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Check One: Tutor Hat, Teacher Hat, Facilitator Hat, Some/All/None of the Above

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Abstract: This autoethnographic essay uses a recent conference experience to delve into questions of process-oriented center-tutor identity. Through multiple lenses and descriptors, we attempt to reveal some of the intricate negotiations that characterize our multi-hatted educative work as tutors, teachers, and workshop facilitators within the UMass Boston community. We argue that the current context of increasing acceptance and recognition of writing center tutor authority and expertise necessitates a reexamination of tutor integrity, tutor/informant roles, and the tutor as a complex self. Anecdotal evidence from the conference presentation, workshop negotiations, and actual tutorials flesh out these autoethnographic snapshots. We forego closure by posing a fresh set of problematic questions, stemming from our new insights.

I. INTRODUCTION: WELCOME TO THE CONTACT ZONE

1. Choosing A Hat (Or Not)

When reading journal articles which hat(s) does a reader unconsciously or consciously choose? Which hat(s) does the same reader choose in paper-writing conferences? When readers look at the title of this essay, which hats (e.g., tutor, teacher, student, workshop facilitator, tutee, writing center director, and/or other) do they instinctively wear?

We explicitly point out the complicated nature of a reader's and academic's hats and roles because this paper examines our complex roles and identities as Reading, Writing, and Study Strategies Center tutors at a university (University of Massachu-

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setts Boston) and in a larger context which increasingly recognize reading and writing center tutors as having expertise about the writing process and the expertise to assist with the writing process. Particularly, we are calling into question academia's and our own former notions of writing center[1] tutor-identity and -authority.

2. Tutor Identity and Autoethnography

Pratt (1998) uses Guaman Poma's multilingual, cross-cultural, and multi-authoritied message to the King—*The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (1613)[2], a message apparently never read by its intended audience—as a prime example of a text created in the "*contact zone*." Pratt defines "contact zone" as "social space… where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (p. 173). Poma's is a model "*autoethnographic* text, … a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (p. 175, emphasis in the original).

We situate ourselves in Pratt's contact zone because this approach facilitates our expression of tutor values through cross-commentary, subversion of definitions, dependence on simultaneous systems of authority, questioning of identity, and recognition of the multiple forms of epistemology and literacy present in the environments in which we and other writing center tutors are situated (see Bawarshi & Pelkowski, 2008, pp. 88-93, for example). This approach allows us to inform about the writing center tutor role (which we focus on here, rather than on the subject / content tutor) as multi-faceted without abandoning the issue of tutor-integrity.

The literature recognizes the writing center tutor as non-singular. Recently, Murphy and Sherwood (2008) reaffirmed this characterization (and, indirectly, they echo Pratt and Poma) with their initial claim in *The St. Martin's sourcebook for writing tutors*: "*Tutoring is contextual*. [It]… takes place within a number of sociocultural and interpersonal contexts that lend… complexity to the tutor's role (p. 1, emphasis in the original). We are not authoring the first "point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture" for the writing center tutor (Pratt points out that autoethnographic texts often take on this duty), yet we do implicate ourselves as being multiply informed, like Poma (trained and educated by both his Inca culture and the conquering Spanish one) (Pratt, p. 175). For us, emerging recognition of the writing center tutor's knowledge and roles is associated with our multiple and multiplying allegiances and functions. We treat the construction of tutor identity using an autoethnographic approach because, in our morphing (and increasingly more accepting) context, the literature's and the academy's perceptions of tutor roles are inadequate.[3]

3. The Tutor as Deliberately Composite

In Reed-Danahay's (1997) positioning of the autoethnography as a post-modern venue, she writes that "the coherent, individual self has been… called into question" (p. 2).

The identity of the writing center tutor is composite, one situated within potentially conflicting expectations of the complementary roles that the tutor fills. In other words, the hat-switching tutor deliberately shifts among complementary roles to work

[1] We often omit the word 'reading' from our discussion of reading and writing centers to avoid repeated qualifications. 'Reading' is the first word in our Center's full title because the staff do not recognize reading and writing as dichotomous processes, and because working on reading is an appropriate use of tutorials. Much of what we claim can be applied to the reading-writing process.

[2] A scanned facsimile of Poma's *Chronicle* is viewable at *El sitio de Guaman Poma* at http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/info/es/frontpage.htm.

effectively with students; recognition of this fluidity and of its necessity is obscured due to constructions of tutors' identities (by dominant and non-dominant groups on campus) which stem from the ways in which each group is situated. And, dominant, in the writing center tutor case, is encased in shifting hierarchies. Students and their advocates rightfully perceive the tutor as serving the tutee. Teachers to some extent must identify tutors as those who will help students perform and progress in the teachers' course(s). The academy (and to some extent the writing center itself) constructs tutor-identity as a composite, and tutors are in part employees.

Each of the above constructions of the tutor relies on the various dominant-groups' repositioning of the other groups in the university. When a tutee physically hands a paper draft to a tutor, knowledge from these multiple roles and about these multiple positionings influence the tutor's effort to return the paper to tutee control. Striving for an impossible single identity approach would be unhealthy for both tutor and tutee. Yet, the tutor needs to take on a great deal of authority to successfully define and shift among the multiple hats s / he wears.

4. Our "Contact Zone" Code: Lack of Linearity and of Systematic Links among Terms

This is not a narrative which provides an all-encompassing and exhaustive ethnography or auto-biography of the writing center tutor. It is a disjointed invitation for readers to wear *their* multiple hats while reading this text. We recognize that our self-referential definitions will be an inadequate whole. Just as theater audiences suspend logic while watching a lone actor play alternating roles in a one-person performance, we suspended much of the conventional logic and expectations of the uni-directional essayist tradition to get at the greater truth of our 'composite selves': Multi-hatted informant—Inca / ruler, King, and Inca / Poma. Likewise, the authors expect that readers are continuing to collect a closet full of various, complementary hats—e.g., tutor, teaching assistant, teacher, writing center director—over time. And so, in the spirit of sharing this snapshot auto-ethnography we invite you to be prepared to switch and choose among your hats, or to wear many at once.

