



Hannah Telling

## Drawing Power: Analyzing *Writing Center* as Homeplace through Gesture Drawings

---

Hello, welcome, and thank you for coming. My name is Hannah Telling and I am very excited, and just a *little bit* nervous, to be here with you all.

Before I get started, I would like to direct your attention to my slide. That link is where you can access the transcript and follow along if you would like. I also want to let you all know there will be interactive portions of this presentation in which I ask people to sit in the same positions as the tutors and writers from my gesture drawings. I want to invite everyone to participate in whatever capacity they feel comfortable and able to do so.

I am an undergraduate student at Montana State University (MSU) in Bozeman, Montana. I am in my fifth year studying English education and women, gender, and sexuality studies. I have worked in MSU's writing center for three years as a one-on-one tutor, writing-group facilitator, and workshop facilitator. In these positions, I have worked with writers across disciplines and at all degree levels.

I am honored to be giving this talk and for the opportunity to continue my IRB-approved research over the past year. I would especially like to thank

---

This keynote was delivered at the joint meetings of the International Writing Centers Association and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, October 18th, 2019, in Columbus, OH.

all my wonderful colleagues and administrators for their support. I would also like to thank Dr. Mike Mattison for hearing my research at last year's NCPTW conference and inviting me to be here today. Thank you all.

## Research Question and Gesture Drawings

Last year, when my director told us about the NCPTW 2018 conference whose theme was migration, I decided to research how bodies move and what their movement tells us about reciprocity and hospitality in my writing center.

**Figure 1**  
*Examples of Gesture Drawings*



I researched this question using Michele Eodice's concept of participatory hospitality (2019), which I will talk about later, and gesture drawings, examples of which you can see in Figure 1. Gesture drawings are a research method from studio art that capture movement, the embodiment of tensions, and the relationships between people. Through using gesture drawings to capture how people's bodies move to participate in tutoring sessions, I can then look at how bodies are or are not embodying hospitality and reciprocity, two values intently focused on over the past three years in my writing center's tutor education.

I came to this research question through my fascination with bodies—how they move, how they convey messages, and how they are policed by different institutions and socially dictated rules. For example, there are different expectations for how bodies look and act around a boss, a professor, or a friend. These social rules follow students into our writing centers.

My interest in bodies is one of the reasons I bounced in and out of studio art classes for the last few years—putting my all into classes that did not count towards my degree. It was in the art studio, in these classes where paint splatters covered the floor and charcoal dust coated every surface, that I learned of gesture drawings as an integral research tool.

Gesture drawings are a foundational tool in studio art because artists use them to puzzle out the visible world. Through gesture drawings, artists study and question the dominant visual languages of their time period and physical location. The way we interpret what we see—how we make meaning of the images before us—is due to the dominant visual language that surrounds us. Through gesture drawings, artists are able to interrogate visual languages and to push at the languages' boundaries and, therefore, the boundaries of how we interpret our world.

**Figure 2**

*Process of Creating a Gesture Drawing*

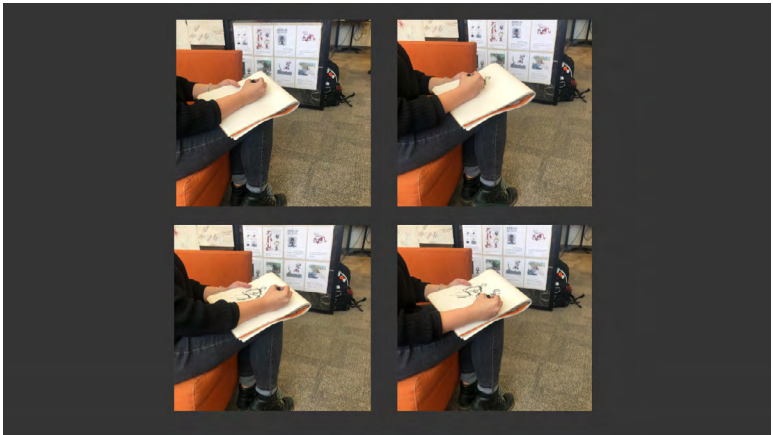


Figure 2 contains images of me doing a gesture drawing of a tutoring session. It is a quick process that takes 30–90 seconds. During this time, my piece of charcoal almost never leaves the page.

So, with all of this information, you might be wondering how I connect gesture drawings to hospitality and reciprocity, and what I mean by hospitality and reciprocity.

## Reciprocity, Hospitality, and Participatory Hospitality

For us in MSU's writing center, our understanding of reciprocity mirrors how John Bennett, a scholar of hospitality in academia, talks about relationality. Pulling from Bennett (2003), we think of reciprocity as "the capacity to be influenced and affected as well as to influence and affect" (p. 41).

I further add to the definition of reciprocity, saying that reciprocity is an ideology that allows for *active* equity and accessibility in which each person shares their knowledge and learns from the knowledge of the other.

