only to decide what to revise, but also to shape his revisions as he typed them into the computer.

In the editing conference at the computer, the outcome was not a plan for revising or notes to use for revising the text because David entered all of the major revisions during and immediately after the writing conference.

Conference Conversation Between David and Ann

In this section I argue that conducting a conference at the computer helped David not only decide what to revise but how to revise it because writing consultants helped him to shape his revisions as he entered them into the text. Making small-scale changes was in line with David's goal to turn in his paper at the end of the writing conference, and he conceived of revision as proceeding directly through the essay and correcting any mistakes that the consultants identified. David did identify some of his own areas of the text to revise, but primarily relied on consultants to identify mistakes and help him correct them. David resisted doing revision activities that would require him to take action outside of the writing center. Ann operated according to David's situation definition of a writing conference, which I interpret to be an interaction in which the consultant took responsibility for locating and correcting mistakes.

By not reading the entire draft, Ann did not learn that David's draft had problems with the thesis statement and the supporting ideas, and so perhaps was not able to provide the kind of feedback that that could result from a conversation about the ideas. Dave's report was an analysis of a case study from *The Harvard Business Review*. He was supposed to summarize the case, determine a major issue that was discussed in the case, present a strong argument about that issue, and support the argument with evidence. David chose a case study of Frank Addante, an entrepreneur who was encountering difficulties at his fifth startup, StrongMail. David wrote:

> [Addante] began to have increasing doubts about his abilities due to the failure of two consecutive hires, poor performance of the company, lack of clear company goals and direction, and poor employee morale.

In addition, the company's board disagreed with Addante's decision to hire two vice presidents of sales. David's main argument was that Addante needed to trust his own judgments and instincts in order to make the right decisions in leading his company. The paper seemed to suggest that if Addante trusted his own judgment, he would solve his company's problems. David briefly summarized the success that Addante had at previous companies, but with respect to solving the problems at StrongMail, David provided little specific evidence as to how Addante could address StrongMail's problems by acting according to principles. Again, by reading the papers out loud to students, consultants often did not prioritize issues to discuss. Instead, they often stopped at the first issue they discovered and tried to suggest ways to fix it, even if there were other global problems with the text.

As to the effect of the computer on the conference, the first two writing consultants who worked with him had different perspectives. Ann thought that working at the computer enabled them to focus their discussion on smaller sections of the text. She said, "I think also we may have gone into more detail in it because you could literally only see one paragraph at a time, and so you had a lot of focus on that" (personal interview, March 17, 2009). But Lisa said that this caused students to work on correcting their writing and left less time for conversation about the meaning (personal interview, March 17, 2009).

Because David did not know what was wrong with his writing, he wanted Ann to identify his mistakes and offer corrections. David, however, had the technical tool of the computer available to him, so unlike Carmen and Janelle, he was able to make immediate changes to the text and ask for the consultant to validate his revisions. Ann took enough time to read the essay section by section and used a variety of methods to help David edit his writing. One method she used was to identify a problem and prompt David to correct it. For example, Ann suggested to him that vary his word selection because she felt that he overused the word "venture" in the first three sentences:

The case study, <u>Frank Addante Serial Entrepreneur</u>, details five business ventures started by Frank Addante and the ensuing lessons he learned about issues such as leadership, entrepreneurship, hiring, equity, funding, and team building. A detailed description is given for each new venture beginning at approximately age 20 up until his fifth venture at age 25. On lesson learned from his first venture, Starting Point, (an Internet search engine and directory) concerned equity.

In the excerpt below, which was the first revision that they discussed, David made changes to the second sentence, replacing the first "venture" with "company" and the second with "business." Unlike Nancy, who often suggested to students the right words they should use, Ann was content to wait for David to suggest a correction before moving on to the text.

> Ann: All right, the first thing I noticed is that   you used the word
> David: mhm
> Ann: "venture" quite a bit, um, so I'd maybe try to think of other words to use instead of "venture" or "ventures." Um (.) just because (.)
> David: Okay. (8s) Oh. {?} um, those are company, company, comp (3s) oh, okay, here we {?} venture, venture okay, up there, so uh (4s) Like business inter, er, {?}, first business (4s) maybe?
> Ann: Yeah, that would be fine.

After Ann approved of this change she focused on the second sentence of the first paragraph because she did not believe that David needed to use parentheses in sentence like this one: "One lesson learned from his first venture, Starting Point, (an Internet search engine and directory) concerned equity." At this point of the conference, she seemed content to identify sentence-level errors and make suggestions for fixing them, much like Nancy did. Ann also believed that including the information about Starting Point in parentheses was unnecessary and suggested that he find a way to integrate the information into the sentence. But along with making an indirect suggestion, she also talked through possible ways to revise the text:

> Ann: You could try to figure out a way to work that information into the sentence without putting it in parentheses, um, Starting Point, which is an Internet search engine, or, um, his first company was an Internet search engine called Starting Point, um, just finding some way to work that description into the sentence without separating it so much.

In the excerpt below, David talked through making his revision and then Ann approved of the result. This was very common in their writing conference. David's goal

was to find help with revising his paper, and he wanted Ann to approve of all of his changes. But at this stage of the conference, which was 15 minutes after the conference started, my interpretation is that Ann tried to impose her own situation definition of revising by encouraging him to revise independently. In the excerpt below, she asked David whether he would want to try to correct similar mistakes on his own, but David directed her attention to the next sentence that he wanted to correct. Thus, he was able to make his goal for the conference (editing his entire paper in the conference) the situation definition that they both were to use.

> Ann: Okay, so, I, let's look at the first one and just think of some ways we can work it into the sentence　　and like, um (5s) um one lesson learned
> David: 　　　　　　　　　　okay
> Ann: from his firth, first venture Starting Point
> David: I was (.) thinking here, uh, ((typing)) (10s) {?} which (.) {?} I need a comma there, wouldn't I if (.) I said [which {?} (8s)
> Ann: 　　　　　　　　　　　　[yeah　　　Okay, *so one lesson learned from his first venture, which was an Internet search engine and directory called Starting Point concerned quality.*
> David: Equity?
> Ann: Er, sorry, [equity, yeah, so, um, yeah, I think that sounds a lot better,
> David: 　　　　[{?}
> Ann: um, you flow right through the sentence, you still have all the same information that there was in there before (.) um (.) so maybe just go through your other examples and find, um, new ways to work those into the sentences as well. (.) Um, and we can either do that right now or if you, if you think you can do it on your own, that's fine. [So
> David: 　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[{?} okay (.) {?} I mean should I change all of them or I mean like for this one, um
> Ann: You know, I think that one was fine, um, at his fourth business Zondigo Wireless (.) wireless advertising he learned about leadership that needed to put together a management team that had experience but also could work well together and not (3s) taking outside money.

The revised sentence read: "One lesson learned from his first venture, which was an Internet search engine and directory called Starting Point, concerned equity." Part of the language for the revision came from Ann, but David added "directory." This was a common kind of revision because as David typed, both of them commented on the revisions and collaborated to fix the text. This kind of conversation, however, ensured that the discussion remained on fixing the text rather than on having a conversation about ideas.

A kind of editing that happened in this conference, which was particular to the two writing conferences that happened at the computer, was how the consultant and student co-composed revisions to the text. Ann often tried to facilitate revision by serving as an audience who could react to changes David proposed and help David come up with what she considered to be a better way to cast the revision. This took place repeatedly during the writing conference, and I will now provide a detailed example from the conference that followed the excerpt above.

Even though in his last statement in the excerpt above David asked about revising the other sentences that included parentheses, Ann directed the focus to the last sentence in the first paragraph: "At his fourth company, Zondigo (wireless advertising), he learned about leadership, that he needed to put together a management team that had experience but also could work well together, and not taking outside money early." In the excerpt below, Ann tried to clarify whether the lesson about taking outside money applied to Frank Addante or to the management team. While talking about this, David came up with his own solution: to move the phrase about taking outside money closer to the subject of the sentence:

Ann: You know, I think that one was fine, um, *at his fourth business Zondigo Wireless (.) wireless advertising he learned about leadership that needed to put together a management team that had experience but also could work well together and not (3s) taking outside money.* Um

David: Take (.)

Ann: Yeah. (.) 'cause you were trying to say the management team would not take outside money too early, right?

David: Yeah, or that (.) um (4s) er, {?} is about the lessons that he (.) learned, uh he learned about leadership, he learned that he needed (.) to put together a management team that had experience {?} (.) yet could work well together (.) and he learned not to take outside money too early.

Ann: Okay so he's the one who's not taking outside money too early, not the management team, right?

David: Yeah. He's the like the founder [{?}   Maybe I should move this

Ann: [The {?} (.) um

David: bef-fore the thing about management, uh

Ann: Yeah.

David: 'Cause then [it wouldn't

Ann: [I'm wondering maybe even move it before you talk about leadership 'cause a lot of times we associate leadership and

David: {?}

Ann: management together and so um taking outside money too early {?} if it maybe came first then we'd read that and move on to the whole concept of [leadership and management.

David: [{?}   ((to himself, quietly)) not take outside money too (.) early (.) um (.) {?} about leadership (.) um and that (.) he needed

Ann: To put together a [management team

David: [management team that explains what could also work well together?

Ann: Yeah. I think that, I think that sounds good.

This final approval from Ann was what David used as a cue to move on to discussing the next revision. Indeed, David resisted moving to a new paragraph until Ann said that they had corrected all that was wrong up until that point.

As the conference proceeded, Ann seemed to become tired. I observed her try to stifle several yawns. She also became more willing to make direct suggestions instead of prompting David to revise, which she did more often earlier in the conference. Ann also used direct suggestions during the writing conference that did not involve the co-composition of the revisions. In this excerpt from the writing conference, she read a paragraph and made a direct suggestion about how to correct a problem that with pronouns and antecedents.

Ann: Okay uh *this pattern is clearly seen in the case study when Addante changed his behavior and appearance in an attempt to impress his venture capitalist, Sequioa. His admitted lack of knowledge in the field of enterprise software raised self-doubts and he began to second-guess himself. Addante experienced* ((stifling yawn)) *even more self-doubt due to the failure of two consecutive hires and the poor performance of the company. He then expressed his doubts to his board, which prompted the board to have major concerns about his confidence in the business. Addante realized how greatly his thinking had changed, and he started to reflect on his recent behavior and decisions. His thought process involved such comments as, "What did I just do? That doesn't sound like me. I almost felt like I was giving up, and that's not what I do. I never give up. I wasn't comfortable with the way I was operating."* Okay. Um (15s) Um, I'm wondering if it might be better to start the second sentence with Addante and then the third one with he so Addante admitted lack of [uh

David: [Addante's?

Ann: Yeah. (4s) ((sound of David typing))

For David, this visit to the writing center was the last step before turning in his paper, so he wanted a consultant to help him fix the errors and awkwardness before he

turned his paper in. This was not unusual for students who visited the writing center, and Ann told me later on that she considered this conference an "editing" conference (personal interview, March 17, 2009). Ann focused almost exclusively on issues of punctuation, word choice, and syntax. But after an hour, Ann had to leave for a class, and another consultant, Lisa, took over for her and returned to the beginning of the piece and tried to help him with more ideas than just word selection. Lisa's and Ann's different approaches illustrated different philosophies about being a writing consultant: whereas Ann read the paper paragraph by paragraph and did not prioritize the issues that she wanted to discuss, Lisa read almost the entire paper silently in order to grasp the entire meaning of his essay.

Conference Conversation Between David and Lisa

When Ann left to go to class, she asked another student to take over the conference. Ann, at this point, was noticeably tired—and had had to stifle several yawns while talking to David. (I influenced this next step of the conference because I asked Ann to pick Lisa because she had agreed to participate in the study. It is likely that she would have asked this consultant even if I had not asked her to because Lisa was one of the few consultants working at the time.) At the time of the conference, Lisa had been doing homework and chatting with other writing consultants by the bank of computers. She was barefoot, and she did not put her shoes on when she took over for Ann, who provided no background information about the writing project or on what she had accomplished with David up until that point.

Lisa's actions at the beginning of the conference showed that she wanted to first understand the meaning of David's paper before deciding on how to help him revise the paper. Unlike Ann, who began the conference by reading the first paragraph out loud and then suggesting to David that he not repeat the word "venture" too much, Lisa went back and silently read the paper from the beginning to understand the text. Reading the paper silently enabled Lisa to focus solely on the sentences that she wanted to because she only

stopped when she wanted to. David reiterated to her that he wanted help with grammar, APA formatting, and other "little changes that would make it look better or more understandable." In the middle of reading, she asked him what class he was writing this paper for. And instead of reading up to the point where Ann and David left off, she began by focusing on a sentence in which David claimed that Frank Addante was successful in hiring managers: "In my opinion, Frank should follow this advice and his instincts about his hiring decision due to his past successes in his earlier ventures, such as hiring Tim McQuillen while at L90." This was a sentence that Ann did not stop to talk about earlier, but Lisa wanted to know why hiring Tom McQuillen was a smart decision. As was so common a strategy for writing center consultants, Lisa asked David questions about his intended meaning so that she could suggest the specific revision. Here is the excerpt from this moment in the conference:

Lisa: Okay, so, um, where and what company is McQuillen working?
David: Uh, he first met McQuillen, um, with El
Lisa: The fifth one?
David: Er, with the third one, the [one that went public, L90. Um (.)
Lisa: [okay
David: [and McQuill-en had really helped, uh, bring to L90 up
Lisa: [okay
David: and then   later he started, er, his fifth one, co-founding it with
Lisa: okay
David: McQuillen.
Lisa: Okay, so because McQuillen was so successful in that company that went public, that's why you're calling, why you're citing him as a past success?
David: Yeah.

At this point, David seemed to be following Lisa's lead, but he began to ask questions about punctuation while Lisa was trying to help him think about more substantial revisions:

Lisa: Okay, I think making that clear would be important, um, just adding in, such as hiring Tim McQuillen while at L90 who helped do whatever and just give yourself some [backup on that point.
David: [okay   So should I have a comma after L90, or
Lisa: It depends on what you're going to write.
David: Well let's here, I'll leave without a comma for now ((typing)) um (14s) helped (3s) um company, uh (3s) {?} and uh (11s).

Lisa: Okay, um. (.)
David: Er, yeah, {?} now.
Lisa: Um, because the, (.) the phrase you added like the, who helped the
          company grow is re-naming Tom McQuillen you are going to want to
          set that aside with commas after, yeah. (3s)

Lisa helped David shape the utterance after he has already added the words to express his meaning. While working with a student at the keyboard, the writing center consultant provided immediate feedback to different kinds of output—in this case, recommending that the student use a comma to separate the subordinate clause at the end of the sentence. Lisa helped David in this manner (asking questions, providing immediate feedback to text that David typed in his draft) until, she, too, had to leave for her painting class. Almost exclusively, David only revised sections that consultants brought to his attention by consultants and, like Janelle, did not attempt meaningful revisions on his own except for ensuring that his paper met the guidelines for APA style.

The writing center consultants did not leave time at the end of the conference to focus on skills that David could apply to future writing projects. The consultants, who wanted to help the student improve their texts, were less concerned about helping the students develop better writing strategies and processes. The conversation was about the text, and when they were finished talking about the text, the conversation was over. Ann did try to keep David in control of the revising process, and after she had suggested a way to correct the punctuation problems in his first paragraph, she even said that he could fix the rest of them later, but he declined and began to fix them immediately. Lisa told me later in the interview that one problem with conferences at the computer was that students spent more time making changes than they did talking about the issues in the piece of writing (personal interview, March 17, 2009).

Unlike Janelle, who could not integrate suggestions on the spot, David felt compelled to work on the sections that the consultants pointed out as problematic, such as the lack of a reason about why hiring Tom McQuillen was a good idea. David did not rewrite quickly, and labored through small changes in phrasing. Considering that many of

the sentences in his draft were well-formed, it is not clear why many revisions took a long time. But my research design did not include methods to learn about the individual differences of writers who visited the writing center, so making inferences about their writing abilities is beyond the scope of this study.

<u>The End of the Conference: Brief Discussion with Brynna</u>

After Lisa left, I observed David as he finished revising by adding a title page and headers—he used a sample paper in APA format as a guide. He also determined the appropriate number of spaces between the title of his paper and the page number. Having used the writing center to fix his language, he was finishing completing the requirements for his class by ensuring that the paper met the standards for a paper in APA format. After he added these elements, he e-mailed the paper to his instructor. When I was talking to him about the study procedures, he realized that he had forgotten to cite the case study. In this way, I inadvertently interfered with his revising process. I left to photocopy his documents, and when I returned he asked Brynna, who was sitting at a computer terminal, for help with citing the case study.

Brynna used several websites to find information on how to cite the case study while David sat beside her at the computer terminal. She tried finding information on the Purdue Online Writing Lab and on Wikipedia, but could not determine exactly how to cite it. She even asked Alicia, who was working at another computer, to come over and help her. They both suggested that he treat it like an article, but they did not use the APA Manual that was on a shelf behind the front desk. Perhaps they were so used to finding answers to these types of questions online that they did not bother to check the manual. In any case, David believed that he had done enough revision to make the paper acceptable for his instructor and did not need to cite the case study. He even believed it was not his responsibility to know how to cite it: "You know what, I'm just gonna say, oh, well, if he says, you know, you should've cited this, then I'm gonna say, okay, can you tell me how to cite it…." For David, to revise meant to bring the paper up to the standard that was

acceptable for his instructor, which was why he did not take up the consultants' advice and tell him to treat it like an article. He said, "[I]f I lose a couple of points, uh (.) I'll be okay with that. I'm not expecting to get an A in the class." And even though Alicia said he could ask his instructor, David said he would ask him about it for the next assignment.

In this section I described a group of students who did not have specific textual goals for their writing conferences. Because they sensed that something was wrong with their writing but could not identify the problems, they ceded authority to the consultant, who facilitated the conference according to the situation definition of the students. The consultants did not try to facilitate situation redefinition and help students develop better writing processes or strategies. The main outcomes of their conferences were marked-up drafts that students could use to correct their writing.

In the next section, I describe the conferences of students who did not have specific textual goals for their conferences, but did develop psychological tools in the form of writing strategies that mediated their revision processes. These cases illustrated how some consultants, who focused on meaning-related concerns in the students' writing, could help students to develop new strategies to use in the revision process.

<u>Writing Conferences with Outcomes That Were New</u>

<u>Strategies</u>

Cindy's Writing Conference: Using a Consultant's

Suggestion in Her Own Way

When Cindy visited the writing center for her appointment, she also did not have specific goals for her writing conference except to ensure that she had a good thesis statement, which was the reason her instructor, Professor Simpson, required her to go to the writing center.

The conference began in an awkward manner that resulted in Cindy feeling unwelcome in the writing center (personal interview, May 19, 2009). When Cindy came to the front desk to say that she had made an appointment, she spoke to Nancy. Nancy

then assigned the conference to Brynna, but Brynna told Nancy that she had reached her quota for the semester. Nancy, however, insisted that Brynna take this conference. All of this happened in front of Cindy, and she told me that she did not appreciate witnessing two consultants trying to avoid working with her. Later, Brynna told me that she wished the conversation had not happened in front of Cindy (personal interview, March 26, 2009).

Cindy did not have a specific aspect of her thesis that she wanted to discuss, and she told Brynna that her assignment was to come to the writing center to discuss her thesis.

Cindy: Okay, what we're supposed to be doing is writing a thesis on one of our short stories.   And I was supposed to come in and have you read it,
Brynna: okay
Cindy: and hopefully make suggestions to make it the best thesis I've ever written.

Just like Carmen and Janelle, Cindy was content to have her consultant take control of the writing conference because she did not have specific aspects of the text to discuss. Thus, when Brynna asked Cindy about reading the essay, Cindy was eager to have Brynna read it.

Brynna: All right. (.) Um, (.) do you wanna read it out loud or do you care how it's read or [anything?
Cindy: [Uh, no, I'll let you read it. I've read it enough. ((laughs)) I don't want to read it again.

When Brynna read the essay silently, she alternated between focusing both on higher-order concerns and on lower-order concerns that she felt were important enough to discuss with Cindy. (The majority of the sections that Brynna focused on were, however, higher-order concerns.) Brynna only stopped once to focus on an obvious problem of a missing word that she prompted Cindy to fix by reading the phrase aloud for Cindy to hear. This passage was typical of how Brynna addressed sentence-level errors because, unlike Nancy, she did not want to make direct suggestions about editing at the expense of discussing the ideas:

Brynna: Well, right here.   I'll just point this out to you, just to let you
Cindy: 'kay
Brynna: know.   Um, *men did not and sometimes still do not want equality of*
Cindy: mhm
Brynna**:** *the sexes in anyway.*   in, in like what? Like in society? (.) Or
Cindy: mhm   Okay,
            [um
Brynna: [it just, like it sounds funny, like there's something missing there, and
            I'm wondering what you were trying to say.
Cindy: ((to herself)) The sexes. ((to Brynna)) I would say, in society, so I
            would get rid of anyway and put society.

When Brynna talked to Cindy about the thesis, she did not have any major

suggestions about it. The thesis was this sentence at the beginning of the second

paragraph:

> By admitting in plain and explicit terms that women have just as many sexual
> needs as men, Kate Chopin broke through a glass ceiling in both literature and in
> a woman's life, and it also opened new roads of communication for both men and
> women.

And in the next excerpt, Brynna asked Cindy questions about her thesis, but they

changed the topic to a discussion of the beginning of Chopin's writing career. Brynna

appeared to be patient

Brynna: Okay. (8s) So your thesis is the first sentence, or, like, (.) right (.) *by*
            admitting in plain and [*explicit terms*. Okay. (25s) So in your thesis
Cindy: [mhm
Brynna: statement, you're saying that (.) basically (.) this woman pointed out that
            women have just as many needs   sexually as men,   and in doing,
Cindy: mhm   mhm
Brynna: in pointing this out, she broke through barriers that were previously, like,
            restricted in both literature and life.
Cindy: Yeah, 'cause in, um, back then at her time they were, um, told that
            women had just the duty to satisfy the men's sexual desire, they didn't
            actually have any   for themselves. (.) [They, they were the ones
Brynna: okay   [{?}
Cindy: that to hold {?} hold the men back, and, no, no, no no. And only [when
Brynna: [yeah
Cindy: they were married could they. And then, it was just a duty. Just did it
            to have children.
Brynna: Um, when was the, when did she write this book?
Cindy: Oh, I see, in the 1890s.
Brynna: Okay. Wow, that's very pretty early.
Cindy: Yes. ((laughs)) And then they, then the men who were the publishers
            wouldn't publish it. It wasn't published, I think, until 1960.   So there
Brynna: wow
Cindy: was a lot of, you know, we can't say this stuff. I mean, it was read, (.)
            um, but then they took it off. They said, no we can't have this out here.
Brynna: So it was, it was put out there but then it was taken back.

The excerpt above was typical of how Brynna facilitated her conferences. She read a section silently and then stopped to talk about it. This meant that when the students did not have specific goals, she was the one who identified the topics for discussion. In our interview later, Brynna told me that she liked to read a section and discuss it immediately because she did not want to forget any concerns or questions (personal interview, March 26, 2009).

Brynna lingered more over passages of the text that were unclear—in this conference, she did not need to play "the dumb reader" because she did not have in-depth knowledge of Chopin's stories. For example, after Brynna and Cindy discussed the thesis statement, Brynna commented on a section about how Chopin went along with the social norms in her early career. Brynna initiated the discussion about the section, but Cindy participated in the discussion and suggested a way of addressing how the reader could have been confused about learning that Chopin was a more conventional writer in her earlier career.

> Brynna: So did she continue writing other pieces [then as well? Okay.
> Cindy: [Yes, mhm
> Brynna: 'Cause you said "at the beginning of her career, and I'm like, oh, was she
>   a writer along then {?}.
> Cindy: So I should make that more plain.
> Brynna: Probably. Was it like her first piece or like one of her very first pieces?
> Cindy: Um, (.) yeah, it {?} somewhere in there. Um, it was kind of like the mid
>   part of her career.   Um, (.)
> Brynna: okay   'Cause you say that, like, she went along
>   with the normal standards that were already expect—acceptable—but
>   then seemed to (.) find this
> Cindy: Find change in   in, in her middle   okay, so
> Brynna: yeah   yeah   So I guess maybe
>   if you [just
> Cindy: [so talk about the start of her career?
> Brynna: Yeah, as a writer, like. I don't think it's important, like, you know. Or
>   maybe like what inspired her to write, since that could be important, too.

Although Cindy participated in the conversation, however, she did not integrate any of these revisions about writing more about Kate Chopin's life. She did take notes, like Janelle did, about these ways to expand the meaning, but she did not discuss these

additions in depth with Brynna. After Cindy jotted down the note, Brynna moved on to the rest of the paper.

In this next excerpt, Brynna made a suggestion about the text that Cindy would later use as a writing strategy during her revision process. Brynna believed that Cindy should be "explicit" about how Chopin's writing was groundbreaking because of how she wrote about sex and relationships. Later, however, Cindy would use this suggestion to mediate her entire process of trying to clarify the ideas in her essay. This was the psychological tool that Cindy developed in the conference, as opposed to the students in the first half of this chapter whose primary outcomes were marked-up drafts.

Brynna: Okay. (5s) So they were a lot more open than Americans at the time, like
Cindy: Than any other [culture
Brynna: [Than any other society, 'kay. (.) I was gonna say, maybe just kind of add that in there. (3s) Because then you have something to base it off of.
Cindy: Mm-hm. (68s)
Brynna: Uh, so they were having an affair.
Cindy: Mhm.
Brynna: Oh, naughty, naughty.
Cindy: ((laughs)) Well, they didn't think so.
Brynna: ((laughs)) Apparently!
Cindy: And it looked like Chopin didn't think so either. (43s)
Brynna: This is a very long paragraph.   And I'm thinking, um, besides for the
Cindy: 'kay
Brynna: fact that it's just really long, you don't really talk about how it relates back to the thesis   I mean, it's implied that like oh, well, it's
Cindy: okay
Brynna: because of her explicit writing and that fact that this wasn't really acceptable at that time.   But I would maybe express, like explicitly
Cindy: 'kay
Brynna: say that. Like, you know, this, this kind of language isn't, like, used, you know?

Cindy's revision, which I will discuss in more depth in the next chapter, reflected that desire to be more explicit because she added several different sentences to her paragraph about "The 'Cadian Ball" in which she described how Alcee and Calixta had no qualms about their extramarital affair.

During the conference, Cindy wrote down in the margins the different suggestions that Brynna made. She did not use arrows to point to the specific section that Brynna was

referring to; rather, Cindy listed each suggestion as a three-to-five-word phrase. Some writing consultants were buoyed up when they saw students writing down different suggestions. (Nancy, for example, believed that a student was going to take up one of her suggestions when she saw the student make notes about the suggestion in the margin of her paper.) But in Cindy's conference, she wrote down suggestions and then she and Brynna moved on to discussing a different aspect of the essay. It may be argued that reading in a writing conference creates an expectation that the consultant will proceed to discuss the entire draft, so any discussion of an idea will be stopped by proceeding to read the next section. (In all conferences except for Garrett's, the students and consultants read and discussed the entire drafts; no paper was too long, and consultants did not adhere to a strict time limit.)

<div align="center">Tim's Developed Sense of Word Selection</div>

Another student who came to the writing center without a specific goal was Tim, who brought several poems to the writing center to discuss them with Maureen, a consultant who was also his friend. In this section I will describe how Tim, who was prepared to submit the same drafts in his poetry workshop the next day, had a discussion with Maureen that helped him to develop a better sense of how to select appropriate words in his poems.

Unlike the conferences with the other students described in this chapter, Tim did not come to the writing center with the intention of revising his writing. In our interview, he told me that he wanted to have the writing center conference so that he could get an "outside perspective" on his writing (personal interview, May 19, 2009). He also told Maureen toward the beginning of his writing conference with her that he was interested more in seeing what she thought about his poems rather than figuring out how to fix them.

During the conference, Tim read his poems and Maureen asked him questions about the decisions he made during the composing process. Maureen would focus mainly

on talking about the line breaks and word selection than grammar or mechanics. After

their conference, Maureen told me about her strategy for discussing poetry in a writing

conference.

> Maureen: I don't have a lot of negative … I mean I don't have much criticism, so it's more talking about ideas, and I think that is helpful to the writer for them to have to verbalize what it is they meant when they wrote this: why did you choose this word? um, (.) you know, was there a reason behind the structure, was there a reason behind your organization, and that's kind of the most fun because you're not saying, (.) you know, it's not really criticism, it's just a discussion.

Thus, Maureen was more interested in discussing the ideas rather than finding out

how to correct something. The first poem they discussed was entitled "Canyon":

Canyon

Drop after drop
into the bowl,

drips from a broken faucet.

Colorado's trickling
erodes

with nature's evolution
excavating itself
from the cracks of hands
cleared like the Grand.

This next excerpt, then, was typical of how Maureen and Tim discussed each

poem. Maureen asked him questions about the form of the poem, and near the end of

excerpt, Tim seemed to think more about the rhythm of the form.

> Tim: Um, all right. Do you want to read? I'll, I'll read this one first. All right. "Canyon." *Drop after drop / into the bowl, // drips from a broken faucet. // Colorado's trickling / erodes // with nature's evolution / excavating itself / from the cracks of hands / cleared like the Grand.*
>
> Maureen: 'Kay. Um, so did you revise this from what you wrote in class or did you just transcribe it?
>
> Tim: Yeah, there's been quite a few revisions, um, mostly, um, (.) in just kinda switching up the stanzas, [um the order of the stanzas and, um,
>
> Maureen: [um
>
> Tim: um, and also kind of, (.) pruning a, a few of the words in each line, just to make it more concise I think.
>
> Maureen: Okay, did you, um, (.) why did you split the stanzas the way you did?

Tim: Um,

Maureen: I mean, was there a reason for having this one; I mean did you want to have it be two one two four, because it's kind of balanced like that, I guess.

Tim: Yeah, [I think   [I mean it was definitely conscious,

Maureen: [But it's not really, like   [{?}

Tim: um, as opposed to having them all, all together. (3s) And I guess, you know, um, for me, um, a lot of my formatting on the page is, um, (4s) kind of represents the imagery that I'm writing for, about a little bit, so I have the break here from drop after drop into the bowl, and then a, a break into [drips, as if

Maureen: [mm, okay, so it's like drips

Tim: Yeah, and then, I guess, the next stanza's, um, when I go from the image of the dripping faucet to, um, the Colorado River [and start talking about

Maureen: [So, it's more like   like a rhythm kind of?

Tim: Mhm.

Maureen: Okay.

Tim: Well, yeah, I, I guess it does establish a rhythm, you know, visually, that isn't necessarily heard.

After their brief discussion of "Canyon," Maureen asked Tim whether he had a

plan for revising it, but Tim answered that he was interested in her reaction to his work:

Maureen: Okay, um, are you satisfied with this poem or do you think that it still needs work after revision? Like, do you plan on revising this or do you think it's

Tim: Um,

Maureen: pretty much done.

Tim: I mean, uh, I suppose like going back to all your work you can, you know, depending on how, you know, what place you're (.) you're in, you can probably make some sort of revision, so I mean essentially, you know, I'm bringing it here, um, to, to get a, you know, a second opinion on the poem, but as these pieces are, I would be comfortable taking them to class tomorrow [and reading them.

Maureen: [okay

That exchange was typical of how Tim thought about his conference: he did not

have a specific agenda. He wanted a "second opinion," and my interpretation is that their

discussion resulted in an outcome of a psychological tool that helped him to think about

his poems more precisely. This kind of discussion that promoted the development of a

writing strategy was also part of their discussion of "Second Floor Reading Room":

Second Floor Reading Room

A young gentleman sleeps
on his back, on a couch in the library.

Mouth open wide
like a baby bird

awaiting the worm,
mother fluttering just above.

The conversation was similar to the conversation about "Canyon" in that they

focused on talking about the poem, not changing it. Their discussion centered on why he

used the word "gentleman." Maureen asked challenging questions that helped her see his

thought process. At the end of the excerpt, Tim decided to consider his decision and did

not plan a revision; rather, he suggested that they move to the last poem.

Maureen: Or, I mean even just the decision to use the word gentleman as
             opposed to man   or boy, or whatever?   I'm not disagreeing with
Tim: yeah   mhm
Maureen: you at all. It's just, I mean that seems like a very deliberate choice and
             I'm [curious
Tim: [yeah
Maureen: as to why you would   I mean [for me it invokes a sense of irony and I
Tim: um   [{?}
Maureen: was wondering if that was the intention.
Tim: Mm. (.) I guess it was just a way to, um, (.) I mean it definitely was
             intentional but, yeah, I guess (.)
Maureen: Well (.)
Tim: I mean, I didn't want it to seem {?} (.) seem (.) like it was, you know,
             a homeless person sleeping [on the couch, or, um (3s) I don't know, I
Maureen: [oh, yeah
Tim: wanted to set a, I guess, yeah, I'm not sure. [That's a good question
Maureen: [I mean did you want to
             evoke him as being (.) yeah I guess, I mean, like if you had said a
             young man, I wouldn't have thought twice, or if you had said a young
             student   I wouldn't really have thought twice, but it just seems
Tim: mhm
Maureen: like a very, I mean you're right—it is, you have elegant images of
             gentlemen. I, like, keep imagining him in, like, a suit ((laughs))
Tim: yeah, okay
Maureen: and, um, (3s) and that's good, I guess. I just was wondering what you
             were (.) what your (.) decision (.) what the thought process behind that
             decision was.
Tim: Okay. (.) So [((laughs)) I guess I'll have to get back ((laughs))
Maureen: [((laughs))
Tim: [with you on that one. All right. Next one?
Maureen: [((laughs))

In my interview with Tim after he submitted his portfolio to his professor, he said

that the conversation with Maureen encouraged him to examine more closely the choices

he made in writing his poems. He said, "I hadn't really thought about its interpretation

too thoroughly, and that got me thinking a little bit more of, um, why, why I did use 'gentleman' as opposed to those other words, I guess, or other descriptions" (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

Tim also believed that his writing conference with Maureen helped him not only in the process of revising, but in writing other poems for his course portfolio. Tim was the only student who referred to how his conference helped him with subsequent writing projects. Cindy, though she seemed to develop a psychological tool for being specific in all aspects of her text, did not discuss how this tool was useful in her other writing projects. In this part of our interview, Tim discussed how useful the conference was even though only one of the three poems ("Second Floor Reading Room") made it into his final portfolio:

> I did only use one of the three poems, but what I learned generally, um, through that conference, um, the, those discussions were still, you know, at the time, in my mind when I was, when I was writing, maybe, the next day, or, um, writing new poems. Not just revising, so. (personal interview, May 19, 2009)

<u>Conclusion and Prelude to Next Chapter</u>

In this chapter I described the conferences of two groups of students who came to their writing conferences without specific goals for revising their texts. The first group, which consisted of Janelle, Carmen, Carolyn and Andrea, and David, wanted a consultant to identify errors in their writing and suggest corrections. The situation definitions of consultants in these four writing conferences were different from the situation definitions that their students had. Although their consultants were eager to discuss the ideas in their writing and not just errors in grammar and mechanics, these students were primarily interested in having the consultant locate errors and suggest ways to fix them.   Because they could not identify problems or errors on their own, they ceded authority to their consultants who they wanted to take control of the conference. The consultants chose to facilitate the conference according to the situation definition of their students and not focus on enabling the students to develop a more nuanced situation definition of revising

or of how to participate in a writing conference. These students left the writing conference with the same situation definition; the primary outcome of the conferences was revised text or marked up drafts that could be used in the revising process.

Carolyn and Andrea, however, displayed different behavior because they were willing to assert authority at certain moments when they felt that Nancy strayed too far into making suggestions about editing text that they had already corrected. They also did not know what needed to be corrected in their lab report, but were willing to assert themselves and take back authority when they believed that Nancy was giving them suggestions about aspects of their texts that Professor Jones had already approved.

