

MAKING QUALITY CONTACT IN THE WRITING CENTER: A COLLECTIVE CASE
STUDY OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WRITING CONSULTANTS' DISCOURSE
COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND GENRE KNOWLEDGE

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the first writing centers were established on college and university campuses, their directors have struggled to convince others of the writing center's role as more than a "fix-it shop" for editing mistakes. Given that campus-wide writing centers are available for stakeholders from various disciplinary discourse communities to use, the consultants who work in these centers can expect to encounter different discipline-specific genres. Yet, many writing centers are staffed only with generalist consultants who have expertise in a specific disciplinary discourse community and who lack familiarity with other discipline-specific genres. Accordingly, these centers might not make a convincing argument that they can provide quality feedback on any writing task they encounter.

This study documented two generalist writing center consultants' experiences working with business students on their discipline-specific writing tasks. It utilized a qualitative case study design to gain insight into the consultants' feedback both before and after they explored business discourse by either observing a business classroom or reading sample business documents for approximately one month. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the consultants that elicited information about their academic and business genre knowledge, their experiences with academic and business discourse communities, their goals and objectives as writing center consultants, and their feelings of self-efficacy when working with unfamiliar genres and disciplinary discourse communities. Additional data came from consultant reflections in their

consultation session write-ups and field notes one consultant made during classroom observations. Data were also collected through interviews with the business students' Professor. These interviews provided information about the quality of feedback in the consultation sessions from the perspective of a member of the business discourse community.

Overall, the consultants' discourse community knowledge from either observing the business classroom or reading sample business documents did not enhance their business genre knowledge, as they did not make more connections in their final sessions between the form and content of the business students' writing tasks. Ultimately, this study provides an opportunity to discuss how re-envisioning the writing center as a "discourse zone" is appropriate for socio-epistemic writing center pedagogy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This project arose out of multiple motivations: the desire to understand better the kind of writing instruction that occurs in a non-English course in which students complete multiple writing projects, an interest in qualitative research that comes from my belief that writing is a social practice, and a more discipline-specific follow-up on previous writing center discourse analysis research that I have conducted. The fundamental question that motivates my research is how genre knowledge intersects with the feedback quality that generalist tutors provide on discipline-specific writing tasks. Ultimately, this study raises more questions than answers, but that is the nature of the kind of qualitative research conducted. I hope, however, that the questions raised can be put to practical use in writing center settings, or any other setting where individuals are exchanging ideas about their writing, by encouraging tutors, tutees, and teachers to ask some foundational questions about genre and discourse communities when talking about writing.

As I looked over guides and manuals written especially for tutors working in writing centers, as well as teachers who wanted to improve individual conferences about their students' writing, I was struck by how little attention was given to the concept of "genre," "genre knowledge," and "discourse community." In these books, there is an overwhelming emphasis on reducing a one-sided authority in the tutorial session and on discussing writing as a process. While these are both important concepts for tutors to understand, the noticeable absence (and at

times an overt admonishment) of discussing writing as a product gave me pause. The oft-cited Stephen North quote, “our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (446) is used in the writing center literature to endorse what I imagine must mean that tutors aim to effect more sustainable change than simply offering advice on one writing task during one specific session. Writing centers are likely concerned that to promote the production of better writing and not better writers might encourage others to view the center as a mere proof-reading service; or tutees might become dependent on their tutors for help on future tasks; or, worse yet, it might urge centers to ensure that the students’ writing is better (for the sake of their reputations) and open the door for the unethical situations in which tutors appropriate and actually write parts of a text for a tutee.

Given these issues of respect, dependency, and ethics, I understand why so many writing centers would abide by North’s mantra. Yet, this idea that writers and writing can be created separately perplexes me, because I believe that the two are intimately connected and cannot be independently affected -- a belief that is very much in line with genre theory. According to genre theorists, the form of a document depends on its socio-rhetorical context (see Bawarshi and Reiff 9). The text takes shape because of the content that the writer chooses to include. To affect the writer is then necessarily to affect the writing; thus it does not make sense to conduct a writing center session on the notion that consultants will focus on improving writers and not also the writing. To subscribe to this philosophy essentially is to believe that tutors can influence major change in a tutee that will last beyond the single tutorial session, but without having to focus on

the final product. How, then, are student writers to know that they are “better” writers if not but by an evaluation of their written products? I believe that the division leads to confusion for multiple stakeholders -- tutors, tutees, and teachers -- and it perpetuates the stereotype that writing center scholars have been struggling against for decades: that of the writing center as a “fix-it shop” or “grammar garage.” Focusing on the product *as well as* the writer in the tutorial session, rather than *only* the writer, provides an opportunity to discuss both the reader’s and the writer’s perspective. This dual focus means, of course, that the right questions must be asked, but at least the tutor will not be in the wrong to discuss her feedback in terms of the writer and the writing.

Particularly for campus-wide writing centers, meaning those centers that hold their doors open to students who write at any level from any discipline across campus, genre and discourse community are critical components of any session -- whether such concepts are explicitly discussed or not. In other words, student writers bring specific genres with them into writing centers, and they write in response to specific discourse communities. To avoid discussing these topics almost seems impossible if there is to be any kind of meaningful dialogue about what the tutee hopes to accomplish with his or her text. Yet, when participants are unfamiliar with different genres and the conventions of different discourse communities, the dialogue is often less than meaningful.

Because writing center scholars themselves realize that much of the research that exists in the literature on tutoring, conferencing, peer groups, and writing fellows programs is so often

“built on theoretical discussions or pedagogical recommendations rather than actual research” (McAndrew and Reigstad 8), I also became interested in conducting empirical research that studied tutoring to learn about its effectiveness, not simply to discuss it. More specifically, I set out to explore the discourse of generalist writing center tutors (tutors who work in a campus-wide writing center and hold themselves out as experts in English academic writing) during their interactions with students who bring in discipline-specific writing tasks. I believe that this type of research is necessary to raise awareness about writing centers as more than the go-to place for proofreading help. Operating on lore maintains exclusivity, in that the only ones who pay the most attention to the anecdotes are the ones who need the least convincing about the writing center as a *zone of proximal development* -- an idea that I come back to in the conclusion.

