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Using Case Study Multi-Methods to Investigate Close(r) Collaboration: Course-Based Tutoring and the Directive/Nondirective Instructional Continuum

by Steven J. Corbett

About the Author

Steven J. Corbett is Assistant Professor of English and Co-Coordinator of the Composition Program at Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven. His research and teaching interests include peer tutoring, creative nonfiction, and rhetorical theory and criticism.

His essays on tutoring and teaching have appeared in several publications, including *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, *On Location*, *Diversity in the Composition Classroom*, *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* 4th Ed., and *Inside Higher ed*. He is currently co-editing the collection *Peer Pressure, Peer Power: Collaborative Peer Review and Response in the Writing Classroom* with Michelle LaFrance and Teagan Decker for Fountainhead Press.

Familiar memes—don't write on the paper, don't speak more than the student-writer, ask non-directive questions—get passed among cohorts of writing tutors as gospel before they even interact with writers in an everyday setting.

— Geller, Eodice, Condon, Carroll, and Boquet (21)

Since the publication of North's impassioned and often-cited essay ("Idea"), writing center practitioners and scholars have continued to ask a pivotal question: how closely can or should writing centers and writing classrooms collaborate (North "Revisting"; Smith; Hemmeter;

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Healy; Raines; Soliday; Decker; Sherwood; Boquet and Lerner)? In their recent essay for *College English*, Elizabeth Boquet and Neal Lerner draw on critiques of North to argue that we need to be more open to experiencing two-way streets in theory, research, and practice—in short, instructional learning—between classroom and center. Curriculum- and classroom-based tutoring offer exciting, dramatic instructional arenas from which to continue asking questions and provoking conversations involving closer classroom/writing center connections (Spigelman and Grobman; Moss, Highberg, and Nicolas; Soven; Lutes; Bruland; Zawacki). In the introduction to *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring*, Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman differentiate between curriculum-based tutoring, usually associated with writing fellows programs, and classroom-based tutoring, where tutorial support is offered during class. Due to the considerable overlap in theory and practice between curriculum- and classroom-based tutoring, I have opted for the term *course-based tutoring* (CBT) when referring to instructional elements shared by both. But just as all writing centers are not alike, CBT programs differ from institution to institution. There is much variation and choice in and between instructional models. And where we have instructional choice combined with closer collaboration, interpersonal drama is likely to follow closely behind.

CBT in its many guises makes all involved question any “safe house” image that might be associated with the writing classroom or the writing center. In my years of practicing and researching CBT, as well as my experiences with traditional one-to-one teaching, the issue of directive versus nondirective tutoring methods has emerged frequently and has provided a useful, albeit complex, lens with which to investigate scenes of CBT. Similarly, tutors new to CBT find themselves trying to negotiate just what they’re supposed to do now that the typical ecology of the tutorial has changed: tutors might find themselves in classrooms in a leadership role; tutors might find themselves more in the know regarding course readings or expectations during tutorials. And instructors and students find themselves in a situation where they have a tutor ready to help share in teaching and learning efforts. In short, all actors try to build trust in one another’s authority and roles. Tutors, finding themselves

often more in the know, have to negotiate between whether to take more interventionist (directive) or more typically endorsed non-interventionist (nondirective) approaches to tutoring. Further, tutors finding themselves in the on-location action of the classroom have to decide if they want to take on more authoritative (directive) roles or try to be as minimalist (nondirective) in the ebb and flow of classroom instructional activity as possible. But writing center specialists are only beginning to understand just how interesting and complex these negotiations really can be. Triangulated, multi-method case study research—including interviews, questionnaires, observations, and audio-recordings—can help CBT practitioners more precisely share the intricacies of this promising instructional hybrid (see Bruland; Corbett, “Give and Take”), including a more intimate look at how practitioners traverse the directive/nondirective continuum. How do tutor roles affect how directly or nondirectly they choose to act? Do classroom-based tutors involved in the day-to-day activity of the classroom more frequently feel obligated to be more directive in their tutoring and mentoring? Do curriculum-based tutors less connected to the particular rhythm of a specific classroom activity feel less obligation to tell students directly what to do? What other factors might cause tutors to perform more or less directly or authoritatively?

This essay presents case studies of CBT and one-to-one tutorials in two sections of developmental first-year composition (FYC) at a large West Coast research university. My study uses a combination of rhetorical and discourse analyses and ethnographic and case study multi-methods to investigate both the scenes of teaching and learning—planning between tutors and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and participant interactions in the classroom and during one-to-one tutoring sessions—as well as the points of view and interpretations from all the participating actors in these scenes: two TAs, two peer tutors, twenty students, and one researcher. I conduct analyses of tutorial and conference transcripts similar to the types conducted by Muriel Harris in *Teaching One-to-One* and Laurel Johnson Black in *Between Talk and Teaching*, and I complicate the analyses by factoring in larger contextual data from interviews, questionnaires, and course materials to more fully investigate how

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and why participants negotiated instructional authority, role, and directive/nondirective methods the way they did. The pedagogical insights involving the directive/nondirective continuum (Clark) or control/flexibility (Gillespie and Lerner) gained in CBT research and practice can help pave the sorts of two-way instructional streets called for by Boquet and Lerner. As the epigraph suggests, writing center and peer tutoring specialists have talked and debated much about the directive/nondirective instructional continuum, and we have much to share on this topic with all educators. As we will begin to see in the following section and throughout this essay, a closer look at CBT can bring this ongoing conversation into stark relief.

