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Institutional assessment in higher education often restricts measurement of learning to outcomes that elide the complexity of learning processes and contexts in favor of data that is tidy and manageable. Moreover, such outcomes are frequently written to express an economic value for the learning to justify the purpose of education as a personal good versus a public good. Currently, the value of education is determined by free market principles and commodified as something necessary for social mobility. However, this commodification functions within exclusionary power structures that serve hegemonic systems, not the public good. Writing centers within this contemporary ecosphere of higher education offer unique opportunities to interrupt these neoliberal logics. Yet, much of the writing center scholarship leans towards utopian narratives (e.g., “The Idea of a Writing Center”) about the positionality of the writing center within these educational ecologies. New voices have specifically called for writing center administrators to account for the ways that center work operates within these neoliberal logics in order to reckon with the ways that such work might actually reify the very logics it hopes—and claims—to interrupt.

This project takes up that call to design a heuristic meant to map how my writing center is positioned within its various educational ecologies (i.e., higher education in the US; the local Queens ecology; the classroom) and what that positionality means for my work as the director. Specifically, this project explores the ways that distant ecologies, local ecologies, and the writing center infrastructure influence the daily operations of the center and the tutoring practices of the student-tutors. Using a framework of ecological thinking by Lorraine Code, this project seeks to make legible the ways that these educational ecologies impact writing center work so that writing

center administrators can make ethical and informed choices—such as with institutional assessments—about the daily processes and practices in order to resist the neoliberal logics that shift our missions in subtle but tangible ways.

DISCOVERY AS THE DIRECT AND URGENT ACTION OF ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN WRITING CENTERS

by

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Approved by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to Mr. Fred Rogers, my first teacher.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION - MAPPING EDUCATIONAL ECOLOGIES

Discoveries from the journey …

The landmarks that led me to and through this project began with three important classroom moments that were offered by the three scholars who served as my committee. The first moment came from my National Writing Project course with Dr. Reynolds when she invited me to question my faith in the benignity of some long-held tenets in writing center work. The second moment came from a course on the connections between ethics and ethos where Dr. Myers suggested that ecological thinking might be a methodology that helped me account for years of lived experience as a writing center director. The third moment came from a feminist pedagogies course with Dr. Adams where a watershed moment from an assignment brought into specific relief how my choices as a teacher may have been undermining my goals as a writing center director. These moments mark the trailhead of this journey; they led me to the questions, methodology, and main argument.

I would be remiss not to voice my own beliefs about education and how these three classroom moments engaged those beliefs, resulting in this project. Despite my own fraught experiences with school, I believe in the power of education to effect change personally, economically, civically, and ethically. My own uneven relationship with education has led me to act, direct, and teach from bell hooks' "vision of liberatory education," which "connects the will to know with the will to become" (19). Knowing and becoming are the heart of this work. In 2020, as I was just beginning the long trek of this project, Jackie Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch's essay, "Ethics and Action: Feminist Perspectives on Facing the Grand Challenges of Our Times" came into academic discourses as a call to "resist simple solutions and focus instead on keeping the horizons of our operational paradigms dynamic and open" (137). They *invited educators and scholars to traverse the "uncertainty for educational enterprises" by creating "a compass, a path-finding system for negotiating the terrain" (127). My project seeks to enact their call. I choose ecological thinking for my methodology as it offers a counter epistemology of assessment from the current system that informs higher education, which is technical rationality and scientific management. Lorraine Code's theories on ecological thinking, in concert with Shari Stenberg's charge for repurposing accountability, serve as theoretical guides. I use my experiences in the Queens writing center as the data.*

The introduction of this project offers the bird's-eye view of the educational ecologies in which the Queens writing center operates. As a means to orient the audience, I map the largest, yet most distant, educational ecology in which my writing center exists—the institution of contemporary US higher education. Additionally, I explain the landmarks (or artifacts) that I use on my path. In attempting to map the larger ecology, I acknowledge that this project cannot account for the entire history of the university. However, from my research on the development in higher education in the US, I did come to two important conclusions. First, there is not a stable idea of the university. Second, previous ideas of the university as a public good have shifted to it functioning as a private good. One result of this shift has been a reliance on Outcomes Assessment (OA) to measure learning, which I argue is an outcome of the neoliberal influences that currently pervade education. A shift of focus to the more local educational ecologies of Queens University of Charlotte, the writing center, and the tutor education course follows.

Each educational ecology is rhetorical and as such can be examined to understand the messaging both explicitly and implicitly that students encounter; these ecologies are both externally and internally available, even as they may not be recognized as such. Using rhetorical *analysis, I examine the following artifacts: Queens' public facing messaging such as the "Mission, Visions and Values" page of the Queens website; the Queens course catalog; tutor prep course documents; and my own positionality as the main traveler for this narrative. This examination reveals conflicts between the explicit and tacit messages between Queens as an institution and me as an educator-director in that institution. More specifically, it makes legible the neoliberal undertones of the university in contrast with my attempts towards a more open stance that resists a logic of mastery. These methods helped me to answer the above call to keep my operational paradigms dynamic and open.*

Finally, what I express in my conclusion is a hopeful stance. This project confirmed in concrete ways that this work is vocational in the sense that it requires me to seek what Cornel West describes as "direct and urgent action" (94). Where West, as a philosopher, is concerned with morals, I, as a rhetorician, am concerned with ethics; in truth, for this project, they are both imperative. As a vocation is a moral-ethical-political pursuit, then so too my teaching and directing are moral-ethical-political endeavors. For me, teaching is the most direct and urgent action we take towards a life of moral and political action. What is at stake for all of us in these educational endeavors is a way to do this work that is sustainable when the path is crowded with discouraging discourses. I do this work as a public good. The students who I teach and direct will go out into the world, and I hope they become the best versions of themselves despite a world that is often hostile, competitive, and unforgiving.

I'd like to share a quote by Mr. Rogers, my first teacher: "What matters isn't how a person's inner life finally puts together the alphabet and numbers of his outer life. What really matters is whether he uses the alphabet for the declaration of a war or the description of a sunrise—his numbers for the final count at Buchenwald or the specifics of a brand-new bridge"

(Rider). Given the opportunities that education has to teach students how to be in the world, remembering their value is true North on this compass guiding us towards the direct and urgent action of becoming.

My grandfather had an innate sense of direction. We would be in a new city, and he seemed to know instinctively which way was east or which road we needed to turn down. Alas, I do not have that same sense of direction. I can follow a map or GPS directions, but I do not have that embodied sense of the cardinal points to understand which direction I am facing. What I do have is the ability to find my way around once I have walked a terrain—even years later. After I have the physical experience of *doing* the directions and choosing my own landmarks to mark my way, I know exactly where I am. Consequently, I never feel lost when traveling. I just know that I am learning the route by doing the route. This same metaphor might be applied to my experiences as a writing center director. As with many writing center directors, even though I had been a writing tutor, I had limited experience with what it meant to direct a writing center and how to navigate the various institutional contexts, protocols, and relationships that make up the topography of this work. Here, too, I am learning through doing.

I love writing center work. To me, it represents what learning should and can look like—folks connecting and working together towards making meaning. That might be me working with the student-tutors or the tutors working with student-writers. Sometimes, it is the tutors sitting around between appointments talking to one another about what they are learning and engaging with each other before they dash to their next class or work or practice. Moreover, for our campus, it is one of the few spaces where the diversity of our student body manifests not only in terms of race, gender, and class but also in the myriad other identities they hold either as athletes or student representatives or first-generation students. Often, our students are siloed into outwardly specific student populations such as by athletics or by majors. In the writing center, however, the recruitment process pulls from all the programs of study, so we have various constituencies represented on our roster both in terms of areas of study as well as by more ambiguous identities. This diversity of experiences and identities matters to the type of learning space I hope to foster as a director.

However, I recognize the tension that many writing center directors feel in navigating a place that while hopeful also sits within the institution of higher education. Education proclaims itself a democratizing endeavor even as it preserves hegemonic systems of power. A writing center as an entity within the context of such institutions exists and operates both inside and outside of those hegemonic systems. Yet, writing center scholarship often tilts towards a utopian stance of operating as the conduit for unlocking students' agency. Eric Camarillo critiques this narrative as "problematic because the purpose of the mission of writing centers is not engaged in a critical manner in terms of a larger framework." I read his critique as a call-in for an ecological framework. Through this project, I want to take up Camarillo's critique to assume a more reflexive approach for writing center work using a "path-finding system [that] is keyed by an ethics model that integrates and operationalizes both inner-facing and outer-facing analytical and interpretative frameworks for action" (Royster and Kirsch 127). After more than ten years directing and teaching, I have yet to find such a system to direct my way. This project is my attempt to build one.

Directing a writing center entails a multitude of competencies from project management to interpersonal skills. Patricia Bizzell aptly describes my own experiences that "to be a good administrator […] you must draw on *everything* you know" (vii). Yet, I am mindful that any pathway I build based on my own knowledge, experiences, and identity needs to be ethical. To that end, I will set my context and my own imperatives for taking up this critique. Chiefly among the competencies for directing a writing center is the act of teaching, which may happen in a classroom or in the center or both. My teaching philosophy is guided by critical educators such as bell hooks who promote education as a liberatory space driven by relationship and reflexivity. She points to a tension in educational spaces when she describes that a sense of "belonging" (inclusivity) is the "difference between education as a practice of freedom and education that merely strives to reinforce domination" (5). Even as I work through this project, I am still defining for myself what I mean by liberatory space.[1] For now, I operate from the idea that part of my responsibility to students (and particularly student-tutors) is to ask us all "to take a good look at the system that structures what we do with literacy in higher education" (Grimm 21). In this sense, literacy is the watchword often used to grant or deny access to the complex ecologies of education. Moreover, this tension operates within an "uncertainty for educational enterprises [in] a world in flux, amid contested value systems, shifts in points of view, terms of engagement, and decision-making paradigms" (Royster & Kirsch 127). Given the turbulent contexts of any educational enterprise, understanding my ethical responsibilities becomes a paramount endeavor. Such an endeavor flourishes "from continual reflection, reflexivity, recalibration" so that "these processes offer [a way for me] to be more consciously and deliberately aware of context, purpose, and interconnectedness" (131). What I have come to discover is that the current methods of assessment for learning or directing whether, in the classroom or programmatically, offer no path for charting context, purpose, or interconnectedness. Therefore, I must create that pathway.

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[1] I am grateful to Dr. Heather Adams for encouraging me to think through what this term meant for me and for this project.

The knowledge making practices of students and tutors are shaped in untold ways by the quotidian choices of schooling, whether it be my pedagogical choices or the policies of the institution. Moreover, it is precisely because these impacts are untold or unaccounted for that this project is valuable. Without critically examining my own administrative and pedagogical choices and understanding the educational ecologies in which my student-tutors learn, any attempts I make at measuring their effectiveness as tutors is incomplete, and my teaching is compromised. However, as a director, I am required to assess the program for effectiveness, which includes the work that the tutors do using the systems sanctioned by the institution. Such institutional assessment based on the current outcomes model can never really capture the nuanced complexity of the relational work of my teaching or the tutors' tutoring. To reduce this work to "effectiveness" is overly simplistic. As such, the problem this project seeks to engage is to make explicit the connections between the writing center and the various educational ecologies in which it exists to determine if my goals of a liberatory space for education are met within these competing educational ecologies. After years of directing a writing center, I had a felt sense of how these educational ecologies affected the daily practices of the center, but I could not find a process by which to discover, (land)mark, and track how those ecologies countered or supported my choices as a director.

In this project, I am not advocating that outcomes be abandoned as an institutional protocol for assessment, despite critique of this model in later chapters. Some sort of accountability for this work is not only necessary but wise. Without a system of checks and balances, institutions can become useless at best and predatory at worst, as evidenced by the Congressional hearings earlier in this century that exposed the abuses by for-profit institutions. However, the current hyper focus on outcomes-based learning does not offer mechanisms and opportunities to make legible the interconnected aspects within each educational ecology. In mapping these ecologies and my choosing own landmarks (i.e., artifacts, methods, and methodologies), I have a stronger sense of direction for my writing center work.

How I Got Here—Ecological Thinking and Feminist Pedagogies

Two pivotal moments helped me to discover the need for finding these various institutional connections and how they function alongside my choices as a director. The first was my introduction to the theories of Lorraine Code about ecological thinking. Code characterizes ecological thinking as a “revisioned mode of engagement with knowledge, subjectivity, politics, ethics, science, citizenship, and agency that pervades and reconfigures theory and practice” (*Ecological Thinking* 5). This lens invites a way of knowing based on a relational model of ecology “conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner 3).

Figure 1. Relationship Between Educational Ecologies

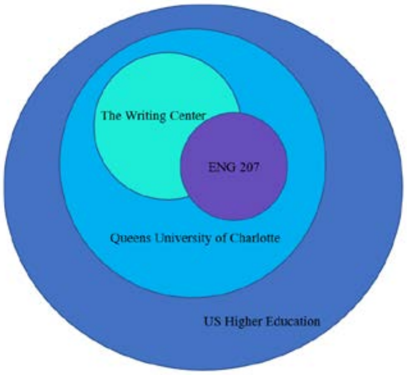

Figure 1 above is my attempt to visualize how these educational ecologies in which the writing center exists interact with each other and what that might mean for how the writing center is positioned inside and outside these ecologies. It is my sense of Bronfenbrenner’s nested structure. For the purposes of this study, I work from Ronald Barnett's definition of educational ecology:

> 'Ecology' is a double-barrelled term. It both refers to systems *in themselves* that have an internal unity, the coherence of which could be threatened in some way, and also refers to a *study* of such systems in the world. An ecology is both out there, as a real presence in the world, *and* is a form of thought, understanding and knowledge generated by humanity. (It is at once an ontological and an epistemological term.) This dual-headedness applies also to the university, for the university lives amid ecologies (they have real substance in the world) *and* also has helped to bequeath the formation of ecology as an academic field of study. (18)

In this project, the educational ecologies are the systems and environments in which a student learns and teachers teach. The educational ecology largest in scope and most distant from the everyday practice of the writing center is that of US higher education. This ecology encompasses the history and development of higher education in the US and the current trend of accountability and assessment that drives higher education policy, including at the level of my own institution. Sited within the broader educational ecology of US higher education is the Queens University of Charlotte ("Queens") educational ecology that has a more direct effect on both the daily practices of the writing center and the pedagogical ecology of the writing tutor preparation course, identified above as ENG 207: Practicum in Composition Theory (ENG 207). The educational ecology of the writing center and the pedagogical ecology[2] of ENG 207 are situated within these broader ecologies, yet unlike the broader ecologies which are nested within each other, the writing center and ENG 207 ecologies exist collectively. Ideally, this collective existence works together to create a space where students (both student-writers and student-tutors) deeply learn. Such ecologies should go beyond merely making students become proficient in how to write in the prescribed and privileged ways sanctioned by the university; they should aid thinking and metacognition so that students develop into the best versions of themselves. Where writing operates as much as a tool for learning as a skill to be assessed.

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[2] I differentiate pedagogical ecology as another version of the educational ecology but one that it is as concerned with the teaching as the learning.

Code's ecological thinking "does not reduce to a set of rules or methods; it may play out differently from location to location; but it is sufficiently coherent to be interpreted and enacted across widely diverse situations" (*Ecological Thinking* 5). Ecological thinking gives me a more comprehensive evaluation process for the work I do in the writing center because it assumes that interactions with all the possible constituents within an ecology will be necessarily affected by other ecologies and the constituents of other ecologies.

The second insight originated in a course on women's rhetorics and feminist pedagogies. A particular assignment from this course required me to apply the feminist theories from the course to an actual class that I taught. In that course, I came to understand how my own pedagogical practices may actually undercut my intentions for the course I teach to prepare students to become writing tutors (ENG 207). My own syllabus revealed that while I claimed a stance of liberatory pedagogy, the material reality of my course materials may not have actually reflected that stance. This realization opened a line of questioning about my teaching choices and how they might connect to my directing practices.

Teaching is a humbling experience. Part performance, part modeling, part embodiment—my teaching choices influence the vast array of ways that student-tutors engage their work in the classroom and the writing center. My choices, however, do not exist in a vacuum. In fact, they contribute to part of the constellation of ecologies in which I, students, tutors, and the institution operates. This realization guided my project in two stages. The first stage is to consider if the various educational ecologies where the student-tutors work and learn manifest in their tutoring praxes. The second stage is to recognize how such manifestations might necessitate shifts in my own teaching and directing practices. By understanding these various ecologies (institutional and pedagogical), my study seeks to offer a heuristic that is a fungible model to other directors[3] about how writing centers are positioned in these ecologies and how these ecologies affect center work.

Scouting for Landmarks

Before I outline the ecology of the US higher education system, let me articulate my beliefs about education. Despite my own fraught experiences with school, I believe in the power of education to effect change in the world, whether that be personally, economically, civically, or ethically. Currently, education is necessary both as a practical instrument for credentialing and as a theoretical space for knowledge production. Perhaps it was my own uneven relationship with school that led me to teach what hooks describes as a "vision of liberatory education that connects the will to know with the will to become" (19). Personally, knowledge making is about becoming. That is where meaning making happens for me and, after a decade of teaching, it seems to be where and how my students make meaning as well.

At this point in my introduction, it seems appropriate to engage my experiences with assessment as both a teacher and a director. The term assessment tends to be a catch-all word that is meant to indicate the evaluation of an activity. In education specifically, assessment at the classroom level can cover anything from pop-quizzes to projects or final exams. These assessments might be formative in that they "*monitor student learning* to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning" ("What is the difference"). Formative assessments provide a feedback loop between the student and the instructor as they work towards the goals of the course. Other assessments are summative in that they are meant to "*evaluate student learning* at the end of the instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark" ("What is the difference"). Within the Outcomes Assessment (OA) model, these classroom assessments are linked to student learning outcomes (SLOs) communicated by the instructor. SLOs are the goals that students should achieve within a specific timeframe and are typically scored on a benchmarked rubric. I routinely engage this type of assessment in the curricular courses that I teach.

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[3] I use the word director, but this project is meant for anyone, regardless of title or position who is directly involved with writing center operations.

OA is the larger framework often seen in the US that aggregates this bench-marked data to measure student learning and make evaluations not of individual student progress but as cohorts. It is the feedback loop between students and institutions. For example, OA might consider student learning levels through the lens of socioeconomic characteristics (Kuh and Ewell 11). Outcomes can provide instructors and administrators purposeful guidance to improve teaching and programming. When outcomes assessment is designed and implemented thoughtfully and effectively, it provides relevant information about what is happening in classrooms, university programs, and across campus. Unfortunately, my experience of OA is that it traffics in disparate data points that rarely connect to the educational ecologies in which they exist. OA offers a tidy mechanism by which to track and evaluate student learning; however, they do not allow for the ways that learning is an iterative process. Later in this chapter, I will explain how this system became so pervasive in US higher education.

This project starts from an important question that seems obvious and somehow nebulous: how to define a good education. Given the polarization in today's political landscape, any answer defies consensus, so I only answer from my own perspective. Establishing an account of *what* makes for a good education is imperative before considering *how* to provide a good education and then assessing said education. Gert Biesta asserts that the question of what comprises a good education should be situated "openly and explicitly *as* a normative question–a question of aims, ends, and values" (2). This normative situatedness has implications for the ways that teaching and learning are measured and how those measurements are subsequently used for building curricula and policies. Like Biesta and others, I argue that education is a public good that has been compromised by the influence of neoliberalism through the rise of an accountability culture that promotes education as solely a private good.

The Unstable Idea of the University

In order to orient myself, I begin within the context of higher education within the US system. As Donald Schön explains, it is a current epistemic system informed by Technical Rationality:

> Since the Reformation, the history of the West has been shaped by the rise of science and technology and by the industrial movement which was both cause and consequence of the increasingly powerful scientific world-view. As the scientific world-view gained dominance, so did the idea that human progress would be achieved by harnessing science to create technology for the achievement of human ends. This Technological Program, which was first vividly expressed in writings of Bacon and Hobbes, became a major

> theme for the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, and by the late nineteenth century had been firmly established as a pillar of conventional wisdom. (31)

This epistemic system still permeates contemporary theories on teaching and higher education's drive to prove its cost-effectiveness and relevance in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, higher education in the US matured and "assumed [its] now familiar structure and styles of operations, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when science and technology were on the rise and the intellectual hegemony of Positivism was beginning to be established" (Schön 34). It is in this context that the contemporary university system came of age.

Mapping the ecology of US higher education cannot be comprehensively attended to within the scope of this project, but establishing some of the fraught evolution of colleges[4] to account for the current state of higher education is vital to understanding how a writing center operates within that realm. The concept of *university* as a space for learning and to live the life of the mind originated in European cities where formal institutions developed out of the intellectual hubs connected to the Roman Catholic Church or monarchies across the European continent. Scholarship on the origins of higher education within the US explores institutions founded before the Revolutionary War as the US American colonies began to stabilize (Thelin 1). The essence of US higher education is informed by those European institutions; their raison d'etre was a means for strengthening the state, developing a national culture, and, finally, evolved towards the pursuit of excellence as established by Bill Readings in *The University in Ruins.* However, the university's current orientation has moved from the premise of education being a public good to education being a private good (Biesta 97; Labaree, "An Affair" 21). Such a shift has brought forth the conditions that teachers face in the contemporary landscapes of K-12 and higher education: waning belief in intellectualism; distrust of teacher expertise; hyper focus on accountability and efficiency; and curriculum standardization (see Aronowitz; Gallagher; Giroux; Labaree; Readings; Stenberg; Welch and Scott).

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[4] For the purposes of readability, I will interchange the terms post-secondary education, higher education, colleges, and universities in this study but acknowledge that they are not synonymous and even within these terms there are distinctions and variations.

The comprehensive volume, *History of American*[5] *Higher Education* by John Thelin, recounts the rise and spread of US education—both secondary and post-secondary—as a concomitant ideal alongside the pursuit of liberty and freedom espoused in the tenets of the country's founding stories. He tracks the circumstances around the rise of higher education in the US, starting with its colonial intentions of producing leaders for the newly-founded democracy. Thelin's argument provides sufficient evidence to doubt the narratives that higher education was ever a stable enterprise. Ultimately, Thelin complicates two pervasive, though myopic, narratives about US higher education. The first is that the more money an institution has, the greater its prestige in terms of being an intellectual powerhouse of learning. Second, there is "'reasonable doubt' about the permanence of many present-day policies and practices" taken for granted in the contemporary system (Thelin xxx). One consistent narrative that lingers from the colonial origins of higher education is "its relationship to American society" (xxxi). As the country grew, so too, higher education. That relationship with American society was higher education's "destiny" as a "cultural mission" because of "its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture" (Readings 3).

As the nineteenth century dawned, pragmatic corporate rationales for higher education began to seriously influence higher education as an institution (Thelin 89). In a sentiment echoed in contemporary narratives, the 1868-1869 catalog of Richmond College in Virginia “recorded students from an increasingly varied background” with liberal arts courses “advertised as being practical and appropriate to any future profession, including business” (93). This statement could be inserted as is into the current Queens catalog. Higher education became less about preparing moral leaders and more about creating corporate ones. At the turn of the twentieth century, this pivot from moral leadership to economic leadership still maintained an emphasis on the character development of its students even as it moved towards “an organizational ethos that prized order and efficiency” introducing the influence on education from the business sector (114). Another account in Readings’ historiography locates the origins of the modern US American university as “conceived by Humboldt as one of the primary apparatuses through which [the] production of national subjects was to take place in modernity” (Readings 46). The modern university became the focus of influence for “large-scale philanthropy from the large industrial fortunes;” this funding drove the prolific development of higher education's physical plants (Thelin 206). With the influence of philanthropic capitalism, the purpose of higher education again shifts towards a faith in education and its relationship for attaining the American Dream (206). This shift marks the origins of its current iteration: “a transnational bureaucratic corporation, either tied to transnational instances of government [...] or functioning independently, by analogy with a transnational corporation” (Readings 3). Joining Readings’ critique of the modern university, Henry Giroux proclaims: “Welcome to the dystopian world of corporate education” (30). Both Giroux and Readings’ commentary critique not only the myth of a stable university but also the current version influenced by neoliberal interests.

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[5] I acknowledge that use of the descriptor "American" in this dissertation references "US American" for the sake of brevity and recognizes that this phrasing is inaccurate as the word American can also describe various other physical locations.

While some scholars, pundits, and legislators might argue against the stance that neoliberalism has materially affected education, I maintain that neoliberal policies and doctrines have considerable reverberations for education and, therefore, for writing centers, as evidence by a large body of scholarship (see Biesta; Giroux; Labaree; Monty; Stenberg; Welch and Scott). For my project, I draw on the framing of neoliberalism from Tony Scott, Nancy Welch, and Shari J. Stenberg. Scott and Welch theorize that "[n]eoliberalization is a way to describe the changes we are seeing in higher education that have had their analogues in virtually every sector of society, especially the public and governmental sector" (7). Neoliberalism, as defined by Stenberg, "is a set of economic principles and cultural politics that positions the free market as a guide for all human action [and] seeks to remove all barriers to the free market" (5). Essentially, neoliberalism claims that there is "no distinction between the economy and society; what's best for one is considered best for the other" (5). Understanding education as a public good but evaluating it as a private good makes visible the incongruity that is our current state of education. "Neoliberalism" as noted by Scott and Welch "is rife with paradoxes, but among them is the perpetuation of the theory that government best achieves the greater public good by serving private interests" (7).

Comparable to K-12, higher education has become subject to neoliberalism as seen in widespread scholarship where students have become consumers and universities provide the product—an education. Stenberg contends that students and "[parents] are encouraged to view college as a commodity" (6). This conflation of student as consumer mirrors the other problematic conflations that neoliberalism enacts such as "the civic and the industrial, the citizen and the customer, and the body and the machine" (Monty 39). Conflations such as these create a "complicated network of identifications, which [position] individuals and corporations as having cohabitable rights" (39). A systemic phenomenon, neoliberalism echoes the worn-out narrative of individual merit or laziness (as the case may be) without accounting for the collective issues of socio-economic conditions, racial inequities, or other hegemonic realities that thwart individual agency. This use of market logic creates the false narrative that market influences are somehow apolitical (Scott and Welch 8). Neoliberalism enacts this logic through managerialism "that insists upon quantification while ignoring or denying the qualitative consequences for learning" (Scott and Welch 8). Quantification becomes the domain of administration with a misguided focus on excellence.

The predicament in making excellence the purpose of the university is that it is rather a meaningless measurement. According to Readings, many administrators claim "excellence" as "the unifying principle of the contemporary University" (22). This claim is the manifestation of the process of "'dereferentialization,'" or the point when a word "no longer has specific referents" or "no longer refers to a specific set of things or ideas" (22). The idea of excellence is dereferentialized because the normative questions about the purpose of education and what constitutes a good education have all but disappeared from discussions about educational policies and practices and has been "[displaced] with technical and managerial questions about efficiency and effectiveness of processes" (Biesta 2). There is no baseline for excellence. Also, this begs the question of whose excellence? Therefore, the "contemporary University of Excellence should now be understood as a bureaucratic system whose internal regulation is entirely self-interested without regard to wider ideological imperatives" (Readings 40).

The origins of the University of Excellence (as coined by Readings) appear around 1931, even as the purpose of a university remained under construction. Robert Maynard Hutchins' announcement regarding "a 'New College' at the University of Chicago" approximates higher education's purpose at the time: "College *is* an association of scholars in which provision is made for the development of traits and powers which must be cultivated, in addition to those which are purely intellectual, if one is to become a well-balanced and useful member of any community" (Thelin 235). This text sees the origins of the pivot from a university education that serves a democratic state with an educated citizenry towards subjects useful for the labor market. College is not just about intellectual pursuits, but the cultivation of well-balanced and useful people. The question left unanswered by this announcement is to whom these students should be useful. Stanley Aronowitz directly, and satirically, answers that "[e]ducation is successful when the student identifies with the social and cultural authorities" (1). In short, schooling useful people—echoing Foucault's theories of docile bodies—is about conformity (Giroux 29) and navigating a culture of power (Delpit 282).

Another signal of the effect of neoliberalism in creating a corporate university lies in how philanthropic funding invested in higher education. Thelin notes that between "1920 to 1940 a coalition of major foundations accelerated their effort to bring both standards and standardization to American higher education" (238). Prior to this time, philanthropic funds were generally directed towards the nurture and development of a single institution. For example, Commodore Vanderbilt's naming and giving for the support of Vanderbilt University. The shift to larger-scale support of postsecondary education meant that the philanthropic entities (e.g., the Mellon Foundation) wanted accountability from institutions for such generous donations. This alteration marks a move to a corporate model for the governance of higher education institutions (Thelin 238-239). The corporate model brought a new focus on efficiency and accountability, ushering in a culture of accountability and assessment.

Higher Education's Contemporary Ecology: Accountability and Assessment

The US preoccupation with efficiency and scientific management in the workplace and education originates around the turn of the twentieth century under the burgeoning theory of

Taylorism, a method for “improving efficiency in the workforce” using a “scientific method [that] consists of three steps: observation, experimentation, and analysis” (“Scientific Management Theory”). Education adopted methods born from Taylorism, such as delivering a standardized curriculum at all levels of education, and leveraged the language of “outcomes and/or standards to drive the educational process” (Au 27). In the current, wide-spread system of assessment, learning outcomes “are statements identifying what students will know or be able to do at the end of an activity, unit of instruction, course, or program of study. They are generally expressed in terms of knowledge, understandings, skills, dispositions, or values that students will have attained” (Gallagher, “The Trouble” 44). As such, these efficiency measures help administrators determine “‘weak’ and ‘strong’ teachers” and to break down curriculum “into minute units of work that could be standardized, determined in advance, taught in a linear manner, and easily assessed,” creating a “factory-like, capitalist production-minded educational” system (Au 28). Under neoliberal logics, assessment that is tidy is also reductive, which drives measurements towards what can be measured and what is economically valuable. There is no room for what should be measured and valuable for the public good because such measurements are beyond the bounds of tidiness.

Coupled with the Reagan-era fixation on small government, a free market economic system, and reduced regulation, US education became a contested space for instituting policies that sought to reign in perceived wasteful federal spending. However, these narratives were circulating alongside a narrative of America’s supposed slip in educational competitiveness at a global level, evidenced in the Reagan Administration commissioned report, *A Nation at Risk.* This 40-year-old report, in concert with the Spellings Commission report of 2005, continues to influence the educational policies today that dictate how education is delivered and measured from kindergarten to higher education (Kamenetz). Even as these accountability narratives grew from the K-12 system, the Spellings Report brought this narrative of efficiency and accountability specifically to higher education using the trope of universities having a "monopoly" to call for greater accountability, which continues with the Obama era *College Scorecard* (Gallagher, "Our Trojan Horse" 22).

Perhaps less overtly political and obvious in the narrative of how accountability came to US higher education is the connection between government funding and the accreditation process. First, open enrollment and a rapidly diversifying student body necessitated changes in college admissions and the reliance on standardized tests. Beginning with the 1944 GI Bill, colleges and universities began to see a shift in the type of student pursuing higher education. Later, women, students of color, and families of lower socioeconomic status took the opportunities that college degrees offered for social mobility (Thelin 265). Standardized tests such as the SAT or the ACT became the measurement by which students were offered admissions and were used to predict success towards graduation. Simultaneously, financial support from the US government in the form of student loans or other tuition support needed to be protected from "diploma mills," so it began accepting "as a proxy the institutional evaluations that colleges and university themselves rendered as a part of voluntary accreditation associations," such the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Thelin 265). To ensure that colleges receive federal funds for student loans, they must follow the guidelines and requirements by these accrediting bodies who rely heavily on the use of outcomes assessment to establish whether a university is effective at the education it claims to provide (Boyd 246-250).