Figure 4 describes how these students had conferences focused on fixing errors, and the outcomes of these conferences were, primarily, notes for fixing errors in grammar and mechanics rather than new conceptions of revising or other writing tools. (David, however, corrected his changes at the conference, so his outcome was a corrected text.)

Figure 4. The Activity System of Conferences in Which Students Did Not Have Specific Textual Goals
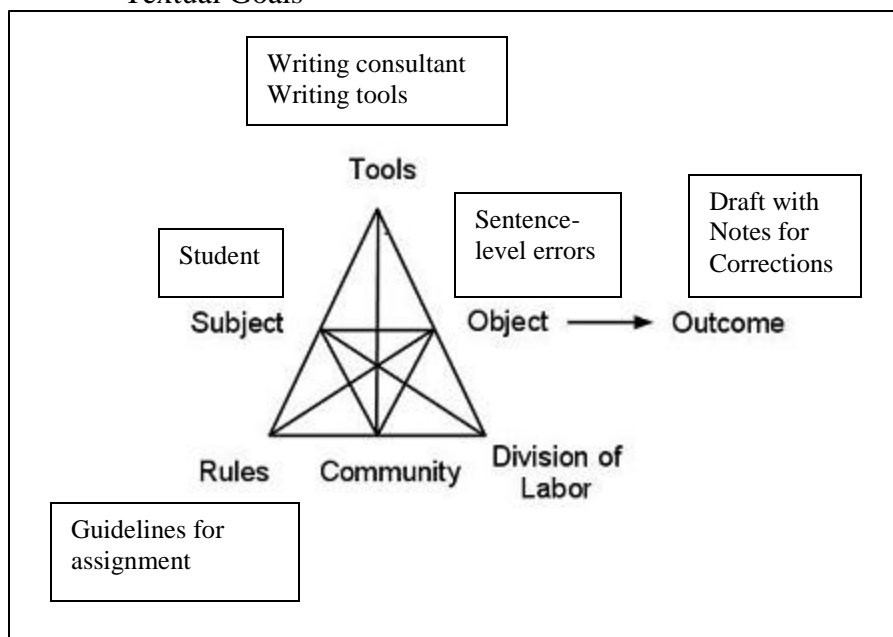
The cases in the first section of this chapter illustrate the different ways that writing consultants and students may conceive of the situation definition of a writing conference. For example, while Nancy was enthusiastic about helping Janelle write more about biology, Janelle was focused on editing her text. Nancy was heartened when she saw Janelle write down the suggestion about adding more information about endemic species, but Janelle did not integrate that suggestion in her revision process. This research suggests that when students are taking notes, consultants may need to continue the discussion to help students integrate the material rather than assuming that note-taking means the student knows how to use the suggestion.

Tim and Cindy, however, did not have the goal of fixing errors, but also allowed the consultant to direct the agenda of the conference discussion. My interpretation is that they did develop new conceptions of revision or other rhetorical strategies that they did use in their revising process. Their writing conferences, which were not focused on immediate textual goals, were focused more on writing concepts that they learned how to use in new way. Brynna and Maureen, I believe, conducted their conferences according to their own situation definition of what a conference should be and how a writer an effectively revise. Thus, Cindy developed a new concept of how to be explicit in her revision process, and Tim learned about being aware of how his audience might react to the diction of his poetry. Figure 5 illustrates how the outcomes of their writing conferences were these new concepts to use in their revision processes.

Figure 5. The Activity System of Conferences in Which the Outcomes Were New
        Psychological Tools
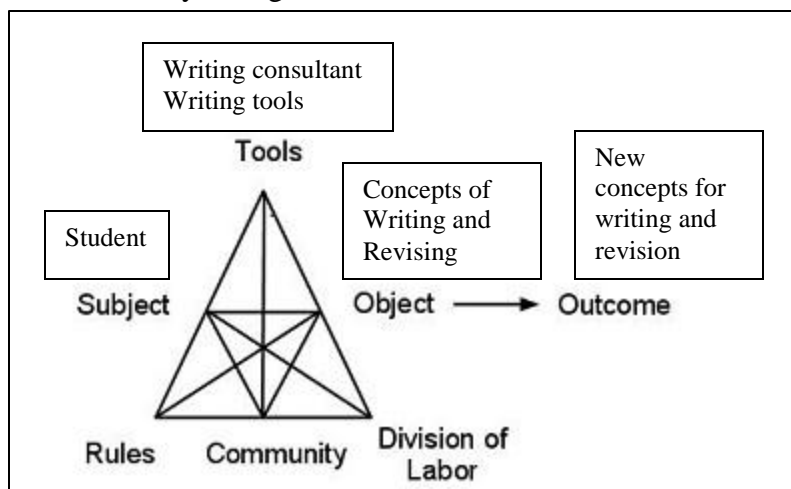
      In the next chapter, I will explore how these students without specific goals revised their writing by examining how the students integrated the conference feedback, with feedback that they had received from other people, such as instructors, peers, and family members. In will describe how the outcome of the writing conference became a tool in their revising process—a tool that was mediated by the social factors of the student's activity system.

CHAPTER III:

THE DIFFERENT WAYS THAT STUDENTS WITHOUT SPECIFIC

GOALS REVISED THEIR WRITING

<u>Introduction</u>

In the previous chapter I discussed the writing conferences of students who visited the writing center without specific goals for revising their texts. One group of these students, Carmen, Janelle, Carolyn and Andrea, and David, developed tools in the form of marked-up drafts that they could use in the revising process. (David, however, edited his draft during his conference at the computer.) These students wanted their consultant to identify and correct their mistakes, so they wanted the consultant to control the agenda and take responsibility for locating mistakes that they could not identify. Usually, this meant that the consultant read the text and stopped whenever she wanted to discuss an error. But students could also read the text and cede authority to the consultant: Carolyn and Andrea read their work aloud and controlled the agenda by stopping reading to ensure that Nancy did not miss an opportunity to suggest a correction.

The students who developed psychological tools in the form of new concepts to use in their revision processes, Cindy and Tim, worked with consultants who also directed the agenda by selecting which areas to discuss in the conference. These consultants, however, facilitated the conferences more closely to their own situation definitions by addressing primarily the meaning-related concerns in Cindy's and Tim's writing. The outcomes of these conferences included new concepts that the students could employ in the revising process.

I now turn to discussing how these students used the feedback from their writing conferences along with other feedback (e.g., from instructors or family members) in the revising process.

<u>Assertions</u>

The revision processes of students who did not have specific goals for their conferences can be separated into two groups. Janelle, Carmen, Carolyn and Andrea relied almost exclusively on the notes on their conference drafts to revise their writing. They almost always integrated their consultants' suggestions about formal and meaning-preserving revisions because they believed that their instructors valued writing that was correct and free of errors. For example, Table 2, which includes all revisions that students in this study made to their texts during or after their writing conferences, indicates that students made almost all of the formal revisions that consultants directly suggested during the conference. Students did not integrate only a few of the direct suggestions that consultants made about formal and meaning-preserving revisions. These students, however, often did not integrate consultants' indirect suggestions about microstructure and macrostructure revisions unless they believed that their instructors wanted to see those kinds of revisions. Table 2 also indicates that students did not integrate many of the indirect suggestions, which were often about how to expand or refine the main meaning of the text.

Cindy and Tim, however, used their new writing strategies to generate revisions that were specifically discussed in their conferences. These students used their conference outcomes as only one tool in their revising process. They did not focus on revising errors in grammar and mechanics; rather, they generated revisions based on their own goals and the psychological tools that they developed in their conferences.

Table 2. The Relationship Between Conference Conversation and Student Revision

Conference Activity	Type of Revision					
	Form.	MP	Micro.	Macro.	Misp.	No Revision
Direct Suggestions						
# That Student Identified	3	8	1	-	1	3
# That Consultant Identified	31	19	1	-	1	5
Indirect Suggestions						
# That Student Identified	-	-	-	-	-	-
# That Consultant Identified	-	7	9	-	-	14
Consultant Prompts						
# That Student Identified	-	-	-	-	-	-
# That Consultant Identified	4	3	4	-	-	1
Negotiated Revisions						
# That Student Identified	1	1	7	-	-	1
# That Consultant Identified	1	8	3	-	-	1
Student Suggested						
# That Student Identified	6	4	16	1	-	2
# That Consultant Identified	1	3	-	1	-	-
Independent Revisions	24	37	17	2	-	-
Total	**71**	**90**	**58**	**4**	**2**	**27**

(Form.: Formal; MP: Meaning-preserving; Micro.: Microstructure; Macro.:
Macrostructure; Misp.: Misperception; No Revision: Interactions that did not lead to
revision.)

The kinds of revisions that these students made complemented what I interpret to

be their situation definitions of revising for class. The students who did not have specific

textual goals for their conferences corrected errors in punctuation and replaced words and

phrases with different ones they believed were better. Table 3 indicates that students in

this study made more punctuation revisions than any other type—the students in this

chapter made most of these revisions. Indeed, Table 3 shows that punctuation revisions were the most frequent kind of revision that students in this study made to their writing.

Table 3. The Conference-Related and Independent Revisions That Students Made

Formal			MP	Micro.	Macro.	Misper.
Abbreviation	3 (2)	Addition	21 (9)	32 (22)	2	-
Format	10 (1)	Consolidation	3 (2)	1 (1)	-	-
Modal	6 (3)	Deletion	21 (12)	8 (3)	1 (1)	-
Number	5 (4)	Distribution	4 (4)	-	-	-
Punctuation	42 (32)	Permutation	14 (4)	3 (2)	1 (1)	-
Spelling	4 (4)	Substitution	26 (22)	14 (13)	-	2 (2)
Tense	1 (1)					
Total	71 (47)		90 (53)	58 (41)	4 (2)	2 (2)

(The number in parentheses is the total in that category that was related to the conference discussion. MP: Meaning-preserving; Micro.: Microstructure; Macro.: Macrostructure; Misper.: Misperception.)

In the rest of this chapters, I will be discussing these revisions in depth as I explore the relationship between how students participated in writing conferences and how they revised their writing.

<u>When the Tool Looks Just Like the Outcome: How</u>

<u>Students Use Their Notes to Correct Errors in Their</u>

<u>Writing</u>

In this section, I will continue to explain my argument Janelle, Carmen, Carolyn and Andrea, and David who visited the writing center without specific goals for revising their texts, and whose outcomes were primarily drafts with notes on how to make formal and meaning-preserving revisions, These students made fewer independent revisions than revisions that were directly related to their conference conversation.

Although the students who developed new psychological tools used them to revise their text, the outcomes that students and consultants developed in writing conferences resembled the revisions that students eventually made. Figure 6 illustrates

how the outcome of the writing conference became a tool in the revision sessions for students who produced marked-up drafts tools in their writing conferences. The bi-directional arrow indicates that there was not much difference between the tool and the outcome of the revision process, which illustrates that the conferences were heavily focused on producing textual outcomes and not changes in students' understanding.

Figure 6. The Activity System of Revision Sessions for Students Who Developed Technical Tools in Their Writing Conferences
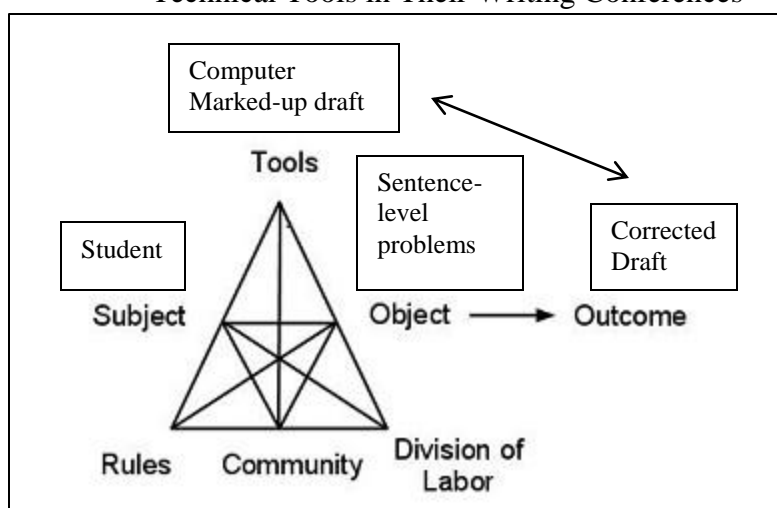
The students who used marked-up drafts to correct sentence-level errors did not generally produce another draft between the conference draft and the final draft. But the students who came to the writing center with specific goals, like Brynna, used the conference drafts to develop new ideas for revision. This was one major difference between students who had specific goals and those that did not: those students with specific goals interacted with their conference drafts and used them to develop new ideas that were not the same ones discussed in the conference.

Revision as Transcription: How Students Used Their

Marked-up Conference Drafts to Edit Formal Concerns

Janelle and Carmen paid close attention to editing mostly formal concerns after their writing conference. For example, after her conference, Janelle went to the library and typed the changes that she took notes about in the writing conference. When she edited her writing, she only used the document that she had taken to the writing conference with Nancy. She looked at the copy with the corrections and typed them into the computer. Using her left hand, she kept her place in the paper draft while she used her right hand to move the cursor on her laptop. Janelle went through the draft line by line and fixed the errors that Nancy had spotted and suggested corrections for. This was very similar to how David edited his paper in the conference with Ann; he, too, went through the paper line by line. (Although I did not observe Carmen revise, the kinds of revisions that she made were very similar to Janelle's, which is why I discuss her revision process in this chapter.)

Figure 7 is an excerpt from Janelle's conference draft, which she used in her revision session. In the margin of the text she wrote two phrases: "Endemic species" and "Connection → This is how connects to O&E." The text also includes several notes for editing punctuation errors (such as a missing apostrophe and a missing comma before the coordinating conjunction "and") and the crossing out of an article in front of a plural noun. All of these notes were related to the conference; indeed, these were all changes that Nancy suggested to Janelle. Nancy was especially pleased with her suggestion about endemic species and wrote in the summary, "[Janelle] actually took me up on that offer and made a side note about it in her paper."

Figure 7. Excerpt of Text from the Draft That Janelle Brought to Her Conference
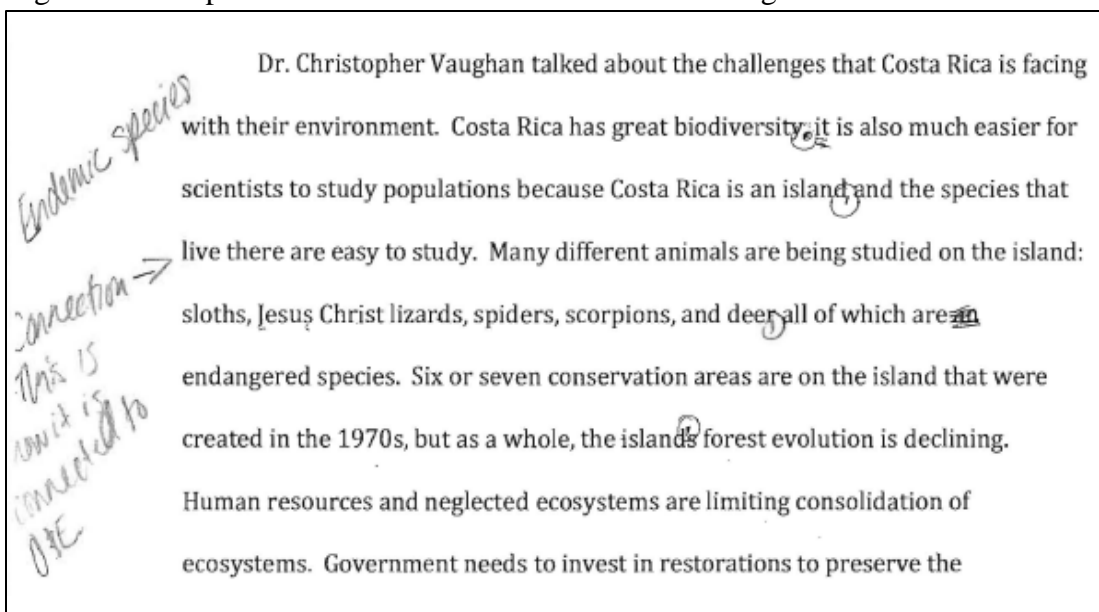
Janelle did focus on correcting the punctuation changes that were mostly due to Nancy's direct suggestions; she did not expand the connections like Nancy had suggested. (Indeed, she did not open any other browser windows except for her e-mail account so that she could send me a copy of the revision.) Her revision session in the library lasted 13 minutes.

Figure 8 is an excerpt from Janelle's revised essay that is typical of how Janelle revised her summaries. The tracked changes indicate that Janelle inserted a sentence to make the connection between her course and the research symposiums. This new sentence was a simple connection, unlike the substantial connection about endemic species that Nancy suggested during the conference. In the other summaries, Janelle added two one-sentence connections instead of expanding on how the ideas in the presentations were related to Organismal and Ecological Biology. Figure 8 also illustrates the kind of punctuation changes that Janelle made, such as the correction of a comma

splice in the second sentence. These corrections to punctuation errors were very common and were also typical of the revisions that Carmen made.

Figure 8. A Section of Janelle's Revised Writing

Carmen and Janelle both made more formal revisions than all of the other categories combined, and the majority of those revisions were related to punctuation. Janelle's draft did have a lot of fused sentences and other problems with punctuation, so it was not surprising that most of her revising was focused on this category. The formal and meaning-preserving revisions that Janelle and Carmen made were almost exclusively related to the conference discussion. Janelle did not take the time to research more ideas for her essay.

Nancy made twenty-four direct suggestions to Janelle about specific changes to the punctuation or wording of her summaries. She made only four indirect suggestions, which included all of the suggestions about how to expand her ideas, such as the suggestions about including more information about endemic species. Janelle suggested two of her own corrections during the conference, and just made one change to her text, a minor deletion, that she did not discuss in her conference.

However, it is important to note that both Carmen and Janelle did not transcribe all of the notes that they made in their conferences, nor were their revised drafts completely of mistakes in grammar and mechanics. For example, Janelle made two revisions that contradicted the changes that she and Nancy had discussed during the conference. Nancy suggested that Janelle revise this sentence, "Sugars were found to be not a good NRG source.", by replacing "not a good" with "inefficient." But in her final version, she edited the sentence to read "Sugars were found to be an efficient NRG source," which contradicted the original meaning. In another revision that was the result of a misperception, Janelle replaced "was" with "where" (instead of the intended "were"). These misperceptions may have been a result of not re-reading the draft as she made the changes that were discussed during the conference. During the revision session, Janelle did not appear to proofread or read through the draft after she made her changes, and one final read may have helped her catch these mistakes. (Indeed, when I discussed this revision with her, she said that I had helped her to learn that she needed to proofread more.)

Janelle also did not integrate revisions that she suggested during the conference. When Nancy read this sentence, she suggested that Janelle fix the comma splice by replacing the comma with a period and starting a new sentence: "Shark finning has become a major issue on the island, residents are removing the fins of sharks for food and the shark population is depleting." Janelle then suggested out loud that she could add "As a result" at the beginning of the new sentence so that it would read "As a result, residents are removing the fins of sharks for food and the shark population is depleting." Janelle then wrote "As a result" above the line where it would be inserted. But in the revision session, Janelle skipped over this note and did not integrate it. I was not able to determine why Janelle skipped over this revision. My interpretation is that Janelle was ambivalent about revisions that did not correct actual mistakes that Nancy had identified, so she may not have believed that adding "As a result" was necessary. This also may have been why

Janelle did not, in one section, follow Nancy's suggestion to use "that" instead of "which" to introduce a clause with essential information.

Although Carmen took notes on her draft about where to correct errors in punctuation, she, too, did not integrate all of the punctuation edits that Nancy suggested during the conference: Carmen did not add three of the direct punctuation suggestions from Nancy, and she also did not integrate one of her own punctuation corrections. I had assumed that Carmen had just integrated all of those suggestions, so I did not ask her specifically about them. I discovered these omissions later in my analysis. Carmen made very small marks in her draft as Nancy suggested changes, so perhaps Carmen missed seeing them during the revision session.

In addition, the new text that Carmen added during the revising process included several instances of the same error that Nancy pointed out during the writing conference. Nancy pointed out to Carmen that she did not need to use the possessive s in "American's". Nancy did not explain why, but may have assumed that Carmen just overlooked how to correctly write the noun in a plural form.

> Nancy: Okay, *so if oil's so important, why do a majority of American's*, um, here you might not need the apostrophe. (.) *Um, not get their oil checked regularly.*

Even though Carmen corrected this mistake in her revision, Carmen added additional text about the chemistry of synthetic oil, and two of the short passages that she added contained the same error that that Nancy had pointed out. In one of the passages she added a sentence to her draft with more information about synthetic oils: "this is where synthetic oil's outperform conventional oil's." Reading aloud may have helped Nancy to identify errors in the text, but pointing them out to Carmen did not seem to help Carmen avoid such errors when she created new text.

The conference with Janelle also illustrates that writing tutors can often misread or misunderstand what their students will do after the writing conference. Nancy believed that Janelle was primarily interested in expanding the corrections between the

presentations and her biology class: Nancy indicated on the conference summary that Janelle's primary interest was "Expand/Develop Draft." This may have been because Janelle wanted to add connections between her class and the presentations; and during their discussions, it may have appeared to Nancy that Janelle was interested in writing substantial connections. But Janelle's situation definition of revising was entirely different. She told me in our interview that she just needed to "stick in a little blurb" about the seminars' connections to Organismal and Ecological Biology (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

In research about writing center work, scholars claim that back-channel feedback or note-taking can be a sign of a student's sincere interested in using suggestion in their revision (Thompson, 2009). Janelle often responded with back-channel feedback to Nancy's suggestions about expanding the meaning. But Janelle's entire thinking about how much time she would devote to her writing was constrained by her knowledge that this extra-credit assignment was worth a few test points at the most. Suggestions for developing ideas and drawing connections between endemic species and Organismal and Ecological Biology, which Nancy believed to be an important part of the conference, were unimportant to Janelle.

For the conferences in which the primary outcomes were corrected drafts, such as Janelle's and Carmen's, the activities in the conferences did not appear to result in psychological tools for identifying and correcting errors on their own. In our interview, Janelle did say that she learned that she needed to be careful when she was using longer sentences, but she was not specific about what she had learned (personal interview, April 29, 2009). Carmen, too, said that her conference just emphasized how important it was to have someone read your paper out loud: She said, "Having your paper read out loud while you read it over yourself really helps with noticing where you need commas and what words are spelled wrong" (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

Unlike Janelle, Carmen did add significant amounts of information about synthetic oils to her paper, which was something that Nancy had suggested before they began editing the paper for mistakes in grammar and punctuation. Thus, Carmen took seriously the suggestion to add information about the chemical processes of oil. But Carmen suggested in the conference that she was planning to integrate more information and had just not done it yet. Carmen made most of these additions in the form of exact quotations instead of trying to explain the chemical processes in her own words.

When Nancy made indirect suggestions about the different kinds of ideas that students should add, she limited the discussion just to a discussion of what could be added, but she did not necessarily discuss how to add the information. Thus, students did not need to challenge their perceptions of how to integrate source material effectively.

Like Janelle, when Carmen made meaning-preserving or microstructure changes to her writing, they were often additions. Carmen's, however, were longer, but not necessarily in her own words. Much of the added text was direct quotations from magazines such as "Hot Rod." One of these new sections is included below. (This student did not revise with "Track Changes" turned on, so I could not use that functionality to highlight the revised text.)

> If you get an oil that is not meant for your car, you may begin to have problems in your engine, because "heat accelerates oxygen, the oil starts to oxidize and thicken, changing into other molecular combinations. As the oil thickens, it forms deposits or varnish. In motor oil, the antioxidant additives first sacrifice themselves to prevent this oxidation from occurring, but if they get overwhelmed, the oil eventually turns into a hard, crusty sludge" (Hot Rod).

Another part of the text that Carmen needed to add was her conclusion. The draft that Carmen brought to the writing center did not have a conclusion—the last paragraph described how oil functions at high engine temperatures. The draft ended with an incomplete sentence: "This is where synthetic oil's come into play". In her revision, she tried to be more specific by changing that incomplete sentence to "this is where synthetic

oil's outperform conventional oil's." But in her revision, she inserted more information about the chemistry of oil to complete that statement:

> …this is where synthetic oil's outperform conventional oil's. The chemical makeup of synthetic oil has "synthesized-hydrocarbon molecular chains" that give "desirable characteristics and uniformity not found in even the highest-quality traditional motor oils" (Davis). Through this change you get molecules that are more consistent in size which means "they are better able to withstand extreme engine temperatures", while conventional oils "can easily vaporize or oxidize in extreme heat" (Davis). Synthetic's, because of their supreme chemical makeup also help your engine gain more horsepower, and "broaden the torque and power bands overall" (Davis).

Although the central idea in this new passage—that synthetic oil performs better than conventional oil—was not a new one, Carmen provided a few more details about the nature of that performance. The passage, however, was interlarded with quotations because of the technical nature of the language. Carmen believed that what she was adding was "filler" because she felt the paper was long enough when she brought it to the writing center (personal interview, April 21, 2009). This may have been why she did not want to discuss the nature of oil chemistry in detail with Nancy—Carmen felt as though she had done enough and was not eager to do extra work because she felt that she said all that she needed to say.

Carmen had very strong opinions about the organization of her essay, but she chose not to discuss them with Nancy when Nancy suggested an alternative organization. These opinions also guided Carmen's revision process. Nancy suggested during the conference that Carmen switch the order of the second and third paragraphs. The second paragraph provided a description of what engine oil is, and the third paragraph stated why oil was important for the engine. In the interview, Carmen was emphatic about her decision to keep those paragraphs in that order: "I don't know. I'm behind the opinion that I feel like if you're writing a paper for the, a broad audience, they should know what you're talking about before you start actually going into what it is" (personal interview, April 21, 2009). However, in the writing conference, Carmen only listened to the suggestion and did not state her reasoning:

Nancy: So, um, part of me was just kind of like, mostly when I'm reading a paper I kind of go, like, I start off looking for, like, why should I worry about this   and stuff like that, so I don't know if wanna put

Carmen: mhm

Nancy: like why it's important first or what it is first. It's completely up to you, 'cause I [could see both of them being   starting points {?} Um,

Carmen: [okay   okay

Nancy: that and just like there was a, a redundancy, 'cause I was like, so what is oil and why is it such a big deal? Let's begin with what oil is and why it's, [oil is such a big deal. Um, which it isn't too huge of a thing, but

Carmen: [okay

Nancy: I was just like, um, {?} a little redundant.

Carmen: okay

Carmen avoided going into a discussion of this aspect of her organization, and the conference proceeded quickly to the editing segment.

Carmen told me in our interview that she preferred blunt, direct feedback—the kind that she received from her sister one evening when they were discussing her essay while they played Scrabble on Facebook. Carmen recounted the discussion to me in our interview and said that her sister was not afraid to give her direct criticism. Her sister, for example, did not believe that Carmen was addressing the question at the outset of her draft: "So what is oil and why is it such a big deal? Is there really a difference from one type to another? Should I be using a different oil when the temperature changes?" Her sister felt that Carmen needed to address those questions. Carmen recalled that her sister said, "there's no point in asking a question if you're not gonna address it" (personal interview, April 21, 2009).

Nancy, however, was not blunt when she provided feedback. The excerpt from their conference that I quoted above shows how Nancy tried to qualify her suggestions by saying, "It's completely up to you because I could see both of them…." Carmen appeared to like that her sister told her up front what should happen.

Carmen's sister also helped her to be more specific in the introduction. Carmen said that her sister approved of the revision in which Carmen replaced "different" with "conventional and synthetic" to more clearly announce what her essay would be about. Carmen said that her sister believed that this gave the reader "more of an idea of what to

expect next" (personal interview, April 21, 2009). The revised sentence read, "'Think with your dipstick Jimmy', a phrase from the commercial by Castrol, disputing the values between conventional and synthetic engine oils."

Carmen and Nancy used the outcomes of their conferences, the corrected drafts, to correct errors in grammar and punctuation, and to make the additions that they believed were necessary for their texts. In the next section, I turn to students who also corrected sentence-level errors by focusing more on substituting new phrases and words for those that their consultants identified as incorrect or unclear.

Revision as a Process of Substitution: How both David and

Carolyn and Andrea Revised Their Writing

Like Carmen and Janelle, Carolyn and Andrea were not interested in revising their writing substantially after the writing conference. Like Janelle, they left the writing center to find a place to immediately revise their writing. But Carolyn, Andrea, and David did not make as many formal revisions as Carmen and Janelle did. In terms of the taxonomy that I used to count the revisions, the most revisions that these three students made were meaning-preserving revisions. This was also true for David, who made all of his revisions during and immediately after his conference. In this section I describe the revision processes of students who were more interested in changing words and phrases than they were in fixing errors in grammar and mechanics. Although I will refer to David in this section, I already described most of his process of revising in the previous chapter because he revised during his writing conference. I will focus on his post-conference revisions in this chapter.

Carolyn and Andrea decided to revise their report three floors above the writing center in the computer lab of the Chemistry Department. After their conference, they briefly discussed when they should revise and decided to finish their report as soon as possible. Another reason that may have influenced their decision was that the computers

in that lab had special software for making diagrams of chemical processes, which they would decide to revise.

When they arrived at the computer lab, Professor Jones was explaining to a student why he received a certain grade on an assignment. The student was frustrated and was appealing the grade. Carolyn and Andrea did not appear to be distracted by the activity in the lab. While Carolyn and Andrea revised their writing in the computer lab in the chemistry department, they, like Janelle, went through their draft line by line to make the corrections that they had discussed. Carolyn sat at the keyboard and made the changes while Andrea read them to her. Carolyn stayed at the keyboard during the entire process.

These corrections were mostly small changes to words and phrases that they had discussed with Nancy. A typical revised sentence was this one from the beginning of the second paragraph of the introduction. The original sentence read: "Propranolol is a nonselective beta-adrenergic blocker acting on both β_1 and β_2 receptors in the sympathetic nervous system, especially on nerves innervating the heart." When they revised it, it had essentially the same meaning, but two words were changed based on Nancy's suggestion in the conference: "Propranolol is a nonselective beta-adrenergic blocker acting on both β_1 and β_2 receptors in the sympathetic nervous system, **particularly** on nerves that **innervate** the heart" (emphasis mine). Another similar revision was how they changed (again, based on Nancy's suggestion) the phrase "recent studies" to "current studies" in a sentence about researchers who were studying the benefits of propranolol. They did this because they realized that they wanted to refer to studies that were ongoing. Thus, their revision process was not so much about correcting errors as it was about fine-tuning their meaning and ensuring that they had the right words. Carolyn typed these changes efficiently and did not discuss them with Andrea.

David, too, made many meaning-preserving changes at the computer. But often his revisions were about how to improve overall sentence fluency while maintaining the same meaning in the passage. For example, he revised the awkward introduction to a

quotation "His thought processes involved such comments as" to "His thoughts included." He also substituted the main subject of the case study's full name for his first name throughout the document.

One reason that these three students made many more meaning-preserving revisions than formal revisions was because their conference drafts had fewer comma splices and missing commas that were in Janelle's and Carmen's conference drafts. David did correct some punctuation mistakes during his revisions session but did not have as many mistakes as Carmen and Janelle had in their drafts.

Carolyn and Andrea did not integrate two direct and two indirect suggestions into the final draft, which was a small number compared to the total that Nancy made. They did not integrate suggestions that they believed Professor Jones would not approve of. Although they did tell Nancy that they were not interested in taking some of her suggestions (such as Nancy's suggestion to cite the sources in more detail), they also evaluated other suggestions of Nancy's during the revision session. An example of this evaluation was how Carolyn and Andrea discussed a moment in the conference when they talked with Nancy about how they described a chemical process that involved chlorine. The following excerpt from the writing conference focused on how Carolyn and Andrea presented a part of their procedure that involved a chlorine atom.

> Carolyn: Okay, um, *this process will be carried out by dissolving 1-naphthol in potassium   hydroxide and ethanol. The conjugate base of 1-naphthol will displace the chloride of epichlorohydrin in an S-N-2 reaction.* Is it chloride, or should we say chloride ion or just chloride?
> Nancy: I think, um, displace [the chlorine atom, [maybe   yeah
> Carolyn: [{?}   [the chlorine atom   'cause that's what's leaving.
> Nancy: If it's the only chlorine in there, then yeah.

Again, Nancy usually answered their questions directly and did not turn the question around and ask them what they would do in this situation. In our interview later, I did not ask Nancy about this specific moment in the conference, but Nancy seemed to believe that they were working "together" to revise the essay (personal interview, April

29, 2009). During their revision session, Carolyn and Andrea discussed this possible revision and had this brief exchange when they decided not to integrate the change. Carolyn was typing the changes into the computer, and Andrea was reading them to her from the draft.

> Andrea: I thought when he explained it, he said this displaced the chloride was how he had phrased it.
> Carolyn: Yeah.
> Andrea: I think that's fine.
> Carolyn: If he didn't say anything specifically about it, it'll be fine.

Carolyn and Andrea's revision session was mediated by the specific feedback that they had already received from Professor Jones. Carmen, Janelle, and David, however, did not seem to revise with such specific knowledge about what their instructors wanted based on earlier feedback. They had general a general notion of what the instructor wanted to see in their writing that mediated how much effort they were willing to put into the revising process.

The changes to the final draft of Carolyn and Andrea's lab report were not major structural changes; most of the revisions were changes that Carolyn and Nancy believed refined their meaning or helped them to meet their instructor's expectations. In this sense, their textual revisions were very similar to the kinds that Carmen and Janelle made— even though they had different knowledge of what their instructors wanted to read. For example, they may have substituted "following desiccation" for "after drying" to try to sound more professional. Some of the formal changes that Nancy suggested were that they remove the parentheses from around the superscripts and using percent signs instead of the word "percent." Carolyn and Andrea's heavy focus on making substitution revisions was a sign of how they believed they were very close to finishing their report after a long process of writing several drafts and showing them to others for feedback.

At another time in the revision session, Carolyn and Andrea thought about whether to include the name of the equipment that they used in the experiment. Nancy had suggested that they do this, but they hesitated because Professor Jones had not

suggested that revision even after reading several drafts of their report. He had told them earlier in their writing process that he did not want a very detailed account of the laboratory procedures. When they reached that part of their report, they wanted to ask Professor Jones if they should include the name of the instrument, but he had already finished the discussion with the student and had left for lunch. Andrea went down the hall and found another chemistry professor in her office who said that they should include the name of the spectrometer. Andrea returned to the computer lab and told Carolyn about what the other professor said, and then she went to the lab to find the name of the spectrometer. Carolyn and Andrea demonstrated how careful they were and concerned about their grade by scrutinizing a minor revision.

At the end of the revision session, Carolyn suggested that she could show the report to her mother who could proofread it. In our interview, however, Carolyn told me that she did show it to her mother because she needed to study for a test and did not want to be distracted by a long conversation (personal interview, April 28, 2009).

Later that evening, Carolyn went through the report by herself one more time to make corrections. Carolyn made three independent, meaning-preserving revisions before submitting the lab report. She changed "IR" to "IR spectrum," substituted "observed" for "visible" in one sentence, and substituted "following desiccation" for "after drying."

Unlike Carolyn and Andrea, who stopped revising after they made all the corrections that they wanted to make, David decided not to pursue certain revisions because he believed that he had made sufficient changes to receive a decent grade on the paper. He made almost all of the substitution revisions with the help of Ann and Lisa, and focused on revising the format (the majority of his formal revisions) when he was working by himself.

David made mostly formal revisions while he tried to ensure that is paper was in APA format. Not only did he want to cite his sources in APA format, but also revise so that his headers, title page, and page numbers were in APA format, too. Thus, I observed

him add a title page to his document. He also added a running header and page numbers to the document. It was at this time that I interfered with the revision process because I helped him to reveal the ruler in Microsoft Word. After he had finished these revisions to the format, he e-mailed the essay to his professor.

