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“IMAGINATION IN PRACTICE”  
WRITING STUDIES AND THE APPLICATION OF HOSPITALITY

By

Edward Alan English  
B.A., University of Oklahoma, 2008  
M.A., University of Oklahoma, 2011

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in English/Rhetoric and Composition

Department of English  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

August 2021

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B.A., University of Oklahoma 2008  
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A Dissertation Approved on

May/27/2021

by the following Dissertation Committee:

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Dissertation Director

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John Duffy

## DEDICATION

To Morgan:

I remain amazed at my fortune to have you as my closest friend and lifelong partner.

Thank you for believing in me and—more importantly—us. I love you

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My deepest gratitude extends to Dr. Bronwyn Williams whose exceptional leadership, mentorship, and friendship sustained me throughout graduate school. Thank you for demonstrating a priceless model of the type of person I hope to become personally and professionally. I can't imagine having done this without you.

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## ABSTRACT

### “IMAGINATION IN PRACTICE:” WRITING STUDIES AND THE APPLICATION OF HOSPITALITY

Edward A. English

May 27, 2021

The question of how to ethically teach, learn, and engage in an evolving world remains one of the most longstanding investigations in writing studies scholarship. Examining some of the most foundational frameworks for writing pedagogy reveals that their underlying motivations share common concerns for how to learn from and empower students. This dissertation builds from this trend and foregrounds the observations, stories, and experiences of consultants and writers at the University of Louisville’s Writing Center through a qualitative study that is informed by case study methodology and collaborative action research.

I draw on primary data collected from one focus group with ten writing center consultants, ten recorded writing center consultations, ten post-consultation semi-structured interviews with consultants, ten post-consultation semi-structured interviews with writers, and thirty-eight mood inventory surveys to argue for the promising utility of “hospitality” as a theoretical framework to inform ethical writing pedagogy. More specifically, I utilize affect theory, listening studies, and strategic contemplation to make

sense of how hospitality informed the experiences of writing center consultants and their writers and use hospitality as a framework to interpret the ethics of tutorial practice.

The results of this project offer three major contributions. First, I argue that hospitality functions as helpful conceptual framework allowing tutors to acknowledge issues of power, authority, and expertise in their appointments and consider how to responsibly navigate these realities based on hospitality's guiding ethics. Second, I suggest that hospitality's underlying values of rhetorical listening and attention to the emotional aspects of learning and teaching proved influential in helping consultants cultivate more healthy and generative affective positions towards their writers. Finally, I offer implications to this research, suggesting hospitality's applications in higher-education classroom contexts and well as a social praxis for writing studies scholars.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER I: Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER II: Methodology.....	28
CHAPTER III: Rethinking Power, Authority, and Expertise—Hospitality.....	61
CHAPTER IV: Emotion, Listening, and Hospitality in the Writing Center.....	106
CHAPTER V: Conclusion.....	152
REFERENCES.....	168
APPENDICES.....	184
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	203

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This work's title takes inspiration from Rose Dyar, a writing consultant and, at the time, first-year master's student in English at the University of Louisville. Rose belonged to a group of colleagues and friends of mine whose collaboration during the Spring of 2020 made this project possible. Towards the end of a lively focus group in late January 2020 Rose thoughtfully noted, "It just strikes me that hospitality seems to be a way to imagine, both imagine and practice, for a better future. So, both a philosophy and a practice that either individuals or groups can subscribe to." On further reflection, I was taken aback by how poignantly Rose articulated hospitality's promising, and significantly untapped, applications to pedagogical theory and practice—especially in relation to writing studies.<sup>1</sup>

What's more, Rose's sentiments resonate with numerous philosophers, educators, and theologians who point to hospitality as a theoretical lens and practical guide to inform how individuals, institutions, and cultures might ethically operate in the material world. In the mid-1970s, the Dutch professor, priest, and theologian Henri Nouwen given that "so many people spend crucial parts of their lives, as students or teachers or both" (84), while simultaneously noting, "if there is any concept worth

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<sup>1</sup> Drawing from Susan Miller, I use writing studies as a widely encompassing term including, but not limited to: composition studies, writing center studies, literacy studies, and rhetorical studies.

restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality” (66).<sup>2</sup> Though articulated five decades ago, Nouwen’s analysis still resonates with our current social and historic moment—perhaps even more so now than at the time of its original expression. And while hospitality is by no means a new term to the field, I remain surprised at how underexplored and underappreciated it is considering its potential.

Seeing hospitality as understudied and underutilized in education, I thus strive to promote greater visibility to hospitality as a theoretical concept and guiding philosophy for students, teachers, and scholars in writing studies contexts. Before explicating the specifics of my research, however, I first wish to consider the ways hospitality has emerged in writing studies, contextualize it within the history(ies) of writing pedagogy, and highlight misconceptions and unwanted associations with the term. Next, I provide my own definition of the term for this manuscript. Finally, in a related move, I stress current cultural and historical circumstances which illuminate the growing need to find models of interpersonal communication to help writing consultants and instructors—and our society more broadly.

### **Hospitality’s Emergence in Writing Studies**

During the 80s and 90s, hospitality was occasionally used in writing studies. In “Hospitality in the Classroom: The Teaching Stand of Writers in the Schools” Robert Tremel, for example, argued the need for hospitality to take on greater value in

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<sup>2</sup> While Henri Nouwen may initially seem a peculiar voice to invoke, especially so early in my argument, as readers will see, his influence has left an indelible mark on many, if not most, of the foundational scholars in writing studies exploring the concept of hospitality.

composition classrooms given its potential to help instructors “respect their students’ language” in addition to offering students “broad and flexible audience situations which support their efforts throughout the whole writing process” (192). In her work as a literacy educator in the Michigan Prison System, Judy Wenzel later borrowed from Parker Palmer’ and Henri Nouwen’s insights into hospitality to illuminate various ways hospitality may prove helpful for educators working with adults facing incarceration. As she notes, “It may be easier to create hospitable space and a sense of community in an inmate classroom than in any other kind” (50). In a similar vein, in her community literacy work Rosemary Winslow imagined hospitality as a foundational principle to help educators, and those in church communities, to humanize and empathize with individuals suffering from homelessness. For Winslow, hospitality serves as a foundational principle, “to allow homeless persons to be reinterpreted not only as existing within society, but as bearing a gift of great value to the society” (133). In 2003, John Bennett’s *Academic Life: Hospitality, Ethics, and Spirituality* then infused hospitality with a level of intellectual depth and complexity which later writing studies scholars would repeatedly draw from. Offering a critique of “insistent individualism” which he believes pervades academic culture at large, Bennett encourages academic institutions—especially on the faculty and administrative level—to strive for a new model of ethics understood as “relational individualism.” The primary means by which relational individualism can occur, moreover, is through the cultivation of hospitality. For Bennett the unfortunate culture of “insistent individualism” throughout academia reflects a “philosophical atomism” or, “tendency to regard individuals as self-enclosed and unconnected in deep, constructive ways to others” (25). Directly tying this to the academy he argues:

Our institutions help by reinforcing atomistic assumptions in their reward systems and in their own competitive behaviors. Individuals both contribute to and internalize these institutional values. When we are disposed and taught to see others as potential threats, it seems natural to seek self-protection. (25)

Among the factors Bennett identifies as contributing to this spirit of “insistent individualism” is how increasing specialization among fields and universities has splintered collaboration and integration of curricula, causing many schools and departments to view each other as competitors for prestige, student enrollment, or financial resources. According to Bennett, “As a result, ownership of the collective enterprise is spotty and institutions appear inefficient and self-indulgent” (16). This environment, Bennett claims, is further worsened by the all-too-common practice of over-dependence—yet underappreciation—of adjunct faculty. Bennett also links “insistent individualism” to the reality many graduate students face when trying to secure a career in academia. According to Bennett, transitioning from graduate studies to a viable job in the academy often requires an intense pressure for graduate students to establish associations with reputable academics who can then designate them to an established elite as worthy of the ivory tower. Illuminating this dilemma, Bennett draws from Julie Rivkin who, in “Beyond the Prestige of Graduate Education” argues that for many graduate students, “identity, value, and agency are mediated by and through 'the proper names' of famous professors. To be a student of X or Y is the only way to have any value or identity” (Rivkin, 16). Add to this equation the pressure given that “those seeking academic jobs outstrip available positions” and it may come as no surprise that from the get go many early developing scholars become primed to see each other as “competitors rather than colleagues” (38). Bennett additionally highlights the general sense of cultural elitism felt by many established faculties in academia—especially

promulgated when colleges and universities show little interest or engagement with their larger community. Altogether this ever-pervasive spirit of “insistent individualism” described by Bennett reflects “a persistent competitive and possessive individualism in which self-promotion and protection become central values” (1).

In fairness, Bennett’s indictment of academic culture at large relies heavily on sweeping generalizations and largely overlooks the many exceptions to the norms he articulates. To a good extent I attribute this to the nature of his writing. Diagnosing the ills of the entire academy and calling for large scale reform in a relatively short book does not allow him much room for nuance. Still, Bennett’s descriptions of insistent individualism and the underlying philosophy(ies) promoting its operation provide a constructive way of understanding uncharitable behaviors and ways of thinking which permeate not just academia, but culture and society at large. Furthermore, what I find most promising are the alternatives he provides: allowing for personal, group, and institutional reflection, as well as the possibility of finding individual and collaborative solutions.

More specifically, to counter insistent individualism Bennet promotes “relational individualism,” which philosophically positions reality “as a complex flow of interconnected actualities, and the self as both discrete individual and relationally constituted” (xiv).<sup>3</sup> Elaborating more extensively he explains this as an ethic whereby:

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<sup>3</sup> Bennet’s positioning of metaphysics as relationally constituted relies on mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead’s foundational contributions to Process Philosophy, a school of thought which dismisses framing reality as essentially composed of isolated bits of matter existing independently of each other. Instead, as the word suggests, Process Philosophy emphasizes understanding reality as composed of processes which are then best explained by their relationship to other processes. Stated another way, Process Philosophy places a primacy of Becoming over Being. Whitehead’s



Community is recognized—even celebrated—as necessary for individual freedom and creativity. Far from simple collections or aggregations of independent selves, communities constitute the many-layered contexts within which individuals dwell and grow—and to which they contribute. Our freedom emerges from this relationality—it emerges with, and out of, the actualities and possibilities that others provide us, and we them. The greater the diversity of our relationships, the more potentiality they represent for our growth and enrichment (40).

For Bennett, in this context the effective use of power no longer becomes understood as the “unilateral exercise of force to achieve one's objectives” but instead refers to “the capacity to be influenced and affected as well as to influence and affect—it involves both giving and receiving. Relational power means allowing the other to make an inner difference” (41).

At its most basic level, hospitality translated to academic environments means being “open to others, sharing resources, and receiving with care the new and the strange, as well as critically reviewing the familiar” which also requires recognizing, “the particularity of others as part of the broader interdependence of being and the interconnectedness of learning that characterizes the depths of our reality” (47).

Throughout his work then, Bennett enlists thinkers like Henri Nouwen, Simone Weil, and Parker Palmer to help understand hospitality in the context of educational environments given that, “in their different ways” they communicate, “that we teach and learn only by extending and sharing ourselves and our knowledge, and by attending to and receiving from the experience and knowledge of others” (xiv). Bennett then establishes a number of virtues as intertwined with hospitality including: integrity, perseverance, courage, and self-reflection. In specific regard to self-reflection, he extends other virtues that make

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scholarship, moreover, has had a lasting and evolving influence on fields like ecology, economics, education, psychology, and theology.

healthy reflection possible such as how we: “provide testimony, exercise discernment, display humility, and extend forgiveness” (xiv). Giving some concrete form to how hospitality might be cultivated on an individual, group, or institutional level he also describes useful habits including: “attending to the other, seeking self-knowledge, and practicing asceticism” (xiv).<sup>4</sup>

Writing studies, however, while falling under the purview of Bennett’s widespread critique, is by no means directly explicated or conceptually connected to the hospitality Bennett advocates. Nevertheless, such scholarship began to emerge not long after his publication. Dale Jacob’s 2008 *JAC* article “The Audacity of Hospitality,” in particular, made important connections between hospitality’s promising applications to writing studies and drawing in preexisting scholarship to constructively enrich how we might understand and enact hospitality. Jacobs frames the central argument of his article as an extension to his previous piece, published three years earlier in *JAC* and titled, “What’s Hope Got to Do with It?: Towards a Theory of Hope and Pedagogy.”<sup>5</sup> Upon reflection, Jacobs establishes important similarities between hope and hospitality in so far as they both “center on the idea of possibility and display an orientation toward the future” yet, he designates hospitality as the, “radical act that necessarily precedes” hope

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<sup>4</sup> Given asceticism’s typical association with religious practices involving rigorous self-denial, Bennett’s reframing of the term is worth noting. Overall, Bennett expands the meaning of asceticism in academic contexts to mean refraining from “craving acclaim or recognition” (80). In a similar vein, he refers to an asceticism of language whereby one refuses, “to use language to posture, polarize, or abuse” (80).

<sup>5</sup> In particular, I remain impressed by the links Jacobs makes between hospitality and Cheryl Glenn’s scholarship on rhetoric(s) of silence as well as Krista Ratcliffe’s work on rhetorical listening. After Dale’s article, Glenn and Ratcliffe’s later collaboration cemented “listening studies” as an important sub-field to writing studies. As will become evident, I draw on Glenn and Ratcliffe’s scholarship throughout—viewing silence and deep listening as the crux of hospitable practice.

(564). Likewise, Jacobs directly communicates a need for public and professional discourses, especially within writing studies, to value and begin to think through how hospitality might be enacted. As he states:

To my mind, hospitality needs to become an integral part of not only our civic lives, but also of our professional lives, including the work we do as teachers, as department members, and as intellectuals as we engage in the ongoing conversations in our field(s) (564).

In their 2009 *College Composition and Communication* article “Hospitality in College Composition Courses” Janis Haswell, Richard Haswell and Glenn Blalock added more complex theoretical dimensions to hospitality and considered practices that might support hospitality as a teacher’s guiding pedagogical philosophy. In the writing they historicize and describe three modes of hospitality, “Homeric,” “Judeo-Christian,” and “Nomadic,” and argue that the “application of these modes to instructional situations may lead to new and sometimes counter-establishment methods, in terms of course objectives, shared labor of teacher and students, writing assignments, response to writing, and assessment of student work” (707). While at first glance the authors’ arguments may come across as basic appeals to revisit earlier scholarship exploring “student-centered pedagogies,” they carefully distinguish hospitality as a promising pedagogical framework given that it stakes out “a position that might be considered marginal apropos the current political and educational climate in the United States” (707). In *Hospitality and Authoring: An Essay for the English Profession* (2015), Richard and Janis Haswell more exhaustively developed these arguments and ideas in their book, offering to date the most philosophical and comprehensive exploration of hospitality in writing studies. In fact, given that my main research participants relied almost exclusively on Haswell and

Haswell's work when contributing to this project, further explication into these scholars' conception of hospitality is necessary.

### **Haswell and Haswell and Hospitality**

My first exposure to hospitality as a theoretical concept actually came from reading Haswell and Haswell's *Hospitality and Authoring: An Essay for the English Profession*, after which I was immediately encouraged and energized. For over a decade, my professional life has been committed to teaching writing and striving to understand what it means to do so ethically. Much of this ongoing search has come from teaching diverse student populations as a writing instructor and consultant in institutions of higher education in the U.S. But I have also been fortunate to work in international contexts such as volunteering in after-school and community outreach programs in India and Panama, being an English camp counselor in Italy and Austria, and teaching at universities in Colombia and China. These experiences teaching, both domestically and abroad, have proved beneficial on a number of fronts, providing me with friendships, cultural insights, and new understandings of language and literacy along with a rewarding sense that I have offered similar gifts to others. Additionally, these opportunities have been productively humbling, often making me conscious of my ignorance and prejudices—a first step towards reflection, openness, and productive growth.

While I found other scholarship related to student-centered pedagogy useful, Haswell and Haswell's explications of hospitality resonated with my own experiences in a way no other theories in writing studies had. Afterwards, looking into earlier research into hospitality, I began to see even more promise hospitality might offer to the field of writing studies. In particular, I see in hospitality an understanding that ethical writing

pedagogy requires keen attention to the cultural, social, and historical circumstances in which one teaches as well as an open, flexible, and humble spirit on the part of an instructor. And while many of these ideas are embedded in other models of writing pedagogy, I see none that have such a cohesive and well-formed model of ethics in combination with metaphors, histories, stories, and theories which practically and theoretically remain applicable and accessible to students, instructors, researchers, and scholars across differing social and cultural perspectives.

Early on, Haswell and Haswell underscore that their notion of hospitality is exercised in “the traditional way” (6), where at a specific site “a host privately offers shelter, food, entertainment, and information to a stranger” (6).<sup>6</sup> Haswell and Haswell then more thoroughly explicate what these manifestations of hospitality can look like by drawing upon three historical traditions: “Homeric, or warrior, hospitality; Judeo-Christian, or biblical, hospitality; and Central and Eastern Asian, or nomadic, hospitality” (7). Nomadic hospitality, for example, as seen in Bedouin culture, involves a host providing, food, shelter and drink to any wandering stranger without question. Typically, this interaction then involves a gift, or exchange, whereby the guest offers information to their host, whether that be in the form of stories, their own culture customs, or happenings occurring outside the encampment. Undergirding this exchange is the usual assumption that future circumstances might place the host in the land of the guest—

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<sup>6</sup> For readers who find the host/guest dichotomy reductive or problematic and are interested in alternative approaches to understanding hospitality, check out Brandy Grabow’s *Expanding the Metaphor: A Pragmatic Application of Hospitality Theory to the Field of Writing Studies* (2013) which argues for a disruption of the host/guest binary within theoretical understandings of hospitality given that the influence of the university complicates instructors’ relationships to students.

whereby roles become exchanged (19). Working towards a more pedagogical bent, Haswell and Haswell also establish three main frames of mind they believe central to hospitality in postsecondary education. Designated as “postures, dispositions, or inner values,” these include: “intellectual hospitality,” “transformative hospitality,” and “ubuntu hospitality” (53).

For the authors, “intellectual hospitality” refers to establishing room and welcoming new or different ideas (8). For teachers a disposition of “intellectual hospitality” is especially paramount and requires inviting novel or developing ideas from students, since this, “undercuts the fatal expectation that knowledge transfer is a one-way street from teacher to student” (8). Haswell and Haswell also believe that “Through such reciprocal respect and gift giving, intellectual hospitality may cross over into our second form or manifestation, transformative hospitality” (58). Here, Haswell and Haswell argue that within educational contexts founded on intellectual hospitality change or alteration will happen for both student and teacher, what is understood as “transformative hospitality.” In such cases, transformative hospitality works against, “the image of teachers as books full of knowledge, available to be opened and read but fixed in time, not a word or comma open to change” (8). Finally, “Ubuntu hospitality” draws upon the South African folk ethic of “Ubuntu” where compassion and understanding are fostered by a rich and deep awareness of our interconnected and shared humanity. As theologian and human rights activist, Archbishop Desmond Tutu explains:

A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed (19).

Haswell and Haswell aptly point out how it was Ubuntu philosophy which underscored, and helped facilitate, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of post-apartheid South Africa. Collectively then, “Intellectual,” “Transformative,” and “Ubuntu” Hospitality may “energize distinct social, cultural, pedagogical practices” (8). Lastly, hospitality also exhibits specific actions involving: “risk taking,” “restlessness,” “resistance,” and “retreat”—referred to as a “new set of classroom R’s” (8). In many respects an uncertain enterprise, hospitality’s vulnerable positioning, for both host and guest, involves a potential for danger, making “risk taking” essential (60). As both subjects are also subject to change—often an uncomfortable process—varying levels of “restlessness” may be felt throughout, and even after, the engagement.

The third characteristic “resistance” refers not to resisting the “other” or the “thou,” but instead means resisting impulses to categorize or make assumptions before knowing the “other” or the “thou” (59). This requires a level of suspended judgement and asks a host to acknowledge and “relish the shock of difference” (66). “Retreat,” the final R in the series, in contrast to its militaristic associations, refers to a religious retreat to the margins (61). As hospitality often includes a blurring, or even disintegration, of understood roles between host and guest, in this regard it offers a retreat to marginal space—challenging and working against established boundaries. All four of these characteristics “risk taking,” “restlessness,” “resistance,” and “retreat,” according to Haswell and Haswell share the “same willingness to be open to the Other” (61).

### **Levinas, Derrida, Nouwen and Hospitality**

To advance hospitality as a theoretical framework, Haswell and Haswell draw from an assortment of thinkers to establish hospitality’s philosophical, and even

theological, foundations. Most notably, Emmanuel Levinas' conception of "self" and "thou" explored in his work *Totality and Infinity*, finds a direct connection to hospitality's "host" and "guest." Ultimately, Levinas prizes the face-to-face encounter with the other as a privileged phenomenon from which ethics are derived. For Levinas, the interaction or conversation with the "thou" or "other" invites a displacement from one's totality into infinity. Illuminating Levinas' conceptualization of movement into infinity, Haswell and Haswell explain this phenomenon as "the infinity formed when singular self meets singular other in hospitality, thereby forming an ongoing community" and thus challenging, "the totality imposed when established orthodoxies regulate behavior, thereby affirming a permanent identity"(14). In other words, hospitality, as an intimate, unpredictable, and creative enterprise represents a radical relationship to the other whereby an individual must be open to entering a space outside of themselves—beyond their fixed preconceptions, comforts, biases, and values into an unknown—infinity.

To a significant but lesser extent, Jacques Derrida's *Of Hospitality* also informs Haswell and Haswell's work. In particular, the authors use Derrida's ideas to note hospitality's long held historic significance and to distinguish differences in hospitality as a means for social utility rather than an exemplary moral action. Derrida's exploration of hospitality ultimately serves as a larger investigation into the question of the foreigner or stranger and, in doing so, he makes important distinctions between two types of hospitality: "conditional" and "unconditional" (sometimes referred to as "absolute" or "hyperbolic"). According to Derrida, "unconditional," "absolute" or "hyperbolic" hospitality, at least in its philosophical essence, envisions the host as completely welcoming with no requirements, expectations, or questions of the guest; an action the



host offers “before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification” (76). Derrida, however, is quick to point out how many acts of hospitality may ostensibly appear to exhibit this “unconditional” quality but in actuality represent an exchange between host and guest imposed by right or law—such as asylum seeking. These types of circumstances designated as “conditional” hospitality may also reify rather than blur or diminish markers of difference as they often depend on firm categories of national identity. Nonetheless, according to Derrida, the values underlying “unconditional” hospitality are necessary, even if they are not purely enacted, since these ideals set a framework for how hospitality can operate, even if on “conditional” terms (129).

Finally, Catholic priest, professor, and theologian Henri Nouwen’s observations and insights into hospitality serve as a repeated reference point for Haswell and Haswell. Usually in these contexts Nouwen’s writings operate not so much to add new theoretical dimensions to hospitality so much as they enliven and clarify what radical hospitality can look like in material form. This is at least partially due to Nouwen’s experience living and serving in communities and his ability to write deeply personal and moving prose related to human suffering and longing for interpersonal connection. Specifically, Nouwen’s work and observations into the ethics of counseling and pastoral care shed light onto the role of host in hospitality. Nouwen, for example, describes the ideal minister as a host who “heals, sustains, and guides” yet, claims these feats can only be accomplished when one rejects the need to maintain control or have all the answers (51). For Nouwen, who spent a significant portion of his life living and communing with people with disabilities at L’Arche community in France, “Someone who is filled with

ideas, concepts, opinions and convictions cannot be a good host. There is no inner space to listen, no openness to discover the gift of the other” (103). Insights such as these work not only to underscore blurrings of power and role reversals of host and guest in Haswell and Haswell’s hospitality but they also vividly describe many of Hospitality’s central features like “risk taking,” “restlessness,” “resistance,” and “retreat.”

### **Hospitality and the Writing Center**

When addressing composition pedagogies, many scholars are quick to draw from the writing classroom as the foundational location to investigate scholarship and theory while overlooking other crucial locations like writing centers. The writing center may, in fact, be the most ideal location to understand hospitality’s pedagogical potential in higher education. For example, Haswell and Haswell speculate that, “[p]robably, if we could put numbers on it, over the years more acts of genuine hospitality have been initiated by writing-center tutors than by any other postsecondary faculty” (307). Therefore, it’s important to understand some of the major developments in writing center theory and hospitality’s applications within these contexts.

In particular, significant writing center research has stressed the role writing centers play not simply to “fix” papers but instead contribute to the overall social development involved in helping writers develop confidence and long-term writing capabilities. In his foundational article “The Idea of the Writing Center” Stephen North, for instance, highlights the ideal goal of writing centers as “to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction. In axiom form it goes like this: our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (348). But this begs the question of what exactly it means to attend to others’ social development in order to

“produce better writers.” We might similarly ask how consultants are supposed to accomplish such goals given the seemingly ambiguous nature of their authority in addition to the vastly different identities of their writers and the challenges they face.

Responding to these concerns, scholarship exploring successful writing center practice has framed consultants as needing to exhibit everything from appropriate “cognitive apprenticeship” (Collins, Brown, Newman), “legitimate peripheral participation” (Bloch et al.), to appropriate “question asking” instead of strong directives (Brooks). Related research also tends to position a consultant’s ideal role as engaged and active in a consultation—stressing the participatory nature of learning as well as the social elements that contribute to writing expertise (Boquet; Geller; Shamoon and Burns). These lines of inquiry have also become productively complicated by other writing center scholars who point to the immensely complex social dynamics that might take place at any given writing center appointment. Writing centers are, after all, some of the most diverse environments on campuses with conversations occurring across all kinds of difference. Consequently, more and more writing center research has begun to address issues of race (Condon; Greenfield and Rowan; Grimm), sexual identity (Denny; Rihn and Sloan), disability (Babcock), and multilingualism (Blau et al.; Olson) to help determine means in which writing consultants, and writing centers more broadly, might account for difference and be more attentive, helpful and inclusive to those they serve.

This scholarship attempting to define the role(s) of writing center consultants and help consultants take into account differences markers of writers’ identity has undoubtedly proved helpful. Still, given the personal and unpredictable nature to writing center work, and taking into account the concerns and anxieties writers so frequently

bring with them to appointments, insufficient research has offered more comprehensive and accessible frameworks to help consultants respond to differing, though related, challenges to writing center tutoring. Specifically, I'm encouraged by hospitality's capacity to be accessible while simultaneously helping tutors: adjust their position of power, authority, or expertise based on the specific context of a situation, navigate the emotional/affective aspects at play during consultations, and develop skills at deep rhetorical listening.

### **What Hospitality Is and Is Not**

Before moving forward, however, I wish to offer my own definition of hospitality established from its etymological roots and the scholarship I have thus described. To give further clarification I likewise offer a detailed analysis concerning what hospitality is not. Working towards my definition, I first draw from the Greek word *philoxenia*, φιλόξενοϛ meaning "love of stranger" (Liddel and Scott).<sup>7</sup> Latin later uses the word *hospes* to mean "host" as well as "stranger or guest" (Traupman and Glare). Taking *philoxenia* and *hospes* into account and borrowing from the scholarship of Bennett and Haswell and Haswell, as well as the central figures they employ to illuminate the concept of hospitality, I define hospitality as "Love and desire for friendship offered to a stranger with characteristics of attendance to the other's needs, a willingness to set aside ego or need to be right, an awareness of humanity's interconnected nature, and a curious disposition that views shared learning as the best form of knowledge acquisition."

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, *philoxenia*'s antonym *xenophobia* "fear of stranger" has found more popularity in contemporary English vernacular.

Concerning what hospitality is not, to speak of hospitality in its more commonplace understanding(s) may elicit a number of associations including, tourist industries, social events used to network, or even currying favor with another to win them over to a certain ideological framework. Nouwen makes similar observations when he notes that for many people hospitality simply suggests “tea parties, bland conversations, and a general atmosphere of coziness” (66). Indeed, perhaps the biggest challenge to promoting hospitality as a pedagogy, theory, and practice requires its separation from such potentially distrustful and superficial associations.

To untangle and extirpate some of these modern connotations to hospitality, I find Richard and Janis Haswell’s clarification helpful. Haswell and Haswell underscore that their notion of hospitality is exercised in “the traditional way” (6), where at a specific site “a host privately offers shelter, food, entertainment, and information to a stranger” (6). This stands in contrast to the more common understandings of hospitality as a commercial, political, or colonizing enterprise, such as, “lodging travelers for money, wining and dining friends, or missionizing in foreign lands” (6). Bluntly put, “The attributes of traditional hospitality are not balancing the ledger, evening the social score, or harvesting souls” (6). Instead, this traditional sense of hospitality demonstrates a relationship to the “other” with characteristics of, “goodwill, generosity, welcome, opening to the other, trust, mutual respect, privacy, talk, ease, gift exchange, elbow room, risk, marginality, social retreat, and embrace of change” (6).

Importantly, hospitality must also be distinguished from associations with terms like “civility,” “care,” or “charity.” In regards to civility, Bennet makes crucial distinctions when he notes that appeals to civility can inhibit, “discussions on important,

long-overdue initiatives” (49). To be clear, this doesn’t mean hospitality promotes incivility. However, with its foundational values stressing honest conversation held, ideally, between attentive, reflective, and humble parties willing to see each other as worthy of inquiry, hospitality likewise views risk, discomfort, and disagreement as possible, even likely, aspects on the path to achieve its larger goals. This distinction also does not dismiss the potential utility of civility, it just avoids seeing it as the ultimate goal, as Bennet points out, “Civil truces amongst warring parties are important, but they can deny the greater good that comes only with efforts to address the common welfare” (50). Additionally, what constitutes civil behavior varies significantly across time and cultures, making it difficult to establish any universally specific criteria for the term.

Likewise, hospitality should be thoughtfully demarcated from certain appeals to “care” and “charity” which might position an educator to seek a sense of altruistic superiority at the expense of others, in addition to overlooking the reflective, knowledge-seeking reciprocity hospitality seeks. The most significant figure to apply ethics of care to contexts of education, for example, has been Nel Noddings, with the most pertinent of her works being *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> While published in 1984, Noddings work has since been republished and, in its third edition (2013) was renamed *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Other influential pieces by Noddings include: *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (1992), *Educating Moral People* (2002); *Happiness and Education* (2003), and *Education and Democracy in the 21st Century* (2013). Although Noddings’ ethics of care is less popular in contemporary writing studies, several foundational scholars of composition and rhetoric continue to borrow from, expound upon and provide more nuance to Noddings’ ethics of care. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch, for example, in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, note “Our phrase *ethos of humility, respect, and care* does echo, to some degree, Nel Noddings’ concept of an *ethics of care*. Noddings’ work has led to rich discussions of ethical principles and feminist theory in fields as diverse as philosophy, sociology, education, women’s studies, psychology, literature, cultural studies, and composition studies” (157a).

Noddings links the origins of ethical action to naturally occurring displays of care, or memories of such behaviors, which predominantly occur in original form between mothers responding to their children in early development. Though Noddings's ideas have found more uptake in fields outside of higher education, composition scholars have still been attracted to Noddings's framework of care to: figure out ways to teach ethnography less prescriptively (Gray-Rosendale and Harootunian), value intuition in the design of first-year writing courses (Soles), and help composition instructors consider methods to balance their political convictions with the individual needs and differences of their students (Phelps).

Still, scholars like Brian White point out the potentially infantilizing nature of Nodding's ethic of care transposed onto pedagogy, suggesting that such actions could, in many instances, render the cared-for powerless (296). Other criticisms of Nodding's stress a lack of emphasis on the provider realizing the need for self-care, whereby a caregiver could unwisely take the wholehearted role of the "martyr, servant, or slave" (Hoagland 255). Also, scholars have noted the reductive nature of Noddings's associations between femininity and caring— potentially invoking notions of caring as a characteristic specific only to women and continuing a long stereotype of care and teaching being attributes relegated to "women's work" (Tronto ; Tuell). This is not to say that Noddings's scholarship, and similar scholarship related to care, are unworthy of attention or do not have continued practical and theoretical utility. Care, as generally conceived, indeed can serve as useful component to hospitable practice. Yet many of the appeals to care which could lead to a positioning of the instructor/student relationship as one of co-dependency should be mindfully watched for and avoided.

Similar to appeals of care, particular invocations of charity must be distinguished from hospitality. Certainly, manifestations of charity in the material world can be a desirable good. However, all too often the term carries with it a fixed designation of giver and receiver with assumed recipients being understood as less fortunate or in dire need of the redemptive gifts of another. Bennett, for example, reminds us that such dynamics, all too often, maintain rather than overcome, “barriers between selves” (51). Along these lines, Bennett also notes how charity as a guiding ethos might actually prevent an educator from taking on the more difficult challenges hospitality poses. As Bennett argues:

Because real intellectual hospitality leads to a critique of the self as well as the other, some academics may commit acts of charity because they find it less threatening to be hosts rather than guests. They want to be benefactors, not also beneficiaries-dispensers, not also recipients. These acts continue the structures of separation that hospitality is attempting to bridge. Hospitality honors interdependence; charity reinforces dependence (51).