“They Like to Be Told What to Do”: Locating Conflict When Moving among Curriculum, Classroom, and Center

One of the major areas for potential complication in role and tutorial-method negotiation in CBT involves how to reconcile tutoring philosophies with tutoring strategies. In the second edition of *Collaborative Learning*, Kenneth Bruffee distinguishes between two forms of peer tutoring programs: monitoring and collaborative. In the monitoring model, tutors “are select, superior students who for all intents and purposes serve as faculty surrogates under faculty supervision. Their peer status is so thoroughly compromised that they are educationally effective only in strictly traditional academic terms” (97). In contrast, Bruffee argues that collaborative tutors “do not mediate directly between tutees and their teachers” (97); they do not explicitly instruct as teachers do, but rather “guide and support” tutees to help them “translate at the boundaries between the knowledge communities they already belong to and the knowledge communities they aspire to join” (98). This boundary is where things get tricky for the purposes of our discussion. In CBT situations, for example, the task of assignment negotiation can take a different turn when tutors have insider knowledge of teacher expectations. The question of tutor authority, whether more “tutorly” or “teacherly”—more directive or nondirective—approaches make for better one-to-one or one-to-many interactions, begins to branch into ever-winding

roads of qualification.

This idea of just how and to what degree the role of the tutor might affect the method of instruction in CBT leads us straight to considerations of curriculum-based writing fellows. The fact that writing fellows write comments on drafts of students' papers and then often meet one-to-one with the students, sometimes without attending class or doing the same readings as the students, points immediately to the issue of directive/nondirective approaches to peer tutoring. In this vein, Jean Marie Lutes's study of the Writing Fellows Program at the University of Wisconsin points to an instance of the controlling force of better knowing the professor's goals in one-to-one interactions. One fellow in Lutes's study, Helen, reported that she resorted to a more directive style of tutoring when she noticed students' getting closer to the professor's expectations. Helen concluded that this more intimate knowledge of the professor's expectations, that she "knew the answer" (250 n.18), made her job harder rather than easier to negotiate. The sorts of give and take surrounding curriculum-based negotiations and the pressure it exerts on tutors leads Lutes to argue that "the [writing fellows] program complicates the peer relationship between fellows and students; when fellows comment on drafts, they inevitably write not only for their immediate audience (the student writers), but also for their future audience (the professor)" (239). Terry Zawacki also reports on the difficulties writing fellows can face when balancing between student, instructor, and their own desires and expectations for writing. An experienced fellow, Alex, described herself as being caught in the middle between students' desire to figure out the professor's expectations and do well on their papers and the professor's uncertainty about where and how to provide information about his/her priorities and expectations. Alex had a difficult time knowing when to be directive and when not to be (see also Severino and Trachsel).

Melissa Nicolas offers a cautionary tale that similarly illuminates the methodological difficulty participants can face transitioning into, and during, classroom-based negotiations. Since tutors were required to take on more authoritative roles—taking attendance, monitoring and reporting on their tutees, setting agendas—they found that what they were learning about writing center theory and

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practice conflicted with what they were being asked to do in this situation. This new arrangement puts tutors in a high-risk situation where they may be struggling to apply what they have been taught from orthodox writing center theory and practice—especially taking a nondirective approach—to this new and different instructional context. In Nicolas’s tale, this conflict between reading about the abstract ideals of the writing center and the hierarchical reality of the classroom caused authority and role confusion in the tutors. One tutor explained that, though she tried to downplay her authoritative directiveness while working with students, “they just always seem to look at me or toward me. . . . They like to be told what to do. . . . It’s kind of confusing. It’s sort of like a balancing act where you try not to be in it too much but try to be there, but it’s like you’re not there. It’s hard” (120). The hard reality is that when tutors are connected to courses in the capacity of a helper or assistant of some sort, it will look to students as if they must be involved for a reason—to share some knowledge or skill that the students may not possess. And just as traditional classroom teachers learn to balance levels of control and directiveness, questioning, and listening with letting students run with ideas, tutors—regardless of how much training they’ve had—and students develop a heightened sense of these instructional moves.

Locations, Locutions: Participants Negotiate Collaborative Roles, Expectations, and Trust

The two models employed for this study were the in-class model (more classroom-based) and the writing advisor model (more curriculum-based). Essentially, the in-class tutor was embedded in the classroom on a day-to-day basis, while the writing advisor tutor only visited the classroom once to introduce herself. During interviews, all instructors, tutors, and class members had interesting things to say about their in-class interactions, some conflicting, some more in sync with one another’s points of view. In this section, then, in order to move readers toward a fuller understanding of the context that foregrounds the tutorial transcript analyses in later sections, I compare the participants’ accounts to each other.