When I was asking him questions about his sources, he realized that he had not cited the case study from the *Harvard Business Review*. He asked another student, Brynna, who was working at a different computer, to help him cite the case study. After searching the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab and conducting a few Google searches about how to cite a case study in APA format, Brynna was unable to find the correct method of citation. (A copy of the *APA Manual* was behind the front desk, but Brynna did not consult it.) Instead of waiting for Brynna to find the answer, David decided to end the conference. He said that he might lose some points for not citing the case study, but he did not expect to get a good grade in the class anyway. Thus, unlike Carolyn and Andrea, who believed they addressed every last detail, David's fatigue may have contributed to him wanting to stop.

The students in this section mostly made formal and meaning-preserving revisions that did not significantly alter the meaning of their texts. They made these revisions to try to ensure that their writing was free from errors in grammar and mechanics. They also wanted to ensure that their local meanings were exact. However, these students did not develop new psychological tools in their conferences, so they did not have new writing processes, techniques, or strategies to use in their future writing tasks. In essence, their situation definition of writing conferences and revision did not change.

In the next section, I turn to the students who visited the writing center without specific goals, Tim and Cindy, but who did develop new psychological tools that mediated their revision processes.

How Students Who Developed Psychological Tools

Revised Their Writing

Tim and Cindy, who did not have specific goals for their writing conferences, developed psychological tools that they could use in their revising process. These students did not just use corrected drafts to revise their writing. Cindy learned from her writing conference about the importance of being "explicit" in making her points so that the reader could understand her ideas. Like Carmen and Janelle most of the textual revisions that she made were additions to the text. Tim learned about the importance of paying close attention to his word selection in his revision process because Maureen asked him incisive questions about why he chose specific words (such as the words that ended in "–ion" in his poem "Drawing"

Figure 9 illustrates how the new concepts were a tool in the revising processes of Tim and Cindy. Unlike the activity systems of the students I discussed earlier in this chapter, the tool was not identical to the outcome of the revision process. In these cases, the student could use the psychological tool in different ways to create revisions that they did not specifically discuss with their consultants.

Figure 9. The Activity System of the Revision Process of Students Who Developed
        Psychological Tools in the Writing Conferences
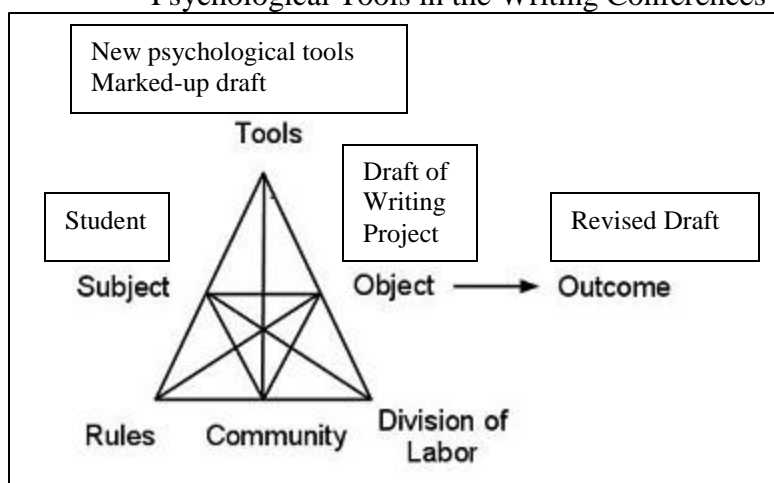
Both of these students interacted with consultants who did not make specific, direct suggestions about how the students could revise their grammar or mechanics. And, of course, one reason that Tim was not concerned about grammar and mechanics may have been that the genre of poetry is different than prose. Cindy, too, visited the writing center not to have her essay edited, but to fulfill the requirement of having a consultant read her thesis to discuss how to improve it.

Of all of these students, Tim was perhaps the most enthusiastic student about his writing and his visit to the writing center, and this enthusiasm seemed to carry over into his revision process. In our interview, Tim had told me several times about how revising his writing and sharing his writing with others was important to him:

> I would often write my poems and revise my poems in the library, and there'd be, you know, students, friends of mine sitting next to me at a computer next to me…. I would just in the moment ask them what they thought, or, you know, would be excited about something and share it with them. (personal interview, May 19, 2009)

Cindy, on the other hand, was not eager to revise her essay after visiting the writing center. One reason, which I learned about in our interview and not from the conference, was that after Cindy visited the writing center, she needed to get started on a new writing project for the class (personal interview, May 19, 2009). Also, Cindy may have wanted additional feedback because she returned to her instructor for more feedback about her thesis (personal interview, May 19, 2009). It was at this meeting with her instructor that Cindy received additional feedback about how to revise her thesis statement and how to integrate secondary source material that depicted the nature of gender relations in the 19th century. Cindy told me about this process, "So [Professor Simpson] gave me comments and then the center gave me comments and a direction, and I had to balance" (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

Cindy did not go the writing center to discuss the second writing assignment because of how she was treated before her writing conference with Brynna. Cindy said, "…my second time was I'll just go to the teacher. At least I know he's paid to. ((laughs))

He, he has to do it….I just didn't feel welcome in the center" (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

In much the same way that Carmen revised her writing, most of the meaning-preserving and microstructure revisions that Cindy made to her essay were additions. Using the new tool she had developed in her conference, Cindy wanted to ensure that she was being "explicit" enough in describing her points.

One way that Cindy revised to be more explicit was by expanding her thesis. Even though the professor required Cindy to visit the writing center to ensure that she had a strong thesis, Cindy said that the revised thesis was influenced more by comments that the professor sent her through Moodle, the course management system (personal interview, May 19, 2009). Her first thesis statement was: "By admitting in plain and explicit terms that women have just as many sexual needs as men, Kate Chopin broke through a glass ceiling in both literature and in a woman's life, and it also opened new roads of communication for both men and women." In her final draft, Cindy deleted the first verbal phrase and added:

> Moving against the current of her time and culture, in "The Storm," Kate Chopin frankly affirms that women, like men, are sexual beings who benefit from normal orgasmic sexual intercourse. Her story suggests the following benefits: the release of built up sexual tension, and with that release, return to a more positive equilibrium with those around you. Furthermore, Chopin affirms that sexual fulfillment has benefits even if it takes place outside of marriage. She shows this by the complacent attitudes shown by the participants of the act.

In this added section in the final draft, the first sentence includes the ideas in the deleted verbal phrase, and the additional information explains concrete "benefits" and makes clear that she is going to discuss how these benefits also apply to extramarital sex. Her essay describes how female characters in "The Storm" and "The 'Cadian Ball" have extramarital sexual relationships, but besides demonstrating that these women have realized sexual fulfillment, the essay still does not describe how communication has improved or how people "return to a more positive equilibrium with those around you."

This added section is indicative of a kind of revision in which the student seeks to

correct a section without clearly addressing how the addition or deletion of text affects coherence. The section she added between the part of the first paragraph of the essay, which is a discussion of how women have been continually trying to break through many glass ceilings (with a reference to how Hillary Clinton nearly became the Democratic Party's nominee for the general election in 2008), and the mention of the "glass ceiling" in the second paragraph. Thus, instead of the reader having to read just one verbal phrase before the concept of the "glass ceiling" is brought up in the second paragraph, he or she must read three sentences without knowing how the ideas are going to be connected to the "glass ceiling" idea in the first paragraph. It may have been that seeing she needed to be more explicit at the beginning, Cindy added more information without realizing that the additional information had no effective transition. In other revisions to her text, Cindy showed that she was aware of making effective transitions, such as when she decided to break (based on Brynna's suggestion) the paragraph discussing both stories into two paragraphs and added a transition to forecast that she was going to discuss how, in "The Storm," Kate Chopin describes women's sexual intensity.

In her revision of the thesis statement, she focused more on sexual relationships in "The Storm." Indeed, her first new sentence mentioned that story specifically, and she revised to be more specific about how women benefit from a release of tension, and that the benefits extended to extramarital sex. Cindy also claimed that Chopin showed that extramarital sex had benefits because the participants (Alcee and Calixta) had "complacent attitudes" toward what they did.

Cindy also tried to be more explicit in the body of his essay by adding text to emphasize the points that she was making. She did not add any different quotations from "The Storm" to illustrate her points, but added additional text to highlight how Kate Chopin illustrated the romantic relationships in "The Storm." For example, she tried to emphasize her idea that Alcee and Calixta found something special in their extramarital relationship. Cindy added the sentence, "Both Alcee and Calixta were married to people

who did not share the same sexual intensity but having these two characters come together, they can release built up tension in each other's embrace."

Not all of the meaning-related revisions were due to Cindy's effort to be more explicit. Following the suggestion of her instructor, Cindy also added several quotations from secondary sources about the role of women. Like Carmen, she inserted these quotations without adjusting the text around them to accommodate the revision. Cindy also added more details about the sections of the stories that she quoted

In our interview, Cindy told me that she was surprised when she learned (after her conference) that she needed to add secondary source material to her essay, and she said she didn't notice any of her classmates trying to integrate information from authors who wrote about the time period in which Chopin wrote. (Cindy, however, did not cite the resource in a works cited page or references list.) This microstructure revision—though it was substantial—was appended to the end of the second paragraph without any introductory transition, nor did Cindy refer to the ideas again later in the essay. Cindy added the text only because she felt she was required to by her instructor.

> "In the book "The Light of the Home" by Harvey Green it states "One mother wrote to her young daughter that "the devotion of the lover seldom survives the bridal, but where the wife has cultivated those qualities which will command lasting regard and esteem, there comes a quiet happiness far more enduring." (Page21)

. Cindy believed that the suggestions that she decided not to use were helpful because they helped her determine which direction not to take in the revision process (personal interview, May 19, 2009). Thus she believed that Brynna's suggestions about, for example, adding more information about how Chopin became a writer gave her a better idea of what not to explore in her revision.

Cindy balanced these ideas from her instructor with the plan that she developed in her conference with Brynna. She said, "[The professor] gave me comments and a direction and then the center gave me comments and a direction, and I had to balance" (personal interview, May 19, 2009). (The peer feedback seemed to have played no role in

her revising process; she never claimed that her peer feedback helped her make any of the changes.) As in her conference with Alicia, Brynna made more indirect suggestions than direct suggestions during the writing conference, and Brynna also prompted Cindy to revise her own text. Of the seven indirect suggestions that Brynna made, Cindy integrated three that did not require her to carry out additional research or take the paper in a different direction. Cindy was able to consider each of the suggestions because she wrote down each indirect suggestion in the margin of her draft. She followed Brynna's indirect suggestion about breaking up a large paragraph that discussed both stories into two paragraphs, and she also followed another of Brynna's suggestions by adding a sentence at the end of her essay to that picked up on the theme of the glass ceiling that she used in her introduction. And although Brynna had suggested that Cindy talk in more detail about how Chopin explicitly characterized the relationship between Alcee and Calixta, Cindy, instead, tried to emphasize and clarify and be "explicit" about what how revolutionary Chopin was in depicting women's sexuality. Cindy claimed that she needed to consider how to integrate suggestions that she received from both the writing center and her instructor.

Almost as important, however, was why Cindy decided not to integrate the remaining indirect suggestions. Cindy, for example, decided that it was not important to go into detail about the beginning of Chopin's career, to add more information about the French's attitudes toward intimate relationships, or to go into more detail about Clarissa. Clarissa was only mentioned once in the essay, and Cindy may have avoided going into more depth about her because she focused greatly on Alcee and Calixta.

Like Alicia, Cindy did not make any changes formal changes as a result of meeting with Brynna. Brynna did prompt Cindy to fix a problem of a missing word, which Cindy did fix. Also, she substituted a different phrase for the first-person singular pronoun because Brynna told her that the first-person pronoun did not belong in the essay. But Brynna did not comment on how Cindy used "We" in her draft. This may have

been due, in part, to the fact that Brynna emphatically said that it was not her job to edit papers. Or Brynna may have considered that it was not appropriate to use "I," but "We" was acceptable. (I did not ask Brynna about this specific issue.) During her revision, Cindy did add the phrase "We would think that" when she revised a different sentence, so she seemed to believe that only "I" was inappropriate.

When I sent Brynna my interpretations of her participation in this writing conference, she sent me back a long, annotated response. In a section where I had stated that reading silently prevented her from being able to notice at least one sentence-level problem in the paper, she wrote back, "I'm a bit concerned as how you portray me…. It isn't my job to edit/correct papers; they need to do this themselves. And, actually, it is strictly against the rules I <u>can't</u> edit" (personal communication, March 25, 2010). Thus, I needed to change my assumption that when Brynna was reading silently she was missing errors in grammar and mechanics.

Also, Brynna differed with my interpretation that she was asking Cindy to add additional information to the essay that was not related to the thesis. Brynna commented on this sentence in my member check: "Brynna did not consider herself to be an authority like the professor. This is interesting because Brynna did not did not hesitate when making suggestions about breaking up a paragraph or adding background information about the life of Kate Chopin." About this she wrote in the margin, "purpose was meant to relate to thesis better and make it easier to read…I believe this is important to note" (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Cindy said that she would not return to the writing center even though she did receive some feedback that was useful and did receive an A on the assignment. Ultimately, Cindy was surprised that she could do so little work and still receive a good grade in the class. She did not have to work very hard on integrating the material that her professor suggested she add about women's role in society:

I still put in minimal effort. I just want to know what would happen if—I mean, to get an A is great, but I get an A with minimal effort. … I mean there doesn't seem to be a reason to do that, to put in a lotta effort, if I'm gonna get the A anyway. (personal interview, May 19, 2009)

The technique of revising by inserting passages of text was in line with Cindy's view of revising as a way to fix a paper. The majority of the meaning-preserving and microstructure changes involved the addition of information that either further explained her views of Kate Chopin's writing or tried to make a connection to a scholar's work. In her conferences, Brynna focused on discussing the texts with students and the discussions usually were focused on clarifying the meaning or adding new text; she did not make suggestions about what needed to be removed. The students who were most interested in revising for the instructor or fixing a piece of writing (as opposed to revising for personal goals) were more interested in this kind of addition.

Tim's revisions, on the other hand, were difficult to trace exactly to his conference because he did not make many specific revisions that were a direct result of the conferences that he had with Maureen. I also believe that Tim was more independent than students like Carolyn and Andrea because he did not revise parts of his poems even after his instructor gave him written comments that seemed to question his choices. During my interview with Tim, he was unable to recall why he made specific revision because the revision sessions happened long before he submitted his final portfolio to his instructor.

In both revision sessions, Tim revised according to his own goals, trying to be more aware of his word choices and how his audience interpreted them. Unlike students like Janelle and Carmen who revised once, Tim revised his poems several times. The first revisions he sent me were the day after his first conference with Maureen—we had scheduled a later date and time at which I could observe him revise, but he began working on revising soon after his conference. He rearranged the order of the first two stanzas and made several deletions, including shortening the title to "Drawing". He told

me that his class had suggested to him that put the artist in the first stanza, so he made

that revision (personal interview, May 19, 2009). Here is the text of the revised poem:

"Drawing"

Trained in observation,
the artist makes generalization
of organization.

Pencil to paper,
a materialization
describing a scene.

The mark,
informed with concentration
and relation,

is an imitation:

two apples,
one pear,
in a white bowl
on a table,
spot light shining.

At his second revision session, which I observed in the library, he made fewer

revisions, as if he were content with the poem. He removed an article and added a

parenthetical phrase at the end:

"Drawing"

Trained in observation,
the artist makes generalization
of organization.

Pencil to paper,
materialization
describing a scene.

The mark,
informed with concentration
and relation,

is an imitation:

two apples,
one pear,
in a white bowl

on a table,
spot light shining.

(Learning from the thing)

As to "Canyon," Tim decided to revise the last stanza to clarify the final image in the poem by removing the image of "cracks of hands" and by separating the stanza into two new ones. He made "with nature's evolution, / excavating itself," its own stanza. The new last stanza was "And the lines of hands, / moist with the dripping, / are cleared from dust, / until it builds again." Although the new last stanza seems to clear up the possible confusion of trying to see "cracks of hands," the expletive "it" in the last line is perhaps too ambiguous, and it is not clear just what is about to "begin" again. Although this specific revision is not linked to discussions that Tim had with Maureen, this may have been related to how Tim said that his conference with Maureen helped him to think more deeply about the choices he made in his poems.

Indeed, of the students who carried out revision after their writing conferences, Tim had the least number of revisions that were directly related to the conference discussion. Except for his revision to "Canyon" that he discussed with Alicia, all of his other revisions were independent. They had focused almost completely on the ideas in the poems, and Tim even admitted in his interview that he wanted to discuss their meaning and that he had not come in to have them fixed or corrected.

Tim made no revisions to "Second Floor Reading Room," which was the only poem of the three that he included in his end-of-semester portfolio. His instructor had written beside the first two stanzas "good image" but she circled the last line of the poem—"mother fluttering just above"—and wrote "purching" [sic] beside the line along with a question mark. Tim reiterated in my interview with him that he liked the line and the poem and did not feel like he should change it. Tim had a strong sense of identity as a writer, enjoyed sharing his poems, and participated in open-mics. Perhaps his experience as a studio art major also played a role in his desire to adhere to how he wanted his poems to be.

Conclusion and Prelude to Next Chapter

The students who did not have specific goals for their writing center conferences revised their writing differently based on the kinds of tools they developed in their writing conferences and their goals for completing their writing. Those that developed corrected drafts in their conferences—Carolyn and Andrea, Janelle, and Carmen—used their marked-up drafts to make most of their revisions, which were formal and meaning-preserving revisions that they believed would be acceptable to their instructors. David, who conducted his conference at the computer, produced the new draft in the conference because he wanted to be efficient. These students did not develop new conceptions of revising, and their situation definitions of revising did not appear to change during the revision process.

The students who did appear to develop new writing strategies in their conferences—Cindy and Tim—both used the conference discussion to refine their meaning during the revision process. Even though Brynna and Maureen did not explicitly try to promote situation redefinition on the part of their students, they did promote students' development of better conceptions for academic writing.

How these students responded to different kind of suggestions (i.e., direct or indirect) depended on the kind of revision that the suggestion was about. These students always integrated suggestions about formal and meaning-preserving suggestions because they were interested in submitting writing that was correct. These students also avoided making substantial revisions to their meaning unless they believed that these changes were what their instructor wanted to see. These outcomes for students who wanted their writing corrected were primarily their corrected texts and not their understanding of how to apply new conceptions of writing or revising in the future. The students whose conferences were not focused on editing did develop new tools that enabled them to revise according to a new situation definition.

In the next chapter, I explore the writing conferences of a different group of students that consisted of writing consultants. These students had specific goals for their writing conferences and revision process, so they participated actively in discussing their writing and suggesting ways to revise their writing. These consultants preferred having conferences with each other because of the degree of mutual participation in them—a quality that they seemed to prefer about having "incestuous" conferences. They did not try to have such conversations with students who were not writing consultants.

CHAPTER IV:

HOW STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC GOALS PARTICIPATED IN

THEIR WRITING CONFERENCES

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I described the writing conferences and revision processes of students who used the writing center because they were required to or because they wanted a writing consultant to identify and correct their sentence-level errors in their writing. These students did not have specific textual goals for their conferences because they could not identify possible errors or aspects of their texts that required clarification.

In this chapter, I discuss a different group of students that were composed of writing center consultants who had writing conferences about their own writing. These student-consultants, Garrett, Alicia, and Brynna, had specific goals for their writing conferences, and they participated more actively in their conferences by setting the agenda and using the consultant to mediate their revision process. (When I discuss conferences between writing consultants, I will refer to consultants who had the role of writer as the student.")

Assertions

Alicia, Brynna, and Garrett had specific goals for their writing conferences and used their conferences to help them revise their writing. Because they had specific goals, they took an active role in identifying problems and suggesting ways to fix them. Instead of evaluating the consultants' suggestions based on whether or not their instructor would approve of the revision, these students judged possible revisions according to their own goals for their writing.

The writing consultants shared similar situation definitions of the purpose of a writing conference and of the revision process. Thus, they preferred having conferences with each other because each person understood that the conference should focus on

meaning-related concerns and that the student should take an active role. The writing conferences of these students, however, shared an important quality with the ones that I described in the previous chapters: the consultants themselves did not negotiate new situation definitions with the student-consultants because their writing conferences were also focused on how to revise their texts as opposed to how to improve their strategies. (The consultants in these writing conferences all indicated in their report forms that the conferences were draft-focused; this was the same for consultants in conferences in which the students did not have specific goals.)

This chapter is divided into two sections based on the kinds of goals that these students had. Garrett and Alicia exhibited a kind of behavior that was peculiar to writing consultants in this study: they visited the writing center with a specific plan to revise aspects of their text or compose new portions within the conference while their consultant helped them. They had immediate textual goals for their conference. Brynna, on the other hand, did not have a conference to create new text, but did have specific questions about the organization of her piece of creative nonfiction. Brynna was more interested in receiving feedback about decisions she made in writing her piece of creative nonfiction.

A Place to Continue Writing: How Alicia and Garrett Used

Conferences to Refine Their Writing and Expand Their

Drafts

Alicia and Garrett were two students who had writing center conferences to not only refine their writing but also to compose additional text. Although Alicia had already typed the descriptions for most of her experiences that she included in her résumé, she wanted help as she wrote two more descriptions of two aspects of her experience from a summer semester that she spent at her college's wilderness station, "Environmental Law" and "Cook's Assistant." Environmental Law was a summer course that she took at the wilderness station, where she worked in the kitchen as "Cook's Assistant." Initially, she thought that she could leave out descriptions of these items, but in our interview she told

me that a professional at the college's Career Services office told her that she needed the descriptions, so she decided to discuss them in her conference with Brynna (personal interview, February 26, 2009). Garrett had the goal of refining his introduction during the conference because he believed it was inadequate. He needed to turn in his paper later that day, and he wanted to finish the paper in the writing center.

These students differed from the other students in the research study in that they talked specifically about how the writing center helped them to improve the greater meanings in their writing. Garrett told me in our interview that he enjoyed having writing conferences because in a conference he needed to justify his ideas, which helped him to strengthen his writing. He said, "The act of discussing [my writing] helps to improve it and, um, bring along, like it forces you to develop your ideas more fully 'cause someone's other than you is questioning" (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

He also believed that having writing conferences helped him with most of the aspects of a paper:

> [O]ur papers just always turn out better after I conference, 'cause like I go up, um, a letter grade, honestly. It helps correct grammar mistakes, um, some organizational issues. It's, I'm a very detailed for a tree guy in that I have to like step back and have someone look at the forest for me. (personal interview, April 9, 2009)

Alicia also told me that she could improve her main meanings after she discussed her writing with someone else. At our interview, Alicia said, "I always feel like my wordage gets stronger when I talk to someone about it in a résumé…" (personal interview, February 26, 2009).

The other writing consultants in the research study freely emphasized how they preferred working with each other in "incestuous" conferences because they had similar expectations of what should happen in a writing conference. Maureen summarized how this community was an excellent environment for talking about writing:

> [W]e [writing consultants] are coming at the conferences with the same (.) the same level of background about what conferencing is, uh, and we're able to speak freely. You know what I mean? I know that when somebody says something

about my paper, they're not critiquing me they're trying to help me. (personal interview, February 18, 2009)

Brynna noted that working in the writing center was convenient because she could easily speak with another writing consultant:

[W]hen I see one problem in a paper but I can't fix it, and I don't know what other people see it as, I get incredibly frustrated. Incredibly frustrated. And infuriated with it. Like I don't even want to touch it. So it (.) it makes it a lot easier if I go and like talk to somebody, like when I was in high school, I would talk to my mom because we didn't really do stuff like this. But now working here, like it's perfect, like we go and talk about it…. (personal interview, March 24, 2009)

Paula, who facilitated the conference with Garrett, not only preferred working with other consultants, but also believed that those conferences were more successful because both parties expected to talk about writing, not just the draft. She told me in our interview, "And I think that working with another writing center consultant in a conference, my goals are much more likely to be achieved" (personal interview, April 7, 2009). She also said that she believed students who were not writing consultants would be uncomfortable with a discussion about writing: "I imagine they [students] might think I was a little bit crazy if I said, 'This isn't really a conference about the paper; it's a conference about writing'" (personal interview, April 7, 2009).

As to why they decided to have conferences, Alicia and Garrett also told me about different motives that other students did not have. Alicia decided to have the writing conference with Brynna not only because she wanted help revising her résumé, but also because she wanted to win the prize for having the most conferences. She agreed to exchange a conference with Brynna, and she also wanted to participate in the research study (personal interview, February 26, 2009). According to Alicia, every semester the writing center director gave a prize to the consultant who logged the most conferences. (The prize consisted of gift certificates to the college bookstore.) In our interview, Alicia said that she didn't think there would be much competition for the prize because she didn't think that other consultants tried to have extra writing conferences (personal interview, February 26, 2009). At the end of the semester, I learned that Alicia did, in

fact, win the prize for having the most conferences, and Brynna won the prize for being

the first-year consultant who facilitated the most conferences. Garrett, on the other hand,

told me in our interview that sometimes he liked to have writing conferences because

they entitled him to a free cup of coffee (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

<center>Garrett's and Alicia's Pre-Conference Writing Processes:</center>

<center>Seeking Feedback Before the Conference</center>

In their conference report forms, the consultants in these conferences wrote about

their students' specific goals for their conferences, indicating that the students had

already discussed their writing with others and had specific reasons for the conferences

that I observed. Paula wrote, "Garrett had already conferenced on some sections of the

paper so we focused on the remaining sections, which included the introduction,

conclusion, and issues sections." Garrett also told me in our interview that he had had a

conference with another consultant in which the consultant helped him to "clarify and

grammar check" the history and issues sections in his paper (personal interview, April 9,

2009). Garrett believed that the history section and half of the issues section were

finished, so he had a specific plan to only discuss the second half of the issues section, his

introduction and conclusion, and the solutions section (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

Alicia, too, had specific goals that she made clear during the conference. Brynna

described Alicia's goals in this sentence from the summary:

> The writer brought in her resume [sic], she'd taken it to Career Services
> previously, but the changes that they'd made there mostly involved the look and
> professionalism of the resume, and now she wanted to talk more In-depth and
> expand upon her specific experiences.

In her "incestuous" conference, Alicia focused entirely on the meaning of her

résumé and not on surface concerns because she believed the purpose of the conference

was to help her talk about her writing out loud and ensure that she was communicating

her meaning correctly. One reason she focused on the descriptions of her experience,

also, was because she had addressed many formal and meaning-preserving revisions

before her writing conference. A few days before her writing conference, Alicia had met with a professional at Career Services who helped her with the format and conventions of résumé writing. Brynna, who was not familiar with Alicia's work experience at the outset of the conference, asked probing questions and prompted Alicia to develop the descriptions of her experience in order to revise her résumé.

When Garrett and Alicia arrived for their conferences, they had specific goals to achieve, and both of them did not address those parts of their texts that they had already received feedback. This was very different from the other group of students who wanted their consultants to identify errors in any section of their texts.

Mutual Participation: How Garrett and Alicia Directed the

Agenda and Allowed Their Consultants Also to Direct the

Agenda

When they had their individual conferences, Garrett and Alicia discussed drafts that were almost finished; they both wanted to work on expanding their drafts to ensure that they would be complete. Garrett had a seven-page, double-spaced complete draft of his essay entitled "Likud's Position on Resolving the Palestinian Problem." Garrett had stayed up late the night before to complete the draft. The introduction of the essay— which Garrett would expand with Paula's help—was a three-sentence paragraph that included a direct announcement of the purpose of the essay (to describe the Likud's positions on the conflict in Israel and Palestine, to present Likud's solutions and a plan to effect them, and to describe why other groups' solutions were ineffective). It also included a two-page bibliography in MLA format; most of the sources were from online news sources such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

The draft that Alicia brought to the writing center was the same copy that she took to Career Services; the draft was covered with notes about how to fix the format and information about adding the location to the main headers. This draft was one page, and there were three sections: 1) contact information at the top, where Alicia's name was

centered at the top of the page in a white font that was set in a gray oval; 2) a short Education section that listed her school, major, anticipated graduation date, and GPA; and 3) a "Sustainability Experience" section that included her experience in environmentally-friendly activities such as her participation in the Environmental Club and her effort as "Eco-House Director." Most of the positions in the "Sustainability Experience" section had descriptions of her activities, but one sub-header "XYZ School Wilderness Station" comprised two items, "Environmental Law" and "Cook's Assistant," that had no descriptions. (XYZ School is the pseudonym for the institution.) Alicia thought they were self-explanatory and did not require additional information, but the person she met with at the Career Center said that she needed to describe them (personal interview, February 26, 2009).

At the beginning of their conferences, Alicia and Garrett both discussed what they had written before their meetings, and they stated specific goals that they wanted to achieve. Alicia, for example, described the position that she was applying for and that she had already sought help from Career Services. She also discussed how she needed to add more descriptions of her experience and ensure that the existing descriptions were effective. She asked Brynna about whether she had facilitated writing conferences about résumés before and then set the overall agenda for the conference by asking Brynna to read the résumé and comment on the descriptions of her experience:

> Alicia: Basically, like the main thing I need to work on right now is how to like effectively describe my, um, my time, like, environmental law assistant and so I was thinking that you could read through it and just tell me, um, if my descriptions of my experience is, you know, effective?
> Brynna: Okay.
> Alicia: You know, 'cause I know that you haven't really done a lot of résumés before, maybe you haven't. I don't even know if you've conf done résumés before.
> Brynna: Um, I've been working on mine significantly for internships, so.
> Alicia: Okay, yeah, so if you could just like (.) read through it and tell me what you think, [I guess when it comes to, like, how descriptive this is and
> Brynna: [okay
> Alicia: if it is active enough.

Garrett, too, spoke specifically about the goals for his conference, suggesting that

he knew what he wanted to work on and would direct the agenda of the conference.

> Paula: So, (.) what would you like to work on?
> Garrett: Um, so I conferenced yesterday and we ran over. Yesterday I had
>   through, I had my history part through, and I had my issues part. Um,
>   so we can briefly look over those. They should be okay.   Um, I do
> Paula: okay
> Garrett: need to beef up my introduction, which I can do now that everything
>   else is, I don't know, when I, when I first start, like, I'm one of these
>   guys that has to go in order, so like, put out my introduction and it's
>   more of an outline.   But I want to make it a proper introduction.
> Paula: mhm
> Garrett: So we need to work on the introduction and then, um, we should
>   probably work, like, definite grammar checks on
> Paula: Everything?
> Garrett: On solutions, implementations

After some further discussion, Garrett directed her to the middle of the report

where he wanted to begin looking over what might be wrong. This was similar to how

David could direct the attention of his consultants at his conference at the computer.

Garrett seemed to be content to not discuss earlier sections at all with Paula, unlike David

who was not sure what was wrong and so wanted a consultant to look over everything.

> Garrett: so we should probably start here on page four.   The status of
> Paula: okay
> Garrett: Jerusalem, and this is like, grammar [content. Mainly 'cause
> Paula: [okay
> Garrett: this is due today.

Garrett directed the conference because he took responsibility for reading and

identifying mistakes in his writing. He moved back and forth from correcting word-level

errors to adding new text. He identified more aspects to discuss than Paula did, as he did

in this excerpt:

> Garrett: Um, *Netanayu has also called for an end to uni'ral withdrawals,*
>   *pointing out, pointing* (.) *pointing* ((G. types)) *to Gaza as proof that*
>   *withdrawals will make Israel more vulnerable.*   *And that any area*
> Paula: okay
> Garrett: *that the IDF*, which is to say, ((G. types)) Israeli Defense Force.

Garrett could maintain much of the control over the agenda because he was

reading the paper. Alicia, however, set the overall agenda for the writing conference, but

she did not try to control how Brynna facilitated the conference because Brynna was

reading the draft and stopping to discuss aspects that she felt were unclear. For example,

even though at the beginning of the writing conference Alicia asked for help with the

items that had no descriptions, the first section that Brynna focused on was the second

header—"Eco-House Director." After reading silently, Brynna asked, "So what exactly

do you do as Eco-House Director?" This question, which was typical of the questions that

Brynna asked to learn more about Alicia's experience, initiated a discussion in which

Alicia talked in more detail about what her responsibilities were. When Brynna read

silently she focused on the existing text.

In both of these conferences, Alicia and Garrett were willing to engage in a

prolonged discussion of ideas in their texts and were not overly eager to proceed to fixing

the text. Whereas the students without specific goals did not want to engage in detailed

discussion about the backgrounds of their texts, all of the writing consultants were willing

to inform their consultant in on important information about their writing. They were

willing, in short, to have the conversations that Professor Grant said was the writing

center's specialty.

In this excerpt from the beginning of the conference, Garrett answered Paula's

questions about Likud's position in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Paula did not have

specialized knowledge of this subject matter, so she did not react when Garrett

mispronounced the name of Binyamin Netanyahu during the conference.

> Paula: In fact they want more or are they fine with what they have?
> Garrett: Yeah, that would be like The Golan Heights Initiative and like what Ariel Sharon did and then (.) um, yeah, they do want more. They want West Bank and Gaza, I think {?}, but they don't. Um, so there's that. But they are willing to abide by, like, um, and I mention this, 'cause their platform mentions that they abide by previously signed treaties.
> Paula: mm
> Garrett: 'Cause like it's democratically done. They um (.) so on, on territory they're like, they will give it up, but they really don't want to and it's only after Palestine has done like everything, will they follow it. Like the, the, the PM Benjamin Yurto or something   signed these
> Paula: mhm

<div style="margin-left: 2em">

Garrett: accords to like give up thirteen percent and then they gave up like seven percent and Palestine hadn't done what it was supposed to do, which was like collect guns and stop terrorism and like other things. And so then Israel said, nope! No more withdrawal, we're coming in. And Palestine's well, you agreed, and

Paula: And so the Likud was in support of not withdrawing any more.

Garrett: Yeah, basically always has been. Um, it's, I mean there, there's some hard right, very far right factions within Likud. Most of it's, it's center-right, so. Um, most of the PM's tend to swerve toward the center now.

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(Garrett called Netanyahu "Yurto" and "Netanayoo" at different points during the conference.) Garrett told me that he did not align himself with the Likud's position, so he may not have been enthusiastic enough about the topic to seek out the correct pronunciations of people and places.

And Alicia, too, told Brynna a lot about her background, which was information that Brynna could use in suggesting revisions to Alicia.

<div style="margin-left: 2em">

Alicia: So, yeah, these are things I've done, so I, I mean we went to a conference which I haven't, I need to spell that out but it's um, ASHE stands for (5s) ((knocks on table)), oh I used to know this by heart. I'll just look that up again, but it's basically like, um, colleges that are focused on sustainability, like any college that wants to improve the sustainability usually becomes a member of this ASHE thing. Um, and it's a way for campuses who are generally, rather liberal to, well, hopefully rather liberal to pool their resources and like effect change on a nationwide level just by [dint of being, I mean' cause I remember

Brynna: [okay

Alicia: this one example, I think it was, um, University of Oklahoma, no, Ohio? I don't know, it's, it's basically like, there's a university in some state that I didn't really expect this from that has like the highest number of students in their university than any other university in the country, and they switched over to recycled paper, and by dint of that college, that enormous university switching over to recycled paper, the price of recycled paper dropped down by one cent. (.)

Brynna: Wow.

Alicia: Yeah. ((laughs)) Worldwide. And isn't that ridiculous?

</div>

These excerpts were also typical of the friendliness and informality of conferences between consultants. It is my interpretation that the consultants' conferences were more like conversation because their conferences did not have the pattern of a consultant reading a section, making a suggestion, and moving to the next section. The writing consultants were also less concerned about offending each other by saying something direct about the text.

Although Garrett and Alicia had specific goals for their writing conferences, they also were content to have their consultants identify aspects of their texts to discuss. It is my interpretation that when Brynna read silently, she focused on problems in clarity of existing text; she did not use this technique to identify problems about absence of meaning. So Brynna read the different descriptions and asked Alicia questions about them so that she could help Alicia determine what she should include.