Here, Bennett’s argument underscores how gestures aimed at charity can frustrate hospitality’s emphasis on deep listening, mutual exchange of knowledge-sharing, as well as the fluid transitions which can take place in any given transaction between who is constituted as the “host” or “guest.”

Hospitality also is not the absence of communicating one’s opinions, values, or convictions. Because of superficial associations with the term, as well as its emphasis on deep listening and attendance to the other, hospitality, understandably, could be viewed as simply a half-baked strategy for conflict aversion—a method to make others feel heard without facing any further inquiry or pushback. But, as Bennett points out:

Hospitality requires critical examination of all positions as well as scrupulous honesty about who one is and the standards one honors...hospitality in its fullness involves learning in depth about what motivates and sustains the other, as well as



sharing cherished fundamental beliefs and commitments that give form and substance (51).

In this sense, though wise restraint can be an important part to hospitality, fundamentally hospitality resists a negation, either to oneself or others, of positions or stances one finds important.

Finally, hospitality typically functions more as a continually evolving goal rather than a neatly prescriptive set of rules to follow. When fully immersed in the guiding values, characteristics, and philosophy(ies) which undergird hospitality, the temptation to dismiss it simply as an unrealistic utopic vision, and therefore unworthy of study, may loom large. Especially within contexts of education, a superficial understanding of hospitality may lend it to be interpreted simply as institutional happy talk. Such criticisms, to me, make sense but also seem to overlook the utility of striving towards hospitable actions and dispositions despite the reality that hospitality, in its most idealized form, may rarely, if ever, be made fully manifest. Ideological divisions, institutional restraints, human ego, difficulty listening, reservations in being vulnerable, and an array of other factors will indeed always be ever-existing hindrances to a hospitable world.

But these limitations do not negate the value of considering how hospitality's characteristics and values might be enacted—even in limited form. Nor do they dismiss the ways in which hospitality as an overarching ethic and worldview offer transformation for how one understands their own individual value while simultaneously honoring existence as inextricably linked and dependent upon others. Furthermore, if we take examinations of hospitality, like those Bennett proposes, as rooted philosophically in understanding human beings, and the larger material world, as in a constant state of

process or becoming, then hospitality's precepts stress movements towards understanding and enacting hospitality rather than demanding puritanical devotion to an unrealistic proposition. As I strive to make evident as well, aspects of communication which might initially seem to fall out of place with hospitable practice (e.g. misunderstandings, frustrations, dismissals) can in many instances actually serve as avenues or tools towards the larger goal's hospitality aims for. Lastly, dismissals of hospitality may likewise overlook its invitational nature, as Bennett explains:

To practice hospitality is to hope for reciprocity, knowing it cannot be commanded, only invited. Genuine hospitality means sharing something that isn't required with someone who doesn't have to receive it. It is neither involuntary self-sacrifice nor coerced acceptance. Sharing and receiving arise out of freedom and engender freedom, not dependence. One can but offer one's own learning without stipulations as to its use. (49).

### **Our Current Moment**

My major impetus for this project came from a growing concern as I noticed discourses in the United States exhibiting increased political tribalism and a general unwillingness to speak across difference. On occasion I even saw these uncharitable, and sometimes hostile, modes of communication creep into professional and academic discourses (e.g. conferences, message boards, facebook groups, etc.). I was relieved, then, to read John Duffy's *Provocations of Virtue: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing* which shared many of my concerns and carefully investigated their potential origins. Like Duffy, I believe that rapidly developing social, political, and technological changes have allowed for "toxic discourses" to have greater visibility and circulation.

Duffy's criteria for toxic discourses include: "dishonesty," "unaccountability," "demonization," "violence," and a "poverty of spirit" (41). And while toxic discourses are nothing new, there is reason to believe that culturally and technologically specific

circumstances have facilitated the spread of toxic discourses at an alarming rate and in ways that warrant more attention and scholarship. For Duffy, “dishonesty” means “the intentional use of language to deceive, dissemble, or manipulate by distorting or falsifying empirically verifiable facts, resulting in harm to others, either individuals or groups” (41). Similarly, “unaccountability” refers to a type of dishonesty where assertions are made “without relevant and sufficient evidence to support the claim” (41). This attitude of unaccountability may also concomitantly be found in “denial” where one exhibits an, “unwillingness to accept arguments based on empirical evidence when that evidence conflicts with one's interests or worldview” (42). “Demonization” then refers to rhetorical practices which represent “individuals, groups, or ideas as evil, corrupt, cowardly, malevolent, or in some other manner as morally debased” (41). Finally, “poverty of spirit,” broadly defined, means “public language devoid of generosity, charity, tolerance, and respect” (43). According to Duffy, “poverty of spirit” is more an attitude than anything else and, like dishonesty, represents one of the hallmark features of toxic discourses. Also, poverty of spirit usually involves not only an unwillingness to consider how your own positions might be misinformed, misguided, shortsighted or wrong but also a resistance or refusal to see a different political or cultural position as anything other than “axiomatically evil” (43).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Duffy implores “virtue ethics” as a promising means to work against toxic discourses. As Duffy argues, “In virtue and virtue ethics, we are offered, writers and teachers, a language for re-imagining what it means in to be a good writer in the twenty-first century” (62). Although in my research I do not draw specifically on virtue ethics, I do see his propositions finding many important parallels to the moves and ethics scholars like Bennett and Haswell & Haswell describe of hospitality..

For my own purposes, I wish to avoid coming across as sensationalist or seeming to suggest that political tribalism, self-preoccupation, or general incivility is novel to public discourse in the United States. However, key factors assisting toxic discourses I identify include: heightened political tribalism, how rapidly various forms of social media have changed communication norms, and increased dismissals or suspicions of science, reason, and factual accuracy. Though my overarching goals do not include identifying the origins of particular toxic discourses, I am interested in how to ethically use theories and practices to prevent, curb, or even change these uncharitable and hostile means of communication.<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, it is beyond the scope of writing studies to solve these problems. Still, our rich scholarship and unique interpersonal spaces (e.g. composition classrooms, writing centers, community engagements projects) strategically position our field to more thoughtfully begin to address, understand, and speak to many of the challenges that toxic discourses present. As a writing instructor and Ph.D. candidate in Composition and Rhetoric, my attention has thus become increasingly focused on the role of writing pedagogy and writing studies scholarship to respond to toxic discourses.

### **Project Specifics**

To a large extent, hospitality still resides in the realm of theory. For my purposes then, drawing from my qualitative study situated in the University Writing Center at the

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<sup>10</sup> In particular, I view hospitality as an overarching worldview from which the virtues Duffy describes can be made manifest. Bennett, for example, though not directly using the term virtue ethics, does as much claiming, “The cultivation of hospitality requires individual acts of openness which over time become habits and steady dispositions-and ultimately ways of life that nourish spiritually and satisfy ethically” (91). I highly recommend Duffy’s book and am encouraged by how promising virtue ethics might be to help current and future teachers and scholars formulate more ethical understandings of writing pedagogy.

University of Louisville, I draw upon and analyze findings from focus groups, interviews, recorded consultations, and mood-inventory surveys to help understand what the practical applications of hospitality may be within contexts of writing center consultations and in other educational contexts.

Specifically, in Chapter 2, I begin by outlining my research questions. I then describe and justify my research methods which include: ten audio recordings of writing center tutors, twenty post-consultation interviews with ten writing center tutors and—separately—ten writers in these appointments, two focus groups with writing center consultants, and thirty-eight mood inventory surveys filled out by writing consultants and their writings before and after their consultations. After this, I contextualize my research site, The University of Louisville Writing Center, and consider my research participants positionality in this project, then defend why the overarching methodology of case study methodology fits with my project objectives and ethics. Next, I explain the analytical lenses I use to interpret my findings including: affect theory, strategic contemplation, and listing studies—detailing how these frameworks inform how I design interviews, observations, and focus groups, as well as how I will interpret and analyze collected data. After this, I describe my transcribing and coding processes—explaining their rootedness in grounded theory and in-vivo coding. Finally, I more thoroughly detail my research ethics, considering my own positionality, the risks and promises involved in this project, and my IRB approval.

In Chapter 3, I offer readers a better sense of the realities writing consultants frequently face in their day-to-day work. In particular, I highlight the ambiguous, and often confusing, position writing consultants find themselves in when trying to figure out

a sense of power, authority, or expertise when working with writers. From this, I draw from my focus groups, writing center consultations, and interviews to argue that hospitality offers a helpful way for consultants to adapt their role of power, expertise, or authority based off concern for the goals and social development of writers in addition to taking into account the specific contexts with which they encounter writers in their appointments. I also link this type of approach to what I view as the more promising, and ethical, pedagogical model of “relational individualism.”

Chapter 4 then positions hospitality as a useful theoretical framework for consultants, teachers, and researchers, to value how rhetorical listening informs tutorial practice and allows educators to appreciate and consider effective means of responding to the emotional dimensions of their work. In specific relation to writing center tutorials, I highlight how hospitality’s central values of rhetorical listening and attendance to the emotional/affective dimensions of tutorials helped consultants improve writer’s individual pieces while, at the same time, allowing tutors to assist writers in developing healthier and more productive long-term relationships to writing processes.

Finally, in Chapter 5, my conclusion, I offer several important implications of this project for the participants involved and the site of my research—The University of Louisville’s Writing Center. I then reflect on my research practices for this project, detailing important ways this project helped me re-think how I might conduct future research. Finally, I offer broader implications for ways this research applies to college writing classrooms and writing studies scholarship more generally.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

As the vast majority of this project involved people-based qualitative research, I carefully investigated what methods, methodologies, and other underlying theoretical lenses could best operate to ensure quality research ethics which kept the best interests of all involved. While such aspirations should always be the goal of any researcher, I felt a particularly strong impetus to do so given the positionality of my participants and my relationships to them. Half of my research participants were undergraduate and graduate writers who were already putting themselves in vulnerable positions by coming to our writing center to seek help. The other half of participants were graduate students working in the writing center as part of their GTAships. As M.A. students in English, most of these consultant participants were in the process of exploring potential careers in academia as well. Aware of this, I took seriously that the findings of this research—whether that simply be in the form of a defended dissertation or expansion into a published article or book— would circulate to other scholars.

For me, research findings which left any participant feeling unfairly represented could have serious consequences for how they believed they were portrayed to others, especially those in more established academic positions. Furthermore, misrepresentation could potentially lead a consultant to rethink their desires to pursue further work in academia. As the Assistant Director to our Writing Center, which involved a high degree of mentorship to consultant participants, I knew I needed to take thoughtful precautions

and measures to make sure participants felt no pressure or coercion to take part in the project—in addition to feeling at ease to be honest with their feedback. Ultimately, fair representation of my research participants and staying true to my ethics was the highest priority for me.

In this chapter, therefore, I describe the methods, methodologies, and theoretical lenses I used to safeguard against compromised research ethics. First, I present the overarching research questions which guided and grounded my methods and methodology, then explain the overarching methodology I used which was case study methodology—though with many aspects of collaborative action research. After this, I describe the methods I incorporated including: recorded consultations, semi-structured active interviews, focus groups, mood inventory surveys, and my coding processes of transcriptions. I then detail operative theoretical lenses I used (i.e. affect theory, strategic contemplation, and listening studies) and end by explicating other ethical procedures undertaken.

The definitions for methods and methodologies I used come from Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan who characterize a method as “a technique or way of proceeding in gathering evidence” and methodology as “the underlying theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed” (2). Any method or methodology, though, must be guided by specific research questions. The following questions grounded my methods and methodological approaches:

Main Research Question: What overall effect does a theoretical framework of hospitality have on tutoring work in a writing center?



1. What are writing center consultants' understandings' and perceptions of Haswell and Haswell's hospitality?
  - A. What do writing center consultants identify as acts of hospitality within a writing center consultation and the writing center culture more broadly?
  - B. What kinds of limitations do writing center consultants see to hospitality as a theoretical framework informing Writing Center Studies and Composition Classroom teaching?
  - C. What problems do writing center consultants identify which hospitality may be helpful to aid or ameliorate?
2. Do writing center consultants draw on hospitality in their work with writers? In what ways is their use of this framework productive? In what ways is their use an obstacle to effective tutoring?
3. What advantages might there be for hospitality to be more broadly understood, developed, and utilized as an overarching theoretical framework in Writing Studies?
4. How can hospitality be seen to incorporate, develop, or improve upon terms, concepts, and theories aimed at understanding student-centeredness in writing studies?

Other research questions played an important role in guiding this project, but I approached these as ambitious questions addressed with more speculative responses:

5. In what ways can manifestations of hospitality in writing center consultations be applied to composition classrooms?

6. What could other academic environments learn from the atypical space of the “writing center”?
7. In what ways could enactments of hospitality in writing center consultations work against “toxic discourses”?

### **Methodology: Case Study Methodology with Collaborative Action Research**

#### **Elements**

Sharan Merriam defines a case study in its most basic terms as, “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” and notes that “the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (40). In order for research to qualify as a case study methodology then, there must be some bounded unit(s) under investigation. Merriam notes that a bounded system could include, “some phenomenon, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy” (42). Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, likewise imagine a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (25). McKinney similarly notes that researchers using case study methodology “select particular participants as “cases,” people or perhaps groups or classes, to profile within the population or setting” (94). Case study methodology ultimately worked well as my overarching methodology in this project as the consultant participants and writer participants operated as a bounded group or community studied over a specific of time—the Spring semester of 2020.

Given the close relational nature to many of my research participants, though, there were many elemental aspects of collaborative action research which I drew upon to inform my practices. To understand “collaborative action research,” I need to break down the broader category “action research.” First attributed to sociologist Kurt Lewin

in the mid-1940s, action research is distinguished by its design to address specific social problems. More precisely, action research attempts to address and respond to gaps between social action and social theory, as well as chasms and disparities between practitioners and researchers and theories to practical problems (Dickens and Watkins). For my research purposes, I drew primarily from Jackie Grutsch McKinney’s definition of action research as “collaborative, site-based, primarily qualitative research that involves the systematic collection of data to make responsible, collective decisions about enacting change in the researchers’ own context” (107). Contemporary action research typically offers more specificity to its terminology—by adding an adjective to the term—such as: participatory action research (Ozias and Godbee), teacher action research (Dickens and Watkins), and school wide action research (Calhoun). What distinguishes collaborative action research though, is, as the term suggests, its “collaborative” nature where researchers and participants work collectively to identify problems, share information and data, and together look for solutions. Collaborative action research, furthermore, involves recursive processes of researchers and participants sharing data, generating individual and communal time for reflection on the findings, and discussing, analyzing, and formulating solutions as a group.

For my research project, certain characteristics of collaborative action research worked well for numerous reasons. In my role as the Assistant Director to the University Writing Center my relationship to consultant participants—all employees in the University Writing Center—was one of an established rapport of trust, collegiality, and mentorship. Considering this dynamic, I believed it disingenuous to study my colleagues as subjects whose ideas, opinions, and actions I could analyze disinterestedly. Also, my

research was deeply interested in the ideas, analyses, problem identifications, as well as embodied experiences that writing center consultants brought to this project. I therefore considered my work with consultant participants to largely be one of co-collaboration where together we analyzed, generated ideas, reflected, and considered the pedagogical implications to hospitality in the context of writing centers and composition classrooms. I also saw a number of shared values and ethics between collaborative action research and Haswell and Haswell's theory of hospitality—helping the overall alignment of my research. Collaborative action research, for example, in its emphasis on social transformation, brought about by colleagues and friends respectfully seeking change, mirrors hospitality's dispositions of “intellectual,” “transformative,” and “ubuntu” hospitality which ask for a teacher to be open to differing ideas, willing to change, and value our interconnected humanity. Along similar lines, as frameworks which both recognize the complexity innate to social interactions hospitality and collaborative action research both acknowledge the risk-taking nature to their methods. As Michael Grady notes, “educators who take up action research run a risk of discovering things about their own practice that are negative, deficient, or limiting” (47). Still, unlike most models of collaborative action research, I was the primary agent in shaping this project's research questions, coding and analyzing data, and facilitating interviews and focus groups, thus my research did not fully qualify as collaborative action research. Therefore, case study methodology operated more appropriately given that case studies involve “the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive” (Grady, 42).

In regards to specific methods falling in line with case studies, Merriam argues, “case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing, can be used in a case study, although certain techniques are used more than others” (42). Nonetheless, I incorporated varying methods to help ensure I would be able to produce the “thick description” characteristic of case studies which involves including, “as many variables as possible” and portraying, “their interaction over a period of time” (Merriam 43). My methods included recorded consultations, semi-structured active interviews, focus groups, and mood inventory surveys.

### **Context and Participants**

All of my research was gathered at a single site—the University of Louisville Writing Center located on the first floor of Ekstrom Library. Part of my duties as the Assistant Director for this Writing Center included training graduate writing consultants, facilitating mentor groups with graduate writing consultants, and participating weekly in English 604 (Writing Center Theory and Practice) with graduate writing consultants. The vast majority of graduate writing consultants at the University of Louisville Writing Center were M.A. students in English working in the writing center as part of their graduate teaching GTAships. Thus, as described earlier, my relationship to each of these participants was one of mentorship and collegiality.

Before seeking consultant volunteers from this group of ten, I sent out an e-mail explaining the nature of my research, what I was interested in learning, how volunteers would be involved, the date I would be showing up to their English 604 (Writing Center Theory) class for them to potentially sign up, and stressed that this was project was

entirely voluntary and only for those interested. In addition, I described how if they chose to participate in this study and re-think their decision later, they had complete freedom to withdraw and have no data collected from them be presented in research finding. When the date came to attend their 604 class, I re-iterated my research to potential participants and had a sign-up sheet circulated when I have left the classroom. All ten of the graduate writing consultants agreed to participate. This group of graduate consultants had established a close connection from working together in our writing center and had all taken English 604 (Writing Center Theory and Practice) the previous fall—a course where they read and discussed Haswell and Haswell’s theoretical framework of hospitality. In particular, these graduate writing consultants read Chapters 3 and 5 from *Hospitality and Authoring: An Essay for the English Profession*, discussed the chapters in their English 604 course, made connections between Haswell and Haswell’s theoretical conception of hospitality and other course readings on their discussion board, and some drew from Haswell and Haswell’s text in later classes and research projects. Prior to collecting my data, these graduate writing consultants also watched a video I created to give them a refresher on the specific concepts, characteristics, and central theorists Haswell and Haswell drew from to frame their explication of hospitality.<sup>11</sup>

Before recording consultations and conducting interviews, all volunteer consultant participants and volunteer writer participants filled out a basic demographic survey which interested readers can view in Appendix (C). The resultants of the survey for the graduate writing consultants involved in this project can be seen below:

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oTAAInsbiI>

### Consultant Demographics

		<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>International</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Educational Standing</b>
Hayley		Female	28-32	From Canada but does not identify as international	Caucasian	Graduate
Rose		Female	19-23	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Kendyl		Female	19-23	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Ash		Male	32-36	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Lauren		Female	24-27	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Kayla		Female	24-27	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Tristan		Female	19-23	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Cat		Female	19-23	No	Caucasian/Asian	Graduate
Kelby		Female	19-23	No	Caucasian	Graduate
Michelle		Female	24-27	No	Caucasian	Graduate

Prior to their recorded consultations and follow-up interviews, I discussed with each graduate consultant volunteer optimal times on their work schedules where I could collect data. Once times were established, I would show up prior to these appointments and discuss any questions or concerns the consultant might have. When their scheduled writers would come to their appointments, I would first meet with the writer to see if they were interested in volunteering in my project. My conversation with potential volunteer writers followed this basic script: "Hello, my name is Edward English and I am a graduate student in the English department and conducting research in the writing center. For my PhD dissertation I am attempting to understand new methods and theories to improve tutoring and teaching of writing. Today you have the option of taking part in this

study or not. If you choose to take part in the study, it will involve your writing center session being video or audio recorded and afterwards the researcher will interview you to ask about your experience. You will also fill out a short entrance and exit mood survey and a short demographic survey. If you chose not to take part in this study, your session will of course continue on without it being recorded. Please feel no pressure to take part if you wish not to. Do you have any questions? Would you be willing to take part in this study?" If writers chose to volunteer, I would then allow them adequate time to read through the consent form and ask any clarifying questions.

All writer volunteers were also given copies of the voluntary consent forms with my contact information. Just as I did with the graduate consultant volunteers, I described to writer volunteers how if they chose to participate in this study and re-think their decision later, they had complete freedom to withdraw and have no data collected from them be presented in research finding. In total, I invited fourteen writers to take part in this study. Of those, ten agreed and four declined. When a writer declined, I kept trying again when the consultant had a different writer. On three occasions scheduled writers did not show up to their appointments. Like consultant volunteers, writer volunteers also filled out the basic demographic survey. The results of this survey for writer volunteers can be seen below:

### **Writer Demographics**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>International</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Educational Standing</b>
Fred	Male	37+	Yes (South Korea)	Asian	Graduate
Fatemah	Female	37+	No	Caucasian/Iranian	Graduate
Anna	Female	24-27	No	West African	Undergraduate
Pavel	Male	28-32	Yes (Egypt)	Arabian	Graduate
Amir	Male	28-32	Yes (Iran)	Middle Eastern	Graduate



Joe		Male	24-27	No	Black/White	Graduate
Nic		Male	15-18	No	Caucasian/ African American	Undergraduate
Maria		Female	37+	Yes (Brazil)	Latino or Hispanic	Graduate
Inaya		Female	15-18	No	Asian	Undergraduate
Aafreen		Female	24-27	Yes (Saudi Arabia)	(not specified)	Graduate

**Method: Recorded Consultations**

Each volunteer consultant and their volunteer writer were recorded for one consultation. I had originally planned on both audio and video recording all consultations. However, in general my efforts to video record consultations proved ineffectual. Of the ten volunteer writers, four wished not to be video recorded. During the six recorded consultations, one was cut off ten minutes into the consultation because of my oversight as a researcher to keep a mindful watch on the allotted storage in the memory card. And even the remaining five consultations which were recorded proved of little use to my analysis. All the recorded consultations were held in private side-rooms of the writing center to reduce noise. Because of limited space, I set up the video camera with tripod in the most viable corner. From this angle, the camera generally faced the backs of consultants and their writers—limiting much useful recorded video data. Therefore, I relied primarily on the audio recordings taken in each recorded consultation. Prior to an appointment, I would press record on my audio recorder and leave the consultation. In total, I audio recorded and transcribed approximately seven hours and sixteen minutes of consultations.

**Method: Semi-Structured, Active Interviews**

Each volunteer consultant and volunteer writer were separately interviewed one time after their consultation. In total, I audio recorded and transcribed approximately six hours and forty-five minutes of post-consultation interviews. The type of interview style I used during my research is best described as semi-structured, active interviews. Given that my research was interested in the opinions, thoughts, impressions, and analyses of writing center consultants and participant writers, interviewing was one of the key methods I employed because, as Michael Patton claims, it is a means “to enter into the other person’s perspective” which “begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (341). Semi-structured interviews are characterized by an interviewer using a prepared guide with a number of questions, yet, “These questions are usually open-ended...the interviewer follows up with probes seeking further detail and description about what has been said...each interview will vary according to what was said by individual interviewees, and how each interviewer used follow-up questions to elicit further description” (Roulston, 8). Hesse-Biber and Leavy describe the disposition of the researcher during these interviews as “to stay on his or her toes and listen intently to what the interviewee has to say, for the researcher must be prepared to drop his or her agenda and follow the pace of the interview” (132-133). In a similar way, Michael Patton notes that in these types of semi-structured environments “other topics might still emerge during the interview, topics of importance to the respondent that are not listed explicitly on the guide” (344).

To me, this flexible and open researcher disposition found in semi-structured interviews finds several important correlatives in what other researchers have described as “active interviews.” In *The Active Interview*, James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium

describe how active interviews typically place high emphasis on how the interviewer positions themselves to the participants' answers, more so than on the specific questions being asked. Diverging from traditional interview approaches where "subjects are basically conceived of as passive vessels of answers for experiential question to respondents by interviewers" (7-8), active interviews favor "the notion that the subject's interpretative capabilities must be activated, stimulated, and cultivated" (17). The overall focus for the interviews with consultant participants then was to gather information concerning their experiences, impressions, and overall analyses of their writing center consultation and to probe into the degrees to which consultants see hospitality: being enacted in appointments, useful as a guiding framework, and ameliorative to problems they identify in their work.

The flexibility inherent to semi-structured interviews along with active interviews' emphasis on researcher attention to participants' responses also functioned well as a means of collecting my desired data while also upholding the ethics I promote and explore in my research—hospitality. Drawing from Henri Nouwen, Dale Jacobs, for instance notes that, "As hosts, we should not seek to re-make guests (students, colleagues, and so on) in our own image, but should instead create an atmosphere where change can occur" (571). In a similar fashion, as an interviewer I attempted a stance which first sought to understand my interviewee's desires, needs, and perspectives rather than leading my interviewees into my own desired responses or having our conversations be guided by a preconceived agenda. To try to achieve these ends, my interviews with consultant participants, for example, began with me asking what their schedule was like so I could be mindful of their time. On a couple of occasions consultants had later

appointments they needed to attend to. Therefore, making sure they had enough time to prepare for their later work was central to my ethics as a researcher.<sup>12</sup> After this, I always asked if they would be comfortable with me asking a few questions about the consultation. During my interviews with consultants, I had a loose set of questions to guide our conversation which were:

1. Describe the overall experience you had during this consultation. What were some of the most memorable parts and why?
2. Are there any specific instances you identify where either you or your writer enacted hospitality as framed by Haswell and Haswell? If so, what was the effect on the direction of the consultation?
3. How helpful do you feel like Haswell and Haswell's hospitality is to understanding the effectiveness of this consultation?
4. Are there any places during the consultation where either you or the writer could have enacted hospitality more? If so, where, and what do you imagine this might have done for the consultation?

Still, wanting to be true to the nature of semi-structured, active interviews—and my ethical stance as a researcher—the approach allowed consultants to voice thoughts, opinions, and impressions which diverged, or were tangentially related, to these questions.<sup>13</sup> On numerous occasions such flexibility generated productive insights I later

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<sup>12</sup> In two cases, consultants were unable to be interviewed immediately after their recorded consultation but still expressed their desire to be interviewed. In both instances we re-scheduled for a later date to conduct the interviews.

<sup>13</sup> Considering consultant participants were my colleagues, and given my established rapport with each of them, on some occasion's conversations would begin (or move into) friendly topics related to each other's' lives and interests. While these moments may not have been directly related to the topics under investigation, I view them as useful.

explicate which, had I employed a more rigid mode of interviewing, would likely not have occurred.

Throughout interviews I also worked hard to assume a stance as a researcher exhibiting, “openness, curiosity, compassion, and a turn to the Other”—what Haswell and Haswell describe as some of the most important characteristics of genuine hospitality (160). Consequently, at moments when I read consultants as comfortable, inquisitive, or enthusiastic when sharing insights, I might ask for more details, clarification, or even draw in my own experiences or insights to collaboratively make sense of ideas and topics being explored. For me, this method of interviewing, in addition to falling in line with the research under investigation, likewise assumed the characteristics of active interviews where a researcher seeks to intently activate the interests, ideas, and observations of their participants. During my time conducting these interviews (both for tutor participants and writer participants) I also wanted to remain true to Bennett’s observation that, “To practice hospitality is to hope for reciprocity, knowing it cannot be commanded, only invited” (48). Therefore, as a researcher, I took numerous precautions to not make my participants feel pressured into providing information. For instance, I always emphasized to participants my desire for them to feel at ease asking for any clarification or refraining from answering a question if they weren’t sure of a response. Given the semi-structured nature of my consultant interviews, and also taking into account my attention to their time and varying levels of interest in responding to questions, there was a good amount of range for how long interviews were conducted. The shortest being 8 minutes and 30 seconds while the longest was approximately 29 minutes. The average of all interviews for consultants ended up being 12 minutes and 10 seconds.

After planning scheduled times with participant consultants where I might record their consultations, I always met beforehand with their scheduled writers and informed them of my research and asked if they would be interested in participating. On some occasions writers politely declined. Follow-up interviews with all volunteer writers took place directly after their consultations. Similar to my consultant interviews, during these follow-up interviews with writers who chose to be involved, I always began by inquiring into the availability of time they could offer. Then, I asked if they were comfortable answering a few questions related to their consultation and communicated to them to feel at ease asking for any clarification or not answering a question if they wished not to. Additionally, like consultant participants, writer participants were also offered the option of looking over and responding to transcribed consultations and interviews as well as findings which involved them. All participant writers declined to access their transcribed consultations and interviews, though one participant writer asked to see any findings produced in this project where they were represented. Like my interviews with consultants, I also had a few basic questions entering these interviews but approached these questions as potential avenues to guide conversation while still allowing for flexibility based off the participants' interests, observations, or questions. These questions were:

1. Have you ever been to the writing center before for a consultation?
2. Describe the overall experience you had during this consultation. What were some of the most memorable parts and why?
3. How would you describe the way you felt coming into this consultation vs. how you felt after the appointment?

4. How would you describe the way your consultant responded to your questions and concerns? How well do you feel like they listened and were attentive to your needs?
5. To what extent were your concerns addressed in the consultation?
6. Given your experience today, how likely do you think you are to come back to the writing center?

Compared to consultant participants, there was even greater variance of time interviews were conducted with the shortest being 1 minute and 55 seconds and the longest being approximately 21 minutes. The approximate average time for all interviews was 10 minutes and 45 seconds. While being mindful of these writer participants' time and interests in responding, on occasions when I interpreted some writers as energized or interested in sharing their insights, I asked for more details, clarification, or even drew in my own experiences or insights to help us make sense of a topic under investigation. Interestingly, this average was significantly inflated by a handful of writers who, being graduate students themselves, expressed interest in knowing the ins and outs of my project or wished to describe their own research practices and interests.

### **Method: Focus Groups**

Gloria Bader and Catherine Rossi define a focus group as, “a special type of group interview that is structured to gather detailed opinions and knowledge about a particular topic from selected participants” (5). In my study I employed two separate focus groups. These two focus groups were advantageous to my project for a number of reasons. First, the communal environment of the focus groups—especially given my consultant participants already worked with each other—allowed consultants to build on

and play off each other's ideas in ways that surveys and individual interviews would have been unable to achieve. As some scholars have noted, this type of collaborative energy, frequently seen in focus groups, can likewise allow researchers to access data "on the uncertainties, ambiguities, and group processes that lead to and underlie group assessment" (Bloor et al. 3).

These focus groups also proved to be useful methods given they helped "stimulate new ideas and simultaneously build interest and commitment to change" (Bader and Rossi 5)—all central aspects of my project's goals and ethos. Finally, the data from my focus groups functioned as a useful interpretative aid to my other research methods and, in triangulating other data, these focus groups helped me spot trends, overlaps, and minor discrepancies in my overall findings.

All of the 10 consultant participants took part in our first focus group which lasted approximately 45 minutes. During this focus group, I had a series of questions to cover but, like the style of my interviews, I avoided being too prescriptive and allowed for consultant flexibility to explore the varying topics of this research project. The loose set of questions I came into the focus group with were:

1. What is your general understanding of Haswell and Haswell's hospitality? What exactly are its central values?
2. To what extent do you see hospitality being enacted in the University Writing Center? This could be the general culture or the way consultations are conducted?
3. Do you see hospitality as something you already enact in your writing center consultations? If so, how? And if not, why not?



4. To what extent do you think hospitality can be enacted during writing center consultations?
5. How helpful do you see hospitality as a framework or disposition for writing center consultants?

During this first focus group, I was interested in understanding the ways consultants made sense of Haswell and Haswell's hospitality as a theoretical and pedagogical model. Also, I was curious about the extent to which consultants saw acts or dispositions of hospitality already integrated into their tutoring practice, as well as what they thought writing center consultants could learn from hospitality. To help facilitate conversation and create more of an atmosphere of ease during this first focus group, I also secured funding to have a catered lunch from Panera Bread.