One way to read this paper is to think of it as loosely resembling a DNA double helix. Some things are discussed on their own terms, and some are defined in terms of their mirror image (across the helix). Our paper attempts to echo Poma's manipulation of standard Spanish chronicles to both tell his story and to critique the dominant discourse. Like Poma, we have inverted, reversed, subverted, and appropriated concepts for our purposes. Our logic is that it is more useful to use a broken code switching model than to limit ourselves to linearity. Our code unzips and can be reordered to form new sequences and ideas. We appropriate the ability to separate and regroup as

[3] Both authors are tutors and workshop facilitators for the Reading, Writing, and Study Strategies Center, and for the Graduate Writing Center, both of which are housed in Academic Support Programs at UMass Boston. Both authors have also taught Academic Support Programs' Critical Reading and Writing courses and First Year Seminars. Our roles as professional tutors / teachers has become connected with a tradition in which we provide tutoring and conferencing workshops for other tutors and teachers, drop in writing workshops for students, specific reading and writing in-class workshops for both undergraduate and graduate courses, and writing workshops for graduate student orientations. (Thus, we are Inca, King, or Poma depending on the time of day, and sometimes all three at once.) In the tutoring programs that have shaped our identities, tutor and tutee do not have the same student status (i.e., graduate students tutor undergraduate students, professional tutors tutor graduate students); however, the initial roles of tutors in the Reading, Writing, and Study Strategies Center are complicated by the fact that tutors are students—albeit with a different status, themselves.

we reconstruct identity. We view this as a performative text, as both product and process. When choosing among hats, readers may want to think of our code's building blocks as epistemology, authority, and negotiation, whereas tutor-identity, tutor-integrity, tutor's investment in his/her role, and the tutor as informant are the meeting/linkage points on the helix.

5. Operational Definitions as Linkages

What is paramount to the operational definitions of these linkage points which will be incrementally unpacked in this paper? For now, we merely offer broadly defined components of our "Four I's":

• Tutor Integrity:

a) consists of self-respect to follow ethical commitments, even within a context of inappropriate definitions and expectations;
b) depends on commitment to students' long-term benefits;
c) relies on experiential credibility, which simultaneously frames tutor integrity and identity;
d) depends on adherence to non-authoritative authority, an adherence from which tutor identity also stems;
e) manifests in negotiations with teachers and tutees, which connects it to authority.

• Tutor Identity:

a) is associated with the recognition of the tutor as responsible for fostering the knowledge-making process and the development of thinkers, writers, and learners, rather than of products;
b) stems from a tutor's responsibility to his/her pedagogy, which is linked to epistemology;
c) stems from a tutor's commitment to fluid identity as core on which integrity depends;
d) becomes increasingly complex as tutors realize that their identity enables them to witness in tutees what students attempt to hide from teachers, which reframes a tutor's epistemology insofar as this animates informant roles;
e) relies on ethnographic discourses and models, no matter which context/role we are in.

• Tutor Investment:

a) is associated with commitments to do and to be, and, conversely, to not be and not do; (as such, we are invested in the other three 'I's'; for example, in a multi-positioned identity, as is indicated by the willingness to semi-abandon a traditional paper writing process);
b) is aligned with an identity derived from professional integrity, or soundness, which provides our own norms for determining the nature of our professional commitments and fundamental praxis;
c) is fundamental to the tutor in the process of negotiating, because it is part of the dynamic between identity and integrity.

• Tutor/Informant:

a) Our tutor identity and integrity rely on a tutor's informant role/status;
b) The core transferable components of our identities as educators are the tutor's epistemology, which allows the tutor to inform, and the tutor's authority;
c) Tutors who inform (even implicitly) their communities about tutors' identity foster the learning process.

These four qualities are like compatible fabrics which we weave together to form our coherent selves and corresponding authority. Regardless of the particular hat in question, we use the same basic fabrics with different patterns. As we describe

later, these linkages manifest themselves during the deliberate hat shifts and sharing that we perform.

6. The Literature and General Definitions upon Which We Rely and Which We Defy

Until quite recently, frank discussion of tutors' identity and authority appeared in some newsletters, but less commonly in scholarly work. The sources of this barren landscape are legion and often indisputably self-evident: The sheer variety of tutoring contexts and roles, institutional and professional marginalization, variability in professional credentials and standards easily come to mind. Consequently, the majority of scholarly publications are not authored by tutors; writing and learning center directors and professors pervade. In addition, a mere handful of publications which include a variety of submissions from college-level writing tutors, such as *The Writing Lab Newsletter* and *Praxis*, dominates the field.

The prevailing image of tutors as peripheral 'service' workers (Gordon, 2006) is less powerful than it once was, but it continues to defy defiance—with lamentable consequences—partly because the image and state of the literature mutually reinforce each other. As composite selves, we actively compose our identities in the midst or entanglement of the dominant norming compositions of academic identities and status in a hierarchy. Gordon's lament has non-universal application, just as our definitions are inadequate. Our immediate environment (a very process oriented center) accepts a more accurate definition of tutors' value, which complicates our position. We are valued both as tutors and teachers and we therefore must make deliberate choices to maintain the integrity of our roles. For example, when, as staff of our writing center, we offer a workshop on writing conferences for faculty, are we wearing a tutor or faculty hat? Or facilitator? Sometimes we juggle our hats; at other times we balance them. The authors' experiences disallow them from viewing the hats as either / or options.