The influence of neoliberalism on education is felt most acutely in what Giroux et al. refer to as "'an output fundamentalism'" (30) or what Chris Gallagher suggests is the "fetishizing

[of] outcomes" ("Our Trojan Horse" 30). Tools of technical rationality and scientific management, outcomes support the regulatory and administrative conditions that promote the corporate aspects of the neoliberal university. Such conditions are aided and abetted by educational research through its promotion of Outcomes Assessment (OA[6]) as a path towards legitimacy. David Labaree, a historian of education, posits that the US compulsion with quantification "enjoyed a prominent place in public policy and professional discourse" ("The Lure" 13). He asserts that the discipline of education is defined as both a soft field of study and one of applied knowledge, thereby making strong generalizations of theory difficult to produce (16-17). Further, he writes of educational researchers, "[t]hey cannot construct towers of knowledge, building on the work of predecessors, but are stuck with the task of continually rebuilding their intellectual foundations" (18). This precarious context finds education as a discipline trying to establish a valid position comparable to other fields such as the hard sciences. As such, this concatenation of educational research searching for legitimacy and the corporate university promoting quantification makes the move towards OA an inevitability.

Coinciding with the Reagan-era narratives about small government and accountability, OA perspectives of measurement moved from "corporate training" to higher education's accreditation systems, compelling universities to build program assessments based on outcomes (Bennett 148). These factors become a "*double transformation* of both educational research and educational practice" that continues to impact curriculum, classrooms, students, and teachers (Biesta 29). Before this shift toward evidence-based education, educational effectiveness was measured by "broad social outcomes" such as better jobs for college graduates and a growing economy (Labaree, “Targeting Teachers” 9). Tectonic shifts towards globalization in the second half of the twentieth century saw educational politics being constrained by “growing fiscal constraints and growing educational inequality” (“Targeting Teachers” 10). Critiques of OA are vast and varied, however, for the purposes of this project I attend to those that are germane to the feminist and ecological intentions of my research. The three relevant critiques of OA are the limitations of the method for capturing student learning, the flattening effect that does not preserve the complexity of teaching and learning, and the reductive and harmful futures it invites for education.

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[6] OA is also referred to as Learning Outcomes Assessment (LOA) and the umbrella term, Outcomes Based Education (OBE).

Multiple limitations impede the effectiveness of OA. Labaree warns that “the quantitative turn in educational research […] provides researchers with a strong incentive to focus on what they can measure statistically rather than on what is important” (“The Lure" 19). As such, the focus on outcomes diminishes precious attention from teachers for students and undermines the relational aims of education between students and teachers (Gallagher, “The Trouble” 43). Particularly, the way the educational experience is undermined is that OA minimizes it to the point of rigidity in its “narrow fixation on singular results rather than openness to emergent possibilities” (45). Gallagher explains that “outcomes become isolated, over time, from the ongoing activities of the teachers and students” even as they “become enshrined in the bureaucratic machinery” (45). What this analysis signals is that even as Outcomes Based Education can bring some clarity to what instructors hope students learn, the narrowness of the measurement elides the myriad other learning that may not be visible when outcomes merely serve a technical role of measurement for educational efficiency and effectiveness. OBE is not expansive enough for discovery.

Another factor that contributes to the limitations of OA is that often the outcomes are assessed in isolation and become “an abstract technical ideal [that] ends up destroying the complex distinctive ecology that depends on local practical knowledge” (Labaree, “The Lure” 25). Ignored is the local practical knowledge of the classroom where the meaning-makers (student and teacher) are and in which messy and intangible knowledge, such as negotiating peer relationships, understanding social cues, collaboration with classmates, is sacrificed for that which can be counted. Students intake, manage, and output data. Moreover, data that “carries economic value” is prioritized and valued because contemporary assessment protocols see “education as an engine of human capital production” (Labaree, “Let’s Measure” 11). These protocols operate outside of an ecological lens so that the complexity of teaching and learning becomes flattened. Partly, this flattening is the result of the distance from the outcome to the site of learning and within a larger framework colored by neoliberal ideas about accountability. Labaree contends that some of the dilemma lies in the fact that “educational researchers are stuck with understanding matters like teaching and learning within an organizational structure that both is loosely coupled (between vertical layers in the system and between units in each layer) and deeply nested (with students nested in classrooms nested in schools nested in [educational] systems)” (“The Lure” 17). The further the outcome (university-wide or programmatic) is away from the original site of learning (classroom), the more “remote, generalized, and irrelevant statements of learning outcomes become,” such that the outcomes are all but meaningless with the result being that outcomes have “more to do with administrative and regulatory necessity” instead of data that can help teachers adjust practices to meet the contextualized needs of the student in the moment and in the classroom (Bennett et al. 147).

The focus on accountability in the form of OA portends a bleak future for education within a system informed by neoliberalism. First, the reliance of test scores in isolation from other factors that affect student learning, such as food and housing instability or access to well-funded schools, creates an opportunity for blaming teachers for poor student performance and opening up a method for diverting public funds from already struggling institutions to charter schools that only serve to exacerbate the inequalities already evident in education (Bennett et al. 149). Funds are also earmarked for educational technology that promises a panacea for promoting student learning in place of the slower method of differentiated teaching or the less cost-effective policy of smaller class sizes. Leaning into technology and OA also promotes standardization in an effort "to homogenize classrooms and curricula [and] marginalize those teachers and students who do not fit homogenization" (Bennet et al. 151). This homogenization may be scalable, but it is a "reductionist vision of education [so that] education policymakers risk imposing reforms that will destroy the local practical knowledge that makes the ecology of the individual classroom function effectively" (Labaree, "The Lure" 14).

One possible future is the renewed interest in competency-based education (CBE), which centers the purpose of education on what a student can know and do without regard for "the educational experiences of teachers and students" (Gallagher, "Our Trojan Horse" 23). Gallagher is not claiming that all outcomes are bad so much as he is pointing out that learning based on outcomes produced in isolation "embedded in instrumentalist and managerial logics [...] produce certain *tendencies*" (24). He further echoes the theories of John Dewey that these tendencies create "fixity and rigidity in the formulation of ends; diversion of attention away from the existing conditions for teaching and learning; narrow fixation on singular results rather than openness to emergent consequences; and imposition on students and teachers" (24). What

Gallagher suggests is that frameworks built on OA, such as Competency Based Education ("CBE") eschew the "social process through which [students] engage in the continuous reconstruction of experience" (30). In short, assessment fixated on outcomes can never account for relationality or experiences.

My intentions for this project are not to take on the Sisyphean task of ridding the university of student learning outcomes or OA as the method for assessment. That would be tilting at windmills. Nor do I categorically denounce the use of outcomes as a way to measure learning. That would be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. What I can offer is alternate ways of working alongside the system to discover and (land)mark the messy parts of teaching and learning as well, or at least, not operating from the fixity and rigidness that OA can invite.

Mapping Ecologies Using Critical Theories and a Feminist Methodology

I have made a case that students matriculate in a myriad of educational ecologies and current tools for assessing student learning are narrow and informed by a neoliberal framework that privileges certain types of learning. These facts evidence the need for "frames informed by an intersection of systems that are constantly interrogated with a deliberate de-centering of the primacy of human beings and *the primacy of Western ontologies, theories, and practices*" (Royster and Kirsch 126; emphasis mine). Given that my own teaching and scholarly interests seek to interrupt Cartesian notions of epistemologies in favor of interacting with the world from the stance of embodiment and multiplicity, I adopt the feminist methodology of ecological thinking for this project. Also, I investigate the ways my own choices interact with these educational ecologies for good or ill. Deeply steeped in Western educational practices originating from a hegemonic standpoint, it is vital that this project does not propagate the same delimited ways of knowing. The critical theories that contribute to my study include hooks' framework of engaged pedagogy, Code's methodology of ecological thinking, and Stenberg's call for repurposing accountability within the neoliberal university system.

hooks' understanding of engaged pedagogy undergirds my teaching practices. She describes it as a "[p]rogressive, holistic education [...] that emphasizes well-being [...] by teachers actively committed to a process of self-actualization[7] that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (15). A teacher informed by an engaged pedagogy must be willing to critique her own practices in pursuit of this participatory space for the pursuit of knowledge. It is this critique that may cause discomfort for many teachers because the process asks them to name how their own classroom choices mediate the educational system and student learning. Here is what I know about myself as a director and a teacher, though—that discomfort is already something I carry with me. If my ethos is informed by critical pedagogy, but my teaching and directing habitus are conditioned by the power systems in the field of education; I embody the tension between them. I cannot reconcile this tension, but I can tolerate it and even interrupt it as a claim for my own agency as a director and teacher and offer students a path towards their own agency. My own well-being as a teacher is the balance of explicitly naming the problematic educational habitus along with the practice of interrupting that habitus, an interruption that "refers to breaks, divides, hitches, disruptions, disturbances, ruptures, or breaches—counter to traditional way of behaving or conversing—to change the status quo of dominant values and practices" (Ryan et al. 23). To this end, directors who are curious about the effectiveness of their teaching curriculum and pedagogy and center policies for a tutor's learning and practice might seek to be more intentional when evaluating student artifacts or assessing their centers. I hope this project contributes to their search.

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[7] I understand hooks' use of the term self-actualization as a process for being the best version of oneself through reflection and a commitment to self-growth. Whether or not she is referring to Maslow's contested theory regarding human needs does not diminish her ideas or my use of them.

In her text, *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*, Code introduced me to Gilles Deleuze's concept of ethology as a means for understanding "ways of mapping human beings' relations to one another, to physicality, sociality, place, cultural institutions, materiality, corporeality" and other "possibilities" to generate a new way to find out if what I am attempting to do as a rhetoric teacher and a writing center director interrupts the years of educational conditioning student-tutors bring with them that may act counter to my goals for the writing center (*Ecological Thinking* 26). Code asserts that current epistemic understandings of knowledge production abide by the "conviction that objects of knowledge are best known in ideal observation conditions" and that the disconnection is the greatest between "orthodox epistemology and ecological epistemology" (41). If we apply this idea to assessment and my choices as a director and a teacher, what she offers is a more complex and, I argue, useful methodology for considering the writing center's positionality within these ecologies. Ideal conditions assume the myth of objectivity as if the students, their instructors, and their institutions are not all imbued with a myriad of factors that shape and reshape them. Ultimately, I chose ecological thinking for my methodology because it "reconfigures relationships all the way down: epistemological, ethical, scientific, political, rational, and other relationships between and among living beings and the inanimate parts of the world" (Code 47). It is the reconfiguration of relationships that offers a way to interrupt the hegemonic systems of education towards hooks' engaged pedagogy.

Stenberg's ideas in *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*, in concert with Code's ideas on ecological thinking, formed the basis of my vision for this project. Stenberg’s call for a “repurposed responsibility” encouraged me to consider other ways I might discover and track how my tutors’ praxis came into being as a reflection of my teaching and directing choices. Each chapter and the analysis of the ecologies defined attempts to complete that analysis through the “feminist values, knowledges, and practices” of “situated, reflexive knowledge; careful listening and genuine dialogue; and acknowledgement of learning as complex and affective” (Stenberg 127). These feminist values require me to contradict the taken-for-granted idea that somehow, as a director and a teacher, my position is neutral or objective; I aim to make my positionality visible and integral to these ecologies because a “feminist responsibility model for education [...] abides by the notion that all views are situated and embodied, and that responsibility is relational” (134). These relationships and this relational work are the landmarks I hope to discover, to map, and to make legible in this project.

Setting the Course

The following chapters are meant to capture some elements of a particular educational ecology to consider ecologically what the interconnections tell me about the work of the writing center. I hope they answer the calls by scholars (see Camarillo; Gallagher; Lerner; McKinney; Stenberg) to consider how the writing center is positioned in the larger educational ecologies of higher education and how centers reckon with that positionality. Fundamentally for me, I see assessment as a type of therapy for my teaching. As such, I consider my heuristic as a repurposing of assessment as a means to affirm whether the choices I make as a director and a teacher serve my goal of helping students come into their own presence and to reveal the growing edges that I as a director need to address.

In the introductory chapter, I establish my commitment to hook’s and other critical literacy teachers’ call for education as a liberatory practice. This chapter establishes my feminist methodology through the framework of Lorraine Code's ecological thinking as the means for creating this heuristic because a feminist methodology seeks a generative and abundant stance toward knowledge. In order to understand my local institutional context, I established the larger higher education ecology currently manifest here in the United States. This mapping included specifically discrediting some myths about universities in the US such as the idea that higher education was ever a stable concept. Also, it tracks the original intentions for the university as a way to train future democratic leaders; to its attempt at creating a cohesive US culture; and finally its devolvement further into a university of excellence guided by neoliberal precepts. This shift is central to the current state of higher education, as it marked the shift from being a public good for all of society to a private gain ensuring social mobility through credentialing.

Chapter 2, entitled "Here Be Dragons: External Mappings, Internal Mappings, and Intermappings," takes up the Queens ecology and my own positionality to make visible the beliefs and commitments that both Queens and I bring to this relational work with student-tutors. Each ecology is rhetorical and can be examined to understand the messaging both explicitly and implicitly that students encounter; these ecologies are both external and internal. The external ecology of Queens is represented in the public-facing texts that operate to construct a narrative built for the marketing of the university. Such a narrative is warranted, as Queens is a private university whose revenue and economic health is driven by enrollment. This external narrative conflicts with an internal mapping represented by the procedural text of Queens located in the course catalog and other institutional spaces (e.g., the learning management system), which regulates not only the student experience but also the relationship between faculty and students. The second internal mapping includes the educational documents of the tutor preparation course; they articulate my intentions for the course, while also seeking to discover any unconscious signals my course material may impart. These connections are important as I, too, am influenced by the neoliberal stance of the institution.

External Mappings

The artifacts this chapter examines include the Queens University website with special attention to the mission and values language, as my writing center is asked to coordinate our mission and vision statements with the university's text. This language represents the external mapping of the university ecology. Further, I examine the institutional history of Queens and factor in the demographic trends of our current student population. Finally, this mapping includes the geographical location of the university and how that location might contribute to the educational ecology of Queens. I consider the connective tissue between the external mapping and the internal mapping that I charted using the Queens Course catalog, which I reason represents the procedural context of the university, although most of these policies are not foregrounded but are assumed to be understood and observed by all Queens faculty and students. Ecologies are rhetorical; therefore, they are not static. As such, the constituents of the ecologies are marked by fluidity, so it was important to establish the various narratives that Queens and the writing center told about itself even if they conflicted.

Internal Mappings

The next set of artifacts centered on the ecology of the writing center in respect to two sites. First, the ecology of the classroom, which prepares students to become writing tutors, and then the writing center itself. The result of this analysis was the prominence of ethical praxis in regard to the writing center ecology—both mine as the course instructor and the students as tutors-in-training. A brief history of the writing center reveals that while the purpose of the center started from a deficient-model ethos (as many centers do), it evolved beyond that approach and shifted toward a model that seeks to understand and to support the multiple literacy practices of students, which is a more inclusive model. Demographics of the student-tutors also contribute to understanding the writing center's positionality. The roster represents the pointed efforts of my directing towards an inclusive center and the challenges that arise toward those goals. The mission and values of the center were also intentionally examined, as I am encouraged to align my language to that of the university at large. This practice is specifically grounded in the outcomes assessment movement to make assessment measurement easier to capture and showcase as evidence that the university is making good on its claims for a Queens education.

My Positionality

The final artifacts from this chapter are expressly related to me as an instructor. I examine the syllabus from ENG 207: Practicum in Composition Theory and the Final Reflection Assignment to map the relationships between the larger Queens ecology and the classroom ecology to consider possible impacts on the tutors' praxis. To discern how my framing language relates to the other ecologies that were mapped, I stripped my syllabus of any language that was not written by me, which included a host of procedural texts and policies that also reside in the course catalog. Given that the introductory chapter conveys the vast impact of neoliberalism on the current university context, I included analysis of my own learning outcomes and the learning outcomes of the major (of which 207 is a core course) to consider whether they act upon or are acted upon by the larger university ecology. Analysis of the Final Reflection Assignment captured the intentions I have for tutors when they complete the tutor preparation course. This assignment is of particular interest because it runs counter to the rigidity that outcomes might impose on a course, as it was a "just-in-time" assignment meant to meet the students in a particular moment. The assignment did that as well as offering an opportunity for students to display proficiency with at least some of the outcomes from the course and the major.

A qualitative coding system of Initial Coding used iteratively confirms themes and emergent patterns suggesting tutoring stances were performative or embodied and whether the tutors relate more to communities of practices or discourse communities. The performative stance implies that some tutors sustained their usual educational stance of deferring to power (i.e., the grade or the professor’s expectations) while others shifted their thinking to allow for more inclusive support (i.e., attending to the writer’s purpose or deemphasizing the grade) and how they should continue reflecting on their tutoring practices. The other emergent themes suggest associations for the students’ reflections as aligned with communities of practices or discourse communities. This pattern indicates that students may have been considering other ecologies (i.e., course work versus major) as they reflected on their initial responses.

For Chapter 3, “The Classroom Ecology,” I consider the student-tutors’ final reflection assignments to determine what, if any, impact the material of ENG 207 exerts on student-tutors’ ways of thinking when supporting a student-writer. As ENG 207 is the concrete manifestation of my own ideas about how to support student-writers, the culminating reflection assignment potentially reveals the ways the course impacts the student-tutors’ perceptions about learning, writing, and what it means to support their peers as student-writers. In this chapter, I explain the relationship of the course materials and how they connect to the work that student-tutors do in the writing center. What excites me from this chapter are thought processes that the student-tutors came to as they applied what they learned or understood from class to an authentic tutoring situation and the insights they came to for themselves as both students and tutors.

Chapter 4, “The Writing Center Ecology,” reveals the real and timely ways that all the nested ecologies of the university shape tutoring praxis. I situate my own understanding of praxis as corresponding to Aristotelian characteristics of acting toward a greater ethical good. The undertheorized artifacts in this chapter, the post-session tutor notes, offer a rich site for understanding the influences on a tutor’s praxis. I use these session notes to consider the rhetorical moves that a tutor makes as they interact with real students in authentic writing situations in the center. These notes capture a moment between a student-tutor and a student-writer that offers me as teacher and director insight into how the ecologies in which the tutor has been manifest in their praxis.

Post-session notes are the narratives that tutors write after a session with a student-writer to capture what did (or did not) happen as they worked on the student’s project. After explaining the affordances and constraints of the scheduling system that students and tutors use to set up an appointment, I explain the types of data we collect before and after a session, such as the student-writer’s home language, the assignment requirements, and the student-writer’s goals for the session. These data points were important for considering the session narratives in an ecological framework because they contribute to the rhetorical ecology of that session. The writer’s identity and lived experiences cannot be separated from their writing or composing practices, so it would limit the efficacy of the assessment to analyze the session notes as stand-alone evidence for the tutor’s choices without that intake data. Next, I shared demographics and data on who came to the center and the appointment types offered.

To analyze the session note narratives, I used relational coding, which is a more specific type of content analysis that focuses particularly on relationships between the data. Additionally, I analyzed information from the registration and intake forms to understand how that information may have impacted a tutor's praxis. A wealth of themes surfaced from this method that gave me insight not only into the skills and strategies that tutors use in sessions but also into the relationships between them and how they interrelated.

Gearing Up for the Journey

I will share a few caveats before the analysis. The cohort of participants in this study is singular compared to the student-tutors who came before, as they were preparing to become tutors during a global pandemic. Their experiences in both ENG 207 and in tutoring in the writing center happened in an online modality. This condition meant that the tutors had little to no informal learning spaces such as before or after class to reflect as a community; outside of my teaching practices, the syllabus was the most direct instruction guiding the learning. This cohort of six included five students who were majors or minors of our Professional Writing and Rhetoric program and represented diverse lived experiences—though not fully representative of the Queens student body. The result is that the sample size is small and offers only one instance to investigate these interrelated linkages between ecologies. However, the abundance of options for mapping these linkages also illustrates the complexity present even in such a small cohort.

My experience is enacting a version of assessment where the data tells me something about my choices instead of looking for already agreed-upon outcomes. In an attempt to discern what the data from chapters 3 and 4 suggest, I created a naming device to help me comprehend and narrate the moves I saw the student-tutors making. To that end, the examination of the data for both of these chapters adopts a case-study method to achieve this naming device. Another caveat for this project is the fact that the human actors of this study—me and the students—are occupying multiple roles simultaneously. Me as an instructor and a director. The student-tutors as both students and tutors. The student-writers as both student and writers. These multiple and simultaneous roles also represent liminal spaces as each role meets at a threshold that we all transverse and that have elements both of ambiguity and situatedness.

As I write about the current higher education ecology of the US, it is difficult not to become angry and defeatist. Perhaps that is why I return repeatedly to the voices that remind me that this is the work of hope: Freire, Glenn, hooks, Lorde, Royster. They remind me that I do this work because my “educational responsibility [is] a responsibility for the coming into presence of unique individual beings” (Biesta 91). Even while situated in the circumscribed system of the neoliberal institution that “forecloses more expansive purposes for education,” I can operate with concurrent counter goals that inform my directing and teaching (Stenberg 127). Biesta posits that education has three main goals: qualification, socialization, subjectification (19-20). Qualification seeks to make students prepared for specific tasks; for example, a student goes to medical school to become a doctor (19). Socialization is about preparing students to become members of a society and culture (20). What interests me most is his idea of subjectification, or that step beyond socialization where there are “ways of being that hint at independence” from the hegemonic systems of power (21). Is there evidence that tutors can operate from a liberatory stance despite thirteen or more years in an educational system marked by a limited focus on outcomes in which students are conditioned to fixate on evaluation systems (i.e., grades) that promotes extrinsic motivation undermining their human disposition for learning? I answer yes, and that such a question directs my own teaching and directing practices toward making both more ethical. Finally, I look to Richard Miller’s recent reflection in “As If Learning Mattered: Looking Back, Looking Forward” and draw optimism from his point that “theory and practice always come into conflict and in that space of conflict resides the hope and the promise for change.”

CHAPTER II: HERE BE DRAGONS: EXTERNAL MAPPINGS, INTERNAL MAPPINGS, AND INTERMAPPINGS

While any particular writing center contends with the origin stories of its founding, it also navigates grand narratives of writing centers as they came to be across multiple contexts and multiple ecologies. Such grand narratives might praise writing centers as a utopian space for collaborative learning or that writing centers are marginalized within their institutional contexts. While there may be some truth to both of these narratives, they only tell part of the story. The practical realities of any writing center may either contribute or counter those larger grand narratives that have been constructed to justify center work within the bureaucracy of higher education. In this sense, the story of the Queens writing center mimics all writing center narratives. The particular of *how* we negotiate our position within a university ecology may vary, but the reality that we *do* negotiate it is why the Queens writing center is emblematic of all writing centers.

In consideration that much of higher education as a whole is under scrutiny to justify its necessity to contemporary life as both a smart financial investment and a valid pathway to upward social mobility, it seems inevitable that universities would ask its constituent parts to demonstrate their value to the institution as the cost of a college degree continues to rise. To that end, all writing centers share the experience of assessing their programs at some basic level to affirm that this work is relevant and necessary to the mission of the university. As explored in the introductory chapter, the current mechanisms for evaluating the programs and curriculum of higher education in the United States, and Queens, is through an Outcomes Assessment model. In the previous chapter, I referred to the two usages of the word assessment in the higher education context; usage in the US to describe measuring student learning based on aggregated data to understand how students with shared characteristics perform as a group (i.e., measurements based on racial demographics) as opposed to a more generalized usage globally that refers to individual student learning (i.e., tests, projects, quizzes) (Kuh and Ewell 11). In my study, I engage both of these types of assessment, as both are factors in the educational ecologies that I explore.

Within this project, I am defining the framing of ecology quite specifically by considering the intersectional aspects of the educational ecology of higher education in the US, the educational ecology of Queens, and the educational ecology of the Queens writing center. In relation to the Queens writing center, that educational ecology necessarily overlaps with the pedagogical ecology of the classroom space of ENG 207: English Practicum in Composition Theory (where the undergraduate student-tutors[8] learn about writing center theories, critical pedagogy, and writing studies), as well as the spaces where tutoring sessions take place. Those environments are intimately linked pedagogically through the logics of campus policies, center operations, course assignments, and the experiential learning that happens as the student-tutors hold writing sessions while they concurrently take the course. These arenas are addressed and analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

Initially, what needs to be articulated is that the educational ecologies listed above are not static. Moreover, they are rhetorical. In integrating the ideas of ecological perspectives with rhetorical ones, I adopt Jenny Edbauer's framing of rhetorical situations to more fully capture the dynamic complexity of these ecologies. Edbauer advocates for an augmented understanding of rhetorical situations as less static and more representative of “an ongoing social flux” to further complicate these seemingly static sites of knowing (9). She posits that the etymology of the word “situation” has limited the understanding of the rhetorical situation to read “static” with definable parts and defined boundaries. She renames this phenomenon as a rhetorical ecology, which encompasses “rhetorics in their temporal, historical, and lived fluxes” (9). The lived reality of directors, student-tutors, and student-writers in any given writing center on any given day is marked by fluidity, and as such, any assessment of their practices or the program needs a complementary method for capturing and interpreting the complex and interrelated activities of the center. As I posit in the introduction, outcomes assessments may become rigid and, thus, obscure local practices and the ways that tutoring practices are always in-flux. These local (and unseen by OA) practices are as consequential for effectiveness in supporting a writing center’s mission as the institutional and programmatic outcomes (typically explicitly stated). They are more consequential because they externalized the surplus of moves (both good and ill) that tutors make. It is in these daily practices where embodied harm or benefit may happen. Moreover, it is the site where I can make ethical choices to mitigate harm and promote benefit.

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[8] For the sake of readability and clarity in this project, I have labeled the tutors as "tutor" and the students who use our center as "students." Sometimes, I want to emphasize their dual positionality as "student-tutors," so I will refer to them as student-tutors or writing tutors.

Adopting Edbauer and Code’s theories, this project considers the multiple ecologies that student-tutors navigate to support students in their writing at Queens. The current assessments of writing center and writing tutor effectiveness are like the differences between a map of the Americas in 1776 and a map of the Americas today using Google Maps. Simply, assessment should account also for the unnamed parts of the ecologies and the way these ecologies relate to one another. Otherwise, the unexplored area of our maps might still labeled “here be dragons.” In 1776, the vastness and diversity of the newly formed United States of America was unknown and yet to be discovered. Those maps could provide great detail about the terrain and the landmarks that made up the original thirteen colonies but little information on the terrain and the landmarks beyond. When landscapes (or ecologies) are complex—such as student learning or tutoring practices—I need more expansive methods to discover or uncover those complexities in order to equip myself for the journey of teaching and learning and to draw maps legible to the institution.

In considering what I wanted to know about the Queens writing center and myself as a director, I chose Code's ecological thinking as the theoretical methodology in order to implement Edbauer's charge to consider the fluidity and rhetoricity of these educational ecologies. I wanted to move beyond the currently limited and uniform assessments for understanding my writing center's positionality in favor of a heuristic that embraces capaciousness and responsiveness. In *Ecological Thinking,* Code seeks to "unsettle the self-certainties of Western capitalism and the epistemologies of mastery it underwrites" (*Ecological Thinking* 4). Although Code's critique addresses epistemology of mastery is diffuse in scientific theory and discourse, her evaluation applies to education as well:

> One of my overriding interests in this project is to show how the discourse of autonomy and individualism, integral to epistemologies of mastery, comes into tension–*productive tension*–with the rhetorical and practical challenges ecological thinking poses to the self-certainties of western capitalism. [Ecological thinking] also subverts some of the most basic assumptions of instituted scientific practice, thereby generating a healthy skepticism about how reductive, mechanistic scientific research isolates parts of nature so as to obscure the constitutive functions of multiple and complex interconnections in producing the phenomena it studies. (38)

I call attention to this quote to emphasize the ways that assessment (in all its usages) can operate reductively. She could easily be referencing education as it also operates under a logic of mastery. Students test on what they have learned (or not learned); they are not measured on development and potential. The assessment tools we use for cognitive processes, such as literacy, measure only one kind of knowledge that may not be relevant at all to a student's life and educational experiences. Moreover, this type of assessment operates as a closed network in that there are no feedback loops that might make space for multiple ways of knowledge production. Code contends that an ecological framework for considering knowledge practices disrupts the "'epistemologies of mastery' that have dominated […] discourses […] closing off other knowledge possibilities through their pretensions of providing a single true story" (Grasswick 152). Code reminds us that "'Everyday life' contrasts […] with the abstractions of dislocated theory that would aim to develop a grid […] which evaluators could superimpose upon any putative claim to knowledge with the aim of assessing how that claim fits within the spaces the grid makes available" (*Rhetorical Spaces* xi). Code's work broadens the constituents and actors by which to understand these various sites of knowledge production within an educational ecology.

The current modes of institutional assessment for either the writing center as a program or the tutors as students are not only narrow, they are also incomplete because they do not "[gesture] towards ways of mapping human beings' relations to one another, to physicality, sociality, place, cultural institutions, materiality, corporeality" (*Ecological Thinking* 26). If the exigence of institutional assessment were more about responsive teaching and less about economic justification for the cost of education, the current forms of assessment might be less about "[reducing] learning to the acquisition of economically useful skills (human capital)" (Labaree, "Let's Measure" 2). My experience with OA is that it has never been able to capture what Code calls "the experiential-material situatedness of everyday knowings" (*Ecological Thinking* 160). These everyday knowings are often dismissed as anecdotal or lore, but they are manifest in the quotidian ways that the Queens writing center works. They represent the multitude of explicit and tacit choices that are made by the humans who do work in the center, whether as a director or a tutor or a student-writer. My hope for this project is that in thinking ecologically about these choices, I can capture and make visible the ways these choices position the writing center both externally (i.e., the university's public messaging) and internally (i.e., the interconnected messaging between the university, the writing center, and the writing center director), even as it exists in educational ecologies determined by neoliberal influences and Western fixations on mastery.

What follows in this chapter is my detailing of the external mappings (Queens), internal mappings (Queens, ENG 207, and the writing center), and the intermappings of all the relevant ecologies for the writing center by "[t]aking as [my] point of departure from the [...] interdependence of knowledge-making activities and the constitutive effects of sociality and location" to chart two important ecologies (Queens University of Charlotte and the Queens writing center) and one positionality (me as director of that center) (Code, *Ecological Thinking* 35). This chapter charts the connections of those external/internal mappings and intermappings to establish a clearer sense of the context within which the writing center operates at Queens. By mappings, I mean the various "interdependence[s] of knowledge-making activities" that constellate the various ecologies that student-tutors, navigate especially the "concealed linkages between power and knowledge" that often reside in the curriculum, institutional policy, and assessment protocols (*Ecological Thinking* 35). I am most interested in discovering these concealed linkages in order to account for how they interact with the writing center.

First, I chart rhetorically the internal mappings of the university, the tutor preparation course, and the writing center itself to establish a sense of each ecology. Since I am analyzing multiple ecologies and their relationships to each other, I need a more sophisticated framework to understand the complexity of these relations. Even as I signal through mapping metaphors my intentions for navigating these ecologies, I do not mean to assert that they are somehow distinct, discrete, or even fixed. I am not suggesting that my project is a “rhetorical situation […] in which we can visit through a mapping of various elements: the relevant persons, events, objects, exigence, and utterances” (Edbauer 12). I am suggesting that accounting for some of these constituents and factors in a particular moment as part of a larger “open network” or “as a process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process” can capture a more complete understanding of how various ecologies impact writing center work (Edbauer 13). However, as I asserted earlier, current assessment operates from the lens of closed networks and singular exigencies.