Initially, I planned on all consultant participants taking part in our second focus group. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic occurred I wanted to be sensitive to my participants' need for self-care and also be considerate to the stress they felt trying to finish their own coursework and GTAships during the Spring 2020 semester. Therefore, I communicated to consultant participants that the second focus group was emphatically optional. This second focus group was over Microsoft Teams and three consultant participants took part. Considering the stressful and unusual nature of the pandemic, I began this second focus by first asking how these consultant participants (also my colleagues) were doing and allowing us to catch up on topics unrelated to the specifics of my research. Likewise, I rethought the initial guiding questions for this focus group and had my questions explore more relevant issues relating to hospitality and the nature of online or virtual learning. As with my interviews and my first focus group, I allowed for

consultant participants to take the conversation in directions they found interesting or useful. My loose set of questions for this second focus group were:

1. What have your experiences been like doing written feedback appointments as opposed to face to face appointments?
2. Considering this transition, to what extent do you see hospitality as a theoretical concept being applicable to educational contexts which happen virtually or through other online means?
3. To what extent do you see the applications of hospitality as dependent on the face-to-face nature of our typical appointments?

#### **Method: Mood Inventory Surveys**

In *Strategies for Writing Center Research*, Jackie Grutsch McKinney describes surveying as a common quantitative method used in writing center research (73). I was interested in using surveys in my research for a number of reasons. My research relates closely to issues of affect/emotion so, though such concepts are hard to quantify, I was curious about the possibility of mood surveys offering me insight into the affective/emotional experiences of my participants—especially differences before and after an appointment. Also, given the ways in which mixed methods can help triangulate data and produce the desired “thick description” characteristic of case studies, an additional method seemed potentially useful. I was also struck by how, even though surveys are commonly used by writing center researchers, the vast majority of published research on writing centers tends to be qualitative (Carino and Enders; Driscoll et al.;



mood” (Mayer and Gaschke). Nine consultant participants and ten writer participants separately filled out the (BMSI) before and after their recorded consultation, making the cumulative total of (BMSI) surveys 38.<sup>15</sup> Interested readers can find a thorough analysis of the results of these surveys in Appendix (A).

Overall, the greatest utility I found in using the (BMSI) for my research was helping to triangulate data I discovered in recorded consultations and follow up interviews. McKinney’s suggestion, for instance, that surveys in writing studies are often best used as follow-up with interviews “to get more human touch, more in-depth answers” (86) rang true with my experience as a researcher. Most of my use of the (BMSI) surveys then was to compare the surveys’ results with observations found in consultations and post-interviews and see how similarities or differences confirmed or complicated overall findings. The vast majority of this analysis occurred on the level of each individual participant. For example, if a participant indicated a high level of feeling tiredness prior to an appointment yet revealed a low level of tiredness after an appointment, I would investigate the extent to which this appeared reflective in their recorded consultation and post-consultation interview. If results seemed confirmed across varying methods, I then might investigate potential sources which altered the levels of tiredness to the participant during the appointment.

On a separate note, one unexpected finding related to the (BMSI) surveys came from consultant participant Rose. Rose ended up taking numerous mood inventory surveys because many of her scheduled writers either failed to show up or declined to

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<sup>15</sup> The results of two mood-inventory surveys (pre- and post-consultation) of one writing consultant were misplaced and could not be replicated.

take part in this project. In her post-consultation interview, Rose reflected on the process of repeatedly taking the (BMSI) and described it as a practice of mindfulness which proved useful to her work. Rose noted, for example, “I don't think in numbers typically, but seeing those numbers go up and down, it has helped me to understand my moods—those do fluctuate throughout the day...it's both a way to check in with myself but also re-center myself and say okay, “I might be feeling this, but I need to go into this session and be there with someone else”” (Rose). Rose’s observations particularly remind me of growing scholarship exploring the usefulness of meditation and mindfulness practices in writing center work (Poon and Danoff-Burg; Kervin and Barrett; Emmelhainz) in addition to writing studies more broadly (Belanoff; Campbell; Consilio and Kennedy; Moore; Schaefer).

Still, of all the methods I employed, the (BMSI) surveys were the least influential in my overall findings. For one, researchers must be careful to draw big conclusions from surveys—especially when sample sizes are relatively small—which was the case in my research. McKinney, for instance, says that “Surveys are wonderful at pointing to trends in population, yet they are limited by participation and validity” (86). The overall validity of my findings in the (BMSI) surveys was also compromised because several participant writers, many of whom their first language was not English, expressed confusion and asked for clarification on numerous mood adjectives such as: lively, gloomy, jittery, peppy, and fed up.

### **Coding and Analysis**

After my interviews, recorded consultations, and focus groups were fully transcribed I used thematic analysis as the overarching framework for how I coded and

analyzed my data. Thematic analysis, at its most basic level, “involves immersing oneself in the data in order to identify common ideas or themes that emerge based on the phenomenon under investigation and that resonate with research questions posed in the study” (Peterson, 1). The type of coding I used was in-vivo coding, one type of coding used in thematic analysis which involved reading through transcripts and assigning a label to sections of the data in the form of a word or short phrase. These short phrases or words at times included actual words or phrases used by participants and at other moments were labels designed to express the general theme or sentiment of a section of data. I also used the software coding program Atlas TI. Once data was coded, I looked for repeated ideas and concepts which emerged and then divided ideas and concepts into categories. A full list of codes and categories I used can be found in Appendix (B). This process of looking for trends in codes and organizing into categories was a recursive process where I continued to refine and reorganize my findings as more data was collected and reviewed by participants and others reviewing my work. I was specifically drawn to in-vivo coding because I saw it as well situated and aligned with the collaborative nature of my project. Several researchers, for instance, have noted that compared to other coding methods, in-vivo coding tends to rely heavily on the ideas and words of participants themselves, thus allowing participants’ voices to be at the center of findings (Charmaz; Grbich; Saldaña).

### **Analytical Lenses: Affect Theory, Strategic Contemplation, and Listening Studies**

While my overarching methodology was case study methodology, other theoretical lenses played key roles in the design of my methods and interpretations of my data. In particular, I drew on affect theory to, among other reasons, help study the

emotional dispositions writing center consultants and writers bring to consultations, as well as the exchanges of affect and emotion which took place during consultations. For this project, I drew on the definition of affect and emotion as “embodied meaning making and performance”— established by Bronwyn Williams’ expansion of Margaret Wetherell’s definition (Williams 19). There are, of course, many reasons why writing studies, and academia more broadly, have been hesitant to value the role emotions, sometimes interchanged with affect, play in the teaching and study of writing. Emotions can be difficult to quantify, given subordinate value, especially in Western cultures, to logic and reason, and even have certain anti-academic associations (Micciche; Newkirk).

Still, if we as teachers and researchers wish to increase writers’ sense of competency and agency, then understanding models which can improve emotional dispositions towards acts of writing is an exceptionally worthwhile endeavor. As Williams observes, “when academics think they can exclude emotion completely from research and education, they miss the ways it is present in their work and the work of their students” (19). Additionally, considering the aims of my project, emotions played a central, if not primary, role in how hospitality was defined and understood. Hospitality is, after all, largely an emotional, or affective, disposition to the “Other” with characteristics of “goodwill, generosity, welcome... trust, mutual respect, privacy, talk, ease, gift exchange, elbow room, risk, marginality, social retreat, and embrace of change” (Haswell and Haswell, 6). Hospitality is also designated with “postures, dispositions, or inner values” that include: intellectual hospitality, transformative hospitality, and ubuntu hospitality (53). As such, my project was deeply interested in the effective affectiveness of hospitality as a disposition for writing center consultants. That is, I was interested in

what emotions writing center consultants experienced when enacting, or not enacting, aspects of hospitality in writing center consultations and how they interpreted the pedagogical effectiveness of those encounters and the role emotion played in them. Furthermore, during this project I sought to gain a clearer sense of writers' relationships towards writing and tutoring and understand ways in which a consulting disposition of hospitality could bring about more positive, generative, and encouraging outcomes.

Thinking through the pivotal roles dialogue, collaboration, and reflection played in this project, I also frequently relied on “strategic contemplation,” defined by Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch as, “deliberately taking the time, space, and resources to think about, through, and around our work as an important meditative dimension of scholarly productivity” (21). I saw specific acts of strategic contemplation taking place on multiple levels during my research. As a researcher who wished to be informed by the opinions and analyses of my participants—even when they may differ from my own—I specifically saw strategic contemplation playing a crucial role in how I strove to work alongside my participants as collaborators. In particular, I designed my focus groups as times to collectively reflect on what our developing, differing, and shared opinions and ideas concerning hospitality's pedagogical applications were. I also continually shared relevant data with participants and expressed a willingness to rethink data during these times (i.e. analyses of focus groups, transcribed interviews, analyses of interviews). To me, these actions enacted strategic contemplation as a means of “engaging in a dialogue, in an exchange...to understand their words, their visions, their priorities, whether and perhaps especially when they differ from our own” (Kirsch and Royster 21).



Strategic contemplation also played an important role in helping to clarify and make sense of the types of emotions/affects I studied. Essentially, emotions and affect, in so far as they are usually manifested, often require reflection and conversation to be processed, understood, and analyzed. Royster, explains how she encourages her students to think of rhetoric as a “whole-body experience” rather than simply a series of disembodied practices (97). Ultimately, by asking students to both reflect upon and feel “bodily responses to what they were reading and writing...their body parts became symbolically sites of persuasion, leaving open the opportunity to interrogate the sources of such responses and the extent to which these visceral reactions are shaped and defined by culture, experience, habits of engagement and so on” (97). With these ideas in mind, I designed my research to have participants, and myself, continually reflect upon the emotional or affective responses experienced during consultations, focus groups, and conversations of data analysis they shared with me as researcher.

Lastly, just as emotion has often been viewed as an unworthy category for research and scholarship, listening and acts of silence have long been overlooked in rhetoric and writing studies. Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliff, argue that “the positive features of silence and listening have been only briefly mentioned or subtly implied—if not completely ignored. Rarely have they been foregrounded as rhetorical arts vital to our communicative effectiveness” (2). Fortunately, continued scholarship in the last decade from researchers like Glenn, Ratcliff, Lipari, and Tompkins has begun to establish silence and listening as central features to rhetorical studies and the teaching of writing. Listening and acts of silence played crucial roles in my research. In fact, they may have been the primary practices necessary to enacting hospitality in writing center

consultations—in so far as hospitality can be enacted. For one, without engaged listening and a willingness to hold silence with a writer, hospitality's central aims are lost. Lisbeth Lipari, for example, points out that, "There may be speaking, and there may be acting, but there can be no genuinely engaged response" (178). Referring more specifically to praxis, Ann Ellen Geller, reminds us that ultimately, writing center work, "accomplishes its goals by saying less and doing more, in subversive and deliberate ways" (118).

Listening and strategic acts of silence, moreover, appeared central to assisting writing consultants in their capacity to enact hospitality's features like risk taking, openness to transformation, retreat, and a willingness to learn from difference. Much like hospitality, listening studies emphasizes not only the need to make sense of difference, but the importance to acknowledge your own biases, accept others' alterity, and adopt a stance of openness. Lipari, for example, in describing engaged listening, frames misunderstanding as not only, "an inescapable aspect of communication" but also "valuable and indispensable" given how misunderstanding, "reminds us, again and again, that our conversational partners are truly 'other' than us" (Lipari 8). Here, much like hospitality's embrace and emphasis of seeing difference and understanding as a means to opportunity and transformation, Lipari couches misunderstanding as a tool which, "opens the doorway to the ethical relation by inspiring (or frustrating) us to listen more closely to others, to inquire more deeply into their differences, and to question our own already well-formed understandings of the world" (8). Given the immense overlap in values and practices of hospitality, silence, and listening, I continually drew from listening studies to evaluate this project. Therefore, I also used decipherable acts of listening and silence found in my recorded consultations, follow up interviews, and focus groups as units of

analyses in my coding processes as I worked towards understanding the extent of hospitality's pedagogical applications in writing center consultations and composition classrooms.

### **Ethics**

Before I proceeded with this study, I received approval from the University of Louisville Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent forms were given to all participants before any research was conducted. The forms stated explicitly that participants had the right to confidentiality in discussions of the research findings, as well as stopping their participation in the study at any moment, and that participants could decline to answer any questions. The consent forms also stated in specific terms that the subjects could refrain from answering any questions they might find inappropriate or irrelevant. All data in this the study that had identifiable markers was stored on a password-protected computer, and any printed materials (i.e. consent forms and mood inventory surveys) were stored in a locked cabinet.

There were several other means I took to ensure that my project followed good research ethics. Knowing that this project was a major part of my dissertation—the final means for finishing my degree—I wanted to make sure this pressure did not undermine my research ethics. Thomas Newkirk notes, for instance, the need for all those working in academia to, “question the automatic belief in our own benevolence, the automatic equation between our own academic success and ethical behavior” (5). Given these concerns, as well as considering my position as the Assistant Director to the Writing Center and my collegial relationship to many of the participants, there were a number of potential ethical risks I took measures to avoid.

First, I wanted to make sure participants did not feel coerced to take part in the study. I also wanted to avoid participants feeling misrepresented by my analyses and ensure that—against their wishes—information could make them identifiable to readers. Additionally, while analyzing data, I sought to make sure I did not undermine what participants perceived as my “supposed benevolence” (Newkirk, 14). Especially considering the amount of time consultant participants invested in this study (i.e. focus groups, a recorded consultation, and follow-up interview), I wanted to be sure they did not feel taken advantage of.

All participants who chose to take part in the study were offered the option to remain anonymous by using a pseudonym of their choice or, if they preferred, keep their name and be credited for their contributions. To ensure participants did not feel misrepresented by the any of the information or analysis I included in this final project, I also incorporated into my research (i.e. focus groups, consultations, interview transcripts and overall analyses) a practice referred to by Merriam as “respondent validation” (217). This entailed repeatedly asking for participants feedback and analysis of my emergent findings. Every consultant was e-mailed the entirety of transcripts from their recorded consultation, post-consultation interview, as well as focus groups they were involved in. When given these transcripts, I communicated to each consultant that they were welcome to have any information omitted.

All consultant participants were also offered drafts of all my interpretations and analyses of any data I used involving them. When offered these drafts via-email, I communicated to each consultant that they had full freedom to have any of my interpretations rethought, adjusted, omitted, or included alongside their own

interpretations if they wished so. I saw these respondent validations allowing for a number of advantages to my research. In particular, these validations allowed me as a researcher to value, learning from, and incorporate other points of view for more of a collective analysis, reflecting a collaborative and reflective research disposition which stressed: seeing participants as active collaborators in the research process and in the general construction of knowledge, committing to data sharing with participants, and incorporating space and time for individual and collective reflective practice during the research (Fine and Torre; Whitehead and McNiff; Baskerville and Wood-Harper). That is, the semi-structured nature of my interviews and focus groups stayed open to where my participants wished to take the conversation and allowed for more potential participant agency to guide and construct knowledge. Ultimately, the priority during these times was not to have my own perceptions projected on participants, but to represent their ideas, interactions, and lived experiences—understood on their terms.

The mixed methods nature of my qualitative study (i.e. focus groups, recorded consultations, interviews, and mood inventory surveys) also allowed me to triangulate much of my data— making my observations and findings more reliable. While triangulation in research can be employed in different ways, Merriam and Tisdale define triangulation as, “comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people” (244). With these ideas in mind, I continually relied on triangulation to verify, question, or even dismiss certain findings. The most obvious way I built triangulation into my methodology was having follow-up interviews with participants in which I discussed their thoughts and

observations on the recording of their consultation. During these times, I was given more data (communicated from participants) to make sense of findings. Similarly, by being able to check repeating, discordant, or contradictory information presented across methods (i.e. focus groups, interviews, recorded consultations, mood inventory surveys), I was able to improve verification and reliability of findings.

While researching, collecting data, and making sense of my data, I also repeatedly reflected on my own positionality and considered factors which might color how I made sense of the research I gather and access. The impetus for this largely stemmed from my respect for standpoint theory, a theoretical framework developed predominantly by feminist scholars which, among other ideas, emphasizes how an individual's social and political experiences shape their perspectives and capacity to understand the world (Harding; Smith). To ensure that I consciously reflected on my positionality throughout my research, I routinely engaged in practices of reflexivity including structured ethical reflections (Brydon-Miller et al.; Stevens et al.) on my research methods and questions. This was partly done by keeping a research journal in which I regularly recorded my thoughts and impressions after focus groups, recorded consultation, and follow up interviews were conducted. I was also lucky to have excellent access to constructive criticism and general feedback from many in my field including the four members of my dissertation committee and colleagues who reviewed my work in bi-weekly meetings with our dissertation director. Here, I received regular feedback for how I might need to rethink or adjust my research to more thoughtfully consider my own positionality, the positionality of my participants, and the overall ethics of my study.

Finally, as the Assistant Director to the University Writing Center where my participants worked, I also wanted to ensure that my relationship to participants exhibited a spirit of reciprocity, shared respect, and an overall sense of being well compensated for their time. The specific means of reciprocity was discussed individually with participants and included the ongoing possibility of further academic collaboration (e.g. presenting together at a conference panel), having our collective research be framed as a professional development opportunity to be highlighted on resumes or C.V.s, and lunch provided during our first focus group

### CHAPTER III

#### RETHINKING POWER, AUTHORITY, AND EXPERTISE—HOSPITALITY

The most creative, and perhaps most accurate, representation of writing center work I've encountered came from Ash—a consultant and participant in this project. When asked in his English 604 course (Writing Center Theory and Practice) to compose a self-analysis reflecting on one or more of his consultations, Ash took advantage of creative opportunities and responded with a one-act play titled “Writing for Godot.”<sup>16</sup> Early in the play, a writing consultant attempts to help a flustered student, new to the university, understand their upcoming assignment, a literacy narrative. After thoughtful probing, the student hones in on a past experience to write on and, as we later find out, receives an A.

As the play continues a bell suddenly rings, so the consultant transitions to their next appointment and, in preparation, puts on a hat then remarks “You must be my next writer! Welcome to the writing center, have you been here before?” the writer, an established physicist, replies, “ $e^2=m^2c^4+p^2c^2$ ”. When this appointment reaches its end, the bell rings, and the consultant exclaims, “I think we did some good work here. I didn't understand most of it, but you certainly seemed good at catching your mistakes when I made you read them out loud.”

The consultant then exits stage, but reemerges quickly with a new hat atop the other

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<sup>16</sup> My summation does little justice to the humor, wit, and overall fun of Ash's play. Interested readers can find the play in its entirety in Appendix (D).



and meets the next client—a student whose first language is not English. This writer states, “I need you to explain which bodies of water start with “the,” I need you to explain which Native American words being used as place names are pronounced Americanized and which are pronounced properly, and I need you to explain to me why there are two fully accepted standards for placing a comma before the last ‘and’ in a list.” Overwhelmed by the requests, the consultant falls out of their chair and begins twitching, but is then quickly saved by the bell. At which point the front desk asks if they would like another hat, to which the consultant responds, “Yes, please, if you have one” and exits stage.

Finally, this consultant promptly reappears with a third hat atop the two others. As we find out the consultant is unsure how to respond to their final writer, a walk-in graduate student working on a literacy essay meta-response, based in Lacanian theory. Accordingly, the consultant seeks help from “the boss” (presumably the Writing Center director) who is described as “a roving mass of hats, stacked up on head, sewn together as a cloak, concealing any sign of the person underneath.” After the walk-in “takes the writing prompt and pushes it into the mass of hats” the boss offers some useful, albeit cryptic, advice to the writer. Shortly after, the play ends.

Though humorous and whimsical, “Writing for Godot” nonetheless, for me, effectively captures the interpersonal and unpredictable nature to so much writing center work. At most institutions of higher education writing centers specialize in providing one-on-one consultations between writers and tutors—most often in sessions ranging from twenty minutes to an hour. Given that writing center services are typically offered to all students, staff, and faculty at a given institution, consultants usually work with a

diversity of writers from a variety of disciplines on any given project or assignment. Such dynamics present consultants with a number of advantages. For one, unlike other contexts of writing instruction, writing center consultations allow for more individualized attention and this often results in writers feeling less anxiety or pressure—especially considering they will not be graded and consultants are trained to assist and be helpful in whatever capacity seems appropriate. Additionally, consultants gain opportunities to meet and learn from writers coming from various cultures, stages of life, and academic disciplines. Yet, “Writing for Godot” also illuminates the real challenges and anxieties writing center consultants frequently face in thinking through how to appropriately respond to writers’ personal concerns and anxieties while offering them professional assistance on assignments from vastly different genres and disciplines. It also speaks to the frequent confusion many tutors face in trying to understand the nature of their own power or authority given the complexity of writing center dynamics.

These anxieties and confusions are also frequently unaddressed, or worse, exacerbated by scholarship. In their introduction to *Stories From the Center: Connecting Narrative and Theory in the Writing Center*, editors Lynn Craig Briggs and Meg Woolbright note, “so many publications about writing centers seemed to sweep away the complexity, to reduce tutoring/consulting/responding to a set of seven steps or five categories, to streamline policy and procedures, and to offer simple 'solutions' to 'problems'” (x). Elizabeth Boquet similarly explains writing consultants as “often objectified and essentialized in the literature devoted to them” and draws attention to consultants being “generally intelligent people who quickly learn that the reality of life in the center is much different from that most often depicted in journals” (18). More

precisely, Boquet describes this characterization as “tutors are supportive; they are peers, they affirm; they question. These are formidable expectations for beginning (or for any) tutors to fulfill” (18). Along similar lines, in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* McKinney challenges descriptions which proliferate scholarship on writing centers as “comfortable,” “friendly,” and “cozy homes.”

This is not to dismiss the great work writing centers do and how uniquely situated they are to provide services to faculty, staff, students, and communities. On a personal note, I’ve found writing center work to be the most rewarding part of being in education for over a decade, and this is at least partially true because descriptions like “comfortable,” “friendly,” and “cozy homes” resonate with my writing center experience. Still, while such characterizations of consultants and writing centers are admirable and bear a level of truth, they often mask the immense complexity and unpredictability involved in writing center work. Worse, their simplistic nature may leave consultants feeling unequipped or misguided when they face appointments which seem far from these ideal representations. In reality, writing center work is often much less cozy than a lot of scholarship would lead us to believe. McKinney, for instance, draws attention to how, “[w]riting centers already make students uncomfortable—they make students revise, confront their shortcomings, formulate questions, engage us in their work, be active, and think” (26). Likewise, for consultants the ambiguous status of their roles can make inevitable factors accompanying writing center appointments like power, authority, and expertise difficult to acknowledge and manage. Adding to these challenges, Boquet notes that consultants must “negotiate the role of tutor so that it squares with the other roles they play in our society, roles marked perhaps by race, class, gender, and sexual

orientation, to name a few” (20). For many tutors, the push for non-directive only strategies (though challenged in more recent scholarship) still looms large as well—often making consultants feel confusion or guilt when being more directive with writers.

Hospitality, I argue, intervenes in these issues in a number of productive ways.

Taking these concerns into account, I begin this chapter by explicating how power and authority have generally been understood, or ignored, in writing center scholarship. Following this I draw from data in my interviews, focus groups, and relevant scholarship to demonstrate ways in which hospitality helped consultants acknowledge differentials of power, authority, and expertise in their work. Hospitality, I posit, likewise provided consultants with a useful framing to productively consider what responsible, or ethical, use of power and authority might look like for their appointments.

### **Power and Authority in the Writing Center**

Peter Carino notes that for most writing centers power and authority are “not nice words” given that the majority of writing centers promote themselves “as nurturing environments, friendly places with coffee pots and comfy couches for the weary” (118). Indeed, writing studies has long drawn attention to the discomfort, and even avoidance, many writing centers exhibit in having consultants consider how they enact or understand power and authority in their tutorials (Boquet; Carino; Clark and Healy). Similar characterizations of writing centers as “student sanctuaries” or “safe houses” come, at least partially, from the advantageous position of writing centers to, unlike most classrooms, not assign grades. Carino also contends that in the atmosphere of a writing center, “Students can, it is claimed, feel relaxed and unintimidated as they might not in a teacher’s office or class” (118). On the one hand, this trend of characterizing writing

centers in such ideal terms draws attention to writing centers' advantageous positioning in academia, serves as a useful way to promote writing center work more broadly, and offers productive challenges to traditional ways writing has been understood and taught in higher education. Yet, in avoiding issues of power and authority writing center scholarship often misses important opportunities to engage in the ways power dynamics inevitably find themselves in writing center work. More importantly, this push to acknowledge power and authority in writing center work is, for me, driven by a desire to make scholarship more reflective, nuanced, and useful for practitioners.

Michel Foucault reminds us that “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” and that it is “diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge, and regimes of truth” (215). As he argues in the *Discourse on Language*, “I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its power and its dangers, to cope with changes events, to evade its ponderous awesome materiality” (216). Discourses, according to Foucault, are monitored, regulated, and controlled by disciplines. Foucault, moreover, defines a discipline as, “a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments” (222). As comforting as it may be to see writing centers as outside the confines of the control, power, and regulation Foucault speaks of, such sentiments overlook the complex ways writing centers operate to re-enforce discourses and institutional power. And while consultants might aptly be understood by their writers as peers, colleagues, or even friends, being a tutor inevitably requires enforcing approved discourses, dismissing other ways of knowing and being,

and serving the larger aims of the institutions they operate under. Boquet actually suggests that writing consultants might be the biggest student population enforcing institutional ideologies in academia:

Writing tutors, perhaps more than any other students in the university, are the students who have mastered the discourse and internalized the ideology of the institution. To the students they work with, tutors embody the university's ideal. So, it is only fitting that those same tutors, often unknowingly, serve as the instruments through which that discourse is enforced (24).

This avoidance of addressing power and authority in writing center scholarship comes at least partially from associations of power and authority which render the terms as innately negative or unethical. To a good extent this longstanding evasion of associations with power and authority can also be attributed to historic shifts in writing studies pedagogies over decades. In the minds of many contemporary scholars, current traditional rhetoric, the prevailing pedagogical framework of university writing classrooms throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, appears to have rendered power and authority as all largely pejorative terms when exercised in the hands of an instructor or tutor. Though the evolution of writing centers and their guiding values show variation, significant contemporary scholarship criticizes the domineering nature of early writing centers' philosophies whose missions were predominantly to be "places for remediation" (Carino, "Early" 109-10, 112) or spaces simply offering "grammatical instruction and drill, the fix-it-shop model" (Carino, "Power" 116). These models of tutoring by and large followed the underlying methods of current traditional rhetoric which placed the writing instructor as the definitive center of knowledge. In these contexts, students were asked to produce uniform styles of composition with little attention to audience and an emphasis on final product, grammar, and syntax (Berlin). Berlin describes current

traditional rhetoric as “grounded in a positivistic epistemology” and centered on a “Newtonian, inductive scheme” (25). According to this worldview, self-evident truths exist within exterior objects largely inaccessible to individuals. Sill, with proper use of inductive reasoning—understood as one’s ability to unlock nature’s orderly mechanisms through sense impression—one can arrive at “the immediate perception” of such self-evident truths (26). Assuming certain experts as capable of accessing ultimate truth, language in its most idealized manifestation thus becomes “a sign system that transcribes nonverbal sense experience so that the effects of this sense experience can be reproduced in the reader” (26).

In the worldview of current traditional rhetoric, the ultimate goal of the writer as expert becomes using language to properly reproduce for readers the particular experiences of their mind. The writing instructor’s task is then teaching “the transcription process, providing instruction in arrangement and style—arrangement so that order of experience is correctly recorded, and style so that clarity is achieved” (Berlin, 27). Aside from its epistemologically narrow and linguistically reductive nature, Berlin likewise notes the discriminatory underpinnings of current-traditional rhetoric as a gatekeeper designed to maintain economic and political interests of the rising middle class of the time. He argues:

Unable to conceive of observer, audience, or language as integral to the process of discovering knowledge, the members of the new middle class...the doctors or lawyers or engineers or business managers—having been certified as experts, as trained observers, in their disciplines—felt they were surely correct in discovering that economic and political arrangements that benefited them were indeed in the nature of things...Thus, acting in the name of science, the new professionals used current-traditional rhetoric to justify their privileged status in society (37).

Scholars like Boquet, moreover, frame the emergence of many writing centers at universities as designed to reinforce the early aims of classrooms operating under current traditional models. Many early writing centers, in fact, functioned as disciplinary measures “created largely to fix problems that university officials had difficulty even naming, things like increasing enrollment, larger minority populations, and declining (according to the public) literacy skills” (Boquet, “Our Little Secret”, 472). In a similar vein, Lunsford uses the metaphor of early writing centers as storehouses of knowledge. According to this line of thinking, a tutor’s primary role was leading a session by offering writers skills and strategies—thus granting them access to knowledge stored in the writing center (Lunsford, 4). It should come as no surprise then why, though current traditional rhetoric still finds a presence in higher education, power and authority have largely been viewed in negative terms and why subsequent schools of thought (e.g. critical pedagogies, expressionist pedagogies, process pedagogies, cognitive pedagogies) typically reframe instructors as “facilitators of student self-discovery rather than embodiments of fixed knowledge” (Clark, “Perspectives,” 33).

Foucault, however, acknowledges that power is everywhere and unavoidable, and that power isn’t innately a moral negative and can be enacted as a positive social force. As he claims in *Discipline and Punish*, “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (194). In a writing studies context, Carino similarly argues that power and authority are inevitable factors to any educational environment,



including writing center tutorials, and that instead of masking these factors in “the egalitarian rhetoric of peerness” writing centers should instead consider what might be gained from reconfiguring power and authority. As he notes, authority can serve, “as a usable descriptor in discussing tutorial work” and more scholarship should begin to consider “how tutors might be trained differently to recognize and use their power and authority without becoming authoritarian” (113). Of course, as Carino suggests, the acknowledgement of power and authority in tutorial work must proceed any reconfiguration of the terms.

### **The Reality of Power and Authority in The Writing Center**

Understanding the role of power and authority in a framework of hospitality can be a tricky undertaking though. In our focus group, Rose moved our conversation towards this direction asking, “What might a truly hospitable classroom, writing center, and university look like?” To which quick descriptions like “anarchy,” “utter chaos,” and the absence of “rules in general” were offered by others. Upon more deliberation Cat, however, noted the presence of rules—even if they are loosely held—within the context of our writing center as well as the traditional understanding of hospitality. As she observed,

When you are hosting someone in your home there are rules, there are things you might say “okay I prefer you not to wear your shoes in the house” or whatever. It maybe you are caring for them and providing them space but we have rules in the writing center too. But I like hospitality because it allows that writer/consultant role to be flexible which I think it really is.

Here, Cat framed traditional hospitality in the context of writing centers as a shared space with basic rules where consultants, at least initially, function as hosts and writers as guests. Within this dynamic there is also a difference in power between writers and

consultants. Unlike most writers coming to a writing center, consultants, for example, likely have an established familiarity with the space in which they regularly work in (e.g. knowledge of how appointments operate, relationships to co-workers, established workspace). And overall, compared to writers (especially those new to the writing center), consultants typically begin appointments on unequal ground—possessing specific resources and capacities to influence this working environment. Consultants have also been offered the authority to guide an appointment because of their perceived qualifications to do so. Directors may hire a consultant because of their specific knowledge of language and writing, experience teaching or tutoring in various contexts, or because of an individual’s interest or enthusiasm to be a tutor. In other contexts where tutors assume the position of consultant as part of their graduate teaching assistantship, their authority to consult has been conferred by their acceptance into graduate school. What Cat also acknowledges is that the starting point of traditional hospitality relies on the concept of a wanderer distanced from their own land who, by accepting an invitation, enters the designated home of one whose customs, traditions, and values differ from their own—a space where there are rules. Given this set up, the guest moves into an unknown territory where the host has more insider knowledge and power concerning the temporarily shared space.

In their post-consultation interviews multiple consultants expressed an awareness of ways their familiarity with the space of the writing center differed from their writers and considered how these differences affected their appointments. Michelle described how humor became a useful tool at the beginning of her consultation with Fatemeh (pseudonym) to make their work together more inviting. As Michelle explains, laughter

can put writers “in a good mood” and “make them feel comfortable.” Michelle, also recognized the usefulness of laughter in the appointment as a means of creating more ease and explained, “it's always weird when you are in an unfamiliar place, and I can't imagine coming in here and not knowing any of these people.” Observations like Michelle's draw attention to useful ways of complicating the metaphor of the writing center as a cozy home, especially considering the differentials of power and authority involved in tutorials. McKinney stresses that “homes are culturally marked” and notes how “We might recreate the familiar patterns of our class or culture's idea of home... these patterns might not be shared by all students” (25). McKinney also acknowledges that while so much scholarship claims that writing center work strives to bring a comfortable atmosphere to all students including “non-traditional” ones, “when we narrate normal and abnormal tutoring scenarios in tutor training manuals, we reveal our unease with working with a vast array of students” (51). In our focus group, Kelby similarly drew attention to how cultural norms are embedded in both writing center theory and tutorial practice. Imagining how hospitality might re-shape these conventions though she claimed, “what would that look like and for who? Because we have non-traditional students, but we still label them non-traditional students. So, what kind of environment can that bring if maybe we open everything up to be a little more hospitable?” In our focus groups and post-consultation interviews, ultimately the tensions consultants identified with how power and authority are embedded in writing center practice reflect a struggle within academia, and our culture more broadly, to make sense of power and authority's simultaneously constraining and productive concepts and associations.