This dissertation is a collective case study that ultimately has two purposes: the first purpose is to tell the story of the somewhat limited growth of two generalist tutors (from this researcher’s perspective) from the first time they meet with business students in the writing center until the final tutorial session they have with the business students one month later. The second purpose is to make a case for a re-conceptualization of tutor training in campus-wide writing centers, and there are several “characters” involved in the argument. These characters represent the various stakeholders who stand to gain from a writing center that is aware of genre and discourse community theories and that seeks to apply these theories when interacting with student writers and faculty from across campus. I draw on the data of two case studies that follow generalist tutors working with business students in the campus-wide writing center.

In Chapter Two, I describe some of the qualitative research that has been done on tutoring in writing centers and Writing Fellows Programs to discuss what these studies look like, as well as the conclusions they support. Many of these studies involve non-native English speakers in their research design, which also influenced my decision to focus on native English speakers in this study's empirical research design. Chapter Two also introduces the theoretical framework that I use to design my study: discourse community and genre theories. Next, in Chapter Three I describe the setting, participants, data collection, and analysis methods for conducting the case studies. I describe the discourse communities to which the participants belong, the genres with which they are familiar with, and the different ways the tutors learn about their tutees' discourse communities. I introduce my research questions, which explore the differences in generalists' genre knowledge as they access a new discourse community in different ways, as well as sub-issues of changes in confidence, directive comments, and feedback quality.

In Chapter Four, I analyze the data collected from the first recorded tutorial sessions between the generalists and the business students. I specifically note the instances in the conversation where the tutors demonstrate their authority, as well as where they exhibit the least authority. Throughout the analysis, I incorporate feedback from a content expert in the business discourse community, as well as my own research on genre and discourse community theory, to suggest what might contribute to the tutors' expression of authority or lack thereof. I also examine some missed opportunities for furthering the students' writing development. In Chapter Five, I analyze the data collected from the second recorded tutorial session between the

generalists and business students. This session takes place after the tutors have engaged with the business discourse community in different ways, and I explore the same kinds of issues as I do in the first tutorial session. That is, I analyze the data for instances where the tutors demonstrate their authority or lack of confidence, and with the assistance of an expert in the business discourse community, I explore what these instances indicate about the tutors' discipline-specific feedback. I discuss in this chapter how the tutors' different ways of experiencing the business discourse community seem to have affected how they read and responded to the discipline-specific writing tasks.

From the data presented in these two chapters, one can begin to understand the challenges facing a traditionally staffed and trained campus-wide writing center that works with discipline-specific writing tasks. Ultimately, my findings from Chapters Four and Five suggest ways writing centers can introduce new tutor training strategies while building stronger interdisciplinary relationships with faculty and students across campus. Chapter Six presents the major assertions and implications of the results, as I suggest that the foundation of these interdisciplinary relationships is an understanding of genre and discourse communities. I also suggest that writing centers can strengthen these relationships by training tutors who are expert at analyzing writing goals in multiple contexts, rather than a single context. I make an argument against the dichotomous thinking about content and form which provides feedback about writing as though a single standard applies. This kind of feedback does not explain how and why knowledge of the subject matter affects the written discourse features.

Specifically, Chapter Six lays out a future research agenda for writing centers that begins by re-imagining the writing center as a “disco zone.” I draw on the concept of naming a writing program discussed in *Design Discourse*, in which Knieval, et al. write that “the archaeology of a program name can be uniquely generative as a site of research, a catalyst for institutional critique, and, consequently, a means of reclaiming a name and program” (21). Because writing centers embrace collaboration and shared knowledge between participants, advocating explicit discussions about the discourse communities with which student writers are more familiar serves two goals: first, it allows student writers to contribute their expert knowledge to the conversation; second, it provides a clear social context for the discussion which avoids the implicit lesson that one universal way of “good writing” exists. I believe that future research should also explore the possibility of what I would call “genre training,” in which generalists read, discuss, and apply concepts of genre theory to multiple genres in preparation for tutorial sessions. For, as Charles Bazerman notes, “genre is a tool for getting at the resources the students bring with them, the genres they carry from their educations and their experiences in society, and it is a tool for framing challenges that bring students into new domains that are as yet for them unexplored, but not so different from what they know as to be unintelligible” (24).

I discuss how this particular study corroborates the problem that David Russell raises about “content” courses that incorporate discipline-specific writing projects. In these courses, Russell remarks, “writing tends to become transparent, automatic, and beneath the level of conscious activity for those who are thoroughly socialized into it . . . As a result, experts may

have great difficulty explaining these operations to neophytes” (1995, 70). Writing centers could be invaluable resources for teachers in these courses, for they could provide them with support and guidance about how to incorporate writing instruction into the classroom. An understanding of the differences and similarities between distinct discourse communities is necessary to offer this kind of direction, and generalists who spend time in discipline-specific content courses can make a stronger case to the content teachers that they in fact do understand such issues. Though writing centers could potentially connect the content instruction and the writing instruction that is not occurring in discipline-specific courses, the writing center struggles to overcome its image of a fix-it shop, grammar garage. In other words, historically writing centers are not spaces where writing and content fuse together, or where discussions about writing as meaning-making take place (see Lerner, *The Idea*; Carino, “Early Writing Centers”).

Finally, I argue that re-imagined writing centers should make a committed effort to communicate with content teachers about what the goals of the writing center are so that the teachers are clear about why their students should visit the writing center and how their students can benefit from individual feedback. In this way, writing centers can be the impetus for serious discussions about the connection between writing and critical thinking in content courses. If writing centers are going to hold themselves out to the entire campus, then they will have to prepare themselves to be *de facto* WAC programs (Waldo, “The Last Best Place”; M. Harris; Pemberton, “Rethinking”; Kurlioff). This reality means that campus-wide writing centers staffed by “generalists” must also train the generalists to make the connections between writing and

content. Such connections are more likely to occur when members of different discourse communities are dialoging with each other and learning about what each other does.