Hospitality is a little trickier to define than reciprocity. Hospitality is a concept that has been around ever since the ancient Greeks declared you could not kill a stranger who dined under your roof. Instead, you had to share gifts and knowledge. After all, you never know who might be a god in disguise.

At its base, I define hospitality as social customs of receiving and welcoming guests, visitors, or strangers. However, many cultures have practices of hospitality, and all these practices look a little different from one another. Writing center literature studies hospitality because of the power hospitality has in shaping how we design our centers, how we carry our bodies, and what we expect of the people who use writing centers. Hospitality can break down barriers or further inscribe lines of power and oppression. Having awareness of these different forms of hospitality, how they are embodied and how they impact others, gives us agency in creating interactions beneficial to the people around us and to ourselves.

For the last few semesters, my writing center analyzed our own tutoring practices through the lenses of hospitality and reciprocity. We specifically drew from Eodice's "Participatory Hospitality and Writing Centers" (2019). In this chapter, Eodice analyzes traditions of hospitality to examine how writing spaces either foster insistent individualism, in which people function as isolated individuals, or interdependence, in which people work *with* each other to build communities of mutual learning. As I stated before, different constructions of hospitality have power in shaping how writers, tutors, and administration experience writing centers. Eodice writes that hospitality is a set of "moves made in service to the values found in our mission statements: access and equality" (Hospitable Spaces section, para. 3).

Therefore, Eodice (2019) talks about how participatory hospitality *is not* like the hospitality offered when you walk into a coffee shop, where your only role is to sit there and be served. Instead, participatory hospitality *is* immersive collaboration in which *all* participants are recognized as having gifts to bring and valuable ideas to share.

Sometimes people walk into MSU's writing center and ask if a tutor can edit their paper while they go to class. This *is not* an example of participatory hospitality because it does not ask anything of the student and does not align

with my writing center's values of collaboration and reciprocity. This interaction does not recognize student-writers have important and valuable insights to offer our writing center through conversation.

The goal of the participatory-hospitality model is interdependence through reciprocity. During tutor education, my writing center looked through the participatory-hospitality lens to explore dynamics between people in tutoring sessions and how these dynamics impact enactments of reciprocity.

## Valued Practices

Reciprocity is one of my writing center's core values. Recently, we have begun to use R. Mark Hall's (2017) *Around the Texts of Writing Center Work: An Inquiry-Based Approach to Tutor Education* to think about how we can observe our values. In this text, Hall examines valued practices that form in institutional environments and in writing centers. Hall writes of the need to identify, observe, and examine each of our center's valued practices, practices that are "not arbitrary or neutral. They are negotiated. They are privileged" (p. 21). This means our values are not immovable truths about the world. Rather, they are created by us and are changed with every new person who enters our writing centers. What values we have and ways we participate are influenced by the contexts we live in, the identities we hold, and the histories we are responding to.

MSU's writing center has been working on how to observe our values and valued practices. One of my colleagues, Henry Fessler, used corpus analysis to look at how the language we use in emails to writers after sessions demonstrates our values, and how our language has changed over time. He is presenting his findings later today at this conference if you are interested in learning more.

As for me, I wanted to *see* and capture these abstract concepts—I wanted to make them visible and interrogatable. So I started creating gesture drawings of sessions. After getting the consent of the writer and tutor, I would sit in the background and draw.

As I said before, gesture drawings are quick. Each of the images you see here took between 30 and 90 seconds. This way, I was able to create multiple drawings of the same session, ultimately capturing how dynamics shifted or remained the same throughout the session. These gesture drawings show how bodies relate to each other, the ways bodies "speak," and where reciprocity is, or is not, happening.

Before I dive further into how I used gesture drawings to research bodies in my writing center, I am going to contextualize my research and tell you a little more about me, my university, and my writing center. Through this

contextualization, I am working to practice accountability to the communities and histories my research is both a continuation of and a response to.

## Context of Montana State University

The context in which we live and learn impacts us, just as we impact the context. Our values and ways of understanding the world do not exist in a vacuum; instead, they are learned from institutions—such as our universities and writing centers.

My research took place at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana (IRB exemption number HT091918-EX). Though Montana is the fourth largest state by area in the United States, our population is barely over a million people. MSU is Montana’s four-year, land-grant, public university, founded through the Morrill Act of 1862. This act gave federal land to states to build colleges that focused on teaching agriculture, science, military science, and engineering.

As a result of this history, MSU has a focus on STEM and agriculture. My writing center, set within this land-grant institution, responds to this history and current reality through nurturing many partnerships and writing groups with biology, engineering, earth science, and other STEM related fields.