## **Hospitality and the Ethics of Power and Authority**

Understandably, power and authority typically bring with them negative connotations in writing studies—and the humanities more broadly. Inflections of both terms constructively point to the long history(ies) of ideological subjugation of oppressed groups and highlight numerous ways discrimination can become sedimented institutionally. Yet, keeping these realities in mind need not foreclose considering power and authority in the context of ethics—an exploration, I believe, which has been underexamined and which hospitality productively investigates. One useful way to begin theorizing how hospitality addresses the ethics of power and authority begins with looking back to the etymological roots of the terms—offering a basic heuristic.

Our contemporary usage of power finds its origin in the latin *posse* meaning “to be able” (Du Cange et al.; Meissner and Auden) and later taken up in Middle English *pou(ə)r* as “ability to act or do; strength, vigor, might” (Merriam-Webster). A definition we might settle on in a modern context—and which I employ thus forward—is “the capacity or ability to influence.” Assuming this as an acceptable definition, what becomes noteworthy are the elemental qualities of power as a capacity or ability. Power under these terms refers not to directing or influencing the material world but rather the potential to do so. Certainly, specific exercises of power can be called into moral question. Words like corruption “dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power,” manipulation “aims to change the behavior or perception of others through indirect, deceptive, or underhanded tactics,” and exploitation “the action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work,” offer guidance into the qualities of

how to understand unethical uses of power (Simpson et al.)<sup>17</sup> But to what extent power can be enacted in the larger material world without falling prey to qualities captured in terms like corruption, manipulation and exploitation is an open question. Authority's etymology, I argue, investigates this line of inquiry.

Taking its roots in the Proto-Italic *augeo* meaning "to increase or to nourish" the Latin *auctor* later came to signify a "master, leader, or author" (Simpson et al.). Old French then uses *aurorit/auctorite* to mean "prestige, right, permission, dignity," and Middle English designates *auctour* as "power derived from good reputation; power to convince people, capacity to inspire trust" (Simpson et al.). The contemporary usage of authority which I employ in understanding hospitality is "right delegated or given to offer influence." As evidenced from its etymology and contemporary understanding, authority designates permission, or legitimacy to exercise influence or power. To what extent that right or legitimacy has been intelligibly, properly, or ethically conferred is an important, and related, but different question. According to these terms, power refers to the capacity to influence, while authority is differentiated by a designation or right to offer influence. Importantly, like power, authority also maintains a quality of potentiality. That is, authority might be conferred or possessed but withheld or left unexercised.

So, given this heuristic where power can be understood as the capacity or ability to influence others or events and authority can be defined as a right or designation to offer one's influence, what does it mean to enact power or authority on ethical grounds?

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<sup>17</sup> Inherent in these definitions is the common factor of exercising influence in the world without deep consideration to the humanity and well-being of those involved or affected by its use. Such displays also tend to avoid sincere invitation, conversation, and negotiation.

Essentially, what components are necessary for any ethical transfer of knowledge between individuals with differing positionalities or levels of power and authority? Hospitality's suggestion begins with the actions and motives of the host—the individual who, on many levels, possess more power or authority given their resources and insider knowledge. If the insider wishes to be a host free of exploitation, coercion, or manipulation they must demonstrate a peculiar spin on power and put the needs of the guest on equal, or perhaps higher, standing than their own. A host must also in attending to the specific needs of the guest be open to learning from them. Bennett refers to this transformative reconceptualization of power as “relational power” whereby power “no longer means only the unilateral exercise of force to achieve one’s objectives in relationship to the other” (41). In contrast to most traditional notions of power, “Relational power is honored and celebrated—the ability to incorporate and reflect contributions from others is judged as a mark of strength, not a lack of power. In short, self and others are known to be in mutual relationships that can be ignored or abused, but never eliminated” (40).

In our focus group, Ash underscored that while hospitality acknowledges variance in power between a host and guest, it likewise promotes a host's disposition towards the guest as welcoming, open, and thoughtful. As he observed, “There is still a host in hospitality and there is still a difference in the position the host and the guest have. It just encourages that the host's position is one of generosity...the host is glad to be giving you of what they have and you are glad to be receiving it.” Here, Ash points to the crucial understanding stressed by Haswell and Haswell that “traditional hospitality is an act of sharing or exchange” (172). Moreover, Haswell and Haswell acknowledge that

the typical contexts of traditional hospitality involve “two people, usually strangers, usually unequals in social rank, always equals in personal worth, one on the move and asking for help, the other in residence and offering assistance” (172).

### **Hospitality and the Writing Consultant**

Hospitality’s framing of the ideal host as one with sincere interest and willingness to learn from the views and knowledge of the stranger, yet aware of their own values, power, and authority, also offers a beneficial means to help consultants consider the utility of knowledge sharing in their appointments. In our focus group, for instance, several consultants expressed how viewing their work through the lens of hospitality helped them value, appreciate, and make sense of times where their writers offered them support, new perspectives, and knowledge acquisition. Kelby, for instance, drew attention to common experiences in her consultations where her writers left her with useful information, inspiration, and a sustaining sense of encouragement. As she explained:

I think there are more sessions than not that I leave feeling more confident in myself and empowered from what my writers are doing and what I’m able to help them get to... They really inspire me so I think it is a very, very flexible role because I think I sometimes get just as much if not more from just being able to interact with them and read their writing than they get with me being there to help.

This knowledge sharing where tutors appreciated learning from their writers while offering them guidance was also evident throughout recorded consultations and post-consultation interviews.

### **Lauren and Amir**

One great example of effective knowledge-sharing was Lauren’s work with her writer Amir (pseudonym), an international graduate student in his second year of his

masters in civil engineering. Prior to his appointment, Amir had submitted an article to publishers which researched “influencing factors on walking in a diverse range of purposes including work education shopping and returning to home” in the city of Rasht, Iran. In his post consultation interview, Amir described his motivation for this appointment saying, “Today I got back from the journal that said it needs English revision, and it was a writing I submitted two years ago. My writing has improved a lot, but I sent this to the journal and it goes under review. And they still consider it, but say it needs clear English or improvement for clarity.” Having already worked together in previous appointments and established a rapport, Lauren and Amir quickly jump into the task at hand.

**Lauren:** Alright so you submitted a journal article and they're wanting to?

**Amir:** Yeah, you know I wrote it maybe two years ago and sometime this summer they said it needs English review and you need to come up with proof. Not proof?

**Lauren:** Evidence?

**Amir:** Evidence yeah.

**Lauren:** Yeah.

The appointment then proceeded with Lauren reading the entirety of the journal’s abstract aloud then asking, “So, what do you think?”

**Amir:** Um, it's not that bad I think.

**Lauren:** No, I don't think it was bad at all.



**Amir:** You know when I read, I couldn't find much after that to be honest. I read through it and I couldn't find, for example, mistakes because yeah, I can't, I don't know.

**Lauren:** Yeah, you know I didn't see anything big either. I think there was a need for a few articles.

**Amir:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Lauren:** Kind of things just very minor, and then I just had a couple questions about clarification.

**Amir:** Um, huh.

As they worked through Amir's piece, on occasion Lauren pointed to places where articles might be added, where they might rethink subject-verb agreements, as well as asking numerous questions to reevaluate sentence structure and consider incorporating transitions. At other moments, Lauren drew attention to higher order concerns:

**Lauren:** It seems like the main information distance is trying to convey is that researchers are now trying to determine influential factors on walking?

**Amir:** Um, huh.

**Lauren:** So, maybe say why something is an interesting research area?

**Amir:** Uh, huh it's not enough.

**Lauren:** It's kind of a little bit empty you know.

**Amir:** Yeah, yeah.

**Lauren:** Just to say it's interesting.

**Amir:** Yeah, yeah you are right.

**Lauren:** So, I might highlight this determining influential factors on walking.

**Amir:** Great.

What really stood out about Lauren's engagement with Amir's writing though was her sincere interest in making sense of the article's vocabulary and content as well as her continual reliance on Amir's expertise to improve the piece. For example, at one point Lauren notices the words "indexes" and "indices" and asks what differentiates the terms.

**Lauren:** So, what is the difference?

**Amir:** Index, indice?

**Lauren:** Well, why don't we look at the definition? Because I'm not sure what the difference is.

**Amir:** Yeah, yeah.

**Lauren:** Cause indexes is totally.

**Amir:** Oh, sorry. Index I should know. Yes.

**Lauren:** So, what is the difference between those two things?

**Amir:** Index, index and Indice. Index. (typing on computer)

**Lauren:** Definition?

**Amir:** Both. (Laughter)

**Lauren:** (Laughter) Oh, awesome. Wonderful. Great. Perfect.

**Amir:** (Laughter)

**Lauren:** You learn something new everyday. Perfect. So, since you're mostly using indices, maybe stick with indices.

In his post-consultation interview, Amir drew attention to his appreciation for Lauren's focused engagement with his work, and how helpful such attention was to transforming

his article into a piece that would be more readily received by publishers. He observed, for instance:

What makes Lauren different than the others is she's trying to understand what's the paper about. You know it's very hard to be honest. I'm a civil engineer... I know how hard it is, but she's trying to understand and she's enduring the different reading of the paper. She's trying to understand what I'm trying to say what's this paper is about you know it makes the changes very, very, very practical and helpful.

While acknowledging the difficulties inherent to consulting a piece outside of her field, in her post-consultation interview Lauren described her enjoyment with working with writers in technical fields and how she learned from them and found it valuable to her academic work. As she stated “I really like working with engineering students because I'm really analytical. I'm a technical person in my own studies in the arts, so it helps my work, but it can be difficult for people who don't have an immense knowledge of those fields.” According to Amir, Lauren’s willingness to take his expertise into account improved the writing beyond basic cosmetic issues, as he claimed, “I've been at some places that they're just trying to change the grammar, grammar, grammar, grammar but you know the relationship between the sentences, the flow of the words, yeah. She helps makes sense of one sentence after the other you know how it makes a story.” Importantly, Amir’s observations on Lauren’s tutoring style also represent a departure from what research has suggested frequently happens in appointments where consultants encounter writings outside their fields. In the “The Role of Disciplinary Expertise in Shaping Writing Tutorials,” Sue Dinitz and Susanmarie Harrington, for example, noticed that in consultations where tutors lacked “disciplinary expertise” they inevitably “retreated to areas where they felt more confident: addressing local concerns related to grammar and usage, punctuation, documenting sources, and creating transitions” (85). For, Dinitz and

Harrington these habits are ultimately “problematic moves” given that “Without knowledge of the conceptual framework, key terms, and disciplinary expectations for the paper - and without the confidence and authority linked to that knowledge - tutors seemed both less able and less willing to identify global issues, to evaluate the writer's statements, to challenge the writer's point of view, to formulate questions that would push the writer's thinking and extend the conversation, and to draw general lessons” (85).

Lauren’s hospitable disposition, however, where she acknowledged her own expertise yet extended an openness and willingness to let Amir’s knowledge guide them in the appointment reflects the “inversion of host-guest roles...natural in hospitality” (Haswell & Haswell, 67)<sup>18</sup> while likewise, according to Amir, being an effective means of improving his writing. As he stressed, “This consulting session, I feel my paper can convey what it tried to say because, a non-expert in this area read the paper and understood somehow what happened there...it was a great accomplishment.”

Importantly, such an approach where a tutor takes sincere interest in their writer’s knowledge and allows for the host and guest dynamic to be shifting categories similarly reflects Kenneth Bruffee’s push for collaborative learning, in which “both student and tutor share authority” (Bruffee, “Collaborative” 104).

Lauren additionally explained how hospitality as a theoretical lens helped her appreciate and learn how to ethically manage situations like these where she worked “with multilingual writers in technical fields.” Specifically, Lauren expressed a clear awareness of the knowledge and expertise she brought to these types of appointments

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<sup>18</sup> Haswell and Haswell are actually emphatic about how central this concept of host-guest inversion is to hospitality, stating, “a sign that hospitality has lost its ethical core is the inability of host and guest to change roles” (53).

noting, “I know I can help with a lot of technical issues like grammar, sentence structure, and different ways they might convey their experiment’s meaning.” Yet, at the same time, she described how in order to make these appointments more productive, and enjoyable, she often needed to rely on her writers’ knowledge and authority in their own area of expertise, as she claimed, “Working with writers outside of my field, especially advanced scientific writers, it allows me to be more of a partner rather than a tutor. In relationships like that hospitality is especially important because it establishes that ground of respect. You know your stuff. I know mine. Let’s combine it.” Here, and in earlier comments, Lauren made important distinctions concerning hospitality’s operation which are often overlooked. To be hospitable, as Lauren notes, requires mutual respect between parties as well an openness and willingness to learn from each other. Bennet, for instance, argues that for learning to occur in a truly hospitable context “genuine openness to the perspectives and ideas of others is deemed essential for significant and enduring progress” (171). At the same time, in acknowledging her positionality as a consultant and the knowledge and expertise she brings to appointments, Lauren also draws attention to the fact that being an effective and ethical host is far from an act of self-denial or abnegation. A host operating from the “relational individualism” explicated by Bennett actually requires a humble sense of their deficits of knowledge, power, and authority along with a simultaneous self-awareness of the knowledge, power, and authority they possess. As Bennett makes clear, “a courageous individualist is a relational individualist...fully appreciative of the constitutive roles of others but not reducible to them...this individualist thinks for himself or herself, takes personal initiative, has a singular view of the world, and a distinctive personality and character” (41-42). In fact,

if a host has no sense of their own autonomy, no self-awareness of the utility of their knowledge, no understanding of how they might offer influence in service of others, they are left unable to meet the needs of the guest—the most basic criteria defining an ethical host.

Of course, not all appointments allow for the knowledge sharing or reversals between guest and host that can be seen in consultations like Lauren and Amir's. In fact, barriers which inhibit such collaboration often have a lot to do with writers' expectations and perceptions of a consultant's role. Terese Thonus, for example, investigated "how tutors, tutees, and course instructors perceive the tutor's role" and discovered that, "tutees, especially first-timers, may not realize that they will be participating in a conversation radically different from one with their course instructors" (70). Additionally, Thonus found that while tutors tended to contrast their roles from instructors and evaluate their work in terms friendliness, collaboration, and peerness, many writers still "regard the tutor role as comprehending higher status vis-à-vis the tutee" (74). In the study, Thonus also highlighted that, "Whether or not their tutors are trained in the particular academic discipline for which they seeking writing assistance, all of the tutees believed that their tutors "know" writing" (70). Such perceptions of tutors as instructors or ultimate authorities on writing can also cause writers to expect little negotiation and more directive instruction. In our focus group, Cat explained this phenomenon:

Think about how even in a fifty-minute writing session how much unlearning the writer may have to do because they're expecting the transactional form, they're expecting an authority or they have some sort of expectation of what they are walking into and when you try to facilitate a dialogue they can be resistant or they may not understand. "Aren't you just supposed to tell me where to put a comma." And you are feeling like "I'm trying to be hospitable."

Similar dynamics where writers expected more of a one-way transaction from their tutors were also evident in some of our recorded consultations. In Ash's appointment with Pavel (pseudonym), an international student in the second year of his masters in bioengineering, for example, Ash interpreted Pavel as coming to their appointment looking exclusively for directive instruction, and the specifics of the consultation suggested the same. Similar in some regards to Amir, Pavel had submitted an article to a journal which asked for specific edits related to grammar and academic STEM English. His article specifically proposed a new method to evaluate "physiological heart assessment" and investigated "aims to provide an automatic and accurate way to evaluate the heart function especially in parameters related to the LV function in mass." The appointment began:

**Pavel:** I am here to look for grammatical errors.

**Ash:** This is an engineering article?

**Pavel:** Yes. Bioengineering.

**Ash:** Oh, even fancier.

**Pavel:** Starting from this section.

As Ash read the article aloud, at several moments during the appointment, Pavel drew attention to instances where he recognized errors in his writing but was unsure how to fix them and expected Ash to know. For instance:

**Ash:** (reading the article aloud) Additionally, we compared our framework with other frameworks that tried to estimate cardiac parameters from the ACDC data set. To show the advantages of our methods based on the reported errors of each methods.

**Pavel:** This sentence, something is wrong in this sentence.

**Ash:** Yeah, and I think these two should just be one sentence. Like instead of a period after data set, we just make it into one big sentence. You did the analysis of the two in order to prove that the others are inferior.

While the majority of the appointment involved Ash offering directive assistance related to commas and other grammatical issues, on a number of occasions Ash communicated to Pavel how his expertise in bioengineering was necessary to evaluate these corrections.

**Ash:** This one is just inside of two parentheses, but this one only has one.

**Pavel:** Okay, I will. Two parentheses.

**Ash:** If that's standard in your field.

**Pavel:** Okay.

In part, Ash attributed the specific stage of Pavel's writing as one reason why he was looking for more "copy-editing" type services. As he noted, "He was here for a service and the level at which his paper was currently already set, this was not an early stage. There wasn't any "Let's talk, let's brainstorm." This was very late stage." Still, Ash described how, "Correcting grammar always feels like the most inane of jobs that I can do. But on the other hand, he needs it because this is his thesis and it's critical for his career that the language be sufficient for the American corporate journals to publish. So, it makes me feel like a tool...because you had to be more prescriptive." For Ash, and for me, these types of situations added a particular complication to understanding the ethics of consulting through the lens of hospitality. Specifically, as a consultant, what does it mean to be hospitable or a good host if a writer expects route instruction or editing rather



than conversation, collaboration, or knowledge sharing and how should one respond to such situations? Explicating this dilemma in more detail, Ash observed:

In hospitality, our aim, as I understood hospitality, is we have a guest and we seek to provide them with the meat and bread that they need. In this case, however, the meat and bread that I was being asked for was a very specific one that I did not feel as hospitable to give him, but he was seeking. So, I think it reaches an unusual position in hospitality where if we are being asked to provide prescriptive analytic material that our guest is looking for instead of the sharing of knowledge, is there a hospitality struggle in the situation?

Ash is certainly not alone in facing dynamics like these and questioning what the appropriate ethical response should be. In describing her work consulting, Boquet explains, “While I know that, in the ideal tutoring situation, I (as tutor) would facilitate a student's self-discovery, I also know that real tutorial cases are not always as simple as that” (119). Specifically, Bouquet points to common instances where “students perceive her as having all the answers” and how she frequently does in fact “have the answers they are looking for” (119). These situations, moreover, become even more difficult to navigate when writers come in simply, “looking for help with their grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation” (119). As Boquet details, “This is often not knowledge that I can help them access, because it is probably not knowledge that they have. By attempting to have them figure it out for themselves, I end up feeling as though I've perpetuated the very notion that I am attempting to dispel – that there is a body of knowledge "out there" that some people (like me) have access to and other people (like them) do not” (119).

Scenarios like those articulated by Cat, Ash, and Boquet highlight how writers can, and often do, come to consultations expecting direct instruction or correction and how such occasions limit the desired knowledge-sharing many consultants seek and find rewarding to their work. As Cat pointed out, based off their experiences in education,

many of these same writers likely don't expect, or even know, that a more collaborative dynamic is an option.<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, these situations certainly miss the ideals of a hospitable interaction which involves "constant mutual exchanges of experiences, perspectives, and insights" between host and guest (Haswell and Haswell, 53). Still, they likewise point to the host's disposition and response to the guest as crucial to understanding hospitality's ethical underpinnings. That is, for a host reciprocity, collaboration, or learning from the other may be hoped for but not the ultimate goal nor contingent on whether or not the host extends assistance. Bennett, for example, explains that, "To practice hospitality is to share experience, insights, and resources without imposing conditions that demand a return...one can but offer one's own learning without stipulations as to its use" (48). In a similar way Haswell and Haswell draw attention to a gracious host welcoming a stranger where "learning is a customary outcome" though "not the primary object" (172). This is not to suggest that the correct or proper response for a consultant in situations where writers expect a one-way transaction simply be to offer what's expected unquestionably, or that a consultant's attempt to move an appointment into a more dialogical dynamic isn't a useful or appropriate response. Each writing consultation brings its own unique context which a tutor must respond to. In her post consultation interview, Cat aptly noted the delicate and unpredictable position tutors

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<sup>19</sup> In my own experiences working with writers seeking more directive, one-way assistance I've often found many of them to be in vulnerable and stressful positions where they perceive—perhaps accurately—directive help as crucial to their academic or career success. As seen in situations like Amir's and Pavel's, many non-native English speakers come to writing consultations with high stakes assignments which instructors, advisors, or publishers have communicated need fine-tuned attention to grammatical detail in order to be approved—changes many of these same writers feel unequipped to identify and correct alone.

often find themselves in given the multitude of factors a consultant must take into account when offering assistance. As she observed, “You sit down, and you're making a million split second decisions as you go through reading out loud, talking about a paper, or whatever it might be... so I think there're several moments where you pick your battle in a session.” Yet, hospitality’s emphasis on the centrality of a host’s response as open and willing to extend help without specific stipulations draws attention to how hospitality can still be manifested even without an apparent reciprocity or knowledge sharing on the part of the guest. Additionally, in the context of writing consultations, a host’s extension of help even when it takes on a less collaborative dynamic should not dismiss the potential value and utility when such occasions occur. In his post-consultation interview Pavel, for example, expressed a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for Ash’s assistance saying:

He is very helpful. And the article was beyond his field, but he insisted to read and understand and to find the grammatical errors for me. I really appreciate his help. It was a lengthy article and he read everything and he helped me. I really appreciate his effort. I feel accomplished.

Along similar lines, several consultants communicated the usefulness they found in hospitality’s stress that a host seek to offer assistance on the guest’s terms and how this emphasis allowed them to feel more freedom to let go of a pre-conceived agenda.

Kendyl, in particular, used a humorous analogy to describe how hospitality helped her understand the potential usefulness of appointments in which writers took appointments in directions, or asked for help with issues, that she identified as not of primary importance, stating:

If somebody was in my house and they were hungry and ate a brownie but I also had vegetables it's like well they still ate. They still like liked what they ate...

Jerry Seinfeld says that you can ruin your appetite but another one's coming right after it so it doesn't matter.

Kendyl likewise pointed out how, through the lens of writing center work, hospitality's aims do not end with a single appointment and that when writers are left feeling welcomed, they are "more likely to come back." In her post-consultation interview, Kayla similarly explained, "Hospitality looks different with someone you've worked with several times than with someone you're meeting for the first time. And in some ways, hospitality might look like being more straightforward...it's a special opportunity." So, while hospitality may not offer consultants a cut-and-dried answer concerning how to respond to writers seeking more directive, one-way transactional help, it certainly can leave room to appreciate the circumstances writers find themselves in when wanting more directive help.

Additionally, as consultants noted, hospitality can likewise shed light on the usefulness of offering assistance even when a writer comes to an appointment not expecting collaboration or knowledge-sharing and their likelihood to return for future appointments if help is extended. Due to how consultants are often trained, as well as the writing center scholarship on "best tutoring practice", it's also unsurprising why offering directive help is typically seen by tutors as something to wholeheartedly avoid. For many, any utilization of directive help seems tantamount to an error in consulting. Yet, hospitality, I argue, can begin to give consultants more nuance concerning how to use directive or non-directive approaches thoughtfully depending on the specific context of an appointment. Before considering hospitality's intervention with these issues however, I must contextualize the history of writing center scholarship concerning directive and non-directive tutorial approaches.

## **Directive or Non-Directive: The Writing Consultant as Host**

As noted, writing center pedagogies have generally followed the emerging trends of the university writing classroom—adapting their techniques to the specific contexts of individualized writing consultations. The immense shift from current traditional rhetoric to student centered pedagogies in writing classrooms accordingly played a crucial role in how writing centers came to understand and grapple with directive and non-directive tutoring approaches.<sup>20</sup> Although reductive, the commonplace understanding of directive approaches in writing center consultations frame tutors as taking the lead in appointments and relying more on their own knowledge and direction to improve a writer’s piece. Following a schema similar in many regards to current traditional rhetoric, directive approaches received harsh criticisms from numerous scholars. Brooks, for instance, evaluates directive approaches as favoring product over process and argues that in these scenarios a “student who comes to the writing center and passively receives knowledge from a tutor will not be any closer to his own paper than he was when he walked in” (2). Additionally, she argues against directive approaches given that the student rather than the papers should be “our primary object in the writing center session” (4).

In contrast to directive approaches, non-directive approaches, also defined as “minimalist” (Brooks) or “non-interventionist” (Clark), stress the need for consultants to have as little intervention as possible during tutorials and instead let the writer be the “primary agent” during a consultation (Brooks 2). Carino adds that non-directive

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<sup>20</sup> In *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work For Postmodern Times*, Nancy Grimm, for instance, notes that nondirective approaches emerged in large part as a reaction against current traditional models and she also links non-directive approaches to the influence of process and expressivist pedagogies (85).

approaches also tend to suggest consultants, “never edit a student sentence or supply language in the form of phrases or vocabulary” (114). Offering more detail to what non-directive approaches practically look like, Brooks advises that consultants not write anything on a student’s paper, have their writer read their piece out loud, and ask their writer questions about their content given, “It’s her paper; she is the expert on it. Ask questions...as often as possible” (4). Along similar lines, Clark characterizes the non-directive approach as giving responsibility to the writer for their content which is often a useful practice considering tutors are often unfamiliar with it (“Power” 104).

Much work on tutoring in the writing center thus began promoting “non-directive”, “minimalist” (Brooks), or “non-interventionist” (Clark) as best practices. Shamon and Burns even contend that non-directive approaches eventually became the prevailing “tutoring orthodoxy” in writing centers (137). Carino, in a similar fashion, notes that with few exceptions “writing center discourse, in both published scholarship and conference talk often represents direct instruction as a form of plunder rather than help, while adherence to non-directive principles remain the pedagogy du jour” (114). What’s more, as writing centers began labeling their pedagogies as student-centered, collaborative, and process-oriented, non-directive tutoring approaches, by and large, became conflated with these terms.

However, more recent scholarship details significant drawbacks in having consultants adhere to a strict orthodoxy of being non-directive, noting limitations to the directive/non-directive binary (Harris; Palmeri), the ways in which non-directive approaches can actually inhibit student-centeredness or collaboration (Corbett), in addition to how non-directive approaches often undervalue tutoring expertise and

opportunities for writers to practice imitation (Clark and Healy). In line with these concerns, Grimm casts doubt on the ethics of adopting an uncompromising non-directive philosophy, arguing that it can actually, “protect the status quo and withhold insider knowledge, inadvertently keeping students from the non-mainstream culture on the sidelines, making them guess about what the mainstream culture expects” (Grimm). Similarly, Corbett, as well as Clark and Healy, explain adverse effects arising from strict devotion to one exclusive approach to tutoring. Corbett, for example, details ways in which non-directive approaches can be interpreted by writers as manipulative or insincere given that just because a consultant relies on question asking doesn’t mean their questions are not leading or a means for a tutor to retain domineering power (“Tutoring Style”). Corbett similarly draws attention to how a “strict minimalist approach forecloses the act of collaboration that could take place” (150). That is, a strict non-directive approach may ostensibly appear collaborative but without there being “negotiation that takes both the tutor’s and the tutee’s goals into consideration” (151) obviously such dynamics miss the inherent meaning of collaboration. Other scholars draw attention to advantageous aspects of directive approaches when utilized thoughtfully. Shamoan and Burns, for example, highlight fields like music and art where accepted educational practices primarily operate on master-apprentice models—similar in many regards to directive approaches. As they claim, although these disciplines are obviously hierarchical, nonetheless, their “open admission that some individuals have more knowledge and skills than others” allows for expertise to be appropriately “handed down” (141).

Yet, despite these more nuanced approaches, the stigma of directive tutoring nonetheless still looms large for many consultants—even when they might understand advantages to a directive approaches (Blau et al.; Cogie; Gillam et al.) Jennifer Nicklay’s qualitative findings in “Got Guilt?: Consultant Guilt in the Writing Center Community,” for instance, observed that although the most important trend she found “was that all consultants felt there were situations in which minimalist methods could be utilized well...and, likewise, there were situations in which directive methods were more appropriate,” nonetheless most of these same tutors “discussed directive methods” when explaining when and why they felt guilt (21). Producing similar findings, Elsie Dixon’s “Strategy-Centered or Student-Centered: A Meditation on Conflation” details how frequently consultant anxiety arises “because tutors (and perhaps their directors) are conflating the concept of student-centeredness with the concept of non-directivity” (7). Dixon additionally found that the consultants in her study frequently felt guilty when unable to “sustain non-directive assistance” (8), although their writers often requested more directive help. Collectively then, the scholarship addressing tutorial hesitation to use directive approaches speaks to an increased need for a reconceptualization of power and authority in order to help consultants consider how they might best utilize varying tutorial approaches in service of their writer’s best interests. Hospitality, I argue, guides us in a more promising direction towards these aims.

The typical contexts of writing center appointments translate well onto the dynamics of hospitality for a number of reasons. For one, like a gracious host responding to the needs of their guest, the ideal aims of a consultant begin with understanding and meeting the needs of their writer. Given their insider knowledge and authority,



consultants also initiate and guide an appointment while writers, entering a less familiar space, are assumed to follow a tutor's lead. Importantly, a consultant with a hospitable position also acknowledges the utility of their own power and authority but seeks to exercise such influence perceptively and in service to their writer.

During any given appointment, a consultant's insider knowledge might well be part of what a writer wants or needs to improve their writing and develop their broader academic skills. At such moments, directive approaches can prove useful while withholding or obfuscating insider knowledge could be a disservice. In our post-consultation interview, Cat Sar for instance, described various ways in which hospitality helped her feel more at ease and open to moments where being directive with a writer seemed to be the best option. Similar to Nicklay's findings in "Got Guilt?: Consultant Guilt in the Writing Center Community" and Dixon's observations in "Strategy-Centered or Student-Centered: A Meditation on Conflation" Cat spoke of her own tendency to feel remorse when offering directive approaches saying, "I think a lot of times I will walk away from a session, and think I was directive in some way and kind of beat myself up for that. It just feels like so against this understanding of, "Don't be directive. Don't let them write down what you say."" At the same time, like numerous writing studies scholars (e.g. Grimm; Corbett; Clark and Healy; Shmoon and Burns) Cat also described apparent shortcomings to non-directive only approaches, stating, "It's frustrating for me to pretend I don't know the answers, so I know it must be frustrating for people who come in here...and then it's a waste of time to try to beat around the bush and get to a roundabout when you could be helping more directly." From her observations, Cat illuminates the reality of situations where a strict adherence to non-

directive only approaches can actually deteriorate rather than build trust between a consultant and writer, in addition to getting in the way of a writer's progress. Boquet, in a similar way asks, "What is the justification for ostensibly creating spaces in which dialogue can occur only to encourage our tutors to be antidialogic? What sort of message are we sending to the students we tutor if they perceive us as withholding information vital to their academic success? (119). Describing hospitality, however, Cat detailed how "It takes the pressure off trying to stay in this specific role of, "Okay. I have the answers, but I'm not going to tell you." That's not helpful." Here, Cat draws attention to hospitality's capacity to help consultants embrace a more flexible and expansive view of their role as a tutor. Accordingly, in being a good host, a consultant need not subscribe to a strict tutoring orthodoxy but can understand the potential utility of directive approaches and how occasional directives can be a means of keeping their writer's needs and interests in mind.

Deciding appropriate and effective occasions to be directive can be challenging though—especially if a consultant has been conditioned to think through a non-directive only lens. Offering further insight, Cat pointed to potential dangers of overusing directive approaches claiming, "finding that boundary of their writing versus your writing can be tricky." As Cat suggests, directive approaches can lean too far into reductive models of pedagogy like current traditional rhetoric. In such circumstances where a consultant depends too heavily or entirely on directive approaches a tutor indeed runs the risk of stifling their writer's academic development, ignoring the usefulness of their writer's insider knowledge, and ineffectually exercising power and authority during an appointment. To avoid such instances where a consultant ends up designing a writing in

their own, rather than their writer's, image hospitality's emphasis on continually seeking to understand and meet the needs of the guest can prove helpful. A host assuming how best to care for their guest without first understanding and continually trying to make sense of the guest's specific needs and desires will likely prove unhelpful—and perhaps insulting. In a similar way, a tutor assuming their writer's goals and needs without attentive inquiry will be prone to miss the desired aims of their writer in addition to giving them little room to exercise their own power and authority during an appointment. Typically, in these circumstance unsolicited directives from a tutor pervade the consultation as well.