An obvious question that one might ask is whether a re-conceptualized writing center can be offered based on two case studies. I base my views on my own experiences tutoring and teaching writing in the disciplines, my interdisciplinary interactions with faculty who attempt to incorporate writing into their content courses, and my research. The case studies offer the advantage of an in-depth examination of a particular situation. Given the goal in this study of examining the tutors' discourse and what it indicates about their genre knowledge and how that connects to the overall quality of their feedback, the case study methodology was ideal. While not generalizable, the case studies offer the potential for refining a conceptual framework for writing center training that can be tested in other settings.

Ultimately, I believe that genre research is a fertile site for interdisciplinarity. Scholars such as Amy Devitt and Charles Bazerman also see potential in forging links among fields and disciplines with genre research (see Bawarshi and Reiff 108). Research methods arising from related fields and disciplines, such as discourse analysis and case studies, hold “much promise for drawing humanities' understandings of the workings of language into relation with the social sciences' understandings of human relations, behavior, and consciousness” (Bazerman 23). Open communication between generalist tutors and content teachers could also benefit teachers if tutors provided feedback on why and how to incorporate writing discussions into the classroom. In this study, Lisa noted that Professor Dorf spent no class time discussing writing, though he

expected his students to know how to create audience-aware business reports and to know the “right” questions to ask him. Without sitting in on his class, Lisa would not have understood the disconnect between writing and content that was occurring, and her discussions with Simon reflect this awareness.

Future research should explore whether tutors who learn the values, objectives, and goals of a discourse community by experiencing one course can effectively transfer those insights and provide quality feedback on the writing students do in other courses.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces the major issues I address in my research and reviews the relevant literature that has focused on the following topics: how different pedagogical approaches affect feedback strategies, how students learn to navigate different disciplines, and how tutors are classified as generalists or specialists. The end of the section details the gap in the literature that I propose to fill and leads into my research questions and an explanation of my plan for answering those questions.

The shifts in writing instruction pedagogy over the past few decades from current-traditionalist, product-focused approaches to cognitive-expressivist, process approaches, to social-epistemic theories of instruction, have been well documented (Berlin; Sanchez; Tate, Rupier, and Schick). As Maxine Hairston notes in her seminal 1982 article “The Winds of Change,” transitions in composition theory are not smooth, and they leave many problems unresolved. Not surprisingly then, in the pages of academic journals and in the rooms of conference venues from across the disciplines heated conversations still occur today over the most effective way to teach writing. Much of the debate surrounds the different feedback strategies promoted by process-approach versus product-approach advocates.

Writing Center scholarship has generally followed the trends in composition theory, and Writing Center practices and pedagogy reflect a similar transition from current-traditionalism to a widely accepted process approach to some interest in a “social-constructionist” approach

(Murphy). Yet, even though there is some discussion of social constructionism within writing center theory and research,, the winds of change have not yet blown social-constructionist theories into an obvious spotlight in Writing Center training guides. A brief glance through the latest editions of popular tutor training manuals (see, for example, Ryan and Zimmerelli's *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*; Gillespie and Lerner's *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*; Soven's *What the Writing Tutor Needs to Know*) shows that process-approach strategies (rather than a socio-epistemic focus on product) are still the most commonly endorsed techniques for providing feedback.

Central to the debate over which feedback strategies to use is the issue of generalist tutors and discipline-specific writing tasks. The arguments surrounding this issue have created dichotomous camps in the Writing Center field between scholars who advocate using generalists for discipline-specific feedback (because they can provide valuable feedback from the perspective of a layperson), and those who disagree with using generalists for discipline-specific feedback because it perpetuates the “myth of transience¹” (Beaufort; Freedman). Some researchers have attempted to find a middle ground position in the debate by relying on concepts of discourse communities and genre theory to acknowledge the different meanings of “good

¹ I refer to the “myth of transience” concept that claims there is one universally accepted “good” way of writing that transcends all contexts. Johnston and Speck define it as “the belief that writing is a skill independent of any content learning and that once learned can be transferred equally well from one class to another, at any level, in any discipline” (14). This definition is specific to issues in writing, as opposed to Mike Rose’s use of the term in “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” in which he defines the “myth of transience” as “optimism in the face of a disconfirming historical survey” about remediation in education (355).

writing.” They contend that because there are as many different ways to define “good writing” as there are discourse communities, feedback strategies should focus on the specific genres students need to learn to enter those communities (Clark, “Addressing Genre”; Walker). That is to say, they recognize that student writers can benefit from discussions about discourse conventions that can help change the way they define “good writing” for a specific discipline.

Ironically, this middle position fails to account for a generalist’s lack of genre knowledge when providing feedback to students with discipline-specific needs. Thus, in an attempt to call a truce in the debate, the genre theorists often subscribe to the very “myth of transience” they claim to deny. This study sought to conduct qualitative research using a theoretical framework of discourse community and genre theories to explore whether a middle position in the generalist/specialist debate is possible. The study involved generalist Writing Center tutors, upper-level undergraduate business students, and the business students’ Professor. The Professor is an expert member of a disciplinary discourse community who evaluates the quality of feedback the generalists provide the business students on their discipline-specific writing tasks.

In regard to feedback quality, genre knowledge was determined based on definitions of “genre knowledge” in the literature. I conducted two descriptive, instrumental case studies through interviews, audio-recording and transcribing tutorial sessions, and analyzing tutor Report Logs and field notes. Thus, by adding to the conversation about using generalists in a campus-wide Writing Center and the relationship of genre knowledge and peer response (see Wardle), I

responded to Lisa Ede's call for writing center research that contributes to the "intellectual dialogue" about the social nature of writing (101).

2.1 Process v. Product Approaches to Writing Instruction

The process approach encourages invention and revision as commonly accepted writing strategies (Flower and Hayes; Elbow). This method was a response to current-traditionalism with its sole focus on "product" and seeming lack of concern for students' voices and attempts to invent meaning in their writing (Murray). The process revolution in writing center pedagogy also integrated Flower and Hayes' cognitive-expressivist theories, which meant that writing centers were no longer proof-reading services where students dropped off their unfinished products (North). No longer could students sit and watch as tutors edited their papers; gone were the days of tutors holding pens or speaking too much. Instead, a new philosophy of student-centered feedback took shape that advocated a focus on invention strategies to determine what the students know (Brannon and Knoblauch).