## Theorists Who Influenced My Research

My research is strongly influenced by Beth Godbee, Moira Ozias, and Jasmine Kar Tang’s article “Body + Power + Justice: Movement-Based Workshops for Critical Tutor Education” (2015). These scholars argue that “systemic power and privilege . . . are mapped onto, read through, and enacted in the body” (p. 63). Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang write that in tutoring sessions, the crux of the work happens in conversation, in the embodied acts of writers collaborating around a text. As a writing center community, we have the mandate to explore how the embodied dimensions of our practice facilitate or frustrate learning; consolidate or share power; and open or close possibilities for learning, change, and revision. (pp. 63–64)

This quote speaks to how we cannot ignore our bodies and writers’ bodies because the practices of our centers are inherently interwoven with our physical selves.

Identities are important. When researching bodies, especially bodies in writing centers, it is important to keep in mind that bodies are not devoid of meaning—rather, bodies and identities influence how people experience the world, and how people experience our writing centers.

Through my experience using gesture drawings as a research tool, I have come to believe gesture drawings are a powerful heuristic to build knowledge

of how the embodied dimensions of sessions impact how writers experience our centers.

Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang (2015) argue that, in writing centers, we need to reckon with our bodies across three spheres—the personal, the relational, and the systemic—as bodies are foundational to the creation of spaces, dynamics, and learning. Bodies mediate all interactions and social forces. My research focuses on the second sphere, the relational sphere: how our bodies relate with other bodies. I used gesture drawings to reckon with how our bodies relate with other bodies.

When I started my research process, bringing gesture drawings into the writing center was an experiment. I did not know how it would work, or even *if* it would work. But as I engaged in these gesture drawings, I began to develop a deeper awareness of how bodies—their movements and tensions—are an integral component in the creation of hospitable spaces, spaces where people feel valued, so they can be brave and take risks.

In my gesture drawings, I marked the tutors with a *T* and the writers with a *W*. Though I only made identification marks on which body belonged to the tutor and which to the writer, I sketched sessions with varied configurations of new tutor, veteran tutor, writers who frequently come to the writing center, and writers who were there for the first time. I sketched 11 sessions and created 60–70 gesture drawings.

## Gesture Drawings as Methodology

As I stated at the beginning of this talk, gesture drawings are quick, loose sketches that capture the movement of a body by turning the body into lines, shadows, and highlights (Nicolaidēs, 1990). Through studying the visible, gesture drawings puzzle out where the body is holding weight and tension or is relaxed and at ease—and how all these components interact.

Kimon Nicolaidēs, an art theorist, says gesture drawings reveal the “key to the nature of the subject” (p. 29) because gesture drawings record all the forces, ideologies, and power structures that are acting upon the subject and that the subject is acting upon the outside world.

For this reason, gesture drawings become a perfect methodology to research Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang’s (2015) argument that “systemic power and privilege . . . are mapped onto, read through, and enacted in the body” (p. 63).

**Figure 3**

*Writer on the Left, Tutor on the Right*



For example, in Figure 3, we can see where the bodies are holding tension and weight:

- lines in tutor's body—reaching and extended
- lines in writer's body—closed off and pointed away

We know this image is filled with tension for two reasons. First, gesture drawings allow viewers to partially inhabit the bodies. John Berger, a Marxist art theorist, writes, “[When drawing,] I saw and recognized quite ordinary anatomical facts; but I also felt them physically—as if, in a sense, *my* nervous system inhabited *his* body” (p. 31). We, viewing these gesture drawings, can imagine our own bodies in these positions and how we would feel. Please turn to your neighbor and have one person position themselves as the writer in this image and one as the tutor. Take a moment to notice how that body position feels. We will come back together in 40 seconds.

The second reason we know this image is filled with tension is because of the heavy dark lines around the writer's back and the tutor's legs, which show tension. These heavy lines capture movement shifts and body discomfort. Because gesture drawings are quick, the lines build up when bodies minutely shift back and forth.

We will look at this specific gesture drawing a few more times throughout the presentation to analyze these tensions. Before we do that, I will first dive deeper into the three ways gesture drawings function:

1. Gesture drawings are subjective.
2. Gesture drawings allow the artist to pass through the subject.



3. Gesture drawings capture how bodies speak independently of the subject's conscious word choice.

### **Gesture Drawings Are Subjective**

Gesture drawings offer subjectivity as an integral component. There is no pretense of objectivity. Having the artist and the artist's gaze as integral components, gesture drawings keep my research connected to the community and environment where the drawing and writing tutoring sessions took place.

### **Gesture Drawings Allow the Artist to Pass Through the Subject**

Berger (2016) writes that “each mark you make on the paper is a stepping stone from which you proceed to the next, until you have crossed your subject as though it were a river, have put it behind you” (p. 27). When I was taught to draw, I was told to forget the name of what I am drawing. This means I look past the skin-deep aspects of the person and instead break the body down into form, shape, weight, and tensions—and then slowly rebuild until I again remember the name of what I am drawing. In this way, I was taught to pass through the subject in order to capture how the subject embodies various tensions and interactions. These drawings are a record of confrontations and encounters between the subjects. When placed in the context of a writing center, gesture drawings are a record of how various understandings of participation come into contact within a tutoring session.