Table 1 summarizes the two teams with brief biographies of the two tutors and two TAs and a synopsis of the respective tutorial models they employed. Importantly, Madeleine and Sam hail from two different campus writing centers. Madeleine worked for a writing center administered by a university minority affairs program. She did not receive any formal training in teaching one-to-one. Her TA partner, Sydney, had asked early on for a tutor of color, regardless of tutoring experience. Sam worked for a writing center administered by the English department. She had read several articles on writing center theory and practice prior to, and while, tutoring, including articles on directive/nondirective tutoring strategies by Irene Clark and Jeff Brooks. Her TA partner, Sarah, had requested a model whereby the tutor would not attend class, and by extension, a tutor who would have very little in-class contact with students. For the sake of honoring Sarah's and Sydney's preferences and desires, I selected tutors more in relation to whether or not they fit these TAs' requests than by how much experience or training they had. One of the main motivating factors I have for presenting these two case studies, of all the ones I have conducted on CBT, is the crucial role instructor and tutor choice can play in the coordination and outcome of such partnerships.

	The Model	The Tutor	The Instructor
Team One	<i>In-Class Tutor:</i> Tutor attended class every other day and worked one-to-one with students at her center.	<i>Madeleine</i> is an African-American sophomore creative writing major who had tutored one quarter for her center prior to this pairing. She did not receive any formal training in teaching one-to-one.	<i>Sydney</i> is a second year, African-American TA in English literature. She had several years of teaching experience with high school students and one year teaching traditional FYC prior to this pairing.
Team Two	<i>Writing Advisor Tutor:</i> Tutor commented on student papers and met one-to-one with students at her center. She visited class only once to introduce herself.	<i>Samantha (Sam)</i> is a white senior English/biology major who had worked in her center for a total of two years. She had read several articles on writing center theory and practice prior to tutoring.	<i>Sarah</i> is a second year, Latina TA in English literature. She had one year of teaching experience in a traditional FYC classroom prior to this pairing, and two years' experience teaching ESL.

Table 1. Team Descriptions

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Madeleine and Sydney from Team One expressed conflicting reviews of their partnership. The tutor, Madeleine, narrated her satisfaction with the experience from start to finish. She enjoyed all aspects of her involvement: working with Sydney; working with students; and working with the subject of the course, race and citizenship in the nation. On her initial interactions with students, Madeleine said:

I think at first they were like, “What the heck, who is this person?” They weren’t mad or anything [Laughter]. They were just kind of like “ok.” They didn’t know why I was there, but it was cool. After awhile they just thought of me as kind of like another student. . . . They really seemed to appreciate the things that I said in class and after awhile I think it was really comfortable [. . .] And they didn’t feel, at least as far as I know, they didn’t feel like I was trying to be authoritative.

And on her initial role negotiations with Sydney, Madeleine reported, “At first I didn’t know what my job would be in the class. And we were just like trying to work it out the first couple of weeks of the quarter.” Madeleine goes on to describe how she soon found her niche in the classroom as “discussion participant.” During an early class discussion of readings, Madeleine joined in. Afterwards, Sydney praised Madeleine, telling her that she felt the students had participated in a way they “might not have been able to and she [Sydney] might not have been able to. She felt like the students listen to me. Not really more than they listen to her, but they tend to agree with her. So whatever she’s saying, whatever she’s contributing to the discussion, they think ‘oh that’s the right way.’”

Sydney’s take on the partnership portrays a much more conflicted point of view. Sydney said that she was initially worried that someone else’s presence in the classroom would make her feel as if she were being watched, but that, fortunately, did not end up being the case. This may be due to her impressions that, echoing Madeleine’s own comments, Madeleine took on more of a peer role in the classroom, seeming much like another student. She did detail, however, further initial misgivings that ended up affecting the rest of the quarter:

Initially there was a lot of frustration just trying to match two personalities, two kinds of teaching styles, trying to negotiate where roles were. . . . I

remember the first couple of days I felt like there was a little bit of showing off going on on her part. Maybe she felt the need to prove herself to show [herself] as capable as the TA. Maybe she was trying to show me; I don't know. And I felt that that kind of shut down conversations with my students a little bit because they might have felt intimidated a little bit you know.

But Sydney also talked about how she eventually came to view her interactions with Madeleine in a different light: "In the end, I think it took us a while, but I feel like in the end we finally at least began to kind of click and mesh." A big part of this eventually realized mutual understanding may have had something to do with Madeleine's overall motives for and attitude toward this course. In her own words, "The most important thing for me to teach the students was to be active learners in the classroom. I hoped that they would view my enthusiasm for the content as an example of it actually being cool to care."

Of the ten student questionnaires I received, all ten were overwhelmingly positive. Students talked about the convenience of having a tutor in the know, a tutor closer to the expectations of the course. Strikingly, nine students commented in detail on the benefits of having Madeleine in the classroom regularly. Student course evaluations for Team One were also glowing. Out of a possible 5.0, students gave the course a 4.7.