This strategy is decidedly non-directive, as students are encouraged to find their own answers and to do the majority of the talking. The person providing the feedback (whether it be a teacher, a peer in the same class, a writing center tutor, or a Writing Fellow) is to assume the role of co-learner. When the tutor does talk, the tutor intends for a mutual exchange of "shared knowledge" to flow back and forth between tutor and tutee as one person shares knowledge about writing and the other shares knowledge about the subject matter (Bruffee). This type of

exchange is normally achieved by a series of open-ended, Socratic questioning techniques in which the tutor does not directly answer the tutee's questions nor directly offer suggestions on the tutee's writing (Ashton-Jones; Hanson; Brooks). Questions are redirected back to the tutee to concentrate on what the student knows, with the intent of increasing the student's self-confidence and self-reliance as a writer (Bruffee; Elbow).

2.2 Non-directive v. Directive Feedback Strategies

Non-directive feedback strategies are common features of a process approach to tutoring that encourages student writers to focus on invention methods. At the same time, such strategies have raised larger questions and provoked debate over issues of authority, collaboration, and empowerment. Those who favor non-directive techniques argue that they increase the student writer's rhetorical authority, which will allow the student to maintain control of the final text (Pemberton, "Ethics" 14). This minimalist strategy helps ensure that tutors will not misappropriate the students' work (Hubbuck). Non-directive tutoring is also a powerful defense against those who question the ethics of feedback because they consider feedback practices comparable to plagiarism (Clark, "Writing Centers and Plagiarism"). Overall, non-directive proponents argue that students who assume positions of equal authority in a collaborative environment and maintain ownership over their work will be empowered because they will learn a heuristic that they can draw on to organize their own thoughts.

While supporters of a more directive feedback strategy also promote student empowerment, they have fundamental disagreements with the non-directive philosophy. They argue that students will never truly assume roles of equal authority with their tutors (Carino, “Power and Authority”), that the environment cannot be collaborative if tutors must withhold knowledge (Trimbur; Shamon and Burns; Lunsford), and that students who are not familiar with a discourse are disempowered because they will maintain their marginalized voices (Grimm, *Good Intentions*; Freedman).

Even more, some directive feedback advocates believe that a process approach disempowers those providing the feedback as well because these tutors cannot explain why student writers might make certain choices in their writing. The ability to explain a process for a particular kind of writing does not necessarily mean that an individual can confidently discuss the process for other genres and audiences. Cheryl Geisler writes about this disconnect when she notes that even individuals who “operate as experts in one domain resort to relatively naive strategies in other domains and take texts at face value” (49).

Anne Beaufort argues that when individuals move away from being directive, they rely on very general strategies to provide feedback in which teachers and tutors “treat superficially” the context-specific aspects of writing and instead focus on a general set of rules for academic writing (16). Other scholars agree, noting that when feedback is too generic and minimal, it essentially becomes so detached from the writing that it offers no real help (Straub; Odell and Goswami). Moreover, they argue, learning occurs most effectively if teachers explicitly lay out

what students are studying, why they are studying it, and what students are expected to do. That is, teachers are meant to contribute what learners cannot do alone.

Researchers recognize that tutors should sometimes use a flexible approach when providing feedback (Thompson refers to it as “informed flexibility,” “Scaffolding” 418). This flexibility would allow tutors to use a more directive approach when students show signs of needing explicit instruction. For those who advocate a flexible approach, the ability to recognize a student’s need for directive instruction “usually” depends on a tutors’ subject matter expertise, but “always” depends on the tutors’ expertise “in writing genres and styles” (Thompson, “Scaffolding” 418, citing Mackiewicz). Gaining this ability is directly related to theories of discourse community and genre.

2.3 Discourse Communities and Social Acceptance: Writing as Proof of Membership in a Disciplinary Community

The notion of a “discourse community” has been the subject of debate in composition and linguistic studies as composition researchers contest notions of stability and consistency in disciplinary discourse (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff; Bizzell; J. Harris; Prior). Bizzell defines discourse community as “a group of people who share certain language-using practices” (“What Is” 222). For John Swales, a discourse community is a “social group using language to accomplish work in the world” (cited in Bizzell, “What Is” 225). He maintains that any discourse community must have the following six criteria: 1) a shared, common goal; 2) a

discursive “forum”; 3) information and feedback provided in the forum to achieve goals; 4) expectations of information exchanges developed by the group, i.e., shared discourse conventions/genres; 5) specialized discourse; and 6) a group of experts who can initiate the novices (Swales 3). The very survival of a discourse community “depends on a reasonable ratio between experts and novices” (2-3).

These definitions might appear to present discourse communities as definable and therefore consistent, but the argument continues that individuals attempt to become members of local discourse communities (what Bizzell refers to as discourse “subcommunities”) within a broader discourse community (“What Is” 232). For example, within the broad discourse community of the university, there are as many subcommunities as there are disciplines, and within those disciplines there are evermore localized subcommunities made up of departments and programs. Before a person can gain access to a subcommunity, the internal workings of the broad discourse community first must be examined (J. Harris; Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff).

Within the academic discourse community, then, the language and social practices of departments within disciplines and classrooms within those departments should be studied (see Brammer, Amare, and Campbell). Only then will students be able to understand that within the larger academic discourse community there are “mixings of sometimes conflicting and sometimes conjoining beliefs and purposes” (Bartholomae; J. Harris 20). Scholars such as Bazerman, Prior, and Rose suggest that an effective means of introducing students to this concept is to teach writing as a social practice that creates and maintains different meanings for different

communities. Current writing instruction, however, often denies these differences (Bizzell, “What Is,” 235).

A common notion of discourse communities suggests that the members determine what texts are considered meaningful and how they will be interpreted (Bizzell; Walvoord and McCarthy). Researchers also note that a fundamental aspect of a discourse community is that newcomers learn what texts and textual conventions community members consider meaningful as they interact with more knowledgeable members of these communities and become aware of what practices are socially accepted there (Walvoord and McCarthy; Dressen-Hammouda; Bizzell; Ramanathan and Kaplan). Yet scholars remark that students are not being made aware of discursive practices and acceptable ways of communicating knowledge. Students are often expected to intuit the social nature of writing, especially in English Studies where language is discussed as an innate concept, rather than a socially constructed one (Pemberton “Ethics”; Thaiss and Zawacki; Bizzell).