### **Michelle and Fatemah**

In our recorded consultations, Michelle's work with her writer Fatemah (pseudonym) represented one noteworthy example of a consultant who in continually seeking to understand their writer's needs—and the specifics of the assignment—intelligently and effectively shifted between directive and non-directive approaches. Fatemeh was an international student in her second year of her masters in social work and brought in an assignment exploring how to understand effective leadership in non-profit organizations.<sup>21</sup> Specifically, the assignment asked for students to draw from different aspects of leadership which might be understood crucial to non-profit management. Next, writers needed to analyze the effectiveness of a business meeting they observed, then

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<sup>21</sup> In her post consultation interview Fatemeh explained that when she received a scholarship to study in the United States she had to learn English in a single year. Detailing her graduate work she claimed, "It's so hard and my speaking is not perfect but I tried so hard. I spend more time than native speakers spend in one assignment. If you spend two hours on an assignment, I spend four. It takes a lot of time but it's good because I learn everyday."

write their own hypothetical obituary. Understandably, Fatemeh began the appointment unsure of what exactly this assignment was looking for and how the separate parts should work together. Before offering assistance, Michelle first inquired about the assignment and how Fatemeh felt about the work:

**Michelle:** Okay so this is for social work. Is that right?

**Fatemeh:** Yes.

**Michelle:** Okay great. So how are you feeling about your assignment?

**Fatemeh:** I'm feeling a little bit nervous. I'm nervous a little bit because this kind of paper it's like, it's between formal and informal because most of the questions which are listed in the syllabus are about my opinion.

**Michelle:** Um hum.

**Fatemeh:** It isn't based on something written in the book. So, it's kind of, should I write "I" or no? Then I asked my director, instructor, sorry, she said "yes it's okay."

**Michelle:** Okay.

**Fatemeh:** So that's one point. The other point, I don't feel confident about the grammar and formatting.

**Michelle:** Okay, okay.

**Fatemeh:** So, can we get started please?

**Michelle:** Yeah, sure, let's read through and then we can look at stuff like formatting okay.

Throughout the appointment, Michelle read large sections aloud without interruption after which Fatemeh would often ask "Does it make sense for you?" In her post

consultation interview, Michelle described how when reading aloud she noticed that, “there were definitely a lot of grammar errors.” Michelle, however, considered the length of the piece and higher order concerns first rather than tackle specific grammar mistakes and be directive. Reflecting on this approach, she noted “I think I made the better call and we just went ahead and read through the paper and focused on making sure things made sense and were organized.” On multiple occasions, in fact, this strategy allowed for more non-directive assistance. As Michelle read aloud, for example, Fatemeh noticed ways to improve the piece on her own then sought Michelle’s confirmation, for example:

**Michelle:** (Reading aloud) This meeting held once a week every Tuesday for one hour and all the staff members are women except one man. The staff were from different races as well different ages the meeting is about discussing the events that happened during the week as well as discussing the events for the following weeks.

**Fatemeh:** I mean the next week. I think I should change it.

**Michelle:** Yeah. I think that works better.

During the appointment, Michelle also allowed Fatemeh to guide the consultation by letting her identify places where she wasn’t sure if her intended meaning was conveyed. Often during these occasions, Michelle would be non-directive and ask clarifying questions. One of these times particularly stood out as humorous, a moment of building rapport, as well as improving the writing:

**Fatemeh:** Is this clear for you? Did you understand?

**Michelle:** I think I understand. Um, when you say “making meaning online” are you talking about someone they would date? Is that what you mean?

**Fatemeh:** No. (Slight laugh)

**Michelle:** Oh okay.

**Fatemeh:** I mean group work. (Laughter)

**Michelle:** (Laughter) Oh, that's where my mind goes, I understand.

**Fatemeh:** (Laughter) Like a Skype date. So, do you think the instructor will think I'm talking about me dating or something?

**Michelle:** (Laughter) Um, I think, I'm pretty she'll won't understand what you mean.

**Fatemeh:** (Laughter)

**Michelle:** (Laughter) Oh goodness.

**Fatemeh:** (Laughter) Because you're right, because I was talking about the male beforehand. So, I jumped from this topic to.

**Michelle:** Right, to a different one.

**Fatemeh:** Yeah right. Okay. (Laughter)

**Michelle:** (Laughter) I was going to say if you did want to you could just say making a business meeting online just to be really specific. I don't know if you need to.

**Fatemeh:** Okay. Perfect.<sup>22</sup>

While initially being largely non-directive during the consultation, on multiple occasions

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<sup>22</sup> Early in their post consultation interviews both Michelle and Fatemeh identified this as a memorable miscommunication that put them both at ease and helped them establish a friendly connection. Towards the end of their appointment, Fatemeh, in fact, cleverly brought the joke back up after Michelle mentioned the word "business meeting." After laughing together, Fatemeh then playfully said, "Nah, just kidding."

Michelle also offered more directive help rather than withholding knowledge, especially when Fatemeh explicitly asked for it, for example:<sup>23</sup>

**Fatemeh:** How do you spell business?

**Michelle:** b u s i n e

**Fatemeh:** n e

**Michelle:** s s

**Fatemeh:** (Typing)

**Michelle:** And then meeting would have to be plural there so it would be meetings, yeah okay.

**Fatemeh:** Okay. Great.

At another point, Fatemeh asked if she should provide a transition between two sections and, while remaining open to the idea, Michelle suggested possibly providing headings instead depending on what the assignment asked for:

**Michelle:** Yeah, I think that's good. I was also thinking since this is APA formatting you can use headings so that just means like you could write in bold you could just say like my perspective or whatever this syllabus says for that section.

**Fatemeh:** Okay, sounds good.

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<sup>23</sup> This appointment particularly highlights the role that laughter can play in hospitality—often turning miscommunication into a bridge rather than a separating force. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida, explains that “Laughter cannot be dissociated from hospitality: the welcome is hard to imagine without the smile or some sign of joy at the other” (385). In “Humor and the Serious Tutor,” Steve Sherwood similarly observes, “A writing center without laughter can be a grim, fearful place, and we must not disregard the role humor can play in facilitating interactive learning” (4).

After having worked through the entirety of the writing and addressing higher order concerns, with the remaining time Michelle then chose to be more directive and return to many of the grammatical, syntactical, and word choice errors. As she claimed, “We read for the first read through and made adjustments. Then I went back and was like okay let's look at some grammar and similar issues, which I think I made the better call doing that.”

Ultimately, Michelle's hospitable strategy to first listen to Fatemah's concerns, consider the specifics of the assignment, and be flexible in using non-directive and directive approaches depending upon how the consultation unfolded, proved beneficial on multiple levels. Early on, rather than getting bogged down in the minutia of grammatical errors and risk only helping with surface level mistakes or not making it through the writing, Michelle chose to focus on larger concerns like organization, clarity, and effectively blending the different components the assignment asked for. Such an approach allowed Fatemeh to on multiple occasion recognize corrections without assistance as well as point to places where she sought Michelle's collaboration. Throughout the appointment the shifting of “host and guest” which Haswell and Haswell stress as crucial to hospitality was also evident. Given Fatemeh's insider knowledge into her course and the instructor's expectations, Michelle often sought Fatemeh's expertise to guide the appointment. At other times when Fatemeh sought more explicit help, especially in relation to spelling and word choice, rather than withholding insider knowledge Michelle offered directive assistance. In these varying regards, Michelle and Fatemeh's appointment represented the types of productive tutorials Jane Cogie, describes in “Peer Tutoring: Keeping the Contradiction Productive” where consultants alternate between non-directive and directive methods—making power and authority



shifting, yet shared, aspects held by both tutor and writer. The combinations of directive and non-directive approaches during the appointment, by and large, likewise resembled the balance Carino suggests tutor's attempt to find where best practices are understood on a sliding scale determined by the ratio of student to consultant knowledge. As he notes, "Tutors should learn to shift between directive and non-directive methods as needed...More student knowledge, less tutor knowledge = more non-directive methods. Less student knowledge= more tutor knowledge" (110). Importantly, early in the appointment Fatemeh also described her anxieties over the grammatical errors in her piece and while Michelle first laid these aside for other concerns, like a gracious host, she returned to them when their appointment proved to have remaining time to address them. The appointment's productivity was also reflected in Fatemeh's analysis of the consultation, as she explained:

Before the meeting I was very nervous about my paper. You know the grammar mistakes and my point of view. I think my writing is very clear for me and very obvious but it's different for others, so I was very nervous. But she's very good at listening. She reads everything with me...So, she is great. She is awesome. I feel comfortable with her and she gave me all she could.

The overall effectiveness of Michelle and Fatemeh's appointment additionally reveals hospitality's potential to offer consultants a useful, though basic, framework to begin negotiating uses of non-directive and directive strategies. As noted, while the push for non-directive only tutorial approaches has been largely challenged in more recent scholarship, its influence still weighs heavy for many consultants. Perhaps this is due in part to the understandable need for guidance in the inevitably complex and unpredictable work involved in consultations. While not neatly formulaic, a hospitable approach to tutoring directs consultants toward understanding ethical and effective learning

acquisition as a sharing of authority and power directed under the perception of a gracious host. Hospitality, likewise, underscores rather than ignores or diminishes the complexity and unpredictability of tutoring—affirming the anxieties consultants often face and the improvisational nature to so much of their work. Haswell and Haswell, for instance, describe hospitable learning as, “individualistic, erratic, serendipitous, unpredictable” (172) and also note that “Hospitality is simply one model of that relation of the self with the Other, which cannot be imagined beforehand” (46). In these regards, guided by a hospitable philosophy consultants can begin to understand and make sense of more complex and nuanced approaches to directive and directive tutorial practices as advanced by numerous scholars (Burns and Jesson; Corbett; Corino; Shamon and Burns) while still having an ethical template to operate out of.

### **Major Takeaways: Power, Authority, Expertise, and Hospitality**

As absurdist as the play in the introduction to this chapter (*Writing for Godot*) may seem, it’s representation of the vast array of writers and assignments a tutor might encounter is not far from the reality consultants routinely face. On any given day, like the play’s protagonist, a tutor might meet a freshman working on a literacy narrative, a physicist whose work appears nearly indecipherable, a non-native English writer curious about the complexities and contradictions of the English language, or even a graduate student working on a literacy essay meta-response based in Lacanian theory. Writing center scholarship, though, often ignores the unpredictable nature of this work and overlooks the positions consultants find themselves in trying to make sense of their roles while addressing issues of power, authority, and expertise which unavoidably arise in appointments.

Avoiding issues of power in writing center work, however, remains a disservice—especially for tutors who must respond to the various ways power invariably functions in each unique consultation. In turn, for many consultants issues of authority and expertise likewise remain unaddressed or muddled in writing center scholarship. Yet, hospitality offers promising avenues for re-conceptualizing how power, authority, and expertise might be ethically understood and enacted. In particular, hospitality’s underlying framing of a host operating from “relational power” represents an extension of power beyond “insistent individualism” or simply a means to achieve one’s ends. In the context of hospitality, a host operating from “relational power” reveals power potential application in service of others and without contingency for reciprocity. Similarly, through the lens of hospitality a host’s authority and expertise can become valuable means to meet the needs of a guest, as can host’s willingness to learn from the expertise and authority of the other.

The results of this research ultimately support the idea that hospitality as a conceptual framework productively intervened with helping consultants think through issues of power, authority, and expertise in their appointments in a number of interesting ways. First, one significant finding to emerge suggests that hospitality constructively helped tutors acknowledge differentials of power and authority present in their consultations—especially the typically unequal ground consultants and writers face at the start of appointments. In turn, hospitality’s acknowledgement of these differences led consultants to consider the ethics of power in the context of their appointments. Consultants particularly identified hospitality’s characteristics of mutual knowledge sharing and a host’s willingness to reverse roles with a guest as useful in making their

appointments more productive and understanding ways to ethically navigate how power, authority, and expertise arise in appointments. For many consultants, hospitality's stress on a host's willingness to extend help without stipulation likewise allowed them to find value in their work even when writers came seeking more directive, and less collaborative, assistance. Finally, another major finding proposes that hospitality shows great promise to give tutors a helpful framework to negotiate directive and non-directive tutorial approaches depending on the specific conditions of a given appointment. However, hospitality's contributions to writing center work do not end there, and in my next chapter, I explore various ways that hospitality additionally assisted consultants in learning to appreciate and respond to the emotional/affective dimensions to appointments along with detailing hospitality's capacity to help tutors develop rhetorical listening skills.

CHAPTER IV  
EMOTION, RHETORICAL LISTENING, AND HOSPITALITY IN WRITING  
CENTER PRACTICE

There are a multitude of fears writers commonly bring to writing center consultations. Among other reasons, writers might experience frustration in not understanding an instructor's expectations, have unease over their academic standing, or simply feel unequipped to complete an assignment. For many writers, certain pieces (e.g. resumes, cover letters, personal statements, scholarship applications, professional articles) can also have significant consequences for their financial status or career development—making the stakes feel high. Research on achievement theory, in fact, suggests that when writers feel a low sense of control on assignments they perceive as important, their emotional states usually turn to feelings of frustration, hopelessness, or anxiety (Pekrun et. al).

Sadly, many writers also come to consultations having experienced unfortunate and unjust stigmas, often true for non-native English writers, writers whose home languages don't fit the confines of "standard academic English," writers with disabilities, and other students who may feel marginalized or disempowered from dominant culture. Coming to a writing center appointment is ultimately an act of risk and vulnerability. In turn, for tutors knowing how to constructively discern and respond to the varying concerns and anxieties a writer faces can be an unsettling and confusing task, especially considering the underdevelopment of such topics in writing studies scholarship.

There are many reasons why scholars have been hesitant to value the role emotion and affect play in the teaching and study of writing. As discussed in Chapter 2, emotions can be difficult to evaluate, often have certain anti-academic associations, and are frequently ignored in Western rhetoric (Micciche; Newkirk).

Overall, writing center scholarship has historically underexplored and, in some cases, dismissed the important ways emotions inform writing consultations. Agnostinelli et. al in “Tutoring in Emotionally Charged Sessions,” for example, encourage consultants to take a stance of “focus and firmness” (18), arguing that emotions, by and large, cloud judgement and rationality. In a similar way, Hudson argues in “Head ‘Em Off at the Pass: Strategies for Handling Emotionalism in the Writing Center” that tutors should attempt to distance writers from expressing “simmering emotions” claiming that, “by remaining professional and detached, the tutor has a better chance of avoiding unwanted emotionalism in the session” (11). For Hudson, since a consultant’s main goal is improving writing, they should avoid “any attempts to engage in personal counseling or relationships” (12). These approaches to writing consultations certainly deserve merit—especially in regard to their concern for valuing professionalism and self-care. Still, in framing rational expertise and emotional validation as binary they overlook the nuanced ways that attending to emotion in consultations can both improve a specific piece of writing as well as help writers develop healthier and more generative relationships to their writing processes. Along similar lines, observations like Agnostinelli et. al’s and Hudson’s fail to consider established research which has emphatically demonstrated the interconnected nature of rational and emotional responses (Hardiman & Denckla; Immordino-Yang & Damasio; Zambo & Brehm). Martha Nussbaum in *Upheavels of*

*Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, for instance, investigates the interplay of reason and emotion, arguing that both inform each other in evaluations of what is good or bad, right or wrong, as well as ethical or unethical. In regards to hospitality, Bennett similarly positions “hospitable attending” as requiring “a kind of knowing that moves us toward, not away from, others. It draws on a fuller concept of reason, one that includes intuition and emotion as well as analysis” (77). In other words, hospitable attending understands intuition and emotion as complimentary and enriching aspects to how we approach thoughtful reasoning and measured analysis.

Noreen Lape in “Training Tutors in Emotional Intelligence: Toward a Pedagogy of Empathy,” also evaluates and questions how most training manuals for writing center tutors regard emotion, believing they often “prepare tutors for encounters with distressed writers by defining or categorizing the problem types and suggesting how to approach them” (2). For Lape this presents many problems for consultants because, “without theories and concrete strategies for responding to emotions in a session, some tutor training manuals employ a rhetoric that may place new tutors in a defensive position—on alert, waiting for the inevitable problem person to arrive” (2). Fortunately, as Daniel Lawson notes, “over time a more positive sense of emotion has begun to emerge in the literature, a sense that examines what emotion has to offer writing center sessions” (20). Specifically, more recent research has begun to acknowledge and offer strategies in regards to responding to writers’ emotions in appointments as well as thoughtfully considering the immense emotional labor consultants continually face in their work (Green; Perry; Fitzgerald and Wilson; Kjesrud and Wislocki; Mills).

Another related challenge for consultants is that rhetorical listening—what I consider the primary and most effective means of understanding and considering how to respond to writers’ concerns (and the emotions connected to them)—similarly has been underdeveloped in writing center scholarship. In “The Undercurrents of Listening: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Listening in Writing Tutor Guidebooks” Kathryn Valentine, notes that:

Given the long-standing tradition of writing centers to define themselves as student-centered and to champion collaborative learning, it is unsurprising that the field generally values listening. What is surprising is how little attention listening has received in writing center scholarship, particularly as writing centers continue to work with diverse students, tutors, and curricula and as they continue to be located in diverse places and institutions (90).

As Valentine argues in further detail, there has certainly been an “attendant focus on listening” in writing center scholarship but listening as a whole is “rarely explored in depth...particularly in attending to listening as a practice central to tutoring” (90). There are a multitude of reasons why listening (and the related concept of silence) has often been ignored or underappreciated in writing studies and academia in general. Krista Ratcliffe, draws attention to the long tradition in Western rhetoric of privileging speaking and winning an argument, making scholarship on rhetorical concepts of listening, particularly listening across difference, budding but still frequently underappreciated values in writing studies scholarship (20). As she contends, “We inhabit a culture where ‘saying’ has assumed dominance and ‘laying’ (and, thus, listening) has been displaced” (24). In *The Argument Culture: Stopping America’s War of Words*, Deborah Tannen similarly addresses how the privileging of speaking and competitive arguing remains embedded in U.S educational systems, making agonistic behaviors normative in many traditional classrooms. Tannen particularly explains how rather than engaging in



productive civil discourse and listening attentively to varying viewpoints, students are all too often trained to approach discussions by repeating “sound bites” most often drawn from television, radio, and other commercialized media (175).

Continued scholarship in the last decade, however, from researchers like Cheryl Glenn, Krista Ratcliff, Lisbeth Lipari, and Paula Tompkins has begun to establish listening and silence as central features to rhetorical studies and the teaching of writing. In their introduction to the collection *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts* Glenn and Ratcliff, boldly establish that “the arts of silence and listening are as important to rhetoric and composition studies as the traditionally emphasized arts of reading, writing, and speaking” in addition to being “effective for historicizing, theorizing, analyzing, and practicing the cultural stances and power of both dominant and nondominant (subaltern) groups” and “offer people multiple ways to negotiate and deliberate, whether with themselves or in dyadic, small-group, or large-scale situations” (11). Nonetheless, researchers have not applied listening studies applications to tutorial practice in much detail, although, as scholars like Valentine note, listening has a frequent but often superficial presence in published scholarship on writing center work.<sup>24</sup>

Taking these issues into consideration, this chapter positions hospitality as a useful theoretical framework for consultants, and researchers, to value how rhetorical listening productively informs tutorial practice and how such practices allow tutors to appreciate and consider effective means of responding to the emotional dimensions of their work. First, I illustrate how for most of the consultants involved in this project

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<sup>24</sup> Once again, my deepest thanks go out to my friend and colleague Jessie Newman who introduced me to listening studies and whose expertise in the area repeatedly served as a resource for this project.

exposure to Haswell and Haswell's hospitality captured, in a way no other theory had, their lived experiences working in the writing center—especially in relation to the centrality of listening to their writers and the ways emotions permeate writing center appointments. In addition, I highlight the ways in which writing consultants understood hospitality as an exciting alternative pedagogy that subverts and challenges many of the normative values to academia—values I place under the banner of the “insistent individualism” or the “impoverished spirituality” Bennett refers to. Next, I analyze and interpret recorded writing center appointments and follow up interviews, seeking to understand how hospitality as an interpretive framework illustrates ways that practicing rhetorical listening and responding to emotions (and the connected personal aspects of a writer's life) can be an effective pedagogical tool. Ultimately, I argue that hospitality offers an open but promising guide to assist researchers and writing consultants in appreciating and understanding the utility of rhetorical listening in appointments. Additionally, I illustrate how emotions and personal stories inform consultations and can allow tutors to formulate responses to the affective aspects at play in their appointments in ways that are attentive and constructive to writers' emotional and academic development—seeing these two aspects as inextricably linked.

### **Rhetorical Listening, Emotion, Affect, and The Writing Center**

My utilization of “rhetorical listening” comes from Ratcliff who defines the term as a “stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” and a “code of cross-cultural conduct,” combining these two aspects she also defines rhetorical listening as, “a stance of openness a person may choose to assume in cross-cultural exchanges” (1). While ostensibly a simple definition, Ratcliff's

rhetorical listening represents a radical departure from other superficial understandings of listening as well as being a promising means for cross-cultural communication and intervention for conflict resolution. In many regards, Ratcliff's rhetorical listening relates closely to Wayne Booth's concept of "rhetorology" where the goal of rhetoric extends beyond persuasion and emphasizes ethical interpersonal connection, especially between parties with oppositional ideologies. As Booth argues, rhetorology's most important aspect is deep, authentic listening—a willingness to closely attend to and make sense of others' perspectives and ideas even when they may be drastically different from one's own.<sup>25</sup> Booth likewise emphasizes the utility such ways of understanding listening offer for individuals to learn from difference and potentially integrate new ways of knowing and being into their own identities—shifting the goals of rhetoric from "mastery" to being a means of moving an audience "beyond original beliefs to some new version of the truth" (46). Like Booth's rhetorology, Ratcliff's concept of rhetorical listening prioritizes the need for perspective taking whereby a listener, rather than being immediately concerned with sharing their point of view or projecting their ideas onto others, opens themselves up to understanding another's knowledge and perspectives. Offering more concrete dimensions to what this looks like in practice, Ratcliff claims that when one listens rhetorically, they make a "conscious choice to assume an open stance in relation to any person, text, or culture" in order to "foster conscious identifications that may, in turn, facilitate communication" (26). Further illuminating what distinguishes Ratcliff's rhetorical listening, Joy Arbor observes that rather than simply "listening for

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<sup>25</sup> Booth, in fact, defines rhetorology as the "deepest form of listening rhetoric (the whole range of communicative arts for reducing misunderstanding by paying full attention to the opposing view): the systematic probing for 'common ground'" (11).

intent” rhetorical listening entails “listening with intent” and “reflects a rhetor’s choice to truly understand a speaker’s (or writer’s) intent” (168). Ratcliff’s conceptualization of rhetorical listening remains deeply embedded in the undergirding values of hospitality. Bennett, for example, notes that hospitality is not simply a “generic openness” but instead “recognizes the particularity of others as part of the broader interdependence of being and the interconnectedness of learning that characterizes the depths of our reality” (47). Ratcliff’s claim that rhetorical listening goes beyond reading “simply for what we can agree with or challenge” to listening “for the exiled excess and to contemplate its relation to our culture and ourselves” (25) similarly reflects Bennett’s assertion that:

Hospitality requires careful attention to who and what is really there, as opposed to what we might wish. Carefully attending and listening to the other are acquired skills, often more difficult to master than the talking that comes naturally to the professoriate. But with desire, discipline, and careful attention to others, learning and knowledge become gifts to be exchanged, no longer possessions to be hoarded and controlled (47).

Since Ratcliff and Glenn’s foundational work on listening studies more scholars have begun to extend rhetorical listening to include concepts like “compassionate listening” (Hwoschinsky), “reflective listening” (Arbor), “strategic questioning” (Arbor; Carson; Peavy), and “moral imagination” (Thompkins). In this chapter, I borrow from these terms while giving them definition and illustrating their relation to rhetorical listening. I likewise frame Bennett’s conceptualization of “attendance” and Palmer’s “discipline of displacement” as crucial features to rhetorical listening.

For convenience and reader accessibility, I use emotion and affect interchangeably throughout this piece, although writing studies scholarship, and many other fields, continue to contest how each of these terms are understood—especially in

relation to one another.<sup>26</sup> As noted in Chapter 2, for my own purposes, I understand emotion and affect as “embodied meaning making and performance”—established by Bronwyn Williams’ expansion of Margaret Wetherell’s definition (19). According to these terms, emotion/affect has an underlying biological element, as McCloud notes, “cognitive psychologists generally agree that emotions consist of a bodily activation (arousal of the autonomic nervous system involving a visceral reaction—increased heartbeat, a knot in the stomach, a heightened awareness of external stimuli)” (11), and these physical effects have a direct interplay with cognition. Foundational Swiss Psychologist Jean Piaget, for example, argues that “At no level, at no state, even in the adult, can we find a behavior or a state that is purely cognitive without affect nor a purely affective state without a cognitive element involved” (qtd. in Derry and Murphy 13) (9). According to this understanding then, we can, in many regards, conceptualize emotion/affect as both biological and cognitive as well as uniquely individualized and internally experienced.

But emotions/affects simultaneously are also mediated by social and historical contexts, as Williams explains: “While we quickly have our individual feelings, we perform, and interpret those emotions in the immediate social context. Emotions are integrated into, and developed through, our social interactions and contexts” (16).

Worsham, in a similar way, explains emotions as a “tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic takes

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<sup>26</sup> Many writing studies scholars, for instance, choose to view emotion as a subset of affect, believing that affect should also include categories like: attitudes, beliefs, motivation, and intuition (McCloud; Clore, Ortony, and Foss).

hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structure of meaning” (216).

Emotions play a central, if not primary, role in Haswell and Haswell’s framework of hospitality. Hospitality is, after all, largely an emotional, or affective, disposition to the “other” with characteristics of “goodwill, generosity, welcome... trust, mutual respect, privacy, talk, ease, gift exchange, elbow room, risk, marginality, social retreat, and embrace of change” (6). Hospitality is also designated with “postures, dispositions, or inner values” that include: intellectual hospitality, transformative hospitality, and ubuntu hospitality (53). As such, this chapter investigates the effectiveness of hospitality as a disposition for writing center consultants and as an interpretive frame to understand writing center work. In particular, this chapter explores what emotions writing center consultants and their writers experience when enacting, or not enacting, aspects of hospitality in writing center consultations and how they interpret the pedagogical effectiveness of those encounters and the role emotion played in them. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes ways in which a consulting disposition of hospitality might bring about more positive, generative, and encouraging outcomes for the assignments writers bring into consultations as well as individual’s relationships to writing in general.

### **Hospitality and the “Deeply Personal” Nature of Writing**

For me, one of the most startling findings to emerge from this project was how often consultants communicated a deep sense of relief and excitement for how hospitality resonated with what they saw as the reality of their work in the writing center. In particular, I found participants’ analyses of hospitality, especially the connections they made between hospitality and their own experiences tutoring, imbued with a powerful

combination of practicality, insight, and hope. Repeatedly, consultants identified hospitality as allowing them to feel more permission to value the importance of listening attentively to writers and attending to the various ways emotions inevitably arose in consultations. Rose, for example, began our focus group by stating:

The first thing I think of, thinking back to 604, just being amazed at how well the concept of hospitality seems to work in the writing center. At least for me it was the first time reading something talking about writing center theory where it made sense what we're doing on a personal level, and I really appreciate it as a way of looking at the encounter that happens between consultant and writer, and about the very human element of what happens in that space.

Here, Rose expressed a clear resonance with and appreciation for how hospitality represents the “encounter” so common to writing center work which operates on “a personal level.” As a researcher, observations like Rose’s left me with an encouraging sense of hospitality’s promising utility for writing instruction, but, at the same, a curiosity for why other scholarship on writing center theory—and writing studies more generally—have not adequately accounted for the “very human element” Rose spoke of. For many consultants, their attraction and enthusiasm for hospitality came, to a significant degree, from seeing it as operating against the resounding spirit of academia more broadly. Lauren noted, for instance:

When you have someone over to your home you want to attend to their needs and care for them, and I think that connection between the writing center and hospitality, in my mind, eases the relationship between consultant and writer. It gets me out of the mindset of being a tutor vs. being “I’m just there to help, I’m there to listen, I’m there for you if you need to talk about emotions or whatever is going on in your life, I’m here for that. But I’m also here for your writing, this appointment can be whatever you want, I’m here to attend to you.” So, kind of like hosting guests in the writing center essentially. When we read this in 604 it was kind of a breakthrough for me. I don’t necessarily have to teach sentence structure or anything. I can be there for whatever their needs are.

Lauren's comments underscored how connecting writing center work to hospitality gave her license to appreciate the importance of attentively understanding writers' specific needs and concerns before considering direct ways of addressing an assignment. For Lauren, this connection between tutoring and hospitality likewise made her feel more ease in valuing the overall relational dynamics between consultants and writers.

Critical readings of Lauren's observations might point to the drawbacks of forfeiting such agency to writers and allowing them to use allotted consultation time for communicating about their personal lives or emotions—especially if such expressions seem to bear little to no relation to particular writing assignments. Undeniably, such approaches to writing instruction come with risks, among them: positioning consultants as surrogates to work more appropriate for licensed counselors or psychologists, getting writers so far-off topic that actual literacy development becomes overlooked, or making writers feel uneasy. The potential for writers not expecting, or wanting, a session in which they are offered emotional consultation also looms large, as Jane Honigs makes clear in "Personal Revelations in the Tutoring Session," "Some students don't want your sympathy; they just want help with their writing...don't fall into the trap of being overly supportive" (9). Haswell and Haswell, in a similar fashion, describe how without caution and discernment, an educator extending a disposition of care which "looks like an apparent welcoming" may in fact be "a kind of devouring" (57). According to Haswell and Haswell, ethics of care like those presented by Noddings often lack hospitality's invitational nature and deep undergirding values of ethical reciprocity. For the authors, the underlying flaws in Noddings sense of care are two "fixed subject positions" which definitively establish "students as recipients or objects of caring (the "cared-for") and the



teacher as the dispenser of caring (the “one-caring”)” (57). Drawing from White’s critiques of Noddings, Haswell and Haswell similarly question that if “the one-caring demands that the cared-for respond by freely and spontaneously disclosing him or herself” ultimately “how can one be both obliged and free” (57). In scenarios like these, moreover, “It is the teacher, not the student, who is thus the ultimate beneficiary of an ethic of care” (57). Ultimately, what differentiates hospitality from the ethics of care is its authentically invitational nature. In the context of writing center consultations this typically means that agenda setting becomes established by a tutor’s attentive listening to the needs of their writer.

The primary means, for example, which Lauren identified for consultants to assist writers in working through anxieties and concerns was a particular form of listening attuned to invitation—represented in many regards by Carol Hwoschinsky notion of “compassionate listening.” Hwoschinsky describes compassionate listening as a form of rhetorical listening whereby a subject “creates a safe container for people to be free to express themselves and to go to the level of their deep concerns. It simply and profoundly means empathizing with the feelings and condition of people who have been affected by effects and circumstances” (3). While compassionate listening requires attendance to the concerns of others, it likewise must be built upon listening not to seek a sense of one’s superiority as a care-giver but instead is designed to “deepen our understanding of ourselves and others” (Hwoschinsky, 20). As Hwoschinsky details, to practice compassionate listening, “You have to be centered within yourself, so you notice your own judgments...you learn how to ask questions that don’t create defensiveness. It’s incredibly hard work, but it works” (21). In a similar way, Lauren characterized a

consultant's disposition of listening towards a writer as "I'm there for you if you need to talk about emotions or whatever is going on in your life, I'm here for that. But I'm also here for your writing, this appointment can be whatever you want, I'm here to attend to you." In this description, a tutor creates an open space for a writer to feel freedom to voice their personal fears or anxieties and consider how these may or may not be connected to their writing processes. In this framing, the invitation for a writer is given without pressure to involuntarily expose themselves, but, at the same time, validates a writers' choice to be open with a consultant if they freely chose to do so. This emotionally attuned approach Lauren draws from hospitality likewise productively takes into account ways in which personal stories and emotions inform writing processes, especially considering how for so many writers difficult emotions like anxiety, confusion, and sadness can disrupt an assignment's progress—or completion. Williams, in particular, highlights this phenomenon, and its opposing reality, noting, "For students who have had negative experiences with reading and writing, the narrative is often framed in emotions of powerlessness, frustration, and even embarrassment or anger. Conversely, students telling stories of positive experiences often frame them in terms of confidence, security, pleasure, and pride, with additional descriptions of excitement or intense concentration" (27). Lauren's later comments also shed light on the unfortunately common occurrences in which consultations begin with writers feeling anxious, discouraged, or inadequate, and the ways in which hospitality's encouragement to attend to others' emotional dispositions can be productive:

I've had so many sessions begin with writers saying "I know I'm not a good writer but" and I think that idea of hospitality comes in with the idea that writing is hard and just making a connection with them ... writing is often seen as an elusive talent, so mystifying, and a lot of the writers that I've seen come in so

discouraged and I think that hospitality really comes in with encouraging them and saying “all of your ideas are really strong, you've articulated them well, like a comma is just a comma”, and soothing their anxieties is part of what we are here for.

