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THE WRITING CENTER AS A BURKEAN PARLOR, THE
INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND THE DUAL ENGINES
OF POWER: COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Clara Louise Enoch

June 2006

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores where the metaphor of the writing center as a Burkean Parlor breaks down resulting from conflicts due to gender. This thesis further offers suggestions for tutor training that might help us realize, or at least get closer to, the ideal of the writing center as a Burkean Parlor.

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To Deneen, Darryl, and Miesha,
who dedicated precious time so I could pursue my
educational goal.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE WRITING CENTER AS A BURKEAN PARLOR

If Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates were alive and started a dialogue in any setting, the setting and dialogue would work as a "Burkean Parlor." The Burkean Parlor is a metaphor derived from the work of Kenneth Burke. Burke, in his work, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, refers to an ongoing dialogue of scholarship and humanity:

Imagine that you enter a parlor, you come late .
. . you listen for a while, until you decide that
you have caught the tenor of the argument, then
you put in your oar. (110-111)

The metaphor of the writing center as a Burkean Parlor became popular when Andrea Lunsford used the metaphor in her article "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center." Lunsford maintains that writing centers "operate as information stations [called] Burkean Parlor Centers [and] they are regarded as successful collaboration centers" (228-229). The Burkean Parlor metaphor works well for describing the writing center because it explains how collaboration can work in the writing center.

The metaphor fits particularly well in regards to collaboration because of the continuous meetings and conversations going on between participants in the writing center. When tutees enter the parlor of unending conversation, they listen for a while until they decide to converse with the tutors. Ideally, tutors and tutees collaborate and share ideas; then the tutee leaves the writing center and the dialogue in the writing center continues between new tutors and tutees. However, conflict can surface because we are different people, with different cultural backgrounds, religions, races, and, most importantly for this study, genders.

Gender conflict surfaces in the writing center because most tutors are not comfortable dealing with issues such as power struggles between men and women. Gender issues as an inquiry is very important because it will give scholars an awareness that conflict exists. Further, this awareness can lead to a resolution, which in turn can lead to collaboration. Collaboration should work in the writing center if our experiences, cultural background and ideologies about gender issues are compatible, i.e., similar. When these are incompatible, however, conflict arises. Scholars such as Deborah Tannen et al. and *The*

Writing Center Newsletter say gender is an issue in most writing centers. Further investigation also shows that tutors lack sufficient training on how to address gender issues that cause conflict in the writing center.

Thus, while the "Burkean Parlor" metaphor works well to describe a situation where people meet, collaborate, and recognize the ongoing discourse in their field, it is also problematic because it does not address specific sites of conflict (like gender). In this thesis, I have two goals: (1) to explore where the metaphor of the writing center as a Burkean Parlor breaks down due to conflicts because of tutor and tutee's gender; and (2) to offer tutors training suggestions that might help realize, or at least get closer to, the idea of the writing center as a Burkean Parlor.

The Goals of the Writing Center

The ultimate goal of the writing center, basically, is to help students write better. Muriel Harris argues that one way to do this is to allow students to have access to "peer revision, writing communities, and writing resources" (154). By having tutors and tutees learn from each other through collaboration and discussion, writing centers more closely resemble a "Burkean Parlor." Keith

Peterson says that a Burkean Parlor should be a "parlor where various voices can generate a continuing conversation" (194). The writing center tutors help students with various aspects of their papers, including attention to audience, organization, voice, clarity, and style. Teachers that encourage students to use the writing center help both the student and themselves because their students perform better in their classroom. As Harris points out, the writing center can assist in the teaching of writing, rather than having instructors attempt to "go it alone" (154-155). Therefore, the first goal of the writing center is collaboration, even in the sense of how teachers work with tutors.

Collaboration is Essential to the Writing Center

Tutors assisting instructors form a collaborative bond with both the teacher and the tutee. A social bond is formed between tutor and tutee. Therefore, collaboration is a social act and allows the transference of knowledge between them. Collaboration only works when the factors mentioned (such as experiences, cultural background and ideologies) are compatible, or the same. If there is a difference in our background, incompatibility and conflict

often surface. Scholars such as Irene Clark have noted that, "writing center pedagogy advocates a collaborative relationship between tutor and student" (26). She further says, collaboration can lead to understanding the writing process between tutor and tutee, and from this union the tutee can become a "competent writer" (27). Therefore, collaboration is a social act and allows the transference of knowledge between tutor and tutee. Like Clark, Kenneth A. Bruffee also discusses writing as a social act.