Many scholars criticize the process approach to writing instruction for requiring students to intuit their way into a discourse community (see Johns, “Teaching”; Beaufort). One main concern with this approach is that it leaves out the important step that engages student writers in explicit discussions of cultural and social contexts. Leaving out this step ultimately inhibits students from understanding, participating in, or challenging the valued practices of a community (Hyland “Representing Readers”). Bakhtin’s notion of “dialogism,” sometimes translated as “intertextuality,” is often used to discuss how writers never work alone, but always as the result

of their interactions with readers and subjects in the world (Ehwald 332). Thus, the writing process is never truly a singular endeavor, as writers draw upon their prior discourse knowledge when confronted with new discourses (also referred to as “interdiscursivity”, see Scollon and Scollon 540). Moreover, researchers argue that students trained only in a process approach do not understand the different rhetorical ways language is patterned in specific discourse communities, and in turn these students consider writing to be a decontextualized skill that is so fundamental as to be universal (see Herrington and Moran; Berkenkotter and Huckin; Bizzell).

A process approach emphasizes *invention*, which requires students to draw upon their own knowledge to create a meaningful text. Yet inexperienced students often lack sufficient knowledge of the discourse communities for which they are writing to know what counts as meaningful (Bizzell; Beaufort; Dressen-Hammouda). Critics of the process approach claim that it inhibits students from making connections between the writing they do in one course and other contexts, as the writing process “becomes an isolated technique” (Guleff 212; see also Coe). Students cannot consciously manipulate language to create meaningful texts in other situations when the writing process is so closely connected to the culture of a specific discourse community.

Because students who receive training in the process approach do not learn about the explicit cultural similarities and differences among discourse communities, they need other opportunities for discipline-based socialization. Paul Prior suggests that what students need is an “opportunity space for socialization into discursive practices” (489). The more chances to learn

about the social practices and culture of a discourse community, the more effective the “opportunity space” will be considered.

2.4 The Writing Center as an “Opportunity Space”

In their efforts to move away from the “fix-it” shop stigma, some writing center researchers have embraced the concept of discourse communities so that they can be “opportunity spaces” for writing instruction. Writing Center Staff make clear that they are colleagues committed to working alongside faculty to help their students “achieve a level of comfort with their chosen professional discourse community” (Griffin 78). That is, they recognize the importance of understanding the expectations of their “stakeholders” (meaning the various discourse community experts) (Thonus, “Tutor and Student Assessment”; Griffin et al.; Ortoleva and Dyehouse). A tutor who understands a stakeholder’s expectations for a particular assignment can create a more effective “opportunity space” to discuss the culture of the discourse community in connection with the assignment’s context (Blumner; Waldo *Demythologizing*).

Yet many tutors do not understand the expectations of their stakeholders because they do not understand the social practices of the stakeholder’s discourse community. Even more, tutors often do not consider that the students seeking assistance want to become members of that community and therefore need to learn its particular social practices. When tutors lack this consideration, the feedback that they provide is often so general as to be unhelpful (Bizzell). A

genre approach, it is argued, is needed to give students the specific, useful feedback that will help gain them acceptance as members of a discourse community.

2.5 Genre Theory and the Genre Approach to Writing Instruction

Writing instruction based on genre theory is founded on the idea that we write for membership in a discourse community; therefore, we must understand writing as a social practice within the community (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff). This theory rejects the traditional definition of genre as text form. Rather, genre theory incorporates Carolyn Miller's definition of "genre" from her seminal article, "Genre as Social Action," in which she redefines genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (159). According to this definition, genre is more than simply "form." It is a fusion of form and context that acquires different meanings depending on the situation in which it is used (Bazerman).

A genre approach shifts writing away from the "self-discovery" of discursive conventions wherein students can truly only "discover" in the context of a discourse community's social practices. It moves writing instruction toward an empowering and "conscious manipulation of language and choice" (Clark, "Addressing Genre" 26). This conscious manipulation of language is part of genre knowledge and having the power to 1) push boundaries, 2) emphasize conventions in original ways, and 3) creatively adapt the guidelines to make meaning (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff). While the introduction of process strategies into the composition curriculum positively impacts writing instruction, Hyland (2005) argues that there are drawbacks

of an approach that is too student-centered and does not ask them to consider the external forces that help shape their writing.

Studies have found that writers actually want to have an explicit discussion about genre conventions and expectations because they believe that it could “unveil the mysteriousness of their task” (Tardy 85). For one writer, explicit genre instruction “demystified” what she had already learned through practice and ultimately enhanced her genre knowledge (Tardy 86). In another study, a student specifically visited her university’s writing center for an explanation of a legal essay’s genre characteristics, and she was frustrated when the tutor could not tell her what was unique or “special” about the genre (Freedman).

Thus, because students often need and desire direct instruction in the written conventions of a specific discourse community, and giving them that information empowers them to make conscious choices in their writing, many people promote a combined approach as the most effective tutoring practice. Though process-approach proponents view genre-based tutor instruction as constraining and formulaic, others argue that issues of genre at all levels (e.g. punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph organization, document format) should naturally complement a process approach as part of a student’s overall rhetorical awareness (Mirtz; Berkenkotter and Huckin). Thus, shifting to genre-based tutoring does not require tutors to condemn process pedagogy. Rather, it requires tutors to consider students as “strangers in a foreign culture” who need help understanding the culture (Maimon).

To help students feel like cultural insiders, scholars suggest that tutors must first introduce students to the discourse community's social practices and the idea that writing is one of those social practices (see Brodkey; Bazerman). With this awareness, tutors can then help students creatively manipulate the discourse community's conventions and consciously create meaning for its members. In essence, a genre approach operates as a "gray space" where knowledgeable tutors are able to provide directive feedback that encourages students' individualities (Gladstein). These tutors do not have to "play dumb" to maintain an egalitarian tutor dynamic, and they are able to articulate why and how a particular discourse community uses certain textual features (Cooper). After providing an explanation, they can then suggest ways for students to utilize a process that effectively creates meaningful texts for a specific community.