> Alicia: Okay, yeah, so if you could just like (.) read through it and tell me what you think, [I guess,
> Brynna: [okay
> Alicia: when it comes to, like, how descriptive this is, and if it is active enough.
> Brynna: All right. (20s) So what exactly do you do as Eco House Director?
> Alicia: Hmm, right now nothing ((laughs)) um, as Eco House Director right now I'm basically, um, budgeting next year, like budgeting out, um, what we're going to do next year with the, um, Young People Four Grant, um, it's honestly a bit of a fake name t ((soft t sound)) that I gave myself since the house doesn't necessarily exist yet.
> Brynna: Yeah.

Alicia continued to discuss this position and how she believed that she deserved this title. Brynna did not ask Alicia specific questions about the ethical concerns in the résumé. It is my interpretation that Brynna's situation definition of the conference was that it should be a conversation that focused on helping Alicia improve the main meaning of the résumé. In my interview with Brynna, I did not ask direct questions about why she did not raise any ethical concerns, so I cannot be sure about why she did not discuss ethics. I speculate that Brynna considered it her role to help students refine their meaning, not question their questionable motives underlying a problem in the text. For example, in the section about the proposal, Brynna suggested that Alicia show how she tried to keep the proposal going. In both cases, they adhered to the main goal of clarifying the résumé.

> Brynna: I was gonna say, because you might mention that because then it shows that you're dedicated (.) because you have, like, continued to do this against resistance, where it's [really not been going anywhere
> Alicia: [oh yeah, that's true
> Brynna: So (.) they might like to hear that (7s) ((sound of A. writing))

During this discussion Alicia wrote down a phrase in the margin and put a star next to it: "working on it for a while, even with resistance." This kind of exchange was

typical of the moments in the conversation when Brynna read silently and determined the aspects of the text to discuss. Alicia's conference draft was covered in notes; Alicia was active in the discussion and took copious notes during the writing conference on a draft that she had criss-crossed with notes that she wanted to integrate later.

Paula, however, did not hesitate to make direct suggestions during the conference. In this case, Paula interrupted to suggest to Garrett that he remove a single word. In general, Paula was comfortable with such interjections and did not seem to feel it was necessary to justify them.

Garrett: *Issues include if descendants have the right to return, if monetary compensation is okay in place of actual return to original home, and just who is responsible for* ((G. types))
Paula:　I would take out the just. (.) I don't think you need that. I think who was responsible. You can just say that. ((G. types))

A few moments later, Paula also made a direct suggestion about where Garrett could end a sentence.

Garrett: Yeah, and who was responsible for creating refugees in the first place. *When moral issues are not in question, capacity is: can Israel physically accommodate the refugees? Can the economy support the strain?* Uh, (.) *The* ((G. types)) *these economic issues are also debated*
Paula:　Debated where? (3s)
Garrett: Amongst, well, okay
Paula:　Okay, I guess, I was just. Okay, so the right to return has been established by U.N. Mandate but intensely debated between the two sides. Issues include blah, blah, blah. *When moral issues are not in question, capacity is:* ((G. types)) *Can Israel physically accommodate the refugees? Can the economy support the strain? These economic issues are also* {?}. I guess I don't think you even need that sentence.
Garrett: Yeah.
Paula:　Because you're saying, I'm, when moral issues are [not in question,
Garrett:　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[mhm, yeah
Paula:　you've already established that it's being debated because of the, like the, what, the second sentence?　　So I think, can the economy
Garrett:　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　mhm
Paula:　support the strain? You can just end it right there

Although Paula frequently suggested wording of specific revisions, Paula did not talk through each revision with Garrett; she read the sentence aloud with her suggested correction. When they were discussing the conclusion, Paula read a sentence out loud in which she included "Likud" to clarify which party Garrett was referring to. She read the

sentence as a question in order to implicitly ask Garrett if that revision was acceptable to him. This kind of discussion, in which the line between consultant and student was blurred, was very typical of their interaction. It was as if both were authors of the paper and did not need to question each other's suggestions about minor revisions.

> Paula: *With other parties and then the core of the Likud party cannot be neglected for* [*pure* reelection concerns? (9s) ((G. types))
> Garrett: [yeah   Okay.
> Paula: *Maintained and progress achieved.* (31s) ((G. types))

Although Garrett welcomed Paula's direct suggestions about editing local meaning in the text, he resisted having to go into more depth about different issues in his essay. Garrett was aware of his deadline and hesitated when he was asked to describe something in more detail. As a studio art major, Paula admitted that she was not knowledgeable of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Garrett was willing, however, to tell Paula that he did not think he needed to go into more depth because people in his political science class would understand his meanings.

Other times, however, Garrett specifically asked Paula for help with the coherence or logic in his writing. For example, when Garrett perceived that there was something wrong with the clarity of his ideas, he stopped to ask Paula her opinion about a sentence that he was unsure about. At first he only wanted to make sure he cited the BBC correctly, but he sensed a possible problem with the meaning.

> Garrett: *Likud, in short, stands for giving the Palestinians an entity but not a state.* Does this sentence fit in there? I really just wanted to source BBC news.

Before she responded, Paula read through the previous sentence to ensure that she understood the train of thought up until that moment. When she came to that sentence, she said she did not understand it:

> Paula: 'Kay, {?} Likud, in short, ((very softly)) stands for giving the Palestinians an entity—what does that mean?
> Garrett: {?} It stands for giving an entity but not a state?
> Paula: Yeah.
> Garrett: Um. (3s) Think of it like. It's like giving it Iowa but not giving it The United States.

Garrett continued to explain what he meant by "entity," but Paula was still

confused. She said that the sentence was "vague," and Garrett continued to explain that

by giving the Palestinians an "entity," the Israelis were going to be giving the

Palestinians land but not a "complete state" because Israel would still be in control of the

territory. As other consultants did, Paula was asking questions about confusing sections

so that they could be sure of Garrett's intended meaning. To fix the problem, Garrett even

suggested a solution of comparing the situation to other conflicts. He said, "What if I said

it was like the same thing as Scotland and the UK? Or like Wales within the UK?" Paula

agreed that that would probably clear up the confusion but almost immediately she began

to suggest that Garrett's intended audience would understand what he meant:

Paula: Of course, somebody reading this paper who has knowledge of those
           sorts [of things   They're gonna understand that
Garrett: [Who's a political science major.
Paula: sentence. Whereas me, I'm a [art major.   So, I think you can leave it
Garrett: [yeah   yeah
Paula: in there. Just be aware that it's less, um, it's definitely a sentence
           designed for political science people.
Garrett: Yeah, that's fine. This is a paper designed for political science people.

Garrett would use this same reason for not adding additional information when

Paula suggested that he include more information about the different holy sites in Israel

and their importance to both Muslims and Jews. Unlike Carmen, who avoided discussing

the revisions that she did not want to integrate into her revising, Garrett was willing to

talk about why he did not consider a suggestion to be appropriate for his revision.

Brynna also wanted to let Alicia talk about her ideas for revising. Brynna not only

asked questions to prompt Alicia to think about her experience and decide what she

wanted to include in her résumé, but she also helped Alicia to talk through the changes

that she wanted to make toward the end of the conference. Alicia directed the focus of the

conference to two sub-headers ("Environmental Law" and "Cook's Assistant") towards

the end of the writing conference. Interestingly, Brynna did not stop to ask Alicia about

these two sub-headers without any descriptions. In this example, Alicia talked herself

through generating text while Brynna sat next to her silently.

> Alicia: All right, so I'm gonna say dynamics, just gonna write {?} few footnotes here, so like dynamics of (5s), um (.), the creation (.), no dynamics of environmental (.) protection (3s) so (4s) all right gained (.) understanding (3s) of the complex dynamics of environmental protection.

During another moment in the writing conference, Brynna deflected Alicia's

request to say how she should specifically describe her experience. Whereas Nancy often

suggested specific language for students to use, Brynna wanted to ensure that students

came up with their own language. Immediately preceding this next excerpt from the

conference, Alicia described what she did as a cook's assistant and how she had to both

take initiative and follow directions. Brynna's suggestions here were ones that she knew

that Alicia would not take up. Brynna later told me in our interview that was feeling put

"on the spot" and felt like Alicia needed her to suggest a way to specifically revise

sections that she continually brought up. Brynna talked about the following excerpt in our

interview: "I knew that that would not work, but it got her thinking about other things as

well, and so then she was able to come up with something on her own that sounded

decent" (personal interview, February, 19, 2009).

> Brynna: Yes. (4s) You can say worked (2s), ((softly)) worked, mm (4s) to worked underneath to complete, underneath to complete daily tasks or something (11s). I don't know, 'cause that is, that's a very good point to get across, so, that you do, I mean you can take [(.) that
> Alicia: [yeah, oops, so yeah I can talk about being a team player (3s), um
> Brynna: Although if you, if you are actually, like, I was a team player [or something ((laughs))
> Alicia: [((laughs)) ((takes sarcastic tone)) I was a team player, no I'm not gonna actually just say that ((laughs)), um, um, followed directions cheerfully and efficiently—I'll say something like that ((laughs)).

Although Brynna generally avoided giving direct suggestions in her writing

conferences, she did occasionally suggest specific language that she had hoped that

students would use. Brynna suggested a specific change when Alicia struggled to find a

phrase that encapsulated how she learned to live and work among people who valued

being responsible stewards of the environment.

> Brynna: Well, you can say something-[thing to the effect of,
> Alicia: [low-impact living?
> Brynna: yeah, gained better
>   understanding of what it really is like to live in a low-impact setting.
> Alicia: Yeah.
> Brynna: For the environment. (.) [Because (3s) that is something that's, that's, is
> Alicia: [Hmm
> Brynna: something that's really important, and that is quite unique, where it
>   doesn't really exist in a whole lot of other places because I've never
>   really heard of that.

Although Alicia was open about how she created titles for herself, she did not

divulge all of the truth about how she padded her résumé. Brynna suggested that Alicia

talk more about how many hours she volunteered in the garden project. Alicia took notes

about the suggestions regarding the garden project, but she did not want to discuss it in

detail because the facts were not true. Alicia said about this aspect of her résumé, "I

didn't want to tell her that I had lied about that on the résumé, so I just figured I could

just take it out later and she'll never know, and I wouldn't have to lose face" (personal

interview, February 26, 2009).

Brynna's pattern of making indirect suggestions or asking prompting questions in

the conference with Alicia was similar to her behavior in other conferences. In her

conference with Alicia, Brynna made one direct suggestion and five indirect suggestions;

she prompted Alicia once to make one revision. Brynna only once discussed a possible

revision to the form of the résumé; she asked Alicia whether she needed an objective

statement. Brynna considered herself a person who "opens doors" for people who are in

the revising process and thus focused almost exclusively on higher-order concerns of

meaning during her writing conferences (personal interview, February 19, 2009). She

said in our interview after the conference, "I'm not the one who does the revising; I'm

not the one writing the paper. It's not my paper" (personal interview, February 19, 2009).

Brynna also said, "It, it doesn't bother me at all if she doesn't put anything that we talked about in there" (personal interview, February 19, 2009).

Alicia perceived that she was in control of the agenda. Alicia said, "I mean, I was pretty directive with the conference … I feel like during conference I, I was the one initiating stuff" (personal interview, February 26, 2009). Alicia, after all, was approaching graduation and was enthusiastic about the position she was applying for. Garrett was frequently typing changes as he talked to Paula, unlike David, for example, who only would type changes that he had discussed with Ann.

Alicia herself suggested the language for four different revisions that she talked about during the conference, and she would later integrate all four of the ones that she initiated and developed the language for. Much like other students who were not consultants, the student-consultants usually integrated the meaning-related revisions that the student-consultants suggested during the conference.

In none of these conferences between writing consultants did a consultant make a direct suggestion about where to make, or remove, a mark of punctuation. This was a striking difference between the "incestuous" conferences that I observed and the conferences with students who did not have specific textual goals for their writing conferences.

Brynna enjoyed having discussions with people she consulted with, and appreciated learning from the people she consulted with. Brynna told me in our interview that she felt the conference was successful (personal interview, February 26, 2009). In general, Brynna liked her conferences because she learned new things. For example, after her conference with Dan, she remarked that she had enjoyed learning about a new film that she wanted to see and meeting someone with common interests. Indeed, that conference between Brynna and Dan, after which the student did not revise anything, was the only one that a consultant had marked "Talk-Based" on the report form. Every other consultant labeled his or her conference as "Draft-Focused."

Although Brynna seemed to accurately recall how she participated in the writing conference by making mostly indirect suggestions, Paula's memory seemed to conflict with her actions in the conference. When I talked to Paula about her conference with Garrett, she said "One of the things I avoided, I tried to avoid saying was 'You should say this.' Like, specifically telling him specific things to do or just, and instead throwing out different ideas" (personal interview, April 7, 2009). Indeed, Paula frequently gave specific, direct suggestions. Also, Paula stated in our interview that she believed students who were not consultants would be confused if she told them that their conference would be more about "writing" than about the specific "paper," but her conference with Garrett was mostly about how he should edit his draft. (She even indicated in her summary form that the writing conference was "draft-focused.")

Garrett's statement about how he did not learn anything from the conference was typical of how writing consultants perceived their own conferences. He said, "And so I feel like writing center people tend to use the same techniques and then, um, like I, I've, so I haven't learned, I've learned it in the past, but I didn't learn it from this" (personal interview, April 9, 2009). Garrett's main outcome was his revised draft, not any new ideas about how to write.

In this section, I discussed the conferences in which Alicia and Garrett used the discussion to achieve specific goals as well as to receive other suggestions about how to revise their writing. These conferences were focused on refining or expanding the meaning in their texts and not on correcting errors in grammar and mechanics. In the next section, I discuss how Brynna had a writing conference not to generate new text, but to receive specific feedback about the presentation of events in her piece of creative nonfiction.

Wanting a Discussion and Not Changes to the Text: How

Brynna Looked for Feedback About Her Organization

In the conference in which Brynna had the role of student and Alicia was the consultant, most of the time was spent discussing ideas that either Alicia or Brynna brought up during the discussion. Brynna did not have to submit another draft until several days after the conference, so she was not motivated by finding a way to correct her writing that day. In fact, Brynna seemed somewhat ambivalent about having the conference, which was required for her because it was part of an assignment in her class for new writing consultants. She told me later in our interview about deciding to have the conference with Alicia: "And I was like, well I guess I have a Topics assignment, why not? Like I have to get a conference on it with an upperclassman (.) anyways" (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

Seeking Feedback Before the Conference

Like Alicia and Garrett, Brynna sought feedback before the conference about particular aspects of her writing, such as how she presented the different events that led her to believe that rain was an omen. Before the writing conference, Brynna had received feedback from two writing consultants who were also in the Topics class. One consultant only commented about how sad the story was, but the other gave more detailed feedback. Brynna said that they had mostly talked about the timeline of events, but Brynna told me in our interview that she was still concerned that she jumped around a lot in her short piece (personal interview, March 24, 2009). In the first paragraph, for example, Brynna discussed three different events: her uncle Kenny's divorce when she was seven, the time when Kenny was absent at Christmas dinner when she was eight and moving to when she was eight and did not see him at Thanksgiving and then at Christmas dinner. After that section, Brynna set up a framed narrative in which she discussed the day she learned about her uncle's death, talked about two days before that day when they learned about a jogger who had died of exposure in a park, and then returned to the moment when they

learned the jogger was her uncle. Because Brynna had a strict word limit for her piece of creative nonfiction, she was concerned that she was trying to discuss too many events in too few words. The entire first draft is located in APPENDIX G.

Finding the Best Arrangement: Brynna's Conference About

Organization

In the beginning of the writing conference, before Brynna read her essay out loud, Alicia tried to get more background information about Brynna's writing project. When Alicia asked Brynna what she was working on, Brynna began to discuss the assignment that Professor Grant gave to the Topics class, which was to write a short piece for *The Sun* magazine about one of four topics. Although Brynna was writing this piece for her Topics class, she also indicated that she was trying to meet the guidelines of the publication, too.

> Alicia: So, Brynna, what are you working on tonight?
> Brynna: Um (.) I'm working on a very short piece for my topics in composition class. The idea of the assignment was that we were supposed to, there's a certain section in a magazine called *The Sun*, and it's called "Readers Write."
> Alicia: Mhm.
> Brynna: And it's where, I, I almost feel like it's kind of a catharsis piece that people send in concerning a certain subject and like I said it's very short, usually, definitely no more than like a couple of paragraphs, and, um (.) it's kind of like, they're very blunt, they just say what's, say what they're trying to say and get it out there, and there's not a whole lot of detail, there's not a whole lot of riff-raff around the bush and everything, [and that's just it
> Alicia: [And what do they, what do they write about exactly?

Brynna talked about how people chose a variety of topics and explained that she had chosen to write about rain. Alicia asked Brynna why she wrote about rain, and Brynna replied that she had always had a "love-hate" relationship with rain: "And so I kind of just wrote about um (.) one time when it really, when I actually really noticed the rain when something bad happened."

Alicia was never sure about what to begin discussing during a conference and so allowed the agenda to unfold. Her technique differed from Nancy's; Nancy usually

decided to read a paper once to discuss the meaning and a second time to point out

problems in grammar. In my interview with Alicia after the conference, she said that the

beginning of a conference was difficult for her because she never knew exactly what to

do in the beginning. She said that she never had a goal at the beginning of a writing

conference and that her goals tended to develop as the conference proceeded. Alicia said

that her goal was to help Brynna improve the text: "…my goal was basically to facilitate

what she wanted her paper to be, basically and to just like help her like nudge her way

into what her final version was gonna be…" (personal interview, February 18, 2009).

Alicia also spent a lot of time at the beginning of the conference asking Brynna

questions about how many drafts she had written, what class the paper was for, and what

she wanted out of the conference. At one point, Alicia asked Brynna about a specific

writing technique that was for shortening a draft that was too long. Although I did not

determine what the "cutting" activity was, it seemed as though the both of them knew

about it because of their positions as writing consultants:

> Alicia: Well you know what you could have done? Or maybe you could still do
> is, you know, just go over the word limit and then do that little activity
> of cutting out words, did you try that?
> Brynna: I did. I cut out like an entire paragraph [after that.
> Alicia: [((laughs)) Nice. Nice. And so
> [this is the, which which revision is this?
> Brynna: [Yes This is actually, like I wrote one
> and then realized it was way too long. And cut out like a paragraph,
> Alicia: mhm
> Brynna: a long paragraph and so this is technically the second draft turned in as a
> first draft.
> Alicia: Okay. That makes sense.

In much the same way that Alicia allowed Brynna to control part of the agenda of

the conference about her résumé, Brynna was willing to let Alicia determine the focus of

the discussion. For example, Alicia initiated a discussion of about how Brynna presented

the rain in the narrative. Alicia focused specifically on how Brynna described her uncle in

terms of rain, and she believed that Brynna could improve the essay by balancing the

negative associations with rain with some positive associations. This was the first major

aspect of the text that they discussed in the conference.

> Alicia: Um, was it a conscious decision to leave out your feelings in this little story, in the vignette?
> Brynna: Yes, because I feel like the people who write in *The Sun* don't really say like, oh, I was sad, or I was this, they just kind of be like, here it is: deal with it how you want and you can   basically you can infer how they
> Alicia: mhm
> Brynna: felt.
> Alicia: Mhm, yeah, and I'm tot-I'm totally on board with you on that. I think that was a good choice on your part.   Although I don't notice
> Brynna: yeah
> Alicia: in here any description of rain as a good thing. Was that also a conscious decision (.) to only have rain as (.) your negative connotation of it? (3s)
> Brynna: I guess, I guess I hadn't really been a conscious decision (.) conscious decision about not putting rain as (.) a positive light. I guess in my mind I was connecting rain with my Uncle Kenny who was always   we
> Alicia: mhm
> Brynna: actually found out he was bi-polar, but, like, I'd always seen him in his, like, incredibly happy state, and so I guess, that's how I was (.) I just connected that with the rain   and then he died, and now rain is
> Alicia: mhm
> Brynna: like evil.
> Alicia: Okay then, well one solution would be to describe your uncle in, like, positive rainy ways, you know what I mean?
> Brynna: Yeah. (12s) ((Brynna writes notes))
> Alicia: Because, and I, and I know you know, know you know this, but, you know, saying he was always the happiest person I knew, wasn't a very strong way to, to start out a story.

Alicia believed that this suggestion was one of the best she made in the writing

conference, and Brynna wrote the suggestion down for her to consider later. She wrote

down "describe my uncle in (+) rainy ways instead of saying he's happy" and then they

moved on with the rest of the conference. Alicia referred to this suggestion in the

conference summary:

> As we talked more about her uncle and rain, I noticed that rain In the story was only being used in the most cliché ways. She didn't notice that she had done that, and I told her she needed to include more info about happy connotations of rain so the story isn't flat and cheesy. She had a lot of happy memories of her uncle, so i suggested happy rain-like descriptions of him.

Later, when Brynna was writing about her essay in a commentary for the class,

she said that it did not make sense for her to discuss her uncle in "positive rainy ways"

because she did not have positive rain associations with him. She told me in our interview

that at first she considered the suggestion, but concluded that it would be inappropriate to force those descriptions into the piece (personal interview, February 22, 2009).

Another way that Brynna and Alicia focused on the meaning and organization of the piece was by discussing the treatment of time. Brynna's concern about the timeline may have been related to how brief her story was and how the time shifted in almost every sentence. In the first paragraph, she stated that her Uncle Kenny had a divorce when she was seven, and then she referred to her grandmother's death when she was eight, the subsequent rainy funeral in October, and the following Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations that happened without her uncle. The second paragraph began with a date—April 21, 1999—on which Brynna learned about her uncle's death.

When Brynna asked Alicia about the timeline, Alicia responded with a question about whether she needed the last sentence in the first paragraph: "A few months later, spring came…" Brynna responded that she felt it helped her manage the sequence of events:

Alicia: Well, I was going to ask you why this last sentence was necessary at all.
Brynna: Because, well what I was trying to do was setting up a timeline without actually having a thing.   Because, like we buried my grandma in
Alicia: mhm
Brynna: October. He disappeared like right after that, 'cause we didn't see him at Thanksgiving. And, um, like the very next April, so like six months, however long that is.
Alicia: ((softly)) November, December, January, February, March, April (.) hmm, six months.
Brynna: Yeah, so it was more than a couple because a couple's two or three.
Alicia: mhm
Brynna: But I wanted to make sure like that it was there like that. I'm trying to make this timeline but I don't know if people really get that when I'm reading it.   Or when they read it, like, is it consequential or like, and
Alicia: mhm
Brynna: the year as well, like, when I say April twenty-first, nineteen ninety-nine, does that follow directly. (3s) [Or, wait, it well
Alicia: [I don't think you need, I don't think you need to have the date.
Brynna: My sister was not nine.   I was nine.
Alicia: ((laughs))

During this discussion of the timeline, however, Brynna realized that she had the wrong year of the event and the incorrect ages for her and her sister. Later, I learned in

our interview that Brynna contacted her family to ask them for clarification before her first revision session.

Brynna became more engaged when she and Alicia discussed the arrangement of events, especially when they talked about whether the early parts of the story were foreshadowing the death of her uncle. This was one of Brynna's main concerns about the piece. It was a very detailed discussion about how to rearrange existing elements of the text. Alicia and Brynna discussed a way to minimize the foreshadowing that Alicia felt was impeding the narrative; they discussed not bringing Uncle Kenny up until later in the narrative so that the reader would not be able to predict the outcome:

> Brynna: Um and I'm (7s) I mean, is it even important that we'd heard about it in the news beforehand (.) and like then I find out that it was Kenny. Or is that just completely like, unnecessary. Like, it doesn't even matter. It's just, the main thing is, like, I found out he was dead, doesn't matter that he was in the news and I never knew it. (5s)
> Alicia: Well you are constricted by your word count, for one.
> Brynna: Yeah.
> Alicia: And um (3s) and by the, the topic, and so, I don't know, I, I do find that very interesting. Like, really interesting [and very gut wrenching, you
> Brynna: [((laughs))
> Alicia: know? Um One possibility (.) is (4s) if you find that to be very strong, you could replace this bit with your birthday with, um, the news story because you haven't, you haven't talk—I don't feel like we've talked that much about the birthdays issue and it seems to be where you're prose is weakest? You know, up to this point.

Brynna would use this suggestion later on in her revision session when she added more information about her sister's birthday and removed the reference to her Uncle Kenny in the second paragraph.

At the end of the conference, Brynna talked more about the circumstances of her uncle's death. They also discussed the symbols that Brynna wrote in the margins of her text. Alicia was happy to see that Brynna was marking up her draft so extensively:

> Alicia: Nice, I like this, I like that a lot. Can tell you're thinking.
> Brynna: ((laughs)) If I remember it later ((laughs)) it would be better, too.

After her writing conference with Alicia, Brynna did not proceed immediately to revise. She would not need to submit another draft for several days, so she was not worried about meeting an immediate deadline. Later, she would tell me that she liked this period of waiting between a writing conference and her revision session because she would remember only the suggestions and possible revisions that were important (personal interview, February 22, 2009). This comment was reminiscent of my interview with Garrett in which he told me that one problem with revising during the conference was that he did not take the time to think about the issues and revise more deeply (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

At the end of the writing conference, Brynna discussed the situation in more detail, talking more about how her family felt about her uncle's death. This kind of conversation was prevalent toward the end of their conference in which they slowly moved away from discussing revision to just talking about a meaningful moment in Brynna's life.

> Alicia: How are his kids doing? I guess this is irrelevant, but
> Brynna: They, they never saw him because they lived in Minnesota.   So like
> Alicia: okay
> Brynna: they didn't know.   Their mom didn't really let 'em talk to him a
> Alicia: hmm
> Brynna: whole lot. 'Cause she was just so sore about the disor—divorce and she
>   had already like found herself a new man, so she was like
>   [already on moved.
> Alicia: [And so is Kenny {?} like, moved on. He's not your biological uncle
>   then is it?

After they talked more about the events surrounding Brynna's uncle's death, Brynna again asked Alicia about the timeline of events to make sure that she understood how to improve it.

> Brynna: All right, I think that's it. Although (3s) so it does seem like it is fine
>   with the timeline thing.
> Alicia: Oh, yeah.
> Brynna: Okay.
> Alicia: Oh, yeah. (5s) I think that yeah I think the important point in the
>   timeline is the October here, and the five-month-old decomposing body
>   there. And I think that that will allow the {?} the reader can make the
>   connection with that.

Learning about Alicia's view of the timeline was an example of why Brynna liked to have writing conferences. She received that second perspective that was valuable for her revision process. In our interview she echoed the sentiments of other writing consultants who valued having writing conferences: "I really like the idea of the re-vision, like you're re-seeing your paper through somebody else's eyes and they may not know the subject either, which is, like, even better for you because they'll have more questions" (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

Like the other writing consultants, Brynna never mentioned revising for her instructor during the conference. Although her conference was required, she was used to having conferences and perhaps would have talked to another consultant about her writing. Brynna told me that she always liked to have a conference about a writing project, unless it was something like a one-page reading response that did not require much effort (personal interview, March 24, 2009).

In this sense, Brynna's views of writing and rhetorical concepts were very similar to Alicia's. Both valued the feedback they could receive from one another in a conversation even though this discussion did not involve changing their situation definitions. Garrett valued having a writing consultant to help him revise sections that he felt he needed help with; but he also was content to revise on his own while his consultant waited. His discussion also did not involve changing a situation definition. The writing consultants did not facilitate interactions that could have the outcome of a new writing strategy or better understanding of a rhetorical concept of revision. This was because the primary object of these conferences was how to improve the text. The writing consultants believed that the sign of a good conference was an engaging discussion even if the conversation was centered on improving the writing and not necessarily the student's writing strategies, and these conferences were more like conversation than the conferences in which students wanted someone to identify and fix their writing.

Conclusion and Prelude to the Next Chapter

In this chapter, I described the writing conferences of the students who had specific textual goals for their writing conferences. Garrett and Alicia wanted to use the writing conference to help them add text that they needed to complete their writing. Garrett wanted to strengthen the introduction, and Alicia wanted to add descriptions to her résumé. They also participated actively in the discussion, identifying aspects of their text to discuss as opposed to just listening to the consultant give suggestions. Brynna wanted feedback about specific aspects of her short piece of creative nonfiction, but she did not want to make specific textual changes during, or immediately after, her writing conference. She took a small amount of notes and drew lines and diagrams that she could use later when it was time for her to revise her writing.

These three students did participate in their conferences a different way than students who did not have specific goals for their revising process. They shared the process of determining which aspects of their texts to discuss; one person did not take the primary responsibility for identifying problems to talk about. Their conferences were not dominated by a line-by-line discussion of how to fix comma splices, awkward syntax, or spelling errors. For example, Alicia and Brynna, with only a few exceptions, focused exclusively on developing the meaning, or enhancing the organization, of their writing. Of course, the drafts they brought to the writing center were mostly free of sentence-level mistakes, unlike the drafts that David and Janelle brought to the writing center, which exhibited many errors in syntax and punctuation.

There was, however, one critical similarity between these writing conferences, and the conferences of those students who did not have specific goals for their conferences. The students who did have specific goals for their conferences also did not negotiate new situation definitions of revising or of other writing processes. The writing consultants shared similar situation definitions of what a writing conferences was for (a discussion about the meaning in a piece of writing), so they did not try to discuss writing

strategies or rhetorical concepts by moving the focus of the conference away from the text toward the psychological tools that the students used to produce the text. In their conference summaries, the writing consultants in these conferences indicated that the discussions were draft-focused, which was similar to the summaries of conferences in which the students did not have specific goals.

The following diagrams describe the activity systems of the conferences in these chapters and the outcomes that would become tools in the revision processes of these students.

Figure 10 describes the activity systems of Brynna and Alicia, who participated in their conferences in a much different way than the students who did not have specific goals. Alicia and Brynna, who were part of the same community of writing consultants, shared a similar understanding of the purpose of a writing conference. This meant that they focused exclusively on the greater meaning in a discussion that was more like a conversation than the conferences in which students wanted their consultant to identify and correct errors.

The outcomes of these two conferences were also different from the outcomes in conferences with students who did not have specific goals for their conferences. Alicia and Brynna took notes on their conference drafts on how to re-organize their texts and refine their meanings. These notes were not corrections to spelling, grammar, and mechanics. Rather, these notes were ideas that the consultants would consider integrating into their texts when they revised their writing later.

Figure 10. The Activity Systems of Brynna and Alicia: Students Who Had Specific Goals for Their Writing Conferences
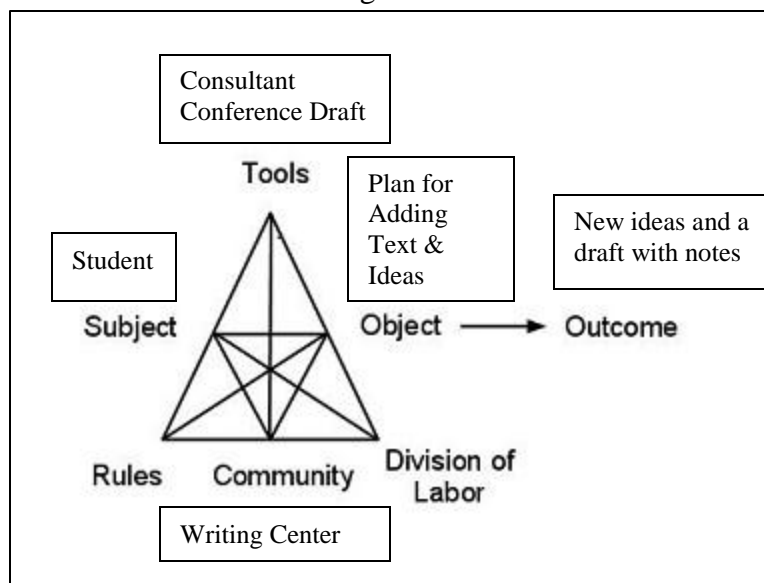
Figure 11 describes the activity system of Garrett's conference. Garrett revised during the conference and immediately afterwards, so the outcome for him was a revised text. Garrett himself saw a problem with revising at the computer: unlike David, who relished revising immediately during a conference, Garrett believed that he did not spend more time considering the ideas in his writing and how to expand them further (personal interview, April 9, 2009). Thus, the diagram indicates that one tool, the computer, played a significant role because the suggestions went right to the text in the form of revisions, unless Garrett explained to Paula why he did not want to make the revision.

Figure 11. The Activity System of Garrett's Writing Conference

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           ┌──────────────────┐                                │
│           │ Paula            │                                │
│           │ Conference Draft │                                │
│           │ Computer         │                                │
│           └──────────────────┘                                │
│                    Tools                                      │
│                         ┌────────────────┐   ┌───────────┐   │
│                         │ Sentence       │   │ Revised   │   │
│   ┌──────────┐          │ structure,     │   │ draft     │   │
│   │ Student  │          │ organization   │   └───────────┘   │
│   └──────────┘          └────────────────┘                   │
│     Subject              Object ────▶ Outcome                │
│                                                               │
│     Rules   Community   Division of                           │
│                           Labor                               │
│           ┌──────────────────┐                               │
│           │ Writing Center   │                               │
│           └──────────────────┘                               │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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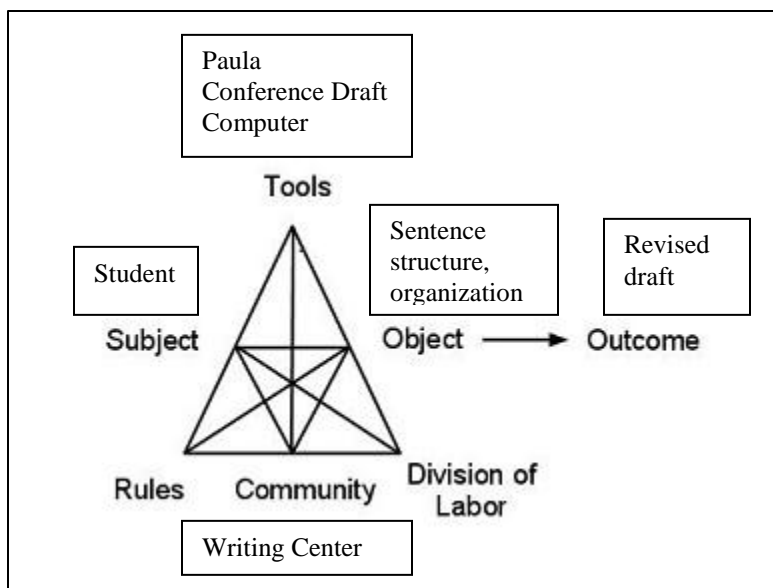
For the writing consultants who had "incestuous" conferences, talking to a writing consultant was an important part of clarifying their writing and ensuring that their drafts were as sharp as they could be. Thus, the immediate goals of revising the text and fixing errors supplanted other goals that may have been focused on conceptions of writing and revising.

Having writing conferences with each other was also about their development; they learned about how to talk to writers by talking to each other. This, however, resulted in a system in which the consultants preferred working with each other than with students who were reluctant to talk to a consultant or revise their writing.

All three of these students used their writing conferences as part of their system of tools for revision; it was not the only source of identifying revisions before they finished their writing. In the next chapter I will discuss in detail how these students purposefully selected the aspects of their conferences that they wanted to use in their revision processes.

CHAPTER V:

HOW STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC GOALS USED THE WRITING

CONFERENCE TO HELP THEM REVISE

<u>Introduction</u>

The three students who had specific textual goals for their writing conferences also revised their writing after (or during) their writing conferences. Alicia and Brynna both revised their writing several days after their respective writing conferences. Garrett, who met with Paula on the day his paper was due, revised during and immediately after the writing conference. Like the students who not did have specific goals for their writing conferences, Alicia and Brynna both took notes on their drafts that they would eventually use in their writing conferences. And like David, Garrett revised his draft at the computer while he talked with Paula about how to revise different sections of his writing. But Alicia, Brynna, and Garrett used their conferences in fundamentally different ways to help them revise their writing.