Sam and Sarah from Team Two had a lesser amount of team interaction, though, interestingly and for very different reasons from Team One, the data from their partnership also points to an overall successful experience. Since Sam did not attend any classes in an instructional role, she primarily voiced the method by which she and Sarah coordinated their activities out of class, and the effects these communications had on Sam's involvement with students:

My involvement with the TA was pretty minimal. We mostly contacted each other via email. I saw her a couple of times, but not really during the quarter. She mostly sent me the prompts and we emailed each other. I'd give her my availability and she would send that to the class. They'd sign up for appointments and then she would send their sign-ups to me.

Sam said that at first she was a little worried that she wasn't involved enough with the students, but that from what she was hearing from

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Sarah and “just knowing how tutoring sessions tend to go even when I’m just making appointments through the computer and not having a relationship with a particular class, I think it turned out pretty well.” Sam and Sarah even agreed that it would be better if Sam did not do any of the course readings. Sam suggests a fear of being too directive: “I thought it would be more helpful to go with the prompt with their papers . . . because I might have my own ideas on where they should be taking their papers and I wanted to avoid that. I just wanted to help them bring out their own claims and arguments.” And although Sam did not have any in-class interaction with students, she did feel a closer connection and responsibility to these students:

I felt more tied to the success of the students in this class. I really wanted them to do better. I wanted Sarah to see the improvements in their papers. I wanted to help them get more out of the class as a whole. And I think that comes with being connected to a particular class. It makes you more invested.

Of the twelve student questionnaires I received, ten were overwhelmingly positive and only two were either critical or ambivalent. (The ambivalent one was from a student who did not visit Sam.) Most students commented on the convenience of the partnership and the availability of Sam. Several students commented specifically on how helpful Sam was during one-to-one conferences. Two students responded favorably to Sam’s commenting on their papers before they met. Finally, one student commented on what she saw as a problem, suggesting what some students must think of writing centers in general: “The tutor was not familiar with the subject taught in class, therefore she wasn’t able to help on specific questions or be any more helpful than the tutors at the writing center.” Student course evaluations for this team were almost as positive as Team One’s. Students gave the course as a whole a 4.5.

Categories and Codes for Analyzing Tutorial Transcripts

In addition to interviewing all participants and collecting student questionnaires and course evaluations, for this study I audio recorded

one-to-one tutorials and collected all course materials, including assignments. Drawing largely on Black, Harris, Gillespie and Lerner, and Gilewicz and Thonus, rhetorical and conversational discourse analyses were the primary methods for coding and analyzing transcripts. The analyses offer broad rhetorical frameworks as well as ways to analyze linguistic features and cues from one-to-one tutorial transcripts. Attention to the micro-linguistic features of tutorial transcripts allows for more nuanced analyses of larger rhetorical issues.

Harris' "Why Writers Need Writing Tutors" provides an overarching rhetorical framework for how tutors can help writers, and this frame can help structure our understanding of tutorial transcripts. According to Harris, tutors can 1) encourage student independence in collaborative talk; 2) assist students with metacognitive acquisition of strategic knowledge; 3) assist with knowledge of how to interpret, translate, and apply assignments and teacher comments; and 4) assist with affective concerns (30-36). In *Teaching One-to-One*, Harris offers seminal analyses of tutorials with instructors such as Roger Garrison and Donald Murray as well as tutors. These transcript analyses offer a useful overview of directive and nondirective methods, ways tutors help students acquire writing strategies, techniques for active listening (including listening for students' affective concerns), and how questions can be used in various ways with different effects.

Gillespie and Lerner supplement our understanding of the meanings of tutor talk by supplying further analysis from peer tutors, albeit in this case the "peers" are graduate student tutors working with undergraduate writers. These analyses extend many of Harris' findings, especially regarding the complex way various questioning techniques and strategies affect the control and flexibility of any given tutorial. In asserting that "questions aren't necessarily a nondirective form of tutoring" (112), their discussion of tutorial transcripts reveal content-clarifying questions, three types of open-ended questions (follow-up, descriptive meta-analysis, and speculative), as well as directive questions that lead tutors away from the conversation advocated for by most writing center scholars to their appropriation of one-to-one tutorials. One of the most important suggestions Gillespie and Lerner make is that note taking is an important aspect

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of tutorials. They advise tutors to read the entire paper before offering any suggestions, taking careful notes so that students can walk away with a transcript of what happened. Otherwise, much of what went on during the conversation will be lost, tutors may make unnecessary comments, and tutors may be too controlling or directive during the session (see also Harris, *Teaching* 108).