A genre approach to writing rests on the notion that "good writing" does not mean mastering processes; rather, it means having an explicit understanding of not only how texts in specific genres are structured, but also *why* they are written that way (Carter; Hyland; Devitt). It seeks to renounce the "myth of transience" that has students seeking to master a universally accepted form of academic "good writing" (Beaufort; Johnston and Speck). Yet even though a genre approach rejects the myth of transience, it can still be compatible with process methods. Clark suggests that incorporating genre concepts into collaborative tutoring strategies can engage students with different discourse communities (14). Engaging with a discourse community

requires “genre knowledge” (what Clark refers to as “genre awareness”; see also Johns, “Genre Awareness” 238).

Specifically, genre knowledge is what Berkenkotter and Huckin refer to as “situated cognition” in that it requires an understanding of “both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point in time” (“Rethinking Genre” 488). If a person has genre knowledge, then she has the ability to engage in critical discussions about why some generic features are “situationally appropriate responses to recurrent situations” (Berkenkotter and Huckin, *Genre Knowledge* ix). In addition to focusing on the values, backgrounds, statuses, educations, and needs of a discourse community’s members, these discussions should focus on the readers and writers of particular texts in particular contexts (Johns, *Genre in the Classroom*; Dressen-Hammouda). Genre knowledge means having an awareness of textual features and asking why they are important -- questions such as “what in the community or among particular readers and writers may determine these textual elements? What do these features tell us about community values, roles of readers and writers, and other rhetorical factors?” (Johns, *Genre in the Classroom* 187). The individual who can answer these questions herself without another person’s input has genre knowledge. Yet, more importantly for my project, the individual who at least knows to ask these questions, even though she might not have the answer to the questions, also has genre knowledge.

A tutor with genre knowledge will understand the need to discuss the student's text as a situationally appropriate response to a recurrent situation. This discussion is critical in providing quality feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks because tutors will ask more specific "how" and "why" questions so they can share explicit information about the discourse community's social practices. The more knowledge a person has about the internal workings of a discourse community, the more opportunity exists for meaningful and specific feedback.

2.6 Implementing the Genre Approach in the Campus-wide Writing Center

A genre approach to writing center pedagogy acknowledges that there are many discourse communities with their own expectations for writing and that students often need explicit help navigating them. Tutors in a campus-wide writing center must be able to straddle disciplinary boundaries and provide feedback in a way that creates what are sometimes referred to as "hybrid genres" or "signposts" (Journet 57; Bazerman 19). Signposts are created when tutors understand the discourse community students want to enter well enough to provide specific feedback about the community in language already familiar to the students. Providing quality feedback requires that tutors first recognize the kind of instruction students need on the *nondirective directive continuum* and then "post signs" about the differences and similarities between the familiar and the new discourse community (Bazerman 19).

A genre approach has been suggested as a manageable way to offer feedback that can address complex and contradictory discourse communities. Clark maintains that a genre

approach to writing center tutoring can expand tutors' selection of pedagogical strategies; furthermore, she suggests that writing centers use a genre approach mainly to foster genre awareness in student writers ("Addressing Genre" 23). Drawing upon a list of questions generated by Bazerman, Clark offers the following questions as a means of promoting students' genre awareness:

- 1) What purpose does this genre serve?
- 2) What are the features of this genre?
- 3) How do the text's particular generic features serve its purpose?
- 4) Whose interests does this genre serve?
- 5) How is this genre similar to and different from other text genres?
- 6) What creative variations on this genre are likely to enhance its effectiveness?
- 7) Which ones will be inappropriate and therefore ineffective? ("Addressing Genre" 26-27)

While these questions are designed to foster student writers' genre awareness, such awareness can only develop if the students are able to answer these questions. The issue then becomes how to promote students' genre awareness if they lack the requisite knowledge to answer the questions. Without an understanding of the recurrent rhetorical situations of a discourse community, students look to the tutors for explicit guidance. Thus, an on-going debate in writing center scholarship concerns what kind of feedback tutors can provide if they also lack discipline-specific knowledge.

Credibility is an issue that generalists must deal with whenever they hold themselves out as "good writers" who can provide quality feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks, especially when faculty from various disciplines express doubts about the qualifications of peer tutors (Jones). When tutors are perceived as disciplinary insiders, professors respect the

feedback the tutors provide and even consider them to be necessary resources for the courses (Gladstein). These tutors often work in Writing Fellows Programs and acquire credibility by not ignoring content and by using the strategies advised for peer tutors (Gladstein).

Tutors who do not work in Writing Fellows Programs do not have disciplinary “insider” status, and Ann Johns refers to them as “outsider” tutors (*Genre in the Classroom* 183). Johns claims that these “outsider” tutors “retreat to ‘the process’ or other, more manageable possibilities” during tutorial sessions in which they deal with the complexity of discipline-specific tasks and the uncertainties of the students required to complete these tasks (183). The argument continues that for these tutors, the idea of discourse communities seems too overwhelming and complex to discuss explicitly in training and tutorial sessions. Even more, relying solely on process methods might also have the unfortunate consequence of reducing other disciplines’ faith in the quality of feedback these tutors provide to student writers. But perhaps what lies at the root of the issue for a writing center is one of resources and not “retreat.” Some researchers suggest that writing centers staffed predominantly by English students require different training strategies to be able to offer the campus-wide, discipline-specific services of a writing center staffed with disciplinary insiders (Kiedaisch and Dinitz).

The generalist/specialist debate in writing center scholarship usually appears in discussions of campus-wide writing centers that offer their services to students from all disciplines, often in conjunction with Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) or Writing in the Disciplines (WID) programs (Barnett and Rosen; Pemberton “Rethinking”). Directors often seek

to address whether generalist tutors (sometimes referred to as “ignorant” tutors due to their lack of discipline-specific knowledge) can offer helpful feedback to students on discipline-specific writing tasks (Kiedaisch and Dinitz; Hubbuch; Scanlon; Luce; Walker, 1998; Smith).