<u>Assertions</u>

The revision processes of these three students differed in several ways from the revision processes of other students who did not have specific goals or who were required to visit the writing center. Alicia, Garrett, and Brynna made few formal revisions—and most of the formal revisions that they made were not related to their conferences because they discussed grammar and mechanics less often than they did the meaning of their drafts. Also, these students supplied their own revisions for their writing because, in part, they were motivated to revise their writing for themselves. Revising, for them, was a balance between using suggestions from the consultant and their own ideas.

Instead of judging suggestions according to whether they believed their instructor (or other main audience) wanted to see them, Alicia, Brynna, and Garrett evaluated suggestions based on their goals for their writing. Alicia and Garrett used the conference discussion to add new text and refine their meanings. Brynna, on the other hand, used the

conference discussion in her revision process, but she relied mostly on developing new ideas in her revision session. For example, she did not just use the conference draft in her first revision session; instead, she used that draft to make another draft that she used to help her revise. She also revised her writing twice. She was not motivated to fix errors as much as she wanted to ensure that her writing was effective.

These three students did not use new psychological tools in their revision processes. Rather, the conferences gave them ideas of what an audience thought about their writing.

<u>The Conference Outcome as Part of the Plan: How Alicia</u>

<u>and Garrett Used the Conference Discussion in the</u>

<u>Revising Process</u>

Garrett and Alicia had specific goals for their conferences and focused on revising their meaning so that they could finish their drafts. Alicia wanted to finish her résumé and send it to a potential employer, and Garrett wanted to turn in his essay to finish preparing for the simulation in his political science course. The revision practices of these students differed in several ways from the practices of students who did not have specific goals for their writing center visits. Garrett and Alicia took initiative in suggesting and integrating their own revisions based on personal goals for their writing rather than on what they thought their instructor wanted to see, they were willing to make more deletions, and they used the conference discussion to generate new text. Both writers also had some plans for their revising process that they did not openly discuss with their consultants. Thus, these students were more independent in terms of selecting what to discuss and what feedback to use while revising.

The feedback from Career Services and the conversation in the writing center mediated Alicia's plan for revising, and the result was a marked-up draft with new language and symbols that she used as a tool in her revising session. Although Alicia knew that she could receive help with the phrasing of her experiences, she relied on

Career Services for the advice on where to include the dates and location information. She did not "check" these suggestions from Career Services with Brynna, who focused solely on the descriptions of her experience rather than the particular conventions of résumé writing (except for her one statement about whether to include an objective statement). Unlike Carolyn and Andrea, who wanted Nancy's approval for every change they planned to make, Alicia seemed confident enough to not need Brynna to check every revision.

Five days after her writing conference, Alicia revised her résumé in the computer lab in the back of the writing center, a quiet room with three PCs and shelves full of books and literary journals. When she began revising, she loaded two copies of her résumé on the computer: the current version that she needed to revise, and an older version that had the format she wanted. Alicia had not worked on her résumé in the period between the writing conference and the revising session. When Alicia revised her résumé, she integrated suggestions that she received from Career Services, used the ideas that were discussed during her writing conference, and changed the format of her résumé. The revised document is in APPENDIX H.

Alicia had made many decisions about how she wanted to revise her résumé before her writing conference. For example, she marked up her draft with many changes that she discussed at Career Services, where she learned that she needed to add a section about her employment experience as well as modify the headers to include the locations of her experience. Alicia's formal and meaning-preserving revisions were related mostly to her discussion at Career Services, and most her textual revisions (except for the new section about her employment experience) were related to her conference discussion or to her own ideas about her résumé. Alicia commented on the different focuses in our interview: "In Career Services it was just better you expand this and then with Brynna we talked about ways to expand it, and how to expand it" (personal interview, February 26, 2009).

A significant amount of her revision session involved moving elements around on the page to correct the headers and keep her résumé to one page. These small-scale changes were suggested to her by the professional at Career Services. Alicia wanted to take the main headings (Education, Sustainability Experience, and Work Experience) and move them from center to the left margin. She also wanted to put the dates of her experience in at the left side of the page and align them with the individual descriptions. During my observation, she consulted the marked-up draft while she revised the new draft on the computer in the writing center. At one point during the observation, I did show her how to use the "Decrease Indent" button in Microsoft Word when she was trying to fix a formatting problem. Thus, I did interfere with the revision process.

Unlike Garrett's revision session, Alicia's revision session was several days after the conference, and during her revision session, Alicia not only inserted the revisions she talked about with Brynna, but also tried to manipulate the format of her current draft to make it one page. After adding the work section to the end, all of her additions had pushed the résumé onto two pages. After revising, then, she spent time highlighting text and changing the font size to get the document to fit on one page. Career Services had suggested altering the font size, so the format she was trying to make her résumé fit had a smaller font and was more compact; however, it also had more white space. Alicia and Garrett, though they both had the goal of generating new text, had different approaches to making formal and meaning-preserving concerns. The students who did not have specific goals made mostly formal and meaning-preserving revisions, but the writing consultants did not focus on making these kinds of revisions. But it is important to say that Alicia and Garrett did want to address some of these issues in their revision process.

These meaning-preserving revisions were changes to the headers of the different sections of the résumé. One meaning-preserving deletion was Alicia's removal of dates next to the sub-headers; instead, she just included one date in the main headers. The other meaning-preserving change was the removal of "Member" in her description of her

position as "Executive Board Member" of the Environmental Club. At Career Services, she had also talked about spelling out an acronym, and Alicia made that revision. Her format change was her reducing the font size in the header—another idea that came from her visit to Career Services.

Most of the micro- and macrostructure revisions that Alicia made were related to the conference activity. Alicia decided not to describe in more detail how her attendance at a sustainability conference "deepened" her "understanding," but she did decide to discuss the proposal for a sustainable living space in her cover letter. The microstructure changes were the additions of descriptions to the items "Environmental Law" and "Cook's Assistant" and the addition of information that better described how often Alicia collaborated with a representative from the dining service. These revisions are in Figure 12, a screen capture of her revised document. (I have changed identifying information in the excerpt to preserve Alicia's confidentiality.) These revisions indicate how Alicia adapted some of the suggestions that Brynna gave her. Although Alicia took copious notes during the writing conference, she did not merely transcribe the notes into her draft. She built on the language of Brynna's suggestions to adapt it to her purpose. For example, in two revisions, Alicia took some language that Brynna suggested and adapted it to fit her text. Brynna's suggestion was in this form: "gained better understanding of what it really is like to live in a low-impact setting." But Alicia's revision was phrased in this way: "Gained direct experience of low impact living in an educational setting." Alicia appeared to have liked using "gained" as an active verb because she also used it to describe her experience in taking a summer course: "Gained understanding of the complex dynamics of environmental protection in the U.S."

Figure 12. Excerpt from Alicia's Revision
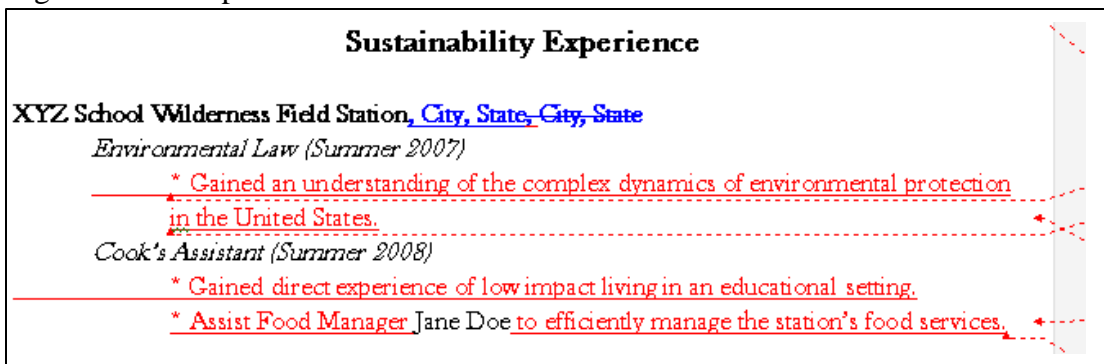
Garrett, too, made most of his revisions during the conference with Paula, and one of the more major revisions was his revised introduction, which was one of his main goals for the conference. And his revision of the introduction was a typical example of how his revisions were a combination of his own suggestions and Paula's, as if they were both authors of the essay. Garrett and Paula focused on revising the introduction at the end of the conference because they began revising the paper in the middle. (He had already discussed the first two pages with another consultant.) He returned to the introduction deliberately after he finalized the body of his essay.

Whereas students who were not consultants discussed their essays without returning to previous sections, Garrett and Paula returned to the introduction after they had discussed the body of the essay. After fifty minutes, Garrett directed the attention back to the beginning of his essay, which they had discussed at the beginning but did not revise. All changes to the introduction were made at the end of the conference.

Figure 13 is the revised first paragraph in which Garrett added text to more specifically describe what he was going to focus on in the essay. The introduction was an announcement of the ideas in the body of the essay. And in revising this paragraph, Garrett followed suggestions from Paula and also initiated his own revisions. Garrett deleted the last sentence of this paragraph without discussing it; he made the change without looking for Paula's approval. Paula probably approved of it because she did not

express any problems with it. The appositives that were enclosed in m-dashes, however,

were Paula's idea:

> Paula: And you could use dashes!
> Garrett: Huh! I can't use dashes.
> Paula: Why not? We're, it's, it's a, added information. [Next the key
> Garrett: [I can use
> Paula: elements of the conflict according to Likud, [dash thingy
> Garrett: [dash   dash, uh
>   ((typing)) territory,   we'll
> Paula: {?}
> Garrett: just assume it's {?}.
> Paula: Jerusalem.
> Garrett: Jerusalem, religion
> Paula: And refugees?
> Garrett: {?} Yeah. And refugees
> Paula: Dash.
> Garrett: Uh, ((typing)) will be
> Paula: You need another dash to close out the refugees.

In my interview with Paula, she said that she liked interesting punctuation, such

as dashes, and she seemed excited about the opportunity to help someone use them

(personal interview, April 7, 2009). She only briefly explained why they were

appropriate—in her comment about how the list was added information—but Garrett

seemed willing to go ahead and use them. Revising for Garrett was like this: a

combination of suggestions from Paula and his own text that he generated in the moment.

He could use Paula to generate and correct his revisions text, and then return to writing

on his own when he felt he did not need her help.

Figure 13. Garrett's Revised Introduction
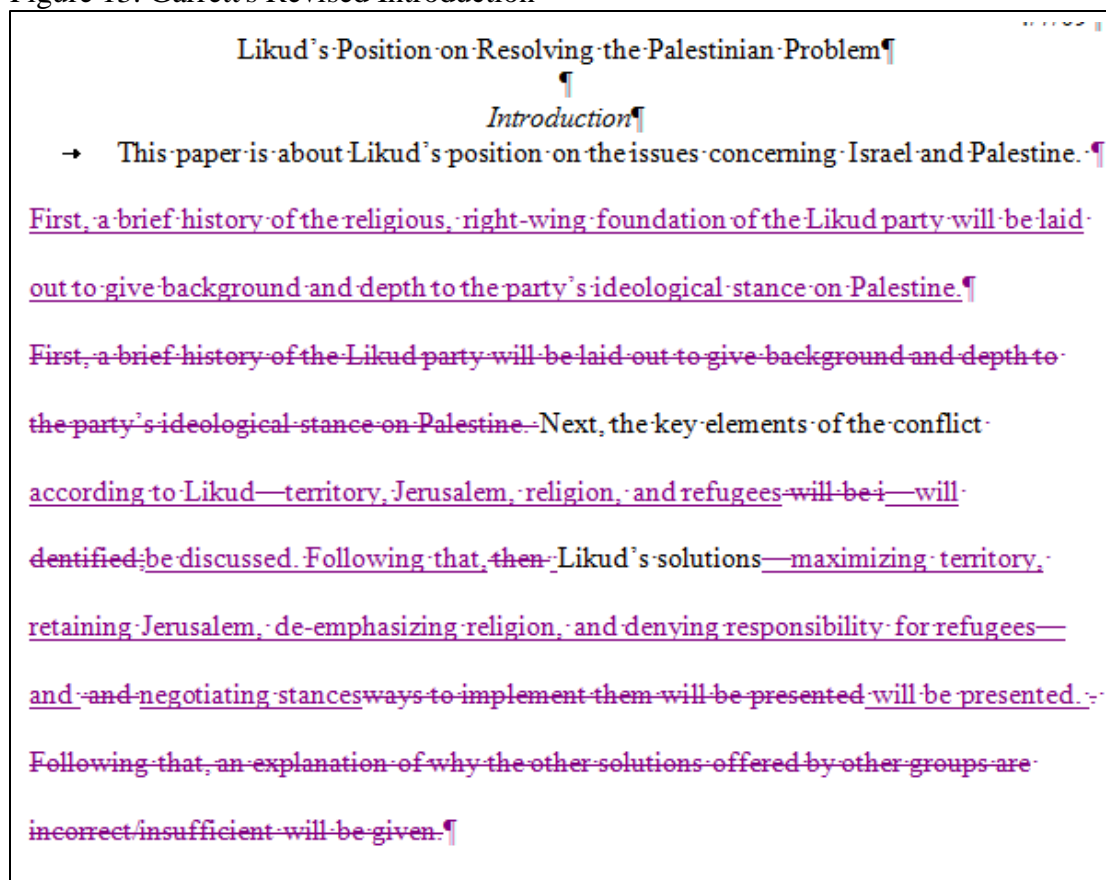
After the conference, he made small changes to his references page and in-text citations. Unlike David, who sought help from consultants even on how to cite his sources, Garrett was more fluid with citing sources and did not seem to find it difficult to cite his sources. He did not stop to ask Paula about citing sources, and was able to create his in-text citations by himself. He left most of the process of finalizing the works cited page to the end of the revision session.

Garrett, too, made many meaning-preserving revisions that he did not discuss with Paula, typing them in between moments when he consulted her opinion about his writing. Unlike David, who discussed almost every single revision with Ann or Lisa,

Garrett integrated many of these revisions that he did not talk about with Paula. Garrett

did not feel the need to have Paula approve of every revision that he made. Some of these

changes were very small-scale changes, as in this sentence, in which he substituted

"while the" for "and":

> Yet it is the third most holy site to Islam, and the area of the Noble Sanctuary has been continually administered by Muslims, ~~and~~ *while the* Jews have followed the rabbinical injunction to stay out of the Temple Mount (Dowty 201-2).

The writing consultants did not focus on meaning-preserving revisions; they took

initiative to make more substantial revisions. Garrett, for example, made another series of

revisions that he did not discuss that were more substantial and possible because he was

working at the computer. He decided to shift the order of several paragraphs in the Issues

section. When I interviewed Garrett about the writing conference, I asked him why he

changed the order of the paragraphs; he answered that he wanted the Issues section and

the Solutions section to have a parallel structure. I pointed out to him that the Issues

section began with Jerusalem, but the Solutions section began with a paragraph about a

different issue. He was disappointed when I asked him about this discrepancy during our

interview. He said, "This is gonna give me a bad grade" (personal interview, April 9,

2009).

Another important aspect of how Garrett and Alicia revised was their willingness

to delete text, albeit small sections of text. Unlike other students in this research study,

those with specific goals made more deletions during the revising process. The students

who did not have specific goals were not eager to delete from their texts. More than half

of the revisions that I coded as "deletions" (18 out of 30) were made by these three

students.

Garrett made several deletions as he edited his paper, but most of them were

minor ones. In this sentence, Garrett removed the lined-out phrase because he realized in

his conversation that he was not sure about the date: "Yet it is the third most holy site to

Islam, and the area of the Noble Sanctuary has been continually administered by Muslims

even after 1967, while the Jews have followed the rabbinical injunction to stay out of the Temple Mount (Dowty 201-2)" And in this sentence, Paula suggested removing "line" in order to improve the sentence fluency: "As the earlier quote from Meridor shows, the negotiating stance from Likud will be a tough ~~line~~ one, and yet one that still has the possibility of success."

Alicia was willing to make more deletions as well. She made them not because she wanted to improve sentence fluency, but because she was not sure it was ethical to include them. She deleted the entire section about how she worked on an organic garden because the project was only in the planning stage.

Alicia chose not to address two macrostructure revisions (regarding her work experience and the garden) in the conference because she had already made up her mind about how to revise them (personal interview, February 26, 2009). Before the conference Alicia had decided to delete the section about the garden. She had put it in her résumé because a friend had suggested she add it in there, and Alicia had wanted to improve the amount of experience in her résumé. However, even though she did not discuss the truth of the situation with Brynna, Alicia did decide that she could have a problem if she was asked about the garden and was forced to disclose that she did not have any experience. Alicia claimed that she would, in the future, get the chance to work on the garden. She also knew that she would add a section describing her work experience, but she did not feel the need to discuss the particulars of that revision with Brynna. Instead, she told me that she took that information from a previous résumé and added it to the current one.

In her revision process, Alicia tried to make decisions about how to convey her experience in a way that she thought was ethical. For example, she kept the title Eco-House Director, and amended Executive Board Member by removing Member. (She had said in the conference that she felt like she acted like a member of the Executive Board.) (I cannot be sure if she corrected these titles because the Career Center had suggested that she not include an initiative—the Green Fund—that her institution did not implement.)

However she did decide to remove all references to the organic garden after considering that it was not true.

During the revision session she cut the section about the Green Fund out of the résumé and pasted it into the bottom of the cover letter. Alicia was the only student in the study who I saw move between multiple documents during the revision process. During our interview, she told me that this was a suggestion from the professional at the Career Center who believed that the experience should not be discussed in the résumé because Alicia had not actually done it.

Although both Alicia and Brynna identified aspects of the résumé to focus on during the conference, Alicia had written down notes about Brynna's suggestions that she did not integrate. Alicia integrated more revisions about the areas that she focused on rather than for the areas that Brynna focused on. Alicia considered that some of Brynna's suggestions were not appropriate for her goal. For example, although Brynna suggested that Alicia add more detail about what she learned at the conference of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, Alicia told me in the interview that she felt that information was not suitable for this résumé because it was for an application for a job working on an organic farm (personal interview, February 26, 2009). And, as was mentioned earlier, Alicia had already decided to remove the reference to the garden.

Paula tried to help Garrett understand where his meaning was not clear by showing how she was confused by specific word choices, such as when Paula came across this sentence: "The status of Jerusalem is an additional source of contention between the parties." Garrett and Paula did not read the paragraph about religion because they started with the paragraph after it, so Paula did not see the first sentence of that paragraph: "Another issue of importance is the religions of both parties involved in this conflict." In that sentence, Garrett was referring to Hamas and Likud, but Garrett also used the term "party" when referring to conflicts among Israeli political parties in this

sentence: Paula had come across a problem that could cause miscue for a reader, but

Garrett again dismissed the concern:

> Garrett: Yeah.
> Paula: ((laughs))
> Garrett: What's an entendre?
> Paula: Well, do you want it to have a dual meaning, or do you want to [change it?
> Garrett: [I like it entendres   I'll keep it. If it flows, it flows.
> Paula: okay

Garrett spent more time than Alicia deflecting suggestions for revisions, and this

may have been mediated by the tool that he used during the conference. Whereas Alicia

could just note a suggestion and move on to the next topic, Garrett said something about

why he was not taking a specific suggestion for revision because it was plain to Paula that

he was typing anything.

Immediately following this section, Garrett again deflected a suggestion from

Paula about how to strengthen the connection between the paragraph about Jerusalem and

the paragraph about refugees. Paula said that she felt the paragraphs themselves were

acceptable, but their transitions were choppy. Paula read the first sentence about refugees

and the preceding sentence as if to forcefully illustrate the poor transition:

> Paula: blah, blah, blah, and then *this dual authority leads to conflict over who should be in charge of Jerusalem. Refugees have been a perpetual source of soreness.* ((knocks table)) See, that transition there, I think
> Garrett: um
> Paula: one of the things, maybe, see if you could add to the end of the Jerusalem paragraph 'cause it's a little bit shorter than the previous paragraph?

She said she was unaware of the significance of Muslim holy sites within

Jerusalem, so she recommended adding more explanation. Garrett resisted this suggestion

and said that he was already near the maximum length. This may have been an example

of how Garrett's ideas for revising were occasionally based on a requirement and not on

what he wanted to do to ensure the meaning was exact.

From Alicia's perspective, Brynna's open-ended and guiding questions helped her

to develop her descriptions. Alicia said:

I was able to verbalize what I was thinking, what I thought about it, and then I kept talking about it, and talking about it, and talking about it, then we're—I was able to come up with something that sounded reasonably good. It's always nice to have someone supportive there going, yeah, that's a good idea that's a good idea ((laughs)). (personal interview, February 26, 2009)

In my interview with Alicia, she took the position of a senior consultant who admired the work of a new consultant and praised the way that Brynna conducted the conference: "She [Brynna] had never really worked with résumés before, so I was actually kind of impressed with how well she dealt with it. Um, I thought she did a great job" (personal interview, February 26, 2009). Unfortunately, I was not able to receive feedback from Alicia about my interpretations of her revision process because my interpretations were returned to me by the post office.

The case of Alicia and Brynna illustrates how Alicia planned to use the writing conference to help her define her meaning because she believed her meaning improved by talking her revision process through. However, she did not take every suggestion from Brynna, and she avoided addressing all of sections of her résumé. The Career Center feedback and her conversation in the writing center were complementary psychological tools that both helped Alicia revise. Still, this also illustrates how some areas of a text were outside of the range of what Alicia wanted to revise. She retained some information (such as "Executive Board") even though she had never held a position on that board. This showed how Alicia was eager to make herself look like an appropriate candidate for the job even if all of her stated experience was not true.

This next conference in the chapter illustrates how Brynna had a specific goal for her writing conference, but did not plan to generate new text to use in the revision process. Brynna also did not have an immediate deadline, so she could spend time on revising, and over the course of two revisions she combined the ideas from the writing conference with her own to revise her piece of creative nonfiction.

Making Multiple Revisions: How Brynna Revised Her

Creative Nonfiction in Different Sessions

Brynna's First Revising Session

Brynna had a more nuanced view of the writing process and of her rhetorical situation, and the writing center conference was one activity that played a role in revising. Unlike Janelle who only used the feedback from the writing center and used every suggestion that they had time to or the willingness to integrate, Brynna carefully considered the suggestions that Alicia made and used the conference to modify her plan for revision, which was less mediated by the demands of her instructor than it was by her hope to write well about her uncle.

When I met Brynna four days after her writing conference to observe her revise, she said she had not thought much about the writing conference. Brynna also said that it was important for her not to think about it because she said that she would only remember the "important things" for her to use in the next draft (personal interview, February 22, 2009). She also said that she was a perfectionist who needed to have things flow. She still had the draft that she had written notes on during her writing conference, which she wanted to use in her revision session.

Brynna first worked on revising her essay the evening on the day she was supposed to submit her revision to her instructor through the course's Moodle site. She revised at her desk in a cramped dormitory room that she shared with another student. Brynna had until 11 pm to turn in her next draft, which was not to be the final draft. The final draft would be due in about a month.

Brynna's revising process differed from other students because she produced another paper draft before she began typing her new draft. When Brynna began revising, she spent about twenty minutes making notes on a clean draft and considering how she wanted to proceed before she began revising. Brynna had the clean draft on a notebook on her lap, and the draft she took to the writing center was on the desk in front of her. A

version of the draft was also on the screen on her laptop, but she did not make any changes on the computer while both paper drafts were in front of her. During this part of her revising stage, she used a pen that could write in different colors and at one point she took out a highlighter to mark the text as well. She appeared to be concentrating intently as she looked back and forth from the conference draft to her new draft, which slowly began to accumulate notes.

During this period when she made marks on a new draft, Brynna considered the suggestion that Alicia had made about describing her uncle in "positive rainy ways." When she seemed frustrated while she was thinking about her revision, I asked her what she was thinking. She said that she was thinking about how to integrate positive descriptions of rain into her piece. Although she originally thought that it was a good suggestion, she now thought it was "cheesy and lame" and watered down the story she was trying to tell. Brynna seemed to think that she could not contrive an uplifting or cheerful memory of rain just to balance the emotions in the story.

Brynna's decision-making process for this possible revision was typical of the students who visited the writing center with specific goals: she carefully considered the revision according to her own goals rather than rejecting it outright. The students without specific goals were usually concerned about doing more work than they needed to or doing something their professor would not approve of.

During the twenty minutes before Brynna began typing changes into her laptop, she wrote down many possible revisions or ideas to consider on the clean draft. Some of these notes on the new draft were changes that she had agreed upon while talking to Alicia. For example, in the first paragraph, she crossed out the last sentence "A few months later, spring came"—the sentence that Alicia believed was unnecessary. Brynna also wrote down "strange" as a possible option to replace "odd" in the sentence, "It was odd." (In the writing center draft, Brynna had underlined odd twice and written "thesaurus" beside it; at the conference she did not decide on the new word.) Above

"strange," Brynna began to write another word and then crossed it out, a different word she may have considered before deciding on "strange." She also wrote down "everyone else was there, where was he?"

In the first paragraph, Brynna also made notes in the text that she did not integrate into her second draft. For example, Brynna made notes for breaking this run-on sentence into two sentences that more clearly explained the events: "When I was eight, my grandmother died of colon cancer, we buried her in October, and it was absolutely pouring rain, but that didn't stop us." In the clean draft, Brynna put a period after "October" and marked the text to make the second sentence, "It was absolutely pouring rain, not that it stopped us." Why didn't Brynna integrate this change? I do not have a good explanation for this except to say that the even though the new draft mediated Brynna's revision process, she knew she was not submitting a final draft and perhaps was content with making the major structural changes that were her goal for this revision. Janelle and Carmen also did not integrate revisions that they had taken notes about, so this was a theme that re-occurred in the research study.

In the second paragraph, Brynna also made notes that she did altered further when she actually began typing the next draft. She crossed out the period after the sentence, "My dad answered." and wrote "then" above the next sentence, "He started crying." But when she typed the change, she put a semicolon between the two sentences. Unlike Janelle and Carmen who transcribed the notes from their conferences, Brynna seemed to be willing to try out different revisions before deciding on one.

In the second paragraph, Brynna continued to be flexible in planning her revision by using ideas from the conference along with new ideas. She planned to remove the elements that foreshadowed what happened to Kenny, to add description about the day on which they learned about Kenny's death, and to fix the timeline of events. Alicia had confirmed for Brynna that including these early references to Kenny may be signaling that something negative was going to happen to him, so she agreed to remove that

reference. Brynna also added more details about her sister's unhappiness about the rain—Brynna wrote a new sentence about how her sister could not go outside to play with her new bike. Also, Brynna wrote that it was her sister's eighth birthday. This last change was one that she did discuss with Alicia, but only in a general way. When Brynna had realized that she had the wrong years for these events, she talked to her family before the revision session to correct the date information. (Thus, even though Brynna said she had not thought about the conference before the revision session, she was revising by ensuring that she knew the timeline before she returned to editing the text.)

Brynna also used the bottom half of the paper to try out different phrases before she decided to integrate them into the next revision. She seemed to have tried out discussing rain in a positive way because she wrote this clause and then crossed it out: "Rain was always accompanied by rainbows for me." She had also crossed out other phrases that she may have considered integrating into her next draft: "When I was younger, Uncle Kenny" and "Mom had made us leave the room."

During this first revision session, Brynna was less concerned about the length requirement than she was during the conference. In the conference, she told Alicia that she needed to adhere to the word limit that was set by *The Sun*, but while she was revising she went onto the college's course management system to see if the final draft needed to fit the publication requirements. She told me during the observation that she wanted to do something for herself even if it didn't "fit" *The Sun*.

Figure 14 is the draft that Brynna took notes on during her first revision session. Brynna made more notes on the third paragraph as part of the plan to remove the foreshadowing of Kenny's death. She underlined all sentences in this paragraph except for the first one, "When we were brought back in the room, we were told that my uncle Kenny had been missing for a couple months now." She also wrote, "A couple days previously" at the bottom of the draft, which she added to the second sentence that informed the reader about how a jogger in a park had discovered a dead body.

Figure 14. The Draft That Brynna Marked Up During Her First Revision
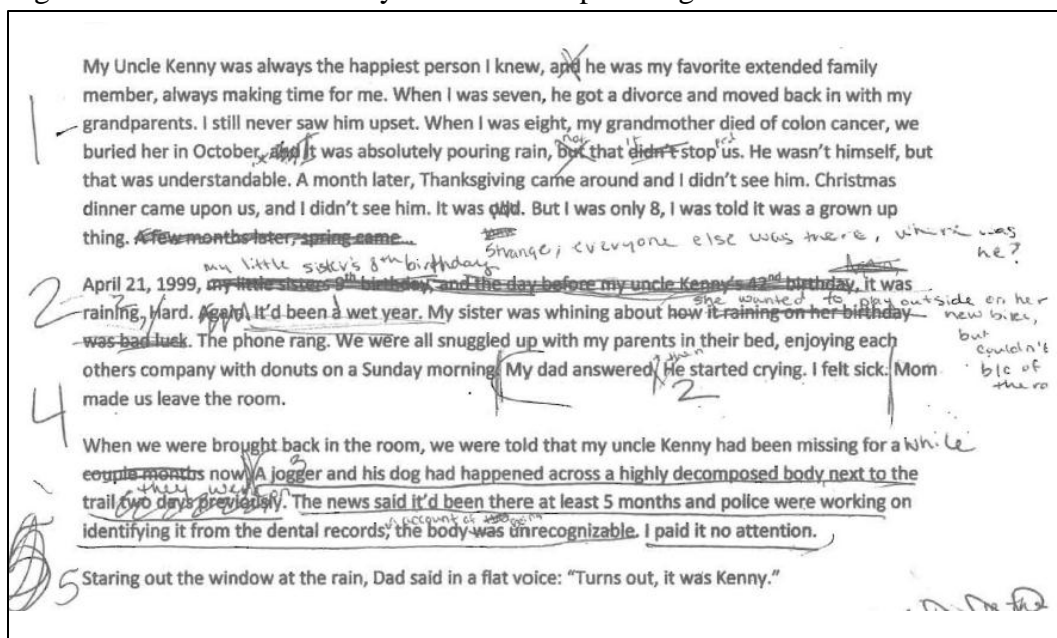
After Brynna made these copious notes—more notes than she made on her draft during the writing conference—she was ready to begin revising on her laptop. She put the writing center draft at her feet, and then she put it in her recycling bin. She said, "There's a point where writing on it becomes excessive." She also said that too much writing on a draft "gets in her way" (personal interview, February 22, 2009). She also did not want to use the writing center draft anymore because she felt that "other people's thoughts on [her] work could be limiting" (personal interview, February 22, 2009).

In Brynna's activity system, the writing center conference mediated her plan for revision because it helped her to decide to remove the foreshadowing and make a minor word change, but she returned to her own goals and plan. She selected from the writing conference the suggestions that complemented her goals, such as removing the foreshadowing elements, and ignored the others, like the suggestion about portraying her uncle in positive rainy ways. But she did not ignore them because she did not think her instructor would disapprove or because she did not have time to integrate them; Brynna

tried out the suggestion and then rejected it when she realized that it would not enhance the text. In her commentary, which she wrote about her revision process and submitted with her revision, Brynna described why she did not use this suggestion. Her comments show that Brynna carefully considered her audience and was not inclined to take up a suggestion that only one reader made:

> When I sat down to revise it however, I deciuncle [*sic*] in positive, rainy ways felt incredibly fake. This is a very short piece, do I really need two-dimensions? Do the readers really need to know why this was important enough for me to write about? No one I conferenced with, during Topics, or with Alicia, questioned those things until I brought them up and questioned them myself. So, therefore, I figure, if I answer the questions for myself, make up my own mind, then it won't matter, because the readers wont' question it. So I decided to keep it my own way, keeping it one dimensional, if you will, because I think that's what important and most powerful, and in the end, the emotional power is what the readers will remember and what will impress upon them.

Brynna also could have included many more specific details had she not been trying to stay within the word limit imposed by the magazine. I learned this by reading a commentary that Brynna wrote about how she revised her draft. In her commentary to the first draft, she wrote in far more detail about the circumstances of Kenny's death and why they spurred her to write about her relationship with rain. Here is a section from her vivid commentary:

> The next week, it'd rained, encasing his body in a block of ice. The weather got so bad that year, they closed the trails around the lake until the spring. The snow and ice melted, giving way to rains and floods. They opened the trails. Kenny was found by a dog who picked up one of his bones and taken it to his master.

<div align="center">

Moving Away from the Original Goal: Brynna's

Second Revision Session

</div>

Brynna did not revise the piece again until March 22, the day that the third and final draft was due. These revisions were independent of the discussion in the writing conference and reflected different goals that she had for the first revision. Brynna did not tell me that she had received feedback from her instructor about the first revision. It seemed that after she received feedback from Alicia, Brynna did not seek further feedback. At our interview, Brynna made no mention of any other feedback after the

conference (personal interview, March 24, 2009). At this second revision, Brynna made no deletions—as she did in the first revision—but made revisions that added clarifying details and enhanced the sentence structure. In the log that she filled out, Brynna wrote that she spent 25 minutes revising, and that she "changed the wording and sentence structure in some places but that's it." My interpretation is that Brynna's goals for her revising were based less on the writing conference and more on a new goal of ensuring that she provided enough description for the reader to feel like a part of the story.

One key difference between the first and second revision sessions was in how Brynna treated the length of her piece of creative nonfiction. Brynna gradually increased the length of the piece throughout the revision process, but the greatest increase was between the second and third drafts. The first draft was 283 words, the second draft was 307 words, and the third draft was 340 words. The increase in the last revision was because Brynna added more details to flesh out the scene. At the bottom of her draft, Brynna wrote, "I did add a few more words than I thought I would. But I am still under 350 words, so I thought that was okay and I'm too laszy [*sic*] to go back through and cut out words again."

In her second revision session (which I did not observe), Brynna focused more on adding details, not on making any deletions. She seemed to have been more concerned with the 300-word length limit in her conference with Alicia than she was later in the revising process. Figure 15 is an excerpt from a paragraph that indicates how Brynna added more details to paint a better picture of the scene.

Figure 15. Excerpt from Brynna's Second Revision

Brynna made these additions in different sections in the text, and some of them made more obvious some details she had subtly understated in the second draft. For example, when she described her uncle's corpse in the third draft, she added the text that I have italicized, "The news said it'd been there at least 5 months and police were working on identifying the body from the dental records on account of the body being unrecognizable *due to the decomposition*." It seems that Brynna decided to make overt a detail that she had understated well in the previous draft.

When, at our interview, Brynna realized that she increased the length of the piece in her second revision, she was surprised because she thought she had decreased the length. She said, "I thought I'd cut down on words. And I did not" (personal interview, March 24, 2009). It is perhaps that without being so concerned about the length requirement or the timeline of events, she felt comfortable adding those explanatory phrases that were more "finishing touches" than substantial revisions.

Word limits mediated the revising processes of both Garrett and Brynna, but in different ways. Garrett cited his page limit as a reason for not having to further explain several aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict, such as how certain holy sites were important to both Jews and Muslims. Brynna worked hard to keep the description as spare as possible to still qualify for publication in *The Sun*, but found it difficult to write about such an emotional series of events in so short a text.

Another important theme in Brynna's revision process was that she revised passages and then returned to revise them later, as if she were still dissatisfied with the form of the passage. In Brynna's two revision sessions, she revised the same sections and used more complex sentence structures for different rhetorical effects. For example, at the beginning of her essay she included this sentence about the rain on the day she learned about her uncle's death: "It was raining. Hard. Again." At the first revision, she changed it to a less abrupt phrasing: "it was raining hard outside again." She had made this change on her own, without any feedback from Alicia. At the second revision, she changed it back to a version that resembled the version in the first draft: "It was raining—hard-outside again." (Instead of a second m-dash, she used a suspended hyphen, which was most likely a mistake.)