Here, Lauren explained ways hospitality allowed her to feel an openness to help writers by addressing their uncomfortable emotions and empathize with the difficult challenges present for everyone when faced with a writing project. She also subjugates smaller technical concerns such as comma usage to what she views as more pressing issues—a writer’s belief in their capacity to grow and know that they are not alone in the emotions they are feeling. Her evaluation, likewise, recalls Michicche’s observation that, “Regardless of the source, however, the reality is that these students come to the act of writing bringing negative and dispiriting emotional experiences with them” (17). Julie Lindquist, furthermore, argues there are immense drawbacks from banishing “emotions from sites of literacy instruction” noting that instead “we need to puzzle out the implications of their presence and figure out how teachers can meet students in productive emotional space” (194). This overall resistance to valuing emotion remains particularly puzzling in writing center contexts given their usual dynamics. In our focus group, Cat, for example, drew attention to how difficult it becomes to understand writing center work without accounting for its immensely personal nature. As she claimed:

In academia and research and even writing it feels like there's always this push to have a distance and not be personal and even coming down to not using the first person, and I don't know that writing center work can function like that because we're doing so many personal things in a one-on-one setting. Writing is deeply personal, so I think hospitality creates a nice space for us to push against that non-personal idea that exists in the University.

As Cat pointed out, the personal remains such a crucial part of writing center work and, I would add, attending to personal components like emotion is not necessarily an obstacle

to be avoided but instead a potential asset for educators to empower and motivate those they work with. Cat's observation that hospitality "creates a nice space for us to push against the non-personal idea that exists in the University" likewise resonates with various ways scholars have stressed the immense importance of finding means to make issues related to how emotions inform writing instruction more visible and practically applicable for educators. Composition scholar Laura Davies, for instance, asserts that "I've come to understand teaching as a risky business, and for all we talk about assignment sequences and scaffolding assessments, we talk little about what it means to us and to our students to really engage with one another, to be honest and vulnerable in each other's presence, to care about one another" (30). Lisa Langstraat, in a similar way, argues in "The Point Is There Is No Point: Miasmatic Cynicism and Cultural Studies Composition," that there is an all-too pervasive "miasmatic cynicism" in composition studies which can be understood as an, "ambient pessimism, loss of affective agency, and misanthropy that accompany postmodern cynicism" that ironically goes against, "cultural studies composition's aims and desires" (294). Langstratt miasmatic cynicism bears striking similarities to Bennett's "insistent individualism," and she links this mindset to significant failures in the field to address and distinguish "diverse affective positions," believing this absence of value for the affective in turn "engenders a distance between self and other that makes it difficult to sustain empathy and commitment. It depletes our affective energies and leads to the inaction and misanthropy that are anathema to social change" (300). Even more pointed, she also claims that this failure to distinguish between such diverse affective positions has "contributed to the many charges that cultural studies compositionists tend to dismiss students' feelings and values in the

service of imposing their own” political viewpoints (304). Other scholars like Paula Tompkins identify how commonly emotion is “viewed as an additional burden in the academy and the public sphere” (7) despite that scholars like Micciche point to how emotion is “crucial to how people form judgments about what constitutes appropriate action or inaction in a given situation” (169). The findings of this project—especially recorded consultations—in fact underscore Micciche’s observation, suggesting that attentive rhetorical listening to a writer’s emotions and concerns can prove instrumental in helping consultants formulate productive measures to assist writers in their immediate and long-term academic growth.

### **Kendyl and Anna**

Of all the recorded consultations and follow-up interviews I conducted, Kendyl’s work with her writer Anna stood out most as an exemplary illustration of a consultant exhibiting rhetorical listening. What’s more, Kendyl’s skill at rhetorical listening proved invaluable in changing Anna’s emotional disposition towards her writing as well as providing her with immense practical help for her assignment.

In her post-consultation interview, Anna described how she was born in Sierra Leone but “during that time there was a civil war and through a series of unfortunate events, I got separated from my family. And luckily for my parents here I was adopted.” Anna also detailed that at age sixteen she traveled to Sierra Leon to visit her biological family for seventeen days and later, at age twenty-one, returned for three months. “It was wonderful, yeah. The experiences were definitely life-changers,” she said. When she came to her writing center appointment, Anna was in the second year of her undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering, and seeking help for an upcoming

annotated bibliography for English 102 (Intermediate College Writing). Though in the beginning stages, Anna also described her nascent research topic, a paper exploring perceptions of the science of beauty based on varying historical, cultural, and demographic perspectives. Anna began the appointment detailing the components of an annotated bibliography she felt confident about and the aspects she wanted more guidance on.

**Anna:** I'm doing an annotated bibliography, and I need ten to twelve sources total but right now the assignment that's due Wednesday is just five sources.

**Kendyl:** Okay.

**Anna:** It's three scholarly and two primary, but I just wanted to do more because I'm not really sure. So, I found one scholarly source, so the guide and topic, and my topic...I've kind of been bouncing around to other things but still under the realm of the science of beauty and the question of it. This is my proposal, but really I just need to focus.

**Kendyl:** Okay. Um, hum.

**Anna:** So, I know how to do the MLA myself. It's just the explaining.

**Kendyl:** Okay. Um, hum.

**Anna:** We have to do ten entries, seven scholarly, and three primary at the end. This is just the first draft. I can do the works cited. I need help though with the summaries per entry and they have to be 100 to 1,500 per entry and my goal three scholarly and three primary. Um and I think free-writing is fine and I'll put it together after that. So, does that sound good?

**Kendyl:** So, yeah we have a handout on annotated bibs that I can go grab, so I'll do that right now and when I come back I'll see if what I'm thinking and what you're looking for help on can kind of come together.

**Anna:** Okay, sounds great thank you.

What this transcription fails to fully capture though is that here, and throughout their appointment, Anna felt immensely encouraged and energized by Kendyl's deeply focused attention to what she was communicating. Describing Kendyl in her post-consultation interview Anna explained, "She was very attentive...the impact of it was the vibe of her being so warm-hearted. I was so engaged because she was so engaged in me. Because when someone is communicating with you and giving you their 100 percent, you want to give your 100 percent back you know." Importantly, in this description, Anna emphasized Kendyl's engaged attention as the primary means leading to her perception of Kendyl as "warm-hearted." This disposition on the part of Kendyl, in turn, cultivated a strong sense of reciprocity in Anna, as she explained "I was so engaged because she was so engaged in me... you'd be surprised how one person can make you feel." Anna's comments also underscored the potential for deep knowledge-sharing and emotional affirmation to occur between host and guest when a host exhibits a sense of openness and willingness to be attentive to the needs and ideas of the guest—the central characteristics of rhetorical listening. In fact, scholars on hospitality in this research, in their own ways, all identify rhetorical listening as critical to enacting hospitality. While these scholars (i.e. Bennett, Nouwen, Haswell and Haswell, Levinas, Palmer) do not explicitly use the term, their own conceptualizations of rhetorical listening directly correspond to Ratcliff's. All, for instance, understand any authentic act of listening as involving a host's

willingness to initially set aside their own impulses to respond in favor of first seeking to make sense of the reality of the guest or other. As noted in the first chapter, Nouwen, for instance states that “Someone who is filled with ideas, concepts, opinions, and convictions cannot be a good host. There is no inner space to listen, no openness to discover the gift of others” (103). In a similar way, Palmer refers to this type of attention as “the discipline of displacement” (Palmer, 115-116) which involves, “holding one’s own position in abeyance, while listening intently and receptively to the other. It means letting go of our inner preoccupations as well as developing an inner silence that allows the other to be heard” (Bennett, 55). Bennett likewise understands this disposition of listening as “attendance” understood as a “disciplined openness to the other—receiving as well as sharing” (40). For Bennett, the relational power characteristic of hospitality can only be enacted by a host capable of attendance which, ideally manifested, leads to sharing and receiving as well as role reversals for both guest and host.

Like rhetorical listening, conceptualizations such as Palmer’s “discipline of displacement” and Bennett’s “attendance” similarly understand authentic listening not as a forfeiture of one’s values or convictions, but instead as a disposition which prioritizes first seeking to truly understanding the guest. In describing how attendance operates on a practical level Bennett, for example, notes that, “Of course, we cannot literally leave our experiences behind. They are part of who we are. But we can work to keep them on a lower-level suspending, not suppressing, what we think. The point is to understand the other in his or her terms, not our own. Attending is not a debate, where one seeks to uncover weakness in order to attack” (54). Additionally, like rhetorical listening these



conceptualizations understand authentic listening as a cultivated habit which is difficult for most.

As the appointment continued, Kendyl guided Anna through various genre conventions of annotated bibliographies. Although working loosely off the suggestions of the worksheet, Kendyl's conversation with Anna exhibited a dialogical character, allowing Anna to reinforce information she understood, ask questions, and direct the conversation towards her specific concerns. Throughout this appointment though, Kendyl's unusual capacity for rhetorical listening gave Anna clarity and confidence to complete her annotated bibliography as well as offering her insider information for how to conduct research for her future essay. For example:

**Anna:** I was thinking that scholarly is like journal articles?

**Kendyl:** Yup.

**Anna:** And um peer-reviewed. You know what I mean?

**Kendyl:** Yeah.

**Anna:** And like primary would be from first hand?

**Kendyl:** Yup.

**Anna:** Yeah, and so I was interviewing people, one woman and one man but with different questions and relating it to beauty, pop culture. So, how can I put this into here?

**Kendyl:** Right, so there's a way in MLA to cite interviews.

**Anna:** Um hum.

**Kendyl:** So, if you go to like the, I'll put right here. (Typing). So, if you go to Purdue owl. Have you ever used the Purdue?

**Anna:** It's so famous.

**Kendyl:** Yeah, so they have in their MLA overview how to cite an interview. And that's where you would put that actual framework.

**Anna:** Um, hum. So where do you put it?

**Kendyl:** Of your interview? You'd put them at the top of your annotated bib.

Here, and during the entire appointment, Kendyl exhibited the kind of “attendance” Bennett refers to, closely listening to and affirming Anna’s existing knowledge while keeping in mind her own insider familiarity with the genre conventions of annotated bibliographies. On one level, Kendyl’s assumed a disposition suspending immediate impulses to give unsolicited advice, favoring instead to closely listen to what Anna communicated and encourage where she was on track. While doing so, however, Kendyl simultaneously remained aware and confident in her expertise, allowing her to quickly expand upon Anna’s knowledge when requested. In her post-consultation interview, Kendyl explained, “When she was speaking, I was definitely thinking about what she already knew, which helped me understand what she wanted help with. I realized during this that she wanted more than just what her assignment required of her. She wanted long-term knowledge.” In these regards, Kendyl largely exhibited the difficult balance scholars like Bennett, Ratcliff, and Palmer call for in order to rhetorically listen—where attention to the other and conscious self-awareness exist in healthy tension. Bennett, for instance, emphasizes that when one practices authentic listening, “The object of attention is both self and other. The self is an object, not in some kind of strained and awkward self-consciousness, but in the sense of self-awareness and self-acceptance. It is this awareness and acceptance of who one is and what one is attentive to that enable acute

awareness and openness to the other” (77-78). This disposition on the part of Kendyl also allowed her multiple opportunities to offer writing techniques drawn from her own experiences—demonstrating the personal knowledge sharing or gift-giving characteristic to hospitality, as Bennett notes, “Practicing the radical openness of hospitality means extending self in order to welcome the other by sharing and receiving intellectual resources and insights” (46). For example:

**Kendyl:** And then the summary of the source. What I do for summary is as I'm reading I try and take notes of one or two words, at most like a sentence for each paragraph you read, so that you can know what the main argument of each paragraph is.

**Anna:** Okay.

**Kendyl:** And so that actually helps you later when you're writing this you can say ok the summary of this source, well if he has fifteen paragraphs and I have like fifteen mini-summaries which ones are really similar to each other, in that case that would be a big section of their argument.

**Anna:** Ok, I can combine those. Okay.

**Kendyl:** Yeah, so this method helps you find the main arguments that an article is making.

Then later in the appointment:

**Anna:** Okay, so this one seems like a good one and I downloaded it. So, from there how do I find another one that's still in this field?

**Kendyl:** So, if you go back to that source there's a thing called citation mining which is if we go back to your document, back to that beauty and soul article.

**Anna:** Oh, here.

**Kendyl:** Yeah, so if you go to the end of their article, um, what's page four? And you find these sources because they're writing about beauty, the science of it, and they're using references all throughout their argument and these are the sources that they're using to reference their argument. So, if it's good for their argument they might be good for your argument.

**Anna:** Oh.

**Kendyl:** And it still gets you multiple sources.

**Anna:** That's nice.

**Kendyl:** Yeah. When I found that out it like changed the way I write.

**Anna:** Yeah. (Laughter)

**Kendyl:** It takes the stress off.

**Anna:** Right, right. (Laughter)

Beyond simply offering practical guidance for Anna's assignment, Kendyl's display of rhetorical listening likewise significantly altered Anna's affective state. In her post-consultation interview, Anna noted how before the appointment she "felt a bit ridged you know, as in my feelings." After the consultation, however, she described a significant shift in her emotional disposition as well as an increased belief in her capacity to move forward with the annotated bibliography and her research paper, stating, "I feel confident accomplishing these assignments and it was very comfortable and I could feel her (Kendyl) you know...she was very selfless." As a researcher, during my data collection I observed a common trend in post-consultation interviews where writers praised their tutors and expressed gratitude for their efforts. But Anna's characterization of Kendyl

was especially noteworthy given its emphasis, descriptiveness, and length. Referring to her time with Kendyl as a “blessing” on multiple occasions Anna underscored a profound sense of feeling accepted because of Kendyl’s open and interested disposition, stating, “She accepted me and she accepted my ideas and definitely who I am. If you don't accept someone and you're trying to work with them it becomes very hard. I really enjoyed my time and I learned a lot and I appreciated her...” Anna also characterized this time as a break from the stresses of daily life, claiming, “Yeah, so it was definitely a relief for 50 minutes and now I have to go back to reality.” Anna likewise drew attention to how Kendyl’s physical posturing, reflective silences, and thoughtful responses made her feel understood and at ease, as she stated:

I remember it vividly. To start with Kendyl would lean in and you know when you lean in physically it shows that you’re interested. After listening, she would then lean back and almost accept herself and process the question for herself before she delivered it to me. So, I appreciated that. When she laid back on her chair, I did the same thing. Yeah so, she was processing it so I can get some good information too. Then she would give me some good feedback or help me process something or ask a question.<sup>27</sup>

In this instance, Anna especially pointed to Kendyl’s reflective silences as key gestures demonstrating her ability to rhetorically listen, reflecting many scholars’ observations of the important role of silence in rhetorical listening and the general need to value silence more prominently in rhetorical studies. In “Revealing Silence: Rethinking Personal Writing” Anne Ruggles Gere, for instance, argues “Instead of seeing silence as speech’s opposite, we can conceive of it as a part of speech, located on a continuum that puts one

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<sup>27</sup> Anna additionally drew attention to how instrumental Kendyl’s eye-contact was in making her feel understood and appreciated, as she claimed, “Also she would look at me. Even when I didn't look at her, she would still look at me. And I appreciated that because I could always go back to her and be like, okay she's there. It was comforting.”

in dialogue with the other” (206). Glenn, similarly contends that silence is “an absence with a function, and a rhetorical one at that” (4). Anna, likewise interpreted Kendyl’s silences as evidence of genuine engagement with what she was communicating and that in these instances Kendyl did not simply respond without reflection but processed “the question for herself before she delivered it” mirroring Bennett’s idea that genuine hospitable attendance “requires effort and imagination—holding in abeyance one’s own truths while divining those of the other through careful attention and question” (104). My post-consultation interview with Anna was also unusual given that she requested I tell Kendyl about what she communicated—specifically how thankful she felt towards Kendyl. Anna stated, “I’d like for you to tell Kendyl our conversation. Please tell her how I appreciate her.”<sup>28</sup>

As I researcher, I was struck both by the depth of thankfulness Anna expressed and her vivid characterizations of Kendyl’s capacity to exhibit rhetorical listening. As various scholars have pointed out, rhetorical listening is easy to idealize in theory but far harder to carry out in practice.<sup>29</sup> Bennett, for example, borrows from novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch to illuminate barriers to the “attendance” he positions as necessary for any real act of hospitality. Specifically, Murdoch identifies “the fat

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<sup>28</sup> In the rest of my research, to keep aligned with my ethics and not violate volunteer trust, during post-consultation interviews I refrained from sharing writer volunteers’ observations with their consultants. Given the nature of Anna’s request, however, I made an exception.

<sup>29</sup> For me, Kendyl’s display of rhetorical listening remains all the more impressive given the typical limitations to writing center appointments. Grimm, for example, notes how, “in tutoring interactions, listening is often done under the pressure of time, usually with a desire to be helpful, and almost always with a notion of what is a normal academic essay” (p. 67).

relentless ego” inherent in each individual as prohibiting the necessary capacity to authentically listen or attend (52). Instead, in attending to the other, one must work against “the issue of self-aggrandizing and consoling wishes and dreams which prevents one from seeing what is there outside one” (59). Ratcliffe too describes how challenging and painful listening, especially listening across difference, can be, stating “It may be . . . another’s truth . . . that hurts us; however, this challenge, this conviction, this hurt exposes a space of dissonance. When responding to this dissonance, we should not accuse the person foregrounding it, deny its existence, or bristle defensively. Rather, we should question ourselves. . . If such questioning makes us more uncomfortable, so be it. In fact, good” (34). Ratcliffe observations also highlight how maintaining engagement and attentive listening towards writers can take a physical and psychological toll on consultants. Therefore, healthy self-care and proper judgement should also be kept in mind when a tutor extends assistance to their writers. With these considerations in mind, I entered my interview with Kendyl curious to identify and understand what she attributed to Anna’s observations of her being such an effective listener.

Kendyl began our interview describing challenges she felt in guiding the appointment—especially given the multi-faceted nature of annotated bibliographies and the methods component to Anna’s larger research paper. Kendyl particularly drew attention to the difficulty of helping someone make sense of research methods if they’ve had little exposure to them. During the appointment, she said she asked herself, “How do I talk about this in the most accessible terms because methods is not really accessible until you really get into it.” Kendyl also worried that the appointment focused too much on exploring how to conduct and cite interviews, as she stated, “I wanted to make her feel

comfortable I gave a lot more time to the interview than I did to the actual annotated bib...but I don't know something about her personality and the way that she spoke and like carried herself I was like I don't want to stop, she has this passion.” Summing up her general impression of the effectiveness of the session, Kendyl noted, “I don't know how much I actually helped her with her assignment. Yeah, I mean it felt like an okay session.”<sup>30</sup> As a researcher, this felt like an appropriate and opportune time to share Anna’s request with Kendyl. After doing so, I additionally asked Kendyl what she attributed to Anna’s impression of her being so attentive, accepting, and helpful. After a reflective pause, Kendyl stated:

Growing up as a form of cruel torture I was forced to read the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*...they (Kendyl’s parents) were like “Here's this complicated book on personal theory.” But in that it talks about always seeking to understand before seeking to be understood. And then it talks about the consistent and important giving of benefit of the doubt. In every interaction I have with people now it's very, it's back burner, it's just second nature now for me to shut up and listen before I say anything. Because you never know what someone is going through, so I wouldn't want to say something that would trigger something in them that I would have known about if I had listened first... but I'm very moved by what she said.

Admittedly, I never would have imagined citing *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* as useful source material to understand how one might listen rhetorically and thus be better equipped to practice hospitality. Originally published in 1989, Robert R. Covey’s business and self-help book continues to find immense commercial success by advising readers to meet personal goals though aligning themselves with “true north”

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<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the contrast between Kendyl’s and Anna’s impressions of the appointment was similarly reflected in some of the data I collected. In the many of post-consultation interviews, writers, in varying ways, described their appointments as immensely helpful and instrumental in building their confidence. Their consultants, however, more often than not expressed doubt or uncertainty about the general effectiveness of the appointment.



principles understood as “fundamental truths that have universal application” (16).<sup>31</sup> Still, to give credit where it’s due, the underlying principles of rhetorical listening are indeed clearly and compelling articulated in his fifth habit to, “seek first to understand, then to be understood” (119). Covey, for instance, identifies the main skill involved in forming this habit as “empathetic listening” defined as “listening with intent to understand...seeking first to understand, to really understand. It's an entirely different paradigm. Empathic (from empathy) listening gets inside another person's frame of reference” (122). Like scholars promoting rhetorical listening, Covey frames empathetic listening as a dramatic departure from typical forms of communication where, “Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They're either speaking or preparing to speak. They're filtering everything through their own paradigms, reading their autobiography into other people's lives” (121). In contrast, empathetic listening requires a “patience, openness and the desire to understand” which allows one to take on the perspective of the other (18). And like rhetorical listening, empathetic listening reflects a focused engagement with the other where disagreement need not be absent, as Covey communicates, “The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it's that you fully, deeply, understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually. Empathic listening involves much more than registering, reflecting, or even understanding the words that are said” (122). Similar to Haswell and Haswell’s emphasis the vulnerability and risk inherent to hospitality, Covey also argues that empathetic listening, “is also risky. It takes a great deal of security to go

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<sup>31</sup> Covey’s work is replete with more effusive and overdone phrasing such as suggesting readers build “Emotional Bank Accounts” by creating “a commerce between hearts” (121).

into a deep listening experience because you open yourself up to be influenced. You become vulnerable. It's a paradox, in a sense, because in order to have influence, you have to be influenced" (122). Given the underlying values and characteristics of Covey's empathetic listening and considering Kendyl's early, and apparently sustained, enculturation to the concept, it remains unsurprising why her comportment towards Anna stood out as an exemplary model of rhetorical listening. For me, though a single example, the fact that Kendyl's skillful exhibition of rhetorical listening derived (to whatever degree) from Covey's self-help book also poses an interesting prospect for how tutorial practice might be enriched if rhetorical listening became more prominently stressed in writing center scholarship and practice—especially if the motives behind concepts like Covey's empathetic listening were designed more for ethical interpersonal communication and education rather than commercial profit or material accumulation.

Moreover, Kendyl's hospitable disposition centered on rhetorical listening ultimately proved instrumental in providing Anna with practical help as well as shifting her attitude towards this assignment from uncertainty and nervousness to confidence and enthusiasm. In her closing remarks, Anna even highlighted surprise given how enjoyable she found her appointment with Kendyl, claiming, "during our time you know it was almost like we were just talking about it, flowing, and that was nice when you're able to talk to someone in an academic form and actually get the answers that you need." She likewise communicated her desire to return to the writing center given how understood she felt by Kendyl and how much she enjoyed the consultation—opening up the possibility for her further academic growth involving the writing center because of the relational connection established with Kendyl. The potential for hospitable relationships

like this to have a more sustained dynamic between consultant and writer was in fact evident in several of the recorded consultations I observed and supports growing scholarship on learning research suggesting that students' emotional connections to the material and instructor constitute critical factors for individual academic success (Efklides and Volet).

### **Rose and Aafreen**

Rose's consultation with her writer Aafreen particularly illustrated how far a hospitable disposition—centered on listening and attendance to emotion—can be in advancing a writer's long term academic progress. In her post-consultation interview, Aafreen explained that shortly after being born in the United States, she moved with her family back to their roots in Iran. At age 19, however, she came to San Diego for two years to pursue undergraduate studies, before returning to Iran to finish her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work. Describing this time in the U.S., she stated, "This is how I started speaking English, because I already knew the grammar or some words but never spoke English when I was growing up." In spite of her academic success, and desire to stay in Iran, she claimed she was unsuccessful in moving towards a Ph.D. until presented with an opportunity at the University of Louisville. At the time of her interview, Aafreen was in the second year of her Ph.D. in social work.

She also described that "during the Iranian Revolution, or especially during Trump's administration" people were continually asking, "How did you get to the States." Though having dual citizenship, she expressed reservations during these occasions to communicate she was a U.S. citizen, stating, "The problem is that neither

my appearance nor my accent or the knowledge of English shows that I'm American. I just have the US passport. That's why it's hard for me to say I'm American.”

Facing many challenges transitioning to graduate studies in Louisville, Kentucky, Aafreen noted, “This is very important to me to write a very understanding and thorough paper. All my classmates have pursued their masters either in the States or in a country that its official language has been English. So that was something hard for me, difficult for me to write papers that's understandable.” Wanting more guidance on academic writing in English, she claimed, “That's when I wanted to just use the writing center, and I came and I didn't know Rose until the day I met her and she went over my paper and it was an annotated bibliography, and she helped me a lot.” To Aafreen’s surprise, she received the highest grade in her class for this assignment, noting, “I was so impressed because I was the only one whose language was not English.” After this experience, Aafreen became a regular to the writing center, always requesting Rose as her consultant. For this particular assignment, Aafreen brought in an early draft of a proposal for a sociology course. Given the nature of their relationship, the appointment began with catching up:

**Rose:** How have you been since I've seen you last?

**Aafreen:** Oh my God, that 92 made the entire semester. Even the previous one. It made up for all the bad grades that I had.

**Rose:** That is awesome. Good, I'm so glad.

**Aafreen:** Thank you for your help.

**Rose:** Oh, thank you, I really enjoyed reading that piece.

**Aafreen:** Thank you, and then you give me the confidence to just. I had started writing this last night-

**Rose:** Okay.

**Aafreen:** And this is proposal for the sociology class. I was talking about my identity as an Iranian-American. I'm going to examine how other Iranian students who are not U.S citizens practice their identity and sense of belonging despite the uncertain future that they have.

As the consultation preceded, Aafreen described the specifics of this assignment as well as her developing ideas, then asked if she can begin reading her writing aloud—a common writing center practice:

**Aafreen:** Should I start, or?

**Rose:** Yes, and I remember you wrote down just the usual grammar, organization-

**Aafreen:** Yeah, as usual.

**Rose:** Okay, sounds good.

Aafreen's proposal detailed a growing trend of Iranian students wishing to pursue higher education in the U.S. She described this phenomenon as a departure from the usual practices "two or three generations ago, when students would mainly continue with their higher education in Europe, particularly in France." In turn this has led both to an increased number of TOFEL, ILTS, and GRE classes throughout major cities in Iran, as well as many websites providing detailed information and resources for Iranian students wishing to pursue a U.S. education. "This all happens" Aafreen said, "despite the hostile political relationship with the two countries." Still, as Aafreen explained in her drafted proposal, there are overwhelming obstacles Iranians must work through to make an

education in the U.S. a reality, including needing to pay excess fees for taking official entry exams and leaving Iran for an interview at a U.S. embassy.<sup>32</sup>

The major topic Aafreen wished to hone in on for her proposal, however, was the alarming reality that even with a multi-entry visa many Iranian students in the U.S. are unable to visit home, or even leave the country, during their entire stay given, “Their fear of not being able to reenter the States, especially during the current administration with its unstable policies towards Iranian students, leaves them no choice but remaining here throughout their education” she stated.

While Aafreen read her proposal, Rose continually embodied a gracious host, offering praise and encouragement by using phrases such as: “Interesting, wow”; “Sounds good”; “Exactly, yes”; “Perfect”; and “Oh cool.” She also frequently asked questions such as: “How did that first paragraph feel for you?”; “Did you want to talk about the little sentence things?”; and “Can you tell me a little bit more about ‘they should be fortunate?’” At these moments, Rose engaged in a style of inquiry known as “strategic questioning”—designated by researchers as a helpful tool for facilitating rhetorical listening (Arbor; Peavy). For Arbor, strategic questioning involves a listener “asking questions to open up new possibilities in someone’s thinking” which can greatly aid in “helping speakers move to praxis. Encouraging people to investigate the relationship between their experiences, ideas, and actions and open up new possibilities” (228). In a similar way, Bennett similarly points out that, “The use of ample questions

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<sup>32</sup> As Aafreen details, since there is no U.S. embassy in Iran, aspiring students must visit other countries to conduct an interview, most commonly Turkey, the U.A.E, or Armenia. “Besides the expense burden the applicants face enormous anxiety and fear of being rejected” she stated.

and the subjunctive rather than the descriptive promotes hospitality in conversation” (52). As this session unfolded, on multiple occasions Rose’s strategic questions created avenues for mutual knowledge sharing as well as improving Aafreen’s proposal.

For example, Rose’s question, “Can you tell me a little bit more about ‘they should be fortunate?’”,<sup>33</sup> for example gave Aafreen a chance to clarify the complex bureaucratic systems Iranians must regularly navigate in trying to obtain a U.S. visa. As Aafreen explained:

There are two different types of visa, the single-entry visa and multiple entry visa. The single-entry visa is when you come to the States and you are not guaranteed to be able to re-enter the States if you leave the country.... If you leave, you have to reapply and go through the process of the interview in a third country and you may not be able to get the visa again... and it's randomly given.<sup>34</sup>

Aafreen’s response ultimately proved helpful on a number of levels. For Rose, this explanation gave her more concrete access to the knowledge Aafreen was exploring. Specifically, Rose came to more clearly understand the stressful nature Iranian students face in obtaining a visa, the advantages and disadvantages of different types of visas, as well as the random and taxing bureaucratic processes involved in trying to study in the U.S. Rose responded to Aafreen’s explanation stating, “No way! Aafreen every time you

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<sup>33</sup> For reader context, the specific passage of Aafreen’s writing Rose refers to here is “Once an Iranian applicant is admitted to an American University they should be fortunate to receive a multiple entry visa, but this is not always the case.”

<sup>34</sup> Aafreen especially stressed the challenge many Iranian students studying in the U.S. encounter when thinking through visiting home. As she explained “I’ve known an Iranian student who left the States for a conference from his university with his supervisor’s permission, but he hasn’t been able to come back to the States and he doesn’t want to go back to Iran because he has to come back here and finish his degree. But he’s staying in a third country.” Aafreen also offered another example, stating, “The person that I’m going to interview had a multiple entry visa when she applied and then she went to Iran and visited her family. She came back and then she had to apply for another degree in the States because she didn’t want to leave the States.”

tell me something that just astounds me. Wow, it's just luck of the draw. Wow, that's so interesting.” At the same time, Aafreen description likewise gave Rose a chance to communicate where she didn’t understand these specifics in Aafreen’s draft. As she explained:

**Rose:** So, I'm hearing there are two separate options?

**Aafreen:** Yeah.

**Rose:** And the preferable one would obviously be to have that multiple entry visa.

**Aafreen:** Yeah.

**Rose:** Okay.

**Aafreen:** Yes, and there is no criteria for getting the multiple entry visa, the council has a mood to give you the multiple entrance visa.

**Rose:** Well that really helps me understand it, and I think that kind of links back to what was giving me some trouble here. I think it's the 'should be fortunate to receive a multiple entry visa', it's just that phrasing, but the way you explained it to me made a lot of sense that there's these two options, but it's really the luck of the draw which one you get.

Rose’s description of how Aafreen’s explanation clarified her initial confusion thus became a means for Aafreen to understand why it might be useful to rethink how she could make this information more accessible to readers. Aafreen responded by saying, “Yeah. So, I think I should first talk about the single entry and multiple entry first and then maybe talk about the fortune. Being fortunate to receive one and then despite having the multiple entry visa some hesitate to.” To which Rose replied, “Yes, I think that would be helpful.” Given the established trust in their relationship, Rose was also



able to occasionally be more pointed with her feedback, which Aafreen appeared to appreciate. During these moments, Rose identified instances for Aafreen to think through re-phrasing ideas that are unclear, add appropriate grammar, as well as places where Aafreen might further develop or re-organize the proposal's main ideas. These occasions, however, usually functioned more as a dialectic conversation, for instance:

**Rose:** I think because you have "pursuing" in the participle tense with -ing and then the word "that mainly guarantees" it just makes it a little bit harder to get a grasp of what's going on in that sentence, even though I understand what you're saying.

**Aafreen:** Maybe I could put them in parentheses or no use of that.

**Rose:** Exactly, I think that works, "pursuing higher education mainly guarantees better career chances with higher salaries."

Instances like these also represent advantages of a hospitable disposition continued in repeat appointments. In other interviews, for example, several consultants discussed their enjoyment at having repeat appointments and how such occasions offered new insights into the role hospitality might play in writing center work. As noted in the last chapter, Kayla, for instance, explained how meeting with the same writer often allowed her to be more direct with her feedback because a rapport of mutual respect and trust had been established.