After analyzing twelve tutorial sessions where generalists provide feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks, Kiedaisch and Dinitz conclude that tutors who are unfamiliar with the process of writing in another discipline can only provide limited feedback to student writers. Proponents of using generalists for feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks argue that student writers will learn their discourse community’s language if they must share their subject matter knowledge (Hubbuch). They also claim that using generalists also avoids the issue of tutors misappropriating students’ work (Hubbuch). Advocates of using specialists counter-argue that students might need explicit instruction depending on what they do or do not know about a discourse community’s practices (Bizzell; Walker). Because of their rhetorical knowledge, specialists actually empower students by making them conscious of discursive practices so that they have the ability to challenge and creatively manipulate them (Grimm, “Rearticulating”; Shamoan and Burns).

Walker invokes genre theory in an attempt to call a truce in the generalist/specialist debate by suggesting a way for generalist tutors to learn about discipline-specific discourse conventions. Her suggestion is actually at odds with the principles of genre theory because she suggests that writing center directors and administrators familiarize themselves with the culture that produces discipline-specific discourse conventions, communicate with experienced members

of the discourse communities, analyze the writing produced in the communities, and then provide models to the tutors, along with the knowledge gained about the discourse community's culture (35). Walker's suggestion gives directors and administrators (as opposed to tutors) the experience with recurrent rhetorical situations that writers might discuss in the writing center.

2.7 Connecting Discourse Community Knowledge, Genre Knowledge, and Feedback Quality

The literature about increasing tutees' genre awareness does not discuss the promotion of genre knowledge or genre awareness in tutors, which is essentially an ironic perpetuation of the "myth of transience" as applied to tutor genre knowledge. By eluding the topic of how tutors come to have genre knowledge and whether it makes a difference in the feedback they provide, scholars assume that a tutor always already has the genre knowledge to help develop a tutee's genre awareness.

While Clark maintains that a genre approach to writing center tutoring can expand tutors' selection of pedagogical strategies, she suggests that writing centers use a genre approach principally to foster genre awareness in student writers. The underlying assumption is that tutors already possess knowledge about the discourse communities for which students are writing to ascertain the kinds of questions that will help raise students' genre awareness. Clark does not suggest how tutors should respond if student writers cannot answer the genre-enhancing questions. Assuming that student writers will always be able to answer genre-enhancing

questions does not account for the situations when there is not an ideal exchange of shared knowledge between tutor and student writer. Assuming that tutors should be able to offer discourse community insight that will help lead students to an answer perpetuates the myth of transience about tutor genre knowledge.

If a tutor is unable to assist a student, then the issue is not whether a tutor needs to learn about the social practices of a discourse community. Rather, as in Kiedaisch and Dinitz's study, the issue is whether the tutor is "ignorant" about the discipline's subject matter. This study also highlights the fundamental differences regarding considerations of generalist versus specialist tutors, for Kiedaisch and Dinitz do not use genre theory to frame their research. They consider a tutor a "specialist" if she is confident enough to put the student writer's paper aside and look at the assignment, is able to assess how well a student's insights are supported by the text, and is knowledgeable enough about the text to ask questions that will help the student reach new insights (91). In other words, a specialist is a subject matter expert. When the authors claim that a specialist tutor knows the "disciplinary conventions," they mean that a specialist is competent in both critical textual analysis and the process of thinking in a particular discipline (93). They do not mean that the tutor is knowledgeable about how the student writer's text creates meaning for members of the disciplinary discourse community, nor do they mean that the tutor can explain why certain textual features are or are not appropriate for the specific discourse community. Kiedaisch and Dinitz go so far as to remark:

...it doesn't seem fair to place on our tutors' shoulders the responsibility for showing students how to think and write in the disciplines. It doesn't even seem fair to place learning this on the student writers' shoulders. Isn't this the responsibility of the departments? (93)

Their issue with helping students to “think and write in the disciplines” stems from their process approach to providing feedback, and it indicates that their definition of a specialist is someone who has content knowledge. If they understood a specialist from a genre approach, then they would consider a specialist as a person with genre knowledge who could help students to think and write in the disciplines by raising their genre awareness, as opposed to teaching them content.

Though Walker cites Berkenkotter and Huckin to support genre theory in the generalist/specialist debate, she appears to misinterpret their advice that a person should study individuals as well as group socialization processes to gain genre knowledge of disciplinary communities (ix). By directly observing individuals and groups, tutors study language use within real contexts and learn the implicit social practices of the discourse community, thereby increasing their genre knowledge (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff 557). “[W]hen we travel to new communicative domains,” notes Charles Bazerman, “we construct our perception of them beginning with the forms we know” (19). Thus, because Walker was the only person to study the disciplinary community, she essentially increased her own genre knowledge, beginning with the forms she knew, rather than directly enhancing her tutors' genre knowledge.

A genre-based tutor training method would have entailed that the tutors themselves communicate with experienced members of the discourse communities and analyze model texts. This training strategy would give tutors “ethnomethodological access” to discourse communities, enabling them to observe how and why members of a community use language in specific contexts (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff 552). Essentially, then, a tutor would conduct a “mini-ethnography” to explore a local community’s social roles and actions to determine what repeated rhetorical situations occur (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff 554). Researchers who have conducted mini-ethnographies of discourse communities have acknowledged the invaluable insight gained into communities’ social practices manifested in their texts (see, for example, Lerner and Hobson).

In her study, “Conducting Research in the Gray Space,” Gladstein follows a Writing Associate in a Writing Fellows Program as he works with Biology students to help them gain a more conceptual understanding (what I would refer to as “genre knowledge”) of their lab reports. Because of his training in process approach strategies combined with his insider knowledge of the biology discourse community, the Writing Associate facilitates a dialogue in which students learn about a specific discipline’s written conventions and a process that can help them consciously manipulate those guidelines. Yet, there is no discussion about whether this dialogue would be possible if the person providing the feedback was already familiar with the process approach but lacked insider knowledge of the disciplinary discourse community.

No research exists that begins to explore the pedagogical possibilities of different training methods focusing on tutor genre knowledge. This project initiates that exploration.