Conclusion and Prelude to Next Chapter

The students who had specific goals when they had writing center conferences were less interested in editing formal concerns as much as they were refining their meaning and making small-scale, meaning-related revisions to their writing. Garrett and Alicia both accomplished their goals of adding new text to their writing as well as refining their existing meaning. Brynna used the conference discussion to give her ideas for revising, and her goals for her second revising session were different than her original goals. She carefully considered which advice from consultants to take on the basis of whether it helped her to reach her goals.

The revision processes of these students illustrated several important themes. First, these students focused less on editing problems with grammar and mechanics than the students who did not have specific goals for their conferences. Alicia and Brynna both worked almost exclusively on the main meanings of their texts, focusing on how to expand their ideas or better present the ideas already in the text. Both Alicia and Brynna also did not transcribe the changes that they wrote down in the writing conference; rather, they carefully considered their notes and used them to generate new ideas for revising.

Garrett, however, displayed some of the same conference and revising behaviors as David did. Garrett, though he identified more errors in his writing than David did, was also focused on problems of word selection and grammar. Garrett also did not take time to consider some of the suggestions about meaning-related revisions that Paula made because he wanted to finish his draft on the day of his conference. For the most part, these students had also decided what they wanted their main meanings to be and wanted a consultant to help them ensure the meanings were clear.

A second important theme was that these students were more willing to make deletions during their revising processes. These three students made the majority of deletion revisions that all of the students in this study made after or during their conferences. They were willing to remove text if it did not enhance the main meaning, but the students without specific textual goals conceived of revising as substituting or adding small sections of text to refine sentence-level meanings.

A third important theme was that these students revised by using similar situation definitions of writing and revising that they had before their conferences. These conferences and their revision sessions did not appear to result in new strategies to use in future writing projects.

In the next chapter, I will examine another important part of the activity system of a writing center: the college faculty who teach writing. It is essential to examine the perceptions that faculty had of the writing center because these instructors often influenced students' decisions to visit the writing center for a conference.

CHAPTER VI:

THE ROLE OF THE WRITING CENTER IN THE ACTIVITY

SYSTEM OF TEACHING WRITING

Introduction

Any examination of how the writing center helps students to improve their writing would be incomplete without an analysis of how the writing center functions in the institution. Thus, this chapter is centered on how the writing center was a mediating tool for different instructors on campus. In the previous chapters, I examined the role of the writing center on the campus by exploring the different themes in individual writing conferences and how students revised after the conferences. I now widen my viewpoint to look at the writing center as part of an institution in which many different people were involved with helping students learn to write effectively.

Assertions

In the greater activity system of teaching writing on campus, professors used the writing center when they believed that it could be a mediating tool for improving their students' writing. Instructors had varying situation definitions of what the writing center was for and how their students could benefit most from having writing conferences with writing consultants. These situation definitions, which were not always similar to the definitions of the director or of consultants, mediated how instructors integrated the writing center's services into their plans for teaching writing.

In this chapter, I discuss the ways that instructors used the writing center in accordance with what they believed was the proper object and outcome for a writing conference. Like their students, the instructors believed that the purpose of the writing center was to help students improve their texts. Thus, the situation definitions of the instructors differed from what the director believed the writing center was for.

I also discuss the tensions between the ways that instructors conceived of goals for writing conferences and the actual goals that students brought to those conferences.

Their students had their own conceptions of what a writing conference could do, as noted in previous chapters, which often contradicted what his or her instructor wanted them to do. During the actual writing conference, different objects emerged that the professors did not intend for their students to work on in a writing conference.

<div align="center">Brief Review of Literature About the Writing Center's</div>

<div align="center">Relationship to College Instructors</div>

Writing center scholars and administrators have explored the relationship between a writing center and the faculty because peer tutors and administrators are part of the greater activity system of a college who wants its students to grow as writers. In general, researchers have examined how writing centers complement or conflict with how college-level instructors teach different kinds of writing (such as first-year composition or technical writing).

Scholars who have examined the history of writing centers and their role in teaching writing have written extensively about the desire on the part of administrators to make writing centers places to remediate writers who were deemed "deficient." In the early 20th century, many writing centers were started for the purpose of "fixing" the problems in student writing (Lerner, 2009). Writing centers began to proliferate in the 1970s due in part to the rise of the open-access educational environment; writing centers played the role of helping struggling writers acclimate to college-level writing (Boquet, 1999). Writing center professionals have since been learning how to best relate to faculty who teach writing (Masiello & Hayward, 1991).

Publications centered on writing centers have frequently explored how writing center directors and tutors can successfully collaborate with college instructors. For example, *The Writing Lab Newsletter* regularly publishes articles about how tutors can help students understand the hidden meanings in writing assignment guidelines (Kendall, 2008); "translate" an instructor's comments on a piece of writing (Auten & Pasterkiewicz, 2007); or even support faculty and staff in their own writing projects

(Schendel, 2010). Scholars and peer tutors alike regularly propose ways to help students in advanced writing classes (Kiedaisch & Dinitz, 1991). The regular publication of these articles is a sign that many writing center practitioners see themselves as playing a supporting role for students who want to succeed at school.

But often scholars have explored significant tensions between faculty and the mission of a writing center. Writing center scholars have argued for the independence of a writing center and have emphasized that it is not a fix-it shop for writers who are struggling succeed (North, 1984a; Sunstein, 1998). Thonus (2001) found that instructors' perceptions of tutors' roles can vary greatly. She observed that some instructors wanted tutors to be instructor surrogates and others wanted tutors to play a role other than that of a teacher.

Scholars have also investigated the controversial practice of requiring students to attend the writing center. For example, Clark (1985) argued that requiring students to visit the writing center was necessary for getting students who need help to visit the writing center. Devet (2009) claimed that requiring students to visit the writing center only satisfies a student's desire to get points for being tutored.

There are two dominant themes in the scholarship about the relationship between faculty and the writing center. Writing center directors and tutors have argued that the college faculty should respect the practice of peer tutoring and support the philosophy of the writing center, but other research has shown that tension exists between writing centers and those instructors who want peer tutors to help students find and fix errors in their writing. But for all the writing about how faculty should or should not use the writing center, there is little research on the actual ways that instructors integrate a writing center's services into their pedagogy and what the outcomes of those integrations are. There is little published scholarship that explores this valuable aspect of a writing center's activity system, which exists in a network of other activity systems in which students are completing many kinds of writing assignments, from senior-thesis projects to

creative writing to technical science reports. Thus, an examination of the ways that instructors interact with the writing center is vital to any exploration of how a writing center mediates students' composing practices.

Instructors Who Participated in the Research Study

I interviewed eight instructors of students who participated in the study so that I could learn what they thought the purpose of the writing center was and how they used the writing center to supplement their own teaching. I believed that these interviews would also yield important information about why their students visited the writing center. (To preserve the confidentiality of the student participants, I did not disclose to the instructors the identities of the students who were also participating in the research study.) Table 4 includes the pseudonyms of the instructors, the subjects they taught, and whether they recommended or required the students in this study to have a conference in the writing center.

Table 4. Instructors Who Participated in the Research Study

Instructor	Subject	Student
Prof. Bower	Literature/Fiction	Dan was required to visit.
Prof. Cranston	Literature/Poetry	Tim decided to visit.
Prof. Edwards	Political Science	Garrett decided to visit.
Prof. Grant	English (writing center director)	Brynna was required to visit.
Prof. Jones	Chemistry	Carmen was required to visit.
		Carolyn and Andrea decided to visit.
Prof. Simpson	English	Cindy was required to visit.
Prof. Thornton	Biology	Janelle decided to visit.
Mr. Younts	Business (adjunct)	David decided to visit.

Although I could not collect documents related to specific classes or writing assignments, several of the faculty willingly provided me with examples of assignments or information they had received from the writing center. Professor Thornton, for

example, gave me an informational handout that the writing center sent to faculty each semester, and Professor Jones gave me a copy of the writing assignment that Carmen had completed and discussed in her conference with Nancy.

<div align="center">The Activity System of Teaching Writing</div>

Instructors were able to use the writing center in a variety of ways, depending on the type of class they were teaching. Instructors could require or recommend that their students have a writing conference. According to their manual, the writing center often worked with students who were required to visit the writing center; the writing center even recommended to faculty that they could require their students to visit the writing center for a conference and provide extra credit to students who completed the requirement.

Faculty who taught a first-year seminar (FYS) class in the fall semester received the assistance of a writing consultant who served as the course's writing fellow. In FYS classes, students were usually required to have a conference with the consultant for each writing assignment. Faculty who taught writing-emphasis courses could also benefit from the assistance of a writing fellow, and in the semester I conducted this study, the writing center began matching writing fellows with instructors who requested them for classes that were not necessarily writing-emphasis courses. Professors consulted with Professor Grant about which writing consultant was best suited for the task, and once that consultant was assigned to be the writing fellow, he or she dedicated several hours each week to helping the students in the course. The writing center also made available a variety of workshops that consultants offered to faculty members and their students. Faculty could request workshops that writing consultants facilitated on a variety of topics related to teaching writing, such as brainstorming and developing effective reading strategies.

The writing center was embedded in the culture of teaching writing. Figure 16 describes the activity system for teaching writing and demonstrates how the writing

center shared the "labor" of teaching writing. In indicates that the teaching of writing involved not only the instructors and elements of the college curriculum, but also those factors outside of class (such as the writing center) that were part of the community and division of labor for the activity of teaching writing. According to the activity-theory perspective, activities are concerned with motives (Leontiev, 1981). The motive behind this activity is to graduate students who are skilled writers in their respective disciplines. The faculty wanted their students to write well, but they had different individual goals that influenced how they used the writing center in their teaching.

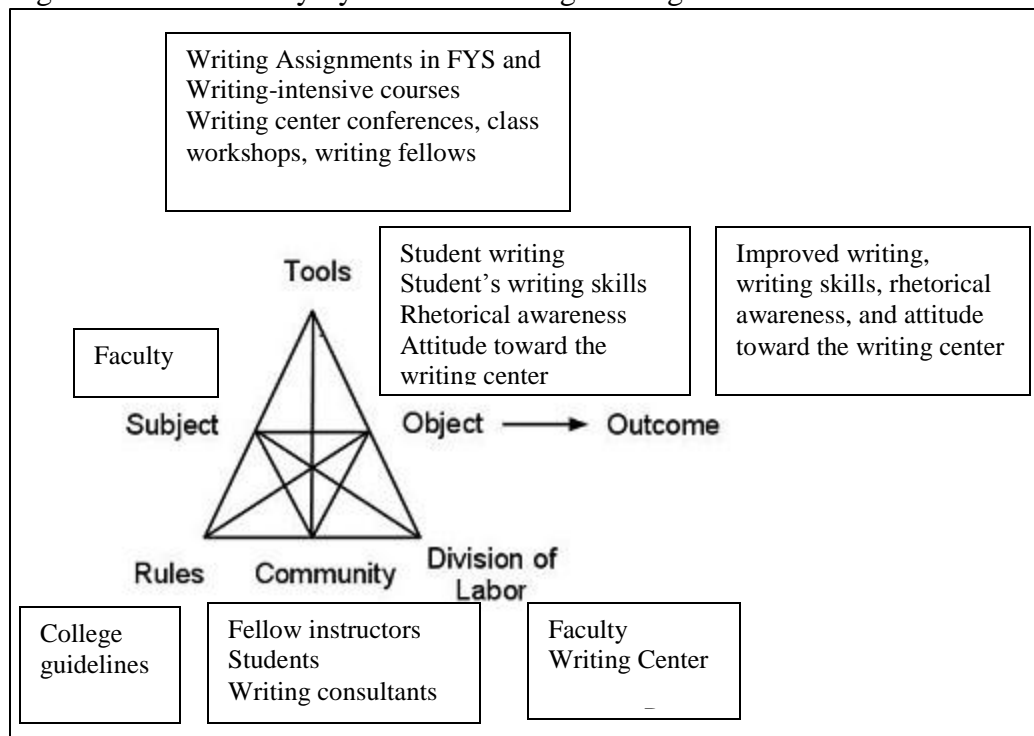Figure 16. The Activity System of Teaching Writing

Figure 16 also suggests why there were tensions in the activity system of teaching writing. Figure 16 indicates that the professors, for the most part, believed that the writing center was a tool that could mediate the improvement of student writing. My

interpretation of the writing center director's belief about writing conferences is that he considered the proper object to be the student's thinking about his or her topic. After all, Professor Grant, the writing center director, said that it was not up to the writing center consultant to ensure that the student revised his or her text. Rather, the proper goal of the consultant was to facilitate a good conversation (personal interview, February 4, 2009). These different conceptions of the object of the activity system resulted in different tensions with respect to what instructors expected from the writing center and what the writing center itself wanted to contribute to the academic mission of the college.

<u>Making Use of Different Tools for Different Situations:</u>

<u>How Instructors Varied Their Use of the Writing Center</u>

The instructors in this research study had varying conceptions of what the proper object of a conference should be and what tool offered by the writing center was best suited for helping their students. An important theme in my interviews with faculty was that they each usually did not have one view of how the writing center could help them; rather, they had several viewpoints according to the kind of writing that they were teaching. They adapted their use of the writing center according to the kind of writing they were teaching in a specific course and what they believed a consultant could help their students with.

In the rest of this chapter, I discuss the different ways that instructors sought to use the writing center and the tensions that existed between the writing center's philosophy and how instructors believed the writing center could help them. I first discuss the instructors who used the writing center as a resource either to help them teach writing or to enable their students to receive feedback. I will then describe how instructors, who believed that the typical writing consultant could not help their students revise, relied on writing fellows with specialized knowledge. Lastly, I will discuss those instructors who believed that writing consultants could not provide adequate feedback about advanced writing and did not recommend their students use the writing center.

Recommending or Requiring Students to Visit the Writing

Center: How Instructors Got Students Through the Door

My analysis suggests that many of the faculty in this research study did not have one way that they preferred to use the writing center. Rather, they had multiple uses for writing consultants, and how they used the writing center depended greatly on the kind of writing that was the subject of the class (e.g., basic writing or advanced writing in upper-level courses). Most of the time, however, the faculty were concerned with how students could get help from a consultant in improving their drafts.

The writing center director, though he believed ardently that his writing center was a "conversation" center, admitted that the writing center did other kinds of conferences. Thus, he was aware of conferences could focus on the improvement of texts. But he still wanted the emphasis to be on discussion and not line-by-line editing. He told me, for example, that they did editing conferences: "I never had any problems with regard to a writing center doing a lot of work with regard to editing, but I always wanted, and right from the beginning felt that that editing work should be done through conversation" (personal interview, February 4, 2009). He stated also that even when a consultant had an "editing" conference, the pen or pencil should stay in the student's hand.

The instructors taught a variety of writing courses and they used the writing center's services in the way that best fit their needs. Many of them shared the writing center director's philosophy (as well as the philosophy of consultants like Brynna) that the conference should center on the meaning of the writing, not on the surface features such as errors in grammar and mechanics.

Professor Jones was an example of a professor who believed that students should use the writing center to obtain feedback about the meaning in their writing. He was also a professor in the chemistry department who taught advanced courses for majors and more basic courses for non-majors, so he used the writing center in different ways.

This statement by Professor Jones encapsulated his view of the writing center:

> The focus of the consultation, as they call it, is, is more on the content, the organization and the flow of the paper, as opposed to looking for typographical errors and, um, you know, spelling mistakes and grammar and that that sort of stuff. (personal interview, April 23, 2009)

Indeed, Professor Jones believed so strongly in this that he even told Carolyn and Andrea that they should not "bother" the writing center with a discussion about proofreading issues. (Carolyn and Andrea told me this during my observation of their revising process.)

It is my interpretation that Professor Jones used the writing center as a multi-purpose tool to help students with the different kinds of writing projects that he assigned in the variety of classes that he taught. Being a professor at an institution focused on teaching, he taught about four courses a semester, and they ranged from chemistry courses for non-majors to lab courses for majors. Professor Jones told me that he learned different strategies for teaching writing and providing effective feedback from the writing center director. Their offices were just doors apart, after all, so they had opportunities to interact with each other. Professor Jones said that Professor Grant taught him about providing verbal feedback about the meaning in a piece of writing because such feedback was more effective than correcting a student's paper with extensive written comments (personal interview, April 23, 2009). Professor Jones said that after these discussions, he stopped providing written feedback and started talking to students about their writing.

Professor Jones required students in his "Selected Concepts in Chemistry" course (such as Carmen) to visit the writing center so that they could refine their writing and learn about the writing center. He told me that he wanted those students to refine how they explained the chemistry concepts that they wrote about, which were written for a general audience:

> And so, um, by visiting the writing center and having someone read over their paper and do this consultation, um, that person in my view would be providing valuable feedback in terms of whether the students were actually meeting, um, one of the criteria for the assignment. (personal interview, April 23, 2009)

It is my interpretation that Professor Jones hoped that students would internalize the idea of using the writing center for help and seek out help from a consultant on their own in the future. This, however, was not as easy as Professor Jones might have hoped it would be. Carmen resented having to go to the writing center, and claimed that she had already learned about it from her FYS class.

Professor Simpson, Cindy's instructor, also believed in requiring his students to visit the writing center, but said that he achieved better results if he gave students specific guidance about what to do in the writing center. He believed that the best time to require a student to visit the writing center was when the student had already received some feedback from peers (in a peer-review activity) and from him. Although he had required students to go to the writing center for brainstorming activities, he did not like having students use the writing center for this purpose because he believed that the students could get more from engaging in brainstorming activities with their classmates. Professor Simpson believed that it was a sound strategy to require students to visit the writing center after they already received some feedback:

> And I think the best it's probably worked for me is, for me is in the revision process. I read the paper, I make a response, and then the student goes to the writing center. That seems to be, I think, probably the common method. But I think I get more out of that. (personal interview, April 27, 2009)

Professor Simpson, however, also believed in having his students use the writing center for editing help when they were looking to publish a piece of writing. He said in our interview, "They've got a paper that's, that's virtually finished and they're trying to locate everything in it that's problematic and fix it. And, so, another set of eyes to help them do that." Thus, for Professor Simpson, a conference could be about how to fix local errors or how to plan for extensive revision. Professor Thornton, too, wanted more of his biology students to have problems in grammar corrected because he was frustrated when he read student writing with poor syntax or mechanical errors (personal interview, May 20, 2009).

Professor Simpson also stated that he spent a lot of time commenting on a paper, and could devote more time to that, but felt that students would react better to a peer who talked to them about their writing (personal interview, April 7, 2009). He requested students "prove" that they visited the writing center by sending him a short paragraph that summarized their activities there. In the interview, he indicated that it was difficult for him to provide extensive "one-to-one" assistance to his students, so the writing center helped students find individualized help with writing. But after he read the member check that I sent him, he sent me a response that included this paragraph:

> I would qualify the idea of my not having time for extensive one-on-one work with student writing. I make time for whatever seems most important to student learning. Having the writing center to help allows me greater flexibility in distributing my time (personal communication, March 17, 2010).

Science professors and professors who taught creative writing were hesitant to require all students to visit the writing center. For example, Professor Jones did not require students in his advanced chemistry courses to visit the writing center because their lab reports were not written to be understood by people with no training in chemistry. He said that he was willing to provide most of the feedback to those students who were writing lab reports because it was too much to ask other students to comment on these reports. Professor Jones said, "Uh, and so that's why, I say pick up most of the slack in that area" (personal interview April 23, 2009).

Another professor, Professor Edwards, learned a lot about the writing center through personal interactions with the director and other consultants. A political science professor, she said that she also had worked with Professor Grant for a long time and learned about the purpose of the writing center through those interactions. Her conception of the purpose of the writing center seemed close to Professor Grant's:

> As I understand it—and I've worked quite a bit with Professor Grant, who's in charge of it—um, is that it's, it's really designed to help students, um, not so much at the final project, product stage, you know, in terms of checking all the commas and so on, but more to help students think through, uh, their ideas, um, clarify their thinking, um, well, formulate their thoughts, determine what it is they want to say and how they want to say it, how to organize their ideas. (personal

interview, May 11, 2009)

She also reiterated a common belief, which was that some students could get by in their writing projects without the help of a consultant:

> I really think it would probably help them to maybe go two or three times over the course of developing a paper. For, for others, um, others can actually do fine on their own, and the rest fall somewhere in the middle. (personal interview, May 11, 2009)

Professor Edwards did not share an office in the same building as Professor Grant, but she did interact with him. She told me in our interview that she had gone on a couple of retreats with him and with several writing consultants where they talked about effective strategies for teaching writing.

Professor Edwards differed from instructors like Professor Simpson in that she did not believe that the writing center would help people with grammar and mechanics at all. Her conceptions of what the writing center did, it seemed, were not based on what actually happened there. It may have been that Professor Edwards only knew consultants like Brynna, who would not "edit" a student's writing. Even though several consultants, most notably Nancy, were willing to help students with their errors in grammar and punctuation, Professor Edwards believed that her students could not get help with grammar and mechanics at the writing center. She adhered to the ideal discourse about the writing center that some consultants, but not all, adhered to in their conferences. She believed, however, that there needed to be a resource to help students with basic-writing issues: "I mean it seems that we do need somebody who's really focused on those kinds of things [grammar and punctuation]. Otherwise students don't know they're making some of the errors and they just keep on making them" (personal interview, May 11, 2009).

This was a very real tension that existed between the writing center and other people on campus. Professor Edwards realized that a very real object in the activity system of teaching writing was the ability to write fluently without significant errors in grammar and mechanics. And although Professor Grant said that the writing center could

do "editing conferences," he believed that those could turn into conferences about meaning-related concerns if the discussion turned to those issues (personal interview, February 4, 2009). Thus, writing consultants were to turn away from grammar and mechanics whenever there was a chance to focus on the main meaning.

<div align="center">Writing Fellows: A Specialized Resource for Instructors</div>

Writing fellows played an important role in the writing center because they collaborated with college faculty in first-year seminar classes by providing extensive conferencing to students. And the semester that I was gathering data was the first semester in which the writing fellows program was expanded to all of the writing-emphasis classes. Professor Jones discussed with Professor Grant the importance of using a writing fellow in his organic chemistry course who had a science background and was able to have a writing fellow with extensive chemistry experience (and who had taken the organic chemistry class). Writing fellows, thus, provided instructors with access to students with specialized, subject-specific knowledge, and the ability to help students with advanced writing assignments. It was a tool that they could use when they believed a general consultant could not mediate the improvement of students' texts. According to Professor Grant, a writing fellow devoted a certain amount of time to the class each week.

Although instructors in this research study generally believed that their students could benefit from conferences with consultants who may not have had specialized knowledge of the subject matter, they also used writing fellows for writing assignments that they felt were too difficult for a student who had not taken the appropriate courses. Professor Jones used a writing fellow for his organic chemistry class, a student who had previously taken the course and who visited the class to talk about the assignment. In addition, this writing fellow met with students outside of class. Carolyn and Andrea told me in our interview that they had met with this writing fellow in the library to discuss how to write the report. They also said that this writing fellow shared with them her

report (personal interview, April 29, 2009).

A writing fellow with experience in biology came to his writing-emphasis class in order to help students get started with writing projects. Professor Thornton, who was not comfortable with his advanced biology students going to the writing center for help with technical writing, was much more positive about writing fellows. He believed that science reports had a very specific kind of organization and that students with experience in biology could help other students with that kind of writing. He told me in our interview:

> We have the students bring the rough draft of their paper; we, uh, we read our papers to each other and to the writing center fellows, get in small groups and work with them, and so, I have had a lot of positive feedback about the writing center fellows being able to help with organization or, um, wording or, you know, just proofreading, editing. (personal interview, May 20, 2009)

Although many of the instructors who used writing fellows used them to provide feedback to students who had completed drafts, Professor Edwards invited a writing fellow to lead her class on different writing exercises to help them get started with their writing (personal interview, May 11, 2009).

None of the instructors talked about having any sort of difficulty with finding a writing fellow to help them. Indeed, the size of the staff—more than 70 consultants— helped the director to find a student who could help a professor with the teaching of writing. The diversity of the consultants may have helped the director to find consultants who could work more closely with students. Because he did not recruit students from among English majors, he had students with a variety of majors.

These close relationships between consultants and instructors may have contributed to the positive attitudes that professors had about writing consultants in general. Professor Jones said that the consultants were the "better students on campus" (personal interview, April 23, 2009).

Although several of the faculty in this research study praised the intellectual qualities of writing consultants, not all of them believed that their students could receive

effective feedback from a consultant. In these cases, they believed that the object of a writing conference—a plan to revise a poem or a scientific lab report—was outside of the scope of what writing consultant could help students with.

Will the "Blacksmith" Do?: Who Can Help Students with

Advanced Writing?

Some instructors in this research study did not think the writing center could help their students with advanced writing assignments because they believed that writing center consultants did not have the necessary expertise for providing feedback in certain genres. These instructors did not consider the writing center to be ineffective, just not suited to specialized forms of writing. Their situation definition of the writing conference was that it was best suited for helping with students with basic elements such as organization and word selection. For these instructors, the object of a writing conference could only be a basic writing assignment or an aspect of prose (such as organization) that the average college-level writers was familiar with. Some of these instructors adapted the writing center's services to fit their needs by enlisting help from writing fellows who had taken their courses or who otherwise had developed skills in the advanced genre.

The writing center director understood that some writing assignments would be difficult for consultants to completely apprehend and provide feedback about. The director believed, however, that these advanced assignments constituted a minority of what the writing consultants would see. In this excerpt from our interview, he talked about how writing consultants helped students with advanced writing:

> We're just trying to ask questions, you know, and get it, just {?} try to understand what you're saying, what are you trying to get across, on the assumption that a very high percentage of papers that we'll look at are really intended for a lay reader or for somebody that doesn't have all that highly specialized knowledge— certainly there would be some exceptions there, science papers in chemistry or physics ((laughs)) get pretty complex real fast, but the vast majority of papers that we see should be understandable to someone without an incredibly sophisticated background. (personal interview, February 4, 2009)

To help the writing consultants facilitate conferences with students in science

classes, Professor Grant invited science professors to come to the writing center and talk about the genre of science writing.

> Later in the semester we meet with several faculty from sciences who are going to talk about lab reports and what they're expecting in lab reports; it could be kind of an interesting conversation 'cause different faculty in different departments have different attitudes with regard to what's the function of a lab report, and, uh, their expectations of how to be evaluated. (personal interview, February 4, 2009)

Although Professor Grant hoped that the writing center could be a place for students to talk about all kinds of writing, Professor Cranston, Tim's poetry professor did not recommend that her students visit the writing center for help with poetry. One reason she told me was because she said her students received a lot of feedback in the workshop; her poetry students were in a class that was designed to give them feedback on their writing.

She also believed that poetry writing was a special genre that worked differently than prose. In her response to the member check that I sent her, she emphasized that the writing center was not the place for a discussion about poetry writing. She wrote, "In regard to poetry, one would not ask a blacksmith for help and advice for the work of a goldsmith" (personal communication, December 15, 2009). She went on to explain more about how poetry differed from prose. She wrote that the goals of expository writing are (among others) clarity and organization, but "the logic of poetry is not the logic of prose. If it were, the student would be writing prose" (personal communication, December 15, 2009).

To the best of my knowledge, however, Professor Cranston did not dissuade her poetry students from visiting the writing center. Tim never told me that his professor did not want him to talk about his poems with a consultant. Professor Cranston told me in our interview that her students were "free" to consult with a writing consultant about poetry, but she did not recommend it (personal interview, March 16, 2009). Tim did visit the writing center to discuss his poems and how to interpret the comments she made. His consultant had taken the class and several poetry workshops. Although it is difficult to

draw specific connections between the two conferences and how he revised his poems,

Tim's conference with Maureen illustrated how students used the writing center in ways

that their instructors may not have wanted them to.

Professor Bower, a teacher of fiction writing, echoed the sentiment that the

writing center was not the place to receive help with creative writing:

> I teach creative writing, I teach fiction writing…I never have used it [the writing center] for that. And only because I don't think the students—I think they can respond in general ways, but I don't think they can give a lot of good advice in specific ways. (personal interview, April 7, 2009)

Thus, even though he believed that his students would be in "good hands" if they

went to the writing center, and that he would like his students to achieve more

independence when revising their expository writing, was almost protective of his

students' fiction writing. He told me in our interview that a consultant could give an

offhand suggestion that could derail a story's effectiveness (personal interview, April 7,

2009).

He seemed to regret that he viewed the writing center as a place that could cause

trouble for his students:

> I suppose that's a terrible attitude to have here, but, um, I think if they get the right person in the writing center, they'll do fine. But if they get the wrong person, someone who's really not experienced in even, even norming what, you know, a decent story is opposed to one that has major problems or isn't working, um, that, that's what I worry about most. (personal interview, April 7, 2009)

It is important for me to emphasize that these professors believed in using the

writing center for their other classes. Professor Cranston believed that students who were

writing literary-analysis papers could benefit from discussing their organization. And

Professor Bower believed that his students got the most out of their visits by taking his

instructions with them to a writing conference. He told me in our interview:

"So when they go to the writing center, they need to take that sheet with them 'cause it

tells the, um, person there what I expect and what the parameters of the paper are"

(personal interview, April 7, 2009).

The notion that the writing center was not for advanced writing was shared by instructors in the sciences as well. Professor Jones told me that he spent more time commenting on students' drafts of technical reports because he did not think other students could provide effective feedback (personal interview, April 23, 2009). He, too, did not appear to have dissuaded students in advanced chemistry courses from seeking help in the writing center because he knew that Carolyn and Andrea were going to have a conference and suggested to them that they not discuss grammar and mechanics with the consultant.

Some professors believed that their writing assignments could not be the object of the activity system of a writing conference because of their difficulty. They did not encourage their students to seek out a writing fellow. But their students' notions of what the writing center was for was mediated by a variety of ideas, and their own relationships with writing consultants (such as Tim's friendship with Maureen, or even how Carolyn knew that Nancy was knowledgeable in chemistry) helped them cross the institutional borders that their professors had drawn.

Conclusion

The professors in this research study shared the opinion that the writing center was helpful for improving students' writing. They believed that the proper object of the writing conference should be a plan for fixing problems in a text that was usually a complete draft because many instructors did not believe that they had good results when they asked the students to brainstorm topics in the writing center.

Figure 17 illustrates how instructors could select from different tools when deciding how best to integrate the writing center into their teaching. That tool depended on the object that the instructor believed should be part of the activity system of the writing conference. The diagram also illustrates that faculty were primarily focused on how their students could improve their writing, not necessarily their thinking about a topic, which was the outcome that the director believed was valuable. This was one of the

most significant tensions in the research study: the different philosophies of the writing center and the instructors. Although the consultants and director referred to the writing center as a conversation center, none of the instructors used that term when I interviewed or corresponded with them.

Figure 17. How Instructors Viewed the Activity System of the Writing Conference
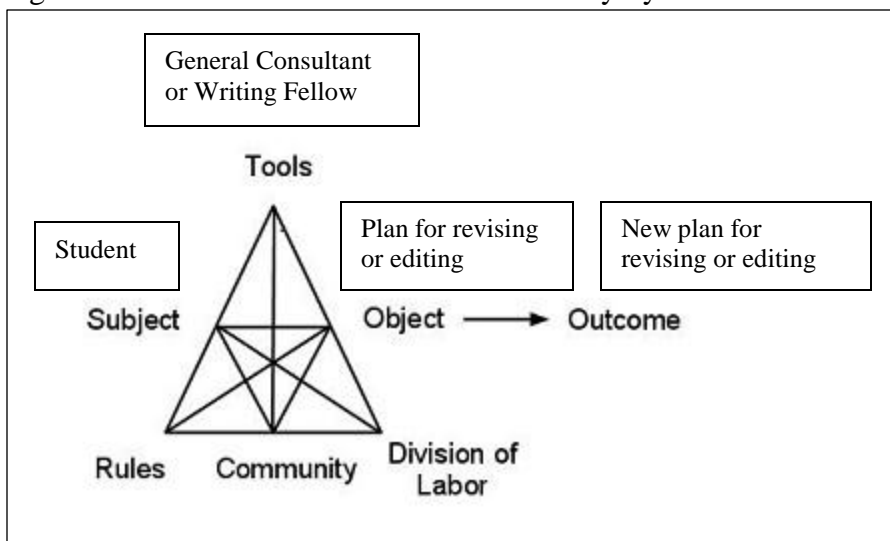
There was, however, significant tension between the goals that faculty had for their students and the actual goals that students had for their writing conferences. Carmen, for example, resented having to go the writing center even though Professor Jones believed that a conference helped his students to see the value of feedback from writing consultants. Carolyn and Andrea discussed sentence-level problems and word selection issues with Nancy even though Professor Jones suggested that they not "bother" the writing center with small problems in their writing (personal interview, April 28, 2009). Thus, even though the faculty used the writing center like a multi-purpose tool, their hoped-for goals and objects for the conferences were not always the students'. As I discussed in the earlier chapters, students' goals (or lack of specific goals) were a key

factor in determining how they participated in their conferences and how they revised.

The instructors' situation definition of the object of a writing conference differed from the situation definition of Professor Grant. Whereas the writing center director believed that the typical writing conference should emphasize conversation and assist the student writer in thinking more clearly about his or her subject matter, instructors who wanted their students to use the writing center believed that the object should be an aspect of the text. The instructors did not value conversation and construction of knowledge as much as the writing center director did.

The difficulty with requiring students to visit the writing center with a specific goal was that the goal and the outcome in the conference were often different than what the instructor had intended. For example, Carmen was required to visit the writing center in part to learn about the writing center because that was one reason Professor Jones gave for requiring students in that class to have a writing conference. But Carmen was already somewhat familiar with the writing center and resented having to meet with someone to discuss her writing. And Cindy, who was supposed to work on her thesis with her consultant, worked minimally on the thesis in her writing conference and returned to the instructor for more feedback.

Some professors believed that the writing center could not help their students because they believed that the genre of writing (poetry, fiction, or advanced lab reports) were not appropriate objects for writing conferences. Instructors like Professor Cranston and Bower believed that the writing center's purview extended to basic prose because consultants were appropriate for helping students with those aspects of writing.

This chapter illustrates just how differently the faculty perceived the purpose of the writing center—in much the same way that some of the students viewed the purpose of a conference differently than their consultants did. These differences, and their significances, will be addressed further in the following chapter, in which I discuss the implications that this research study has for peer tutoring in a writing center, student

revision, and the role of the writing center in the activity system of teaching writing.

CHAPTER VII:

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Summary of Assertions

In this section, I summarize the assertions from the previous five chapters. This will prepare the reader for the discussion of how this research study relates to other studies about writing center conferences, student revision, and the relationship between a writing center and the college faculty.

The Writing Conferences of Students Who Did Not Have

Specific Goals

Students who did not have specific goals for their writing conferences ceded authority to consultants because they wanted the consultants to identify errors and suggest corrections to the text. My interpretation is that the students' situation definition of a conference was that the consultant would point out mistakes and suggest corrections to errors in grammar, mechanics, or local meaning. The consultants who worked with these students, though they preferred to have conferences that were discussions of the main meanings in a piece of writing, facilitated the conference according to the situation definition of the student and did not try to promote situation re-definition.

The students who did not have specific textual goals for their conferences can be divided into two groups that experienced different outcomes of their conferences. For the first group of students, the outcomes of the writing conferences were corrected drafts that they used to edit their writing. These psychological tools closely resembled the actual revisions because these students did not significantly interact with their conference drafts. The second group of students did develop new psychological tools in the form of new conceptions of revision or other rhetorical strategies that they did use in their revising process.

The revision processes of students without specific goals can also be divided into two groups. The students whose conference outcomes were marked-up drafts almost always integrated the formal and meaning-preserving revisions because they wanted their writing to be correct and free of errors. They believed that their instructors wanted writing that was free of errors. They also resisted making microstructure and macrostructure revisions to their writing, and only did so if they believed their instructor would approve of the change. However, students whose outcomes were new conceptions of writing or revising focused on using their new psychological tools to make meaning-related changes to their writing.