II. THE CENTER AT THE CENTER OF THIS PAPER

Any ethnography needs a context. Ours, the Reading, Writing, and Study Strategies Center, is a story in its own right. We begin to tell our multi-hatted stories by providing an incomplete description of Center-culture.

Simply by joining the staff, we enter a vibrant, creative, and dynamic community. To thrive in it, we invariably embrace an acculturation characterized by enthusiastic mutual support. Just as Freire (1990) encouraged teachers to be learners and students to be teachers, staff members freely ask for, offer, and agree to assist each other. *Non*-fix-shop talk is a major activity. This collaboration and mutual support are made possible because tutors work in a common space that facilitates spontaneous conversation, as well as opportunities for unobtrusive observation. Our co-Directors spend time in "the Center" throughout the day in ways that are universally helpful. In a very real way, the Center itself creates conditions for the overriding culture of mentoring, apprenticeship, and respect; the ongoing professional development and transparency foster a strong sense of identity, integrity, and investment that allow us to assert our sense of appropriate tutor-tutee authority. The Center-culture, as well as our own investment in the educative process, support and facilitate efforts to 'catch' ourselves when we overstep our bounds.

An essential component of the Center's culture of investment, informing, integrity, and identity are the weekly staff meetings. These morph weekly as needed—from meetings which allow staff to share strate-

gies for working with struggling tutees, role-plays, and writing drafts for new Center-authored resources for students, to meetings about requests from teachers asking for workshops for students, and announcements and calls for papers. As this list indicates, the Center's context—a public university that is committed to service and research—compels it and its apprentices to fill multiple roles.

Through the process of reexamining the Center's workshop and presentation planning, we have discovered that the cross-hatted tutor is writing (and acting) a sort of autoethnography squared; s/he exists in a positive feedback loop. To successfully work with students, teachers, tutees, and themselves, tutors in the contact zone need to be double informants and autoethnographers (rather than purporting to relinquish authority). As someone who is able to change hats, the tutor bears the responsibility for both having and not having authority, for informing (and sometimes educating) the taught and the teacher. S/he is sending messages to the Spanish and the Inca, messages about teachers, tutees, tutors, and students. However, tutorials (and tutor/tutee meetings with teachers) are not primarily intended to develop an understanding of a tutor's role, because the construction of the *tutee's* role is and should be the main focus of tutorials. Thus, left venue-less, we as tutors have taken to subverting the workshops that we provide for our larger community.

The problematic characterization of the tutor as effaced repair-shop worker, mythical quick-fixer upper, and authority-less grammar checker is what we debunk in our workshops. Traditionally, Center tutors pass the tutor-facilitator-teacher hats to the unsuspecting attendees and instead take on the role of the student-tutees. This shift allows us facilitators to resist association with single identities, and it implicates the attendees. The reversal is appreciated by the community as it allows us to form a united front to broaden the recognition of tutors as active participants in the teaching of individual-student-writing. This is particularly relevant as writing centers become teacher resources—a trend confirmed by Harris's (n.d.) directions to readers: "[S]ee what writing lab services are available to assist you in your teaching and your own professional development" (para. 5). We have come to realize that our workshops are often autoethnographic fora, similar to our exploration here.

Workshops allow us to tackle epistemological and pedagogical questions of the authority, power, and identities associated with multiple instructional hats. Tutor identity, knowledge, and authority are too fragmented and morphable to allow single definitions. So, as we deconstruct tutor epistemology and authority based on *our* context, we do so within the confines of an autoethnographic text and dialogue appropriate for the cross-hatting, non-coherent tutor. Higher education needs use a variety of approaches to reach a fuller understanding of the larger relationship among the tutor's roles; we provide an explanation of *Negotiating the Academic Hat Trick: Exploring Strategies For and From Teaching, Tutoring, and Workshop Facilitating*, our 2008 Center for the Improvement of Teaching workshop as an example of how this might occur.

1. Center Tutors' Roles at Conferences

Conferences serve as more formal opportunities to present Center tutors' roles to the community. Our *Hat* presentation is part of an annual tradition in which Center staff join forces to respond to calls for presentations. (The authors have been part of six Center for the Improvement of Teaching conference presentations.[4]) Center tutors anticipate the yearly conference. This year

[4] For example, *How Long Is An Hour?: Dispelling the Myth of the Quick Fix Tutorial* and *Negotiating the Void: Moving Between Informal and Formal Writing.*

we opted to concentrate on unpacking three roles that Center staff serves in the UMass Boston community: Tutors, workshop facilitators, and teachers. When community members ask what Center tutors do, we often sense that they expect us to declare a single role. So, we welcome the opportunity to inform and perhaps demystify what we do. Outside the contact zone of Academic Support Programs we repeatedly encounter that oversimplified "coherent, individual self" that we beg to "call… into question" (Reed-Danahay, p. 2). These tacit models tend to split our multi-faceted roles into either-or dichotomies that can obscure some hats and amplify others.

The conference proposal serves as an autoethnographic snapshot. Our panel chose its words carefully. The final title plays on the theme of wearing many hats combined with the sports notion of a "hat trick"—an occasion when a hockey or soccer player scores three goals in a single game. With the abstract, which "invite[d] participants to explore the challenges and opportunities of serving in multiple instructional roles" (O'Brien et al., 2008, p. 1) the panel strove to say what it actually meant to do so that it could deliver on its stated intentions.

Our planning process informs about the ways in which we contest the dominant characterization, functions, and behaviors that the academy ascribes to our tutor role. Our multi-faceted roles and construction of authority became evident to us as we reexamined our collaboration. Each person decides if and how s/he will participate. A few volunteers draft a working proposal and send it out for feedback. After the round of feedback, volunteers polish the proposal and submit it.