To demonstrate the various ecologies, I analyze a set of artifacts from the institution, the tutor preparation course, and the writing center. These artifacts are not meant to be exhaustive proof of every discernible detail of each ecology so much as they represent some of the options in accounting for the rhetorical complexity of each one. The artifacts in this chapter include the public information available about Queens, the narrative Queens itself promotes, and university policies. For the pedagogical ecology of the tutor preparation course, I analyze the syllabus for the course and a just-in-time Final Reflection assignment of ENG 207. Finally, I offer a positionality story and the narrative of the syllabus’ evolution because I am a member of all three ecologies. Moreover, as member of all three ecologies, my membership is not singular, as I am both simultaneously director and instructor. Just as the tutors are students and tutors simultaneously. The method for this chapter was a simple count of word frequency discovered by using a Macro in the Word document where I copied and pasted the text of each artifact. After accounting for patterns and absences, this method proved fruitful in understanding the conflicting narratives that coexist in ecologies. The introduction presented the largest educational ecology of US higher education, and while the most distant from the local, everyday practices of the writing center, it remains a tangible factor in the other ecologies.

External Mappings—The Ecology of Queens University of Charlotte

Queens University of Charlotte is a small, regional comprehensive university that claims a liberal arts background. It is located in a large, southeastern, metropolitan area with an urban center and a variety of suburban towns surrounding it collectively known as Metrolina area. Charlotte is considered a New South city defined as urban areas in the US South that struggled to reestablish themselves economically through industry and commerce after the Civil War. The term New South was coined by "enthusiastic young editors" who chronicled investment into "sawmills, textile factories, and coal mines" (Ayers 3). They reported on the expansion of the railway system and the migration of "young people of both races [who] set out for places where they could make a better living" (3). These characterizations still apply to Charlotte today, as the steady economic growth, the temperate weather, and a balanced livability in the region continue to draw professionals and young families. In 2014, however, a comprehensive study from Harvard and University of California-Berkeley on socioeconomic mobility found Charlotte to rank 50th out of 50 cities for economic mobility, highlighting a misimpression about the opportunities in Charlotte and the Metrolina area (Chetty et al.). This study underscores the discrepancy between Charlotte's public narrative and its internal reality.

In the heart of Charlotte, the Queens campus currently sits in one of the more affluent neighborhoods known as Myers Park. Described as Charlotte's first suburb, Myers Park is located a few miles from the city center in a neighborhood defined by a century-old tree canopy, high-end shopping and dining, and extensive green space (Funderburk). The median sales price for a home in the neighborhood is currently $1.3 million dollars ("Myers Park"). Like Charlotte, Queens contends with misimpressions both publicly and internally. Its location within such an affluent neighborhood belies an economic and privileged reality that Queens maintains, which are at once true and not true.

Institutional History

The university began as the Charlotte Female Institute in 1857, which was a higher education institution dedicated to educating upper-class, white women in the socially accepted fields of that era such as nursing and teaching. Originally, the campus was located in the city's center, moving to the current location in 1912 ("History of Queens"). Following a series of mergers with other nearby institutions with Presbyterian affiliations, the school was renamed Queens College and adopted a motto and ethos that centers service. While Queens' origins are clearly focused on the education of women, men were admitted in the 1940s to the newly established evening college, and the institution became co-ed in its residential population in 1987. A similarly shifting story exists around the racial and ethnic identity of the institution. The Board of Trustees made the decision to integrate the school in 1961 and admitted their first Black student, Bernice Poole Fulson, in 1963 ("Queens University of Charlotte"). Like many institutions, Queens is actively addressing ways to be more inclusive and accessible for diverse learners including a robust international student population. It still falls short, however, of being representative of the national, regional, and local student populations.

Demographics of Students

The following data captures various information about the students enrolled at Queens in the fall of 2020. The total number of students enrolled was 2,338; this number includes undergraduates (traditional and post-traditional) and graduates (seated and distance education).

While Queens continues to see an increase in a diverse, cross-section of students, the student body continues to skew towards white and female (see table 1).

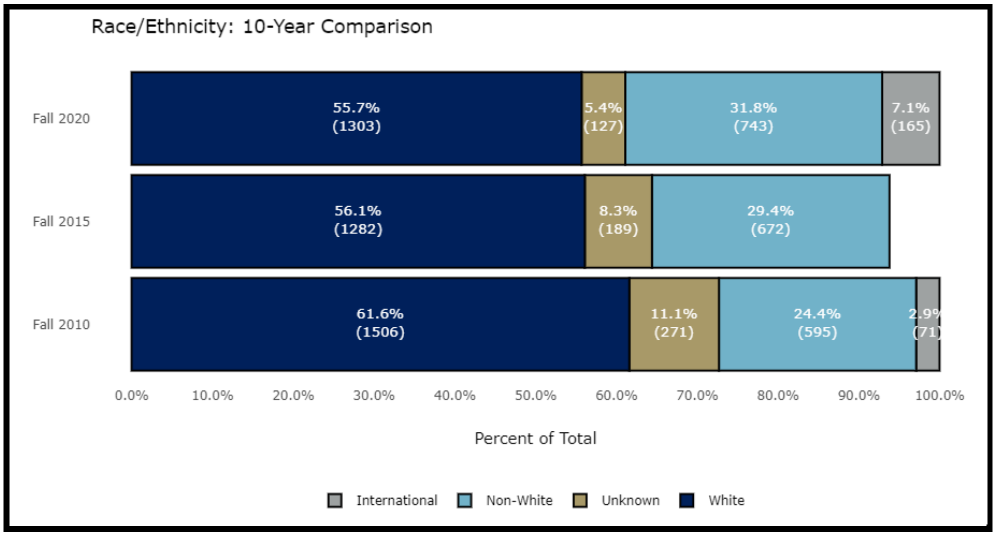
Table 1. Fall Enrollment of All Students 2020

All Students	**Fall 2020**
Female	1586
Male	752
Black or African American	401
Hispanics of any race	265
Nonresident Alien	165
Other Minorities	77
Race and Ethnicity Unknown	127
White	1303
Total	**2338**

Note: “Fall Enrollment of All Students.” Queens Fact Book, 2020, Queens University of Charlotte, http://board.queens.edu/2020factbook.html.

Notwithstanding that demographic skew, a 10-year comparison of students’ racial and ethnic data establishes a steady increase in students of color attending Queens over the course of a decade (see figure 2), establishing a current trend in Queens’ admissions numbers (“Queens Fact Book, 2020”).

Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity: 10 Year Comparison



Note: "Fall Enrollment of All Students." Queens Fact Book, 2020, Queens University of Charlotte, http://board.queens.edu/2020factbook.html

Among Queens undergraduate students, 27.7% of them receive Federal Pell Grants to offset the cost of attending. Since 2016, the number of students receiving Pell grants has consistently been near 30%. Federal Pell Grants are typically only awarded to undergraduate students. At Queens, students of color receive a higher percentage of Pell Grants (39%) compared to white students (14%), despite white students making up the majority of the student body; this statistic tracks with national data ("Queens Fact Book, 2020"). Finally, while 69% of the students claimed North Carolina residency in 2020, students came from 42 states across the US with the largest percentage from the East Coast. Additionally, students represented 44 foreign countries in 2020 with the majority coming from Western Europe ("Queens Fact Book, 2020"). In short, even as Queens continues to be a predominantly white institution (PWI), it closely tracks with the national trends towards greater diversity in the student body demographics.

Mission, Vision and Values

The Queens University of Charlotte mission statement reads: “Queens University of Charlotte provides transformative educational experiences that nurture intellectual curiosity, promote global understanding, encourage ethical living and prepare individuals for purposeful and fulfilling lives” (“Mission, Vision and Values”). What is telling is that on the website, this statement is not labeled explicitly as the mission statement and is offered only after the university motto and a brief narrative about the motto, which reads “Not to be served, but to serve” (“Mission, Vision and Values”). If queried about the mission of the university, students are more likely to recite the motto than the mission. The design of this page on the website does not do much to ameliorate the confusion about the university’s mission. The page explicitly lists the following as the stated values of the institution: “Focus on Students”; “Integrity and Respect”; “Stewardship”; “Creativity and Innovation”; and “Service” (“Mission, Vision and Values”). Yet of the three pages from the Queens website that most publicly describe the values and character of the university (the Home page; the “History of Queens Page”; the “Mission, Vision and Values” page), the only words that correlate with the values stated are “student” and “students.” This disconnection between the stated values and the narrative that Queens shares about the institutional culture indicates the material reality that Queens, like many other higher education institutions, remains conflicted about its objectives. This conflict echoes the narrative from the introduction that the idea of the university has never been stable.

I supply this overview of Queens to understand the nebulous ecologies in which the writing center operates. Queens is no longer a white woman’s finishing school—though that legacy remains as evidenced in the student demographics. Queens is experiencing a significant shift in who its students are and the backgrounds they bring with them. Queens purports a sense of service, a mission for ethical living, and respect for community both locally and globally while being squarely located in a neighborhood that tangibly reflects not only the disproportionate wealth gap of the city but the nation as a whole.

The scope of this chapter cannot cover a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of all of Queens' material, but a high-level scan of the "About Us" section of the website provides sufficient evidence for my claim that while Queens' promotes the institution as student-focused, it does so in such a way that elides individual student characteristics. The top ten repeated words from the "Missions, Vision and Values" are as follows (see table 2):

Table 2. Top 10 Most Frequent Words from "Mission, Vision and Values" webpage

Word	**# of instances**
Queens	16
We	15
Our	12
Community	10
Students	9
University	9
Service	7
Motto	6
Charlotte	6
College	6

Rhetorically, Queens attempts to appeal to a generic, imaginary student that may be drawn to the ethos of service without a conscious understanding of how their own subject positions or lived experiences may be challenged or affirmed within such an environment. I wonder to what extent replacing the word student with the word consumer might shift the meaning and understanding of the "Mission, Vision and Values" text, but this project cannot take up that question.[9] This claim is not a critique of Queens per, se as most students likely experience some degree of disconnection with any higher education institution they join. This public facing text was created and circulated by the Queens marketing department, which would have a specific goal to appeal to a broad number of students using the most positive framing as possible. The tension exists between the Queens' financial circumstances, which is driven enrollment, and its ethotic attempts to move beyond its history of educating white women. Even as the institutional demographics confirm that the student body is diversifying, the external mappings (i.e., the website text) do not reflect the gradual shift in student diversity. By focusing the appeal to a generic student, the website assumes the hegemonic taxonomy of the original Queens student as "a white, CIS gendered, able-bodied, heterosexual [female]" (Chávez 243), because the current text signifies the white body as "normative" (250). The website never addresses the lingering specter of white-woman's finishing school and never explicitly appeals to students beyond that demographic, so an audience is left to assume that in the case of Queens, the normative body of the student is white and female. This normative position of our student body and their bodies carry that same tension into the writing center because attached to this normative body are the hegemonic ideas about language and writing and whose literacies matter.

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[9] I am grateful to Dr. Andrea McCrary for her ideas that led to this line of questioning.

Rhetorical Implications of Catalog Copy

The second word frequency analysis relates to the text of the Queens University of Charlotte course catalog and its incumbent policies. Even as these policies are not as explicitly visible for many of the institution's constituents, they impact the rhetorical ecologies under consideration in this project. The catalog section entitled "Student Rights and Responsibilities" houses a fair number of significant policies that contribute to various educational ecologies in which students matriculate. For the purposes of the Queens ecology, I excluded some policies, as they are not germane to this study. They include the section on student records, the university's immunization requirements, student identifications, parking, and Student Accessibility Services (found also in the syllabus language).

The word frequency of the catalog policies[10] (see table 3) suggest some similarities and one significant difference:

Table 3. Top 10 Most Frequent Words from "Student Rights" Catalog Section

Word	**# of instances**
University	59
Faculty	48
Student(s)	38
Students	35
Policy	29
Will	26
Class	25
Property	24
Queens	22
Should	21

With 73 instances of the words *student* or *students*, these policies are clearly concerned with students as the main focus. Overlap of frequent words also include the word *university,* solidifying the focus at the level of the institution and students' relationship with it.

Implications of Gaps and Alignments

Several implications are evident in the gaps between the word frequency data and the linguistic use of particular words in official Queens text. The most notable gap for this project is the demonstrative absence of the word *faculty* from the "Mission, Vision and Values" website page but the considerable presence (2nd most frequent) of the word *faculty* found in the catalog copy. Rhetorically, this absence and presence indicates the university’s perspective that faculty make little contribution to the Queens culture for the purposes of attracting students but are integral to the regulatory policies that students navigate once they are enrolled. The regulatory role manifests often in phrases such as “A faculty member has the right and responsibility to remove any student from his or her class who, by the student’s disruptive, demeaning, or discourteous behavior, impedes the class” (“Student Rights” 30). Not only does this language sanction a faculty member’s privilege of removing a student but also compels them to do so with the word *responsibility*, indicating a duty. Such a positioning compromises my ability to create liberatory space in the classroom or the writing center if my role is to police from the perspective of the institution. Moreover, it would be unfeasible to assume that I could create a student-centered ecology invoked by the tone of the language promoted on the “Mission, Vision and Values” webpage.

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[10] I excluded small parts of speech such as coordinating conjunctions and articles in the word frequency list as they may be grammatically important for fluency but are not as helpful in this study for understanding relationships.

Other institutional systems also support this regulatory role for faculty such as our learning management system. While our learning management system, Canvas, creates a one-stop platform for course materials to facilitate course communication, it also mediates my relationship with my students. It can run analytics on student usage. These analytics report student usage information including the percentage that a student has turned in assignments on time; the last time they participated in Canvas course; the number of times they viewed a course page; and the number of participations (interactions) they had with the course. The ability to track the amount of weekly activity in the course is perhaps the most surveillant. I rarely use these tools as they attune my focus towards policing student behavior instead of promoting student learning and undermining my goals for a student-center ecology.

Internal Mappings—The Ecology of Writing Center at Queens

The writing center of Queens is located prominently in an active campus building that houses other student support services on the main floor (i.e., Pulliam Center for International Education and the Vandiver Center for Career Development). Both of these other programs have additional financial support from named donors; the Center for Student Success does not. Our physical space, although highly visible, is small and bland. The open tutoring space is glassed in on two sides and houses three administrative offices. This space serves the writing center and the subject tutoring program. The combined roster of both programs can often have as many as 80 peer educators (or tutors) between them; yet, our tutoring space only has five tables that seat six. We share a small footprint in the library as well. While space is tight, the shared area does contribute to the idea that writing is collaborative and connected to learning like the other types of tutoring such as math and nursing.

Queens writing center History

The Queens writing center was born out of an English Department initiative in the fall of 1990. Originally, a long-time English faculty member oversaw the initiative with the help of a student intern. The intern at the time, Dr. Andrea McCrary, describes their approach as a deficient-model where a student came with “whatever they were struggling with” to get help (“McCrary”). Sessions were informal, and while the deficit-model may have colored the sessions, the purpose of the center was never meant to be a fix-it shop. In other words, students came to receive help with brainstorming or development versus student-tutors copy-editing and correcting grammar.

In fall of 1999, a committee “organized to look at freshman retention, suggested that all tutoring be coordinated in one space to be less confusing for students” (“Making the Grade”).

The student-tutors in the newly created Learning Center tutored a multitude of subjects. Writing was supported by professional writing tutors (not enrolled students) while subject tutoring was supported by students. Even with its origins aimed towards working with students beyond grammar and mechanics, grades were still a focus for the program: “Many A and B students are regulars at the Learning Center. I have seen a direct correlation between attendance and improved test scores” (“Making the Grade”). An augmented version of the Learning Center came into fruition in fall of 2008 with a new structure and a new name—the Center for Academic Success. The Center for Academic Success served “ALL Queens students and boast [sic] study skill workshops, peer tutoring, review sessions and academic assistance programs” (“The Center” 17). Interestingly, while the writing center is not in the opening text of the announcement found in the university alumni magazine, further in the story the following quotation appears: “Central to The Center’s service capabilities will be the Writing Center, which will house instructors available to meet with students individually to improve their writing skills and grammar” (17). The director goes on to proclaim that “[t]he support students receive will impress upon them the numerous opportunities that await them at Queens and beyond” (17). This characterization of the writing center continues to position it in a deficit-model framework with a focus on grades.

The current version of the department that houses the writing center, the Center for Student Success (CSS), was created in 2013 under a new structure with new leadership and a new charge. The Writing Center is one of five units that provides a variety of student programs: Academic Advising, Student Accessibility Services, Athletic Academic Success, Academic Support Services (peer tutoring, supplemental instruction, summer bridge program, and the writing center). Each unit has a director that reports to an Associate Dean of Student Success who reports to the Provost. Unlike the previous iteration of the department, CSS is firmly aligned with academics, and this relationship is endorsed by its reporting directly to the Office of Academic Affairs. Formally, our mission is to "[provide] support services to maximize students' learning and prepare them to meet opportunities and challenges at Queens and beyond. Our services include collaborative integration between academic advising, accessibility services, student success mentorship, and peer tutoring to better serve the campus community" ("Center for Student Success"). Informally, our units collaborate and cross-train in order to support students more holistically. We operate as a hub between students' academic lives and other campus experiences such as student life, financial aid, etc. When I began as the director of the center in 2013, my first goal was to move the writing center's function away from the deficit-model both in terms the daily practices of the center, including how writing tutors were trained, and in terms of how the wider university (i.e., faculty, students, and administration) understood our purpose. In 2015, with the introduction of a professional writing and rhetoric major as part of our English department, I was able to begin offering a course practicum in composition and center writing theory that shifted our operational ethos to a liberatory model that sought to understand literacy practices and the impact of institutional systems on those practices.

Demographics of Our Student-Tutors

The writing center roster in the fall of 2020 carried 23 writing consultants. Fifteen were paid consultants, and nine were volunteers (the differences of each are explained later in this chapter). Seventeen consultants identified as women (74%), and six consultants (26%) identified as men. Six consultants (26%) were a racial or ethnic minority: two as biracial and four as Hispanic/Latino. These percentages remained fairly stable over the two years prior to fall of 2020. For three consecutive fall semesters, the only significant change was an increase in writing consultants identifying as males. Otherwise, the writing center has tended to skew white and female, just as the university does. Moreover, the consultants who identified as a racial/ethnic minority were typically Hispanic/Latino, which tracks with current national trends of increased enrollment by those students (see table 4).

Table 4. Three-Year Comparison of Writing Consultant Demographics

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Total # of students on roster	25	22	23
Women	84%	86%	74%
Men	16%	14%	26%
Students of Color	28%	27%	26%
Women Students of Color	27%	26%	29%
White Women Students	73%	74%	71%

These data suggest that the writing center's roster has followed the national and institutional trends around student demographics.

Writing Center Mission

The mission statement of Queens writing center reads: "The mission of The Writing Center is to motivate writers and facilitate student learning by engaging in peer-to-peer collaboration with the Queens University of Charlotte community at all stages of the composing and writing processes" ("Writing Center"). Built into the charge to ourselves are the ideas of collaboration and community. This mission statement was written in 2015 by the inaugural class for ENG 207, which was the first time the writing center tutors took a curricular course in preparation for working as writing tutors. Each year, I revisit the mission statement with the ENG 207 students to see if it needs revision. This version has been stable and unrevised since

2018. Even as the student-tutors continue to contribute to and revise this statement, they also are navigating educational ecologies whose processes seem inverse to its stated purpose.

English Practicum in Composition Studies—Otherwise Known as the Tutor Prep Course

While the tutoring preparation course does not create artifacts for the administration of the writing center, it is a central component for the work of the student-tutors in the center. As such, the syllabus is the single most directive material component of the course (See Appendix A). Other directive components to a course ecology are the formal and informal assignments and the myriad pedagogical choices a teacher makes in the classroom space to encourage learning. My syllabus communicates the pacing of the course through the calendar; the theories and ideas for the course through the readings; and finally, the expectations for learning through the assignments. Often, I explain to students that the syllabus represents a mini-canon of the ideas that I think are the most important for our work and represent who I am as a teacher and director.

As a reflective action, the final assignment for the course is meant to help students contemplate their experiences in the course in concert not only with what they encountered through course material but also in terms of what ideas and opinions they brought into the course (See Appendix B). Ultimately, by analyzing my course materials, I am engaging in Kenneth Burke's complex query: "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (xv). Ultimately, this question is *the* question for all assessment; it is our attempt to answer what people are doing and why. Or, in this case, the answer to what I am doing and why.

The Explicit and Tacit Expectations for Students in the Syllabus and the Final Reflection

My intentions for student learning when I read the course description and outcomes of ENG 207 appear to have three aims. While the syllabus from the course was revised based on the feminist pedagogies course to which I refer in the introduction, it was not designed from the ecological thinking framework that this project enacts. The aim is first, that writing tutors understand the multivalent influences on student-writers' literacy practices as they (both student-tutors and student-writers) learn to write in a university context. Second, that the university is an imperfect institution that often wields power in oppressive ways despite an articulated position towards wisdom and knowledge. Third, that the writing center—as both part of and apart from the university—can be subject to the same oppressive practices. These three aims informed the readings, classroom discussions, and assignments for the student-tutors over the course of the semester. To more accurately examine my motives—both tacit and explicit—for the student-tutors' praxis and the work of the writing center, I apply the same methods of close reading and tracking word frequencies to establish the pedagogical ecology of the writing center tutor preparation course, as its impact on tutor praxis is substantial. To more accurately gauge my intentions, I only consider the text of the syllabus that I wrote and do not take up official Queens policies that are required on syllabi. While I provide access to those policies for students via the learning management system, I do not have them specifically listed on the document.

The first significant quantity of text on the ENG 207 syllabus is the course description, which reads as follows:

> The purpose of this class is to consider various factors that shape our thinking and writing processes. Particularly we will consider how collaboration both supports and complicates writing, thinking and learning by examining the theories and practices for teaching, tutoring, and critiquing writers at the postsecondary level. Through field work in The Writing Center, you will receive professional experience in writing instruction by working as peer tutors and by participating in a community of writers. As a culminating experience, you will also engage in research to build a more nuanced understanding of yourself as both a writer and a tutor. (Daniel 1)

A simple scan of the text in a word cloud generator determines that the top five words within this 100-word text block are: "writing," with four occurrences, and "consider," "experience," "thinking," and "writers," all at two occurrences each. Three of the five words are action verbs that the student-tutors are expected to do; the other two words represent the audience for whom they do this work. As the opening text of the syllabus, I see a clear intention on my part in framing what I hoped would be the spirit and ethos of the course. I use the word *hope* intentionally, as I cannot ensure that my intentions have any impact for students, or, if there is impact, what that impact might be. What I hope is that impact has what Cheryl Glenn theorizes as an action "that can be harnessed for creating … a good and just future" because "teaching is hope embodied" (125).

Officially, the university stipulates that faculty must articulate student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the course, and, in well-designed courses, those course SLOs map to and support the SLOs for the major. As an instructor, I am required to perform assessment on this course through OA and the measurement of SLOs. The major in this case being the Professional Writing and Rhetoric major we offer within our English Department. The SLOs for ENG 207 read as follows:

> After completing this class, student-tutors will:
>
> - identify the motives and needs of student writers;
> - promote collaborative learning through writing process practices;
> - understand the history of writing centers as sites of learning;
> - develop a habit of mind for continual reflection to support ethical choices around language;
> - articulate the roles that culture, background, identity and social structures play in learning and writing, (Daniel 1)

Again, writing and learning are the most dominant ideas in this text. The SLOs for the major read as follows:

> ENG 207 is a part of the core curriculum for the Professional Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) Major. Students who major in PWR will:
>
> - Demonstrate a broad understanding of history and theories of professional writing and rhetoric.
> - Cultivate reflective responses to rhetorical processes, diversity, and identity in texts, including their own.

- Analyze texts in multiple contexts and genres through the practice of close reading.
- Illustrate responsible choices involving the power of language and the ethical and cultural contexts inherent in writing, which include various forms, values, and effects.
- Write effectively with and for various technologies and media, including digital, attending to the verbal and visual elements of the texts they produce.

In the latter set of SLOs, the emphasis pivots from writing and learning to texts and contexts, shifting from a concrete action of thinking and doing to more abstract ways of thinking and knowing. By enumerating both sets of SLOs on the syllabus, I signal to students the ways that writing/learning/contexts/texts are intimately connected to communicate those multivalent influences that students encounter when they sit down to write or come to the writing center for help with their assignment. That writing (and writer) are never disconnected from the ecologies in which they are doing that learning. This idea of an insoluble connection between students and their educational ecologies is confirmed by Kristie Fleckenstein's research on embodied literacies: "We cannot demarcate the borders of our worlds by using the boundaries of our skins, our neighborhoods, our species, our rhetorics, or our images. We are all linked in a permeable network, a complex system of meaning" (169). Yet, the structure of OA assumes discrete borders for meaning, learning, and mastery, with little, if any, attention to the ways that the patterns of these borders shift or re-form like riverbeds do.

Patterns related to word frequency emerge from the syllabus and final reflection just as they did in the analysis of the university artifacts. The first to surface was my abundant use of the subjective personal pronouns *you*, *your*, and *yours* in both documents. In the syllabus, these were found in combination with modal verbs such as *may* and *might*, which indicate the contingency of possibility. This phenomenon is a considerable shift from the way modal verbs operated in the catalog language (internal), which signaled a contingency of obligation. The use of the subject personal pronouns is also an important shift from the disembodied "student" that was the focus of the university website (external). The second-person pronoun centers the experience and learning of the student in the classroom and the curriculum and not the opaque connection to the institution evinced in the text written by Queens. Here, the *you* does not revert to the generic student but invites the specific students (i.e., the ones reading my syllabus) to enter the learning goals as a partner in the learning that includes their subjectivity as expressed in Code's ecological thinking framework. Because *you* is a subjective personal pronoun, the subjectivity of the reader is implied as integral to the learning process. In concert with the modal verbs that invite possibility, I explicitly invite the student into a space of possibility. Moreover, the top repeated verbs are all action-oriented that direct students towards an action related to reflexive practices: *think*, *see* (i.e., observe and note), *write*, *read* (i.e., close read), *consider*. The action taken as instructed by the verbs are meant to be driven by their subjectivity in order for the students to make meaning for themselves that does not assume an attainable objectivity that is often required in educational ecologies informed by a pedagogy of mastery.

While the syllabus marks the beginnings of the course intentions, the final reflection assignment asks students to review their learning experiences and apply it to a specific situation. The final reflection is a just-in-time assignment based on the last class discussion that offered an intentional moment for student-tutors to reflect directly on their learning in that specific classroom instance. Just-in-Time Teaching (JiTT) is "teaching and learning strategy designed to promote the use of class time for more active learning" (Brame). After the last class of the semester generated some profound thoughts by the student-tutors about their praxis, I revised the final reflection to capture some of those thoughts in a more formal way so that I could assess their learning in that particular moment. JiTT reiterates the concept that "[l]earning requires prompt feedback” and “active practice” (Marrs and Novak). This shift enacts Edbauer’s assertion about framing rhetorical ecologies as being in flux. As such, this sort of assessment is more reflective of an open network. It was the feedback from the class discussion that prompted me to re-write the assignment. If I had only designed the assignment towards the student learning outcomes and not redirected the learning to focus on that moment, I would have lost some significant evidence of the “concealed linkages between power and knowledge” (Code, *Ecological Thinking* 35). (I explore the results of this assignment more fully in the following chapter.)

Evidence of this pedagogical choice is present in the language of the final reflection assignment. Mirroring the syllabus, *you* and *your* are the most frequent words present in the assignment, yet the modal verbs (e.g., *should*, *will*, *would*) indicate a contingency of suggestion. Because the class discussion directly shaped the final version of the reflective assignment, I directed the student-tutors to reflect on our discussion with instructions such as “you should explore the shift that you experienced.” In this case, the modal verb *should* relates directly to ideas they expressed. The most frequent non-modal verb is *shift*, aligning with my attempts to capture their reflective understandings from the class discussion and to account for how my feedback in class contributed in challenging the students’ assumptions and entrenched ways of thinking about writing.

My Positionality and Its Impact on the Writing Center Ecology

In their article, “Relating Our Experiences: The Practice of Positionality Stories in Student-Centered Pedagogy,” Christina V. Cedillo and Phil Bratta make a compelling case for how sharing our own positionality stories “allow instructors to present academic counternarratives that contest educational conditions and assumptions” (216). They caution, however, that using positionality stories should be “practiced critically and carefully” (216). Understanding my own positionality informs my teaching practices and “demonstrate[s] a productive vulnerability” that I hope engenders trust with my student-tutors (222). To that end, I share my positionality story in this chapter because my positionality contributes to the educational ecology of the writing center as the director and as the instructor for ENG 207. Cedillo and Bratta define a positionality story as the move that teachers make when they “[share] stories of their own lived experiences” (216). I concur and broaden their ideas to apply to this project.

Here is what my students-turned-tutors know about my positionality. I am white. I am a woman. I am well-educated. Upper middle-class. Neurodivergent, but able-bodied presenting. Middle-aged. CIS-gendered and straight. I am a practicing (albeit skeptical) Christian. I am twice divorced, but currently partnered in a long-term relationship. My depression and neurodivergency can sometimes impact my teaching and directing. I am an alumna of Queens who enjoys a certain amount of institutional capital even as I am untenured. I am a vocal critic of educational policies and institutions (including Queens), even when it is uncomfortable to do so. In short, like most folks, I have some privilege, and I have some marginalization. My relationship to learning started out rocky; my relationship with the academy started out naively.

Students-turned-tutors experience my positionality in two distinct ecologies (classroom and center) that are both marked by authority: first as their instructor and then as their director. Even with mitigations of power around grading, I still hold the gradebook. It is a vertical hierarchy. My authority manifests in my expertise and from the institution. My power comes from my whiteness, my class, and my perceived able-bodiness. When a student-turned-tutor interacts with me as the director, the power dissonance eases as I work alongside them in a more horizontal (read collaborative) framework because I do the work of tutoring as well.

I share my own positionality information with my students to reduce the opacity that some instructors maintain. An opacity that existed between me and my teachers that made me venerate them without really knowing them. An opacity that borders on mystique can be weaponized to maintain distance from students in attempts to maintain the “power and authority within their mini-kingdom, the classroom” (hooks 17). bell hooks reminds me that for many teachers “[w]hen professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators” (17). She warns that “professors who are not concerned with inner well-being are the most threatened by the demand on the part of the students for liberatory education, for pedagogical processes that will aid them in their own struggle for self-actualization” (17). As I shared in the introduction chapter, hooks’ self-actualization centers on inner well-being of both professor and student, and only from that stance can “education [be] the practice of freedom” (21). If we are here to help students be the best version of themselves, then we have to be the best versions of ourselves. I cannot ask students to explore their positionality if I do not join in that reflexive process. Moreover, it is the very action of being with students in this most vulnerable process that offers them a map for how to meet student-writers “where they are at,” which is a phrase often tossed about in academia but rarely defined. Ideally, when a tutor embodies the openness I aspire to model in my teaching and directing with the student-writers they support, the tutor’s praxis meets the student where they are.