Bruffee's Theory of Writing as a Social Act

Bruffee came up with the theory of writing as a "social act" (Stanger 38). His argument says "collaborative learning," or a collaborative relationship, forms part of the social act and acts as a "pedagogical tool" (635). Lunsford solidifies Bruffee's argument, arguing that "knowledge [is] always contextually bound [and is] always socially constructed" (229). The social environment of the writing center provides the tutees and tutors the foundation that is necessary for the tutor and tutee to work together. Bruffee believes that collaboration changes the social context of learning but not the content of learning (4). Bruffee's idea about collaboration as a

social act also includes the art of conversation. In order for a tutor and tutee to work well together (or collaborate), they must converse well.

Similarly, Burke's description of rhetoric parallels Bruffee's idea about collaboration as a social act or conversation. Burke defines rhetoric as:

[T]he [. . .] work (done) by human agents to form attitudes or to introduce actions in other human agents [. . .] (and) the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation (collaboration). (41-43)

In Burke's symbolic view of rhetoric, "persuasion" is the key to conversation and conversation is part of collaboration (41). Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg further explain Burke's idea, writing that "communication and persuasion" can take place where cultural "homogeneity" (is present) among speakers and writers (1201).

Bruffee further says that "the conversation and social act peer tutors engage in with their tutees [. . .] can be emotionally involved, intellectually and substantively focused" (642). The pedagogical tools used by the tutor are enhanced through collaboration, and this can be a great asset to both tutor and tutee. One such tool is one-on-

one-communication. One-on-one communication between tutor and tutee enhances the relationship between the two and allows for a successful exchange of information, because outside influences are either not present, not perceived, or a combination of both.

How Collaboration Should Work

Collaboration works best when the ideologies, cultural backgrounds, religions, races, genders of the tutor and tutee are compatible. One-on-one communication between the tutor and a student (tutee) reduces distance and misunderstanding in relation to a student's work. A one-on-one relationship between tutor and tutee also allows clarification of any misunderstandings. This clarification is possible because the tutor has only one student to focus on at a time rather than several students. Through collaboration, students can obtain valuable feedback on texts. As Harris argues for, tutors collaborate with tutees in such areas as organization, voice, audience, and critical analysis. Lunsford supports Harris' argument when she says collaboration aids in finding problems, the transfer and assimilation of text and "higher achievement

for students" (228). Collaboration can improve the quality of students' work, according to Carol Haviland.

Carol Haviland discussed some of the duties of tutors in her English 530 ("Issues of Tutoring Writing") seminar in 2003, at California State University, San Bernardino. She said that in the writing center a tutor's duty is to deal with all types of writing (from the Arts to the Sciences) by collaborating with tutees. Also according to Haviland, "tutors are readily available to allow each student (tutee) slots of thirty minutes or more, on a one to one basis." A one-on-one tutorial is a great tool when tutor and tutee can collaborate and learn from each other, thereby producing a more enriched paper. Haviland further says tutors are "peers with authority." However, although the authorial position of the tutor usually does not hinder the relationship between the tutor and tutee, it can oftentimes hinder, or affect the relationship when conflicts arise over ideology, race, religion, and especially gender.

Similarly, Rabow et al. discuss how tutors who "work one-on-one with students or even small groups get to experiment in ways that few teachers have the time to" (71). Tutors do not grade student papers, so tutors form a

different relationship with the tutee than the tutee can form with teachers. Therefore, tutees can anticipate that their tutorial relationships with tutors will be more of a "meeting of equals" than are those with classroom teachers. This dynamic of student seeing the tutor as an equal allows the tutor to form a strong bond with their tutees. However, the first goal of the tutor and tutee is to collaborate and have a meeting of the minds, so each will learn from the other. The tutors' "mission is to help clarify what is in the text and facilitate revision without imposing their own ideas" (Shamoon et al. 177).

Collaboration between the tutor and tutee allows learning both ways. Collaborative learning is at its peak level, and persuasion is the goal of the exchange. Tutees and tutors' collaborative efforts will benefit by finding students more attentive to and interested in the construction of texts. Students may be willing to discuss issues that hinder collaboration with tutors they will not discuss with teachers. This view of collaboration, however, is an idealistic one. It does not take into account any conflict, and it is my argument that gender and gender conflict complicates this idealistic view. Therefore, unchallenged assumptions about gender hinder

collaboration and causes conflict. Chapter Two discusses how gender can cause conflict in writing center tutorials.

CHAPTER TWO
HOW GENDER ISSUES CAN CAUSE CONFLICT IN THE
WRITING CENTER

The idealized metaphor of the Burkean Parlor is problematic because "unchallenged assumptions" about gender hinder collaboration and cause conflict. For example, Deborah Tannen says, "to women, conflict is a threat to connection [and] should be avoided at all costs" (392). This can create conflicting feelings in women if they encounter this issue. Tannen further discusses how "men are more comfortable with conflict" (392). This contradictory dichotomy can set up a negative relationship between tutor and tutee, and collaboration can turn into conflict. Tannen's statement points to the possibility that conflict will surface in the writing center because men may feel comfortable dealing with issues of power, whereas women may feel uncomfortable. Conflict in the writing center happens because society inflicts stereotypes on women and men.