2. Our Negotiated Process during Presentation Planning and Actual 'Presentation'

Habermas's (1987) framework of communicative action helps describe the normative qualities of Center collaboration. We speak, listen, evaluate, and decide from the presupposition that all of these actions are "oriented to reaching understanding" (p. 27). Consequently, we reject and accept our own and others' "validity claims" on the basis of reasoned counterclaims and evidence (p. 27). Insofar as the panel members honored their intention to converse freely, they "proceed[ed] in the expectation that they can achieve a rationally motivated agreement and can coordinate their plans and actions" (p. 27). According to Habermas, this "linguistic medium of reaching understanding gains the power to bind the wills of the responsible actors" (p. 27). The tutors *reason* out a single plan by freely *binding wills* to what they honestly see as the most valid rationale for a given project. The open, non-coercive reasoning process of claims and evidence is an essential stage in a process that our panel continually enacted and refined.

Our integrity is further manifested by the continuity between the Center's "ways with words" (Heath, 1983) and the presentation process. We, the authors of this paper, had the authority to preserve the expert-audience participant structure, but we also had and exercised our legitimate option to impose an alternative presentation characterized by dialogue among equals. In this way, by risking inviting people to move out of the familiar conference comfort zone into new interactional relations, we obviated the need to consider 'keeping' audience attention and other pitfalls of normative educative discourse models, for example, the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (Hicks, 1996) paradigm.

Four days before the conference we were still relying on e-mails to unify the multiple purposes that the panel associated with the presentation. Excerpts from the e-mail exchange convey a pattern of reasoning that approximates Habermas's model of communicative action: Our co-panelists:

"We discussed a tentative 'outline'…. Disclaimer, we weren't exactly sure what role you… wanted or what you had in mind, so feel free to let us know" (S. Karren, personal communication, January 22, 2008). Our (the authors') response to the outline reads in part:

> If we do the …role plays consecutively people might be more reluctant to participate…there will be observers…. We might… not set folks up for a meaningful…conversation…. [I]f we've switched to the three…skits it seems …we've taken on a lot more work. Erin and I did a role play at the FYS/IS debriefing and …even though we did not script [it]… we spent much time meeting…. But [it's possible that we are]…. not fully following [your reasoning]. (M. McCarthy, person communication, January 23, 2008)

And it was this dimension that was a strength and vulnerability. It was the sense in which the panelists most worked as tutors, even when no tutees were present. While everyone had a voice, all panelists deferred to one another to the extent that the selection of one out of a short list of possible approaches occurred shortly before the presentation was scheduled. Early on the morning of the presentation, the authors were scurrying to gather the physical equipment—flip charts, scrap-paper-hats, and copies of debriefing questions—necessitated by the final choice. Thus equipped, the authors met with their co-panelists and filled them in on the last nuts-and-bolts steps.

This decidedly normative vision "approximates" free open speech because there is at least the speakers' "intention of openness, even if the present level of [discursive] development of individuals or society does not actually permit it" (Young, 1992, p. 51). This negotiation style reflected how we collaborate in the Center: We did not assert our concerns and alternatives because we were more experienced but because of our experience we were able to present an argument for a different presentation plan more in keeping with the panelists' initial shared priorities. In this respect, our communicative styles and values powerfully approximate Habermas's model of communicative action. Our multiple hats and experiences provide a broad epistemology, pedagogy, and recognition of others' composite sets of knowledge and experience.

3. The Center at the Presentation

While we were officially tagged as a panel, the presenters did not sit together at the front of the room. Believing in the importance of a purposeful interactive presentation that delivered what had been advertised was paramount, the panelists revised the typical format. Late arrivals would have found it impossible to distinguish the presenters from the participants. Three groups were formed, consisting of both panelists and presenters for the three instructional contexts: Workshop, tutorial, and instructor-student writing conference. An interactive design necessarily demands that facilitators integrate *all* participants into the pre-determined plan. Within each group, the panelists-participants took on the unscripted tutee/student roles, intending to recreate some of the more challenging interactions the panelists have encountered. Attendee-participants acted as workshop facilitators, tutors, and an instructor in a writing conference.

Despite our workshop subverting, we recognize the academy's participant structures and norming discourse can "constrict the flow of dialogue and perpetuate ideological and epistemological distortions" (O'Brien, 2000, p. 3), creating a forced false consensus. Yet we (and many other tutors)

do not uncritically accept the asymmetrical relations and discourse that are imposed. The increased demand for workshops for and from various members of our community suggests that we are not the only ones questioning the dominant paradigm.

Why is it hard to bring these questions of tutor identity to the surface in the context of academia? Young's discussion of constrained speech resonates with our self understanding of the pervasive difficulty with explicitly, openly addressing these intertwined questions of identity, integrity, investment, and informant status. In the academy's microcosm—the classroom—and throughout its larger contexts we find "dialogue constrained by limitations, by teachers' authority, by taboos and no-go zones" (Young, p. 47), where "authority replaces reason" (p. 48). In our case, the product of dominant, normative discourse is a distorted representation of fragmented identities that obscure or camouflage our 'natural' multi-hatted coherent self from public images, symbols, and associations. Thus some of our professional integrity derives from the value of consistency, and we continually strive to act with this intention of transparency and openness with every hat we wear. This dimension of our practice, we suspect, can promote less distorted fora and framing of epistemologies.

III. THE CENTER TUTOR IN CONTEXT

Here, we invite the reader to renavigate the cross-hatted tutor's 'Four I's', while focusing on tutor epistemology and authority. This section degrades / upgrades into a series of vignettes. We expect the hat-switching reader to actively read (Quinn and Irvings, 1997) as we move through the spectrum from formal writing to 'showing not telling' in the narrative form often used by tutors when they are addressing their peers and other community members in newsletters.