<p style="text-align:center">The Writing Conferences of Students Who Had Specific</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Textual Goals</p>

Students who did have specific goals for their conferences controlled the agenda of the conference so that they could compose new sections of their text or receive feedback about certain aspects of their existing text. They shared with the consultant the process of identifying aspects of the text to discuss in the conference. In these "incestuous" conferences, the students shared the same situation definition of the purpose of a writing conference and of revising, so the consultant could not facilitate a new situation definition on the part of the student. Like the conferences with students who did not have specific goals, these conferences were centered on the improvement of the student's text as opposed to his or her strategies for writing. These students did not have outcomes that were new writing strategies or processes for the revision process.

Students with specific goals for revising focused on making meaning-preserving and microstructure revisions that were discussed in the conference; they rarely discussed formal revisions because they had a command of principles of grammar and mechanics. They more often integrated the revisions that they suggested during the conference, and they were willing to engage the feedback that they received and alter it before they made their revisions. Instead of immediately rejecting suggestions about revising their

meaning, these students generally evaluated each suggestion according to their goals for their writing.

How Instructors Used or Did Not Use the Writing Center as
a Resource

The instructors used the writing center as a tool to help them teach writing in their courses, and they usually had several ways to use a writing center based on whether they believed the writing center was an adequate tool for helping their students revise. Unlike the writing center director, they believed that the writing center's purpose was to help students fix different kinds of problems in their writing, not to have meaningful conversations. Faculty who taught upper-level writing courses avoided recommending or requiring their students use the writing center, but some used writing fellows who had specialized knowledge in their disciplines to facilitate writing conferences or teach units about writing in a particular genre.

Discussion

The Relationship Between Student Revision and Writing
Center Conferences

First, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Hillocks (1982) who studied the interaction between revision and teacher feedback. In this research study, students who did not have specific directions for their assignments, such as Janelle, did not pay attention to feedback about how to expand the meaning in their writing. Students did not use all types of feedback in the same way, which Hillocks emphasized in his report. Thus, this study suggests that researchers who analyze how students revise after writing center conferences should take into account the factors that influence a student's decision to integrate feedback such as the directions and feedback that they have received from their instructors.

The results of this collective case study support the findings of some research studies that examined how students revised after writing conferences, but contradicted the

results of others. In the case of Williams (2004), this research study supports some of its findings and contradicts others. For example, Williams also found that students were more likely to address surface errors than text-based revisions. Indeed, in this research study, when the student and consultant discussed a formal revision, the student usually made that revision because students believed that their instructors wanted correct writing. These revisions that the consultants suggested were also easy for the students to integrate into their new drafts. Williams (2004) and Bernhardt (1988) also found that revision did not necessarily lead to better papers, which I observed when students fixed errors but did not address meaning-related issues. (E.g., when David corrected local errors but did not add additional support for his thesis statement about Frank Addante.)

This study supports another key finding of Williams (2004), who found that students tended to revise those aspects of their writing that they discussed with their writing tutors. The results of this case study extend the findings of Williams in that students did usually revise those aspects that they talked about, but they integrated indirect suggestions into their revisions if they did not conflict with other aspects of their activity system, such as their instructors' requirements or how much time they wanted to spend on revising.

Some students were able to improve aspects of their drafts after their meetings with consultants, which is consistent with the findings of researchers who examined how pre-conference drafts differed from students' revised drafts (David & Bubolz, 1985; Niiler, 2003, 2005; Roberts, 1988; Van Dam, 1985). Janelle and Carmen, for example, had fewer sentence-level errors in their drafts after they revised them. But the improved drafts may not have been a sign of a beneficial conference because these students did not develop better psychological tools to apply in future writing projects. Indeed, Carmen made the same errors in her revising process that Nancy corrected for her during the conference.

When students suggested language for their own revisions, they almost always

integrated these revisions into their writing at their revisions sessions. This is not to say that students in this study always integrated the changes that they suggested in the writing center. Janelle, for example, seemed to overlook a change she suggested while working with Nancy. Still, this study suggests that writers tend to revise when they are enabled to make suggestions of their own during the conference.

It was the indirect suggestions that students did not always integrate into their own writing for various reasons—often not because the suggestion itself was wrong. Indirect suggestions about changes in meaning were only integrated if the students believed the suggestion was in line with other aspects of the activity system, such as what they believed their instructors wanted. Writing consultants, however, revised according to personal goals for their writing and did not cite their instructors as reasons for making revisions.

These results are in line with some of the other research about how students tended to only make the revisions that they discussed in their writing conferences. Bell (2002) found that when students worked with peer tutors, the students did not make many additional revisions after making the ones that they discussed in their conferences. Bell also claimed that he was not able to say whether the students who worked with peer tutors became better writers, which was a finding that was similar to one of mine in this research study. Janelle, for example, made (except for a few independent revisions) only the changes that she discussed in her conference with Nancy. Janelle's behavior was in line with the findings of Bell, but did not explain what happened with other students in this research study.

As to whether students made macrostructure revisions after their writing conferences, this research study conflicts with the results of earlier studies. Stay (1983) found that writers were able to make macrostructure changes under the guidance of a writing center instructor. Stay also claimed that students made macrostructure changes because they talked about ideas with their writing center instructors. The students in the

present research study rarely made macrostructure changes as a result of working with a writing consultant. But the writing consultants rarely made suggestions about macrostructure revisions. Alicia had already made the decision to add the "Work Experience" section of her résumé before she had the writing conference with Brynna. In Stay's research study, he referred to writing center instructors, which may have mean that the students were working with professional, and not peer tutors. This is an important distinction because Bell (2002) also found that students who worked with a professional tutor revised more after the writing conference than students who had conferences with a peer tutor.

This research study is also consistent with the findings of Cho and MacArthur (2010) who found that student who sought help from a variety of peers made successful revisions. Carolyn and Andrea sought help from a writing fellow in addition to having a conference with Nancy, and Garrett had two writing conferences to discuss his political-science essay. Gaining multiple perspectives helped these students to revise their writing. The students, such as Brynna, who sought feedback from a variety of people, appeared to be invested in the outcome of their writing process.

Another important component of the research study was evaluating how students responded to the comments of their instructors. The findings are consistent with Ziv (1984) who found that students tended to respond to explicit comments from their instructors. Cindy followed the suggestion of her instructor to integrate outside source material about the life of Kate Chopin. But one limitation of this research study was that I was not able to collect all of the comments that instructors provided to students (e.g., the written comments that Professor Simpson sent to Cindy about how she could revise her essay). Thus, I cannot reliably assess the implications that this research study had for how students respond solely to feedback from their instructors.

The students in this research study did, however, exhibit a range of attitudes toward how they followed their instructors' advice about revising. Tim, for example,

selected to follow the comments that only made sense to him and his goals for revising his poetry. This was consisted with the findings of Prior (1995) who concluded that when students revise according to instructor feedback, the comments become internally persuasive to the students so that they can use them.

The findings of this research study complicate a previous finding on whether students are interested in instructor feedback that is directive. Indeed, students in this research study displayed a variety of attitudes towards the feedback that they received: Carolyn, Andrea, and Cindy were eager to follow the advice of their instructors. This is not consistent with Straub (1997), who found that first-year college students were wary of comments that sought to control their revision process.

<div align="center">Conference Conversation</div>

Although many writing center scholars have emphasized how the writing conference should focus on facilitating the development of the writer rather than the correcting of a student's text (Brooks, 1991; Bruffee, 1984; North, 1984a), the writing conferences in this study were almost exclusively focused on how students could improve their drafts. Much of the discourse about peer tutoring, however, has not been based on empirical research but rather on what some have called the "lore" of writing center pedagogy (Thompson et al., 2009). It is the ideal that writing center professionals want to see reflected in the practice of peer tutoring. The writing consultants in this study talked about a variety of aspects of student writing, but not just sentence-level concerns. The writing consultants facilitated the writing conferences according to the situation definitions of their students by suggesting ways to fix the textual problems that were most pressing. Maureen was perhaps one of the exceptions because she engaged Tim in a discussion of what he believed a poem should be about and whether a poem could be about the sound of words rather than the meaning. On the whole, however, the conferences were text focused.

The cases in this study reflect the different perspectives on student – tutor

interactions that scholars have described. For example, Murphy (1991) argued that a "liberal" approach to tutoring emphasizes how a student develops a better writing process through collaboration with an accomplished tutor that can be a guide:

> Students learn how to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills through dialogic exchanges with the tutor. The paradigm of this method is apprenticeship learning in which the craft of writing is learned by an apprentice writer from a more experienced and knowledgeable writer, the tutor, who is also able to articulate aspects of his or her craft. (p. 278)

In the conservative approach, Murphy argued, "writing centers are effective when they advance a student's mastery of skills—specifically, grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, and sentence complexity and variety" (p. 277). In this study, most of the writing consultants did not meet the description of the liberal approach because they often could not explicitly describe writing strategies or processes to their students. As to helping students with grammar or mechanics, they usually needed to read a student's text aloud to hear where a comma or other kind of punctuation was needed. Indeed, many of the conferences fit this model of the conservative approach, while other conferences did not. But this study suggests that peer tutors may not be the right kind of students to facilitate an apprenticeship because the writing consultants in this study usually did not move the conversation away from the text toward a discussion of the particular processes and strategies that the writers used to come up with the drafts. Indeed, the consultants did not seek to uncover the patterns of error that tutors can address to effectively help their students (Shaughnessy, 1977).

This research also suggests that characterizing tutorials as directive or nondirective is not a sufficient classification because it omits consideration of important aspects of the activity system of the writing conference. These models are almost exclusively focused on what the tutor does to facilitate student learning (Brooks, 1991; Shamoon & Burns, 1995). But students visited the writing center with varying goals for their conferences, different amounts of pre-conference writing, and different tools to use in the writing conference; all of these influenced how they participated in their

conferences and how they used the conference as a tool in the revision process. And how students revised did not solely depend on whether the conference was directive or nondirective; students responded to suggestions based on the kind of revision the suggestion was about and whether they believed the revision would be approved by their audience. This study suggests that peer tutors may need to elicit the situation definitions that their students have about revision and writing conferences. When they have elicited these definitions, they may structure an activity to help students develop new definitions that are more appropriate for their academic writing.

The case studies in this research study complicate the notion of how a successful tutorial requires collaboration between a tutor and a student. Many writing center scholars have also stressed that true collaboration between tutor and student promotes a successful tutorial (Gillam, 1994; Harris, 1992; Lunsford, 1991). Indeed, the students who had specific textual goals for their writing conferences, like Alicia, did collaborate with their consultants by helping to set a specific agenda and then participating in a discussion about how to revise their writing. But most of the students who did not have specific goals, such as Carmen and Janelle, were passive while their consultant suggested how to edit sentence-level problems. The consultants in these conferences, such as seemed to accept the responsibility of identifying and correcting mistakes instead of promoting collaboration.

Indeed, the conferences with students who did not have specific textual goals seemed to fit the model that previous researchers have called asymmetrical collaboration (Thompson et al., 2009). Thompson et al. argued that students preferred conferences that fit that model in which the student supplies the text and the general goal of the conference, and the tutor decides on the activity that they will carry out to complete that goal. Carolyn and Andrea, for example, were willing to revise how they described the procedures and results in their lab report, but they wanted Nancy to identify errors and suggest corrections. This study, however, suggests a problem with the model of

asymmetrical collaboration: students who did not participate actively in developing a plan for revising their writing were still satisfied with the conference because the consultant did identify and suggest corrections. The students, such as Janelle and Carmen, did not mind being passive while the writing consultant dictated corrections. Tutors may need to facilitate an interaction in which the student does participate more in a collaborative activity after the student and tutor have set the agenda. For example, in David's conference, Ann identified aspects of David's text that contained awkward syntax, but she prompted him to revise them so that David worked on generating new language.

This research study also complicates some findings of researchers who have focused on analyzing tutorial conversation. Thonus (2002) found that students preferred writing tutorials that resembled natural conversation in which both speakers interrupted each other, laughed, and engaged in light banter. The writing consultants were satisfied with their "incestuous" conferences that were conversational. But other students, like Janelle, were satisfied with a conference in which the consultant dictated corrections. This study suggests that a student's satisfaction may not be an appropriate measure of whether the conference was focused on student learning.

The findings of this collective case study are consistent with researchers who have found that tutors controlled the tutorials (Davis, Hayward, Hunter, & Wallace, 1988; Thonus, 2004). The students like Janelle and Carmen who wanted editing help were passive while their consultant assumed the primary responsibility for identifying errors and suggesting corrections. But the students who had specific goals for their conferences did participate more actively, and the consultant did not dominate those conferences as much. Thus, this study suggests that the level of dominance by a peer tutor depends on the student's attitude toward the conference and his or her situation definition of what the purpose of a writing conference is.

The findings of this research study are also consistent with Thonus (1999) who

found that tutors deferred to the advice of students' instructors when the tutors were not experts in the subject matter. In her conference with David, Ann said that she was not a business major and did not attempt to serve as an instructor surrogate like Nancy did in her conferences with Janelle and with Carolyn and Andrea. Students were well aware of what their instructors expected and hoped to meet their expectations without doing more work than was expected of them.

<div align="center">The Role of Reading in Writing Conferences</div>

In this research study, reading did play a significant role in helping consultants and students identify errors. This confirms the suggestion by Ryan and Zimmerelli (2006), whose manual emphasizes the role that reading can play in correcting errors.

An implication of this study, however, is that consultants should carefully select a strategy for reading that will prompt a student to make substantive revision to the global meaning, if that is what is necessary. When Ann began her conference with David, for example, she read the first paragraph and first focused on discussing a problem with word selection. However, David's essay seemed to have a larger problem in the global meaning because the draft did not contain adequate support for his argument that Frank Addante should rely on his instincts in his decision-making process. Perhaps the problem could have been avoided by first engaging in a discussion about the global meaning of the essay.

The interaction with Ann and David illustrates a difficult issue regarding the setting of an agenda for a conference. Should peer tutors resist the request of a student to only examine lower-order concerns and not first try to assess the main meanings in a piece of writing? This research suggests that peer tutors need to consider the goals of the conference before selecting a reading strategy.

When consultants read student writing and stopped to ask questions and make suggestions about local meaning, they sometimes overlooked problems in global meaning. This, of course, is a difficult situation for a writing consultant because reading

the entire work out loud takes a significant amount of time and the student may become disengaged. Reading small portions does keep the student involved in the writing conference, but consultants may want to focus on assessing the global meaning before deciding that it is appropriate to discuss a piece of writing line by line.

The Writing Center and Its Relationship with Instructors

Who Teach Writing

This study revealed significant tensions between the activity systems of the writing center and of instructors who taught advanced writing. Some professors in this research study who taught advanced writing (such as scientific reports, poetry, or fiction) did not recommend their students use the writing center for assistance with their writing.

The results of this research study are consistent with much of the writing about the relationship between instructors and the writing center. The findings of this study are consistent with Thonus (2001) who found that instructors had a wide variety of opinions of what a tutor's role should be. Some professors in this study wanted the writing center to help their students with grammar and mechanics, but others believed that writing consultants only focused on discussing meaning.

The writing center and instructors in this study benefited from having writing consultants who studied in a variety of disciplines. In this study, consultants' majors included neuroscience, chemistry, political science, and English. Results of this study were consistent with Samson (1991) who argued that writing centers need to help their peer tutors learn about scientific knowledge to help students with those kinds of writing projects. Not only was Nancy able to understand Carolyn and Andrea's lab report and give them feedback about the lab report, but the writing fellows in the writing center were helpful resources for the instructors who wanted help from writing center consultants with considerable subject-specific knowledge.

Although both students and instructors in this study believed that the writing center was for helping students revise their writing, students in this research study did not

share the same opinions that their instructors did about the usefulness of the writing center. The professors who taught courses in advanced writing did not say that they forbade or prohibited their students from visiting the writing center; rather, they did not recommend their students visit the writing center to receive help with advanced writing assignments. Thus, when students have operationalized going to the writing center, external factors cannot disrupt their goal of getting help at a writing center.

This research study suggests that those who worked in the writing center had different conceptions of what were legitimate objects in the activity systems of writing center conferences. Indeed the instructors who participated in this research study held a wide variety of opinions on what the writing center did and how it could help them. Professor Thornton was an example of a professor who believed that writing consultants could help his students with grammar and mechanics but not with the content of their more complicated biology lab reports. Professor Edwards believed that her students could not get editing help at the writing center and struggled with finding a helpful resource for her students who needed to improve their grammar and mechanics. Professor Simpson, on the other hand, understood that his students could receive help with editing when they were in the last stages of a writing project. When I was interviewing different professors, I sometimes felt that each professor had worked with a different writing center on campus.

During the growth period of writing centers, writing center practitioners were concerned that instructors would only want their students to visit the writing center to have their writing corrected (North, 1984a). Now that writing centers are commonplace on college and university campuses, they may need to be explore why members of the academy keep them on the outside of academic discourse.

The findings of this study have important implications for faculty who believe that the writing center should be a place where students learn grammar and mechanics. Writing consultants in this study had a range of opinions on whether they should help a

student edit their paper. Several even doubted that they enough knowledge of grammar and mechanics to help students with these aspects of their writing. For example, when Ann wrote about helping David with editing, she said, "I admittedly am not very good with grammar and so when people ask me grammar questions it takes me a while of looking at it…" (personal interview, March 17, 2009). Even if writing consultants could spot and correct errors, this did not guarantee that students would not repeat the error. For example, when Nancy made direct suggestions about punctuation to Carmen, Carmen repeated the same errors in the new text that she added to her revisions. This research suggests that peer tutors may not be the appropriate people to help students learn how to apply the principles of grammar and mechanics.

This research also suggests that the routinized operations, which are instrumental conditions for an activity, may be a key area for writing center researchers to investigate to find out how faculty develop their conceptions of what the writing center is for. This research suggests that the faculty learn about the writing center through interacting with a few students. Future research could help develop methods and strategies of ensuring that faculty learn about what the writing center strives to be.

Professors who taught creative or technical writing stated that they did not believe the writing center was an appropriate resource for students who were writing poetry and fiction. These instructors assumed responsibility for providing feedback to students. Professor Bower wanted his fiction students to talk to him about how to revise their fiction, and Professor Jones spent a significant amount of time reading and responding to lab reports. This study suggests that faculty may designate the writing center as incapable of helping students with this kind of writing. Writing centers may need to expand their training to accommodate these professors or better communicate how a peer tutor can help a student with an advanced writing assignment.

Certainly one important implication of this research study is how faculty may have impressions of a writing center that differ than what the actual purpose of a writing

center is. But another more serious implication is that regardless of what a writing center's director or consultants may communicate to the rest of the campus, it is the actual writing conferences that build the writing center's reputation. Even though Professor Cranston believed that the writing center could not do the work of a "goldsmith," Tim was able to find a helpful writing consultant that provided astute feedback about the choices he made in writing his poems.

More research is needed on how an institution's instructors conceive the purpose of a writing center and how these perceptions influence what they teach their own students about what a writing center can do. If faculty have widely divergent opinions as to what a writing center does (and even hold incorrect opinions about what a writing center does), this can have important implications for students who are seeking to use a writing center for help with their writing.

Writing Consultants at Different Levels of Experience

One of the important findings of this research is that this study suggests that senior writing consultants may differ greatly in their conception of the role of a peer tutor. I am not aware of any research that has explored the differences in how senior consultants differ from first-year or second-year writing consultants. Future research may investigate how peer tutors develop different ideas about writing conferences as they progress in their education, develop specialized knowledge in certain fields, and get to know what different instructors tend to prefer in their students' writing.

Two writing consultants at different poles of the continuum on how to help students were Brynna, who believed she could not edit a student's paper, and Nancy, who provided a great deal of editing help to the students she worked with. Because of the constraints of this research study, I cannot know the reason for this difference, such as whether it was related to different experiences in training courses. Certainly, the different kinds of drafts that their respective students brought to the writing center may have also affected how Nancy and Brynna facilitated their respective conferences. But Cindy's

draft did have problems in mechanics (such as not using a comma and a conjunction to join two independent clauses).

Does "peerness" decline as peer tutors gain more experience? Some of the results in this study confirm other studies' findings that peer tutors dominate their writing conferences by taking the primary responsibility of identifying errors and correcting them (Williams, 2005).

Researchers have noted that peer tutors develop more of a bond with their institution (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990). Certainly, one side effect of this stronger bond is also how a peer tutor has specific knowledge of a certain instructor's grading standards. This is important knowledge at a school—such as the one where I conducted my research study—that is small. Students may not only obtain help with their papers, but help with learning about what their instructors like to see in their students' writing (such as Carmen did from Nancy) or what an instructor's comments meant (such as in Tim's second conference with Maureen).

Now, Maureen was a senior consultant, too, and she did adhere very closely to the concept that the writing center is a place for conversation. She did ask many questions of Tim, and avoided making suggestions about changing words in his poems even when she was seemed uncertain about their effectiveness.

Future research may investigate whether peer tutors' conceptions facilitating conferences change as they gain more experience in the writing center. This could be an important line of research that could shed light on whether consultants adhere to the writer-focused mission of a writing center or whether they begin to identify themselves as being more of an instructor.

<div align="center">The Effect of Required Writing Conferences</div>

Although some research (Clark, 1985; Van Dam, 1985) has shown positive effects of requiring students to visit writing centers, this research suggests that students may not experience the outcome that their professors hoped they would by visiting the

writing center. Even though Cindy was supposed to ensure that she had a strong thesis statement by visiting the writing center, she passively listened to her consultant discuss the thesis and then went back to the instructor for advice on how to revise. Carmen, too, resented having to go to the writing center to discuss her essay for Concepts in Chemistry.

But the results of this research study go beyond just explaining whether students were satisfied with being required to attend writing conferences. They also demonstrated significant tensions in the activity systems of instructors who wanted the writing center to assist them in teaching writing. When professors required their students to visit the writing center so that they could receive a specific kind of feedback or learn about what the writing center could offer, their students did not experience the intended outcome. Of course, professors cannot predict the outcome of any kind of recommendation or requirement that students carry out.

One reason there may not be a large amount of research about required writing conferences is that some writing centers dissuade faculty from mandating that their students have writing conferences. Often, writing centers struggle to meet the needs of students who willingly visit the writing center and cannot accommodate all of the students who are required to visit the writing center. Future research may need to more closely investigate whether being required to attend the writing center results in positive impressions of the writing center and a desire to return for future writing conferences.

<center>Writing Fellows: A Specialized Resource</center>

Although I designed this research study to investigate how students revised after they visited the writing center, I learned about how instructors used writing fellows as a special kind of resource. Professor Thornton and Professor Edwards both relied on writing fellows with subject-specific knowledge to help them. Writing fellows were spoken about positively in this research study, and those professors who taught advanced writing were grateful for a resource that could help them teach writing in their respective

disciplines. I have not been able to locate empirical research about the role of writing

fellows in a post-secondary institution. But scholars have been researching how writing

centers can help students who compose technical documents (Hollis, 1991). Future

research can explore the important role that writing fellows can play in helping students

with writing in specific courses. This study does indeed suggest that a writing center can

harness the abilities of its individual peer tutors to help students with writing in advanced

courses.

<div align="center">Computers and Peer Tutoring</div>

Two of the writing conferences that were part of this research study occurred at a

computer workstation. There is little empirical research on writing centers about how

having writing conferences at a computer terminal affect students' revision processes, but

for decades researchers in composition studies have been interested in learning about the

effect of computers on students' composing practices (Bangert-Drowns, 1993; Boiarsky,

1991; Collier, 1983; Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, & Selfe, 1996; Owston, Murphy, &

Wideman, 1992; Selfe, 1999). Dave and Russell (2010), who conducted a study that was

similar to Boiarsky (1991), found that business and technical-communication students

most students revised at the computer to make local revisions rather than global ones.

Although students tend to compose more text with computers (Hawisher, 1987), students

still tend to revise locally rather than globally (Owston et al., 1992).

Some findings in this study were consistent with Neuleib and Scharton (1990),

who found that tutors were hesitant to tutor at a computer terminal because they believed

that it impeded the discussion and made it easy to change the writer's text. E.g., Lisa was

hesitant to work with students at the computer because the emphasis of the discussion

was the text and how to change it (personal interview, March 17, 2009). Even Garrett,

who said that he enjoyed being able to bring up his draft on a computer and discuss it

with another writing consultant, admitted that one weakness of the method was that he

did not reflect on the feedback later because all changes were made during the conference

(personal interview, April 9, 2009).

The results of this case study were also consistent with the researchers who found that having access to a computer did not guarantee that a student would revise globally (Dave & Russell, 2010; Owston et al., 1992). David and Garrett both had their writing conferences on the day that that they submitted their writing to the instructor. Buck (2008) also found that students who used computers in face-to-face writing conferences spend a good deal of time discussing the text, and the revisions were local instead of global.

Brynna, whose revision session was the longest that I observed, did not immediately proceed to revise her draft on the computer. She thought carefully about her plan for revision before typing changes, and she exhibited the metarhetorical awareness that Horning (2002) argued was a skill of students who revise successfully.

As to the relationship between the revision practices of students and having a conference at the computer, this study has important implications for writing center practitioners. First, students in this research study revised almost everything that they discussed with their consultants because they could not easily ignore a suggestion. Consultants also participated more in shaping the text that students produced (e.g., when David typed a revision, his consultant either approved of it or suggested a way to improve it). Future research can explore the power dynamics between peer tutors and students when the draft is on a device that enables immediate editing.

<u>Implications</u>

Implications for Peer Tutoring

This research study has important implications for several aspects of writing center pedagogy, including the training of peer tutors and how a writing center collaborates with other people in its institution who teach writing.

Training of Peer Tutors

One implication of this study is that peer tutors should be trained to 1) identify the situation definitions of their students and 2) use strategies to promote situation redefinition when it is appropriate. The writing consultants' situation definitions of the purpose of a writing conference were different from those that their students held, but the consultants did not engage in a discussion to help them develop better writing strategies and processes. By only focusing on the texts, students and consultants discussed the sentence-level problems and did not establish intersubjectivity in the ZPD. Peer tutor training should incorporate strategies to enable peer tutors to first elicit the situation definitions of rhetorical concepts before they begin to discuss specific textual matters. This way, peer tutors can identify a student's actual level of development. The peer tutor may then engage in a discussion to promote situation redefinition of writing concepts. With more appropriate situation definitions for their academic writing tasks, students may be able to apply these new concepts in future writing tasks.

This implication, I hope, will help peer tutor training move beyond a process of simply instructing peer tutors to be directive, nondirective, or some combination of the two. A view of a writing conference or peer tutor as directive or nondirective is unhelpful because it does not take into account the student's role in the writing conference as a learner who is hoping to progress through the ZPD, which is created in joint activity with a peer tutor. A more helpful viewpoint might be whether the student achieves situation redefinition in the activity. The process of helping a student achieve situation redefinition may include both directive and nondirective discourse strategies. Viewing the writing conference in this way puts the emphasis on the student and on the student's learning.

In a conference in which a peer tutor is helping a student to develop a more appropriate situation definition in the ZPD, the peer tutor selects from different semiotic mechanisms while both interlocutors try to create an intersubjective situation definition. For example, if a student has the situation definition of revising as an activity in which he

or she only needs to make surface changes instead of seeking how to develop the global meaning, the peer tutor can select from an array of strategies. The peer tutor may, for example, just ask the student to assume a different definition (the peer tutor's) or the peer tutor may engage in a discussion in which the student comes to the conclusion that a more nuanced definition is appropriate for the academic-writing task at hand.

Peer tutors may also need to help students learn about the features of successful writing conferences. The writing consultants preferred working with each other because they had a shared understanding of what a successful writing conference looked like: a collaborative conversation on the main ideas in a piece of writing. When the writing consultants worked with each other in the writing center, their shared community, knowledge of rules, and the division of labor helped them to have fruitful interactions. In addition, they shared the same situation definition of what a writing conference is; consultants frequently talked about how much they enjoyed working with each other because consultants did not want another consultant just to correct their writing. Rather, they all wanted to participate in a conversation.

The writing consultants did not attempt to help other students adopt a similar conception of writing conference; they were resigned to the fact that their students wanted to remain passive while they made suggestions about how to improve an aspect of the text (usually grammar, mechanics, or word-selection). Instead of launching immediately into reading the text or discussing a specific problem with the text, peer tutors may talk about the principles that underlie good conferences. If peer tutors in a writing center only prefer working with their fellow tutors because they know the conventions, a writing center may be in danger of focusing inward and not helping students to learn how to have effective writing conferences.

An important implication is for how to help senior peer tutors adhere to the goals of the writing center. If senior tutors begin to identify more with their instructors than with their peers, they may begin to rely on tutoring by informing students about what

they think professors want to see in student writing. Tutor training should help peer tutors identify the tendency to act as instructor-surrogates because interpreting the demands of a certain instructor is an uncertain business.

<u>The Writing Center in Its Institution</u>

This research study has important implications for how a writing center can develop relationships with college or university faculty who teach writing. On an institutional level, the college faculty may have very different situation definitions of the purpose of a writing center conference. In this study, the faculty believed that the writing center existed to help students improve their writing. And faculty members recommended their students use the writing center if they believed that the consultants were capable of helping their students correct their texts. Thus, writing center administrators need to identify the situation definitions of writing conferences that faculty hold and help them to develop more appropriate definitions that more closely resemble the ones that guide how peer tutors facilitate their conferences.

The professors in this study held a variety of beliefs about the writing center. For example, some thought that writing consultants could find and fix errors in grammar and mechanics. Others believed that the writing conference was for discussing how to revise the meaning of a text. One implication of this study is that writing centers need to identify those activity systems in which faculty want to use the writing center as a mediating tool. This can help writing centers to understand how faculty want to use the writing center and whether the intended use complements the writing center's philosophy.

Writing consultants also had different philosophies about how to facilitate a writing conference and about what a writing center should be. Some were eager to help students edit their writing; others avoided editing and focused on discussing the meaning. One implication of this study is that a writing center cannot be defined in a simple manner. A writing center is the accumulation of intersecting activity systems in which

peer tutors use different strategies for different situations. A writing center's philosophy may be its practice, so writing centers should examine their practice more so ensure that it complements its philosophy.

Implications for the Use of Activity Theory and Situation

Definition

I used the conceptual framework of activity theory because student revision was a goal-directed action that was mediated by factors related to the conference and by other factors in the student's activity system. This framework was especially useful for examining how students used psychological and technical tools during the writing conference and their revision processes because student revision was not an activity that happened in isolation from other factors. Students who edited their papers used their consultants' suggestions to fix errors, and others who revised their meaning used the conference conversation to help develop new ideas. Using this framework, I realized that my original research question belied a notion that students revised their own writing. But this research suggests that researchers must continue to evaluate the systems that students participate in and how these systems mediate students' revision processes.

I had a major difficulty using this framework. Although the activity system can model all of the different social factors that may be part of the revision, I was unable to determine exactly how each factor may have influenced the revision process. For example, in Carmen's writing conference, when Nancy suggested that she add more chemistry to the report, she said she was going to do that. But it was impossible to always know what caused students to make every revision. A think-aloud protocol may have given me that information, but that method would have intruded too much in how students revised.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this research study that affected how well I could describe the cases and make inferences about the data. Limitations included

problems with the design of my research, the kind of data that I could gather in the field, and my analysis of the data.

<p style="text-align:center">Limitations Due to Problems with the Research Design and</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Data Analysis</p>

One methodological limitation was my use of the taxonomy that I adapted from Faigley and Witte (1981). Although the taxonomy was useful for characterizing the type of revisions that students it made, it was not especially useful for determining the effectiveness of those revisions. For example, when I characterized a revision as a "Microstructure substitution," the reader did not know if the revision was successful unless I addressed it specifically in the analysis. This taxonomy may be more appropriate for quantitative research studies than for qualitative studies. Other researchers may have sensed this weakness of the Faigley and Witte taxonomy. For example Cho and MacArthur (2010) adapted the taxonomy by labeling microstructure changes as "complex repairs" to better explain what the purpose of the revision was.

Another methodological limitation was that I was not prepared to gather all the possible data from conferences in which a student discussed a draft that was on one of the writing center's workstations. I did not have a process to capture the keystrokes that students made at computer terminals. Thus, even though I could print the draft that the student revised during the conference, I did not capture the revisions that the student tried out and deleted before the end of the conference. When I read my transcripts, I could not determine what happened when the consultant and student writer were discussing the text that the student was typing. This is an example of such a situation from Garrett's conference when Paula read aloud a sentence with an error. Garrett then types something and there is an abbreviated exchange that I could interpret because they are talking about the text that appears and disappears from the screen:

Paula: Stop. *Thus the position of Likud will be that of that demanding.*
Garrett: That of
Paula: Demanding Palestine?

Garrett: Yeah. ((typing))
Paula: {?}
Garrett: Um, {?} Is that line by {?}?
Paula: What?
Garrett: ((typing)) ((to himself)) {?}

In future studies, writing center researchers may use key-logging software to capture the revisions that students try out in order to learn about why students select the final text. Of course, if students bring drafts on their own laptops, there is no way to capture this kind of data without interfering in the conferencing process.

Another limitation of the research study is that I did not have a system for analyzing the outcomes of writing center conferences that were not related to specific textual revision. It was difficulty to examine how students used new writing strategies in their revision processes. Maureen, for example, did not make suggestions to Tim about how he should revise his poems; she asked insightful questions about Tim's choices in his poems. Tim claimed that the conference, which did not seem to affect his revision process in a meaningful way, helped him in writing other poems for the class. In our interview, he said that his discussions with Maureen were "in his mind" when he was writing poems for his final portfolio (personal interview, May 19, 2009).

The improved thinking skills that Tim referred to may have been a psychological tool that Tim could use in his writing process. I did not plan to study how students could learn to apply skills to different writing projects. Focusing the study on textual revision may have limited my analysis of the usefulness of writing conferences. But still, I am unsure how to "measure" the outcome that Tim referred to in our interview.

My research design did not include a viable method of learning about the writing conferences that did not occur in the writing center. The director indicated in our interview that the majority of the conferences happened outside of the writing center in dormitories, apartments, or the cafeteria. But the consultants also said that these conferences happened on the spur of the moment, and I decided that I could not "follow" a consultant to wait for one of these impromptu writing conferences. Garrett summed up

a common view of writing center consultants when he said to me, "Every time you talk about a paper, though, it's a writing conference" (personal interview, April 9, 2009).

My methods may not have reflected the nuanced viewpoint that many researchers have about revision. For example, I was not able to capture information about whether students decided on a revision before they began writing or if the act of writing caused them to revise. Carmen had decided before her conference that she should add more information about chemical processes, but Nancy gave her specific suggestions about what to include. These kinds of interactions were difficult to quantify.

Lastly, my methods did not enable me to take into account students' individual differences. I did not collect students' ACT or SAT scores, so I did not have information about their writing ability that I could use to refine my analysis of how students revised. In a future study, I may seek to collect this kind of information to examine whether a student's writing ability also plays a role in responding to tutor feedback.

<div align="center">Limitations Due to Missing or Incomplete Data</div>

My interpretations about how this specific writing center functioned on its campus are limited by small sample of consultants. In all, 14 writing consultants consented to participate in the research study. But only seven writing consultants, out of more than 60 who worked in the writing center, facilitated conferences that I observed. Thus, I could not reliably discuss the activity system of the entire writing center and its role in helping students learn to write on campus. I cannot know for certain whether other consultants had different practices than what I observed.

One important limitation was that I did not have full sets of data for several of the cases: I did not observe Cindy or Carmen revise their writing, so I did not have information about their revising processes. Cindy did not respond to my requests to observe her revision process, and Carmen also decided to revise without scheduling a session that I could observe. While Garrett revised his essay, I interviewed Paula in a nearby office.

Besides missing two revision sessions, I also was not able to gather data about what had affected students' revising processes. For example, Cindy said that her instructor sent her comments through the course management system about how to revise her essay. I requested a copy, but she did not send me one. Carmen, too, chatted about her essay with her sister during a game of Facebook scrabble, but she did not save the chat transcript.