Stereotypical Roles

Tannen's argument shows how society can influence the thoughts of men and women by creating and encouraging certain gender stereotypes, such as the idea that men are stronger, less emotional, and better in mathematics and science than women. If men and women believe gender stereotypes, and do not challenge them, conflict surfaces. Therefore, stereotypes can hinder a collaborative relationship and cause conflict in the writing center. Thus, in order to collaborate, or persuade the tutee to accept the speech, attitudes, and ideas of the tutor, both must reach a comfort level. To do this, tutors must recognize their ideas are encroached with societal prejudices against gender differences. Further, both tutor and tutee must have commonalities, or similar social training, backgrounds, or ideologies. This can also affect the seating arrangements of men and women.

Seating Arrangement

Another issue that might cause men and woman to be uncomfortable or at odds with one another is the seating arrangement in the writing center. Nance Buchert says that tutors should "sit next to the students" [tutees], rather than across the table" (7). When a tutor sits in the

middle of the table and the tutee sits at the end of the table, the power distribution is in favor of the tutee. Gender plays into this because if the tutor is a woman and the tutee a male, or the reverse, the woman tutee might feel intimidated. Further, the man tutor may feel the distribution of power is totally in his favor. This is possible because of societal stereotype, about the distribution of power being in favor of the man. Buchert further expresses that when the student sat across the table "he found himself giving a lecture" (7). Moreover, when a tutee feels that the tutor is an authority figure instead of a collaborative partner, confusion may surface, which itself can lead to conflict. Buchert's summation, however, is that by not sitting next to the tutee, the tutor did not show the tutee that he was interested in the tutee's work. Clearly the seating arrangement can lead to arguments and disagreements if tutor and tutee become uncomfortable with each other.

Arguments and Disagreements

Upon entering the writing center, a tutee might experience emotional conflict because arguments or disagreements may be going on between the participants or genders. The argument or disagreement may be because of a

mental struggle between men or women due to various influences such as culture, ideologies and assumptions about each other. The act of clashing, opposition, or conflict can often cause aggravation by a collision of ideas, or elevated language caused by a heated debate. Often the participants are uneasy because they are concerned that even in an argument they will say the wrong thing. This scenario fits in with Tannen's theory, that women see conflict as a threat to their need to connect to others, and men see conflict as necessary. Moreover, the argument may label men/women as gender biased. A second goal of the writing center is to encourage conversation between the participants to achieve a collaborative relationship.

Keith Peterson says the "writing center is a place where various voices can generate a continuing conversation" (194). However, the various voices that enter the center may enter "defensively" because of gender stereotypes and show uncertainty about the new format, and this causes conflict (194). Further, conflict can hinder collaboration, which is an essential element when working in the writing center (Peterson 194). According to Flynn, men and women are biologically different and the

difference can lead to arguments and disagreements.

Flynn's argument parallels Geoffrey A. Cross's conclusion to a study that he conducted. Cross also says, "men and women's different, clashing perspectives may have been due in part to cultural and/or biological determinants" (83). Therefore, according to Cross and Flynn, men and women are biologically different emotionally and this can cause gender conflict.

Flynn's article says that, "feminist research and theory emphasize males and females differ in their emotional development [. . .]" and in their emotional "interaction with others" (245). Flynn's theory reinforces the idea of women and men having inherited tendencies to converse differently both verbally and through written work. Therefore, according to Flynn, women and men are not culturally or socially motivated toward gender roles, but inherit them. Consequently, some tutors may enter the writing center with the idea that they are exempt from conflicts because of gender issues. This can add additional stress to the writing center because gender issues in fact exist.

When tutors or tutees enter the writing center thinking they are exempt from conflict because of gender

issues, collaborative efforts can fail. Clark's analogy is, "as much as one might believe in the value of collaborative learning, it is not always easy to achieve" (26). John Trimbur agrees with Clark's analogy and says, "tutoring [. . .] requires a balancing act that asks tutors to juggle roles, to shift identity" (25). This is almost impossible to maintain on a continuous basis. Moreover, students want to see improvements in their work and often pressure the tutors to inject more of their thoughts than the writing center rules allow. This can hinder collaboration between the tutor and tutee. In addition, when this dynamic encounters stereotypical gender roles additional stress often surfaces. The stereotypical roles include the issue of power and the idea that women are more emotional and men more logical. Stereotypes about the tutor or tutee may surface between either, causing conflicting feelings. If the tutor is a man and the tutee a woman, the tutor may expect the woman to react emotionally when the tutor critiques the tutee's work. If the tutor is a woman, the male tutee may reject the ideas of the female because he believes the woman is emotional and not logical. Additional stress can cause collaboration to be unsuccessful. Conflict can surface and

disrupt the equal distribution of power necessary between tutor and tutee.