Intermappings – Evolution of a Syllabus, an Assignment, and a Teacher

I share my positionality story to offer the context in which this syllabus and assignment came to be in their current iterations. In the first iterations of this course, the student-tutors moved through conventional course material that foregrounded a pragmatic tutoring practice, such as how to start/end a session or the merits and disadvantages of directive tutoring and non-directive tutoring. The pragmatic material was interwoven with more theoretical concepts such as Deborah Brandt's sponsors of literacy and Stephen North's manifesto about what writing centers should be. While many of these topics danced around issues related to gender and race and ability, often the issues were merely identified but not often centered and engaged.

The exigence for my revision of the syllabus was a graduate school course on feminist pedagogies, which brought into specific relief for me why the student-tutors rarely wrote about subject positionality in relation to their tutoring. When a tutor did address their positionality, it was more often in relation to a dis/ability with which they themselves struggled. Partly, I knew this was because the demographics of the student-tutors were always skewed towards white women as does the student population at Queens. As an instructor and a director, I wanted students to understand that whiteness as a subject positionality also informed their interactions with student-writers.

The revision came about through the nexus of engaging with the Krista Ratcliffe's theories on rhetorical listening and Thomas Rickert's theories on ambient rhetoric[11]. What I came to realize is that I have to examine my own privilege and marginalization, then make that privilege and marginalization visible to the student-tutors and to invite them to do the same. This examination is vital when most of my staff are like me: white women of a certain background and lived experience. While the student-tutors engage with a vast array of rhetorical and cultural theories thoughtfully, the placement of theories about power systems particularly as they relate to questions of race, gender, ability etc., often feel like an afterthought to a syllabus or a textbook. I began to consider how even my own teaching practices, trainings, and classrooms replicated the minimizing of positionality even as I proclaimed its importance. I began to think about how my own classroom and training material were rhetorically positioning race and gender in the larger body of writing center knowledge and practice. My own pedagogical choices were not reinforcing the theories we were exploring in class or that I claimed to prioritize.

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[11] I would like to acknowledge that when I began this project, I named Rickert's theories as a generative framework for my project. Since, I have come to learn about the ways that white, Western scholars have co-opted and repackaged Indigenous Knowledge as Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Any research or publications that follow this project will aim to align my ideas with Indigenous scholars and sources and to cite them to promote the ethical citation and circulation of these theories. I appreciate the article by Jennifer Clary-Lemon ("Gift, Ancestors, and Relations: Notes Toward an Indigenous New Materialism," 2019) in *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture* for helping me to reconsider my source material. This footnote is evidence of my own academic conditioning.

In considering ambient rhetoric in concert with rhetorical listening, what would it mean to revise the arrangement of our tutor preparation materials to counter a hegemonic educational ecosystem that continues to center whiteness, maleness, ability, etc.? My hope was that this revision of the materials might attune to the student-tutors' "disposition in the world" and consider "how [they] find [themselves] embedded in a situation" (Rickert 9). For the purposes of this class, the situation under consideration was the tutoring session. I started with Ratcliffe's theory of rhetorical listening, in which she posits that "scholars/teachers may ask our students and ourselves to reflect on how gender and whiteness ... inform theories and praxes" (135). Many tutor preparation courses and tutor training modules may invite student-tutors to consider the subject positionality of themselves and their tutees, but I began to suspect that I was not explicit in making sure that my materials reflected that goal. For example, often the placement of these theories that question race/gender/ability and other subject positionalities feel like an afterthought to syllabi and training texts. Student-tutors often did not encounter these lenses until late in the semester.

The second influence on my course revision was born from Rickert's theories on ambient rhetoric, and specifically, attunement. Rickert defines rhetoric as "a responsive way of revealing the world for others, responding to and put forth through affective, symbolic, and material means, so as to (at least potentially) reattune or otherwise transform how others inhabit the world to an extent that calls for some action" (162). Attunement "as environment [...] 'constitutes and is in turn constituted by the subjects situated within it'" (Crawford et al. 2). One way to consider this idea of ambience is that "salient and non-salient features of the world" are always present, but attunement foregrounds some features at the expense of others (Crawford et al. 2). Therefore, syllabi and assignments are a material reality conditioning the attunement of writing student-tutors in ways that might undermine the goals of inclusivity for the course and tutoring practices unless teachers and directors are deliberate in their pedagogies and framing within those materials. If I operate from the premise that the Queens system of education is like most of the US educational landscape with pedagogies and curriculum attuned a pedagogy of mastery, how do I, as a critical educator and director, intervene or subvert this habitus towards mastery? How do I encourage student-tutors to question their own habitus? Rickert's notions on attunement ask me to consider the ways my material world directs my teaching and directing? Ambience and attunement challenge my own commonplaces about how the materials I use can attune students in subtle but profound ways.

In concert with Shari Stenberg's ideas on repurposing responsibility and conversations around reframing accountability, I approach tutor education as a chance to complicate the ways students have come to see writing as a talent or inherent ability instead of an agility that can be developed and practiced. I align with scholars such as Chris Gallagher and Gert Biesta that institutional OA and classroom assessments (i.e., grades) used in isolation might limit what we can know about student learning. Alfie Kohn explains that nearly 90 years ago, educational researchers were warning against the adverse effects of a focus on grades that include reduction in students' interest, effort, and critical thinking (28-30). A consequence of these trends is that the regulation and funding by government became tied to student success measures (i.e., grades, test scores) that only capture a portion of student learning and does not account for student potential to learn. Moreover, our current system of accountability locates the onus of learning on teacher accountability without consideration of other factors such as student inputs (i.e., what they bring with them to the classroom), family support, access to privileged literacies, etc. Stenberg—extending the work of others such Judith Butler and Linda Adler-Kassner—argues that the current neoliberal bent of US educational institutions sets teachers and directors up for failure when we operate from an accountability to mindset instead of a "responsibility for" mindset. The accountability model separates teachers from their students or perhaps even sets up antagonistic educational ecologies. The responsibility model compels me to be with students (and student-tutors) relationally in ways that I hope they can model in their own tutoring practices. Moving towards responsibility for learning—mine, the writing tutors, the student-writers—encourages others to reconsider ways that teaching may or may not be upholding systems that do not serve the mission of writing centers. For example, how do directors move towards being responsible for student-tutors' praxes? Especially when they operate in an ecosystem that is more often than not oppressive in terms of the subject positionalities that student-tutors and student-writers bring to centers.

One option explored by this project is to practice this relational stance of responsibility for by imagining and modeling an alternate path to assess the center through an ecological framework. What this project invites is for directors like me to think about teaching and learning in ecological ways. If I aim to interrupt these systems of oppression within the ecological space of education, I have to continuously reflect on when my common understandings of teaching and directing serve that system and when they challenge it.

Vygotsky and the Limits of Educational Assessment

I end this chapter with some ideas from Lev Vygotsky because his theories are integral to the scholarship of education and writing centers. Vygotsky's investigations into the assumptions about how learning works is unaccounted for typically in the current neoliberal-informed assessment practices of the contemporary educational system. Plainly said, academia only accounts for a fraction of what a student knows or can know and what a student does or can do. Problematically, OA does not allow for the interplay of the material realities of students' various educational ecologies—particularly within the curriculum. Vygotsky asserts that "[i]t is assumed that mental capabilities function independently of the material with which they operate, and that the development of one ability entails the development of others" (82). One example of how this assumption functions in real time manifests across college campuses whereby faculty assume that the habits of mind taught in first-year writing courses magically transfer into their other courses and that students will be proficient at academic writing.[12] US American students who have been in the public-school system have little experience writing in meaningful ways with the benefits of feedback and revision. Moreover, the writing that they do engage in is often formulaic and does not do much in the way of promoting critical thinking as it is often disconnected from their own lived experiences and learning goals. As described by historian of education, David L. Labaree, “American schools and colleges are adept at teaching students how to write by the numbers” (“The Five-Paragraph Fetish”). Lastly, learning for transfer is not built into the pedagogy because teachers are not trained to provide productive feedback that invites students to use an iterative writing process as a means for learning.

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[12] I acknowledge that the concept of proficiency in writing is contested and unresolved even in our own discipline. Beyond our own field, the fractiousness of the phrase is exponential.

This learning-to-write model is effective as assessment only as a means to capture a student’s ability to follow a prescribed set of instructions and offers little, if any, opportunity for students to exhibit creative, critical thought or the potential for such. Vygotsky reminds us that for learning functions to translate from one activity to another, certain factors must be present, the most substantial of which is that “[t]he improvement of one function of consciousness or one aspect of its activity can affect the development of another only to the extent that there are elements common to both functions or activities (83). In short, what is present in one situation—for example, a rhetorical approach with a shared vocabulary about writing—must be present in the other situations for that learning to transfer. If a course in students’ majors, which uses writing as a means for the assessment of learning, does not use the same pedagogical frameworks and language that were used in students’ first-year writing courses, Vygotsky’s theories demonstrate that the students will not draw on their experiences from the first-year writing; in subsequent courses in which writing is assigned.

Vygotsky further asserts that “[l]earning does not alter our overall ability to focus attention but rather develops various abilities to focus attention on a variety of things” (83). What this means for students is that all the educational ecologies in which they have been learning are going to drive in some material way how learning in a particular course or with a particular curriculum manifests. As such, “special training affects overall development only when its elements, materials, and processes are similar across specific domains" because “habit[s] governs us” (Vygotsky 83). This manifestation should not come as a surprise to those of us who attempt to enact a critical pedagogy within the classroom or for directors of writing centers. Consider the student who needs constant validation of their intelligence or standing as a “good student” through grades. A conditioning towards grades necessarily draws a student’s attention towards the grade and away from the learning if the external and internal mappings all point towards that destination. I see ecological assessment as an extension of the alternative assessment practices such as ungrading or specification grading. Just as these alternative assessments will not serve every context, neither will ecological assessment. However, they both provide new paths for measuring student learning that diverges from the current systems informed by scientific management to operate from a more flexible stance.

After over a decade of teaching and eight years of teaching ENG 207, my teaching philosophy and practices align with the educational views of critical educators such as hooks, Paulo Freire, and Henry Giroux in that I, too, want to provide students with “tools to engage in self-empowerment, to strengthen democracy, and to become involved in social transformation” (Rendón 15). My interest for student learning corresponds to Code’s work on ecological thinking and her theory of the epistemology of the everyday as a “contrast to the formalized and idealized epistemologies” that manifest from the ideas born of Western Civilization and the Enlightenment (Grasswick 151). What I know at the beginning of this project is that OA is not giving me the opportunity to discover evidence for student-tutors’ epistemologies of the everyday. The examinations in the following chapters of some key artifacts from the course serve to chart the intended ecology of ENG 207 and the writing center in hopes of tracking that everyday knowledge. This examination is central to the idea that “pedagogy cannot be understood apart from a reflection on the *institutional context of education*” including the quite local level of my own university (Readings 153).

Naming Landmarks and Discovering New Paths

The next two chapters operate as case studies to enact the heuristic that I hope this project constructs. I choose these two particular sets of artifacts as the basis of my case evidence because they represent real time contexts to illustrate tutor learning and praxis in both the student-tutors’ curricular course and their tutoring sessions in the writing center. Secondly, I wanted to have these cases help me understand the connections between the classroom ecology and the writing center ecology. Case studies methods are conducive here because:

> the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important in two respects. First, it is important for the development of a nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process, and in much theory. Second, cases are important for researchers’ own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research. (Flyvbjerg 392)

These case studies offer me a way to engage the multifaceted aspects of each set of artifacts. I use the word understand above and in the following chapters as an echo of Krista Ratcliffe’s call for “listening with the intent to understand” (28). She explains that “*understanding* means listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent—with the intent to understand not just the claims but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well” (28). For me, Ratcliffe’s petition highlights the problematic nature of how we currently rely on OA as a way to account for instead of ecologically, which is a stance of assessing towards … in the case of this project, assessing towards student-tutor praxis as that of rhetorical negotiation without a preconceived idea of what I might or might not find.[13] Ratcliffe suggests that this particular idea of understanding is an action of "*standing under*" by "consciously standing under discourses that surround us and others" (29). To this definition of understanding, I would add the additional stance of standing with as in standing alongside because for these student-tutors the rhetorical negations are "always already" in the sense that they are "inescapable aspects of [the student-tutors] condition" (Polt 389). Plainly, the discourse of education is the water the student-tutors swim in. Analysis of these cases might help me answer Ratcliffe's query of how we might "know what is so naturalized for us that it no longer visible to us" in order to find a "possibility for hearing what we cannot see" (29). I am enacting an action of discovery.

At an operational level, these case studies give me the means by which to create a naming mechanism to help me identify and interpret the student-tutors' moves. It offers me a way to catalog the student-tutors taking in of data points (i.e., the course material) and converting them into knowledge for themselves. OA struggles to capture these conversions because the procedure for measuring is restricted. Ecologically thinking about assessment needs flexibility. The challenge is that I do not currently have a model that offers that flexibility, so I have to build it myself. That is what the next two chapters attempt. They represent an emergent strategy: a naming process so that I can get to the next place for evaluation. "'Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions'" (Obolensky, as quoted in brown 13). adrienne maree brown's understanding of emergence as "a system that makes use of everything in the iterative process" articulates the methods that I developed in the next two chapters (14-15). The logics of OA are divergent from the logics of emergence. OA reduces complex systems to data points, but complex systems are actually created by emergence. Therefore, I need the emergent strategies in the following chapters to resist epistemologies of mastery in order to anticipate what may come next.

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[13] I am grateful to Dr. Heather Adams for this wording to help me describe the shift in stance between an OA model and an ecological model.

CHAPTER III: LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE CLASSROOM ECOLOGY

As a teacher, my concern is what students learn and how they learn. As a writing center director, I want the Queens University of Charlotte Writing Center to be a "participatory [space] for the sharing of knowledge" (hooks 15). Both of these goals compel me to spend time understanding how they work in concert with and in tension against one another, to account for the "concealed linkages between power and knowledge," and to uncover the everyday epistemologies from which the student-tutors operate (*Ecological Thinking* 35). The curriculum for educating student-tutors has a limited amount of time in which to intervene in the educational ecologies that students have experienced for over 13 years in their primary and secondary schools. It is unlikely that a 16-week course can interrupt those years of conditioning that students received in every facet of education from desks in rows to a bell system for managing time to a curriculum that may or may not reflect their own lived experiences. Even given these conditions, what matters to me is in what ways and to what degree this course might intervene in an educational habitus that claims explicitly to promote critical thinking while tacitly centering structures and practices that actually promote Foucauldian ideas of docile bodies as "useful" instead of as "intelligible" (Foucault 136). Many of the traditional assessments used ubiquitously throughout higher education fail to capture if or to what extent this course intervenes in a student habitus imprinted with Frederick Taylor's scientific management principles (Au 25) that helps condition these useful bodies.

In the previous chapter, I made a case for understanding how the course materials I designed communicate my intentions for this intervention. The choices I make as both instructor and director will inform the pedagogical ecology of the tutoring course. Understanding the pedagogical ecology of our course provides me more information about what learning or unlearning manifests for the student-tutors in the course and what that might signify for their tutoring practices. I use the terms *learning* to represent the explicit educational components of the coursework (i.e., the curriculum, the assignments, the readings, the student learning outcomes). Unlearning represents the moments when a student questions the conditioning of their educational ecologies (including ENG 207) to understand how some of those explicit components are interconnected with tacit factors related to power, control, and mastery. For example, we spend time reading and discussing the myriad ways that education as a system tends to focus on writing through a lens of mastery of a privileged literacy practice instead of a lens of development that encourages students to foster rhetorical agility by understanding the contingencies of any rhetorical situation. The distinction between learning and unlearning matter to a student-tutor's praxis because as a director, I strive to create a space where the power systems of the university are mitigated as much as possible in our practices.

Moreover, learning is not an instantiated phenomenon. Currently, the degree of learning is determined systemically by a variety of flawed classroom and institutional assessment tools that are imbued with the very doctrines that critical pedagogy aims to confront because "[p]roponents of traditional forms of assessment assume that students can be tested fairly in uniform ways, thus disregarding issues of socioeconomic dominance and cultural subordination that are intrinsically tied to any process of learning" (Barros 79). What the student-tutors' reflections examined for this chapter relate is less about discrete points of information and more about the relationship between those points and the ways student-tutors engage in reflection to move from reporters of data information to ethical knowledge makers. The data in this chapter challenge US education's scientific management model for identifying student learning as a quantitative knowable. In the case of the writing center, knowledge production by student-tutors around how literacy works and the intimate connections between writing and culture and identity are vital to this work as a space for writer development. More importantly, the data reveal the need for both teacher-director and student-tutors to acknowledge how we might be complicit in a system that maintains an allegiance to Western understandings of knowledge production.

An overarching goal of this project is to create a method in order to answer bell hooks' call for "'conscientization' in the classroom" so that I am "an active participant, not a passive consumer" in the classroom ecology; the concept of conscientization hooks renders as "critical awareness and engagement" (hooks 14). Conscientization is the enactment of my action (my pedagogy) and my reflection (this project) to create a critical awareness about the implications of my choices in the classroom and the writing center. By extension, I hope the student-tutors enact the same critical awareness about their schooling and tutoring. The likelihood that my one class in writing center practices, which is informed by critical pedagogy, can unseat all the educational ecologies to which student-tutors have been habituated is doubtful. Interrupting our conditioning by the corporate university, however, might be possible. That possibility creates the participatory space for learning.

Research Methods, Process, and Analysis of Data

First and foremost for me, these student-tutors in the center and the course are real and embodied thinkers who capture their thoughts into a format that I am analyzing for patterns "as a means of examining [a] communicative practice so as to uncover signs of social identities, institutions, and norms as well as the means by which these social formations are established, negotiated, enacted, and changed" (Bazerman and Prior 3).[14] Just as my analysis could never account for the myriad nuances related to their thoughts, following the convention of detaching the data from their corporeal bodies would not make this process more objective. Furthermore, as this research is ultimately an examination of language, I am mindful that "language is emergent, multiform, negotiated in the process, meaningful in the uptake, [and] accomplishing social acts" (Bazerman and Prior 1).

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[14] I am going to begin this section of the chapter with a disclaimer. In the social sciences, the researcher would customarily not refer to what the participant does, opting instead to describe what the data presents.

Recruitment

The student-tutors for the Writing Center at Queens begin with taking ENG 207: English Practicum in Composition, which runs every fall and is required for a tutoring position and in our Professional Writing and Rhetoric major/minor. Our center recruits writing tutors from across the disciplines, as I see writing as a vital tool for student learning that is not owned by a particular discipline. Students can enter the course through one of two paths. If they apply for a paid writing consultant position, they are required to take the course. If they are a Professional Writing & Rhetoric major or minor[15], they are required to take the course. Typically, the course has as many non-English majors as it does majors, which means that the responses in these artifacts for this analysis represent a variety of curricula. The artifacts were their final reflection assignment for the course.

Participant Demographics

As these student-tutors take a curricular course in preparation for working in the writing center, I do not query them specifically on race, gender, ability, socioeconomic status, sexuality, or any other social locations. They often share these identities in the course through class discussions and in their writing. For example, the data points in the last column entitled

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[15] For the purposes of readability, I will use the word *major* to indicate both students who major or minor in PWR.

"Identities/Social Locations" were shared with me as part of their final reflections. The other data related to their major or minor, the Dean's List, and class standing were obtained from our registration software. Of the student-tutors who agreed to allow the use of their artifacts, six total consented from a class roster of 12. The following table lists some curricular and personal identity markers in which these student-tutors live, work, and learn (see table 5). Providing their majors and minors helps identify some of the specific curricular ecologies they navigate.

Table 5. Curricular and Personal Identity Markers for Cohort

Tutor[16]	**Major/Minor**	**Class Year**	**Identities/Social Locations**
Alex	Creative Writing/Professional Writing & Rhetoric Dean's List	Senior	White; CIS woman; Neurodivergent; Catholic; Upper middle-class; Financially Stable; Gamer
Amaya	Professional Writing & Rhetoric/Honors College Dean's List	Junior	White; CIS woman; Queer; Progressive
Anna	Professional Writing & Rhetoric/Marketing	Junior	White; CIS woman; Catholic; dis/Abled
Caroline	Interior Architecture & Design/Professional Writing & Rhetoric Dean's List	Junior	White; CIS woman; Queer
Georgia	Early Education Major Dean's List	Junior	White, CIS woman, Progressive; Student Athlete

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[16] All student-tutors were assigned pseudonyms.

Jocelyn	Professional Writing & Rhetoric/Creative Writing Dean’s List	Senior	Mixed Race; CIS woman; Queer; dis/Abled; THRIVE[17] student

The roster mostly aligns with the demographic percentages of the Queens ecology with a total student enrollment for Fall 2020 at 2,338 students (“Visualizing”). During the fall 2020, ENG 207 had 12 students enrolled in the course (see table 6). The gender demographics are nearly identical between the institution and the course. The racial demographic varies significantly.

Table 6. Demographic Percentages of Queens and ENG 207

Fall 2020	Queens University	ENG 207
Women	68%	66%
Men	32%	33%
Race other than White	45%	25%
White	55%	75%

Source: “Queens Fact Book, 2020.” *Visualizing Queens Data | Queens University of Charlotte*, 2021, www.queens.edu/about/visualizing-queens-data.html.

Course Modality and COVID-19 Protocol Impacts

My rationale for using the course from this semester and the related cohort was mostly a function of timing, as I had just finalized my prospectus, and I knew I would need artifacts from ENG 207 as part of my material. However, in the fall of 2020, our ENG 207 course was delivered in an online modality, as the COVID-19 global pandemic forced our university to opt for virtual learning that semester to protect the health of our Queens community. While the work of the course was still rich, and the student-tutors and I had many of the same conversations that have arisen in previous in-person iterations of the course, during this particular semester, other more informal opportunities were lost because of the course modality. In particular, the side conversations that often happen with student cross-talk or the before and after class chats were absent, as those organic moments of informal chatter were not sought by the student-tutors. The opportunity for interactions to bubble up between students or between me and students were constrained by the awkwardness of etiquette in the virtual setting as students most often waited behind muted cameras for class to begin. There was no pre- or post-class chatter where they could share experiences about supporting students or unpack the readings so as to apply them to sessions they had seen or facilitated.

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[17] THRIVE students participate in a summer bridge program meant to support historically marginalized students who are First-Generation, financially fragile, and/or racial or ethnic minorities.

While the modality created some limitations for student-tutor interaction, it also offered some affordances for this project as the online modality contracted points of contact between the members of our classroom ecology. As such, more significance was put on the curricular material of the class (e.g., the syllabus, the assignments, the readings) in that student-tutors could not rely on the short-hand of consulting with each other before or after class or as they occupied the writing center physically. The same online etiquette referenced above frustrated the normal clarifying questions that I would often field before and after class when we met in person. Without the ease of access to me or their classmates, the student-tutors had to rely more on the messaging of course materials.

Final Assignment That Produced the Student Artifacts

The typical assignment of the course is a Final Class Reflection Letter from the student to me, which is meant to invite students to consider the ways their tutoring practices have been influenced by the course materials or to consider what they have learned in our time together. This assignment is made available to the students one week before the end of the semester, as I try to mitigate students working ahead on reflective assignments. Each year, as I review the material and assignments from the previous year, I consider whether the course materials are still serving the student learning outcomes and goals for the course. Additionally, as each ENG 207 cohort has its own personality, sometime in the two weeks before the Final Class Reflection assignment prompt is revealed, I appraise whether that prompt as then written will be fruitful for us given our interactions over the previous 14 weeks.

Without the usual in-person interactions, I felt this Final Class Reflection assignment was insufficient for providing the students an opportunity to consider their tutoring practices in any concrete way. The student engagement with the writing center was down drastically, and many student-tutors had held only one or two writing sessions. I revised the final prompt to give them an opportunity to engage a real writer in a real writing situation. Dr. Temptaous McKoy had posted a Tweet approximately about the time I was reconsidering revising this assignment. Her query struck me as excellent material for class discussion. Her tweet read: "Can I title my article, '...y'all really got my [sic] fucked up.'"? Is that too edgy? I know it ain't 'professional' but it is the language to really describe what I am thinking and talking about." (McKoy).

In the final class of the semester, I opened the class discussion by asking the student-tutors to consider the question from a writer and to respond on Padlet[18] so that we could see in real time how they might respond to the writer. The Padlet page was devoid of any identifying cues as to the identity of the writer, the circumstances of the query, or even the location where the question was posed. Also, I was careful not to use any identifying words (i.e., pronouns, titles) when explaining the exercise. The student-tutors only had a retyped version of the question on at the top of the Padlet page. After posting their responses, I asked them to read their classmates' posts. Finally, I asked the consider patterns in the responses. I told them to hold their observations and not report out what they saw.

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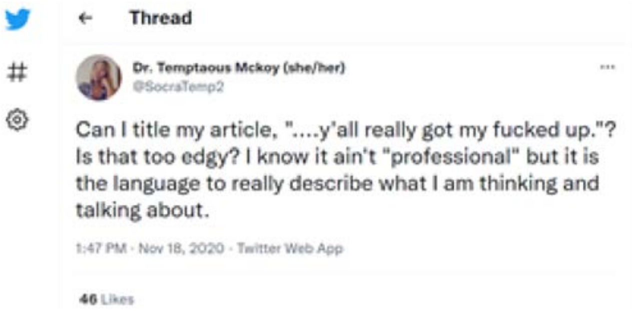
[18] Padlet is an open-source, digital collaboration tool for students that I used in place of a white board since our class was on-line. We could see what others post to the board in real time to drive class discussion.

Figure 3. Original Tweet by Dr. McKoy, 11/18/2020



Dr. Temptaous Mckoy (she/her)
@SocraTemp2

Can I title my article, "....y'all really got my fucked up."? Is that too edgy? I know it ain't "professional" but it is the language to really describe what I am thinking and talking about.

1:47 PM · Nov 18, 2020 · Twitter Web App

46 Likes

Afterwards, I shared a presentation slide through our video platform that revealed Dr. McKoy's original Tweet (see figure 3). Then I told the student-tutors where I found the question and explained Dr. McKoy's background and credentials and why she might have been posing this question on Twitter. I asked them to look back at the patterns from their responses and invited them to complicate their thinking from their original Padlet posts. I asked to them to consider the readings and discussion posts that had preceded this activity. I also read them the learning outcomes and drew particular attention to the outcome that focuses on the ways that culture, background, identity, and social structures play in learning and writing. This point marks a third, meta-reflexive response that asked the student-tutors to center themselves and their understanding of praxis in relation to their first response. This in-class activity engendered an animated discussion by the student-tutors as they came to recognize the ways that their original posts were based on reactive thinking that was conditioned by the institution of education. They quickly pointed how that their original responses did not consider the questioner's (i.e., the writer) identity, purpose, or ethos. All but one of the original posts advised the anonymized writer to consider the consequences of the title as it related to either the grade or the professor's reaction.

From this class activity, I revised the final assignment in an attempt to capture the last class discussion in an artifact for study. (See Appendix B for full assignment.) This reflection assignment had three main components that asked the student to:

1. Consider their first responses on the Padlet we used for class discussion.
2. Reflect on their thoughts after I revealed the writer.
3. Construct a response to Dr. McKoy based on the last four readings of the course, which was research theorizing race and gender.
4. This response was to be either a video response or a transcript of what they would say if Dr. McKoy was a real writer sitting across from them in a session.

The student artifacts created from this assignment gave me new information on how tutoring practices are shaped not just by tutor education and training, but also by the other pedagogical ecologies—past and present—that students bring to their learning. Five of the student-tutors chose to upload a written transcript of what they presented as their reframed response to Dr. McKoy; one tutor chose to upload a Flipgrid video of her response. These responses created a richer understanding of student learning than previous reflective letters that asked the student to speak directly to me.

Analysis and Nascent Codes

As part of an IRB approved study, these final reflections were coded using a qualitative method that iteratively analyzed the artifacts to search for emergent themes about the knowledge students produced in their tutor education course. For the first cycle of coding, I used Initial

Coding (also known as open coding). Joey Saldana explains that this type of coding method "breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences" (115). Given that the spirit of this class and the research is grounded in feminist pedagogies and methodologies, I approached coding with an openness that allowed the data to suggest themes of what student-tutors learned (or not) and any impact on their tutoring practices. Or, as Kathy Charmaz advises, I attempted to "remain open to all possible theoretical directions suggested by [my] interpretation of the data" (47). This openness is a key tenet of any grounded theory coding process that seeks to discover what the data offers instead of accounting for a predetermined set of criteria.

For my own work as a teacher-researcher, it was important that I let the tutor's moves and thoughts be as unfiltered as possible by my own intentions for the course. In the first catalog of coding, I noticed student-tutors referring to their classmates and also the larger community of scholars from our course readings. These indications pointed to the various scholarly communities the student-tutors were navigating that included both a community of practice and a larger discourse community along with their multiple identities and the writer's multiple identities.

In this project, I am operating with the understanding that a discourse community is the larger body of scholarship that the students read as part of their study in the major. A community of practice is their class cohort operating with the shared goal of learning how to support student-writers. Markers of the community of practice are reflected in statements such as "We have spent the semester pushing against a university hierarchy" by Amaya, signaling her understanding of her disconnection from her experiences in the course and her initial response to Dr. McKoy's question. The third person pronoun "we" indicates student-tutors in the class. In contrast, Anna states that “[the title”] doesn’t come off as professional simply because most scholar [sic] or formal writing doesn’t have this explicit language.” Anna is referring to language practices of a professionalized group while Amaya’s point operates from the perspective of her fellow classmates.

Another focal reference was to their tutoring practices and their relationship with the theories we had been engaging, leading me to identify the theme of praxis as a continuum identifying two types of tutoring stances: performative and embodied. The performative tutoring stance is the posture a tutor takes when she acts in accordance with the educational habitus of performing school. An embodied tutoring stance is one informed by her praxis or her reflection upon her initial action as informed by our class ecology. Alex’s reflection represents my understanding of a performative tutoring stance when she writes about “not mixing myself up into your ethos and clear rhetorical mastery above myself”; she is addressing Dr. McKoy directly and not the “imaginary student” from the beginning of the activity. Her identification of Dr. McKoy’s “rhetorical mastery” gestures to her focus on Dr. McKoy as an expert. Meanwhile, Caroline communicates an embodied tutoring stance during her reflection when she expresses how she wants to slow down when “thinking about my own intersection…intersectionality when responding to Dr. M.”

As acknowledged at the end of the previous chapter, these codes are meant to create naming devices that allow me to record the moves the student-tutors are making; they are not meant to be a comprehensive accounting of the all the possibilities that any student-tutor might enact in any given writing activity. Even as the naming devices of tutoring stances and scholarly communities create artificial delineations, the student-tutors can and do occupy any or all of these positions at any giving moment, reflecting a more accurate depiction of the possibilities in which these themes may occur.

Using initial coding gave me a structure defined enough for naming what I saw the data suggesting but flexible enough to be “tentative and provisional” (Saldana 115). To reduce the biases that I would inherently impose on the text and its attendant codes, I sorted most of the text into smaller, line-by-line segments, as it “‘reduces the likelihood of imputing [my] motives, fears, or unresolved personal issues to [my] collected data’” (Charmaz, as qtd. in Saldana 24). This process let the codes become apparent more as word association to those discrete parts as opposed to the themes that seemed most immediate and salient to me when the text was considered holistically. Once the text had been sorted into tables with smaller bits of text occupying its own box, I created subsequent columns to capture descriptive notes to begin to identify patterns. I noted moments that I felt represented the student-tutor’s voice or recognition of the writer’s (i.e., Dr. McKoy) positionality. I repeated this process without access to the initial notes in order to confirm or complicate my first associations. Once I had read the notes, I created a list of tutoring moves that I categorized into approximately 55 types.