Since Gillespie and Lerner, like Harris, take as their purpose the training of tutors, their tutorial discussions do not analyze the transcripts at the micro-linguistic level. Black as well as Gilewicz and Thonus, however, do offer discourse analyses of conference and tutorial transcripts that can help link the macro-rhetorical issues to the micro-linguistic features and cues of one-to-one conferences. Like Harris and Gillespie and Lerner, Black pays careful attention to the issue of directive and nondirective conferencing strategies. Black takes the idea of typical classroom discourse, characterized by initiation-response-evaluation, an arguably directive form of instruction (Cazden 30-59), and shows how it makes its way, often unintentionally, into conference talk. Importantly, Black applies both conversational and critical discourse analyses to the examination of one-to-one conferences. Black also explores how interruptions, backchanneling, and fillers, words like “you know,” can control and coerce students, “subtly forcing another speaker into a cognitive relationship that becomes a linguistic relationship that marks and cements the social relationship” (47).

Like Black, Gilewicz and Thonus pay attention to pauses, backchannels, and fillers. And like Harris and Gillespie and Lerner, they are sensitive to the way questions can be used to encourage or discourage conversation. The authors take us a step further, however, in their breakdown of fillers into backchannels, minimal responses, and tag questions; their attention to pauses; and—especially relevant to this study—their subdividing of overlaps into interruptions, joint productions that occur when one speaker finishes another speaker’s words or phrases, and main channel overlaps, which happen when speakers utter words or phrases simultaneously. Gilewicz and Thonus claim that “joint productions, more than interruptions or main channel overlaps, represent movement toward greater solidarity and collaboration” (36) rather than leave all control in the hands of the tutor.

While offering important micro-level sociolinguistic analyses, both Black's and Gilewicz and Thonus's studies differ from my own because they don't focus on providing contextual information that could help readers make better sense, or provide more of their own interpretations, of their research findings, including why tutors or teachers may be more or less directive in a given tutorial or conference. In *Forms of Talk*, Erving Goffman argues that the flexibility of talk—the fact that so much overlapping, restarting, non-answering, and interrupting can occur—arises from the fact that the “wider world of structures and positions is bled into these occasions” (193), causing any analysis of talk or texts in many ways to be predetermined by circumstances that may seem to have nothing to do with the talk at hand. My triangulating data by way of interviews and follow-ups, transcriptions, and questionnaires attempts to account for such larger contextual factors.

Transcription notations were developed ad hoc as I transcribed. They were used for ease of voice-recognition transcription and will hopefully allow for easy reading:

() indicates interlocutor's fillers including minimal responses, backchannels, and tag questions

Linguistic notations are inserted where appropriate:
for example,

[7 Second Pause] indicates length of pause

[Inter] indicates interruption

[JointProd] indicates joint production

[MainChanOver] indicates main channel overlap

Directing Talk and Texts: Madeleine's Sessions

Madeleine, from Team One, embraced an authoritative role in the classroom. One would think that she approached one-to-one interactions in the same way. Madeleine ended up conducting only four tutorials. All of Madeleine's tutorials occurred within three days of each other, in the sixth week of the quarter. All four of Madeleine's recorded sessions dealt with four-to-six page major papers in which

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students were to make an argument involving articles on two views of multicultural education from Ronald Takaki's "A Different Mirror" and Arthur Slesinger's "The Return of the Melting Pot" and the developmental FYC class they were taking. (Note on the chart below that the third of Madeleine's four sessions was singled out for analysis from the rest due to its atypical features.) The sessions averaged fifty minutes, with the shortest lasting thirty-one minutes and the longest seventy-one minutes. Madeleine read the students' papers in the first two sessions aloud and she read them silently in the last two. I could not detect any noticeable effect this had on the content and flow of any of the sessions. Table 2 provides the details of linguistic features and cues from Madeleine's one-to-ones.

Linguistic Features and Cues	Madeleine	Students
Number of Sessions	3/1	
Average Length (minutes)	50/59	
Total Words Spoken	12,115/7,614	1,919/2,997
Average # of Words Spoken per Minute	81/129	13/51
Content-clarifying Questions	5/4	
Open-ended Questions	23/2	
Directive Questions	23/5	
References to TA	7/4	0/2
References to Assignment Prompt	1/0	0/1
Interruptions	21/44	10/50
Main Channel Overlaps	3/6	7/25
Joint Productions	3/5	24/6

Table 2. Linguistic Features and Cues from Madeleine's (Team One) One-to-One Tutorials

Madeleine evinced certain patterns in her tutoring practice that shaped the content and flow of the tutorials. She usually took control of the session early and maintained firm control of the conversational floor. Her sessions were characterized by little to no praise; plenty of criticism and directive suggestions, usually with no qualifications; and large chunks of time spent on talking, near-lecturing really, about the readings. The teacher, Sydney, played an integral role in Madeleine's

sessions. But Madeleine, rather than the students, brought Sydney into the sessions early on. This excerpt, from the beginning of the first tutorial, is typical of how Madeleine started her sessions:

Madeleine: Okay looking at your introduction?

Student: Yeah introduction and claim.

Madeleine: And your claim. Is it okay if I read aloud?

Student: No go for it. [Madeleine Reads Student's Paper Aloud .24-2.18.]