Equal Distribution of Power

Gender issues can further hinder collaboration if the tutor and tutee do not have an equal distribution of power. Stereotypical gender roles can hinder the distribution of power, because society teaches that men should be powerful and women less assertive. Equal distribution, however, does not mean the tutee sees the tutor totally on the tutee's level. Tutees look up to tutors because of the knowledge the tutors possess. Tutors by the authority given them by administrators and teachers are in a position of power. However, the fact that tutors do not grade papers levels the relationship between tutor and tutee, and the tutee may not feel intimidated by the position of power the tutor holds. However, if the tutor is a man, the woman tutee might feel threatened because she thinks the tutor has power in his position. The woman tutee may feel a further threat because the tutor's position of power resembles the position of her father, husband, or boyfriend. If the tutor is a woman, the man tutee may not take the suggestions of his tutee seriously and this will hinder collaboration and cause conflict. These issues cause men

and women to be uncomfortable with each other. All of these issues surface because of how society socializes men and women into gender roles.

Research on Gender Socialization

Tannen's research on how society socializes men and women into gender roles is discussed in her book Gender and Discourse (1994). According to Tannen, males and females are "treated and socialized differently" in society and consequently men and women respond to different communication styles (5). Different communication styles can cause conflict, because the participants may misunderstand each other. Rafoth et al. conducted studies that applied specifically to the issue of gender in the writing center. Their findings suggested that gender bias is prevalent after birth, and males are favored over females in both eastern and western societies (1-5).

In almost all societies, women's socialization into gender roles tends to favor the men. Helene Cixous argues that "masculinity and femininity" are "culturally constructed [. . .] from birth" (Bizzell 1521). As outlined above, the style of writing depends upon the context of our speech and is often dictated or controlled

by the relationship between gender and language. Beauvoir agrees with Tannen, Cixous and Rafoth et al, when she asserts, "the sovereignty of the father is a fact of social origin" (44). Sigmund Freud also solidifies Beauvoir and Tannen's argument when he says, "fathers should take precedence over the mother" (44).

The ideologies that Tannen and Cixous et al.'s discuss about socialization can cause tensions between men and women. This could also sabotage the collaborative relationship between tutor and tutee in the writing center if either harbors these beliefs. Rafoth et al.'s study showed how socialization of gender bias happens when an infant's exposure to gender biases starts and the exposure continues throughout their lives. Rafoth et al. further agrees that socialization starts from infancy when "males [in] baby pictures are often active, and the females in baby picture[s] are often seen asleep" (1-5).

Socialization into gender roles continues throughout the lives of both men and women, causing conflict for both.

Additionally, parents and society often socialize and prepare little girls for matrimony and children. Such socialization includes encouragement of the girl's playing with dolls, easy bake ovens, toy vacuum cleaners, toy

brooms, and mops. Girls receive encouragement from society and parents that they must act like a woman. Parents often tell girls they are "sugar, spice and everything nice." On the other hand, mothers, fathers, schoolteachers, ministers, sport coaches and others encourage males as children "not to cry because men don't cry" (Cross 83). Females are encouraged to express their emotions openly. Crying is encouraged as a means of expression, and is encouraged by both men and women. This fits in with Flynn's theory that men and women differ in their emotional development. However, this is not biological as Flynn suggests, but cultural as Tannen suggests.

Tannen also says that culture plays a part in how boys and girls are socialized into gender roles, and subsequently how boys and girls are treated. According to her theory, a little boy receives nurturing from his mother and his father dotes on him. Further, boys are encouraged to be "masculine"; parents tell them that they are "rags, tags, and puppy dog tails" and reward their aggressive behavior (Tannen 2). However, little girls are encouraged to be "assertive" or "passive" and not "aggressive" (Rafoth et al. 2). Society gives boys the description of handsome and little girls the descriptions of "cute, pretty,

beautiful, or gorgeous" (Tannen 2). Boys are encouraged to play hard, dangerous, contact sports such as football and baseball, and to play with toy guns and trucks. However, girls are not encouraged to play these dangerous sports, and this makes the girl the "other." Margaret O. Tipper says, boys may "experience the 'other' as either a rival or a comrade, a tendency to black and white thinking" (35-37). The theories of Tipper and Tannen's point to some of the reasons little girls are not encouraged to play some sports.

Ashton-Jones believes such gender-based behaviors have the "potential to reinforce [for some] and subvert [for others] the goals of collaborative learning" (11). Women also experience biases from each other in society because women buy into the stereotypical roles without challenging them. Usually women show gender biases without thought to their actions, which leads to gender conflict. Women are often harder on each other than they are on men in society. For example, a woman tutor may expect a woman tutee to understand the rules of writing better than a man tutee. Further, a woman tutee may believe the stereotypical gender roles and expect the woman tutee to be more emotional than

a male tutee. M. Singh says this scenario happens in the classroom.