Executing a second round of analysis, I designated each code as related to three meta-categories: praxis, rhetorical situation, writer. Praxis encompasses any moves that the student-tutor made that seemed to reflect the ideas and discussions from the coursework of ENG 207. The rhetorical situation includes text that related to the writing activity being explored in the final assignment. Finally, the meta-category of writer related to the writer. Text coded as either praxis and writer also entailed text related to identity markers or subject positionality. This procedure had a secondary benefit of helping me sort portions of text that may have had multiple codes (also referred to as simultaneous codes) embedded or where I may have misread the text and needed to adjust what I thought that text fragment was communicating. In adjusting or aligning the codes during a second round of analysis, I affirmed consistency in the themes that were emerging.

Emergent Themes as Signals for Educational Ecologies

A surface-level reading or use of a rubric to frame my response to the students' final reflections would have discounted some rich and productive knowledge generated by the student-tutors under conventional assessment tools used in many educational settings. A multiple-choice test can only recount discrete facts, but a reflective assignment offers a chance to use writing as a learning tool for me and students as that same writing identifies their metacognitive processes in reflecting on those initial moves. For example, the analysis by coding indicated that student-tutors were thinking in complex ways. The artifacts conveyed that they both *reflected on* the final class (e.g., the discussion, their responses, their classmates' responses, the connections to the course material) and the artifacts were *reflective of* deeper thinking (e.g., they connected their moves to course material).

Moreover, each student-tutor engaged multiple audiences within the artifacts. In one reflection, the student-tutor responded solely to Dr. McKoy as the audience: "Dr. M, I've heard your concerns and I want to help address them" (Alex). In others, there was a combination of possible audiences being addressed. For instance, Caroline's video reflection begins its address with "Hi there, my name is [Caroline] and I'm going to be responding to a tweet that was sent out by Dr. M." From here, her commentary could be read as addressing her classmates or Dr. McKoy, but in one moment that breaks the fourth wall, Caroline asserts "I would say that, um, you know she should do what she feels like doing" and then looks directly into the camera with what I took to be a slight conspiratorial grin. That moment felt as if I was the audience as both instructor and director. This project does not take up these examples in this case study, but I share them as examples of how OA assessment models do not capture and support such complex thinking and doing. Using the artifacts, the case study does take up the suggested interconnections with four emergent themes: performative tutoring, embodied tutoring, communities of practice, and discourse communities. The connections between these themes also makes visible that complex thinking and doing. By way of illustration, I use a simple plot graph to track the orientation of the student-tutors' responses. The relationships between these four codes signal the ways their various pedagogical ecologies engage their practices.

Performative Tutoring Stances and Embodied Tutoring Stances

All of the student-tutors' responses pointed towards instances where they fluctuated between moments of what I am calling a performative tutoring stance and an embodied tutoring stance. In the artifacts, the student-tutors detail the explicit cognitive connections they make in naming and examining their first responses and subsequent reflections in relation to our classroom ecology created by our readings, discussions, and activities.

My observations on a performative tutoring stance, or the stance of performing good student, are informed by Elyse Lamm Pineau's theory of critical performative pedagogy and Peter MacLaren's ideas on performance and education. Developing Paulo Freire's theories of critical pedagogy by considering the implications of performance, McLaren's ideas mark a watershed moment whereby "performativity [...] and critical analysis of the performing bodies of teachers and students-in particular, has opened an interdisciplinary dialogue" giving teacher-researchers another framework to contemplate "how sociopolitical relations are simultaneously reflected in, and constituted through, educational practice at the macro level of public policy as well as the micro level of classroom interaction" (Pineau 41). What I take from Pineau's point is that any adjustments in the pedagogical ecology should be guided by what happens at the local (or micro) level of the classroom. As assessment moves toward macro levels, the embodied experience of the student becomes less visible. Understanding the performative (and embodied) responses as student learning offers us more nuanced ways of understanding, which often lack in the types of assessments currently used.

Pineau, invoking the work of McLaren, writes that enfleshment “connotes the process through which a body acquires certain habits over an extended period of time. These habits become sedimented such that they appear to ourselves and to others as if they were natural rather than culturally constructed” (44). She contends that from our first breath, our sociocultural and political locations are affixed to our “very musculature” and as such “these social norms shape our posture, measure out our movements, inflect our voices, and pattern the ways we touch, experience, and interact with bodies of others" (44). In her research, she makes an important distinction that not only connects enfleshment to the physical body but also to the “ideological body,” which she defines as both the “physical being and *body* as a metaphor connoting all the social factors that might influence physical modes of experience and expression” because “[a]ny substantive discussion of the body must speak to the *relationship* between physical behaviors and cultural norms” (44). Given the virtual modality of my classroom, and the disembodied text used for the response in my final class, the ideological body becomes an important distinction for how I see the performative tutoring stance manifesting in this moment.

Correspondingly, the student-tutors arrive to the classroom enfleshed by an educational system whose goal is the production of a student who “identifies with social and cultural authorities” (Aronowitz 1). As a critical educator, my goal for our class and, ultimately, the student-tutors’ writing center practices, is to encourage ways of thinking and knowledge production that promote a critical consciousness about the ways language "*generates* reality in the inescapable context of power" (Haraway 78). Therefore, while I acknowledge the effects of enfleshment on students, I also recognize my responsibility to counter it with "refleshment," which is McLaren's concept of "a body's innate ability to learn alternative behaviors" in that "new ways of being can be developed that are more enabling than the old habits" (Pineau 44).

Indications of a performative tutoring stance were common across the reflections and took a variety of characteristics ranging from playful diction that breaks the fourth wall so that some student-tutors seem to be addressing me as the audience more so than Dr. McKoy, per the assignment guidelines, or as a means of bringing levity to an uncomfortable realization that they had reverted to the rules of the hegemonic system we were attempting to complicate. Others repeatedly explore classroom themes of balancing student-writer's agency with the power assigned to the instructor in the guise of grades. Still others seem to take a performative tutoring stance as they reflect on what they should have done yet characterize those initial moves as somehow incorrect. The importance of performance touches a variety of disciplines from the social sciences (e.g., sociology) to linguistics and affirms "performativity" is central to this idea of refleshment so that, ultimately, students "[call] on performance to help them negotiate unfamiliar territories, especially the gaps they discovered between theory and practice, abstract ideas and concrete examples" (Fishman et al. 228, 233). Where the student-tutors characterize their initial moves as incorrect, I would argue that the response is them moving from enfleshment to refleshment in understanding how their theory and practice were misaligned.

In other moves, the student-tutors enact what I considered to be an embodied tutoring stance. This stance is not in competition with or in opposition to the performative tutoring stance but a complement or alternative stance. The embodied tutoring stance is one that reflects the refleshment of a tutor’s thinking. The move towards refleshment starts with observation and developing a practice of reflection in order to mark the relationship between enfleshment and refleshment. These embodied stances are also characterized in a variety of ways. Often, in the student-tutors’ thinking, they ponder the practice in relation to the theory to offer a critique of their advice or where they think through what they missed or did not account for. These embodied stances demonstrate how the student-tutor ponders their practice in relation to the theories (e.g.,, Audre Lorde’s theories that “It’s necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths we believe and know beyond understanding”) and how their critical reflection revises their initial responses to incorporate those ideas (e.g., “This concept of living by what we speak and understand goes perfectly with your title because you know the power of language”) (Lorde 43; Anna). Anna’s thoughts are particularly interesting in this moment. At the level of the text, she is connecting to a reading by Lorde, but at the level of her thinking, she is actually demonstrating Kristie Fleckenstein’s embodied literacy and signaling that *knowing* is not always just linguistic but exists on a cellular level. Anna is working from a level of knowing that “[incorporates] the corporeal dimension of resistance, accommodation, and acculturation into what has long been conceived as a predominately linguistic phenomenon’ (Fleckenstein 52).

Communities of Practice and Discourse Communities

A second related set of codes that emerged suggest themes about communities of practice and discourse communities. Discussions associated with communities of practice and discourse communities are generally covered in many rhetoric or writing courses, so it is plausible that the students would have encountered these ideas somewhere in their curriculum, either formally or informally. The understanding of writing as social activity dates back to ancient Greek ideas on oration and cultivation of the audience.[19] For students of rhetoric and composition, understanding the concepts related to both communities of practice and discourse communities are part of the foundational theories they study at Queens. To be sure, the ideas around communities of practice are studied and discussed in writing center theory as a way to understand and articulate the work done for a wider university audience (Geller et al.; Hall). Discourse communities are often explained as a way to understand how students conceptualize writing in a wide variety of contexts for a multitude of purposes (Swales; Johns; Melzer). For the purposes of this project, it will be important to make a distinction between both ideas even as they have sometimes been conflated.

Of particular importance to the Queens writing center is the idea of community of practice. Mark Hall offers the original definition of communities of practice by Lave and Wegner as having "three characteristics," which include a "'domain of interest,'" "'members who engage in common activities, interact, and learn from each other over time,'" and have a "'shared repertoire of resources'" (19). To this definition, however, Hall adds that communities of practice "have a history of shared goals, meanings, and practices" (19). Moreover, Dan Melzer explains a discourse community as "a community of people who share the same goals, the same methods of communicating, the same genres, and the same lexis (specialized language)" (102). While both theories posit an expectation of shared goals for the community, the expectation of shared values is only present in communities of practice.

My attention to shared values as the defining characteristics for the writing center as a community of practice is germane for my work because Dr. Hall was the writing center director in my graduate program. As part of my graduate assistantship, I spent a year tutoring in the writing center where I did my MA, and took two important courses for learning to become an instructor of writing: the writing center preparation course and the composition practicum for teaching first-year writing. My educational ecologies with Dr. Hall were permeated with a numbered of shared values such as inquiry as the basis for writing center practice; dialogic reflection for meaning making; and challenging pedagogies and institutional narratives still mired in a modernist framework for learning. It is this last shared value that I most connected with as a tutor and that continues to resonate with me today as an instructor and director.

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[19] The idea regarding the social and oratory aspects of rhetoric have been documented in a multitude of texts by scholars such as Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg, James Herrick, and George Kennedy.

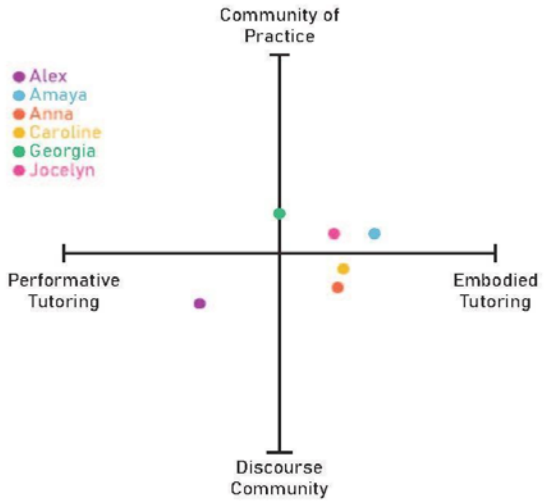
Of all the coursework I have done between both my MA and PhD, only the two courses referenced above gave me instruction on how to teach; the other courses taught me to be a scholar. The distinction between instructor and scholar is often deprioritized in a corporate university culture as the commodity of teaching (and tutoring by extension) "is a highly inefficient teaching and learning activity" (Hall 19). Furthermore, effective teaching is contingent on the ability to reflexively engage your own practices; however, such a sustained activity is generally not valued in a culture defined by neoliberal logics. Hall describes some tutoring practices as "'valued'" because this framing "acknowledges that these practices are not arbitrary or neutral" (21). Moreover, this framing "invites us to trace the ways our writing center community's shared goals, meanings, and practices evolve over time' (21). These assertions crystalize the ways that my values as a director and instructor act on tutoring practices. Perhaps most vital to this point is that "values matter—disciplinary, institutional, academic" and my own in that without examination of their origins and their consequences, I may be undermining my own goals (Lutkewitte et al. 14).

Charting Emerging Territory

In my previous chapter, I outlined that my approach to this data was to create a naming device through coding so that I could observe and speculate on the moves the student-tutors were making in their final reflections. Currently, assessments (both formative and summative) operate from a quantifying framework that resists the inefficiency of learning, as explained above, rendering any assessment that is not informed by ecological thinking as unhelpful for my teaching and directing goals. This claim does not nullify quantification methods as useful but advises using them in concert with other methods to triangulate the data for a more complete map.

Such assessments might initially rate these tutoring responses as correct or incorrect; a traditional assessment operates from a closed system of evaluation that has no method to account for development. In fact, my initial set of codes operated from this deficit model thinking. For example, Amaya writes: “We have spent the semester pushing against a university hierarchy, yet, when it came to a moment of practicing this, we fell short.” She recognizes that her first response assumed the writer’s identity, which informed her response to consider the impact of the title on the writer’s grade. As I continued to analyze the artifacts, however, I came to see their thinking less as static and final but more dynamic and fluid, moving away or toward a particular stance or community as their understandings unfolded in their reflective process.

Figure 4. Scatterplot of relationship between emergent themes



In order to make sense for myself of what I saw the student-tutors doing, I include in this methods narrative a scatter plot, which offered me a mechanism to consider their moves in relation to one another (see figure 4). Typically, scatter plots are designed to anchor independent variables on an X-axis and dependent variables on a Y-axis. In the case of my codes, I consider them all variable because the themes, and my interpretation of them, are always contingent on the educational ecologies of the artifacts. The X-axis of Figure 4 tracks the continuum of performative tutoring elements to embodied tutoring elements; the Y-axis of Figure 4 tracks the continuum of the community of practice elements to discourse community elements.

No neutral stance of tutoring can ever really exist, so I needed a way to see how the moves tended within the aggregate of each reflection, so I assigned a basic counting scheme to create numerical values for each instance of the four themes[20]. Operating with the X-axis as one continuum between embodied tutoring and performative tutoring, I counted the instances of each theme in the reflection and subtracted the smallest number from the largest to create a value; subsequently, I combined each remainder to plot the tutor position on the graph. For example, if Anna had ten instances of performative tutoring and nine instances of embodied tutoring, I subtracted eight from ten, which leaves a remainder of two. Next, I counted to two on the number line of the X-axis moving away from zero towards performative tutoring because in balancing the stances, performative tutoring had two remaining instances. I repeated the process for the Y-axis. Once both values were created, I plotted the student-tutor into the corresponding quadrant.

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[20] I acknowledge the irony of using numbers just after critiquing the quantification framework often used in OA.

While this method both relies on numeracy and what is arbitrary, it allowed me to consider the relationship of each student-tutor's reflection in relation to the other student-tutors. This visual confirmed what I was seeing linguistically in terms of the outliers. Using a numerical value system does not replicate the ways that OA reduces assessment to quantification. Foremost, this method uses the actual student work to generate the numerical values without the mediation of a rubric. Rubrics are not an enemy to the process of assessment, but, like OA, they are problematic to the process of assessment. Often, they are the cornerstone to evaluation of student work, but they cannot accommodate the complexity of student learning and often, through poor design, miss the mark on what is being measured and why. Moreover, rubrics (and by extension classroom assessment and program assessment) substantiate the hegemonic systems of power that use language as a gatekeeping tool:

> At the institutional level, assessment is a tool used for accreditation purposes, stakeholder reports, programmatic changes, and departmental and school reviews. At the personal level, it is a matter of ethically ranking a student's matriculation or readiness for the next step; it's a matter of reducing learning to something quantifiable; it is a negotiation

> between what people have learned and how people are assessed on what they have learned. (Faison 275)

However, by coding and using the student-tutor's actual language and words, the hegemonic mediation of rubrics is diminished. In other words, the actual words and thoughts of the tutors are what is being assessed; that assessment is not then being filtered through rubric language directed by neoliberal influences.

A tutor is likely to fall on the graph in any given quadrant under any given set of circumstances, so this rendering is not meant to be a static representation of good tutoring or bad tutoring. It is only meant to capture a particular way of thinking in a particular moment. As this study is not longitudinal, the student-tutors' thinking should be understood as in-process. However, even as that thinking is in flux, student-tutors carry dispositions that inform how and what they learn. Perhaps a better way to describe it is to say how they *school*. Further, these dispositions have been informed by the corporate university's own disposition informed by technical rationality. I will refer to these dispositions as the student habitus; the concept of which I am drawing from French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Habitus is theorized as "a 'system of dispositions' or acquired patterns of thought, behavior, and taste that correspond to social position" (Beare & Stenberg 105). For the purposes of this project, I am defining a student habitus as a disposition that conditions students to prioritize grades, rule following, and conformity over learning. To that end, what the graph can help me understand is each student-tutors' habitus. When I compare the graph to the other ecological information I have about the student-tutors, I can begin to understand how their thinking represents not only what we have encountered in ENG 207 but also other educational ecological influences that might be present. I will take a closer look at these possibilities in the case studies below.

For now, let me explain how I see what each quadrant represents. A student-tutor falling in the quadrant of performative tutoring and discourse community is engaging the research of a broader field while also performing the habitus of student who is more attuned to the institution's goals than the student-writer's goals. Students indexed into the discourse community and embodied tutoring quadrant are attending to the broader research of the field and able to reflect upon how their actions are informing their tutoring practice, yet not necessarily connecting the field's theories and class discussions to their tutoring practices. A student falling in the performative tutoring and community of practice quadrant is also performing the habitus of a student attuned to the institution's goal but also trying to incorporate the shared values of the community of practice. Falling in this quadrant would indicate a rather fixed habitus of student as the attention to the shared values of the community of practice would indicate more performance. Literally, the student is performing the shared values of the community in service to the student habitus. Finally, the quadrant of community of practice and embodied tutoring stance indicates a student who is moving more towards conscientization, as she is able to use the shared values of the community of practice towards reflection on her actions to form her tutoring praxis.

As a writing center director whose course explicitly challenges some of the educational system's conditioning toward conformity and docility, it would be disingenuous to say that I am fine with student-tutors falling into any of the quadrants. However, what my analysis reveals is that effective tutoring might not always look or align with my expectations. If they did, then I would be complicit in conditioning student-tutors towards a specific way of tutoring. Is this not a type of conformity that I have deemed acceptable and assumed to be liberatory? If I operate from the stance that cultural, social, and political shifts have informed my teaching in a neoliberal educational system contrary to my own stance, I still must stay open and accepting of tutoring praxes that may look as if they run counter to my own expectations.

In fact, in constructing my graph, Jackie Grutsch McKinney's ideas around writing center grand narratives that circulate about the work in writing centers reminds me that I ought to be wary of prescriptive attitudes that would prescribe the moves a tutor can and does make when working with student-writers. McKinney posits that a "grand narrative seems totalizing, but never is" (54). One of the prevailing and enduring grand narratives of writing centers is that they are "*comfortable, iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing*" (McKinney 5). While such space does align with hooks' thoughts on learning spaces as participatory spaces, this narrative creates a utopian sense of comfort that may not always serve learning. McKinney claims these narratives have invisible threads and that, "like all stories have the potential to do" this version "[changes] the way we see" (5). McKinney's point requires that I must stay cognizant that while I might want students to fall on a particular part of the graph as representative of good tutoring, that stance limits what might be discovered about my classroom ecology.

What this graph does is enable is a way to make visible the thinking processes and learning that student-tutors engage in this reflective assignment. Further, the graph elucidates the connections between these emergent themes, which aligns with Uri Bronfenbrenner's theories on human development understood from ecological frameworks that reveal the "*principal effects* [of which] *are likely to be interactions"* (38). From these observations, I, as a teacher and director, can extrapolate other effects my classroom pedagogies might have as I design and implement a tutor education curriculum. Further, none of these themes are more or less important than the others; what is important is how various student-tutors' pedagogical ecologies directed their thoughts when presented with this particular assignment and how the responses may have been reshaped after reflection.

Possible Tutoring Stances

My initial analysis begins with the axis of performative tutoring and embodied tutoring. Afterwards, I will turn to consider the other axis of communities of practice and discourse communities and consider the nascent connections there. Three tutor responses highlight these performative and embodied stances as they negotiated the reflective assignment: Caroline, Georgia, and Alex. Each of these three case studies illustrate the ways that performative tutoring and embodied tutoring represent the ways a student-tutor could flex in support of student-writers, and highlights the ways that the student-tutors thought through their moves, and how they connected these moves back to the course material. Each case represents an occasion of knowledge production for both the student-tutors and for me about tutor flexibility, the presences of multiple discourses in any tutoring session, and the ways that assessment may not capture learning. Each session between a student-tutor and a student-writer is marked by contingency (i.e., the contingency of student identity; the contingency of writing goals; etc.). To that end, each student-tutor must approach the sessions with awareness of these contingencies so that the logics of mastery do not determine the student-tutors' actions.

Case Studies as Maps

Caroline

Caroline is a junior Interior and Architectural Design ("IAD") major with a minor in Professional Writing and Rhetoric. My interactions with her, beginning with our first-year writing course tell me that the design of something—whether space, or graphics, or words—is interesting to her. The curriculum for the IAD program is quite prescriptive with little room for other courses. Her interest in PWR is not just one of practicality (i.e., it was a decent campus job) but also is one of curiosity in how words shape our lives just as materials do in her major.

In Caroline's reflection, the only reflection submitted verbally, I can almost see her thinking process in the video as she's speaking. She describes her initial reaction:

> In my initial response in class, I had said that I would suggest to Dr. M if they were my tutee to consider their audience and to consider their true intention. Umm…and then also think about that word choice by using the word fucked up or the phrase I guess. Umm…only because…you know, when I hear that word, not that I am particularly bothered or even triggered, umm…I just know that…umm…there is a very umm…provocative connotation associated with that word…

A few lines later she recalls:

> And I can see how that would be a limited or one-sided perception of … umm…the kind of question she poses…ummm…based off of some theories within professional writing and rhetoric and in tutoring…umm…uh…because…uh…basically, I was concerned with a very specific audience within the academic world…

Her initial response is performative in that she reacts to the expletive in the proposed title, but then immediately qualifies her reaction by claiming that she herself is not "bothered or even triggered" but that the audience may find it "provocative." She advised the writer to consider her "true intention;" in this moment, she was not curious to understand if being provocative *was* Dr. McKoy's intention. Caroline moves to a more embodied tutoring stance in her reflection when she stops to consider that her initial reaction only engaged a "limited or one-sided perception" of the reader. Moreover, her association as both a "professional academic rhetorician" who "is likely writing a scholarly…scholarly text that's addressing her peers" who are "other people like me" also characterizes an embodied tutoring stance.

In her reflection, Caroline's use of Krista Ratcliffe's introductory chapter of *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender and Whiteness* to frame her reflection on her initial response establishes a visible connection between her tutoring practices and some of the material from the course. Caroline says:

> So what I wanted to bring up about Ratcliffe's…umm…article is that I was really inspired and interested by her breakdown of her experience with…um…you know…I guess it would be racism. You know her experiencing…someone questioning her ethos because she didn't include an African American source…umm…and kind of wanting to think about my own intersectionality when responding to Dr. M and thinking about what it means to be white…young woman…to be a bisexual…all of my intersectionalities…and how that might influence my …particular lens of looking at her title and how I respond to it and thinking about how that could be associated with my perception of that language.

Caroline makes an explicit connection between her own initial response, which was produced by a pedagogical ecology fixated on grades and professor receptions, to the work of the course generally and Ratcliffe's theories of rhetorical listening in particular. What is compelling about this moment is that Caroline is making knowledge for herself because she is making knowledge *about* herself, both as a tutor and how her practices relate to her various identities.

Georgia

Georgia is a junior, Early Education major. Her program of study is regulated by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in order to ensure that she passes the qualifying Praxis exam to become a licensed teacher. She is also quite active in political communities on campus and is an officer in our Young Democrats organization. Initially, she was a French tutor with our peer tutoring program but decided to become a writing consultant as she heard the conversations in and around the shared space with the writing center about literacy practices and supporting student-writers. Based on classroom conversations, there seems to be a significant difference in how we talk about writing and literacy in ENG 207 and the writing center as opposed to what she studies in her major.

In Georgia's reflection, she often frames her response from a collective standpoint of "we", implicating her classmates as well as herself with regards to their initial responses by such phrases as "many of my classmates" or "we made no consideration." Second, she uses a series of passive verbs that situate her and the class as tractable: "Upon the first time I was presented with the question…" I choose the word tractable intentionally, as the denotation of this word suggests a person (or group) that is easy to influence or control. Her reflection is imbued with a sense of the passive collective:

> Many of my classmates who were presented with the same question came up with similar responses. We focused mainly on the audience and when we did acknowledge the writer's identity, we assumed they were a student or in a position which lacked power and would be subject to criticism from a professor whose [sic] grade it accordingly. We made no consideration to the writer's identity and the effect it would have on their ability to use this phrase. We did not consider how the writer's gender, race, or job/position could come into play. It could have been that we, college aged students, identified with the language M used and automatically assumed the writer was a comparable age and the piece in question would be fated by a professor and grade.

I find this verb *fated* an interesting position in her reflection as it seems to elide any agency a writer may have. Georgia signals towards the power dynamics present in higher education in her use of the concept of fate, as that points to a person's (i.e., the writer's) lack of control in an outcome. At this moment for Georgia, she is opting for a performative tutoring stance, as she locates authority with the instructor who will judge the writing through a particular set of standards that do not allow for a student to use expletives in what the institution might deem formal writing. Institutionally sanctioned writing also performs social and professional expectations.

As she works through her thoughts in the reflection, however, she pivots to an embodied tutoring stance and considers her (and the class's) first response through the lens of Krista Ratcliffe's theory on rhetorical listening. Her opening response implicates the entire class not only in the power dynamics of higher education but also suggests a pattern that seems to reflect deficit model thinking that has long plagued our education system. Deficit model thinking is steeped in the problematic notions that “some students struggle because they lack things that good teachers should pour into their heads” (Roberts-Miller). A version of the Freirean banking model where the teacher deposits knowledge into the student’s brain, this deficit model is more harmful in that the knowledge in need of being acquired is based on what a student lacks and not just what they need to know. It is inherently imbued with biases that are informed by racism, misogyny, classism, and ableism. Georgia writes:

> Or, it could have been a lack of thinking within the rhetorical bounds of the theory we have study [sic] this semester in preparation for being writing tutors. [...] Our shortcomings in analyzing this question as rooted in a lack of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening as “a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in cross-cultural exchanges” (1). Our initial responses with heavy focus on the audience and assumption the writer was not in a position of power in respect to the writing were not formulated with this rhetorical listening ear. They lacked the perspective of the writer’s identity and how their gender and race would add dimensions to the question.

After reflecting on her initial reaction, she connects that material from ENG 207 would have asked her to take an open stance toward Dr. McKoy’s question, which may have helped guide her to a response that supported Dr. McKoy’s decision absent the need to perform toward specific institutional standards or for a grade. Interestingly, in her reflection, Georgia enacts the very guilt/blame logic (“the writer’s identity and how their gender and race would add dimensions to the question”) that Ratcliffe posits is one of the barriers that maintains the “dearth of discursive possibilities either for articulating intersecting identifications of gender and race or for promoting cross-cultural dialogues” (3). I suggest that in Georgia’s enactment of and reflection on the class’s original response, she articulates a guilt/blame logic through which her reflections brought her to a more embodied stance. By the end of her reflection, Georgia asserts that the writing center is a space where multiple “discourses intersect,” and student-tutors will need to be intentional in balancing between them to support the writer’s agency.

Alex

Alex is a senior, Creative Writing major with a minor in Professional Writing & Rhetoric. In her writing throughout the semester, she has pointed to the impact her neurodivergency has had on her learning and literacy practices. Three key moves that Alex makes in her reflection are her connection of Dr. McKoy’s word choice to disrupt expectations of scholarly writing, explicitly naming the practice of rhetorical listening as foundational to her tutoring practices, and the demonstrable absence of concern for the writer’s grades or a professor’s evaluation. Her reflection is one of two with the highest number of references to the writer’s agency and power in language choices. Of particular interest is her connection to the writer’s ability to use language—in this case an expletive—to frustrate the expectations of academic discourse as a means for challenging its hierarchical nature.

Alex, however, like Georgia, is an outlier on the scatter plot as she enacts the performative tutoring stance more often and to a more visible degree than any of the other student-tutors. Alex' performative tutoring stance is more manifest in the manner of her tone and style. Her response has the most direct addresses to Dr. McKoy, at least in terms of her voice in the reflection. This move does not surprise me for two central reasons; her self-disclosure as neurodivergent in combination with her creative writing major suggests that she might take the directions of the assignment literally and proceed with them in mind[21]. Her text offers several playful moments of direct address to Dr. McKoy that depicts a performance and a performative tutoring stance. The performance manifests in her use of kitschy words such as “fiddle” to her making a pun out of Dr. McKoy’s original text by remarking that she hopes she hasn’t “fucked [her] up further,” which seems to fluctuate between sincere to cheeky to defensive. The performative tutoring stance is carried consistently through the reflection. She opens with a defense of her original response to the question:

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[21] The trait of literal-mindedness in people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has long been promoted but is also highly contested. Information about ASD and neurodivergency continues to expand such that previous understandings of ASD traits are shifting and highly contingent to individuals. Recent scholarship supports the possibility of my claim asserting literal-mindedness remains a part of the development of executive functioning for people with ASD. See: Vicente, Agustin, and Ingrid L. Faulkum. "Accounting for the Preference for Literal

> When I was first introduced to your tweet, I read it anonymously where your name and credentials were not attached to it. You were not a rhetorician to me but a student asking for advice in their paper. I responded to that imaginary student: “Given an academic audience, the explicit diction here wouldn’t fly very well. BUT writing doesn’t always have to compromise the writer’s voice and clarity of argument. As long as the article provides sufficient evidence for and is related to the quote, yes, the title would then be made appropriate.” Having approved your tweet in this way – not mixing myself up into your ethos and clear rhetorical mastery above myself – I hope that I’ve answered your question, the one posed by the ever-present student inside you. No, I don’t want to change my advice to you even when give – or I should say *especially* when given – your credentials. I should not and will not treat your potential title to a scholarly text directed at your peers ANY differently that [sic] I would treat one of my peer’s class essay written for our peers or a lone professor. In these contexts we are the same, writers and tutors navigating the writing space, a space which tries its best to be absent of hierarchal [sic] principles and the tyranny of titles.

She maintains this line of thinking throughout her reflection concluding with:

> And since it’s the subject of an academic paper, we first think what the other scholars will think. I said “the explicit diction here wouldn’t fly very well,” but I did not say it “wouldn’t fly at all.”

In ENG 207, we spend a good deal of time reconciling ourselves to the reality that even as we try to enact practices that eschew oppression, we are also complicit in a system (i.e., higher education) that is imbued with the very oppression with which we seek to disrupt. Even while Alex maintains that her original response was effective, she points out that same response still

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Meanings in Autism Spectrum Conditions." *Mind & Language*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2021, pp. 119-140, https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12371.

offered the writer the option to use the title as offered in that she was only pointing out a possible consequence while still leaving room for some audiences to accept the unconventional title.