Madeleine: Okay I kind of see what you're trying to say. You're trying to say you're trying to set up the stakes like in the second paragraph? (yeah) You're trying to say that racism exists and the reason that racism exists is because people don't know about themselves (mmhmm). What I would say first of all about the beginning of your paper or the beginning paragraph is that it doesn't really have a claim that directly references both accounts (mmhmm) and maybe that's because you didn't have a copy of [Undecipherable]

Student: Oh you mean the article?

Madeleine: Well first of all we're supposed to be talking about is multicultural education important? And you didn't really say anything about multicultural education in the beginning (oh) and so you just want to like mention that (okay). And also you're supposed to be stating whether or not you agree with the class that you just took. Like on race citizenship and the nation (ok). Like what she wants you to do is look at the class and think okay what have I gained from this class; like is it necessary for us to be studying these concepts or because the two different arguments are Takaki had his arguments well let's take the other guy first Sl- (Slesinger)[JointProd] something hard to say. He basically says that multicultural education, it kind of like boosts people's self-esteem right?

Notice how after reading for a bit, Madeleine starts telling the student directly what the student is trying to say rather than asking her. Then Madeleine jumps straight into criticism of this student's

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introduction and claim without praising any aspect of her writing. She shows her close understanding of the assignment and implies an alignment with Sydney's expectations by telling the student, with the modal auxiliary, what she is "supposed" to be doing. Madeleine amplifies her alignment with Sydney and the prompt by bringing in the pronoun and presence of Sydney: "what *she* wants you to do" (emphasis added). Madeleine typically uses the tag question "right?" as in the case here, not to necessarily elicit a student response as with an open-ended question, but rather just to make sure that the student is following her suggestions. Madeleine goes on from the excerpt above to bring in Sydney via "she" twice more before she stops referring to the instructor.

The above directive suggestions also in many ways parallel the third session, characterized by what I came to see as a struggle or fight for the conversational floor. This hour-long session involved so many overlaps by both interlocutors (ninety-two interruptions, sixteen joint productions, and thirty-two main channel overlaps) that it was taxing to transcribe, even with voice-recognition software. This session is characterized by a student who fights for the conversational floor, especially regarding the main concept she wants to cover in her essay, politics. The student brings up this issue as a possible focus for her claim early in the session and several times thereafter. But Madeleine ignores the idea repeatedly:

Student: I want to get out the thing is I have like three different things I'm trying to talk about (mm) and I don't know how to go at it; like I'm talking about how politically there are going to be more students educated and having a background of different people[Inter]

Madeleine: Yeah but I mean it's not just about it's not just about knowledge it's about knowledge of not only yourself like and how you fit into American history but how other groups not just black and white right? (yeah) fit into American history because Takaki one of his main arguments is also that American history has been really black-and-white like it's either white or it's the other (yeah) and the other is usually black. But that's not true because there's been like Latinos and there's been Asians and there's

been Native Americans that have all helped to shape what America is[Inter]

Student: Yeah but what about because what I'm talking about here are the political process as a whole; like I actually take okay one of my positions is in a medical profession and the other one is a political position you know like what I'm saying? Okay I get the point that I'm not supposed to talk specifically about people going into the university and taking these courses and coming out a certain way, but that's kind of what I did. I'm talking about if you have a better understanding of each other there is going to be more laws formulated their going to[Inter]

Madeleine: But don't you think it's a little bit deeper than just having a better understanding like[Inter]

Student: Well but that was that was deep[Inter]

Madeleine: Yeah but you're talking about he doesn't just say we need to like have a better understanding; like try to use some of the terminology that he uses; one of the most important things that he says "we are influenced by which mirror we choose to see ourselves as" [. . .]

Student: So the political one though I thought that would be okay; maybe I should just focus in on the student actually going into the schools[Inter]

Madeleine: Well what you need to do is have an argument. So you agree with Takaki. Do you know what Takaki's claim is? (he) [10 Second Pause]

This sort of conflict in goals continues until the student emotionally expresses her frustration with not being able to match Madeleine's insistence that she understand the texts (or Madeleine's interpretations of the texts):

Madeleine: I mean if you have to read it a couple more times[Inter]

Student: Well I'm trying to read a lot but it's just like I don't get what I'm doing though Madeleine. . . .

This is the first time a student has used Madeleine's name, an indication perhaps of the frustration that has been bottling up. Yet

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this is also the only time in all the tutorial transcripts I analyzed that a student called her tutor by name, suggesting a slightly more positive interpretation, perhaps, of the dramatic give and take of this interaction.

Through the Act of Writing: Sam's Sessions

Sam from Team Two was the tutor less involved in any classroom activity. She was also expected to play the role of outside reader, or in her terms "independent consultant," in one-to-ones. Having less insider knowledge of the content of the course, and given Sam's typically nondirective approach, it would be reasonable to assume that Sam practiced a highly nondirective tutorial method with these students. Sam ended up conducting eleven tutorials total, eight sessions in the seventh week of the quarter, and three more in the tenth or final week. All of Sam's sessions involved five-to-six page major papers. The first eleven, including the tutorial detailed below, dealt with James Loewen's article on heroes and heroification, "Handicapped by History: The Process of Hero-Making." Since Sam had read most of the papers and supplied written comments beforehand, her sessions were designed to fit within a thirty-minute time frame: the average session lasted twenty-five minutes, with the longest lasting thirty-six minutes and the shortest sixteen minutes. Sam neither had students read papers aloud nor read them aloud for them. Table 3 details linguistic features and cues from Sam's one-to-ones.