1. The Center Tutor's Fluid Identity

Our workshops and other experiences lead us to self-define as chameleons and switch hatters, with fluid roles, multiplicity, multiple connections among roles, and a complex coherence. Tutors' epistemologies are informed / shaped by the academic context and thus, informed by instruction as well as tutoring experience. The exclusion of all the abilities, authority, and experience associated with teachers from the tutor's pedagogy is therefore problematic. Tutors cannot facilitate learning if the tutor's total separation from teacher is categorically given more importance than the tutee's progress. To maintain integrity we daily renavigate the blurred social construction of the 'tutor'; we resist the construct of tutor as proofreader / fixer, yet we also resist the construction of tutor as non-teacher (in the informal sense).

2. Cross-hatting Fluid Identity and Epistemologies

What is happening as tutors' effacement (in the norming descriptions) diminishes? When his / her role and contribution are no longer associated with invisibility, a lack of authority and autonomy, and subordination, what is the writing center tutor expected to know?

The expectations are both appropriate and enormous. For example, Garbus (2005) argues that writing tutors of graduate students need more interdisciplinary expertise, and the ability to make students experts in and informants about their own field. Kimball (2007), both an undergraduate student and a peer tutor, defines tutors as those who "wear many hats as diagnosticians, audience members, devil's advocates, and guides," and as those who acquire a great deal of knowledge about becoming "better students" from wearing the

tutor hat (para. 2, 1). Harris (n.d.) claims that tutors can be "cultural informants" for non-Native speakers of English (para. 3; we would argue that no native speakers of Academic English exist and that all tutees need informants). In our context, tutors work in tandem with students, other tutors, course instructors, directors, and teaching assistants, and are often coaches, role models, and / or workshop facilitators, formally, while wearing her / his tutor hat. Although they help individual students with courses researched and designed by others, effective writing center tutors are *informal* teachers of writing and the individual student-writer's process. Additionally, the writing center tutor can have other, *formal* roles—teacher, assistant, workshop facilitator, student—at the same academy. The literature indicates that expectations about tutors' knowledge have expanded, but the tutor with this more appropriate epistemology must still rely on the student as informant to be more fully effective.

One possible outcome of the poorly defined multi-faceted tutor identity / role is the chance that a tutor may intentionally or inadvertently try her / his hand at "play[ing] … professor" (Jacoby, 2008, p. 148). Another possibility is the replacement of the tutor-tutee constructed session by a situation like that which Neff (1999) recounts: The "session is controlled by what the teacher said… and… marked on [the] paper. The teacher may be physically absent…, but her authority is overwhelmingly present. [The tutor]… decodes the instructor's marginal comments and interprets them… using mini-grammar lessons" (para. 6). The Center context helps us to avoid these pitfalls by being honest to our ethical and pedagogical values and clarifying these to our tutees. At each meeting we negotiate the session's agenda by sharing authority. This stance is derived from our core conviction that shared negotiating power is ethically and pragmatically valid. By sharing in decision-making, by asking and listening, we necessarily minimize the chance that we act as a second or substitute instructor. Strengthening and maintaining our integrity requires investment in ongoing critical self-reflection.

Conversely, when tutees initially and categorically defer to us, we offer ethical and pedagogical reasons for requiring their proactivity, including assuming appropriate responsibility. Often their deference manifests itself indirectly as passivity (e.g., waiting for us to initiate the session), or directly by overtly attributing expert status to us (e.g., "Well, you're the tutor, just tell me what to do"). Regardless of the specific form this passivity takes, we avoid the "despotism of the expert" (Appelbaum, Lidz, & Meisel, as cited in Jacoby, 2008, p. 149) because of our belief that students have at least some of the tools they need to master academic challenges and virtually all of the potential to achieve this mastery. We acknowledge that while we may have knowledge that they need, they have knowledge that we need in order to support them.

3. Center Tutor Identity Influences on Teacher Identity and Integrity

The Center's epistemology is informed because tutors all are or were students at UMass Boston—unlike many of the faculty. Our epistemology is informed by politics and expresses itself in deliberately political acts, such as opposition to the deficit mentality (Valencia, 1997, p. xi) and to the banking education which dictates that writing center tutors-tutees work primarily in one direction with tutor as expert, imparting knowledge.

At the Center, most staff members' careers start as graduate students tutoring undergraduates. The possibility of teaching (in multiple programs and disciplines) eventually and frequently opens up, but at this point the crucial investment in the tutor epistemology has already been initi-

ated. In other words, the faculty outlooks / epistemologies of former and current Center tutors are cultivated from the pre-existing matrix of experience, knowing, and constructing knowledge in a sort of Grand Central. We have had the privileged opportunity *and* challenge to keep a hat while acquiring others. Coulbrooke (1999), who self identifies as "a teacher who is also a tutor," argues that this composite renders her capable of empathy, unlike those "GIs [graduate instructors] who… accepted the role of teacher as authority. They didn't have the advantage of being a peer to their students first" (p. 12). Our own experiential credibility as student writers contributes to the efficacy of our work (Nelson, 1991, p. viii). This, combined with the power of disciplined, empathic listening, feed our epistemological resources (Nelson, p. viii). We learn from tutees as a necessary condition whereas faculty learn from students indirectly and incidentally.

Faculty epistemologies tend to be tied to their disciplines and specializations. Tutors' knowledge bases are associated with global academic abilities (e.g., reading and writing) and strategies, including those necessary for navigating the tower's (Shaughnessy, 1976) labyrinthine expectations and taboos. Furthermore, faculty epistemologies are more closely tied with outcomes in the form of expectations for products whereas tutor epistemologies include processes that help construct those products. Nevertheless, tutors need discipline-specific knowledge; they learn how to make use of content especially by accumulating and being informed / informing about knowledge of normative written discourses.