Tutor Community Identification

At the local level of the classroom ecology, I found subtle distinctions in how the student-tutors were understanding these concepts of community of practice and discourse community and how the student-tutors related to each depending on the point they were making. While the one shared attribute that discourse communities and communities of practice have is shared goals, they do not necessarily share values, which is a key distinction for my project. For my purposes, I labeled the textual data within the reflection to a discourse community code when the student signaled the broader expertise of the field of rhetorical studies. The code of community of practice emerged as student-tutors referenced their own local practice, which aligned with the shared values of the class. Anna, Amaya, and Jocelyn's reflections suggest some complex ways that both the discourse community and the community of practice informed their understanding of their learning. All three students—Anna, Amaya, and Jocelyn—are PWR majors or minors, which means they have spent significant time studying the rhetorical theories of the discipline, with ENG 207 being one of several courses they are required to take.

Anna

Anna is a Professional Writing and Rhetoric major with a minor in Marketing. She changed her major to PWR from Marketing as a first-year student after learning about the major in her First-Year Writing Course. Her instructor for FYW is a PWR faculty member and as such introduces and uses rhetorical theory in her FYW courses. Anna was drawn to the languaging aspects of PWR as opposed to the business/corporate aspects of the Marketing curriculum.

Often, in her class discussions and her reflective writing, Anna articulates a relational ethos that positions her as a partner in learning with both her classmates and her peers.

In reading through her final reflection, I expected to see that relational ethos evidence through references of her community of practice. Holistically, her thoughts reflected an orientation more towards a discourse community, but she maintains her relational stance with Dr. McKoy, referring to her as “fellow rhetor.” By naming Dr. McKoy as a fellow rhetor, Anna associates herself with Dr. McKoy and the larger discourse community. The word rhetor is specific to rhetorical studies and not as often used in the context of the writing center lexicon.

Tracking as many of her classmates do, however, Anna also makes assumptions about Dr. McKoy’s context in alluding to the “formal setting” of Dr. McKoy’s paper. While her classmates signaled the formal setting to the hierarchical context of the university, Anna’s reflection not only presents the codes of community of practice and discourse community simultaneously, but she also comingles them:

> I thought in a formal setting, this may be difficult to get people to support it because it shows disregard of formality [and] it doesn’t come off as professional simply because most scholar [sic] or formal writing doesn’t have explicit language.
>
> By focusing on the expletive, I initially thought a student would title this as they express anger and emotion towards a specific topic. My assumptions had made me think the title is represented to an older audience. My identity has shifted on this topic once I realized you are a rhetor and professor because I could understand a different perspective of maybe why you want to use this language towards a text.
>
> The language ***we*** use represents a certain message the author is portraying (emphasis added).

As I consider this portion of Anna’s reflection, I notice that initially she uses first person pronouns to describe her immediate reaction of coupling formality and professionalism. This coupling could indicate either the local community of practice established in the classroom or the broader understanding of the discourse community for rhetorical studies. Next, she recognizes her focus on the expletive, which in most academic settings would be unexpected; in this moment, she signals multiple power dynamics manifest in pedagogical ecologies that drive how students show up in classes and possibly impact their learning. I read this thought to be Anna’s understanding of herself within the classroom community of practice context where we have spent multiple weeks acknowledging and complicating these power dynamics extant both the larger US educational ecology, the Queens educational ecology, and our classroom ecology. Later, she repositions herself within the local community of practice by identifying with the writer as a fellow student. Also, she alludes to a power dynamic constructed in our expectations around age when she assumes the audience to be “older.”

Her perspective shifts once aware of Dr. McKoy’s identity as both a professor and a rhetorician. Here, Anna leans into the broader discourse community, affiliating herself with that community and Dr. McKoy. The final sentence of this passage suggests that Anna recognizes herself in both the community of practice and the discourse community as she claims a shared positionality of the third person plural “we.” If one of my goals for student learning (whether tacit or explicit) is that they learn to see themselves as part of the disciplinary community, Anna demonstrates that understanding.

In my initial readings of Anna’s reflection, I considered her as identifying more with the larger discourse community of rhetorical studies. This identification is not bad per se, but it might have indicated the learning goals for ENG 207 as the classroom ecology was being overshadowed by those of her PWR major. While ENG 207 is one of the core courses for the major, the pedagogical goals of this classroom ecology move beyond the broad or public goals of a discourse community toward the community of practice goal of shared values (Johns 52). The distinction I am attempting to make is that while Anna’s feeling of a sense of belonging to the discourse community of rhetorical studies is important to her learning as a PWR major, her sense of belonging to the community of practice of our ENG 207 class is important to her praxis as a tutor. Ann Johns claims that “communities of practice are seen as complex collections of individuals who share genres, language, values, concepts, and ‘ways of being’” (52). It is the phrase “ways of being” that matters here. A community of practice works on the more local level that can attend to the local ethos of a writing center so that the shared values of the program are manifest when a tutor has a session with a student-writer.

Amaya

Similar to Anna, Amaya found her way to the PWR major via her first-year writing course. Her original plan was to major in a STEM field with a possible minor in political science. She, too, is active on campus in campus political organizations and is public about her progressive stance on a myriad of topics from reproductive rights to issues facing queer folks. She is a Presidential Scholar, which is the highest scholarship offered by Queens and covers her full tuition.

While Anna’s reflection tacitly points to various power dynamics within the pedagogical ecology of education such as academic hierarchy or age, Amaya’s reflection more explicitly takes on the ways that academic ecologies continue to uphold hegemonic systems of power through writing practices imbued with dominant language ideology, which “is a belief that places a colonial vision/version of language above all others, if not ideologically, definitely practically” (Young and Martinez, as quoted in Lippi-Green, p. 199). Often, academic writing is at best a nebulous concept and at its worst simply code for Standardized English. One of the elements shared across pedagogical ecologies within the context of the United States is the premise that academic writing as an entity can be learned, taught, and evaluated objectively through regulated and homogenized assessment tools. Johns proffers that “many faculty believe that there is a general academic English as well as a general set of critical thinking skills and strategy for approaching texts” (56). The curriculum for ENG 207 attempts to disrupt this framing for student-tutors so that their praxis for working with writers is less complicit with the hegemonic system even while it can never be completely separated.

Using a composite of arguments about “textual practices” from scholars who have studied academic communities, Johns compiles a list of the observations made about “the nature, values, and practices in general expository academic prose” (58). My experience in the writing center as both a tutor and director confirm that all ten of these observations about academic writing are expectations that many faculty have toward student writing and tend to be grounded in Western beliefs of how knowledge should be presented from notions about objectivity to adherence to genre expectations. To make tangible the learning Amaya is expressing, I am going to focus only on one tenet: “Texts should display a vision of reality shared by members of the particular discourse community to which the text is addressed (or the particular faculty member who made the assignment)” (Johns 61). For student-tutors, this expectation for academic writing potentially puts the goals of a discourse community in tension with the shared values of our writing center community of practice.

Amaya’s response mirrors some of the moves that Anna made in that she moves between identification within both the broader discourse community of rhetorical studies and the community of practice of our ENG 207 class. She, like Anna, has several moments where she is operating within both understandings of these communities simultaneously. However, Amaya is more explicit in naming how her initial response operates from the influence of conditioning she acquired since starting her education and the ideas we explored in ENG 207:

> We have spent the semester pushing against a university hierarchy, yet, when it came practicing this, we fell short. I place value in education, which is positive until it effects [sic] how receptive I am to others' writing. My opinion of the tweet, and the suggested title, should not change after author identity is revealed. Rather, in studying rhetoric, my ultimate concern should be attempting to learn from what someone else is daring to write. In rhetorical studies, we are often tasked with situating ourselves around an audience or being the audience to rhetoric ourselves. We adopt this great weight attached to "who will be reading this and what will they think." Especially as university students concerned with our GPA.
>
> If we claim to be writers and rhetoricians, we are tasked with constantly employing openness to those around us no matter their background, or our potential bias against them. We are not truly employing rhetorical listening if we only provide support for an expletive in writing if the person is educated enough. It goes beyond just "saying a bad word." What profound ideas do we push aside until societal norms give us the green light to accept it?
>
> Our silence is rhetoric. What is said by saying nothing at all? What meaning is lost? Our resistance to an expletive points to the way we still bend [sic] the system we are situated within. Writing, and therefore writing centers, must be a place of negotiation amongst differences, no erasure (Davila 2). We must be concerned with why it's being used. [...] If something's got someone fucked up, maybe we should all be paying closer attention to it [sic] determining whether or not it aligns with our preconceived notion of academics.

Amaya makes some significant connections here not only between the larger ecology of the university and its system of student ranking and the practices we aspire to in the writing center ecology. She moves between the discourse community in her identification as "rhetoricians" and weaves in Krista Ratcliffe's theory about rhetorical listening as a stance for cross-cultural communication as proof that she belongs to this discourse community. Yet, she leverages the shared value of questioning institutional hierarchy established in our classroom ecology to challenge not only the Queens institutional ecology but also the rhetorical practice of establishing ethos through credentialing. Amaya's vision of reality differs drastically from the visions of her discourse community and her educational ecology of Queens. How would Amaya's thinking be captured in a long form research essay that insisted on that shared vision of reality? Particularly, if that vision was predetermined by the faculty member giving the assignment who also shares the prescriptive expectations for academic writing that attempts to present writing as wholly unconnected with the student's identities and social locations. Johns explains that "literacy faculty are most often interested in processes and understandings, in developing students' metacognition and metalanguages" (61). Amaya is asking questions of her own response; this critical awareness of her own moves illustrates how her metacognition would inform her tutoring practices to create a culture of negotiating difference and not moving toward erasure. This line of thinking is what I hope to engender.

Jocelyn

Jocelyn is a PWR major and the only participant who identifies as biracial, and her reflection felt markedly different from her classmates. She explicitly names her biracial status in connection with her "mental disorder" and the ways that these identities have sometimes needed to be denied or hidden "in order to fit in" (Jocelyn). This identity marker seems to be a factor in the patterns she began to see in both her response to Dr. McKoy and then with other student-writers she has supported. As with the other students, her initial consideration was for context and audience. She reflects that the reveal of Dr. McKoy's credentials and identity did impact her perceptions of Dr. McKoy's question. Jocelyn writes:

> I think the most problematic opinion I had was about the audience and their opinions. As a black-presenting, mixed woman, who suffers from a mental disorder [...] I've had to put certain parts of my identity on the sidelines in order to fit in. So, my first concern about the proffered title was whether the audience would be willing to listen to a piece title this way rather than what the author felt best worked for them. This concern reminds me of Bethany Davila opens up her essay "Rewriting Race in the Writing Center" discussing. Davila introduces her essay by describing how she has to become homogenized so that she can 'belong' among the other experts in the field of writing centers [...]. She also discusses how, as a tutor, she encouraged students to assimilate as well without

> understanding that she was actually abetting the higher educational system in erasing any real diversity within an [sic] institution.
>
> My identity as a mixed person in the current racial climate of the United States has shaped me in such a way that I have been unconsciously compromising parts of myself to be accepted for years. I've begun to notice that I've been applying this to other people as well even when I'm tutoring so that my first concern is audience.

The first thing I notice in Jocelyn's reflection are the intersectional identities that she names and embodies. Caroline is the only other tutor who explicitly references her social location as a factor in her tutoring practices. When the other students pointed to concerns with the audience, they generally associated the audience with professors and issues around grades. They were acknowledging a tendency towards performing as a good student. Jocelyn's framework seems to be a broader sense of audience and frames her thoughts more around the reception of a more ambiguous audience. In her entire reflection, she never uses the word writer but uses "author" instead. I read this move as the influence of her other major, which is creative writing. Those courses would have encouraged her to think about the audience more broadly and not necessarily tied to institutional hierarchies. She does, however, indicate that her first reaction "showed a lack of trust in the audience." None of the other student-tutors introduce connections to trusting the audience, even the other creative writing student, Alex.

Further, Jocelyn explicitly points to Davila's ideas about belonging to a larger discourse community, but nowhere in her reflection were there references that indicated that she felt an affiliation with the discourse community of rhetoric and writing. While she does make two references to her classmates, she never overtly indicates any sense of shared values. In fact, at one point, she seems to perceive her initial response as different from her classmates when, in fact, she too simply alluded to the need to consider context and audience as her classmates did. Even though she shares multiple demographic points with her peers—major/curriculum, gender, academic success as indicated by her achievement of the Dean’s List, accessibility—the one demographic unique to her is her biracial identity. The reading by Davila encouraged her to consider the ways that she might have “been unconsciously compromising parts of [herself] to be accepted” and how she observed that she had “been applying this to others people as well even when [she’s] tutoring” (Jocelyn). This connection seems significant for Jocelyn not only as a tutor but as a human being. I do not mean to suggest that any choices I made in the curriculum may have influenced her sense of belonging or not belonging, but it does encourage me to think about ways I might be invitational in my pedagogies since my own social location is marked by hegemonic identities including whiteness and perceived able-bodiedness.

What Does This Mean for the Classroom Ecology?

My experience in analyzing these data through an ecological thinking framework enables me to highlight specific thoughts where student-tutors went from managers of data (in the form of course content) to makers of knowledge. What I take away from these data is that the process of reflection by student-tutors on their choices gave them an opportunity to wrestle with the tacit reactions they made, to shift them to explicit responses, and to explain why that shift matters. A key factor in this critical thinking process is that they put the theoretical sources and class discussions into conversation with data (their own choices) for a chance through which to apply the theory.

My understanding of this shift is further deepened through my intimate understanding of the other pedagogical and personal life ecologies in which they exist. While both the student-tutors and I understood how the course materials shaped their initial reactions and reflective responses, I also noted their identities, majors, campus activities, and other demographic information that may have influenced their thinking.

Understanding that their tutoring stances were always in flux as they worked through their thoughts in relation to the course material allows me to encourage a capacious understanding of what tutoring practices are and how they are enacted. The usual grading via rubrics assignments or program assessments of the program could not have offered me this insight. Such insight could only come from the coding of their reflections to produce evidence for what had been anecdotal until the analysis. Additionally, this analysis is a direct answer to McKinney's call to refute grand narratives about writing centers so that we are directing and planning strategically from an ecological understanding of center work.

Further, my pedagogies should also be capacious to allow the student-tutors to respond in ways that honor their own learning experiences (past and current) and social locations. Said capaciousness for both tutoring and teaching practices ought not be unexamined. As an instructor, assessing the student-tutors' work in an ecological thinking framework mediates the Westernized epistemological ways of knowing in which students have heretofore been conditioned generating opportunities for other ways of knowing and being. Ways that recognize that our students come to us with myriad other knowledges that may or may not augment, influence, complicate, etc. what the classroom goals for learning entail. The mediation occurs ecologically when I constantly recalibrate my classroom ecology to account for the real humans coming into class and make time and space for their always-in-flux ways of knowing. What this chapter adds to my project is the tangible evidence that tutors became aware of how their responses were conditioned by other educational ecologies and that these critical thought processes can be made visible. More importantly, this learning represents knowledge production by the students who took information (the course materials and class discussions) and data (their own moves) and reflected on their relationships. In this moment, they went from data managers to knowledge producers.

CHAPTER IV: THE WRITING CENTER ECOLOGY

Being a writing center director requires being comfortable in in-between spaces because that is your default state. Between the institution's policies and your center's goals. Between being part of the institutional ecology but also hovering at its margins. You move between roles that all answer to each other but with distinct purposes and goals. Tutors live in the space between as well; although they are students, they are aligned with the institution through their work. They are neither novice nor expert. In chapters 2 and 3, my goal was to consider how my choices in my role of teacher informed (or not) the learning that tutors did as they learned to support student writers. For this chapter, I am more interested in understanding the tutors' praxis, so I am shifting from the space of teacher to the space of director. Previously, I concluded that learning and unlearning occurred for tutors in the ENG 207 course they took. Moreover, I verified that critical thinking had occurred for the tutors in their final assignment reflections. That critical thinking was in direct response to reflecting on the moves they made in a real-time, situated tutoring scenario and the impact of a host of factors including their identity, their schooling, their understanding of literacy practices, and the relationship of these factors in their own moves. What I learned was that tutors shifted roles from data managers to knowledge producers.

Tutors are, however, not merely engaging in knowledge production; it is ethical[22] knowledge production because they gained a perspective about the impact of their practices on students countering the axiomatic idea inherent in our US schooling that "a single literacy […] should be made available to all" and with "universal coverage" (Geisler, *Academic Literacy* 3).

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[22] A recent collection addresses ethics, rhetoric, and writing pedagogy. See *After Plato: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing*, edited by John Duffy and Lois Agnew, 2020.

The precept of a single literacy promotes “elite standards to an educational system” regarding literacy practices (3). Some writing scholars such as Greenfield, Camarillo, and others argue that writing center’s stance of neutrality actually reinforces this elitism. They suggest that writing centers must create their infrastructure to map how such liberatory moves are already evidenced and could be expanded upon. Ideally, the tutors’ counter this single elite literacy with ethical knowledge production informed by a curriculum of inclusion (ENG 207) and a culture of learning (the writing center). What does that ethical knowledge production look like in real time as these tutors work with student-writers? The ecology of the writing center is concerned with the praxis—the doing—of peer tutoring. Praxis contributes to an “ongoing cultivation of a learning culture” for all of us concerned in this work (Geller et al. 56). To understand the tutors’ praxis more fully, in this chapter, I review session notes of tutors to consider to what extent their praxis reflects the knowledge production they engaged from their tutor education. In other words, I am asking and analyzing the question: What can I learn about the tutors’ praxis from the notes they capture after the tutoring session?

Praxis is not a singularity; it is consistent action towards the next right move based on the contingencies of the situation. As such, praxis is the product of practical reason defined as “the general human capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what one is to do” (Wallace). Practical reason (or deliberation) for the Greeks was a reflective stance not only about what actions one ought to take, but also what consequences those actions may enact (Wallace). I distinguish my treatment of tutoring practices as a type of praxis and not as a study about the transfer of learning. Transfer of learning has long been engaged within the discourses of education, composition, and writing studies. The instructor-scholars behind *The Meaningful Writing Project* frame their research narratives on transfer as “what students bring to a new learning situation, or, [...] how prior learning does and does not impact new learning" (Eodice et al. 81). They point to Juan Guerra's claim that institutions have attended more to "learning outcomes [while] generally ignoring incomes–i.e., what students bring with them when they come to school" (296). Because transfer of learning is a complex process that also requires ecological analysis, I am unable to take it up within the scope of this project. However, I do affirm that some transfer of learning by the tutors happened.

My aims are more to consider how the theories and strategies about tutoring and literacy manifest as—or not—praxis in their sessions. The idea of praxis I have adopted as a framework in this chapter relates to the Greek concept of praxis as practical action that is "not random action [but] is action 'with regard to human goods'" defined by Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Grundy 62). For the Greeks, the concept of praxis would not be merely practical judgment but a practical judgment "to act appropriately, truly and justly in a social-political situation" (Carr and Kemmis 17). Given the established position that all language is political because it is informed by culture and identity, the ethos of any writing center director concerned with the ethics of writing center work requires her close attention to the choices the writing tutors make as they work with a diverse body of learners. I am such a writing center director (WCD). I am a "boundary [worker]" aiming for that culture of learning within an institutional, educational ecology that "explicitly or implicitly values certainty and skills that have already been attained and mastered" (Geller et al. 70). As I took up in the previous chapter, outcomes assessment (OA) makes for a mechanism to measure for certainty (read mastery) and skills. Tutors are making choices based not only on what they encountered in ENG 207 but also the conditioning they have received in hegemonic educational systems. Without including the effects of that conditioning, I cannot understand their praxes meaningfully, while, both the tutors and the student-writers are learning in an environment that promotes what Paul Kameem has coined as a “pedagogy of display” whereby students reproduce the data/information deemed important by the teacher (or as determined by a curriculum) in summative assessments that are not mutually constructed knowledge (175). Kameem, in line with John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks, proposes a “pedagogy of construction,” which is knowledge that “has the prospect for being constituted mutually in the process of the interaction” (175). I cannot conceive of a more apt description of my goals for the learning in ENG 207 or for the work we do in the writing center. In an effort to determine if the content of the course work in ENG 207 informed the tutors’ praxis, I turn to the session notes that tutors write up after working with student-writers to see what rhetorical and epistemological moves the tutors made in the session’s interactions.

Research Methods, Process, and Analysis of Data

Recruitment and demographics for the participants were outlined in chapter 3. I used the same cohort of students and downloaded the session notes for each of their tutoring sessions from our scheduling and tracking software, WCOnline.[23] In this section, I describe the various data points that are collected by the system to explain what information it gathers, how it is used by the tutors, and how it is used by me as the WCD. Each data point helps to create a composite picture of the student and the writing activity.

System Registration Information

The registration questions collect data about student-users that may be relevant to a student’s literacy practices. The most direct way is through using student identification numbers to work with the Queens Office of Institutional Research (OIR) to determine demographic facts about our users. For example, the OIR can aggregate data to help me track student usage around retention and persistence success rates (i.e., students who make it to graduation) related to their use of the writing center. It offers a way to consider the potential contributions of writing center sessions for student GPAs. I am not making the claim that students who visit the writing center will graduate or have a higher GPA, but seeing trends that indicate this correlation provides me with evidence to support our program to senior administrators. However, more importantly to me as a director is to consider not only who is using our center but also who may not be and why. Our system collects information that may be important to our programming but not captured in other places on campus. One example is that our registration questions capture the students' home or first language. Currently, no other office (e.g., admissions, student life, academic advising) at the university is capturing this information. Yet, our student population has changed so significantly over the last 25 years that in 2013, Queens qualified for and received a $3.2 million grant from the Department of Education Title III to support our increasingly diverse student population. Understanding the student users of our writing center from the perspective of class standing to language use to age to race and gender helps me make more informed decisions about programming, tutor recruitment, and tutor education.

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[23] WCOnline is a subscription-based, scheduling software application that we use to schedule and track our writing center appointments. Some questions within the system are not used by the Writing Center but other academic programs for their scheduling and data collection purposes. As such, I do not consider these questions within the framework of this study.

Initially, student-users register with the system to establish an account. This registration page asks for information such as student identification numbers and home languages. From the student ID number, I can request other sorts of demographic information about the writing center's users from the Office of Institutional Research such as socioeconomic status, race, gender, etc. (See Table 7 for the registration questions for students establishing an account and Appendix C for a screen capture.) These questions are focused on student identity.

Student registration questions for establishing an account

Table 7. Student Registration Questions in WCOnline

Question	**Answer**	**Required**
1st Language or Home Language	Choices: English, Arabic, Chinese, Czech, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Shona, Turkish, Vietnamese, Other	Yes
Languages	Choices: English is my only language; English is one of my 1st languages; English is not my 1st language	Yes
Student ID Number	Completed by Student	Yes
User Type	Choices: Undergraduate; Post-Traditional; Graduate; Staff; Faculty	Yes

Appointment Scheduling Intake Questions

The appointment intake questions request information that facilitates the effectiveness of the session from two perspectives: the student-writer and the tutor. For the student-writer, the questions about the course and professor help us to ensure the student-writer is working with the correct tutor who may have disciplinary knowledge. The questions about who may have suggested our center and how well the student understands the assignment or material create opportunities for metacognitive thinking about their choices for setting the appointment and their own level of understanding. Finally, in an effort to help student-writers (and tutors) develop a vocabulary for talking about writing, the intake form provides a list of options for the appointment such as brainstorming, research support, reading comprehension, etc. In the recent past, the appointment intake language used by students overwhelmingly indicated a need for help with grammar and/or flow. By giving specific terminology to students such as brainstorming or thesis development, we hope to help students (both the student-writer and the tutors) develop a larger lexicon for talking about their writing in explicit ways. The challenge with nomenclature such as “grammar” and “flow” is that these words are so non-specific that they are useless for the student-writer, the tutor, and me. After student-writers have been prompted, they provide narrative descriptions of the priorities they want to address in the open-response question. The information provided orients the tutor in preparation of the session; it provides me a way to track trends in terms of writing support being requested and who is requesting support.

Next, the system captures data about the context of the appointment. These questions ensure that student-writers are working with the best tutor option for the writing context in which they are seeking help. For example, a student who needs help writing a literature review for their biology project would want to work with a tutor who is familiar with writing in the STEM fields. (See Table 8 for questions for setting an appointment in WCOnline and Appendix D for a screen capture.) These questions are centered on the context of the class and the assignment.

Table 8. Questions for Appointment Intake in WCOnline

Question/Information	**Answer Options**	**Required**
Course Name and Number	Drop-down menu: First Year Writing; Reading Support; Writing Consultation; Co-Working; Writing for History; Scientific Writing; Writing for Social Science	Yes
Meet Online?	Student indicates the modality of the appointment: Written	Yes

	Feedback (asynchronous) or Virtual (synchronous)	
Professor’s Last Name	Completed by Student	Yes
Class Standing	Drop-down menu: 1st Year, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Post Traditional, Graduate, Staff, Faculty	Yes
Who suggested you visit the Center	Drop-down menu: Professor, Professional Advisor, Faculty Advisor, WC Director, Peer, Tutor, Staff, Self	Yes
How well do you understand this material/assignment?	Drop-down menu: Beginning, Developing, Proficient	Yes
Choose appointment focus	Drop-down menu: Brainstorming, Thesis Development, Support Development, Organization/Structure, Understanding Professors Comments, Grammar/Mechanics, Documentation, Research Support, Reading Comprehension	Yes
List 2 priorities you would like to cover in this session?	Completed by student	Yes

Client Report Form- Post Session Ticket

Once a student-writer and tutor have a session, they complete a form to capture information about the session itself. In various writing centers, these forms are known by a variety of names such as tickets or session notes; WCOnline titles them Client Report Forms. In our writing center, we refer to them as tickets, though I believe the term session notes is a more accurate naming of the artifact.[24] The after-the-session questions are meant to track not only the usage date but also the details of the session itself. The required narratives should summarize what took place in the session and provide the student-writer with follow-up suggestions for revision. The purpose of this space is to continue supporting the student-writer's and the tutor's development of how to talk about writing, which is ideally informed by their session together. Additionally, it gives me, the WCD, a sense of what moves the tutor made to support (or hinder) the student-writer.

The final point of capturing data happens after the session has been completed. (See Table 9 for Post-session information about the appointment and Appendix D for a screen capture.) The tutor completes (most of) this information to report the particulars of the session.

Table 9. Questions for Client Report Form in WCOnline

Information Field	**Answer Option**	**Required**
Assignment/Material Specifics	Open text field completed by tutor	Yes
Course Number	Open text field completed by tutor	Yes
Professor's last name	Open text field completed by tutor	Yes
Student Post-Session Plan (Completed by Student)	Open text field completed by student[25]	No
Tutor Perception of student understanding of material	Drop-Down Menu: Beginning, Developing, Proficient	Yes

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[24] For the sake of readability in this chapter, I will alternate between ticket and session notes.

[25] The WC did not hold in-person appointments during this semester because of the global pandemic, so this field was either left blank or completed by the tutor with a directive for the writer's next steps.

Tutor Feedback on Session	Open text field completed by tutor	Yes

What the Data Does for Each Participant

The registration, appointment, and post-session questions (or data collection points) provide various constellations of information for all of the constituents in the ecology of the writing center, primarily student-writers, writing tutors, and the writing center administrators. In our context, each point in the system offers relevant information at each of these three information collection points. To assist in building the ecological connections between this information, the following section explicitly names what each data collection point records and how this information contributes to a more holistic understanding of the writing center ecology.

System Constraints and Affordances.

The material design of the software and the Client Report Form (post-session ticket) configuration generated from that software gives me significant flexibility about what I capture from the narrative of the session. The open space boxes labeled “Student Post-Session Plan (Completed by Student)” and “Tutor Feedback on Session” offer a dedicated place for both the student-writer and the tutor to reflect on the session. The direction for both spaces is minimal and is meant to provide space for a detailed narrative to be completed in whatever way the student-writer or tutor chooses. Both of these spaces offer me a rich source of data to interpret and to consider the moves the tutor is making and ideally what the student-writer might take away from the session as there is not a recording that captures the session in real time. The ticket is the most significant artifact we have of the session.

Session Notes: Context, Collection, and Significance

From the session notes in the fall of 2020, I collected information about the appointment particulars. The participants simultaneously take ENG 207 as they are actively tutoring student-writers. The pedagogy and assignments for the course are directly tied to the work they do in the writing center. Initially, they are limited to helping first-year writers and typically are scheduled alongside experienced tutors who provide support and guidance. For the fall of 2020, Queens offered all courses and university services in online modalities, as Charlotte was then seeing high concentrations of COVID-19 in our city and our county (Mecklenburg). Our senior leadership opted for this path based on a wide number of factors, not the least of which was watching the problematic situations arising at the larger state universities who were having to navigate repeated outbreaks. Writing center work at Queens has traditionally been face-to-face, so this policy, while welcome in terms of prioritizing safety from spread of the virus, meant I had to rethink and restructure our services, our training, and the coursework for ENG 207. We limited our sessions to synchronous (video) sessions and asynchronous (written feedback) sessions.

From an institutional perspective, the shift was not that difficult in the sense that we were equipped with the technology to conduct the video conferences. In terms of alternate opportunities for interaction, using a video conferencing platform impacted tutor-to-tutor interactions. The flexibility of the modality protected our health and created a more accessible program, but the constraints of this modality also necessarily impacted our interactions. The online modality excluded those embodied spaces where a learning environment is sustained by significantly reducing the amount of time the tutors had to interact in those parasession (in-between) spaces. I am using the word parasession to describe all of the social interactions that happen outside of the tutor-writer session such as the time between sessions or the time when tutors not currently in sessions can listen/observe a fellow tutor working with a student-writer. Without the access to the learning culture created by our “[exchange of] time and ideas and experiences” beyond the shared online class space, the coursework of ENG 207 became the most concentrated source for new tutors on how to support student-writers (Geller et al. 71). In a way, we (me and the tutors) were in-between spaces in a global in-between space created by the pandemic.

After collecting these narratives, I coded the data using the collated appointment information and the post-session ticket data. In the case where the session was asynchronous, the open text box for the student to enter their post-session plan was not completed by the student, as they were not physically present for the appointment. Also, as the sessions were done virtually during this particular semester, if there was a narrative in that box, I assumed it to be entered by the tutor and did not consider it as the student-writer’s thoughts in this analysis.

This cohort of six new tutors held 25 sessions with a variety of student-writers. Of those 25 sessions, 60% were supporting First-Year Writing and 40% were discipline specific writing covering such majors as Education, Communication, Literary Studies, History, Nursing, and Biology. Sixty-four percent of those sessions were first-year students; the remaining covered all the other student demographics: sophomore, junior, senior, post-traditional, and graduate. Of this group, 60% of the sessions were asynchronous and 40% were synchronous. This semester was also the first semester the writing center offered synchronous appointments. Recognition of the types of sessions discloses the impact on data in terms of limits. In this semester, tutors and student-writers could only interact in an online modality, which was abnormal for the writing center’s status quo. Such a radical shift in how sessions were offered may be part of the impact that created a smaller data pool, as fewer student-writers used our services, thus, producing fewer post-session tickets. Equally, I assume that the general upheaval in the world generally and particularly impacting the educational systems and spaces may have simply disrupted students' higher-order thinking. Or, it might be that instructors did a more thorough job of communicating expectations for writing assignments in the absence of in-person learning.