Likely because of their continued work together, Aafreen and Rose moved quickly through this draft. Midway through the allotted time, Aafreen expressed her contentment at what they'd accomplished, and stated, "I will come in for my next. When is it due? Oh my God, 17th of March. Four days before Iranian New Year." Rose,

displaying interest in the celebration, asked more about the specifics of this festival called Nowruz:

**Aafreen:** It's the first day of Spring.

**Rose:** I like that. I like starting off a new year in Spring rather than Winter.

**Aafreen:** Yeah, it's the first. And our month starts at the. The year and the month, they all start with Spring.

**Rose:** See. New life, new birth, flowers, oh that's beautiful.

**Aafreen:** We grow seeds, like let's say lentil or wheat, 15 days prior to Iranian New Year and then we watch them grow as being in sync with nature.

**Rose:** I like that.

**Aafreen:** In sync? Yeah. Cinq is French. To synchronize with nature that we see-

**Rose:** That's beautiful.

**Aafreen:** that even if we are living in apartments, we have the feeling of nature and seeing the wheat or lentils growing.

**Rose:** Wow, will you be celebrating and participating?

**Aafreen:** Yes. This is like the deepest part of the year.

**Rose:** I love that.

**Aafreen:** This is so. I should bring you some pictures.

**Rose:** I would love that, and you know I kind of want to. I'm just so inspired. I want to do something like that myself because I think the Spring is such a symbolic time.

The rest of the appointment Aafreen gave more details about Nowruz, including its origin dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to the usual rituals she enjoys leading up to the Iranian New Year.<sup>35</sup>

Skeptical readers may be prone to viewing Rose and Aafreen's conversation as time spent unproductively. However, Rose's and Aafreen's subsequent reflections suggest otherwise. Looking back on the consultation throughout this appointment Rose demonstrated what many researchers have defined as an essential component to effective rhetorical listening. Paula Tompkins positions rhetorical listening in its most ethical manifestation as facilitating "moral sensitivity," defined as "a process of recognizing and being cognitively responsive to the interests of Others to thrive" (61). In order to achieve moral sensitivity, however, one must first listen intently and engage in "moral imagination" understood as a capacity to make sense of a different reality as if it were their own and thus consider topics and issues from the Other's point of view (Jaska & Pritchard). Tompkins, what's more, argues that ethics permeate any act of communication and that, "The creative dimension of communication impacts everyone involved in the communication process" (61). Considering this, Tompkins thus positions the facilitation of moral sensitivity through rhetorical listening as a promising means for individuals to understand the reality of others, consider their shared humanity with those they address, and become more self-aware of how their actions play a formidable role in affecting both themselves and others. As she explains, "rhetorical

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<sup>35</sup>For example, Aafreen detailed her love of carefully and repeatedly painting eggs with several coats of watercolors to celebrate Nowruz. Explaining this ritual, Aafreen said, "because egg is a symbol of life as well," to which Rose replied, "Cool, it makes me think of Easter eggs."

listening engages the moral imagination, prompting moral sensitivity. The practice of rhetorical listening stimulates the moral imagination by facilitating recognition of the existence of Others whose interest to thrive would be affected by the actor's decisions and actions” (61). As is obvious from their interaction, on multiple occasions Rose demonstrated a high degree of moral sensitivity towards Aafreen and the subjects and topics explored in the proposal. Rose attentively listened to Aafreen’s writing concerns, asked strategic questions, empathized with the struggles of Iranians trying to study in the United States, and took sincere interest in Aafreen’s culture and traditions.<sup>36</sup> In her post-consultation interview, Rose, moreover, pointed to hospitality as being a helpful framework for validating these approaches in her practice as a consultant, as she stated:

From our conversations and conversations in class about hospitality, I think it allows me to feel comfortable stepping away from the writing... if I were just thinking about myself as a tutor here simply to help somebody with the ins and outs of the technicalities of writing, I don't know that those conversations would be fostered. But because I'm thinking through the lines of hospitality and making space for people and welcoming their whole selves into this space, it just informs who I want to be as a consultant. But also, it gives me a framework to enter these sessions with.

For Aafreen these approaches by Rose—exhibited here and in their previous appointments—have also proven instrumental in Aafreen long-term progress as a writer. “She has a very good, open personality” Aafreen explained, “that's why I kept coming and wanting to work with her because it's not only her manners of being a tutor, but it's

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<sup>36</sup> One of the most telling moments, for me, which reflected how deeply attentive and empathetically immersed Rose was in this consultation came from her final reflection in our interview where she stated, “Today she (Aafreen) was sharing about how her new year is in the Spring...we were just talking about the differences between her Iranian new year and New Year's here and it was just a really cool conversation. And I just didn't have any concept of time throughout it, I realized as I left that I did not check the time. It just flew by.”

her personality that she's open to exchanging ideas or communicating.” Further describing her experiences with Rose, she stated, “It's not just sitting there ‘okay I have these 50 minutes to go over your paper and we're done, bye.’ She cares about the things that you write and it's not... It's not superficial for me, it's getting engaged with the material and asking for more information to make it more understanding for herself.”

During the entirety of our interview, Aafreen also repeatedly expressed a deep sense of gratitude for how much these tutorials have significantly improved the grades she's received on her academic papers. She also attributed this dramatic change to Rose's open personality, sincere curiosity, and desire to know more about Aafreen's writings—and the world more broadly. During our interview, at multiple instances Aafreen emphasized unsettling feelings of anxiety and insecurity prior to her time in the writing center, making statements such as, “I write in Farsi, I write plans, I write articles in Farsi. But in English I don't have the confidence.” Repeatedly, however, she underscored a dramatic transformation not only in the quality of her writing but also in her emotional disposition towards acts of writing in English stating, “but when I brought in my papers, and then she started looking at them and reading them, then she gave me the confidence of, ‘oh my God you're doing great, you have the gift, and you're going to write in English, you're going to write this, you're going to write that.’” Aafreen even spoke of how this growth has saved her time and changed the way she feels about writing, “Last semester I had to start a month earlier but I wrote my proposal last night in like three hours. I don't have anxiety in writing papers anymore sometimes. I even feel I'm looking forward to write.”

Aafreen's characterization of Rose, and the nature of their collaboration, especially mirrors how Bennett describes the thoughtful disposition of a hospitable educator.

According to Bennett, hospitable educators are “considerate, showing sensitivity and discretion about others’ circumstances” in addition, “They are also thoughtful because they are full of thoughts. They are reflective about the world, about life, about who they are” (77). Rose’s thoughtful and reflective disposition was also demonstrated in our interview where she noted that Aafreen “writes a lot about identity and her Iranian background and being in America,” and how often during their consultations she and Aafreen discuss various aspects related to Iranian history, culture, and geography. Far from seeing these occasions as digressions, Rose instead claimed:

I think about it in terms of developing that relationship and every time we have those conversations I know that's influencing her writing. Especially since I've become familiar with her style as a writer, but also the content that she's writing about and, because she does write about her homeland so much and identity, I know that these conversations are A. enlightening to me, B. I really enjoy them, C. I feel like she's my friend, but D. It helps me make sense of her writing.

Rose especially framed conversations in which Aafreen explains her life, family, cultural background—and the anxieties she’s experienced living and studying in the U.S.—as useful tools to help make sense of Aafreen’s academic interests as well as a means for offering insight to help Aafreen’s writing and academic growth. In these ways, her observations echo Bennett’s call for educators to, “connect academic inquiry with everyday experience” (119). But far from simply serving a utilitarian purpose, Rose also evaluated these occasions as enlightening, enjoyable, and a means to emotionally connect with a friend.

Furthermore, the nature of Rose and Aafreen’s collaboration recalls one of the three main historic modes of hospitality described by Haswell and Haswell, Nomadic Hospitality, where stories and emotional connection, shared between a host and guest, function as important gifts to be valued—both for their intrinsic worth and practical use.

As Haswell and Haswell explain, Nomadic Hospitality has a long historic standing, represented in various cultures throughout Africa, Central Asia, and eastern Europe. Today, the practice is most commonly seen by the Bedouin of the Middle East. In these contexts, “both host and guest are on the move,” a nomadic host, however, “offers tent and food to persons who are wandering, for whatever reason, away from their own tent. Or perhaps they are just tentless” (19). This interaction then takes place for at most three days whereby the host offers food, drink, shelter, extreme respect, as well as, “information about his region useful to the wanderer” (19). Though tradition dictates a host never directly ask for anything, usually the guest in return offers a gift, “in the form of communication: gossip, political news, information about the movement of other nomadic groups, land-boundaries, and even market conditions and business deals—potentially gifts that the host can use when he is traveling outside his own nomadic range” (19).<sup>37</sup> As is evident, this exchange of information likewise represents a mode of intellectual hospitality and differs in many respects from Judeo-Christian or Homeric traditions in so far as “with two nomads the status of host and guest is impermanent and reversible. When their migratory paths may again intersect, the earlier host can easily be the guest, the guest the host” (19). This reciprocal dynamic embedded in Nomadic Hospitality was also reflected between Rose and Aafreen’s work together. Interestingly, although Rose’s technical position as the consultant by and large designates her as the

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<sup>37</sup> The exclusive use of masculine pronouns in these descriptions is accounted for by Haswell and Haswell, as they draw attention to how, “In practice, Bedouin hospitality is clearly patriarchal, and has been at least since the second century BCE, when it was the foundation for the culture of the Pentateuch fathers, the line of Abraham. But in structure, it does not have to be” (22). They level similar critiques as well to the tradition of Homeric, or Warrior, Hospitality.

overarching host, Rose's descriptions of working with Aafreen are most often outlined as if she is the one being hosted. In these contexts, Rose articulated working alongside Aafreen as a sustaining force for her as she navigates graduate school and her work as a tutor. Rose claimed, for instance, "Every time I go in to work with Aafreen, I know it's going to be one of my highlights of the day...we've worked together so much that we kind of just get into things right away, we both are usually on the same page about what she's looking for and I like that." In addition, during her interview, Aafreen explained that because of her deep appreciation for Rose's open, caring, and helpful disposition "whenever I get the grades I just come here and just leave a note or just let her know how I did on the paper"—demonstrating how "gift giving" characteristic to hospitality can be extended on many levels.

### **Major Takeaways: Hospitality, Emotion, and Rhetorical Listening in Writing**

#### **Center Practice**

The hesitancy found in writing studies to address how emotions inform writing processes corresponds in many regards to the resistance in academia and U.S. culture more broadly to value the affective dimensions involved teaching and learning. However, such opposition comes at a severe cost considering how, as Dana Driscoll, communicates, "Writers' emotions, beliefs, perspectives, dispositions and backgrounds can be either developmentally generative (meaning they help produce growth) or disruptive (meaning they harm growth). Generative characteristics within people are so central to long-term writing" (23). In regards to tutorial practice, Jennifer Follett similarly notes that while consultants are not, nor should they aspire to be, counselors, "writing center tutors need to be able to address affective elements of writing, since successful



intervention when emotions hinder a writer can help the writer move forward with their writing and learning processes in more productive ways” (21). Considering the vulnerable positions many coming to writing centers find themselves in and the ways emotions permeate any act of writing, for consultants finding strategies to appropriately, ethically, and productively address emotion remains paramount. Rhetorical listening, in particular, presents itself as a promising means for consultants to understand their writers’ experiences and emotions at a profound level and, in doing so, formulate ethical responses based on their expertise and the specific context of a given appointment.

The results of this research suggest that hospitality as a theoretical framework assisted consultants in valuing their writers’ backgrounds, experiences, and emotions and helped tutors consider how these elements influenced consultations. One major finding to emerge from this study demonstrated that consultants, by and large, found hospitality to be a novel and exciting theoretical framework which took into account their lived experiences as tutors—where emotions play a central role in writing center work. For many consultants, the characteristics of rhetorical listening embedded in hospitality likewise proved an effective means to ethically and constructively navigate their writer’s (and their own) emotions. Based off recorded consultations and follow-up interviews, one important finding to emerge from this project indicates that hospitality’s undergirding values of rhetorical listening and care to the emotional dimensions of learning, even when manifested in even a single appointment, can prove instrumental in shifting writers to more healthy and generative affective positions in addition to giving them practical assistance on assignments. The results of this study also suggest that hospitality as a tutorial disposition shows great promise to aid in writer retention for future consultations.

Such occasions likewise open up possibilities for re-occurring appointments for writers to develop academically as well as form more generative relationships to writing. An implication of this is the possibility that during repeat appointments consultants can gain similar academic skills and healthier relationships to writing processes given the knowledge-sharing and host-guest reversal characteristic to hospitality.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

I entered this research project interested in how writing center consultants understood hospitality as a theoretical framework for tutoring. Specifically, this project examined tutors' perceptions of how hospitality informed their work and ameliorated challenges they identified in tutorial practice. Along similar lines, this project investigated what consultants identified as acts of hospitality in consultations as well as writing center culture more broadly.

Before conducting this research, I assumed, to some extent, that the consultants involved in this project would find hospitality informative and useful. Given the deeply personal, face-to-face dynamics typical in writing center work, this assumption was informed, as I describe in chapter 3, by my observations of how well the characteristics of hospitality correspond to writing center consultations. This assumption was also guided by research centered on education broadly (Bennett; Nowen; Palmer) and writing studies more specifically (Haswell and Haswell; Jacobs; Tremel; Wenzel) which point to hospitality as a promising means of accounting for the lived experiences of educators and the ethical challenges routinely faced in teaching.

The results of this project demonstrate that the consultants involved in this research by and large found hospitality (as articulated by Haswell and Haswell) to be immensely informative, valuable, and beneficial both in their tutorial work and growth as scholars. As a researcher, I was struck by how emphatic many of these consultants were

in their initial observations of hospitality's utility—ultimately surpassing my expectations. Consultants articulated hospitality in such ways as “a breakthrough moment,” informing “who I want to be as a tutor,” “a nice space for us to push against that non-personal idea that exists in the University,” as well as “being amazed at how well the concept of hospitality seems to work in the writing center.”

Overall, consultants' analyses of hospitality underscore a major gap in writing studies scholarship to address issues related to power and authority in writing center work. More specifically, significant writing studies scholarship highlights that because writing centers are so often characterized as supportive and safe environments, issues of power between tutors and writers remain underexplored, or even ignored, by writing center practitioners (Boquet; Carino; Clark and Healy). Issues of power and authority, however, inevitably find themselves in writing center work, especially between consultants and writers. As detailed in Chapter 3, in our focus group, and post-consultation interviews tutors identified hospitality as a helpful conceptual framework allowing them to acknowledge issues of power, authority, and expertise in their appointments and consider how to responsibly navigate these realities based off the guiding ethics of hospitality. As consultants noted, hospitality acknowledges different positionalities between a host and guest yet emphasizes a welcome, open, and thoughtful disposition on the part of the host. On a larger philosophical level, Bennett identifies this disposition as rooted in a transformative reconceptualization of power known as “relational power,” or “relational individualism.” In the context of hospitality then, the ideal host expresses an interest and openness to learn from the views and knowledge of the stranger, yet remains conscious of their own values and expertise. Consultants

especially highlighted hospitality's characteristics of mutual knowledge sharing and a host's willingness to reverse roles with a guest as constructive concepts in helping them think through how they might ethically and productively navigate their appointments—making power, authority, and expertise shared aspects between consultants and writers.

Reflecting on these characteristics (i.e. mutual knowledge sharing, reversals of guest/host) likewise offered many consultants opportunities to appreciate ways their writers' expertise and life experiences informed their (consultants') knowledge and growth related to teaching, learning, and writing. Consultants communicated that understanding their work with hospitality as a theoretical lens assisted them in valuing and making sense of moments when their writers offered them emotional encouragement, new perspectives, and knowledge acquisition. Analyzing recorded consultations also demonstrated the pedagogical utility that hospitality's characteristics of mutual knowledge sharing and reversals of guest/host can have to improve a writer's piece while building a rapport with their consultant. As described in Chapter 3, not all appointments allow for the types of role reversals and knowledge-sharing characteristic to hospitality yet, for many consultants, hospitality's stress on a host's willingness to extend help without stipulation allowed them to find value in their work even when writers came seeking more directive, and less collaborative, assistance.

This project also supports other scholarship arguing that although writing studies has long moved past the directive vs. non-directive binary, many tutors still experience feelings of guilt or breaking from tutoring orthodoxy when offering directive assistance (Nicklay; Dixon). In post-consultation interviews some consultants communicated that while they understood the limitations to non-directive only approaches, they still felt

remorse when offering directive approaches—even when such strategies seemed effective. These observations highlighting tutorial hesitation to use directive approaches underscore a need for a reconceptualization of power, authority, and expertise in tutoring so consultants might consider how they might best use different tutorial approaches without feeling guilty. To these ends, another major finding of this project proposes that hospitality shows great promise to give tutors a helpful framework to more comfortably negotiate directive and non-directive tutorial approaches depending on the specific conditions of an appointment. A number of consultants detailed ways in which hospitality helped them feel more at ease and open in situations where being directive with a writer appeared to be the best option. More specifically, hospitality’s emphasis on continually seeking to understand and meet the needs of the guest can direct consultants toward understanding ethical and effective learning acquisition as a sharing of authority, power, and expertise directed under the perception of a gracious host.

The results of this project also reinforce scholarship promoting the important role affect/emotion play in teaching and learning (Driscoll; Langstrum; Lindquist; Michicche; Newkirk; Williams). Specifically, in the context of writing center studies, this research builds upon growing scholarship aimed at helping consultants acknowledge and thoughtfully respond to how emotions permeate tutoring (Green; Perry; Fitzgerald and Wison; Kjesrud and Wislocki; Mills). Drawing from focus groups and post consultation interviews, Chapter 4 illustrated how for consultants the appeal and utility they found in hospitality came largely from hospitality’s validation for the immense role emotions play in teaching, learning, and writing. Consultants specifically drew attention to various ways that higher education at large avoids validating the personal nature of learning and

the immense role emotions play in shaping an individual's academic growth. Yet, consultants characterized hospitality as immensely useful and exciting given how it mirrored their experiences working in the writing center and informed how they might appreciate and respond to how their writers' backgrounds, experiences, and emotions influenced consultations.

Overall, recorded consultations, as well as consultants' analyses of hospitality, also support scholarship highlighting the general reluctance to consider how rhetorical listening informs ethical teaching practice (Arbor; Glenn; Lipari; Ratcliff; Thompkins; Valentine). An important discovery from this project indicates that hospitality's underlying values of rhetorical listening and attention to the emotional aspects of learning and teaching proved influential in helping consultants cultivate more healthy and generative affective positions towards their writers while giving them practical assistance related to writing. Specifically, the features of rhetorical listening seen in hospitality ultimately proved an effective means for tutors to reflect on how they might productively respond to numerous ways emotions arise in consultations. Analyses of recorded consultations and interviews also suggest that hospitable acts of rhetorical listening on the part of tutors such as "compassionate listening" (Hwoschinsky), "reflective listening" (Arbor), "strategic questioning" (Arbor; Carson; Peavy), and "moral imagination" (Thompkins) were instrumental in developing productive measures to benefit writers in their immediate and long-term academic growth.

On a most basic level, one of the biggest implications of this project is the utility and effectiveness scholarship on hospitality can play in writing center practicum courses and tutor mentoring. As illustrated in this research, hospitality shows exceptional promise

to speak to the lived experiences of consultants and provide them with opportunities to reflect on important aspects of tutoring which are often overlooked in writing studies scholarship (like those outlined above). As detailed in Chapter 4, writing center scholarship frequently favors idealizing tutorial practice (McKinney), ignores the complex dilemmas consultants routinely face (Briggs and Woolbright), and prefers essentializing tutors instead of using their observations to inform writing center theory and practice (Boquet). In contrast, with hospitality as its guiding theoretical framework this project offered complex portraits of tutors and their writers, addressed difficult problems common to appointments, and used tutors' and writers' insights to foreground potential solutions.

Another important implication to this project highlights the advantageous position hospitality as a theoretical framework plays for writing center studies as a means of addressing and offering nuanced solutions to complex, important, and oft-overlooked dilemmas consultants face in their day-to-day work. As a researcher, I was surprised how hospitality as a basic framework allowed consultants to generate such profound questions and insights related to power and authority in consulting, the importance of affect/emotion in teaching and learning, and the utility of rhetorical listening in appointments. I believe this derives, at least partially, from hospitality's status as a practice occurring across time and culture. As many consultants emphasized, hospitality, though with deep intellectual roots, for most, remains easily accessible. In our focus group, Kayla drew attention to this important aspect, noting:

I appreciate the wide scope for where hospitality comes from, or our ideas of them, and I think that's really reflective of how most people appreciate hospitality around the world and in different cultures and different contexts it's an important



thing, so why would we not bring it into writing center work when we are caring about the people we are working with.

Yet, though ostensibly simple, hospitality can still function as a subversive and unusual ontology which, in encouraging educators to attend, empathize, and value “the other,” offers great promise for consultants to help their writers develop literacy skills and a great sense of agency in deeply sustainable and ethical ways. The impetus to find effective means of constructively speaking across differences in writing center contexts remains all the more salient given the promising moves recent writing center studies scholarship has made to consider how issues of race (Condon; Greenfield and Rowan; Grim), sexual identity (Denny; Rihn and Sloan), disability (Babcock), and multilingualism (Blau et al.; Olson) influence tutorials and reflect a need for writing centers to equip consultants with effective means of accounting for difference and being more attentive, helpful and inclusive to all writers they serve. Towards these ends, as consultants noted throughout this project, hospitality’s underlying values work towards a more holistic model of higher education where educators are asked to separate themselves from manifestations of “insistent individualism” or “hard lines of separation” (Bennett, 52). As Bennett notes, “When higher education loses sight of vibrant connections with individual lives, it works against itself and moves toward a deadening, rather than enlivening, spirituality” (122). Instead, hospitality promotes an open, flexible, and humble disposition on the part of tutors, teachers, and scholars and requires attention and discernment related to the stories, backgrounds, and emotions each individual brings with them to the process of learning.

More recently, the number of writing centers within English-medium colleges and universities outside the U.S. has also dramatically increased (Rafoth; Hyland). In these contexts, where writing consultants work almost completely with ESL students,

hospitality might likewise prove beneficial in future research exploring the ethics and effectiveness of writing center practices in more non-traditional settings.

### **Rethinking Research Practices**

Reflecting back on this project, there are a number of ways I conducted this research which, in hindsight, I would have approached differently. Still, I am thankful for how these missteps inform the ethics and effectiveness of my future research and hope these observations might prove helpful to other scholars conducting similar projects. First, prior to their recorded consultations and post-consultation interviews, participant tutors were given ample time to consider volunteering for this project, understand and ask questions related to consent forms, and fill out mood inventory surveys before their appointments began. For participant writers, however, I found that my approach to invite them to participate when they showed up to an appointment resulted in reducing the time they were able to spend in consultations. In fact, explaining my project to writer participants, giving them enough time to read through the consent form, and ask questions related mood-inventory surveys took, on average, took approximately 7 minutes. As appointments in this writing center run, at most, for 50 minutes, I found it unfortunate that participating in this study may have reduced the assistance volunteer writers received. A small number of consultants communicated that they extended the allotted time of these consultations for a few minutes to compensate for lost time. However, doing so meant these tutors worked beyond their scheduled time and may have put themselves in positions where they were less prepared for appointments that may have followed—something I had not anticipated and wish I could have avoided. To mitigate against these concerns, I could have been more strategic in recruiting volunteer

writers in ways that were more mindful of their, and their consultants', time.

Specifically, prior to writers' scheduled appointments, via e-mail I could have explained my research and invited their participation. If I had taken these measures, I would still have met with volunteer writers to answer any questions or concerns they had, but I imagine this would have significantly reduced the amount of time writers ended up spending prior to their appointments.

Another measure I would have approached differently relates to the Brief Mood Inventory Surveys (BMIS) I administered to participant writers and consultants prior to and after their recorded consultations. As noted in Chapter 2 these surveys were to some extent useful in helping me triangulate data found in recorded consultations and follow up interviews. Also, one unexpected discovery came from a tutor who identified these surveys as meditative or centering practices useful to consultations. Still, some important issues arose in using these surveys for this project. First, they took time away from consultants and writers before and after their appointments. Second, several participant writers whose first languages were not English expressed confusion and needed clarification for mood adjectives on the survey like lively, gloomy, jittery, peppy, and fed up—often cutting further into their consultation time and compromising the overall validity of the surveys. Also, given the relatively small sample size (38 surveys total from 10 writers and 9 consultants) no big conclusions could be responsibly drawn from these surveys. Looking back, I believe the deficits the (BMIS) surveys posed to my project out-weighed the benefits and, if I had I to do it over again, I would not have included them as a component to this research.

Lastly, as mentioned in Chapter 2, my efforts to video record consultations overall proved of little use and posed a minor hindrance to my research. I had initially believed video recording consultations would help add extra dimensions to my analyses of tutorials—especially given my interests in considering the ways affective and emotion influence teaching and learning. However, of the 10 volunteer writers, 4 wished not to be video recorded. With the remaining 6 recorded consultations, 1 was cut off 10 minutes into the consultation because of my oversight as a researcher to keep a mindful watch on the allotted storage in the memory card. The five consultations which were recorded also proved of little use to my analysis. To reduce noise, all consultations were held in private side-rooms of the writing center. These side rooms each had a long table, desktop computer, and two chairs. Because of limited space, I set up the video camera with tripod in the most viable corner. From this angle, the camera generally faced the backs of consultants and their writers—limiting much useful recorded video data.

### **Beyond the Writing Center: Hospitality, What's Next?**

There are a number of implications and suggestions this project also poses for the field of writing studies more generally. Though this research primarily focused on hospitality in writing center work, on a number of occasions consultants explored what hospitality might mean in traditional teaching contexts like college composition courses. Their suggestions likewise open up opportunities for future research exploring how hospitality might prove a beneficial framework to help classroom instructors ethically and effectively navigate their work.<sup>38</sup> Importantly, several consultants identified how

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<sup>38</sup> So far, no site-based research in writing studies exists exploring hospitality in relationship to college composition courses.

hospitality's applications in writer center work are not easily interchangeable with college courses because of their usual differences. In our focus group, Kendyl, for instance, stated "I think that there is a reason why writing centers exist and flourish in the university setting and it's because of that minor contrast between the traditional classroom setting." Unlike writing consultants, most writing instructors, for example, usually have a more defined role of authority, must manage the interests and academic progress of multiple students in a classroom, and offer grades determining students' academic status. Still, the consultants involved in this project generated a number of useful suggestions for how hospitality might be applied to college courses. On general level, consultants observed that hospitality could prove beneficial to writing instructors as a guiding ethos and reminder to continually strive to make their classrooms spaces which promote mutual respect, encourage rhetorical listening, and support diverse viewpoints.

Considering hospitality largely applied to writing classrooms, Cat stated, "I feel like that safe space we're talking about in hospitality, maybe that is the base point where you can start in any classroom is making or creating an environment that welcomes everyone's voice." In a similar way, Haswell and Haswell suggest instructors move towards becoming better host-teachers by approaching students as valid story tellers in their own right with information and ideas that can prove enriching not just to classmates but to the instructor. In doing so, teachers can likewise act as gracious hosts by giving in return "since they often recognize meanings to the stories that the student-teller may not see, and thus offer a new insight" (53). Providing more specific dimensions to how hospitality could be applied to writing classrooms, in our focus group Hayley highlighted how instructors can take advantage of fostering hospitality in office hours where

hospitality's characteristic blurring of authority and power, mutual knowledge sharing, and rhetorical listening might be more readily fostered given their one-on-one, face-to-face dynamics. As she stated, "I think hospitality speaks to things like office hours too because we all have had different experiences going to people's office hours, but in a lot of cases the person is like "Oh I've never thought about it that way" or "have you read this book" and it opens up to a knowledge strain that wouldn't have happened in the classroom. I think that's another space where you have the opportunity to switch those power dynamics or get rid of them when they are outside of the classroom when you are actually just meeting one-on-one as people." Interestingly, Haswell and Haswell similarly stress the need for instructors to encourage office hours as a means of fostering a greater sense of hospitality in classrooms stating, "Safe space can be found for more open-ended, one-on-one encounters. Teachers can increase office hours and encourage students to drop in, and not only when they have a paper due or a paper to be diagnosed" (172).

Some consultants also saw more radical implications if hospitality were to be applied to traditional classroom learning. Rose, for example, stated, "I have ideas about how hospitality transfers from the writing center to first-year composition classes, writing instruction, and even other environments like math classrooms. I think to me one of the big things about hospitality is that it would disrupt timelines of learning and acquisitions, so there are more chances to learn." Haswell and Haswell, correspondingly, argue that for decades most traditional classrooms have been designed for teachers by others who use "every image of change except that intrinsic to hospitality" (173). Consequently, this leads to, "forces that back testing...insist that we keep adding tests, keep hewing to the mandated or legalized syllabus, keep adding more students to our classes, keep carving

our grading system in stone, keep surveying our students with outside assessors—keep doing the things that erect barriers against the individual student and the individual teacher together acting as guest and host” (173). Instead, hospitality presents a promising framework to push against these barriers, especially increased testing and strict deadlines geared towards learning acquisitions. Composition instructors seeking to find a more hospitable approach to teaching—yet facing the inevitable institutional restraints of assigning grades—might also investigate the utility of labor-based grading contracts where instructors and individual students dialogically negotiate the number, types, and quality of assignments then correspond their established criteria with specific grades.<sup>39</sup> Inside the classroom, writing instructors looking for rhetorical methods which promote hospitality might likewise consider teaching alternative methods of argumentation like Rogerian argument—a strategy promoting that people with opposing viewpoints use empathetic listening to promote mutual learning and understanding while finding common-ground. As James Davis argues, “With the Rogerian model, students can learn to look at arguments in a more multifaceted sense, press the limitations of binary thinking, and understand the humanness that accompanies people interacting with the world—and its issues—that surrounds them (328).” Here, Davis’ specifically identifies Rogerian argument as a means of promoting the values of hospitality where learning is framed dialogically and with attention to considering every individual’s equal worth and value.

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<sup>39</sup> For readers wishing to learn more about labor-based grading contracts, my first recommended reference point would be Asao B. Inoue’s *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion*, especially Chapter 4 “What Labor-Based Grading Contracts Look Like.”

The results of this project also suggest that hospitality might serve as a useful metaphor and social praxis to inform concepts central to writing studies like reflexivity.<sup>40</sup> As a discipline, composition and rhetoric, in particular, has long questioned what it means to respect, elevate, and learn from marginalized voices in addition to how to engage and respond to communities within and outside of writing classrooms. Major developments in the field have drawn heavily from frameworks like critical pedagogy, feminist theory, and cultural studies to, among other objectives, question what responsible and ethical engagement with language and literacy difference might look like. The late 80s to late 90s, in particular, saw a surge in research related to reflexivity and teaching writing (Bishop; Howard et al.; Hillocks). During these same times, reflexivity also became more specifically defined and more broadly applied (Alcoff; Chiseri-Strater). For example, Linda Alcoff's influential work "The Problem of Speaking for Others," laid out specific criteria needed to qualify actions or research as "self-reflective" and highlighted ethical dilemmas and potentially destructive consequences when an outsider, even with well-meaning intentions, unreflectively speaks for a group to which they are not a part of. To complicate this, Alcoff, however, saw potential value in speaking for and with others, but highlighted the importance of self-reflexivity in such efforts, whereby we "interrogate the bearing of our location and context on what it is we are saying" and make these efforts, "an explicit part of every serious discursive practice we engage in" (25). Subsequent scholarship in Composition and Rhetoric closely tied reflexivity to ethnography and feminist research methodologies— arguing for

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<sup>40</sup> Broadly speaking, I define reflexivity as concerted efforts to listen, investigate, and learn from difference, as well as a simultaneous willingness to communicate and interrogate one's own position during this process.



reflexivity's necessary and important role in future research practices (Cushman; Kirsch and Ritchie; Kirsch; Mortensen and Kirsch;). Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie, for instance, push for a "rigorously reflexive examination of ourselves as researchers that is as careful as our observation of the object of our inquiry" (9). However, as a component of ethical research, reflexivity is often easier to theoretically conceive of than practice—especially since authentic reflexive practices look different based on the significant contextual nuances to any site under investigation. Some scholars have noted potential shortcomings, for example, in over-emphasizing self-reflexivity's role in research. Brenda Brueggeman, for example, argues that heavy and explicit emphasis and explication of a researcher's positionality may run a risk where "the researcher (the self) once again usurps the position of the subject (the other). For in being self-reflexive, we turn the lens back on ourselves, putting ourselves at the center of representation" (19). Yet, for the consultants involved in this project viewing tutorial work through the lens of hospitality generated productive reflections informing their own reflexive practices in relationship to their work as tutors. For researchers, hospitality may similarly provide an apt metaphor to continually consider how ethically and effectively they are reflexive in their engagement with and representation of those they work with. Specifically, hospitality could be useful in these regards given its promotion of relational power, mutual knowledge sharing, and exchanges of guest and host, for, as Ellen Cushman argues more scholarships in writing studies must be designed where "researchers and participants fluidly negotiate power relations together as they try to facilitate each other's goals" which requires "that participants have the critical reflexivity necessary in order to openly and carefully negotiate the terms of the such conditions" (23).