These institutionally determined differences in epistemology can be best seen in the nature of faculty requests for tutor support, including in-class workshops. For example, a sociology teacher asks for a two session tutor-workshop which applies reading and then writing abilities to mass media content analysis. Another teacher requests a workshop to help students unpack the writing-revision process in the context of a graduate nursing course. Faculty rarely if ever ask tutors to supplement content specific information; this is their domain. The Center's domain is global strategies and bridging them into the disciplines for students.

4. Tutor Epistemology as Socially Constructed by the Tutee/Informant

A Center apprentice acts on the conviction that students, as "knowing subjects[,]…are expert sources of information for a tutor and themselves… who can productively and proactively work with tutors toward becoming more confident and competent academic writers" (O'Brien, 1993, p. 1). This kind of pedagogical conviction springs from repeatedly engaging with students about their reading and writing processes; in other words, we may wear a 'King' hat when tutees play Poma's informant role.

In the academy, writing fluency is a necessary and highly prized expectation with which many students struggle (Huang, 2004). Some of these struggles derive from distorted, misinformed beliefs about writers and writing. Myths, such as 'good writers only write one draft,' 'revising is a fancy word for editing,' and 'good writers are born' with a magical 'gift,' pose formidable obstacles to basic expectations: Meeting essay due dates and minimum length requirements.

A few years ago one author worked with a tutee who, despite being a conscientious thoughtful person who cared about her education and writing, consistently failed to meet both these expectations. Over a semester of weekly hour-long sessions, this student writer not only progressed in her writing agenda but did so partly by assuming more authority over her writing and tutorials. Her acquisition of technical

information about composing was necessary but not sufficient for demonstrating writing proficiency. She increasingly accepted responsibility for taking the sessions and making them her own. Towards the end of the semester she commented that it was "Okay" that sometimes her tutor's analogies and explanations were unclear and incomplete: "There are no problems with what you talked about. I was looking at the paper, thinking about what you said about elaborating and stuff. I can't take you home with me, so I imagined what you'd say" (O'Brien, 1993, p. 18). One of the strategies she came to expertly employ was wearing a reader hat when she was revising: "I asked myself questions. I put myself as the reader and felt I could say more" (p. 19); this was after being introduced to the notion of reader- and writer-based texts (Flower, 1979).

By the end of that semester, she initiated sessions with a predetermined task for her tutor, such as "Can you read this and find my thesis!?" Instead of hesitating and doubting the existence of her thesis, as she did earlier in the semester, she knew she had a thesis and appropriately exerted her authority within the relationship. She *informed* that: "I thought about what you said last week about graduating to another… level. I thought maybe that's not so bad…. I benefit from talking about my writing because then I'm aware of the stages I go through" (p. 27). Further, at this point, tutor and tutee both knew they had been successful because the tutee was putting her tutor out of a job. She became more proficient in meeting deadline and length requirements. From such anecdotal evidence, we get a sense of how a tutor's epistemology is powerfully shaped by tutee's self knowledge so that tutors can eliminate some of the guesswork around the former's processes.

Many conventions of tutor roles and identities are framed in contra-distinction to teachers, as if these roles were always fulfilled by different people. That is, each person has his / her own designated role—and only one. Thus, the discourses of multiple hats, of Center-like writing centers, become problematic. An educator's designated *and* de facto hats pose discursive and practical difficulties to the extent that they are counter-normative. For example, Inglis (1997), a tutor who deconstructs her own visit to the writing center as a tutee, claims that "[t]he roles of teacher, tutor, and student are very distinct, yet they become an integral part of each other in the learning and writing process" (p. 11). When describing the tutor-tutee relationship Inglis defines herself as having important knowledge (because her tutor "was completely inexperienced with [Inglis's] specific needs" (p. 11)), and her tutor as a knowledgeable person who "could give me pointers similar to those of a teacher" (p. 12). However, reciprocity is not influential in Inglis's analysis of the context of the "*teacher*-tutor-student *triangle*" (p. 11, emphasis added). Even as someone with two hats herself, Inglis described a *uni*-directional flow of information from teacher to tutor, and from tutor to tutee (p. 11). Ultimately, artificial limits restrict the outcome of the tutorial and the reflection on it.

The diminishing yet pervasive myth of tutoring is that the tutor's epistemology and purpose do not allow him / her to help with a knowledge-making process, and thus, that the tutor has no authority, which distinguishes a tutor from faculty. This simplification is also a factor or condition for tutorial success. An implication of this condition is that a tutor is 'free' from evaluative concerns and issues of power, and thus optimally geared to help students help themselves. In other words, since tutors have no putatively vested interest in the tutees' work / performance, they are free to be neutral. However, what may appear to be 'relinquishing,' or simply no choice to retain / relinquish authority, or a vacuum, is more aptly perceived as embracing different

forms of authority and credibility.

5. Center-Tutor Defines 'Tutor' Hat by Defining Tutee's Hat

Just as a faculty members' authority is not absolute in a course context, so too tutors' seemingly absolute lack of authority is misleading. The respective natures of the authority of each role are decidedly different; insofar as the instructor's power is centered in / on curriculum and evaluation, there is a gate keeping function.

Scaffolding and meeting students 'where they are' do not fall under some aspects of course-based authority. Furthermore, both tutors and faculty have their own views of authority stemming from their personal pedagogies and professional ethics. Center tutors also have context specific authority regarding the use of tutorials. We have the authority to clarify and insist that tutees behave appropriately. We follow established policies of what we do and do not practice and permit based on clear pedagogical principles and values, which we communicate when tutees are initially unaware of, or resistant to, our expectations (for instance, when tutees' expectations are unrealistic, or pedagogically or socially inappropriate). One of the more critical areas of tutor authority at the Center stems from the 'no quick fix' policy. (For various reasons, a new tutee may expect the tutor to edit drafts—while s / he passively sits and waits.) Center tutors self identify as having the capability to foster the long-term knowledge-making process. Thus, they are comfortable with their expectation that tutees will keep their weekly meeting commitments (and with helping the tutees to subscribe to the same expectation).