Content analysis as a methodology for "identifying, quantifying, and analyzing [...] specific words, phrases, concepts, or other observable semantic data in a text or body of texts with the aim of uncovering some underlying thematic or rhetorical pattern running through the texts" served to help me analyze the narratives as data points that may highlight a tutor's praxis, as they are written from the tutor perspective (Huckin 14). When these data points are considered through relational analysis, a type of content analysis, they can suggest praxis, which is determined not just by a listing of the moves the tutor made but by the relation of those moves to other parts of the tutors' and student-writers' ecologies. Relational analysis "identifies a number of concepts and then examines the relationships among them" (14). This more specific version of content analysis aligns with the ecological framework for this project, as it considers that "meaning is understood to derive from the relationship among concepts" (14). Using relational analysis supports an attempt to find the nexuses between the invisible conditioning associations of the various educational ecologies so that the connections are legible to me. Though this type of analysis does "[exercise] considerable subjectivity" in that I am making the judgment about the significance of the relationships, the purpose of this project is to help me come to understandings about what I think I am teaching and what that means for tutors in their writing sessions; this subjectivity is not problematic, as only the tutors and I share these experiences. Only the tutors and I are intimate with the context under exploration whereby I am looking for evidence suggesting "certain kinds of rhetorical action, discursive practices, [and] sociocultural patterning" (Huckin 16) Thus, using relational analysis aligns with my concept of praxis as an action informed by reflection concerning not only what to do but the consequences of the choices as they are being made.

Coding for Relationships

Because this project aims for an ecological understanding of the tutors' everyday moves, I chose to include the intake data that a student-writer provided when registering and setting up an appointment. I did not code these data points but read and considered them in relation to the narrative that the tutors completed after the session. Next, I identified the units of analysis, which are simply a "segment [of] the data [for] analysis" (Geisler, *Analyzing Streams* 29). In this case, I chose the narrative written by the tutor and any written feedback that the tutor provided directly on a paper or project if written feedback was requested. Cheryl Geisler describes this method as "[letting] each segment of the data suggest appropriate categories to describe what's happening with the phenomenon of interest" (29). These units were fairly uniform in size and tone and offered a way for emergent connections to take priority. The strongest evidence of the tutors' praxis as defined by the Greeks is suggested by the tutor praxis engaging both skill and strategy.

Both Skill and Strategy.

In the narratives, the emergent categories of skills and strategies appeared quickly and often (see Tables 10 and 11).

Table 10. Skills Named or Used in Ticket Narratives

Skills Named/Used	
Genre Awareness	Citations
Sentence Structure	Diction
Analysis	Transitions
Grammar/Mechanics	Conciseness
Tone	Clarity
Thesis/Claim Articulation	Organization/Structure
Audience Awareness	Development of Ideas/Argument

Instructor Expectations (Academic Literacy)	Paraphrasing
Research Literacy	Time Management

Table 11. Strategies Named or Used in Ticket Narratives

Strategies Named/Used	
Drafting	Sharing Insider Information/knowledge or Personal Experience
Repeating Appointments	Brainstorming
Revising texts/assignments	Rearranging or mapping the text
Outlining (pre-writing or reverse outlining)	Offering Feedback (Tutor)
Reading Out Loud	Utilizing Feedback (Professor)
Goal Setting	Collaborative Working/Revising (making meaning/understanding together)
Sharing Resources	Modeling
Naming (Genre, Rhetorical Moves)	Asking Open-Ended Questions
Adopting Rhetorical Grammar Strategies	

While not an exhaustive list, the variety and range of skills and strategies in this small sample are not surprising either. Given the nexus of processes such as cognitive functioning, navigation of university-level expectations for academic literacy, and identity and culture that converge in the act of writing, I expected to see a variety in each category. Both the skills and the strategies represent the various moves that student-writers must learn to make in the composing activities they attend in college. Most of the skills named or worked toward were the often-referenced skill sets that are expected in college-level work: diction, conciseness, clarity. Moreover, these skills and strategies are intimately connected with the elite literacy expected by instructors in higher education (many as defined by the Western understanding of rhetoric established by the 5th century Greeks). Some of the skills and strategies are more aligned with higher-order cognitive functions such as deep learning and critical thinking: development of ideas, analysis, research literacy.

Making the Praxis Visible Through Skills and Strategies

What is of great interest to me is how a tutor's praxis expresses the correlations and interactions between skills and strategies. This interdependence of skills and strategies operates in complex ways that may not present clearly or as interdependent in the static measures of OA. For the purposes of this chapter, I look to educational scholarship for distinguishing the terms "skills" and "strategies," which have historically become interchangeable in education scholarship. Peter Afflerbach et al. differentiate skills and strategies on the basis of student intention. Skills "operate without […] deliberate control or conscious awareness" on the part of the student while strategies are "deliberate [and] goal-directed" (368). Skills seem to signal some subconscious habit that has become internalized in which students make certain moves by muscle memory, as opposed to strategies which are conscious choices a student makes to enact a skill. An example from the writing center relates the ways that a writing tutor initiates contact with a new student-writer. In welcoming a new student and acknowledging their presence in the writing center space, the tutor enacts the skill of introduction. Offering a greeting and saying hello tends to be second nature in spaces where services are offered and a relational encounter is going to take place. This move of greeting represents the skill a tutor—particularly one who has been tutoring for a while—has developed to point of it being an unconscious move. Correspondingly, in an effort to establish trust and engender confidence in her abilities, a tutor who asks questions about the assignment and the professor and offers her own insider knowledge enacts a strategy. This move is conscious because the tutor's training has made her aware that student-writers often come to us with anxiety about being judged about their writing. Moreover, while she could use any number of ways to establish rapport with the student-writer, the rhetorical situation of a tutoring session invites her to use the introduction as a way to establish her own credibility not only as a tutor but also as someone outside the power differential of student and instructor. Finally, this conscious strategy of how to greet a student also gives the tutor more information to inform her next right move. We encounter these sorts of opening gestures every day from the receptionist at a doctor's office to the counter workers in civic offices; often, such gestures disclose something about how our interactions with others will go.

These examples reflect Kristie Fleckenstein's theories on embodied literacies and the way that "we might use language to define imagery […] but that language is born in imagery, catching us in a round robin of image and word creating each other as they enfold each other" (33). The interrelation of skills and strategies is analogous to her theory on double-mapping or "deliberately layering different ways of making sense of reality on one another" (137). Beginning with the skill of introduction and moving seamlessly to the strategy of asking questions, the tutors were double mapping literacy practices with student-writers by not only alternating between skills and strategies but also by connecting them.

What follows are several examples of how skills and strategies arise in a tutor's praxis. These categories and codes create rich opportunities to consider how strategies build these skills and the ways in which a tutor might move between stances towards strategies and skills to both answer the student-writer's purpose for the session while maintaining an inclusive stance supported by their own tutor education.

Caroline and Making Grammar Matter

In a session with a first-year writer, Caroline uses the strategy of naming to address the writer's priorities around thesis development and supporting that thesis. One of her marginal comments reads:

> In your essays [sic] current structure, you are utilizing what's called the "5-paragraph essay" commonly taught in K-12 writing classes. It is a great foundation for an academic

> paper because it coaches you through the basics of an essay’s structure, intro, body, conclusion. This is working well for you. Be sure to state your thesis clearly (which you have) and introduce the evidence you will expand upon within your body paragraphs.
>
> I can tell that in this paragraph you are utilizing character analysis to lay evidence of both a theme within this work and the work as a rhetorical analysis of war. This is [sic] excellent start. Continue refining the structure of this paragraph. Consider paraphrasing to reduce the choppy cuts into direct quotes from your analysis. Try reading aloud to understand the flow better.

She begins with naming the type of genre the student-writer seems to be using, which invites him to draw on past writing experiences from high school. Moreover, she specifically names for him why this genre is appropriate for this assignment in that it provides him with a tangible structure he can use to support his argument. She names his moves (“you are utilizing character analysis”) and affirms his choices (“which you have”) to confirm the clarity of his thesis. Only then does she begin to offer suggestions for revision. She does not just say you need to revise for choppiness; she gives two distinct strategies that he can use to address the choppiness: paraphrasing and reading out loud. This advice is by no means universally helpful; for example, reading out loud as a strategy is not always helpful for English Language Learners. Caroline also uses the vague word “flow” to encourage what I assume should be a nod towards coherence.

In other comments, Caroline names the punctuation that the student uses (an em dash) and directs him to “use it sparingly,” which could potentially be received by the writer as a criticism of his choice. Caroline, however, not only affirms his “clever” use of the em dash at this point in his text, but she also creates a relational moment when she writes: “...often we utilize Em [sic] dashes in place of parentheses, commas, colons, or quotation marks to set off a word or clause—but most importantly to add emphasis!” This moment in her response is doing multiple types of work. First, the use of the first-person plural “we” establishes a connection between her and the student-writer through the strategy of sharing insider information. By referring to the “we,” she is positioning him as a part of the scholarly discourse community to which she belongs as well—student. Finally, her own use of the em dash to create emphasis about how to create emphasis is a playful confirmation that he—the student-writer—is making a good choice.

Caroline’s affirming comments and suggestions are a strategy for validating this student’s prior writing knowledge (i.e., incomes) but also offers epistemological support for a student who may feel overwhelmed by the expectations for college-level writing. So often, college narratives and assumptions about getting support from the writing center assumes the student-writers’ need for remediation. Caroline built trust with the student not just through skill of using affirming language but also through a strategy of trusting his ability as a writer. By using these double-mapped skills and strategies, she builds relationship, welcoming him into the academic discourse community of scholars through her use of the first-person pronoun “we” and her confidence that he would want to understand how that particular punctuation works and his ability to understand the rules for its use.

Amaya- The Radical Praxis of Naming

Amaya offered feedback on a rhetorical analysis assignment in an asynchronous session. This session is the second session with Amaya following up the student’s revisions from their first session. The strongest evidence I have for the effectiveness of Amaya’s tutoring praxis is that this student returned for multiple appointments, indicating Amaya’s internalization of specific training to encourage student-writers to see writing as an iterative process. My experience tells me that when a tutor is not meeting the needs of the student-writer, repeat appointments do not tend to happen.

The student-writer lists the following priorities for the session: help understanding the professor's feedback, support with mechanics, MLA formatting. Amaya does address some lower-order concerns such as mechanics but first addresses the comments made by the professor.[26] Amaya's narrative gives a basic overview of her interaction with the writer's paper:

> April switched from a synchorus [sic] to asynchorus [sic] appointment today. I left comments on her paper with a small note at the end. Her analysis has grown since our first meeting! The quotes she's chosen match very well with her introduction and thesis. Her introduction is solid, as well as organization. I left notes on some MLA formatting as she had asked for help with that. As her professor had mentioned, I encouraged April to push away from plot summary in order to highlight and showcase her excellent analysis!

The narrative is not overly detailed; however, the marginal notes that Amaya made on the student-writer's paper indicate a deeper engagement with both the student-writer and the text through strategies meant to help the student-writer consider meaningful revisions and treating the paper as a "whole discourse" and not the sum of its parts (Sommers 151).

When the student-writer depicts a character in ways that are coded towards dominant narratives about criminality and race, Amaya writes:

> be careful with generalizations of groups of people, if you want to use a concept like this, just be sure to explain what you mean a bit further! are [sic] you saying he wanted to go to prison? or just that it allowed him to removed [sic] himself from the world of crime?

Here you see Amaya using the open-ended question strategy not only to push the student-writer towards a more detailed formulation of her claim but also to challenge the student-writer's uncritical assumptions and warn her about the pitfalls of generalizing groups of people. She is asking the student-writer to think about what she is trying to claim, and Amaya is asking her to be more precise with her thinking. Amaya would have been concurrently exploring her own subject positionalities and identities in ENG 207 based on the date of the session. We had already discussed the gatekeeping aspects of language through dominant language ideology and then moved towards the ways our own subject positionalities bias us in material ways. Amaya understood that the student-writer's ethos might suffer by such a blatant overgeneralization. It might have been useful for Amaya to explain the reason behind her feedback, but, at the very least, Amaya encourages the writer to be more conscious of the ways she frames her argument. Amaya inserts an additional comment at the end of the paragraph that reads:

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[26] The terminology lower-order concern (LOC), medium-order concern (MOC), and higher-order concern (HOC) are standard lexicon in writing center practice. They indicate opportunities for revision that a tutor might indicate to student-writers based on a hierarchy of priorities not necessarily a hierarchy of importance.

> in this paragraph, you seem to be focusing on the idea of absent parents? and the harm Khalil is causing others and himself. In the first part, you are offering summary of the novel, and as your professor said, you do not need to summarize the plot. Rather, focus on your quotes and analysis of those quotes [sic]

By explicitly pointing out to the writer the moves she is making within the body of the paragraph, Amaya invites the writer to think more deeply (i.e., the problematic nature of the overgeneralization) and to revise the paragraph to more closely engage the purpose of the assignment (i.e., making the student-writer's moves visible to herself). Amaya uses the strategies of naming and open-ended questions to help the student build writing skills such as audience awareness and analysis.

I call the praxis of both these tutors radical in the same understanding that Laura Greenfield offers in her text, *Radical Writing Center Praxis*. Greenfield challenges writing center folks to "recognize our daily activities as directly tied up in the stakes of ensuring the future of life on the planet" (9). Her call goes on:

> I challenge both the conservative values that have rendered writing centers complicit actors in numerous systems of oppression but also the failure of dominant liberal writing center practices to engage in transformative change making. Indeed, I argue that when relativism and neutrality are held up as virtues, the liberal practices that emerge serve to facilitate the very injustices many writing center people in theory despise. (9)

Amaya’s explicit caution about the generalization of whole groups not only asks the student-writer to consider the preciseness of her claim but also challenges what could potentially be an unconscious bias under which the student-writer seems to be operating. This one small but clear choice by the tutor in the everyday practice of giving feedback has the potential to be transformative for this student. Moreover, it might possibly operate to reaffirm Amaya’s own knowledge practices. Amaya is asking the writer not only to be more careful about generalizations but also in her thinking. Her suggestion for the writer to be explicit in her argument and the use of the open-ended questions reveals two instances of knowledge production for Amaya and one potential one for the writer. First, Amaya expresses her own understanding of generalizations as a weak tactic for argumentation. As a professional writing and rhetoric major, Amaya has spent a great deal of time learning about how language (in the broadest sense of the word) is used to construct narratives in real time as a tool for producing action. Secondly, her calling the writer’s attention to the generalization goes beyond feedback in service to the student getting a good grade. She does not let the student-writer rest on the facile claim but uses open-ended questions to express the logical progression of the writer’s argument. These direct questions indicate the work Amaya has done related to rhetorical listening. Amaya did not “hear” the full progression of the argument from the student-writer, so she supplied possibilities for the writer who did not consider the implications when she stereotyped young, Black men. For the writer, these questions encourage her to express her argument more explicitly in ways that might make her uncomfortable.

Double Mapping: Strategies and Skills

A final series of examples highlights how the tutors often drew on a variety of strategies to support student-writers with a wide variety of concerns based in part on the request of the student-writer and what the tutor understood to be important to the goals of the assignment even when not explicitly requested by the student. In 24 out of 25 session note artifacts, I was able to see the double-mapping between at least one strategy used to support one writing skill. Occasionally, the double-mapping accumulated more connections. Below is a brief summary mapping the interconnectedness of the strategy and the skill (see Table 12):

Table 12. Connection Between Strategy to Skill

Session Number	Strategy	Skill
1	Reverse outline	Organization Clarity
2	Brainstorming	Idea Development
3	Annotation	Research Literacy
4	Rearrangement	Conciseness
5	Open-Ended Questions Drafting	Academic Literacy Clarity (of ideas)
6	Modeling Shared Resources (OWL)	Sentence Structure Grammar/Mechanics (Run-on sentences)
7	Goal Setting	Time Management
8	Collaborative Revising Naming	Thesis Development Audience Awareness
9	Tutor Feedback (Embodied Reader)	Audience Awareness
10	Outlining Shared Resources	Genre Awareness Citation
11	Brainstorming Outlining	Idea Development Organization
12	Collaborative Revising	Thesis Development
13	Collaborative Revising Rhetorical Grammar	Grammar/Mechanics (Passive Voice)
14	Open-Ended Questions Naming	Idea Development Academic Literacy (Prof Expectations)
15	Modeling	Citations (integration)
16	Collaborative Revising	Organization
17	Modeling	Organization
18	Naming	Genre Awareness
19	Not enough evidence found in narrative to determine	
20	Open-Ended Questions	Clarity

	Modeling	Conciseness
21	Collaborative Revising Shared Resources (Examples from Internet)	Sentence Structure Citation
22	Naming (indicates where the writer did it well)	Clarity
23	Open-Ended Questions Read Out Loud Modeling	Clarity
24	Naming	Citations (integration)
25	Rhetorical Grammar Open-Ended Questions	Grammar/Mechanics Idea Development

This double-mapping makes clear the non-linear, recursive qualities that exist between strategies and skills so that tutors have more options in their own toolkits for helping student-writers. Many of these skills, in fact, map up to higher-order skills that are often upheld as symbolic of our pedagogical purpose in the writing center and beyond its reach, such as critical thinking. Just in this short list—idea development, audience and genre awareness, research literacy, and the ability to organize ideas—I observe what I consider to be critical thinking skills. My analysis of the relationship between skills and strategies and how they work in concert to reveal the complexity that happens within a writing tutoring session that should be a guide for our pedagogies. Outcomes assessments alone does not make this complexity legible.

Beyond Either-Or Thinking

In this chapter's opening, I introduce Geisler's ideas that higher education promotes a universal, single, elite literacy, which acts as a gatekeeper for power and actively undermines the liberatory space I hope for the tutors and students working in our center. As the field of writing studies shifted from a current-traditional approach of teaching writing to the more socially imbued process approach for a more inclusive pedagogical orientation, so too, writing centers began to aim for an idyllic posture that success was measured based on "changes in the writer" as the oft cited "The Idea of the Writing Center" affirms (North 440). This posture, while perhaps noble, remains fraught when a writing center's infrastructure and policies do not encourage tutors to consider their place in this education ecology that supports an elite literacy. Beth Bouquet reminds us "writing centers remain one of the most powerful mechanisms whereby institutions can mark the bodies of students as foreign, alien to themselves" (43). Echoes of colonization remain in writing center work simply because of the multitude of identities of students and tutors and the hegemonic educational system still promoting this elite literacy. Writing centers directors who do not have a clear infrastructure to do the theoretical work of understanding language ideology and implicit bias will remain in that neutral stance that elides the complicity of the writing center within the larger institution.

Regardless of our current intentions, from the inception of writing centers through the shift to open-admissions, writing centers have maintained a tedious balance between being *in* the institution without being *of* the institution (which is not really even possible). We have been "forced to take a defensive stance within [our] institutions" as spaces for "crisis intervention" whereby our job is to assist a university's big-ticket issues such as "declining (according to the public) literacy skills" (Bouquet 50). Nowhere do WCDs see this tension between who we want to be and who we might be better than in the long-standing narratives about teaching process over product. Just one of the either-or narratives that seem to inform our pedagogical and tutoring ecologies: "The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without" (Dewey 17). Amaya's learning from ENG 207 informs her response to the writer's generalization, reaffirming what Amaya learned about her own subject positionality and creating an opportunity to share that learning with the student, who may have learned that broad statements have impacts if not on embodied people, then at least on possible audiences. This moment enacts Dewey's point that "education is essentially a social process" (58).

The Both-And Benefits of Writing Centers for College Writers

The field of writing studies has long debated the function and importance of skills (product) and strategies (process). The debate particularly impacted early writing center scholarship meant to ameliorate the perception of writing center work as remedial (see Carino; Grimm; North;). Fears of the stain of remediation found writing center scholars and directors pushing against the product-first or skills-focused narrative and moving towards writing centers as collaborative spaces (see Lunsford; Bruffee) in concert with the writing process approach to teaching writing.

More recently, scholars are questioning the ways that this progressive, process-oriented stance promotes practices that actually continue to function as barriers for some students who need insider knowledge about that single, elite literacy (see Condon and Faison; Greenfield). Lisa Delpit's corpus about educating educators who work with marginalized students informed some of my thinking as I coded. Her essay, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," reminds me that "[t]eachers do students no service to suggest, even implicitly, that 'product' is not important" (287). Perhaps more importantly to our work in the writing center, she argues that the products students are expected to produce within that elite, single literacy are "based [on] the specific codes of a particular culture, [and] is more readily produced when the directives of *how* to produce it are made explicit" (287, emphasis mine). These case study examples in this chapter reveal the practical ways that the product and the student-writer are served when tutors offer a wide range of strategies and skills. The product is, in fact, a result of skills. Skills are developed and supported by strategies.

These two categories (skills and strategies) and their underlying codes answer the original question for this chapter about the presence or absence of the tutors’ praxis in relationship to their pedagogical ecologies. If, however, I am evaluating the tutors’ practices from an ecological framework, the presence of skills and strategies as a tutor's response is a welcome outcome. The unresolved debate about product versus process or skills versus strategies or theory versus practice mires our learning assessment tools in binary thinking.

This tension extends to educational scholarship around skills versus strategies. The use of these terms circulated in such a way that eventually the usage became inconsistent, thereby rendering them ineffective in describing student learning. Often, the words skills and strategies used to describe actions towards learning that students take are regarded as synonymous, which is problematic. Following the perspectives of literacy and reading scholars, I differentiate these terms in this project. Afflerbach et al. maintain that “strategies represent intention” while “skills [are] equated with habits” (366). It is the awareness of the action that makes the difference in that it is the student’s “deliberate control, goal-directedness, and awareness [that] define a strategic action” (368). The importance of providing clarity between skills and strategies lies in the ways that higher education promotes a universal, single, elite literacy in which a student’s skills may be related to the literacies of their home life that do not align with the universal, elite literacy promoted by higher education (Geisler 3). In other words, those incomes that Guerra reminds us to consider. What I mean by this position is that when an instructor complains to me that students do not have good writing skills, what they really mean is that students do not have the institutionally sanctioned writing skills legitimized in higher education. Eschewing the explicit teaching of skills and the promotion of the process, however, does not intervene meaningfully in this system of elite literacy. Tutors in my writing center do some important work toward helping student-writers achieve their goals, and other directors may consider what their infrastructures do.

In an ecology such as the writing center, when those tutors' praxes are imbued with inclusive, culturally relevant pedagogical theories, we can claim the same for the strategies they employ and for the skills that the student-writer is developing because we see it in the tutors' informed praxis. Our writing center aims to teach tutors that some students gain certain skills (or literacies) through their immersive learning experiences at home. Whatever was promoted and valued at home drives the skills students have on campus. I agree with Brown's assertion that "[w]hat we pay attention grows," so it becomes imperative that I attune my infrastructure accordingly (34). Moreover, when tutors explicitly address the way language promotes narrow narratives, such as the example of the Caroline affirms a writer's choice or the generalization about race and criminality in Amaya's session, they are supporting student-writers development of "a critical and self-reflective form of acculturation" or "critical consciousness" (Bawarshi and Pelkowski 44).

What this analysis made concrete for me is that well-worn arguments about product versus process or skills versus strategies are unproductive. To quote Jen Ross and Amy Collier from the context of online education, "One way to break out of these unhelpful extremes is to attend to the complexity and messiness of education itself" (19). The tutors' praxis is effective because they attended to product and process or moved between skills and strategies. Mastery of the skill or the product was not the objective; collaborative learning was the objective. What the tutors' praxes represent are the myriad ways in which meaning is made. Moreover, the tutors' flexibility in their responses through drawing on their own insider knowledge exemplifies for student-writers the ways learning is always in flux and often situated by modeling various approaches. As the tutors never operate with a goal of mastery, their varied and contingent praxes would not be captured by traditional OA measure, so the critical thinking that is not tidy and measurable (read skills) would remain illegible. When assessment does not use an ecological approach, it measures static singularities through the interpretation of static data. In allowing for the tutors and the students to operate form a place of "not-yetness," as defined by Ross and Collier, and assessing the sessions from an ecological perspective, I can follow Fleckenstein's call to "court transformation by resisting closure" of assessing education (157).

Paramount to my work as a WCD is to ameliorate the colonizing practice of privileging some literacy skills over others by making the tutors aware of the way hegemonic systems of power circulate in institutions such as education so that they can collaborate with student-writers on their choices. Critical consciousness starts with me. To that end, the most powerful strategy available to tutors is the opportunity for collaborative revision. In the process of coding, tutors marked many moments in the tickets where they worked collaboratively with the student-writer. Indeed, all of these strategies should be considered collaborative, but the places when a tutor reported something like "we reworked the sentence together" are the moments that showcase their praxis as informed by what one ought to do because that is a moment "rooted in ecological, humanizing, and liberatory values" (Greenfield 9). The tutors give their own insights and insider knowledge about what possibilities were available to the writer. While WCDs cannot mitigate the entrenched and ubiquitous ways that pedagogies of display permeate higher education in our center, I can make choices that help us (me and tutors) create a culture of learning guided by ecological thinking at the level of the tutoring curriculum so that tutors develop a praxis that not only responds to students and the diverse contingencies they bring to our center but also that seeks to answer Greenfield's call to be conscious of the ways our daily actions in the center affect those we claim to support. As importantly, building infrastructures that explicitly and ethically contend with hegemonic systems begins to move toward Camarillo's idea that the purpose of the writing center must critically engage the educational ecologies in which it is positioned.

CHAPTER V: TRAVERSING THE SPACE BETWEEN

Twenty-five years ago, Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald took up Ann Berthoff's prescient query questioning whether teaching was still possible. They named the frustrations that corporate ideologies bring to the teaching profession: "[i]ncreasing demand to account for and assess the work of teaching, decreasing budgets and increasing class sizes, and the growing doubt that teaching matters much in the overall institutional scheme" (10). They noted that these conditions have made teachers profoundly "tired" and "weary" (10). If these sentiments were being openly acknowledged a quarter of a century ago, why would anyone—me included—choose this path? In many ways, this project helped me to answer this question. The short answer is that this work is vocational for me; I am suited for writing center work, and writing center work is suited for me. Cornel West's separation of vocation and careerism resonates and echoes throughout this project. West asserts that "interrogations regarding 'vocations' of intellectuals and academicians in American society can contribute to *a more enabling and empowering sense of the moral and political dimensions of our functioning in the present-day academy*" (94). West stresses: "To take seriously one's vocation as an intellectual is to justify in moral and political terms why one pursues a rather privileged life of the mind in a world that seems to require forms of more direct and urgent action" (94). Where West, as a philosopher, is concerned with morals, I, as a rhetorician, am concerned with ethics; in truth for this project, they are both imperative. As a vocation is moral-ethical and political, then so too my teaching and directing are moral-ethical and political endeavors. For me (and many of my colleagues across many institutions), teaching *is* the most direct and urgent action we can take towards a life of moral and political action, and this "action extends beyond the classroom" (Roskelly and Ronald 15). Fundamentally, I was drawn to become the teacher that I never had in my early experiences with school. Just as adults who have children come to re-parent themselves in the act of childrearing, I came to re-teach myself in the act of learning to teach.

Sustainable teaching, however, is difficult to maintain in the university of excellence where the institution is both a site and an idea that is compelled by "'instrumental reason'" for "the conversion of everything, including human relationships and creativity, into calculated exchanges between antagonistic and alienated individuals and measuring the value of these exchanges according to their ability to further capital accumulation" (Kapur 18). Added to this alienating culture of measurement are the pressures from anti-intellectualism, hostile legislative bodies, and the continued demoralization of precarity, uncompensated labor, and depressed wages. Notwithstanding all the above, I show up in both my classrooms and the writing center because my students/tutors matter to me, and I matter to them[27]. My experiences and skill sets make the classroom the optimal place for me to manifest a direct and urgent action towards the public good. The public good, in this case, are students who go out into the world to become the best versions of themselves in a world that is often hostile, competitive, and unforgiving. I do not mean to imply that only teachers can support a person's development, but given the influence that education has on the socialization of children into society, teachers certainly contribute to that process for both good and ill.

My teaching also resides in the writing center even when my role shifts from instructor to administrator. Much of my job as a director is as much teaching as it is administering or directing because there is a non-traditional curriculum in the writing center, even as it is dispersed and tacit. I teach tutors how to tutor. I teach faculty how to support writing or to design more effective assignments. I teach staff, such as advisors and career coaches, how our services can help them support students. This teaching is also subject to the same tensions of classroom teaching in the neoliberal university. Like Neal Learner, I, too, “see the liberatory possibilities of a writing center curriculum often in conflict with the normalizing functions of writing center work” (111). Part of these normalizing functions of the center involve discrediting the timeworn misconceptions that the function of writing centers is to remediate bad writing and unskilled writers (see Lerner; McKinney; North). I operate from the perspective that the normalizing functions of the writing center are about discovery, not remediation.

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[27] I matter not only as a teacher and a director, but as a human. They matter not only as student and tutors, but as humans.

In my director capacity, assessment measures required by the university are often relegated to the forms and protocols dictated by our Institutional Effectiveness Office (IEO) that capture data and information with a narrow focus on outcomes and siloed from the other ecological factors. These forms are full of fillable tables and charts that leverage metrics such as the number of workshops the writing center gave in an academic year or the percentage of student-athletes who came to tutoring sessions. While this IEO information is helpful, it in no way tells me if and how a women’s rugby player who came to multiple sessions for support in writing her annotated bibliography will extend this habit of mind and analytical skill to her required information literacy course for her psychology major. Current institutional assessment cannot tell me as a director that our program was vital to a student’s success in her first-year writing course because she was a first-generation student who had little experience writing for an academic audience and because her tutor was also a first-generation student who shared insider information for navigating these unfamiliar expectations. This IEO information is not worthless but neither is it comprehensive. As both a teacher and a director, operating from less than comprehensive information positions me to more easily replicate the hierarchical processes and gatekeeping protocols that permeate higher education. To be a teacher and director guided by an ethical stance that aims to teach and direct for "*world readiness*" not merely "*work readiness*," I am motivated to engage in assessment through ecological thinking to shape my teaching and directing (Royster and Kirsch 130). In short, I have to transverse between what I have to do and what I ought to do. The space between those two exigencies can be reclaimed "to create a relational and situated ethos, one responsive to and reflective of [...] evolving, multiple roles" that model what we ought do even as we operate in a space directed by what we have to do (Ryan et al. 1).

Currently, the news cycles in academic discourses and broader public discourses are inundated with local and state legislatures attempting to influence curriculum choices by circumscribing whose stories and experiences are legitimate and should be learned. Groups such as Moms for Liberty have organized and sought election to local school boards to stop what they consider to be subversive efforts by teachers and school administrators to teach critical race theory or promote programs that have diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Universities and colleges are shutting down long established programs and firing tenured professors based on the ill-informed ideas of politicized boards of trustees who have agendas to a privileged idea of education and a narrow understanding of what a good education should entail. The noble myth that education should produce a literate, thoughtful citizenry in order to work towards a public good has collapsed under the reality of a post-secondary education system steered by neoliberal notions that everything can and should be mediated by market forces, that students are customers, and the purpose of an education is to ensure their social mobility. Perhaps most detrimental to education of all of these factors is the limited framework that knowledge and learning can be reduced to data points and that it can all be measured. All of these factors existed before the global pandemic that brought into specific relief the ways that the state of education today is driven by scarcity. Scarcity makes hope even more difficult, and yet “[t]eaching is a radical act of hope” (Gannon 5).

Working from Abundance

When I initially conceived this project, I had some notion that I would respond to the frustrations I felt that my work was somehow “characterized by *demoralization*, *marginalization*, and *irrelevance*,” both as a teacher and a director (West 95). If this were the case, however, my vocational suitability could not overcome the unsustainability of this work in such an ecology. What I knew was that I had experiences and student artifacts that not only countered this depiction but also offered a “plurality of versions of ‘reality’” (91) about the writing center as a place “to create, sustain and expand intellectual subcultures inside the university networks” (99). These experiences and artifacts constellate an alternative narrative about the writing center’s positionality at Queens. My data highlights the fecundity of the writing center’s work for all students and corrects selective narratives as dictated by the institutionally-sanctioned assessment measures created through a “gaze of accountability [which] appears detached from particular values and agendas” (Stenberg 132). My project transverses the space of accountability to responsibility by assessing from a perspective of abundance instead of scarcity. If I only use the center outcomes that were written in service to the data that my institution wants for its own goals—which are not always aligned with mine—then I forgo the opportunity to see what else may be happening in the center.