Linguistic Features and Cues	Sam	Students
# of Sessions	11	
Average Length (minutes)	25	
Total Words Spoken	18,181	11,292
Average # of Words Spoken per Minute	66	41
Content-clarifying Questions	20	
Open-ended Questions	137	
Directive Questions	21	
References to TA	1	3
References to Assignment Prompt	1	0

Interruptions	12	37
Main Channel Overlaps	7	12
Joint Productions	9	49

Table 3. Linguistic Features and Cues from Sam's (Team Two) One-to-One Tutorials

Sam's use of note-taking and pauses played a pivotal role in the content and flow of her tutorials, affecting not only how much students talked but, perhaps more importantly, to what degree they took agency in tutorials. Sam's longest session evinced many of the same patterns described above, further illustrating the collaborative effects of Sam's particular style. During analysis, I was struck by how similar this student was to the one that Madeleine from Team One had such conversational struggle with. In this thirty-six-minute session, the student overlapped Sam's speech twenty times, while Sam only overlapped the student's speech five times – including three instances when the student did not allow Sam to take control of the conversational floor. In this session Sam showed one of her patterns early in the tutorial when she said, "So one problem that a lot of people have tends to be coming up with the claim in the beginning." Sam referred here to what she noticed that others had been doing often, perhaps deflecting any sort of individualized, evaluative finger-pointing. The student started off describing his claim as involving his belief that heroification is okay for children, but that when they start to mature they need to be able to think critically about this issue. Sam proceeded to ask questions and provide suggestions about how the student could rethink his topic sentences in relation to his claim. In typical fashion, she qualified most of her suggestions: "When you're revising I'd probably, what I recommend. . . ." Discussion of the essay's structure led to a discussion of the student's prewriting strategies. Later the conversation turned back to more specific instances of getting the student's purposes across clearly to the reader. Here Sam showed her typical reference to the reader:

So all that's really needed is that you want to make sure that you specifically say this at the beginning of this paragraph (oh ok) so that we know that that's what you're saying. (oh ok) So that we know that as we read the scene we go "okay so this is where he's going with this."

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A few turns later, the student second-guessed himself when he felt that Sam had disagreed with one of his points:

Student: [. . .] That was just like me presenting both sides of the argument; but clearly, like I'm thinking maybe it doesn't belong because you're telling me like okay this [Undecipherable]

Sam: Okay so do you feel like this fits in with any of your major points so far? Sorry I didn't have a good look at the first paragraph should be[JointProd]

Student: More of a benefit really.

Sam: Or yeah what was the first body paragraph?

Student: It was more like morale of like heroification can be used to build up morale. To want to be great you don't need to hear the negative sides to put a high standard upon yourself; I guess that was kind of it. We could just move that chunk over[Inter](well ok)

Sam: So let's think about this, you've got heroification can build up morale, but then if it gets too blown up out of proportion then there's a danger that it will break down and fail because it's a lie. (mmhm) And then the third danger is that those that are deceived won't be able to [Undecipherable] what they're thinking. So of those three which do you think it fits better with?

Student: Definitely more on the benefit. Well I'm not really sure because that part of my argument was more like I realize I was more focused on possibilities and I kinda wanted to end on a little bit of both because it shows that kinda gave two sides but mainly push towards one thing whether something good can come out of it if you're going to set yourself for the challenge.

In contrast to the fight-for-the-floor tone of Madeleine's third tutorial, in this excerpt and throughout this and all of her sessions, Sam takes a much less argumentative (doubting, dissenting) and much more cooperative (believing, assenting) stance in relation to the student's ideas. Notice how precisely Sam refers back to the student's ideas:

So let's think about this. You've got heroification can build on morale, but then if it gets too blown out of proportion then there's a danger that it will

break down and fail because it's a lie. (mmhm) And then the third danger is that those that are deceived won't be able to [Undecipherable] what they're thinking. So of those three which do you feel it fits better with?

Because Sam has been writing notes, co-constructing an outline with the student, she can repeat back, with some great detail and clarity, the student's own ideas and how they relate to the overall essay. The student can then help add to this co-constructed text. This jointly produced work exemplifies what I would describe as collaborative speaking and writing through the act of collaborative writing or note-taking.

Rather than dismiss any of the student's ideas, or try to force ideas on the student (as Madeleine was prone to do sometimes), Sam used questions to try to get at how this student's idea might be worked into the essay's structure. This reliance on traditionally nondirective questions is due to some degree to the fact that Sam has not done the course readings. But it is also due, I believe, to Sam's methodology. Sam's tenacious ability to stick to using questions to allow students time to process and respond (in one session Sam waited for eighty-nine seconds after asking a student, "So where's your topic sentence on this paragraph?") and then to write down notes as the conversation moves forward as her basic nondirective modus operandi enabled her to turn the conversation over to the hands and minds of the students. (That same student, after thinking through things for eighty-nine seconds, responded in some detail.) Each student that Sam worked with walked away with jointly constructed notes that they could use while revising their essays.