We claim the right and responsibility to not settle for student passivity (Nelson, p. viii). Instead, tutorials position tutees as informants about courses, tasks, personal reading and writing processes, and tutee-expectations; the tutors are likewise informants, about how the long-term process and the student-driven Center-culture put them in a position to learn how to write, read, and think effectively and efficiently. Tutors follow self-imposed limits as they parcel out descriptions of meta-processes that relate to the specific-task work that tutees hope to accomplish over time.

6. Tutees vs. Students as Informants of Tutor/Student/Teacher/Confidante

Participants in our *Hat* workshop confirmed that tutors are exposed to "moving targets"—in other words, to student demands, behaviors, and needs that change during tutorials, as more about the students' challenges is unearthed.

As confidante, the tutor is privy to a truer range of tutee behaviors than teachers are allowed to view when those same tutees are wearing their student hats (exclusively) with their teachers. Tutees expose their boredom, lack of preparedness, confusion, excitement about course materials, and their frustration with themselves, classmates, and teachers. As tutorials focus on individuals, the tutor can encourage this self exposure, when it is useful.

A cross-hatting tutor can mentor students with deliberate / fluid shifts, where the tutee ends up wearing the hat of authority. (Center tutors can model a number of reading strategies (e.g., scanning, previewing, and reading the conclusion first) and then ask "If I was sitting next to you on the UMass shuttle bus, and I told you that I had that much material to read by Wednesday, which strategies would you tell me to try?) Or, s / he can swap hats to validate the difficulty of the task being tackled, again making the tutee the authority hat wearer, even as the Center tutor carefully alludes to other hats s / he wears with other students, or to struggling with writing her / himself: "You know, I give my students similar instructions [for a written paper assignment]

and they need about a week to understand what is being asked of them. I don't expect them to get it right away, and I'm sometimes glad *I* don't have to write that paper" or, "If you were working with the students in your class, even though you didn't need to write the paper yourself, how would you help them? What would they need to figure out so that they could write the paper?"

Admissions and questions such as these, often impossible in classroom context, position the tutee as informant-with-authority, *even* after self-exposure (e.g., "I haven't kept up with the reading all semester") has occurred.

7. Tutor Discards Association with Teacher/Authority Hat

Furthermore, wearing a tutor hat can open more doors into other types of relevant student knowledge that an instructor hat typically will not grant. The profoundly dialogic nature of one-to-one sessions is grounded in the practice of both participants assuming learner (listener) and teacher (talker) roles (Freire, 1990, p. 67).

Tacit assumptions and other ideological notions of what college is about play a powerful role in every aspect of students' academic performance. For example, studies focusing on beliefs and underlying assumptions of what good writers 'do' underscore the profound impact beliefs have on choices (Nelson, p. viii). Conventional course design and participant structures are not intended to accommodate this kind of disclosure / access (Phillips, 1972). In this respect, instructors are left relying mostly on artifacts like tests and essays. Tutors' epistemological possibilities are not constrained in the same way.

In ongoing relationships, tutees directly inform a tutor's epistemology by divulging crucial information about their beliefs, theories, and values pertaining to reading, writing, and other academic capabilities. Thus, by addressing the writer and the text (Zamel, 1985), tutors and tutees have powerful information that can help overcome obstacles such as writer's block and ineffective reading strategies.

8. Tutee/Informant Plus Tutor/ Informant Equals Writing Center Director/Informed

Tutors inform unofficially because formal channels do not always exist. Tutor authority is not always recognized as exercised. Macauley (2004) reports that tutors at the writing center that he directs subverted a putatively mundane discussion of supplies to respond to his pedagogical guidelines which mandated that tutors read tutees' papers aloud as a way to engage tutees. In this instance, the tutors assert authority through opportunistic resistance, as did Poma.

In Macauley's case, as writing center director, he was able to recognize the tutors' authority and knowledge, and he "began to realize that the training I provided to tutors clearly privileged the verbal, to the exclusion of auditory, tactile, and other learning styles / intelligences" (p. 3). His success relied on the change in hats from director to learner, back to director as he made programmatic changes, and then to informant of the larger tutoring community in *The Writing Lab Newsletter.*

When a tutor observes, listens, and poses appropriate questions, the causes of tutees' strengths and challenges can be named, understood, and addressed effectively. Center-pedagogy recognizes that "we as tutors are neither mind readers nor magicians" (O'Brien, 1993 p. 2).

9. Teacher and Students Wear Informant Hat with Tutor/Workshop Facilitator

When a faculty member requests an in-class workshop, an especially multi-hatted

informant negotiation is initiated. Workshop facilitators possess the authority to set, offer, and propose the level of three-way negotiation. We ask the faculty to clarify and prioritize their expectations for the workshop. We assess these expectations and propose a blueprint that addresses resources, processes, and outcomes. We exercise another aspect of authority when we propose obtaining students' perceptions of the workshop topics and goals. The conventional practice is for faculty to serve as informant to the facilitator. We reverse and even subvert this typically unquestioned solo role by directly soliciting students' input. Often instructors welcome this additional information even though they are surprised when we suggest collecting it. Faculty report that they come to see their students, their teaching, and writing quite differently and profitably.