To this end, this writing center project intentionally seeks to engage audiences in two distinct ways. Such audiences include tutors, students and parents, professional staff (e.g., academic advisors, admissions counselors), faculty, senior administrators, and colleagues across my campus and my professional network; likely, there are more audiences that I have not yet identified. The first audience engagement plays out within the dissertation itself or the focus of the study. Even as the context and materials of the study are complex, this focus is simple; I am creating a map to understand what—as a writing center director and classroom teacher—I am doing and how I am doing, it to loosely paraphrase Kenneth Burke (xv). It is my attempt to answer what students are doing and how they are doing it. The other audience engagement is for readers of this study as it offers wayfinding for other writing center administrators who want to understand how their choices as directors affect the practices of their tutors, the positionality of their centers within their particular educational ecologies, and what these choices mean for their own ethos as directors. Doing this work matters and has material consequences on students, tutors, and centers. Tracking and sharing my institutional context supplies with me with companion narratives about center work that might be more relevant and meaningful for such a wide variety of audiences. For example, prospective students trying to choose a college are more likely to remember the story a tutor tells about how we support student-writers than a handout that documents how we met our outcomes and the metrics we used to measure them.

The arc of this study engages three specific points of tension that exist between me as a writing center director and:

- The institutional ecology of Queens represented by the administration;
- The writing center ecology represented by the consultants and the student-writers;
- The course ecology of ENG 207 represented by the students in the course, the curriculum of the course, the pedagogy of the course, and me as the instructor.

Each chapter has been an intentionally reflective activity on my part to consider how my teaching and directing can remain ethically centered on encouraging students toward world-readiness. What I discovered by doing this project is a way to sustain my work despite the very real problems that I face currently in education. I needed a system to help me operate from hope because "[i]n this climate, where neither stories nor theories serve the end of reflective teaching, teachers can easily become cynical, seeing themselves as cogs in the machine they cannot control, or as co-conspirators fighting an oppressive regime" (Roskelly and Ronald 21). However, neither of these options adequately describe my positionality or my goals.

Responsible Interruption(s)

Here is the material reality of writing center work regardless of my earnestness—I am part of the system.[28] There is no option where I can operate fully outside of this system even as I work to counter the hegemonic hierarchies that pervade it. What I can do is make legible the ways the material realities of educational ecologies modify my choices because this "legibility strikes [me] as a necessary and positive move, despite the likelihood that such enhancements may feel like a threat for those who have historically dominated legibility" (Royster and Kirsch 122). This legibility interrupts the neoliberal university's tendency toward tidiness. One way towards these interruptions is to encourage students to be conscious of their own subjectification, or the processes by which a student "is led to observe herself, analyze herself, interpret herself, and recognize herself as a domain of possible knowledge" (Stewart and Roy 1877).[29] When a student comes to the awareness that her experiences contribute to the domain of possible knowledge, that student enacts a responsible interruption. Yet so much about the material realities of her educational ecologies (i.e., grades, outcomes assessment, curricula, dress code policies, the literary canon, bell schedules, syllabi, etc.) misdirect her responses away from knowing that not only *can* she speak but that *she* can speak (Biesta 88). My engagement with critical university studies by becoming critical of both my institution and my own teaching and directing practices serves students in ways that may not be measured but are nonetheless necessary. The goal being to demystify the idea that accountability is the most beneficial mechanism by which to understand student learning, because "[d]emystification is a *theoretical* activity that attempts to give explanations that account for the role and function of specific social practices" (West 89). Just as learning is a social practice, so too is assessment, teaching, and directing.

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[28] This point was provided to me by Dr. Jennifer Feather via Dr. Andrea McCrary when she told her students "The minute you work for the academy, you become The Man."

[29] The source material for this quote draws heavily of Michel Foucault's ideas of subjectification.

The Trailhead of this Project

The origins of this project resonate with Royster and Kirsch's appeal to "resist simple solutions and focus instead on keeping the horizons of [my] operational paradigms dynamic and open" (137). I sought an assessment approach capacious enough to offer a variety of pathways that would be meaningful for any given institutional context without being so unmanageable as to need limitations that mirrored the Outcomes Assessment. Using ecological thinking to understand how writing centers operate within and create their own educational ecology, I mapped the various educational ecologies in which the writing center operates and articulated my own positionality story to see how these various factors constellate to position the center at Queens. In short, I set about to create a heuristic for understanding the relationships between the multiple constituent parts of the writing center ecology: my intentions for teaching as a practice of freedom; student-tutors' metacognition on literacy and supporting student-writers; and the tutors' praxes in real time.

The introduction sets up the material consequences of neoliberalism's impact on education through the accountability movement. This movement is driven by evidenced-based educational reforms that claim a means for measuring student learning and teacher effectiveness even as its features are economically driven and disconnected from its educational ecologies. In in an effort to explore alternate ways for assessing the work of my writing center, I engage Lorraine Code's theories on ecological thinking as a feminist methodology to resist the simple solutions (i.e., assessment measurements) that characterize the work of the Queens writing center.

The second chapter establishes that, like all writing centers, understanding the Queens writing center positionality is emblematic of the negotiating that all writing centers must do. I define and map external and internal educational ecologies that the writing center engages, specifically naming and analyzing the Queens ecology, the classroom ecology of the tutor preparation course, and the Queens writing center ecology. This chapter reveals that even as the writing center mission statement expresses its goals in language similar to the university's mission, there are distinct differences in who is doing the work and how it is done.

Chapter 3 shifts the focus from the educational ecology of Queens to that of the classroom in an examination of the student-tutors' final reflection assignments. The case study in chapter 3 only captures what the students were thinking as they responded to the assignment prompt, but ecological thinking granted me a more flexible framework for a possible range of evaluations that can be connected and interconnected to a range of ecological relations. Ultimately, what the case study in this chapter demonstrates is that, to some degree, student-tutors began to pivot from a conditioned habitus where they merely report data information toward becoming ethical knowledge makers using their own thoughts in concert with material from the course to counter those conditioned ways of thinking. A traditional assessment process, such as using a rubric or completing institutionally designed assessment plans, would not have captured the plurality of their thinking and perhaps moored the results as a fixed set of conclusions.

The penultimate chapter shifts to map the ecology of the writing center itself. For this mapping, I used the post-session tickets of the previously described tutor cohort to track their moves in order to understand their tutoring praxis. What the second case study in Chapter 4 highlights is that my pedagogical choices may have acted as a capacity-builder for the student-tutor to respond to student-writers on a more global level that not only offered material improvement their writing but also offered a responsible interruption of student-writers' thinking. The tutors operated from a both-and position—a position marked by plurality and difference. What I claim is that my choices in ENG 207 at least made the moment possible, which aligns with my goals as a teacher and director. The Queens writing center can be a site that differentiates from other institutionally sanctioned spaces by its commitment to a plurality of realities that guide our practices.

Teacher Role: A Pedagogy of Interruption

It was in the process of undertaking this project that I discovered that my teaching attempts Biesta's philosophical call for a pedagogy of interruption, which is teaching so that students come to think and understand the world, themselves, and others in new ways. This stance sounds simple, but, in fact, it has multiple moving parts that need care and attention. As adrienne maree brown encourages: "What we pay attention to grows" (34). For Biesta (and me), "education becomes uneducational" when subjectification is not "an intrinsic element of all education worthy of its name" because education "should always also have an interest in human freedom" (75). This vision of subjectification entails a "process where we as educators try to bring about a particular kind of human being [that comes] into presence in a world of plurality and difference” (80). Signaling the philosophies of Hannah Arendt, Biesta links freedom with action. Perhaps even direct and urgent action. Lest this premise seem to prioritize the individual, Biesta further asserts that this “coming into presence” is really “a process of ‘coming into the world’—where ‘the world’ stands for a world of plurality and difference” (85).

As universities contend with declining enrollment and fierce competition for student attention, institutions continue to extend their outreach to capture a market that is decidedly plural and different from the student populations of the past. This tactic of a pedagogy of interruption benefits me in two crucial ways: it keeps me reflexive towards better teaching practices and helps me sustain a liberatory stance in the face of problematic institutional ecologies that conflict with my intentions. I want to teach and direct toward a world-readiness of plurality and difference.

As part of my research, it was important to define how I envisioned the concept of praxis as it related to the tutors’ practices. As a director, I work from an Aristotelian perspective that praxis should be characterized by practical reasoning where a tutor responds to a student-writer appropriately and justly for a given writing context, which always has a sociopolitical context. Moreover, this praxis must be fluid, as the practical reasoning must work contingently within any rhetorical ecology. Tutors need to be attuned to the ways that the university promotes a standard literacy from which all students must operate without reference to that student’s lived experience both inside and outside the classroom. If my teaching practices are a pedagogical stance of interruption, then I have fulfilled my “educational responsibility” for helping the student-tutors “[come] into presence [as] unique individual beings” whose subjectification invites them into new ways of thinking (Biesta 91). My responsibility as a writing center director is to invite student-tutors to offer that same sort of model for interruption to student-writers who come to us for support. This educational responsibility ought to carry into the tutors' praxes because the central imperative of the writing center is to cultivate a culture of learning without replicating the oppressive hegemonies of racism, colonization, sexism, ableism, heteronormativity, and any other condition that fundamentally maintains its power by anticipating that students merely merge into the dominant order without question or critical consciousness. Given my statement above, it is with no small amount of discomfort that I state plainly my assertion that writing center work is freedom work.

Director Role: An Ethos of Interruption-Interrupting

Reprising Kristie S. Fleckenstein's ideas on embodied literacies, writers cannot be separated from their lived experiences and prior knowledges. This same sense of connectedness applies to my ethos as a director. Because the purpose of education should be framed as a normative question, and as a director my ethos cannot be separated from my lived experiences and prior knowledges, then any ethos ought to be understood as "a matter of community values" (Ryan et al. 6). The material conditions of higher education and Queens often run counter to my own ethical views and vocation as an educator. In significant and pivotal ways, this puts me at odds with my educational ecologies even as I am a part of them. In such a case, establishing my ethos separately from (and maybe even despite of) the university is a Sisyphean task contributing to the ways that this work can sometimes be unsustainable. This project offers a way to forestall those feelings of demoralization, marginalization, and irrelevance. Coming to understand myself as a teacher and a writing center director through ecological thinking has not just energized me for this work but also has empowered me to resist the urge to feel undervalued (e.g., as an expert, in terms of compensation, in terms of rank or institutional status) in a system where everything is measured by efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

What I know now is that my value to my students and to the center lies in resting and reflecting in a feminist ecological imaginary, as I too, “act to connect the relations, locations, and dynamism that [embodies my] ethos” (Ryan et al. viii). Ecological thinking “is a mindset that makes possible the development of methods for ‘infiltrating gaps in the discourses of mastery’” (Ryan et al. 4). Mastery is the enemy of plurality and difference.

As an extension of my ethos, the ethos of the writing center embodies a broader understanding that takes up ethos not only as character or community values but also as a site “where people can deliberate about and ‘know together’ [...] some matter of interest” (Hyde xiii). Broader understandings of ethos offer ideals that ecological thinking esteems, and one of particular importance to me is “the relationship between ethics and ethos” (Ryan et al. 7). Practical reasoning and knowledge production disconnected from ethical underpinnings makes the tenets of neoliberalism seem naturalized and equitable. Finally, the habit of thinking ecologically “is about a way of living in the world oriented toward cohabitation; it acknowledges the dynamic construction of relationships within and across locations and between people as constituting knowledge and values” (Ryan et al. 11). What this project has made most salient is that my and the writing center’s most urgent and direct action is our intentional interruptions in the neoliberal habitus of higher education; interruptions defined as “breaks, divides, hitches, disruptions, disturbances, ruptures, or breeches [that] counters [...] traditional ways of behaving or conversing—to change the status quo of dominant values and practices” (Ryan et al. 23). I would add that interruptions can also counter traditional ways of assessing to change the status quo as well. Or, at least, slow the lock-step march towards mastery.

Strategic Choices and Possible Futures

As with any extended research project, that involves time constraints, I made strategic choices to complete this study. These choices mean that there are opportunities for others to consider what I did not explore for this project. A few of them offer fruitful prospects for other educators who are keen to critically examine their own practices. The implications of this heuristic as a thinking tool for understanding teaching, writing center administration, writing program direction, and other sites of instruction are vast, as each of these contexts vary just as each of the actors within those ecologies vary. Queens offers a particular rhetorical ecology at a particular historical and political time when the idea of education is being shaped and reshaped by attempts to preserve power or to share power. My results tell me something about the Queens context at this moment in time. The findings for a writing center at an R1 institution that has multiple sites for tutoring with a wider variety of tutor types such as professional tutors will have other complex connections meaningful to its ecologies. That writing center director might want to explore the intermappings between those various centers. Moreover, that director would contend with elements of the R1 context that I do not face. In the Queens context, teaching is a significant part of its ethos in ways that may not be prioritized at institutions that operate with exponentially larger budgets, student populations, and administrative infrastructure.

A possible extension of this project relates the plethora of student/tutor artifacts that are available to anyone who might want to consider those connections ecologically. In this project, I limited my analysis of student/tutor artifacts to two: a final reflection assignment and post-session tickets. In my class alone, I have found that both discussions and discussion boards generate some of the most thoughtful, revelatory, and relational thinking by students. To add them to the ecological data collected would be generative out of the scope of the current project.

Moreover, the context around those types of assignments (i.e., low stakes, writing to learn) have different functions and purposes so that their educational ecologies would need exploration and explanation to establish those ecologies before mapping them to other ecological factors including analysis of the interactions with educational technology.

Finally, I am compelled to offer that this project, while rewarding is labor intensive. The exigence of the dissertation process gave me intrinsic motivation to take on the endeavor, but that may not be an option for other types of instructors or directors or writing program administrators. The expected and unexpected daily practicalities of directing a center and working with students may not allow for the time and resources for reflection and study. In the current context of a post-secondary system driven by neoliberal ideology, this project is in fact a privilege that might not be an option for others. Also, even to make ecological thinking the only way for assessment would be a dogmatic position that forfeits other ways of knowing including OA. This project offers “systematizing practices” as a “productive means of developing habits of mind as repeatable practices” or actions (Ryan et al. 15).

You Are Here

It would not be untrue or dramatic to say that for much of this project I felt lost. However, that was sort of the point of the project; the point was to start the trip equipped with my experiences, my expertise, and to choose my own landmarks to see where I ended up. Despite the frustrations and false starts, I understand myself better now as both a teacher and a director. I understand my choices better. I see the origins of those choices and how they relate to the context in which they were made so that I am better prepared for the choices that will need to be made in the future. In some ways, this experience has offered me access to a GPS system with a satellite view when before I was working from outdated maps drawn by someone else.

I also understand better how I fit into these ecologies. This project has left me with two indelible understandings about my work as a teacher and director. First, that learning to assess the center from an ecological stance is not just an act of resistance to the larger hegemonic ecologies in which I operate but also gives me a way of thinking and knowing for this work in a more sustainable and ethical fashion. It is an unsustainable practice to seek validation of this work outside the source of its powerfulness—from the system. Institutional assessment is not my homeland because it is not ecological. When I turned to assess from a feminist ecological imaginary, I was greeted with abundance and plurality instead of scarcity and mastery. hook's engaged pedagogy and Biesta's pedagogy of interruption are part of the larger constellation of this imaginary, which offers me "an ethical orientation toward well-being and integrity" that simply cannot flourish in the current neoliberal environment (Ryan et al. 9).

The second understanding is that I know what my role is within this ecology. I am a "critical organic catalyst" (West 104). This role is "one who brings the most subtle and sophisticated analytical tools to bear to explain and illuminate how structures of domination and effects of individual choices in language and in nondiscursive institutions operate" (West 104). Moreover, the writing center can also be a critical organic catalyst in educational ecologies as well because "the social location of this activity is the space wherein everyday affairs of ordinary people intersect with possible political mobilization and existential empowerment [in spaces such as] churches, schools, trade unions, and movements" (West 105). I add writing centers to this list.

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APPENDIX A: FALL 2020 SYLLABUS FOR ENGLISH 207

Instructor:	**ENGL 207 001**
Jennifer Smith Daniel	**English Practicum in Comp**
danielj@queens.edu	**R 6-9:30***
RingCentral	**Office Hours: Th 4 – 5**

English Practicum in Composition

The purpose of this class is to consider various factors that shape our thinking and writing processes. Particularly we will consider how collaboration both supports and complicates writing, thinking and learning by examining the theories and practices for teaching, tutoring, and critiquing writers at the postsecondary level. Through field work in The Writing Center, you will receive professional experience in writing instruction by working as peer tutors and by participating in a community of writers. As a culminating experience, you will also engage in research to build a more nuanced understanding of yourself as both a writer and a tutor.

After completing this class, student-tutors will:

- identify the motives and needs of student writers;
- promote collaborative learning through writing process practices;
- understand the history of writing centers as sites of learning;
- develop a habit of mind for continual reflection to support growth mindsets
- articulate the roles that culture, background, identity and social structures play in learning and writing.

ENG 207 is a part of the core curriculum for the Professional Rhetoric and Writing (PWR) Major. Students who major in PWR will:

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of history and theories of professional writing and rhetoric.
- Cultivate reflective responses to rhetorical processes, diversity, and identity in texts, including their own.
- Analyze texts in multiple contexts and genres through the practice of close reading.
- Illustrate responsible choices involving the power of language and the ethical and cultural contexts inherent in writing, which include various forms, values, and effects
- Write effectively with and for various technologies and media, including digital, attending to the verbal and visual elements of the texts they produce.

Required Texts and Materials:

- Various readings posted on MyCourses. You will be required to print them out and bring a hard copy to class.

Distracted Learning

Consider it the same as “texting and driving” – don’t do it. Research shows that phones, computers and other technology distracts you and others.

Assignment Policies

Assignments (including drafts) should be uploaded to MyCourses by the time class starts (6 PM) on the due date). Ultimately, work that isn’t submitted on time affects your ability to learn as it interrupts the process of feedback and revision. The pacing of the syllabus and the design of the assignments are intentional and deliberate.

Work that is complete and submitted on-time will be prioritized above work that is incomplete, late or both. Indeed, such incomplete/late work may not be accepted at all; it is up to my discretion.

You will note that we will not be doing peer reviews in this writing class. That is because I expect you to use the services of your community of practice (fellow writing consultants) at least once for each paper. Plan accordingly so that you can get on the schedule. I will periodically check your usage through WCOnline.

Communication

I prefer to be emailed if you have questions or issues. It is university policy that you use your Queens email for correspondence.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

All university policies (including disability services, QAlert, etc.) can be found on our MyCourses page.

* * *

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation, Reading Responses, In-Class Writing & Small Group Work 5%

This class relies heavily on discussion (both in class and online) and is important for your success. You are expected to come to class every week, on time and prepared for lively engagement.

Regular usage of the Writing Center as a part of your writing assignments is part of the expectation of participation. So, remember to book appointments.

The work you do in the forums will directly correlate with the papers you will write for the course. In fact, consider the forums as a pre-writing session. The more you put into them, the faster the paper itself will come together. For this course, I am totally fine with you using text that you wrote in the forums in your papers.

Weekly Reading Responses or Asynchronous classes **15%**

Each week in the forum on MyCourses, you will respond to that week's readings. What made you more curious? What did you struggle with? What did you come to understand about the reading? Did you see evidence of the theories you read about in one of your or your peers' sessions? If so, how?

Once you have posted, read through your peers' responses – then comment. The purpose of these responses are to keep the theories in the foreground of our practices. Develop threads that have been started and engage in a genuine conversation with your fellow consultants. Talk back to one another – answering their questions, posing new ones of your own.

In order to make connections between the theory and the practice – jot down notes after each session so that you will have details to help you remember. These notes will help you build your post-session tickets as well.

Post weekly responses to that week's forum by the start of class

Literacy Narrative	**15%**
Draft due:	**9/17**
Polished Draft Due:	**9/24**

Observation Reports	**15%**
Draft due:	**10/15**
Polished draft due:	**10/22**

Midterm reflection survey	**10%**
Due:	**10/22**

Reframed Literacy Narrative	**25%**
Draft Due:	**11/12**
Polished Draft Due:	**11/19**

Final Reflection	**15%**
Assignment will open on MyCourses the last week of classes	
Due Date:	**12/3**

APPENDIX B: FINAL REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

In *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, we learn that "Writers develop and improve with practice, time, and–among other things–reflecting throughout the process. Reflection is a mode of inquiry: a deliberate way of systematically recalling writing experiences to reframe the current writing situation. It allows writers to recognize what they are doing in that particular moment (cognition), as well as to consider why they made the rhetorical choices they did (metacognition).[1]

So let's reflect back on our last class together. We took a look at Dr. Temptaous McKoy's Tweet that read: "....y'all really got my fucked up."? Is that too edgy? I know it ain't "professional" but it is the language to really describe what I am thinking and talking about."[2]

If you look back at your Padlet responses (https://padlet.com/danielj29/5mk3gedz4y9bttga), you can see a pattern whereby you responded to this text in a fairly narrow way. There is much focus on audience, which is always important. I'm wondering, however, if you can see a pattern in WHAT audience you are concerned with in this moment? Moreover, once I disclosed that Dr. McKoy was a professional academic rhetorician who was making an inquiry about the title of what is likely a scholarly text to her peers, your spoken responses changed demonstrably.

For this assignment, you should explore the shift that you experienced when you understood more context about who Dr. McKoy was and what she asks. Dr. Chris Anson writes: "When writers' contexts are constrained and they are subjected to the repeated practice of the same genres, using the same processes for the same rhetorical purposes and addressing the same audiences, their conceptual framework for writing may become entrenched, 'solidified,' or "sedimented.'"[3]

What does it mean that you had a shift in perception to her and the tweet AFTER her identity was revealed? What biases were you operating with? As an instructor, what I saw was there was a disconnect between your theory and your practice. Writing and tutoring are always cognitive activities. In your initial response, I see habituated practice that was as Anson describes seemed entrenched. By a) focusing on the expletive … how did you perhaps put the writer in a box? What assumptions did you bring to the moment?

Where was your resistance located when you look back at your tweet and what shifted when you encountered the identity of the rhetor? How did YOUR identity shift? Or not? How does the idea of the audience shift once you saw that she was a professor? How did the power shift when the moment was no longer about grades? Or did the power shift?

The purpose of this assignment is to take us inside a moment of learning that highlights when your practice didn't match your theory.

Requirements:

1. Create either a transcript or a Flipgrid response directly to the writer – Dr. McKoy.

2. Ground your thoughts in only the LAST FOUR readings from the semester and the experiences you had (Baldwin, Lorde, Ratcliffe, and Davila).
3. Explicitly refer to those readings and explain to the writer how they are informing your guidance.

Map of the process:

1. Brainstorm and practice invention FIRST.

2. Decide which readings will best suit what you want the writer to know.

3. Sketch out a basic transcript that refers both to the readings and the text of the Tweet.

4. Practice speaking it (even if you only do a written transcript so that you can hear/feel how it would sound).

Due on MyCourses by 6:00 PM on 12/3.

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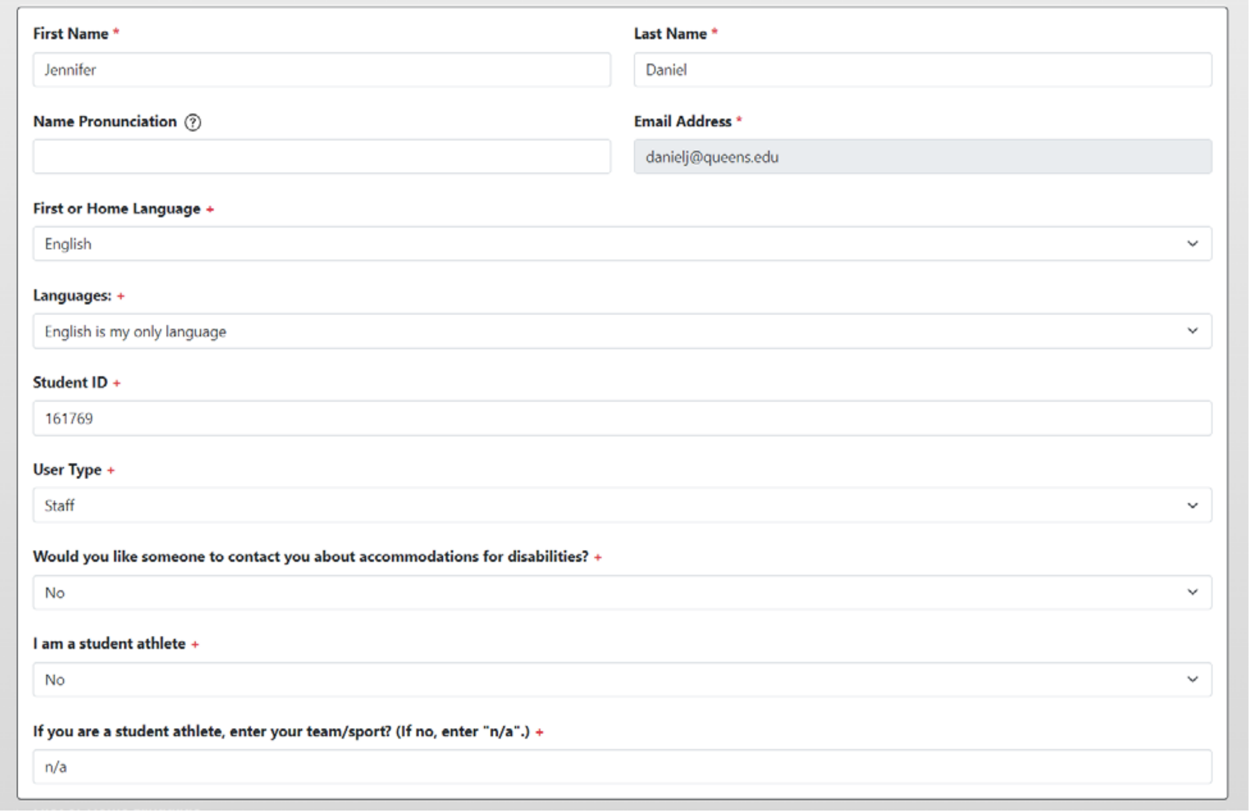
[1] Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle, editors. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. Utah State University Press, 2015. pp. 78.

[2] @SocraTemp2 (Dr. Temptaous McKoy). ”Can I title my article, "....y'all really got my fucked up."? Is that too edgy? I know it ain't "professional" but it is the language to really describe what I am thinking and talking about.” *Twitter*, 18 Nov 2020, 1:47 PM, https://twitter.com/SocraTemp2/status/1329134043275915265.

[3] Anson, Chris. Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle, editors. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. Utah State University Press, 2015. pp. 79.

APPENDIX C: SCREENSHOT OF APPOINTMENT REGISTRATION FORM



First Name *
Jennifer

Last Name *
Daniel

Name Pronunciation

Email Address *
danielj@queens.edu

First or Home Language +
English

Languages: +
English is my only language

Student ID +
161769

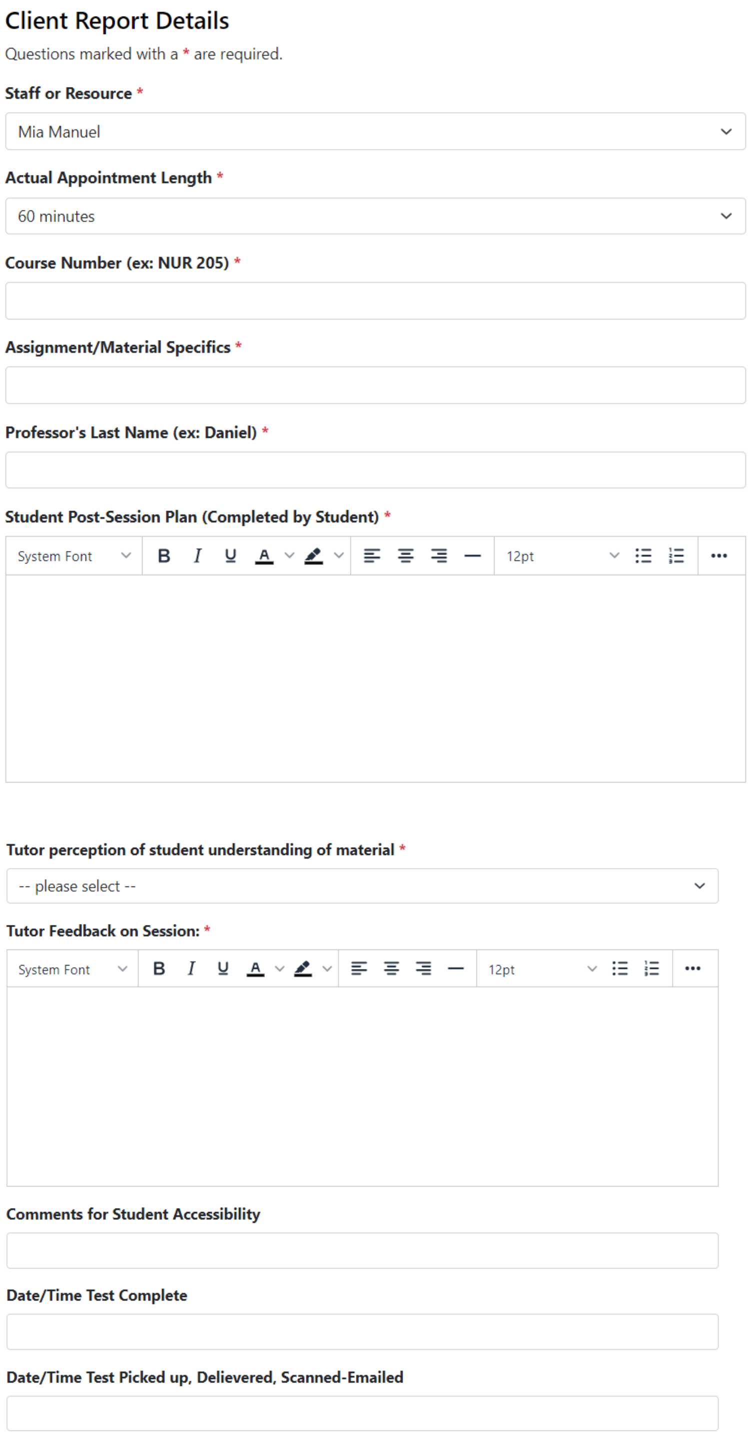
User Type +
Staff

Would you like someone to contact you about accommodations for disabilities? +
No

I am a student athlete +
No

If you are a student athlete, enter your team/sport? (If no, enter "n/a".) +
n/a

APPENDIX D: SCREENSHOT OF CLIENT REPORT FORM



Client Report Details

Questions marked with a * are required.

Staff or Resource *

Mia Manuel

Actual Appointment Length *

60 minutes

Course Number (ex: NUR 205) *

Assignment/Material Specifics *

Professor's Last Name (ex: Daniel) *

Student Post-Session Plan (Completed by Student) *

Tutor perception of student understanding of material *

-- please select --

Tutor Feedback on Session: *

Comments for Student Accessibility

Date/Time Test Complete

Date/Time Test Picked up, Delievered, Scanned-Emailed