<u>Concluding Remarks</u>

In conclusion, this study is an important part of the growing body of research about how students revise after writing center conferences and about the role that the writing center plays in the activity system of teaching writing at a postsecondary institution. It demonstrates the critical idea in the epigram—that research about peer tutoring cannot exclude other factors of the activity system that influence a student's writing conference and revision process.

What students decided to focus on in the writing conference depended on the kind of draft that they brought to the writing center, their goals, what they perceived the standards of their instructor to be, and how the consultant facilitated the conference. The students who did not have specific goals made more revisions based on their writing conferences than they did independently. These students almost always integrated direct feedback about formal and meaning-preserving revisions because they believed that their instructors valued writing that was free of these kinds of errors. But students only integrated feedback about microstructure or macrostructure revisions if they had time to make these revisions or if they believed that the revisions were important to other aspects of the activity system such as their instructors. Students rarely made macrostructure revisions, but their consultants rarely discussed making these kinds of revisions. This last kind of revision was very rare; students did not want to engage in the kind of revision that involved the re-visioning that Donald Murray (1978) wrote about.

Perhaps even more important than the kinds of revisions students made is what I learned about the different situation definitions that students, writing consultants, and instructors held the purpose of revision and of a writing center conference.

The writing consultants shared similar situation definitions of writing conferences (i.e., that the person in the role of student should participate actively in a conversation about the meaning in a piece of writing). Thus, writing consultants preferred working with each other because they both understood how they both needed to act to make a conference successful. These students also often had specific goals that they wanted to achieve in their conferences. Writing consultants shared the same situation definition of the purpose of a writing conference and this led to them having productive conversations that framed the act of revision in a more complex way than simply "revising for the instructor."

Students who visited the writing center—and who were not writing consultants—often had different situation definitions of the purpose of a writing conference and of revision in general. These situation definitions remained unstated while students and writing consultants primarily discussed how to correct the text at hand. Thus, a gulf existed between these two groups of students: those who were in the writing center and willing to talk about writing, and those who wanted direct help with fixing problems.

This study suggests that the real "object" for the activity system of a writing conference should include the situation definitions that students hold about how to revise and how to participate in a writing conference. Without helping students to develop more nuanced definitions of writing concepts such as "revision," students may not understand why or how to implement the plan for revision that they discuss during the writing conference. Peer tutors may believe that their students are listening to them when they write down suggestions, but this study indicated that writing down suggestions about meaning-related revisions did not necessarily lead to revision based on those suggestions.

Also importantly, this study demonstrated how faculty held widely different conceptions of the purpose of a writing center, views that differed from the director's. According to the activity-theory perspective, the writing center director believed that the best object for the activity system was the student's thinking about a topic. But instructors almost always believed that the object was the student's plan for revising the text; the ultimate outcome would be a better text. This suggests that a writing center may also need to engage the situation definitions that faculty hold about what a writing center does. Writing centers may need to engage these definitions and learn about how faculty developed them. This can lead to helping faculty use the writing center in ways that complement its philosophy and mission.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF IOWA

IRB ID #:   200812756

To: Samuel Van Horne

From: IRB-02   DHHS Registration # IRB00000100,
Univ of Iowa,   DHHS Federalwide Assurance # FWA00003007

Re: An Analysis of Interactions Between Writing Center Tutors and Their Students

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Approval Date: 01/20/09

**Next IRB Approval
Due Before:**   01/20/10

Type of Application:	**Type of Application Review:**	**Approved for Populations:**
☒ New Project	☐ Full Board:	☐ Children
☐ Continuing Review	Meeting Date:	☐ Prisoners
☐ Modification	☒ Expedited	☐ Pregnant Women, Fetuses, Neonates
	☐ Exempt	

Source of Support:

This approval has been electronically signed by IRB Chair:
Janet Karen Williams, PHD
01/20/09 1741

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
FOR RESEARCH

APPENDIX B: THE NOTATION FOR VERTICAL TRANSCRIPTION

I used a system of transcription that is called "vertical transcription," which I borrowed from Gilewicz and Thonus (2003). This system enabled me to capture the speech as it was spoken by using notation to capture the pauses, interruptions, overlapping speech, and other important paralinguistic information that is a feature of tutorial conversation. Table B1 includes the notation that I used in the transcription process.

Table B1. The Notation for Vertical Transcription

Notation	Description
[	Indicates overlapping speech
(.)	A pause of two seconds or less
(3s)	A pause of more than two seconds.
{?}	A unintelligible word or phrase
((laughs))	A gesture or some other action is included in double parentheses)
Dropped line	This indicates that one party has interrupted the main speaker, or responded with back-channel feedback.
Italicized text	Italicized text indicates that it was read from a draft.

In the rest of this appendix, I provide examples of the different kinds of notation.

Overlapping Speech

In this example, Carmen has the floor and Nancy interrupts her. The two brackets indicate where the Nancy interrupts Carmen and takes over that part of the conversation.

Carmen: Does that mean I'm gonna get a good grade if I mention your name?
         I'm [just ((laughs))
Nancy: [I don't think so. We get along, so that's a good thing.

Pauses

Students and consultants paused when they were thinking about what to say next. Pauses of two seconds or less are denoted by (.). Longer pauses have the length (in seconds) in parentheses—e.g., (5s). Here is an example of an exchange with a pause, and it also includes italicized text, which is how I denote text that someone is reading during the conference:

Nancy: I think I would just feel better if you said more times you have to.
Carmen: okay
Nancy: Yeah. (4s) Um, *fill up your car, and with they way gas prices are, that can be a petty mistake that is costing you more money than you may think.*

An Unintelligible Word or Phrase

During the transcription process, I sometimes could not understand what the speaker was saying because of background noise on the recording, the speaker moving out of range of the recorder, or the low volume of the speaker's voice. Here is an excerpt with an example of speech that I could not transcribe; I used the symbol {?} to denote those words or phrases that I could not understand.

Garrett: You know I feel like [I don't really get, I {?} feel like I don't [address,
Paula: [talk about all of the issues   [okay
Garrett: address my, um,   yeah, like ((typing)) {?} security issues for Israel
Paula: mhm
Garrett: are the foremost concern.

Laughter, Gestures, or Other Actions The Speaker Makes

In this excerpt, the double parentheses around "typing" indicate that Garrett was typing while he was taking to Paula at different moments in their conference.

Garrett: I was gonna say ((typing)) the three major negotiating stances are (4s)
Paula: Security issues for Israel. Okay, take out the foremost concern, then. Or, are the foremost concern. Take out the all of it. ((typing)) Security issues for Israel, economic progress must be made. (.) Okay. In order, [whatever the
Garrett: [oh

<u>Dropped Lines</u>

Sometimes the listener responded with "mhm" (back-channel feedback) to let the speaker know that he or she was listening. Back-channel feedback was not an attempt to take over the conversation; the line drops to the back-channel feedback and then goes back up to the speaker. Here is an example of David producing back-channel feedback while he listened to Ann suggest a correction:

Ann: All right, the first thing I noticed is that   you used the word
David: mhm
Ann: "venture" quite a bit, um, so I'd maybe try to think of other words to use
        instead of "venture" or "ventures."

At other times, a dropped line does not go back up to the speaker because it signifies an interruption. In the case of an interruption, the end of the speaker's line does not have punctuation. In this excerpt, Paula interrupted Garrett to finish his sentence:

Garrett: So we need to work on the introduction and then, um, we should
          probably work, like, definite grammar checks on
Paula: Everything?

In the following example, Nancy used the back-channel feedback "okay" to indicate that she is still paying attention to Janelle. The line drops "down" to Nancy's one-word utterance. Nancy does not take control of the floor, so Janelle keeps speaking. Thus, the line goes back "up" to Janelle, who finishes her sentence.

Nancy: Okay. Um, is essential to creating its environment. So do you wanna
          figure out like how to tie in there?
Janelle: How and where, like how I can   how I can word the sentence and
Nancy: okay
Janelle: how I can,or where, I guess, I can stick it.

<u>Italicized Text</u>

In most of the writing conferences, consultants or students read their writing aloud. When someone was reading aloud the text, I put the language of the text in italics. But if they were discussing part of the text, I did not put that in italics.

Here is an example in which Nancy read Carmen's essay aloud and suggested ways to fix errors in punctuation:

Nancy: Um, *synthetic oil* {?} *on the other hand*. Um, on the other hand is kind of like a (.)
Carmen: good eye (.) Should I put
Nancy: Yeah, two.   {?} yep. (.) *Synthetic oil, on the other hand, has different*
Carmen: yeah
Nancy: *additives that make the oil stay thicker for longer and that also help with* {?} *build*, hm, I think the build up

APPENDIX C: DESCRIPTION OF CODING CATEGORIES FOR

REVISION

Table C1. List of Categories and Codes for Analyzing Revision

Type of Revision	Description of Revision	Example from Data
Formal		
Spelling	The student corrects a spelling error.	Changing "aloud" to "allowed."
Punctuation	The student fixes a punctuation error in a sentence, or adds punctuation where it is necessary.	"Genetic analysis took out ribosomal 16s gene, which has a low mutation rate." (A comma was added before "which.")
Format	This code is applied to changes in the document's presentation or to the citation of sources.	(Addition of an in-text citation.)
Number	The writer makes a change to correct the number of a noun or its verb. This code was also applied to changes involving definite or indefinite articles.	"Eric was interested in how the economy could be interested in going green and how business regulations and costs affect the economy."
Tense	The writer makes a change in the aspect of tense.	David changes "started" to "starts" in a sentence describing what someone needs to do in the present.
Modality	The writer changes a modal verb to adjust the verb's form.	Paula changed "Today a reader probably could not pick up a book that did not have …" to "Today a reader would not be able to pick up a book that did not have…"
Abbreviation	The writer either abbreviates a term or replaces the abbreviation with the full term.	Change spelling of VPs to "Vice Presidents"
Meaning-Preserving		

Table C1. Continued

Addition	The writer inserts more detail to a sentence that does not significantly alter the meaning of a passage.	"Cap and Trade, the most popular option, but very complex, is a regulation in which a kind of market is created to trade permits that are used for pollution emissions." (The underlined phrase was added to the sentence.)
Deletion	The writer removes text in order to economize or clarify an idea without significantly changing the local meaning.	"Propranolol does contain a hydroxyl functional group, and it is possible that in the aqueous acid work-up in Step 2, an inadequate amount or concentration of aqueous acid was added." ("Aqueous" was deleted from this sentence.)
Substitution	The writer replaces a word, phrase, or sentence with another word, phrase, or sentence that does not significantly alter the local meaning.	"Following desiccation of the crystals, an IT spectrum was obtained and a melting point was determined." ("Following desiccation of" was substituted for "after drying.")
Consolidation	The writer combines two sentences into one sentence, but does not significantly alter the local meaning.	"My dad answered. He started crying" was changed to "My dad answered; he started crying."
Distribution	The writer Breaks up one sentence into two sentences in order to more clearly explain an idea, but does not significantly alter the local meaning in the passage.	"Seventy percent of Costa Ricans receive their water from water sheds, but when that water is being used up for agriculture use, residents are put aside." The revision was, "Seventy percent of Costa Ricans receive their water from watersheds. But when water is being used for agricultural use, residents are put aside."

Table C1. Continued

Permutation	The writer rearranges text (along with substitutions), but does not significantly alter the local meaning of the passage.	(Garrett moves a paragraph from one place to another in his essay.)

<u>Microstructure</u>

Addition	The writer replaces a word, phrase, or sentence with another word, phrase, or sentence that significantly alters the local meaning.	"My uncle Kenny was always the happiest person I knew, and he was my favorite extended family member, always making time for me, <u>always making me laugh</u>."
Deletion	The writer removes a word, phrase, or sentence and significantly changes the local meaning of a text.	"April 21, 2001—my little sister's birthday, ~~and the day before my uncle Kenny's 42nd birthday~~, it was raining. Hard. Again." The lined-out phrase was removed.
Substitution	The writer replaces a word, phrase, or sentence with another word, phrase, or sentence that significantly alters the local meaning.	"My sister was whining about how ~~it raining on her birthday was bad luck~~ the rain was keeping her from going outside and riding her brand new bike." (Lined-out phrase was removed and the rest of the sentence was added.)
Consolidation	The student combines two sentences into one and significantly alters the local meaning.	"The structure of propranolol contains a chirality center with the possibility of either the R or S enantiomer of the compound. Both enantiomers are biologically active." is revised to "The structure of propranolol contains a chirality center with both enantiomers being biologically active."
Distribution	The student breaks up one sentence into two and, in the process, alters the basic meaning.	(no examples from students' texts)

Table C1. Continued

Permutation	The student rearranges textual elements in such a way that significantly alters the local meaning.	(No example in the data.)
Macrostructure		
Addition	The student creates a new section in the text and changes the global meaning of the text.	(Alicia added to her résumé an entirely new section to describe her work experience.)
Deletion	The student removes text and thereby changes the fundamental, global meaning of the remaining text.	(Alicia removed an entire section about her experience working in an organic garden.)
Substitution	The student replaces a section with another section that changes the fundamental, global meaning of the text.	(No example in the data.)
Distribution	The student breaks up a section of text into two discrete sections and changes the fundamental, global meaning of the text.	(No example in the data.)
Permutation	The student moves one section of text to another section, which results in a change in the fundamental, global meaning of the text.	(No example in the data.)
Other Revisions		
Misperception.	The student misunderstands the consultant or misinterprets his or her own notes to make a revision that is not what he or she discussed in the writing conference.	"Sugars were found to be not a good NRG source." The revision was" "Sugars were found to be an efficient NRG source."

APPENDIX D: CODES FOR ANALYZING TRANSCRIPTS AND

OTHER DOCUMENTS

Table D1. Codes for Analyzing Transcripts and Other Documents

Label	Name of Code	Description of Code	Example from the Data
Codes for Writing Conferences		These codes are mostly just for the writing conferences.	
S-Request	Student Requests	Student asks for help with certain aspects of assignment by stating what they want to get out of the conference.	Janelle: …if I got all the punctuations right or re-wording sentences and that kinda thing. (line 10)
Read aloud (S or C)	Reading aloud (consultant or student)	The text of the paper is read out loud by either the student or the consultant.	Carolyn: Beta blockers are also used to control migraines, glaucoma, and hyperthyroidism. The drug inhibits the binding of norepinephrine and epinephrine to adrenergic receptors by binding to these receptors itself. Beta blockers can be either nonselective or selective for beta one and beta two receptors.
Conversation	Discussion of the writing task or meaning.	The consultant tries to obtain information about the writing assignment, audience, guidelines, or meaning of subject matter. This conversation is about the ideas and is not a section that involves consultant or student providing suggestions of how to change the text.	Alicia: So why'd you pick rain? Brynna: "I have this love-hate relationship with rain. I adore rain because I love the way it smells, I love the way it hits the pavement, but really bad things happen to me when it rains.
Choose one of two.			
HOC	HOC	The focus of the dialogue is the meaning of the piece of writing, such as organization, main idea, thesis, argument.	The discussion of the overall meaning when Alicia and Brynna talk about how to organize a section that focuses on how Brynna learned about her uncle's death.
HOC	LOC	The focus of the dialogue is not central to the meaning of the text (punctuation, grammar, citation of sources, word selection that does not alter the meaning significantly).	The focus of the discussion is how to correctly use a comma.

Table D1. Continued

<u>Choose one of three.</u>

C-direct	Consultant directs revision	The consultant directs the revision process by focusing on issues and talking about how he or she thinks it should be revised.	Nancy: Um, *the secretion was found to be a new bacterial slash microbe so Davison.* You don't need a comma there. I think it'll be fine if you just keep going.
S-direct	Student directs focus of revision	The student assumes responsibility for determining how to revise a section of the paper.	The entire section that begins: Carolyn: Should we put angina pectoris up here and say angina down here?
Negotiation of Revision	Student and consultant negotiate revision, co-compose text (in Atlas, S and C negotiate revision)	Working on a section of the text, the student and the consultant will (together) work through possible ways to revise the text. This occurs when the student and consultant have a prolonged discussion about the best way to revise the text.	See bottom of Table D1 for example from data from Garrett and Paula's conference.

<u>Other Conference Codes</u>

C-identifies	Consultant identifies problem	Consultant diagnoses a problem with the text.	Paula: "I think you have a comma splice."
S-identifies (in Atlas it is student diagnoses)	Student identifies problem	The student identifies a problem in the text or a general problem that he or she wants to address.	Janelle: "Yeah, I don't like that. I don't like that sentence at all."
C-Direct	Consultant makes direct suggestion	The consultant suggests a specific edit to formal concern or specific changes to wording or phrasing.	Nancy: "The only thing I would put in here is instead of having a comma, I would have a semicolon."
C-Indirect	Consultant makes indirect suggestion for revision, but not with exact wording. (in Atlas: C. suggests without wording)	The consultant suggests that the student revise, but does not provide the exact wording or change in punctuation.	Alicia: "One solution would be to describe your uncle in positive rainy ways."
C-Reason	Consultant provides reason for revision suggestion.	The consultant explains why the change is necessary in terms of the rhetorical purpose.	Paula: "I think tolerant is a better word 'cause right now you're name calling."
Student asks for judgment	Student asks consultant for a judgment.	The student asks the consultant whether a part of the text is awkward, clear, or whether it fits another standard.	David: Though in that case having that many "him," "his," all that is okay? [346]

Table D1. Continued

C-Prompt	Consultant prompts student to suggest revision.	The consultant usually poses a question for the student so that he or she may decide on how to address a problem.	Alicia: "What would be a better way to, uh, to word that you think?" (line 141)
Student proposes revision	Student identifies solution.	The student proposes a revision during the discussion.	Nancy: "so you might want to split it up there." Janelle: "So a period here?"
C-validate	Consultant validates student's text or a suggestion for revision.	The student aks the consultant about the quality of a section of text or whether a proposed revision is likely to work.	Janelle: "And so can I just kind of throw in, you know, this is how it's connected?" Nancy: "Mhm."
Joking	Joking	The student and consultant have a humorous exchange.	Garrett: "Man, can you imagine how hard this would be without typewriters?" (Consultant laughs)
Cons-Channel	Consultant acts as instructor surrogate.	The consultant interprets the instructor's expectations and requirements for the student.	Nancy: Right. (.) But I'm thinking, I mean you could ask Professor Jones what more he wants, 'cause I've only had him for, like, organic chemistry, [but like, I think if he said, like chemical aspects, he would probably {unint.} looking for, like, as much chemistry as possible.
Stud. Channel	Students ask for help based on their interpretation of instructors' requirements.	The student wants to use the writing conference to meet an instructor's requirement of revise to meet the instructor's needs, so he or she discusses what the instructor already wants.	Cindy: The instructor said that she needed to make sure she has a good thesis statement."
Integrated	Integrated Revision	This section of the writing conference resulted in a change to the student's next draft.	Janelle decides to fix a transition based on the suggestion from the consultant.
Non-Int.	Unintegrated Revision	The discussion of the problem does not result in a change to the text.	In conference between Nancy and Janelle, consultant describes how adding endemic species to the paper will enhance the description. The student does not take up this suggestion.
Teaching	Teaching about how a writing conference works	The consultant and student discuss the purpose of a writing conference.	Nancy: "Yeah. I think, um, what I usually like to do is just kind of like go through what you're saying first. 'Cause usually if I'm looking for grammar then I get distracted by what you're saying." (line 98)

Table D1. Continued

Teaching	Teaching about how a writing conference works	The consultant and student discuss the purpose of a writing conference.	Nancy: "Yeah. I think, um, what I usually like to do is just kind of like go through what you're saying first. 'Cause usually if I'm looking for grammar then I get distracted by what you're saying." (line 98)
Away from text	Discussion of writing principles that goes away from text to promote student learning.	The discussion moves toward learning principles that can be applied to future writing projects.	Paula: "If you read a book, like, any book you read, there's tons of fragmented sentences, especially in like modern books. I think you're, you're allowed fragmented sentences. Especially if your using it, like, for a purpose."
Student makes notes	Student revises during conference or make notes for revision later.	The student who is working at a computer changes text, or the student at the desk makes notes for changes later.	David: just real quick (okay) ((typing)). 'Cause I'm using company too much.
Consultant authority	Student ascribes authority to consultant.	The student places the consultant in a dominant, instructor-like position as a person who is more knowledgeable about writing.	Carolyn: I mean it's great having you read it 'cause you obviously, like, know what an IR is and stuff
Rationale	Student discusses rationale for text.	The student explains his or her decision process.	Alicia: "well I was going to ask you why this last sentence was necessary at all." Brynna: "Because, well what I was trying to do was setting up a timeline without actually having a thing."

Codes for Both Interviews and Conferences

Prior WC experience	Prior experience with writing center consultants	Student has been to the writing center before or has worked with writing fellows in his or her classes.	Tim: "Um, I can't remember too specifically, but I had met with her before and, and usually when I go to the writing center, um, there are a variety of people there, and, you know, I can approach."
WC is for ideas	Writing conference is for developing or confirming ideas or meaning in a piece of writing	Student uses writing conference for second perspective on ideas or to develop ideas, usually referred to HOCs.	Tim:"…and I know that often when I write, "...um, I can kinda get caught up in my own mind and it's nice to have, um, someone, you know, that's fairly competent, that would be able to give me an outside perspective of how they're interpreting the work."

Table D1. Continued

WC is for instructor	Writing conference is for revising to meet instructor's expectations	Student is interested in using the writing conference to help revise according to what he or she thinks the professor wants to see.	Cindy: "Well he, he wanted, um, us to go over our thesis paper. He wanted, and to make sure that we had a strong thesis statement in that paper."
WC is for LOCs	Students rely on writing center to find and fix mistakes in lower-order concerns.	Student considers the writing center a place where mistakes and errors can be corrected (especially mistakes in grammar, sentence structure, and usage).	David:"…there were probably some things that did need to be changed, like it just kind of felt like there were some small little things, probably grammatically, that would be wrong with it, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what they were."
Intrinsic	Students visit writing center out of intrinsic motivation	Student wants to have a writing conference in order to achieve a goal that they have for the piece of writing.	Sam: "Can you, uh, tell me why you decided to visit the writing center?" Carolyn: "Um, I think because we, we've gone over our paper a few times ourselves and we'd kind of cut and pasted things around and we just wanted someone with, like, fresh eyes to read over it and see if there's any like weird wording or if it, if it flowed, I guess.
Extrinsic	Students visit writing center out of extrinsic motivation	Student is required to visit the writing center by instructor.	Cindy: "It was an assignment by the teacher. Teacher said you have to go. ((laughs))"
	Writing Center Supports Faculty Who Teach Writing		
Writing Fellows	Writing fellows help students in classes	Class-based writing fellows influence how student revises or used the writing center.	Professor Thornton: "We take one whole lab period and have writing center fellows come up and basically teach the class."
Advanced	Writing center is not suited for advanced writing, or only a few consultants can help with such writing.	The writing center consultants do not have the particular	Professor Cranston: "You don't ask a blacksmith to do the work of a gold smith."
Professor requires	Professor requires visits.	The professor makes it a necessary part of the assignment to have a writing conference.	Professor Simpson: "I'm notorious for requiring."

Table D1. Continued

Professor requires	Professor requires visits.	The professor makes it a necessary part of the assignment to have a writing conference.	Professor Simpson: "I'm notorious for requiring."
	Consultants and Writing Conferencing		
Rules	Rules in the writing center	Consultant discusses how rules in the writing center affect the work of being a consultant. One rule is that there is no writing on a student's paper. Another common convention is to read a student's paper out loud.	Nancy: So there might be, there might be an exception to the rule but I don't think it'll happen just 'cause I think there's this emphasis on the student needs to edit their own, or do their own corrections to their own paper, so.
Consultants are strong students	Consultant development	Writing center consultants are perceived to be among the top students.	Professor Jones: Um (.) in my opinion, the, the students making up the writing center tend to be some of the better students on campus, um, yeah, you kinda walk in there at any time of the day and just kind of listen to some of the conversations going on, and you know, that, that's something that every, every campus should certainly have
"Incestuous"	"Incestuous" conferencing	Consultant benefits from having a group of writing consultants to work with.	Brynna: "So it (.) it makes it a lot easier if I go and like talk to somebody, like when I was in high school, I would talk to my mom because we didn't really do stuff like this. But now working here, like it's perfect."
Consultant process	Writing process influences consulting process.	The consultant specifically states that her own way of writing informs how she works with students in the writing center.	Ann: "I mean, I'm generally a pretty slow writer, I think. Like I often will write one paragraph then just be like well that's enough for a few hours, and like come back to it….I think there was a lot of long pauses in our conference, and to other people they were probably ((laughs)) like, what are you guys doing, like keep talking."
Rev-Lack of time	Lack of time	Student cites lack of time for not being able to carry out more revision.	Janelle: "Um, I was thinking about putting that in my paper, but, um time-wise and wanting to turn it in at a certain point, I just, I didn't have the time to just look it up." "

Table D1. Continued

Pre-conference	Pre-conference writing process	Student cites how he or she used a writing process before coming to the writing center (seeking feedback, making multiple drafts, etc.)	Garrett: "Um, at that time I had only done, I had gotten my history and my issues section done, and she helped me to clarify that and grammar check that. Um, and like and then again restructuring like, help where I wanted to go with it. 'Cause I, 'cause I wasn't done."
Rev-Instructor	Revise for instructor	The revision was guided by how to meet the instructor's requirements.	Cindy: "No, I made that because the, um, the teacher comments about my thesis paper after going. So he gave me comments and a direction and then the center gave me comments and a direction and I had to balance."
Rev-Personal	Students revise according to personal goals	Student has own aims for revising the piece of writing. These aims are related to his or her own personal goals.	Brynna: "…I just felt like I had to get it right for him, and so I just kept seeing this, and I'm like it's dumb but I don't know how to change it." (line 145)

Example of Code "Student and Consultant Negotiate Revision"
Garrett: So do I wrap enough stuff in, in my conclusion?
Paula: Um, I guess ((sighs)) what I've always been taught is, and maybe this isn't
           [always accurate. It just depends on the paper as well, but this is a seven-page
Garrett: [mhm
Paula: paper   and you've got a half-page conclusion. Do you feel like your
Garrett: mhm
Paula: conclusion is long enough compared to the length of the rest of the sections of
           the paper? Like does it
Garrett: You know I feel like [I don't really get, I {?} feel like I don't [address,
Paula: [talk about all of the issues   [okay
Garrett: address my, um,   yeah, like ((typing)) {?} security issues for Israel are
Paula: mhm
Garrett: the foremost concern. Um, economic progress must be made, like I was, he
           was a finance minister so he's {?} economics. [Um, {?} in order to
Paula: [mhm
Garrett: advance the political progress, Jerusalem must be, must remain in Jewish
           hands. Uh, {?} just say Israeli. Israeli hands. (4s) Uh, do I want to
Paula: That's three sentences. (.) Just so you know.
Garrett: What?
Paula: You can make it three separate sentences if you so choose?
Garrett: No, I don't wanna {?} be [concise.   [yeah
Paula: [Well, just so you,   [let me read it. *Security
           issues for Israel are the foremost concern. Economic progress must be made
           in Palesteini, in Pales[tine   in order to advance the political*

Garrett: [Palestine {?}

Paula: *progress, and Jerusalem must remain in Israeli hands.* Um, security issues for Israel. But I guess my biggest ((typing)) problem is   the security iss, okay,

Garrett: yeah

             [{?}

Paula: [the three security issues for

Garrett: I was gonna say ((typing)) the three major negotiating stances are (4s)

Paula: Security issues for Israel. Okay, take out the foremost concern, then. Or, are the foremost concern. Take out the all of it. ((typing)) Security issues for Israel, economic progress must be made. (.) Okay. In order, [whatever the

Garrett: [oh

Paula: paralleling thingy, [four major issues?   Okay, so,

Garrett: [um   ((typing)) Religion must (10s)

Paula: when making a list with verbs   like, the verb stuff has to be the same, but

Garrett: mhm

Paula: it's not just verbs, like when you're making a list of, like, partial sentences that stuff has to be the same, too. So, you say economic progress must be made in Palestine in order to advance political progress, religion must be di, de-emphasized on both sides, and Jerusalem must remain in Israeli hands. Those three are fine 'cause you use the word "must" in all [three of them. The

Garrett: [mhm

Paula: issue I have is with security issues for Israel, like   um

Garrett: yeah   security must

             be   [yeah   must be the foremost concern.

Paula: prioritized? [Or like (.)

APPENDIX E: FORM FOR SUMMARIZING THE CONFERENCE

███ Form   Writer: _____ ___/___/___ Consultant: _____ ☐ Access
                 (Last name, first name)   (Date: Mo/Day/Yr)   (Last name)

☐ '13 ☐ '12 ☐ '11   ☐ MAT   ☐ ♂ ☐ English Not First Language ☐ Required Location: ☐ ███ ☐ Residence Hall
☐ '10 ☐ '09 ☐ '08   ☐ Faculty/Other ☐ ♀ ☐ Non-Trad   ☐ Incestuous   ☐ Library   ☐ ███ ☐ Other
   Group Conference   Other Students in Group: _____

Instructor: _____   Course Name: _____
        Department Prefix: _____   Course Number: _____   ☐ Personal   ☐ Other: _____

Genre: ☐ Lab Report   ☐ Research Text   ☐ Book-Lit Review/Analysis ☐ Honors Thesis ☐ Poetry/Fiction/Script ☐ Journalism
        ☐ Opinion Essay ☐ Personal Essay   ☐ Grad/Scholar. Essay   ☐ Résumé   ☐ Oral Presentation   ☐ Other: _____

Description of Assignment: _____

Written Draft of Paper: ☐ No Draft [X]   ☐ Notes/Outline [N]   ☐ Unpolished Draft [U]   ☐ Revised Draft [V]   ☐ Faculty-Read Draft [G]
Writer's Apparent Attitude Toward Draft: ☐ Satisfied [S]   ☐ Neutral/Ambivalent [N]   ☐ Dissatisfied [D]   ☐ Non-Applicable [O]

Assistance   ☐ None [N]   ☐ Any/Everything [A]   ☐ Understand Assignments [U]   ☐ Brainstorm [B]   ☐ Teacher Comments [C]
Requested: ☐ Clarify/Discuss Ideas [I]   ☐ Developing Draft [D]   ☐ Revising Draft [R]   ☐ Editing Draft [E]   ☐ Other [O] _____

Primary   ☐ Understand Assignment [U]   ☐ Brainstorm [B]   ☐ Idea Clarification [I]   ☐ Open Discussion [D]
Focus   ☐ Trim/Tighten Draft [T]   ☐ Expand/Develop Draft [E] ☐ Stylistic editing/phrasing [S] ☐ Proofing/Copy Editing [P]
(Check two) ☐ Global Structure/Organization [G] ☐ Comments by Teacher [C] ☐ Read/Grasp a Text [R] ☐ Other [O] _____

Conference   ☐ Draft-Focused [1]   ☐ Under 20" [U]   ☐ Consultant-Directed [C]   Satisfactory Achievement of Your Conference Goals
Assessment   ☐ Talk-Focused [2]   ☐ 20-40" [T]   ☐ Writer-Directed [W]   1   2   3   4   5   6
                                   ☐ Over 40" [O]   ☐ Mutually Directed [M]   (low)   (high)

Commentary (describe strategies for conducting conference, issues discussed, how conference evolved, etc):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

[Use back of form for further commentary]

0400A

APPENDIX F: JANELLE'S CONFERENCE DRAFT (PAGE 1)

Characterization of the Microbial Flora Associated with the Marine Tube Worm

Phragmatopoma lapidosa

"The Characterization of the Microbial Flora Associated with the Marine Tube Worm *Phragmatopoma lapidosa* is an experiment done by Patricia Davison. She had begun her work on this project in the Carver Program and continued her work for about four years. The *Phragmatopoma lapidosa* is a marine worm that lives in the tube systems of coral reefs. This particular worm is able to secrete a kind of cement which helps construct the tubes in the coral reef. The secretion was found to be a new bacterial/microbe so Davison tried to identify the isolates that make up the cement-like secretions. The worms were swabbed and placed in an ocean agar, then different organisms were observed and isolated. Samples were characterized using gram stains and anaerobic tests. They were also placed in artificial salt water to test growth, and then differing carbon sources were tested to find optimal growth rate. Genetic analysis took out 16s ribosomal gene which has a low mutation rate. The samples was then amplified and transferred with plasmid to E coli. The 16s ribosomal DNA was sequenced and compared to database. Results found that six colony types were able to be isolated and grow and all but one was gram negative. Sugars were found to be not a good NRG source. The DNA sequences are hard to match on database and they haven't been able to match *Phragmatopoma lapidosa* samples so this gives evidence in that these bacteria may be unknown. (Connection

APPENDIX G: BRYNNA'S CONFERENCE DRAFT

My Uncle Kenny was always the happiest person I knew, and he was my favorite extended family member, always making time for me. When I was seven, he got a divorce and moved back in with my grandparents. I still never saw him upset. When I was eight, my grandmother died of colon cancer, we buried her in October, and it was absolutely pouring rain, but that didn't stop us. He wasn't himself, but that was understandable. A month later, Thanksgiving came around and I didn't see him. Christmas dinner came upon us, and I didn't see him. It was odd. But I was only 8, I was told it was a grown up thing. A few months later, spring came.

April 21, 1999, my little sisters birthday, and the day before my uncle Kenny's 42nd birthday, it was raining. Hard. Again. It'd been a wet year. My sister was whining about how it raining on her birthday was bad luck. The phone rang. We were all snuggled up with my parents in their bed, enjoying each others company with donuts on a Sunday morning. My dad answered. He started crying. I felt sick. Mom made us leave the room.

When we were brought back in the room, we were told that my uncle Kenny had been missing for a couple months now. A jogger and his dog had happened across a highly decomposed body next to the trail two days previously. The news said it'd been there at least 5 months and police were working on identifying it from the dental records, the body was unrecognizable. I paid it no attention.

Staring out the window at the rain, Dad said in a flat voice: "Turns out, it was Kenny."

APPENDIX H: FINAL DRAFT OF ALICIA'S RÉSUMÉ

Alicia Smith

123 XYZ St.   123.456.7890
City, State 12345   asmith@school.edu

Education

Bachelor of Arts, XYZ School, City, State   Major: Political
Science

GPA: 3.98

Sustainability Experience

XYZ School Wilderness Field Station, City, State

Environmental Law (Summer 2007)
    * Gained an understanding of the complex dynamics of environmental
protection
    in the United States.

Cook's Assistant (Summer 2008)
    * Gained direct experience of low impact living in an educational setting.
    Assist Food Manager Jane Doe to efficiently manage the station's food
    services.

Eco-House Director, XYZ School (Fall 2008-present)
    * Initiated a proposal for themed housing that focuses on sustainability, particularly
    local food systems.

Environmental Club, Executive Board, XYZ School (Fall 2008-present)
    *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
    (AASHE) Conference: Raleigh, NC*
        * Deepened understanding of local and sustainable agriculture issues and
        how to integrate local food into campus dining services as well as student
        life.

Liaison with Sodexo Dining Services
        * Consult and provide feedback from a student's perspective on a weekly
        basis with the director of dining services to improve availability of local
        food.
        * Initiated a referendum to divert $5 from each student's activity fees with
        which to fund sustainability projects at Coe.* Coordinate E-Club activities
        with Sodexo, such as organizing and executing an organic banquet for XYZ
        students to raise awareness of sustainable food issues.

Sustainability Task Force

    * Provide feedback from a student's perspective on a variety of sustainability issues on campus.

    * Collaborate with staff, faculty, and students on the Task Force to innovate sustainable solutions for XYZ.

Work Experience

Writing Center Consultant, XYZ School (September 2005 -present)

    * Conduct one-on-one conferences with students to improve their writing skills and revise their academic papers.

Bilingual Relay Operator, Company, Inc., City, State (June 2006-April 2008)

    * Assist the deaf and hard of hearing to make phone calls in either Spanish or English.