Our roles as workshop facilitators are the most pliable of our three hats insofar as the participants, context, and purposes are open to variation. Over the past few years the authors have been invited to facilitate a number of end-of-semester General Education Seminar debriefings. When a group of General Education First Year Seminar faculty requested a practical workshop dealing with one-to-one writing conferencing, one of the authors, E. O'Brien, was asked to facilitate. Here, she briefly reflects on the experience as a cross-hatting predicament:

> I was somewhat apprehensive. I wondered which of my hats had gotten me into this situation: Tutor? First Year Seminar Instructor? Debriefer? All? Which hat(s) did the participants expect me to officially wear? These identity-based questions were from more than just from nerves; practical design considerations were embedded in them, too. But first, I needed to negotiate primarily with myself to settle on the order in which I presented these hats since I would simultaneously have all of them. Then, I solicited input from the faculty, the First Year Seminar Coordinator, and my Directors.
>
> Like other workshops and debriefings, we saw this request as an opportunity to show writing as a complex process, advance a model of conferencing as student centered, and highlight the participants' own experiential credibility. Consequently, I opted to simultaneously wear all of my hats during the two sessions. Although apprehensive, I still asserted my facilitator authority to invoke a dialogue rather than a discussion, including asking participants to be informants for me. If I took a more predictable path of expert monologue, my identities, investment, integrity, expertise, and the quality of the workshops would have been compromised.

IV. THE GREENHOUSE: A CONCLUSION WITHOUT CLOSURE

1. 'So What?'

Many readers will recognize 'So what?' as a question that tutors use to help their tutees fully articulate implications in conclusions. We now perceive that, although the identity distortion of tutors is easily undone, the tutor needs a specific expertise / authority to negotiate their composite identity carefully.

In our practice, despite outsider perceptions of tutors as semi-subordinate, tutors wield a great deal of authority to maintain the integrity of tutees' learning processes. Our autoethnography allows us to perceive experiential credibility as stemming from an intricate weaving of the 'Four

I's.' The result is a partial subversion of our initial perception of ourselves as tutors.

With our accumulated knowledge and epistemology we use the full range of tutor hats, particularly as we recalibrate agenda-setting authority when long-term tutees have developed their own authority and knowledge about productive tutorials. Center tutees, apprenticed to hat-switching, multiple authorities, and becoming informants, gradually master this limit-setting and dedication to long-term process.

Center tutors have a profound investment in their role. We could not previously explain why, in a brief scenario (a tutor-tutee role play) for Seminar faculty on the complexities of academic composing and negotiated interactions, we so fully engaged in our purported tutor-tutee roles that one of us ended up teaching the other something unexpected and fundamental. We knew from this recent (2007) experience that we can be real tutors and/or tutees anywhere, anytime, but we did not realize what we do now about the intertwined nature of tutor identity and tutor investment.

2. Roles in Context

We appropriated Murphy's and Sherwood's claim that "*Tutoring is contextual*" (p. 1), and found that 'tutor' and 'tutee' are also contextual and socially constructed.

To what extent is the tutee's witnessing of a tutor navigating a seemingly ambiguous role beneficial? Does this encourage the student to navigate his/her socially constructed, multiple selves? We suspected that a tutor's success (and, in part, identity) is defined by tutee success. However, we did not understand how the successful tutor unifies fragments of roles as s/he participates in tutorials, nor how this modeling allows the tutee to witness a non-authoritative model of a composite, partly academic self. When tutees realize this, they can use the model as a portal, to navigate their own multi-faceted composite tutee/informant/student/worker/family-member/learner/community-member selves (*particularly* at our non-traditional university).

A tutor's authority is contextual and morphs when responding to the moving targets tutees provide as they expose their real concerns and challenges. However, the Center tutor can rarely, if ever, presume to claim 'I'm just the messenger,' insofar as her/his polyglot authority, ability to change hats, and the inherently negotiable nature of tutorials preclude such abandonment.

3. The Insider and Outsider Views of the Center

The view of the Center as Grand Central from the outside has led to a greater recognition of it as a resource for students and faculty. Yet, we have learned that tutor identity and integrity appear differently through the inside lens.

This examination of our insider status has eased our concern about the ways in which we carefully compartmentalize some of our formal roles (for example, as faculty we do not tutor students in our classes, and we afford our students the same privacy with their tutors as any other tutees); yet, we informally switch hats and behaviors in the tutor, teacher, and (especially) facilitator roles. We have come to realize that we recommend that our students become tutees because we view the Center-contact-zone as a greenhouse where natural, productive hybrids-of-roles can be encouraged. And, we hope that our students become ready to formally assume other roles.

We would like to say to fellow tutors: Remember that there's always someone else with as much potential as you in the room and that you might be teaching alongside your former tutee someday. (We have witnessed this.)

4. Further Inquiries

How does the presence of Center-like centers affect student and faculty culture on other campuses? One author often wonders this when she creates Center workshop flyers, and later receives copies of them via a distribution list (in her role as First Year Seminar faculty). What of the apprentices like us, who would not leave the Center? How is a faculty member who retains his / her *formal* tutor hat continually informed and changed by that role? What is the impact of this on our *own* teaching, tutoring, and in-service activities?

There are multiple ways in which we serve as informants to faculty, and some are more direct than others. Through in-class workshops, we tend to indirectly inform instructors not only about their strategies but also about their teaching and curriculum. Faculty responses to our work indicate / confirm they gain greater insight about academic writing, teaching, and their own curriculum from our negotiations and the workshop itself. For example, they have indicated that they would change a writing prompt, or the order of readings, after a workshop. How, in general, has faculty-identity been shaped by increasingly 'present' Center-like centers?

5. To Be Continued

We believe that tutors and centers are dynamic and need continual re-reconceptualization. This belief and the previous account are defiantly optimistic in the face of the larger, less stable context of education. But we are products of our Center-context—rough drafts, continually revising ourselves in the midst of our culture, one that we refuse to sabotage.

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