### **Gesture Drawings Capture How Bodies Speak Independently of the Subject's Conscious Word Choice**

By creating gesture drawings of tutoring sessions, I am able to capture reactions to power dynamics within that session through creating a visual record of tensions within a body. These tensions are important when placed alongside Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang's (2015) argument that “systemic power and privilege . . . are mapped onto, read through, and enacted in the body” (p. 63).

Bodies *speak* systemic power and privilege through ideologies of participation—which is a set of beliefs stating *who* should participate and *how* they should participate. Through these ideologies of participation, power is inscribed on bodies and bodies enact, respond to, or subvert power through embodiments of participation. Because of this, gesture drawings inherently “speak” ideologies of participation even when the subject is not aware their body is speaking.

## Ideologies of Participation and Gesture Drawings

So what are ideologies of participation? There is no *one* definition of participation. The differing definitions are all contingent on varying cultural or social beliefs of what actions indicate a body is participating.

In “Participatory Hospitality and Writing Centers” (2019), Eodice gives the example of how college writing classrooms commodify participation through grading acts teachers believe show a student is participating. Teachers grade students based on how well students embody and perform cultural constructions of an engaged student, which in this case means leaning forward, tracking with their eyes, raising their hand, and behaving “professionally.” However, the concept of professionalism becomes hazy when we realize different contexts and histories impact the ways people understand what is or is not professional.

Both Matthew Cox’s “Queering Student Participation: Whispers, Echoes, Rants, and Memories” (2019) and Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang’s “Body + Power + Justice: Movement-Based Workshops for Critical Tutor Education” (2015) explore how characteristics and identities such as professional are coded through different actions, physical appearances, and ways of speaking. Cox, a writing professor, writes about how students enter academic spaces with preconceived understandings of how to embody professionalism, as seen when the students expect “very tidy conversations about what is considered professional and what is unprofessional” (2019). The students expect Cox to support certain notions of professionalism by telling the students “to always wear a suit, to never use slang or regional dialects in the workplace, to never question authority or ask why money might always drive decisions in workplaces” (2019). Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang (2015) turn to Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* (1984/2007) to explain how the embodiment of professionalism becomes linked to embodied identities. These researchers point out that “traditional conceptions of professionalism are highly racialized, invoking Lorde’s discussion of the ‘mythical norm,’” that is, those who fit the categories of the “mythical norm (‘white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure’) are often more likely than others to be viewed as ‘professional’” (Godbee, Ozias, & Kar Tang, p. 77).

In my own experience as a tutor, I often work with students who feel pressured by their professors to sound more like this embodied definition of professional and academic. In these sessions, I feel tensions among what the writer wants, how the academy asks the writer to write, and my desire to affirm the writer’s own voice and disrupt violences of literacy. In moments like these, I feel all the pressures and power structures of the academy trying to control how both voices and bodies perform. As a tutor, I also feel pressure—pressure to conform to the powers of the institution and how those powers are asking

students to perform. Through my research, I wanted to understand how bodies are performing or participating within this context. This is where the concept of participatory hospitality comes in.

As a reminder, participatory hospitality is where people work *with* each other to build communities of mutual learning. Participatory hospitality works towards interdependence in which each person is recognized as a valuable knowledge maker.

Since my research is working to make the theories that undergird my center's valued practices visible, I analyzed my gesture drawings through the lens of participatory hospitality. Specifically, I was looking for sessions where participatory hospitality exists or does not exist. In order to do this, I focused on where reciprocity, an integral aspect of participatory hospitality, manifested in sessions.

First, we will look at sessions where reciprocity was not able to exist, and therefore, participatory hospitality was not able to exist.

**Figure 4**

*Writer on the Left, Tutor on the Right*



Figure 4 is the gesture drawing we looked at earlier. We have already identified that there is tension in this drawing. Now let's zoom in and take a closer look.

**Figure 5**

*Writer on the Left, Tutor on the Right*



In looking at these drawings, as seen in Figure 5, we can really see the way the lines in the body point:

- writer: closed off, pointed away, on their toes like they're at a starting gate
- tutor: reaching, striving to invite writer in

In this image, though the tutor appears to be displaying openness through their extended arm, are they really?

According to participatory hospitality—which values community, interdependence, and reciprocity—no, the tutor is not displaying openness. Rather, the tutor is displaying an understanding of hospitality that mirrors the coffee-shop example I mentioned earlier.

Through the coffee-shop lens of hospitality, the writer becomes someone to be pleased instead of someone to work collaboratively *with*. In MSU's writing center, one of our values is making the writer feel welcome. The tutor in this drawing could have interpreted making someone feel welcome as making them feel at "home" and comfortable, which we see in the tutor's body language through their desire to reach out to the writer and welcome them in.