Tutoring on the Edge of Expertise: Conclusion

Granted, these two case studies represent two extremes in tutorial instruction and tutor preparation and should be taken only for what they truly are, qualitative case studies conducted in a local context. Yet analyzed side-by-side—and from so many methodological angles—they suggest multiple points for more general comparative consideration, especially regarding tutoring method. While scholars caution practitioners and experimenters that tutors may need to be more or less directive when interacting more closely with instructors

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and courses, my study suggests just how tricky this notion really is.

Madeleine from Team One took an authoritative role in the classroom. Students greatly appreciated the fact that she willingly volunteered her interpretations of texts and ideas. But when she moved to her writing center for one-to-one conferences, that same directive, authoritative attitude and action traveled right along with her. I might look at this dilemma in two ways. I could applaud Madeleine for being authoritative and directive in both situations, in the classroom and during one-to-ones. As several writing center scholars have argued, directive tutoring does not necessarily imply hierarchical, authoritarian tutoring (see for example Clark and Healy; Clark; Carino; Corbett, “Tutoring”; and specifically in relation to classroom-based tutoring Corbett, “Bringing”; Cogie, Janke, Kramer, and Simpson). Further, it is also worth noting that Madeleine evinced conversational and instructional communication patterns associated with African Americans, patterns that may account in part for her instructional directiveness (see Delpit; Smitherman; Lee; Corbett, Lewis, and Clifford). Another way to look at this is when moving tutors to classrooms we could encourage a more authoritative approach, but when they move back to the center (or wherever else one-to-one or small-group tutorials happen), we could ask them to resist the temptation to overuse what they know about the course and the instructor’s expectations and hold on a little tighter to some nondirective methods and moves that could place agency back in the hands and minds of the students. (Of course, Madeleine had not been exposed to the literature on directive/nondirective tutoring, nor could I find any indication that she was encouraged to practice a particularly nondirective method.)

I saw these nondirective methods and moves showcased by Sam from Team Two. But I might also critique Sam’s performances in two ways. First, almost every move Sam made during her one-to-ones placed agency on the tutee. She asked many open-ended and follow-up questions. She took careful and detailed notes, to which she and the students added to and referred back to during the course of the tutorials. She allowed for long, extended pauses that aided tremendously in both the students’ and her abilities to process information and formulate responses and questions. Yet I

might also say that the model Sam employed necessarily caused her to deploy the methods she did. Because she was less in the know, because she did not know as much of the content and flow of the day-to-day course happenings, and because she was trained to approach tutorials primarily from a nondirective methodology (and, recall, actually worried about being too directive), Sam was much more situated to practice a nondirective method. Both tutors helped the students they worked with, but one was more helpful perhaps in the classroom and one more helpful perhaps during one-to-ones.

I maintain, however, that even if Madeleine had been exposed to the literature on nondirective tutoring, like tutors who have had more experience or training, she still would have experienced the same type of conflicts in agency and authority she faced in attempting to help students negotiate the course. Although Madeleine's four tutorials made up quite a small data set, my experiences and case-study research over the years as well as the literature on CBT strongly suggest that tutors faced with tutorial situations in which they have a better understanding of the course content, teacher expectations, and perhaps even closer interpersonal relationships with the students, will face a tougher challenge negotiating between directive and nondirective tutorial methods. But I do not believe this is necessarily a bad thing, nor should it deter us from continuing to practice CBT. Rather, I want to pose the same "higher risk/higher yield" question that Boquet in *Noise from the Writing Center* asks about any tutor: "How might I encourage this tutor to operate on the edge of his or her expertise?" (81). More specifically, for CBT and for consideration of CBT and tutors who have more or less training or experience, how might we, and why should we, encourage tutors to reap the benefits of both directive and nondirective tutoring strategies? If a tutor has the confidence and motivation to connect more closely with a writing classroom and help provide a strong model of academic communication and conversation—regardless of how much formal training he/she has received—I believe we should be open to such teaching and learning partnerships. My research over the years, including these brief portraits of CBT teachers, students, and tutors in action, has persuaded me that the pros, by and large, outweigh the cons.

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Research like the kind presented here could help CBT practitioners better imagine ways to provide their tutors with strategies and rationales for what methods might be characterized as directive or nondirective in various circumstances and how to try to resist moving too far along the continuum in either direction, in a variety of situations, in and out of the classroom. Perhaps with the knowledge we've gained regarding directive and nondirective pedagogical strategies and methods, we can continue encouraging our colleagues (and their students and tutors) in writing classrooms and in writing centers to make and map similar explorations—to take similar complimentary journeys—serving center *and* classroom. We have so much to share with, and learn from, each other.

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