According to Singh, a growing volume of literature suggests that gender conflict issues underlie numerous classroom activities. The example Singh uses to back up her argument is from a study conducted by McAuliffe and Kamler (1993). They suggest that the portrayal of characters in children's writing often reflects gender stereotypes. In addition, in a 1996 report Singh investigated individual beliefs about the dominance or subordination of particular genders. The report analyzed which gender receives more attention by having their ideas listened to, accepted, or ignored in student discussions (1).

Singh's investigation and findings strengthened her belief that "un-facilitated group discussions may therefore reinforce gender stereotypes among students" (Alvermann et al. 1996). Singh's argument is similar to Purcell-Gates's when she says, "without some intervention, unstructured language-learning situations may actually encourage children to reproduce gender stereotypes" (1). This reproduction, if played out in the writing center, could hinder collaboration and cause conflict. This is because, as Ashton-Jones suggests, women have to rise to the

dominance of men. Ashton-Jones also says that in a "mixed group males may dominate discussions and decision[s] [and this could] silence the other gender" (11). Therefore, preparing different genders to take on different roles should fall on the shoulders of educators. This happens because of how gender's socialization prepares them to have unrealistic expectations of each other.

Unrealistic Expectations

Sometimes collaboration stalls, or is difficult to achieve when tutors or tutees have anxieties or unrealistic expectations about gender. Unrealistic expectations can surface if tutors and tutees are of different genders and if either expects the other to write as if the tutee is the same gender as the tutor. Jerome Rabow et al. discuss how "tutoring is easiest and most beneficial for both parties when these expectations are left at the door" (105). Unrealistic expectations are not always easy to eradicate, or change.

Further, when the tutor or tutee rejects the idea that unrealistic expectations exist, it can cause a power struggle. Moreover, a power struggle between the tutor and tutee in any dynamic may solidify the impression that gender bias is present. However, what the tutee/tutor sees

as gender bias may not be present; rather, what may exist is a misunderstanding because of different communication styles between the two, which causes conflict as Sheffman suggested. A power struggle between the tutor and tutee may inhibit the trusting relationship that the tutor and tutee needs to have to work together. Tutors and tutees need to form a constructive relationship. If tutors and tutees do not form a constructive relationship while working together in the writing center, they face conflict. Tutors may not recognize conflicting gender issues, such as the distribution of power, or other stereotypes mentioned earlier. Therefore, research on gender issues such as gender and language is invaluable.

Research on Gender and Language

Nick Cipollone et al. says that "research in language and gender issues analyze the role of language by defining, constructing, and reproducing gendered identities" (393). Cipollone et al., also suggest that the classification of gender does not mean men are doing one thing and women another. The scenario is men and women are culturally motivated to fit into certain classified roles, like those described by Tannen. The cultural motivation men and women

experience can lead to different conversational patterns. Language and motives are inextricably linked and through analysis, one may discover that a speaker's/tutors motive can be analyzed through their rhetorical actions.

Western society culturally motivates men to have a specific language (learned on the sports field) that women must learn in order to be successful. This affects how society will accept the issues of gender. Ashton-Jones specifies in her article that the specific language of men give men a position of power. Women have to strive for this level of power throughout their lives. However, young men are culturally encouraged to learn the language of power in their formative years - in sports, and other bonding rituals.

Harris and Ashton-Jones make a similar argument that women write differently from men. Therefore, women have to adjust their learning and writing styles to a male dominated rhetoric in order to succeed in college. Research done by the University of California Los Angeles, reported the majority of "men rate themselves as above average," but "only a few women rated themselves above average" (Longman 1). In addition, the study suggested men probably overstate their abilities and women probably

understate them due to cultural indoctrination. According to Cixous, "women must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing from which they have been driven away" (qtd. in Annas 7).

Women usually start learning the language of power when they enter into academia or into the work force. Some studies have also suggested that men interrupt women in speaking more often than women interrupt men. This characteristic of men interrupting to gain power during a conversation may be dangerous, even damaging to a writing center's atmosphere. What happens during a collaborative task is a dialogue between men and women's language. Based on the work of Tanner et al., we would expect that male language would dominate the new social structure of the peer-learning group. This is correctible by the lack of a patriarchal presence, "teaching," and the presence of strong and vocal women [. . .] in the group who can give women's language the power to replace men's language (31). Other research, showing the effect gender has on conversational patterns showed disparities.