In "Leaving Home Sweet Home: Towards Critical Readings of Writing Center Spaces," Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2005) examines how the metaphor of home manifests in the physical space of writing centers and constructs hospitality as comfort where peoples' needs are met. Grutsch McKinney (2005) writes:

Many writing center professionals seem to be operating under the tacitly accepted notion that writing centers should be welcoming, cozy, comfortable, friendly spots where talk about writing can happen . . . writing

centers should be . . . governed by this metaphor of home. At first glance, this organizing metaphor of home appears unproblematic. However, when we consider that “home” is read differently by different people, the fissures in this metaphor appear. (p. 7)

Metaphors, such as this metaphor of home, become linked to ideologies of participation because, as Bennett (2015) says, “Metaphors express and embody our underlying conceptual schemes or world views” (p. 94). The metaphor of home Grutsch McKinney writes against is a metaphor that becomes embodied as an ideology of participation.

Grutsch McKinney points out that motivations for structuring writing centers with the metaphor of home came from good intentions—wanting to create a space that was obviously “other” from the cold, uncaring, multi-hundred-people lecture halls of the larger academy where students became numbers. Instead, directors wanted to create a space where students felt welcomed, valued, and comforted. However, Grutsch McKinney also points out the harm this ideology of participation could cause students, arguing that home does not look the same to everyone and is not a safe space for everyone. Constructions of home, like constructions of participation, are political and coded with various identity markers that alienate many people.

When tutors and writers operate under the metaphor of home that focuses on making writers comfortable, certain embodiments of participation emerge.

### Figure 6

*Writer on the Left, Tutor on the Right*



In Figure 6, we can see how this home metaphor of hospitality does not allow the session to be reciprocal because there is not an aspect of equality or accessibility in which each person shares their knowledge and learns from the knowledge of the other. The tutor held this body position for a long time with their arm extended to the writer. In this embodiment, the tutor's body is taking all of the responsibility to engage the writer.

When looking at my gesture drawings, there are two key markers that show the tutor's embodiment of the home model of hospitality—a model in which it is challenging for reciprocity to exist. These two markers can be seen in the drawing of the tutor in Figure 7:

1. A triangular space has been created between the tutor's elbow, armpit, and waist.
2. The tutor's body is hinging forward at the waist.

**Figure 7**

*Writer on the Left, Tutor on the Right*



The tutor held this position for a long time. A drawback to this position was that the writer could not lean in and offer their insights/agency. If the writer leaned forward, they would have bonked heads with the tutor. Thus, the tutor monopolized the shared space.

Now let's look at a few more examples:

**Figure 8**

*In All of These Gesture Drawings, the Tutor Is on the Left, and the Writer(s) Is on the Right*



Figure 8 shows more sessions in which reciprocity and participatory hospitality were not able to exist. We can see how the tutors' bodies are speaking.

**Figure 9**

*Orange Boxes Around Tutors*



The tutors are stretched forward, arms extended to the writers, trying to offer their engagement and service to the writers, as shown in Figures 9 and 10. This expressive, forward body position is taught in many classrooms as the performance of engagement.

**Figure 10**  
*Orange Boxes Around Writers*



Now we will examine the body positionings of the writers, which show

- the writers are hugging themselves,
- the lines on writers' bodies are pointed away from the session, and
- the triangle space formed by the armpit, elbow, and waist of the writer is used to put up a barrier between themselves and the tutor.

I did not interview any tutors or writers, so I do not know how they experienced these sessions and what they were thinking. However, as Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang (2015) state, bodies are mapped with privilege, power, and ideologies. The bodies of these tutors and writers are partially products of the various institutions that surround them. Therefore, the way these bodies move is partially informed by different social and institutional power dynamics and ideologies of participation.

As I stated before, in MSU's writing center, one of our values is making the writer feel welcome. These tutors could have interpreted making someone feel welcome as making them feel at home and comfortable. Even if the tutor was leaning into the space with the motivation to show excitement and inclusiveness, in all these gesture drawings we can see tension in the writers' bodies—how they are either closed off or turned away from the tutors. Through



these dynamics, we can see how our institutions, embodied in us as tutors and consultants, affect our writers in ways we do not intend.

I would like to point out that these writers were not disengaged. They were still talking with the tutor and nodding their heads. However, reciprocity was not able to exist because there was not an aspect of equality or accessibility in which each person shared their knowledge and learned from the knowledge of the other.

This is why it is important to look at how bodies are speaking in addition to the verbal, spoken speech. If we were just to look at a transcript of what was said during the session, we would get a very different understanding of how the session went than we would by also looking at these gesture drawings.