## Final Thoughts

Towards the end of our focus group, Lauren gave an important vision for what embracing hospitality in institutionalized settings might mean, stating:

For me, hospitality is "what can I give you" vs. the normal university dynamic is "what can I get from this" so to take on a hospitality approach it's not going to be "we can give you an education if you can meet these requirements" it'll be "we want to give you this education to better yourself, your life, your knowledge."

Various institutional restraints will inevitably present obstacles to Lauren's optimism picture of what a university might look like if it fully embraced the ethos of hospitality.<sup>41</sup>

But, as Bennett reminds us, for many—if not most—of those who have found a vocational calling in academia, the possibility for education to center on the wholistic betterment of everyone involved, educators and students alike, was likely the initial attraction to a professional career in the field, as Bennett claims "Hospitality is central to the relational community most of us were seeking when we entered the academy. To be hospitable is to attend to the reality of the other—to appreciate it without preconditions and to allow it to instruct oneself" (xi). If true, then as educators we should re-center our energies on the very elements that brought us towards loving learning, teaching, and the relationships involved in these processes. We should embrace hospitality

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<sup>41</sup> Readers interested in explorations of hospitality's capacity to be made manifest in educational contexts should read Sean Barnette's *Houses of Hospitality: The Material Rhetoric of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (2011) which offers a comprehensive analysis of the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s, arguing that understanding how figures like Dorothy Day were able to enact hospitality in institutionalized settings contributes to understanding the place hospitality might occupy in composition studies.

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=General Average;      =Average Increase;      =Average Decrease

**Consultant (BMIS) And Mood Survey Results Before Consultation**

Adjective	Kendyl	Lauren	Ash	Kayla	Tristan	Cat	Michelle	Kelby	Hayley	(Average)
Lively	2	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	3	2.88
Happy	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3.22
Caring	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.33
Content	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	2.88
Peppy	1	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2.22
Calm	3	3	4	2	2	4	3	3	3	3
Loving	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.88
Active	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	2.55
Sad	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2.77
Tired	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1.88
Gloomy	2	3	2	4	3	3	4	3	3	3
Jittery	3	4	4	2	2	2	1	4	3	2.77
Drowsy	3	1	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	2.33
Grouchy	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	3.55
Nervous	3	3	4	3	2	4	2	4	3	3.11
Fed Up	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3.22
Total	39	44	52	49	39	50	44	48	46	45.66
Mood Score	10	18	18	17	14	17	17	15	17	15.8

**Average Total (BMIS) Pleasant-Unpleasant Score for all Consultants= 45.66**  
**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=7.13**

**Average Total (Mood Score) For All Consultants=15.8**  
**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=7.94**

### Consultant (BMIS) And Mood Survey Results After Consultation

Adjective	Kendyl	Lauren	Ash	Kayla	Tristan	Cat	Michelle	Kelby	Hayley	(Av.)
Lively	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3.11
Happy	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.22
Caring	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3.44
Content	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3
Peppy	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2.44
Calm	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	2.88
Loving	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.88
Active	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	2.88
Sad	3	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	3	3.44
Tired	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Gloomy	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	3.55
Jittery	2	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	3
Drowsy	3	2	1	2	3	2	4	4	2	2.5
Grouchy	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3.44
Nervous	2	4	4	3	3	4	1	4	3	3.11
Fed Up	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3.55
Total	45	52	50	46	46	55	45	55	43	48.55
Mood Score	12	18	18	15	16	18	19	17	17	16.66

**Average Total (BMIS) Pleasant-Unpleasant Score for all Consultants= 48.55**

**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=7.58**

**Average Total (Mood Score) for all Consultants=16.66**

**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=8.33**

**Consultants' Average Total (BMIS) Pleasant-Unpleasant Score Changes Before and After Consultation**

	Before Consultants' (Average)	After Consultant's (Average)	Increase, Decrease, or Equal	Average Change	Average Change on 1-10 Scale
Lively	2.88	3.11	Increase	0.23	.575
Happy	3.22	3.22	Equal	0	0
Caring	3.33	3.44	Increase	0.11	.275
Content	2.88	3	Increase	0.12	.3
Peppy	2.22	2.44	Increase	0.22	.55
Calm	3	2.88	Decrease	-0.02	-.005
Loving	2.88	2.88	Equal	0	0
Active	2.55	2.88	Increase	0.33	.825
Sad	2.77	3.44	Decrease	-0.67	-1.675
Tired	1.88	2	Decrease	-0.02	-.005
Gloomy	3	3.55	Decrease	-0.55	-1.375
Jittery	2.77	3	Decrease	-0.23	-.575
Drowsy	2.33	2.5	Decrease	-0.17	-.425
Grouchy	3.55	3.44	Increase	0.11	.275
Nervous	3.11	3.11	Equal	0	0
Fed Up	3.22	3.55	Decrease	-0.33	-.825

**Consultant Mood Score Changes Before and After Consultation**

Mood Score Average Before	Mood Score Average After	Increase, Decrease, or Equal	Average Change	Average Change Adjusted on 1-10 scale
15.8	16.7	Increase	0.9	0.45

### Writers' (BMIS) And Mood Score Results Before Consultation

Adjective	Anna	Amir	Pavel	Joe	Nic	Maria	Fatemah	Inaya	Fred	Aafreen	(Av.)
Lively	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3.1
Happy	3	2	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3.2
Caring	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	3.6
Content	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.9
Peppy	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	4	3	2.6
Calm	4	1	3	4	3	4	2	4	3	3	3.1
Loving	4	2	4	3	3	4	3	2	4	3	3.2
Active	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2.7
Sad	3	2	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	3.3
Tired	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	2.6
Gloomy	2	2	4	4	3	2	2	4	3	3	2.9
Jittery	4	3	4	4	2	3	2	4	3	4	3.3
Drowsy	4	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	1	4	3
Grouchy	4	3	4	4	3	3	2	4	2	3	3.2
Nervous	4	1	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	3.2
Fed Up	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3.1
Total	52	40	54	59	49	50	41	48	46	51	49
Mood Score	17	7	18	20	16	17	17	17	18	18	16.5

**Average Total (BMIS) Pleasant-Unpleasant Score For All Writers= 49**  
**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=7.6**

**Average Total (Mood Score) For All Writers=16.5**  
**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=8.25**

**Writers' (BMIS) And Mood Survey Results After Consultation**

Adjective	Anna	Amir	Pavel	Joe	Nic	Maria	Fatemah	Inaya	Fred	Aafreen	(Av.)
Lively	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.6
Happy	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.5
Caring	4	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	4	4	3.5
Content	1	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3.1
Peppy	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	4	2.5
Calm	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.5
Loving	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	2	4	4	3.4
Active	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	4	2.8
Sad	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3.5
Tired	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	2	3	4	2.8
Gloomy	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.7
Jittery	4	2	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	4	3.2
Drowsy	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	4	4	3.2
Grouchy	4	3	3	4	3	2	2	4	3	4	3.2
Nervous	4	2	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3.5
Fed Up	4	3	4	4	3	4	2	4	3	4	3.5
Total	53	44	56	60	53	48	46	46	55	64	52.5
Mood Score	18	11	18	20	17	18	19	17	19	20	17.7

**Average Total (BMIS) Pleasant-Unpleasant Score For All Writers= 52.5**  
**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=8.2**

**Average Total (Mood Score) For All Writers=17.7**  
**Adjusted on a 1-10 scale=8.85**



**Writers' Average Total (BMIS) Pleasant-Unpleasant Score Changes Before and After Consultation**

	Before Writers' (Average)	After Writer's (Average)	Increase, Decrease, or Equal	Average Change	Average Change on 1-10 Scale
Lively	3.1	3.6	Increase	0.5	1.25
Happy	3.2	3.5	Increase	0.3	.75
Caring	3.6	3.5	Decrease	-0.1	-.25
Content	2.9	3.1	Increase	0.2	.5
Peppy	2.6	2.5	Decrease	-0.1	-.25
Calm	3.1	3.5	Increase	0.4	1.0
Loving	3.2	3.4	Increase	0.2	.5
Active	2.7	2.8	Increase	0.1	.25
Sad	3.3	3.5	Decrease	-0.2	-.5
Tired	2.6	2.8	Decrease	-0.2	-.5
Gloomy	2.9	3.7	Decrease	-0.8	-2.0
Jittery	3.3	3.2	Increase	0.1	.25
Drowsy	3	3.2	Decrease	-0.2	-.5
Grouchy	3.2	3.2	Equal	0	0
Nervous	3.2	3.5	Decrease	-0.3	-.75
Fed Up	3.1	3.5	Decrease	-0.4	-1.0

**Writers' Mood Score Changes Before and After Consultation**

Mood Score Average Before	Mood Score Average After	Increase, Decrease, or Equal	Average Change	Average Change Adjusted on 1-10 scale
16.5	17.7	Increase	1.2	0.6

## Appendix (B)

### List of 64 Codes Used Divided by Categories and Number of Times Individually

#### Category 1 (Modes of Hospitality)

Bedouin Hospitality 6
General Examples/Models of Hospitality 7
Intellectual Hospitality 15
Traditional Hospitality 5
Transformative Hospitality 14

#### Category 2 (Characteristics and Examples of Hospitality)

Admitting Not Knowing 10
Asking Question(s) 77
Blurring/Disintegration of Time 2
Common Humanity 10
Cultural Exchange 50
Gift Giving/Exchanging 19
Hospitality and Familiarity 1
Hospitality as Complicating Roles of Power/Knowledge 21
Hospitality as Flexible 26
Hospitality as Subversive/Unorthodox 12
Humor 16
Informal 1

Listening 16
Openness 10
Praise for Consultant 16
Praise for Writing Center 4
Reciprocity 2
Restlessness 13
Risk-taking 27
Silence 32
Surprise 4
Working Through Meaning Together 33

### **Category 3 (Hospitality's Pedagogical Applications)**

Challenges: Tutoring Online 25
Collaborative 19
Differences Between Writing Centers and Classrooms 3
Hospitality and Online Teaching/Tutoring 7
Hospitality as a Pedagogical Mindset 7
Hospitality as Benefiting Consultants 13
Hospitality's Applications in Classrooms 6
Promising Aspects-Online Tutoring 5

### **Category 4 (Hospitality and Personal/Affective Dimensions of Teaching/Tutoring)**

Chit Chat	1
Confidence	5
Friend	4
General Examples of Affect/Feeling/Emotion	41
Joking/Teasing	10
Mood Inventory	2
Mood Inventory Surveys	2
Personal Experience	31
Thanks/Appreciation	11
Writing as Personal/Vulnerable	19
Yawn	11

**Category 5 (Negative Emotion/Affect and Complications to Hospitality)**

Bad Experience with Writing Center	1
Inhospitable	4
Problems/Complications of Hospitality	17
Problems/Complications of Modern Education	11
Questions About Hospitality	5

**Category 6 (Re-occurring Issues in Consulting)**

Client vs. Guest	5
Consulting as Transaction/Directive	10

Diction/Word Choice 4
Directive(s) 17
Explaining Project Details 16
Grammar 32
Multilingual Writers 8
Primary v. Secondary Sources 1
Quality of Tutoring 6

**Category 7 (General References)**

604 Reference 2
7 Habits of Highly Effective People 2
Article Title 1

**Appendix (C)**

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your answer:

1. What gender do you identify as?
  - A. Male
  - B. Female
  - C. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. Prefer not to answer.
  
2. What is your age?
  - A. 15 - 18 years old
  - B. 19 - 23 years old
  - C. 24 - 27 years old
  - D. 28-32 years old
  - E. 32-36 years old
  - F. 37+
  - G. Prefer not to answer.
  
3. Do you consider yourself an international student?
  - Yes
  - NoIf Yes, what country would you describe as your home country?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If from the United States, please specify your ethnicity.
  - A. Caucasian
  - B. African-American
  - C. Latino or Hispanic
  - D. Asian
  - E. Native American
  - F. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - G. Two or More: \_\_\_\_\_
  - H. Other/Unknown: \_\_\_\_\_
  - I. Prefer not to say
  
5. What is your current educational standing?
  - A. Undergraduate
  - B. Graduate
  - C. Faculty
  - D. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. Prefer not to answer

## Appendix (D)

### Writing for Godot

#### THE WRITING CENTER

A Play in One Act for Three or More Actors

#### ACT I

*The writing center. One table sits in the middle of the room, and at it sits FRESHMAN. A backpack sits nearby and a computer is open on the desk. CONSULTANT enter stage left. CONSULTANT is looking at a cell phone.*

CONSULTANT *(looking Increase from phone at only person in room)* You must be FRESHMAN. And it says here that you're working on a literacy narrative.

FRESHMAN Yes, and yes. And I've got a lot of questions.

CONSULTANT *(takes a seat at the table next to FRESHMAN)* That's what we love to hear. This is your first time at the writing center?

FRESHMAN It is, but I think I'm going to be coming here a lot. Look at this writing prompt.

CONSULTANT *(after reading over prompt)* Yes, that's certainly a literacy narrative. What's wrong?

FRESHMAN Look at it! What kind of prompt is that? It wants my opinion. My **opinion**. It doesn't want me to just read and regurgitate a book, it doesn't want me to repeat what my teacher says about a subject. *(increasingly indignant)* It wants me to tell my own ideas and opinions!

CONSULTANT Ah. *(checks phone)* That's right. You're a Freshman. Yes, this is a thing that happens. You're at a university. A college professor wants a room full of scholars, not students.

FRESHMAN ...oh god. *(pales)* High school has not prepared me for this.

CONSULTANT That's alright! Here, that's what the writing center is for. Why don't you tell me a little bit about your relationship with literacy. That is to say, if I had to ask you to produce the biggest moment in your life regarding books, or even movies or television.

FRESHMAN Well, I think, if I had to pick, it'd be when I was nine, there was this book, and whenever I read it, it felt like I found some new meaning, a new interpretation of what it was trying to say to me.

CONSULTANT Voila! You just wrote your literacy narrative. Tell me more about that moment, build on it, really tell me the story, like you're trying to put me in the moment.

FRESHMAN And then there was the last time, when the book came to life and tried to eat my dad...

*(Doorbell chimes, CONSULTANT looks Increase towards the clock.)*

CONSULTANT *(Disregarding the last thing FRESHMAN said)* Sorry, that means we only have a little time, is there anything you want to focus on before we end?

FRESHMAN Even now I must carry it with me in my bag, or else it will lay waste to my family's farm and hunt my siblings through the woods hungry for a Black Sabbath...

CONSULTANT *(Still disregarding FRESHMAN)* Sure, talk about that more, really give it detail in the paper. *(Standing)* Thank you for coming by. Feel free to make more appointments whenever you want to continue working on your writing.

*(CONSULTANT exits stage left. FRESHMAN warily picks Increase backpack. Growling comes from inside of it, and FRESHMAN lifts a book with teeth from the bag. It tries to bite FRESHMAN, who then exits stage right struggling with it. PHYSICIST enters stage looking back towards where FRESHMAN went with an odd look and then takes a seat at the table. A moment passes, and CONSULTANT returns, but wearing a hat.)*

CONSULTANT You must be my next writer! Welcome to the writing center, have you been here before?

PHYSICIST  $e^2=m^2c^4+p^2c^2$

CONSULTANT Oh. A hard-science major. Uh, do you speak English?

PHYSICIST  $P>0$ .

CONSULTANT Well, *(checks phone)* it says here you're working on a journal article, and are just hoping for spelling and grammar assistance



before publication. *(pauses)* Wait, probability greater than zero means you **do** speak English! Come now, I'm not an editing service. You'll have to work with me on this. Why don't you read this paper aloud to me, and we'll see what we hear and hear what you see.

PHYSICIST Curse my academic integrity, even in oblique equation form. Can't you read it for me?

CONSULTANT I can't read or write.

*(PHYSICIST mimes reading paper while CONSULTANT nods along. Occasionally, PHYSICIST puts paper Decrease and scribbles on it. Stage lights dim as night falls, then come back Increase as dawn arrives, then fall again. As they rise once more, doorbell chimes.)*

CONSULTANT *(yawning)* Alright, good scholar, that sound means we're almost out of time. But I think we did some good work here. I didn't understand most of it, but you certainly seemed good at catching your mistakes when I made you read them out loud!

PHYSICIST It really did help. Thanks for that. I've got another appointment for a different article later today, I'll make sure to request you since you're so helpful.

CONSULTANT *(dryly)* Thrilled. See you then!

*(PHYSICIST exits stage right, CONSULTANT exits stage left. PHYSICIST passes NNS, who enters stage left and quietly takes seat and takes out of backpack a paper and a translation dictionary. CONSULTANT enters wearing two hats.)*

NNS *(standing)* Thank you for seeing me today. I hope not to cause too much trouble.

CONSULTANT Uh, yeah. I thought you were a non-native speaker. Your English sounds flawless though.

NNS *(taking a seat)* It is the difficulty of including us. If I am represented with clearly broken English, that is problematic and racist. If I am represented with flawless English, it understates the actual struggles I and others like me suffer on a day-to-day basis here. But to not include me at all would be the most offensive of all, so... *(shrugging)* the playwright has taken the only answer he could think of.

CONSULTANT So... uh... *(taking a seat and looking uncertain)* what can I help you with then?

NNS I need you to explain which bodies of water start with ‘the,’ *(CONSULTANT leans back as if struck)* I need you to explain which Native American words being used as place names are pronounced Americanized and which are pronounced properly, *(CONSULTANT leans back until almost falling out of seat)* and I need you to explain to me why there are two fully accepted standards for placing a comma before the last ‘and’ in a list. *(CONSULTANT falls out of chair onto ground, twitching. The doorbell rings.)* I thought as much.

*(NNS stands Increase, exits stage left, leaving behind dictionary and paper. CONSULTANT twitches on the ground. FRONT DESK enters stage left and approaches CONSULTANT.)*

FRONT DESK Your next appointment is here. Do you need another hat?

CONSULTANT *(struggling to feet, coughing)* Yes, please, if you have one.

*(FRONT DESK gives CONSULTANT another hat, then exits stage left. CONSULTANT gets to feet and puts on new hat on top of other two hats. FRESHMAN enters stage left, clothing noticeably more torn Increase, with war paint under eyes, carrying the toothed book impaled on a spear with another spear on back.)*

CONSULTANT A-hem. *(dusts off self)* Hello and welcome to the writing center! Is this your first time here?

FRESHMAN *(incredulous)* No. I meet you earlier today. You had me unleash a lexical horror that I had to battle with, to hunt and be hunted by, until at last I slew the leafed horror and drank ink-black words as blood and chewed the story as meat.

CONSULTANT Ah, a literacy narrative. How did it go?

FRESHMAN I got an A on it. So, I’ve requested to work with you on all future projects. Next I have to do a literary response paper. *(pulls book from spear to give spear to CONSULTANT, dropping dead book on table)* I’ve brought you a weapon. We HUNT!

*(CONSULTANT and FRESHMAN exit stage right. After a few moments, FRONT DESK enters stage left, visibly sighing and rolling eyes while collecting abandoned props from the table. FRONT DESK exits stage left and doorbell rings. CONSULTANT*

*enters stage right, still in three hats, but now with warpaint on cheeks and a blowdart in the topmost one)*

CONSULTANT *(aside)* When your writer is that enthusiastic and focused, all you have to do is go along for the ride. You'll get to see some amazing things. Though I did not expect the research librarians to be armed.

*(WALK IN enters stage left.)*

WALK IN Hey, are you the Consultant? I'm a walk in.

CONSULTANT I have a walk in?

*(FRONT DESK enters stage left.)*

FRONT DESK Ah, good, you're already out here. I was trying to call you in the back.

*(FRONT DESK exits stage left. CONSULTANT and WALK IN take seats at the table. WALK IN pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of a pocket.)*

CONSULTANT Is this your first time here?

WALK IN No. I worked here last year.

CONSULTANT Ah! A grad student in English! What fascinating project are you here for? What amazing work do I get to provide some small help in bringing to life? A scholarly article? A moving piece of creative writing?

WALK IN *(pulling crumpled paper from pocket)* I don't understand this writing prompt at all.

CONSULTANT *(crestfallen, takes prompt to start reading)* "This project is a literacy essay meta-response. A meta-response is not a response, nor is it an analysis. It is a meta-response. In your paper, please engage with the following questions. How would you respond to this essay? How would you analyze this essay?" *(looks Increase at WALK IN dumbfounded)*

WALK IN Pretty much as far as I got.

CONSULTANT No, no, wait, there's... got to be some logic to this writing prompt. What's the class?

WALK IN Lacanian Theory.

CONSULTANT ...um. Hold on, maybe we should ask The Boss about this one. This is... I dunno. This is confusing.

*(CONSULTANT stands and exits stage right, before returning with THE BOSS. THE BOSS is a roving mass of hats, stacked Increase on head, sewn together as a cloak, concealing any sign of the person underneath. When THE BOSS reaches the table, WALK IN takes the writing prompt and pushes it into the mass of hats.)*

THE BOSS ...to answer a Lacanian riddle, simply invert the words. You are not asked to respond. You are only asked how you *would* respond.

WALK IN You mean, I don't answer the questions, I only explain how I would answer the question if I had to?

*(THE BOSS makes a bowing gesture, like a nod, and turns to shuffle off. Exit stage right.)*

CONSULTANT I don't entirely understand what just happened, but I know a new answer now for if that question is asked again.

WALK IN That's why The Boss is the boss. The Boss has been doing this long enough to vanish under the many hats of this position. Speaking of, here, you need a 'walk in' hat now, since you just had your first walk in. *(WALK IN gives CONSULTANT a hat from backpack. CONSULTANT puts it on, now with four hats, war paint, and a blow dart still in one of the hats)*

CONSULTANT You did this last year, how many hats do I need to have before I feel like I really know what I'm doing? The imposter syndrome is wicked strong.

WALK IN Oh, you mean the actual moment you start to feel comfortable working in the writing center? Well, I found *(Doorbell chimes longer than usual, muting WALK IN's answer.)*

CONSULTANT (on auto-pilot) That bell means we're right about out of time. Is there anything else you want to focus on in your remaining time?

WALK IN (simultaneous to CONSULTANT) That bells means we're right about out of time. Is there anything else you want to focus on in your remaining time?

*(Both CONSULTANT and WALK IN stare at each other waiting for a response, until FRONT DESK enters stage left. With a visible*

*sigh and eyeroll, FRONT DESK pulls WALK IN to feet and guides them off. Both exit stage left. CONSULTANT keeps sitting there waiting for a response.)*

*(Stage lights go out.)*

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### EDUCATION

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**Ph.D. Rhetoric and Composition | University of Louisville, 2017-2021 (May 2021)**  
**Secondary Literature Specialty: Native American and Indigenous Literature**

**Dissertation:** “Imagination in Practice: Writing Studies and the Application of Hospitality.” Defense date: May 2021

**Dissertation Committee:** Bronwyn Williams (Chair), Andrea Olinger, Frank Kelderman, and John Duffy

**M.A. English Composition and Rhetoric | University of Oklahoma, 2009-2011**

**Thesis/Project:** “Enriched Rhetoric: Exploring the Advantages of Multilingual Writers in Composition Classrooms”

**Committee:** Christopher Carter (Chair), Daniela Garofalo, Catherine Hobbs, and Clemencia Rodriguez

**B.A. English Literature, Non-Profit Studies | University of Oklahoma, 2008**

### RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

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Second Language Writing  
Composition Pedagogy  
Writing Program and Center  
Administration  
Research Methods  
Listening Studies

Business and Technical Writing  
Film and Video Studies  
Online Writing Instruction  
Native American and Indigenous  
Literature  
Jesuit Rhetoric

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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### **Manuscript**

With J. Newman, A. Warner, and B. Williams, "Embodiment, Place, and Stance: A Collaborative Exploration of Graduate Research and Mentoring." Published at *International Studies in Sociology of Education* (Taylor and Francis). Spring 2021. **Book Review**

Review of *Help Indians Help Themselves: The Later Writings of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin* by P. Jane Hafen. 2019. Published at *Studies in American Indian Literature* (University of Nebraska Press). Volume 32, Numbers 3-4. 235-237. Fall-Winter 2020.

### **Other**

"Writing for Sanity's Sake: A Quarantine Companion" *University of Louisville Writing Center*, 7 Apr. 2020. *Web*. 9 Apr. 2020 (Blog).

"Tricks and Traps: Negotiating Procrastination and Productivity" *University of Louisville Writing Center*. 24 Aug. 2019. *Web*. 26 Aug. 2019 (Blog).

"Youtubin Your Way Through Literary Theory" *University of Louisville Writing Center*. 24 Nov. 2019. *Web*. 26 Nov. 2018 (Blog).

With R.E. Hogan, "Epilepsy and Brain Function: Common Ideas of Hughlings-Jackson and Wilder Penfield" *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 24.3 (2012): 311–313. (Elsevier).

## **PRESENTATIONS**

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### **Selected Conference Presentations**

"Composing Emotions: Engaging Artifacts to Construct Memories and Relationships," with Katie Frankel and Bronwyn Williams. Conference on College Composition and Communication, Milwaukee, WI. March 2020. (Conference Cancelled).

"Knowing Better than to 'Know Better': Listening, Improvisation, and Collaboration as Artists and Artisans," with Cassie Book, Jessie Newman, and Christopher Stuck. International Writing Center Association Conference: The Art of It All. Columbus, Ohio. October 2019.

"Self-Reflexivity and Jesuit Rhetoric in Martin Scorsese's *Silence*," Religion and Rhetoric in the 21st Century. University of Tennessee-Knoxville. October 2018.

"Engendering Science: Composition and Rhetoric's Engagement in Evolutionary Biology," Thomas R. Watson Conference: Making Future Matters. University of Louisville. October 2018.

"From Creation to Apocalypse: Exploring Gabriel Garcia's Use of Genesis in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*," The End of the World: Tragedy, Catastrophe, and Apocalypse in Literature. Indiana University. March 2018.

"Looking Within: Trauma, Memory, and Healing in the Films of Terrence Malick," IV Festival Audiovisual de los Montes de Maria. Tejiendo Los Hilos de la Memoria. Carmen De Bolivar, Colombia. November 2013.

"Left Behind: Rethinking Ways of Empowering Resident ESL Students in the Composition Classroom," 22<sup>nd</sup> Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and

Composition: Rhetoric and Writing across Language Boundaries. Penn State University. July 2011.

“Reconstructing the Composition Classroom for Critical Literacy,” 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Arkansas Philological Association Conference. University of Arkansas. October 2010.

### **Campus Workshops**

“Academic Workflows: Reference and Citation Management,” Workshop for English Graduate Organization (EGO), University of Louisville English Department. With Joseph Franklin. Spring 2018.

“Adjusting to Teaching First Year Composition,” Workshop for Incoming Graduate Teaching Assistants, Department of English. University of Oklahoma. Summer 2012.

“Understanding the Intercultural SuperHighway,” Instituto De Idomas. Universidad Del Norte. Barranquilla, Colombia. Fall 2012.

“Incorporating Intensive Reading and Writing in Your Classroom,” Instituto De Idiomas. Universidad Del Norte. Barranquilla, Colombia. Spring 2013.

“Building a Student-Centered Classroom,” Workshop for Incoming Graduate Teaching Assistants, Department of English. University of Oklahoma. Summer 2011.

“Wiki-Wiki What? Teaching Research and Writing in the Composition Classroom by Facing Wikipedia Head On,” Workshop for English Department Curricular Development. Department of English. University of Oklahoma. Spring 2011.

“Supporting International Students in the Composition Classroom,” Department of English. University of Oklahoma. Fall 2010.

## **AWARDS AND GRANTS**

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### **Teaching Awards**

**2020 Barbara Plattus Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching (\$500)**

Department of English, University of Louisville

**2017 Li Chongguang Award for Excellence in Teaching**

Department of Languages, Ohio State University and Huazhong Agricultural University (Wuhan, China)

**2011 Roy and Florena Hadswell Award for Superior Teaching and Academic Achievement by an English Graduate Student (\$1,000)**

Department of English, University of Oklahoma

### **Grants**

**2021 Dissertation Completion Award (\$5,000)**

Department of Graduate Studies, University of Louisville

**2020 Graduate Arts and Science Research Grant (\$350)**

Department of Graduate Studies, University of Louisville

**2019 English Department Travel Grant (\$600)**

Department of English, University of Louisville

**Graduate Arts and Science Research Grant (\$350)**

Department of Graduate Studies, University of Louisville

**Graduate Student Council Travel Award (\$350)**

Graduate Student Council, University of Louisville



- 2018 English Department Travel Grant (\$600)**  
Department of English, University of Louisville  
**Graduate Student Council Travel Award (\$350)**  
Graduate Student Council, University of Louisville
- 2011 College of Arts & Sciences Travel Grant (\$750)**  
College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oklahoma  
**Robberson Travel Grant (\$500)**  
Graduate College, University of Oklahoma  
**English Department Travel Grant (\$300)**  
Department of English, University of Oklahoma
- 2009 Neustadt Student Fellowship (\$575)**  
World Literature Today, University of Oklahoma
- 2008 Puterbaugh Student Fellowship (\$575)**  
World Literature Today, University of Oklahoma

## **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

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**Assistant Director of the Writing Center**, University of Louisville, 2018-Present  
Regular duties include training and mentoring graduate writing consultants, meeting individually with writers, co-organizing annual dissertation writing retreats, maintaining social media presence, and coordinating community outreach projects. Also wrote, directed, and edited promotional videos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSYATjJgQho&t=333s>;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqKU696xw2g&t=1s>

## **COLLEGE COURSES TAUGHT**

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### **University of Louisville (2017-present)**

ENGL 101: Introduction to College Writing (2 sections)  
ENGL 102: Intermediate College Writing (2 sections)  
ENGL 102-DE (Online): Intermediate College Writing (1 section)  
ENGL 306: Business Writing (3 sections)  
ENGL 306-DE (Online): Business Writing (1 section)  
ENGL 604: Writing Center Theory and Practice, Guest Instructor (3 sections)

### **Ohio State University & Huazhong Agricultural University, Wuhan, China (2017)**

Intensive English Development Summer Program (5 sections)

### **Universidad Del Norte, Barranquilla, Colombia (2012-2014)**

ENGL 1360: Business English II (5 sections)  
ENGL 4905: Intermediate English IV (5 sections)  
ENGL 7030: English Intercultural Communications VII (4 sections)  
ENGL 7080: Advanced English VIII (2 sections)  
ENGL 7750: Business English V: Intercultural Communication (2 sections)

**University of Oklahoma (2009-2012)**

ENGL 1113: English Composition I (3 sections)

ENGL 1213: English Composition II (6 sections)

ENGL 1213: Technology, Society, and Social Communications Revolution (2 sections)

**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Oklahoma (2011)**

Ernest Hemingway and the Novel (1 section)

**SERVICE**

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**Western Library Branch Cotter Cup Coordinator.** University of Louisville. Spring 2021**Family Scholar House Volunteer Coordinator.** University of Louisville. 2020-Present**Ph.D. Volunteer and Organizer.** University of Louisville. Watson Conference. Fall 2018.**Ph.D. Faculty Liaison.** English Graduate Organization, University of Louisville. 2017-2018**ESL Teacher/Tutor.** All Souls Church. Washington D.C. 2014-2015**ESL Teacher/Tutor.** Habla Ya Language School. Boquete, Panama. Summer 2014**Invited Speaker for Uninorte Cultural Agendas.** Instituto De Idiomas. Barranquilla, Colombia. 2012-2014**Community Mentor/Friend,** Big Brothers Big Sisters, Norman, OK. 2010-2012**SELECTED ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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**Director of Sales and Marketing,** ItemWorks Inc., Fayetteville, AR, 2015-2017**Executive Assistant,** Sojourners Non-Profit, Washington D.C. 2014-2015**ESL Writing Tutor for Student Athletes,** University of Oklahoma, 2011-2012**Research Assistant,** Washington University Medical School, St. Louis, MO, 2008-2009**AFFILIATIONS**

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Conference on College Composition and Communication

National Council of Teachers of English

International Writing Center Association

Modern Language Association

Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society

**REFERENCES**

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**Dr. Bronwyn Williams**

Professor of English

Writing Center Director

University of Louisville

**Dr. Andrea Olinger**

Associate Professor of English

Director of Composition

University of Louisville

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**Dr. Frank Kelderman**

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University of Louisville  
[frank.kelderman@louisville.edu](mailto:frank.kelderman@louisville.edu)

[andrea.olinger@louisville.edu](mailto:andrea.olinger@louisville.edu)

**Dr. Michael Rifenburg**

Associate Professor of English  
University of North Georgia  
[michael.rifenburg@ung.edu](mailto:michael.rifenburg@ung.edu)