Research on How Gender Affects Conversational Patterns

Observations on different conversational patterns in the speech and written work of men and women showed other disparities in the writing of men and women. Ann Levine's argument is that "women use certain [conversational] patterns significantly more often than men and vice versa" (139). The pattern of conversation undertaken by men allows them a position of power, which can silence the female voice. Carol Stanger's idea is that "many critical and historical feminist studies deal with the silencing of women [. . .] under patriarchy" (32). She also analyzes how women write and never reach their "full potential because female energies were drawn off by husbands, fathers, children, and a patriarchal literary tradition" (32). Other researchers, such as Pamela J. Annas, discuss how gender affects conversation and how this can cause conflict.

Research on how gender affects conversation is included in Annas' rhetoric. Annas' argument is similar to both Levine's and Stanger's when she discusses the literary tradition. In Annas' 1984 article, "Silences: Feminist Language Research and the Teaching of Writing," she says,

"Women [. . .] have been mute, and it is doubtless by virtue of this mutism that men have been able to speak and write" (8). Annas believes that men learned to write because society has knowingly or unknowingly stifled women's voices.

Ashton-Jones noted that gender might "influence the writing process and written text of women students" which in turn can impede this equality, or equilibrium and cause conflict between men and women (7). Burke also explains how gender influences writing style. Burke, however, suggests men's and women's verbal skills parallel each other. Ashton-Jones and Burke both agree how gender conflict surfaces.

According to Burke, men and women are biologically equipped with the same verbal skills, but can be motivated through socialization to communicate differently. Bruffee says, "to think well [as a group] we must learn to converse well" (399). In order to avoid some of the conflict men and women must learn to converse well together. Rafoth et al., in the November 1999 issue of *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, discuss how often we are concerned that something we say might offend someone present. However, when gender issues such as miscommunication are present,

collaboration stalls and the writing center faces conflict. Moreover, the lack of a patriarchal presence, "teaching," and the presence of strong and vocal women in the group can combine to give women's language the power to surface and to replace men's language, causing further conflict (31).

When a man interrupts a mixed-gender conversation, it will possibly cause conflict and hinder collaboration. This can happen because a female tutor or tutee may feel intimidated if the interruption silences her voice. Women often feel alienated from the community, and their reality. In writing or conversing, women should be able to be both who they are and who they are not (to write like a woman or man) and not have to suffocate their voices. When women suffocate their voice in order to survive in society, truth (which means that women are a social group and respond to their environment differently than men) is stifled.

Stifling the truth happens when society negates the talents of one group - women - to pamper the ego of another group--men. This suffocation is often unconscious, so both men and women tutors may be unaware of the cultural process. Moreover, men may be unconscious of the implications of cultural suffocation some women experience because of their gender. Therefore, the result of the

research shows issues of gender can affect the collaborative relationship between men and women in the writing center. Therefore, tutors need to be aware of the writing needs of both genders.

How the Preceding Research Plays out in the Writing Center

An article by Muriel Harris in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* discusses how research on gender issues affects the writing styles of males and females. Further, styles are beginning to vary "according to the gender of the student or teacher" (306). Grossman and Grossman report in Gender Issues in Education (1994) that the burden to prepare the genders to fulfill different roles should fall on the shoulders of educators. This is because there are underlying physiological differences between the sexes.

Conflict and unrealistic expectations will surface if participants [tutees] enter the writing center with the kinds of expectations about gender that Bruffee and Tipper et al. discuss. Further, women who take a submissive role can undermine the authority they have as tutors in the writing center. Men may overemphasize their importance because of the "cultural" indoctrinations they receive from

parents and society. This will bridge a gap between the tutor and tutee. Finally, the relationship between tutor and tutee should be equal.

Ashton-Jones noted that knowledge and production are distributed "in an unequal, exclusionary social order and embedded in hierarchical reactions of power" (5). Research shows that the creation of power between two individuals can often form from a hierarchical relationship. The goal, however, is to avoid any hierarchical relationship and to form a relatively equal relationship between tutors and tutees. These hierarchical relationships can form if tutor and tutee are unaware of the struggle and fail to find a way to overcome these issues and collaborate successfully. Otherwise, tutor and tutee will remain in a conflicting relationship. Collaborating and working together allows the tutor and tutee to learn from each other. Some conflict surfaces because of the encouragement of men tutor to other men tutors as Ashton-Jones discusses.

In a group setting according to Ashton-Jones, "men subtly encourage women to act 'feminine' and men to adopt 'masculine,' more directive behaviors" (11). Ashton-Jones goes further to say such gender-based behaviors have the potential to "reinforce" (for some) and "subvert" (for

others) the goals of collaborative learning (11). Tutors could fall in line with certain educators to continue this phenomenon to which Ashton-Jones, refers or they could subscribe to the notions of other educators who are trying to change the imbalance between genders in academic settings. If educators prepare students to fall into androgynous roles, the possibility of true collaboration between tutor and tutee is much more likely.