While conducting my research, I noticed one other place where the home ideology of participation became embodied and visible—the orange couches in MSU’s writing center. These couches are used in two ways: for tutors between sessions or classes and for writers waiting for their session to start after checking in at our front desk. Through having multiple uses, the couches can have different meanings when we apply the lens of home. For example, Figure 11 shows tutors sitting on the orange couches when they did not have any writers. Their bodies are speaking of their comfort in this space through the ways they are relaxed, stretched, spread, or curled.

**Figure 11**

*Tutors on the Orange Couches in MSU’s Writing Center*



In this situation, I see the ideology of home being beneficial for tutors. Tutoring is emotional labor and can become draining. Having a space to sit for a second and feel comfortable can help tutors rejuvenate.

However, these bodies can be either ostracizing or welcoming to incoming writers. The couches are an example of what Grutsch McKinney (2005) might be talking about when she poses the question “Whose home is it?” (p. 16). Depending on what ideology of participation a writer holds, these bodies could either say this is a space where inquiry and writing are divorced from the “professional” requirements of bodies in academia, or this embodiment could display to writers that there is no room for them on the couches and therefore no room for them in this “home.”

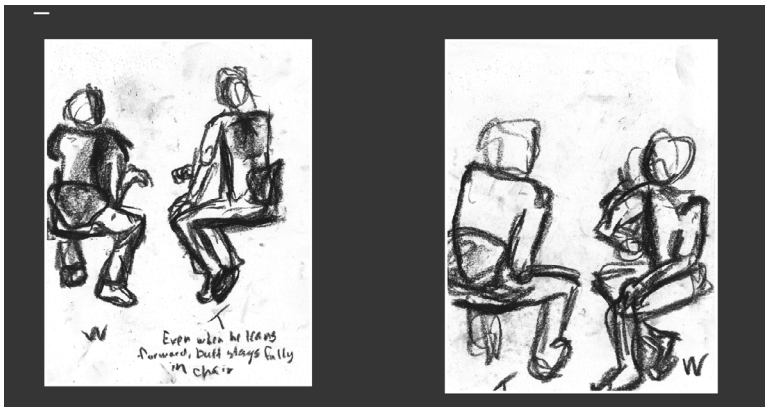
We must be aware of who is being excluded when we are applying a home model of hospitality. If there are many writers coming in and needing to wait before their sessions, the couches must then be used in a different manner of hospitality. Models of home, hospitality, and participation are not set in stone; rather, they are fluid and can be changed.

As a field, we must become aware of different ideologies of participation, what body positionings speak those different ideologies of participation, and how they impact others. Through this, we can gain agency in creating spaces and interactions beneficial to the people around us and aligned with our values. Knowing our bodies and how they speak different models of hospitality helps us be accountable to each other and learn from each other.

In the sessions depicted in Figure 12, the bodies are speaking reciprocity—and participatory hospitality can therefore exist. When looking at participatory hospitality as an embodied practice, the shared space between the tutor and writer becomes important. The shared space is the area between the tutor’s body and the writer’s body. This is space both bodies can enter or leave open.

**Figure 12**

*In the Gesture Drawing on the Left, the Writer Is on the Left and the Tutor Is on the Right. In the Gesture Drawing to the Right, the Tutor Is on the Left and the Writer Is on the Right.*



In the gesture drawing in Figure 13, you can see the shared space is left intact and whole:

**Figure 13**

*Tutor on the Left, Writer on the Right*

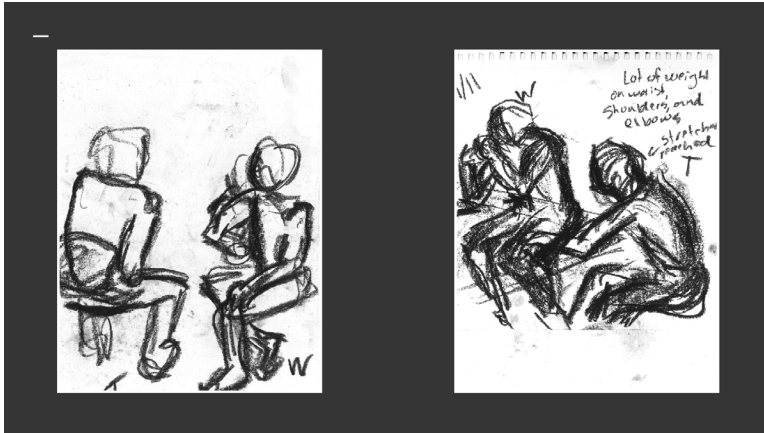


- Both the tutor and the writer are seated firmly.
- The lines of each body point to one another.
- Both the tutor's and the writer's chests are open and pointed towards one another.
- Triangle formed by elbow, waist, and armpit is nonexistent for the tutor.
- The writer is able to enter the space and freely move their body. For example, my charcoal stick caught the writer's movement, especially the lines around the writer's shoulders and head. This evidence of movement, captured in the drawing, offers a sharp contrast from previous sessions we looked at, where the movement was not as free and instead produced heavy lines around the bodies.

Please turn to your neighbor and, once again, have one person position themselves as the writer in this image and one as the tutor, as seen in Figure 13. Take a moment to notice how that body position feels. We will come back together in 40 seconds.

**Figure 14**

*Gesture Drawing on the Left Displays Intact Shared Space. Gesture Drawing on the Right, in Contrast, Displays the Tutor Monopolizing the Shared Space*



In the participatory-hospitality ideology of participation, the interactions between tutor and writer are interdependent. Learning is a participatory activity in which skills, ideas, and decisions are shared, ultimately building interdependence (Eodice, 2019). Tutors and writers see each other as partners in knowledge building and practice knowledge production as a social act.

In my research, I found that the shared space between the tutor and writer is integral for reciprocity to exist. The difference between sessions where reciprocity was not able to exist and where reciprocity was able to exist was the strategic use of space between bodies.

The shared space allowed both tutor and writer to contribute to the interaction in reciprocal ways. However, these interactions cannot be forced; both people must freely enter into the interaction.

## Movement, Bodies, and Reciprocity

**Figure 15**

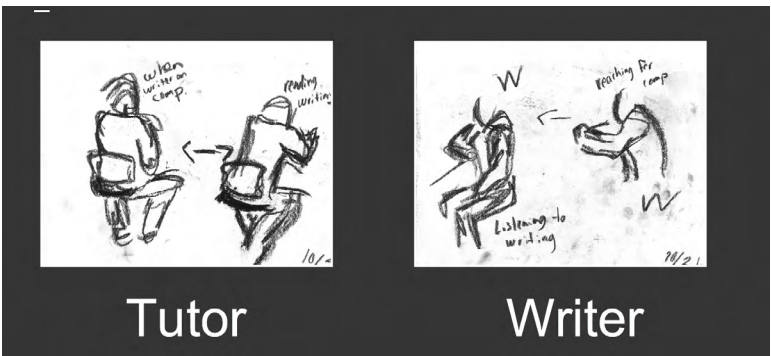
*Tutor on Left, Writer on Right*



In those sessions where reciprocity was able to exist, the tutor and the writer did not remain stagnant and motionless. Rather, the tutor used movement from their waist to direct the flow of the session and invite the writer in. In Figure 15, we can see the tutor leaning forward to read the writer's work. The tutor's body positioning is similar to the bodies in the sessions where reciprocity was not able to exist. However, unlike those sessions, in this session the writer is pointed towards the tutor with their chest open. So why is the writer reacting in this way?

**Figure 16**

*Displaying Movement in a Tutoring Session*



Tutor

Writer

The writer is reacting this way because both the tutor and the writer are in movement, as shown in Figure 16. The tutor entered the shared space to read the writer's document. Once the tutor was done reading, they leaned back, which opened up the shared space. The writer then leaned in to fill the space and make comments about or edits to their document. Through this hinging at the waist movement, both tutor and writer became participants in an embodied dialogue.

As Eodice (2019) writes, for participatory hospitality to truly happen, “the gesture must move in both directions” (Hospitable Spaces section, para. 6). In this session, each person offered skills and advice and accepted the skills and advice of the other, therefore embodying a form of power that was shared and interdependent.

Once again, please turn to your neighbor and have one person position themselves as the writer in Figure 16 and one as the tutor. Please mimic the movement of these bodies through hinging at your waist to move in and out of the shared space. Take a moment to notice how that body position feels. We will come back together in 40 seconds.

Eodice's participatory hospitality is a localized ideology of participation within my home writing center. We spent a full semester of tutor training focusing on participatory hospitality, and Eodice's chapter is now part of our foundations seminar for new tutor education. For that reason, it is completely possible that the tutor in this gesture drawing was operating with the tenets of participatory hospitality in mind, which then became embodied in the interaction they built with the writer.

**Figure 17**  
*Tutor on the Left, Writer on the Right*



MSU's writing center holds reciprocity as one of our core values. However, we were not always practicing reciprocity. Reciprocity and participatory hospitality are not practices we can instantly speak into existence because we also need to learn how to speak these forms of participation through our bodies. As we can see in these gesture drawings, including Figure 17, reciprocity is a hard practice to embody. Our bodies need to practice. Part of practice is observing and learning from how others embody reciprocity.

One interesting thing to note here is that the majority of tutors in sessions where reciprocity *was not* able to exist were new tutors, and the majority of tutors in sessions where reciprocity *was* able to exist were veteran tutors. This could support my idea that bodies need time and mentors—both other tutors and writing center literature—to learn how to embody reciprocity.