The writing center tutors lack awareness about gender issues. Possibly one reason is that some administrators are uncomfortable discussing the issues. Another reason may be that a writing center administrator did not have sufficient training to teach tutors how to successfully deal with gender issues. Some educators are still struggling to find a balance in helping students, between being active versus being passive in student discussions on gender issues. Promoting sensitivity to gender-specific behaviors will help teachers to realize that there are often more differences within each gender group than between them.

Chapter Three analyzes how to offset gender conflict to produce better collaboration, and gives recommendations for dealing with gender conflicts.

CHAPTER THREE
HOW TO OFFSET GENDER CONFLICT TO PRODUCE
BETTER COLLABORATION

To offset gender conflict in the writing center and produce better collaboration, administrators need to recognize and challenge assumptions about gender. Further, administrators need to discuss these issues in meetings. According to Michel Foucault, "the power of dialogue, is not from a hierarchical flow, but is heteronymously distributed and available to all, male and female" (31). If we follow this idea in the writing center, then discussing the issues during meetings Administrators and tutors will find a resolution. In addition, administrators should include gender issues in tutor training. Peterson says that, "only through recognition of and argument over differences, can conflict be resolved into homonymous like-mindedness" (11).

Training Tutors How to Deal with Conflict
Because of Gender Issues

We need to train tutors to deal with gender issues that arise because of gender conflict, and stereotypical roles.

Recognizing gender issues is the first step administrators should discuss with other administrators and tutors. One way to accomplish this is by Belenky et al. rhetoric. Belenky et al. says men's socialization in American culture is toward "decision making based on abstract applied principles." Women, however, are more concerned with relationships between people than with abstract principles. Training can offset this difference.

> In addition, discussing stereotypes, finding solutions to offset stereotypes, and training tutors on how to recognize and deal with these issues are crucial. One way administrators can encourage women tutors who are struggling with gender conflict during training is to discuss how they can strive for empowerment. Administrators can also make men tutors aware of the issues men bring with them to the tutoring relationship because of cultural indoctrinations, and stereotypes.

Communicating gender issues parallels the idea of providing training for tutors in the writing center. Irene Clark (1998) suggests "role-play" as part of the training strategy administrator's use in Writing Center: Teaching in a Writing Center Setting. Clark says "role-play" is when another person's behavior is imitated in order to gain

awareness, learn a skill, or anticipate problematic situation[s]" (34). As Clark suggests, role-play is an excellent tool to cover gender issues that surface in the writing center. Further, it can advocate communication by tutors on gender problems, and allow administrators and tutors to discuss conflicting gender issues and find solutions. This training will help tutors feel comfortable dealing with gender issues when they surface. Another tool administrators can use to help offset gender issues is a well written training manual.

Therefore, to avoid conflict or unsuccessful collaboration, the writing center should strive for an equal distribution of power between women and men, as discussed in chapter two, and train tutors. The equal distribution of power will encourage a collaborative effort between the tutor and tutee. Bruffee discusses how collaborative learning provides a social context in which students can experience and practice the kinds of conversations valued by college teachers (642). Bruffee's ideas, as well as those of other theorists such as Lunsford and Burke, can encourage collaboration because tutor and tutee will communicate better, thus encouraging collaboration.

However, as Carol A. Stanger's article says, this equal distribution of power "is in the negotiation" between the moral values of men and women (and) "reflect [s] gender differences" (41). The equal distribution of power will allow a collaborative effort between the tutor₇ and tutee only if negotiations on how to deal with gender conflict is handled successfully. In order to offset issues of gender, tutors will need sensitivity training. The value of the writing center's group work approach suggests a way to mend the gender issues that can help students to form a collaborative relationship by teaching each other.

The next section will analyze how existing manuals cover the issue of gender conflict and what their authors suggest for correcting these issues.

Existing Training Manuals

Training manuals are readily available and can help tutors with questions concerning the rules of the writing center. However, many such texts have insufficient coverage of gender issues and conflict in the writing center. The texts I am analyzing are; *Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference*, by Muriel Harris; *Tutoring Matters: Everything you Always Wanted to Know About how to Tutor*, by

Jerome Rabow, Tiffani Chin & Nima Fahimian; and *The Center Will Hold*, edited by Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinkead.

Harris' Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference (1986) is part history, part theory, and part training manual for new and seasoned tutors. The book's historical background about the writing center and the tutoring process was informative and easy to follow. Theories are easy to understand and all tutors should be encouraged to read the book. As Harvey Kiel says, "it grounds itself firmly in empirical research data while, at the same time, it situates tutoring within a wide matrix of information and research styles" (77). Although Harris's book was the easiest to read and understand for a non-tutor, gender issues and strategies of dealing with these issues were insufficiently covered.

Jerome Rabow, Tiffani Chin, and Nima Fahimian's Tutoring Matters: everything you always wanted to Know about how to tutor (1999) covers "attitudes, anxieties, and expectations" of the tutor and tutee. It also successfully covers in twenty-five pages how to "build relationships," "teaching techniques," and how to deal with "race, gender, class and background differences." This manual is for the

seasoned as well as the new tutor. The scholarship covers the experience of over a hundred tutors. The manual is easy to read and understand, and is likely to prepare tutors to learn about themselves. However, as in Harris's text, gender issues are not sufficiently covered.

Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinkead The Center Will Hold (2003), won the Writing Program Administration award for 2003, and the IWCA outstanding book award on writing research. The book covers ten essays dealing with technical writing, composition, other fields, and discusses the financial problems the writing center will possibly face in the future. In the book Rebecca Jackson et al.'s article titled "Reshaping the Profession," discusses gender approach to administration as part of a seminar for graduate students at Syracuse University (139). However, the book does not discuss gender awareness.

Recommendations

Training on gender specific issues should be included in each writing center administrator's curriculum.

Training manuals are important to both new and experienced tutors because of issues that may surface in the writing classroom. With inadequate training in handling problems

that surface because of gender stereotypes, conflict surfaces. Tutors need to have a central source of written material, or a policy and procedure manual, which will act as an authorizing agent for tutors working with tutees in the writing center. If the writing centers all share the same manual, tutors could easily transfer between college and university knowing the central rules. A written policy and procedure manual would also have a "concentrated source of information about tutor training practices" (Kiel 74). Additionally, it would protect colleges and universities were they to face complications relating to gender issues.

Further, not only should teachers discuss issues of gender conflict in their English 530 ("Issues in Tutoring Writing") or equivalent classes, they should also analyze the different approaches they have been using to discuss these issues in their classrooms, as well as in the writing center. Teachers and writing center administrators should also explore the validity of other perspectives by collaborating regularly with writing center administrators from colleges and universities on issues of gender conflict. In addition, it is important for administrators to include gender scholarship in the weekly or monthly meetings held for tutors. For example, one way for tutors

and administrators to discuss gender issues is by including role-play as a means of solving conflicts that surface. Role-play can address conflicts that surface because of seating, power struggles, misunderstandings and other problems that tutors and tutees bring with them when they enter the writing center.

William Covino's article, "The Art of Wondering: A Revisionist Return to the History of Rhetoric," (1988) says we carry with us all the academic and historic baggage that may necessarily inform our learning and comprise the context within which we perceive anything (126). Administrators, teachers, and tutors can eliminate some academic and historic baggage if they are aware of gender issues. Writing centers need to acknowledge the differences in the cultural background of tutors and tutees to collaborate successfully. To eliminate some of the issues that cause conflict in some writing centers, such as stereotypes, conversation patterns and comfort levels, schools should also train teachers to deal with these issues. Donna J. Qualley, suggest that what needs to happen to transform a powerless group into power "is a raised consciousness" (31). Teachers and parents should be encouraged to be gender neutral and taught how to encourage

- boys to show emotions and girls to be more assertive. Children's education should include how to recognize issues of gender and how to deal with gender conflict. This scenario will help eliminate some of the problems associated with gender issues in the writing center.

During a conference at the Purdue writing center Harris says forty-three people attended and "overwhelmingly agreed that gender influence tutoring sessions" (4). The result of my research also agrees with Harris' findings; gender does influence the collaborative relationship between tutor and tutee. Grimm says "tutors rarely have time to analyze the conflicts that underlie the writing struggles that bring students to the writing center in the first place" (207). Adding gender conflict to the situation can further create conflict that hinders collaboration.

Eliminating some of the gender issues that stall collaboration will help both the tutor and tutee to produce a more effective piece of writing. According to Lunsford and Bruffee, collaboration can create excellence, but two of the three texts that I critiqued in this chapter did not sufficiently answer questions on how to resolve gender issues that might cause conflict during collaboration.

Rabow et al.'s Tutoring Matters: Everything you Always Wanted to Know About How to Tutor, does, however, cover issues of gender, and some of the anxieties both tutors and tutees experience. The writing center administrator can resolve most of the issues about gender conflict that a tutor brings into the writing center.

The suggestion here is that current writing center manuals should include gender role-play scenarios. Role-play can be done by either script or video. Furthermore, if administrators are currently working on a publication, it should include gender issues. Training manuals covering issues of gender are important to new tutors and trained tutors. Tutors struggling with gender conflict issues should have a central source of written material, or a policy and procedure manual. This manual can act as an authorizing agent for tutors if and when easy access to administrators or peers is not possible. Further suggestions would be to cover gender issues at each monthly meeting held in the writing center, and to include these issues in training classes for tutors.

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