For example, in Figure 17, the tutor does have a more pronounced triangle formed by their armpit, elbow, and waist; they are leaning on the table much like the tutors did in sessions where reciprocity and participatory hospitality were not present. However, unlike those previous sessions, the tutor is not on the edge of the chair. The tutor's butt is instead fully back in their seat, which allows the tutor to hinge at the waist, moving back and forth, in and out of the shared space. You can see they did this often because of the heavier lines at their back, knee, and arms: movement was happening.

You can see the writer also moved in and out of the shared space because of the lines around their back, head, and knee. We can see each body is intent on the other, both engaged by what they each have to offer and learn. Participatory hospitality as a concept and value can help us embrace different perspectives and ways of knowing in writing centers, ultimately leading to the enrichment and growth of everyone involved.

When we go into tutoring sessions, we do not know what ideology of participation the writer is working from. For that reason, we must be aware how our bodies impact the session and how the writer is responding to our bodies. Being accountable to each other means leaning back to give the writer space to work in and share their knowledge. This act can be vulnerable. By truly listening to the writer's ideas and life experiences, we could have our foundational truths challenged.

While vulnerable, this act of leaning back is ultimately a good thing. By practicing participatory hospitality through embodiment, we will listen hard enough to be changed by what we hear. Our truths and worlds will be enlarged.

## Further Research

As Grutsch McKinney (2005) points out when talking about problematic aspects of the home ideology of participation, hospitality and physical space take on different meanings with different configurations of identity.

People have many different versions of what hospitality and reciprocity look like. These differing constructions are often influenced by factors such as race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and geographical location. In tutoring sessions, these identities may be responded to unconsciously or consciously and may shape interactions between the tutor and writer and therefore shape my gesture drawings of those interactions.

For my study, as I mentioned above, I did not interview the tutors or writers, so I do not know what identities they held or how they understood their identities as impacting the session. This is a large gap in my research that must be filled as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia often work to prevent people from accessing spaces; spaces are not always created while keeping diverse identities in mind. For example, race is one of the discourses that influences everyone. MSU is 92% white. It is important that we are thinking about how race is manifested through the body in order to interrogate what narratives of race our center is working from.

## Implications

For me, completing this research has changed my tutoring practice. In sessions, I now consciously pick moments to lean forward and lean back, always making sure to keep my butt seated firmly in the chair. By becoming aware of how my body speaks ideologies of participation, I have learned how to give writers the space they need to share their experiences, skills, and knowledge. Since this research, my sessions have become more vibrant. The writers I work with have exercised more agency in their work, and I have learned so much from all of them.

We must interrogate the unstated, underlying values that make up each of our center's ideologies of participation and conceptions of hospitality. Do the ways we physically organize our centers and interact with each other align with the values in our mission statements? When we embody our ideologies of participation, are we alienating anyone?

Institutions form bodies through exerting power and dictating how people can participate. *But* bodies also exert power on institutions. Through being aware of what ideologies of participation we work from, we can enact positive change in our institutions. Through our bodies, we can send the message that everyone is welcome in our centers as valuable knowledge makers with important things to create and say.

## Acknowledgments

*I would like to thank Dr. Michelle Miley, Jess Carroll, and my coworkers at the MSU Writing Center for their incredible support. I would also like to thank Dr. Mike Mattison and Laura Benton for giving me the opportunity to complete and present this research. Additionally, I thank the editors of WCJ for their wonderful feedback.*



## References

- Bennett, J. B. (2003). *Academic life: Hospitality, ethics, and spirituality*. Anker.
- Berger, J. (2016). *Landscapes: John Berger on art*. Verso.
- Cox, M. (2019). Queering student participation: Whispers, echoes, rants, and memory. In P. V. Banaii, L. Blankenship, K. DeLuca, L. Obermark, & R. Omiza (Eds.), *The rhetoric of participation: Interrogating commonplaces in and beyond the classroom*. Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University Press.
- Eodice, M. (2019). Participatory hospitality in the writing center. In P. V. Banaii, L. Blankenship, K. DeLuca, & L. Obermark (Eds.), *The rhetoric of participation: Interrogating commonplaces in and beyond the classroom*. Computers and Composition Digital Press/ Utah State University Press. <https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/rhetoric-of-participation/eodice/>
- Godbee, B., Ozias, M., & Kar Tang, J. (2015). Body + power + justice: Movement-based workshops for critical tutor education. *Writing Center Journal*, 34(2), 61–112.
- Grutsch McKinney, J. (2005). Leaving home sweet home: Towards critical readings of writing center spaces. *Writing Center Journal*, 25(2), 6–20.
- Hall, M. R. (2017). *Around the texts of writing center work: An inquiry-based approach to tutor education*. Utah State University Press.
- Lorde, A. (1984/2007). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.
- Nicolaïdes, K. (1990). *The natural way to draw: A working plan for art study*. Mariner Books.

**Hannah Telling** is a first-year high school English Language Arts teacher in Belgrade, MT. She is currently focused on designing thematic units that incorporate multicultural literature and culturally responsive pedagogies.