Berkenkotter and Huckin suggest that one way to study disciplinary communication is to study the “situated actions of writers, and the communicative systems in which disciplinary actors participate” (*Genre Knowledge* ix). In the next section I describe a descriptive, instrumental study that will shed light on different training strategies that might affect generalists’ genre knowledge. Thus, I designed my project around the following Research Questions:

1. How do different training strategies affect generalist tutors’ genre knowledge about a specific disciplinary discourse community?
2. What is the connection between generalist tutors’ genre knowledge and feedback quality on discipline-specific writing tasks?
3. How does a generalist tutor’s genre knowledge change after undergoing a specific tutor training method?
4. What is the difference in feedback quality on discipline-specific writing tasks after generalist tutors undergo different training methods?
5. What is the connection between the generalists’ self-confidence and genre knowledge levels?

The next chapter lays out the methodology and methods for my research that sought to answer these questions.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological framework within which the study was grounded and the methods used to conduct the study. The method for this project was a collective case study involving two descriptive, instrumental cases. Johnson maintains that the purpose of a case study is “to understand the complexity and dynamic nature of the particular entity, and to discover systematic connections among experiences, behaviors, and relevant features of the context” (84). The key term in this definition is “context,” because the fundamental issue in my study was how genre knowledge is learned in the context of a discourse community. For my project, the strength of the qualitative research design was its foundational philosophy that how an individual behaves, thinks, and feels can only be understood if a researcher gets to know the community and his or her role in it.

Karen Schriver’s “Connecting Cognition and Context in Composition” influenced my decision to use a case study approach for this project. Schriver notes that a case study has the potential to “sensitize teachers to the values, ideologies, norms, and expectations for literate practices that are cultivated in school contexts” (201). She specifically notes the scholars whose case study research indicates that classrooms often do not provide “meaningful and literate experiences and opportunities for all students” (201). Like Schriver and the scholars she mentions, I was also driven by an ultimate interest in finding a space that is “a more encouraging site of literate activities and productions” (201). Because I believe that writing centers are sites

where multiple discourses are constantly interacting, conducting case studies allowed me to answer Schriver's call for research that explores ways "to provide more students with better chances for active participation in the multiple discourses of society" (202).

A qualitative research approach was suitable to the nature of the subject matter I explored because qualitative research enabled me to understand how individuals "make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam 6). Even more, qualitative case study designs work especially well in situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context (Yin). Because the phenomenon I was interested in studying (genre knowledge and feedback quality) had variables that were impossible to separate from their context (such as business writing experience and business document exposure), the case study method was fitting for my project. Even more, case studies are often defined as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (see Merriam), which also describes the nature of my research questions. That is to say, the questions focused on a particular situation and phenomenon; thus, conducting case study research is valuable "for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (Merriam 29). The research questions ideally have lead to "rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study," and have helped to "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (30).

Case studies were also the most appropriate research design for this project because they were the most effective way for me to gain access to subjective factors like thoughts, beliefs, and opinions (see Bromley), and understanding these subjective characteristics was crucial to my

analysis and discussion. In the following section, I will examine important factors in selecting a case study methodology, such as the goals of the study, the setting for the research, and the nature of the subject matter.

3.1 Methodology

The case study approach tries to make meaning of the actions or interactions that happen to people in certain situations and to look at the process in which these individuals assign meaning to their experience (Bogdan and Biklen). My challenge was to determine how genre knowledge is connected with ways of learning about a discourse community's written conventions and ultimately the generalists' feedback quality. Because I describe the characteristics that indicate the generalists' genre knowledge, as well as the characteristics that indicate the quality of generalists' feedback, the case studies are *descriptive* (Yin).

A descriptive case study design was a fitting way to answer my research questions because it enabled me to explore "the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside," to understand a situation from the perspective of the participants, and to examine the events leading to the results (Gillham 11). Beach et al. also note that the value of descriptive empirical research is that it is accessible to a wide range of educators who can gain insight into situations through "highly concrete, often data-based descriptions" (221). Successful descriptive studies specify the critical ingredients of the phenomenon to be described (Yin 25). A solid theoretical foundation specifies the differences and similarities that will be considered

substantively critical when pattern-matching multiple cases (24). Thus, developing theories to compare the data against is key in a descriptive case study.

In these two case studies, the data are compared against theories of effective feedback strategies as well as theories of tutor training methods for discipline-specific writing tasks. Having rival theories benefited the descriptive case studies because it helped avoid an “expansive tendency” and focused data collection on the issues that were most significant for analysis (Yin 27). Rival theories focused my data collection on the kind of feedback that the tutors provided as well as what interview questions were asked. The two cases are part of a cross-case logic -- an attempted replication of the same theories (the influence of genre knowledge on feedback quality; the increase in genre knowledge with discourse community immersion).

The goal of an *instrumental* case study research design is to gain a greater insight into the theoretical explanation underlying the particular issue being examined (Hancock and Algozzine). Thus, while my primary goal was to broaden the understanding of how different ways of knowing a discourse community affect genre knowledge and how that might relate to feedback quality, I also derived insights regarding specific methods that could be effective for training generalists to provide feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks. The collective case study combines information from the two smaller instrumental cases to substantiate theory about the cases together, while at the same time providing insight into how individuals think and behave in a particular situation (Hancock and Algozzine).

3.2 Research Design Context (Setting and Participants)

3.2.1 Research Setting

The larger sociocultural orientation for which this study was contextually bound was the structure of the campus-wide Writing Center of a large research university in the Deep South, and a classroom in the Business School where the “Small Business Consulting” course (MGT 486) took place. The Writing Center offers its services to all students, faculty, and staff, from any department, seeking assistance on any genre of writing. The generalists and business students met twice during the semester for face-to-face tutorial sessions in the Writing Center, which offers both walk-in and advanced appointments. As of the fall 2009 semester, the Writing Center was staffed by approximately 37 undergraduate and graduate student tutors. Two of these tutors were Ph.D. students in the History department; two were undergraduates pursuing B.A. degrees; and one was an undergraduate working on a B.S. degree. All of the remaining 32 tutors were first-year English graduate students who were pursuing advanced degrees in creative writing, TESOL, or literature studies.

MGT 486 is an upper-level business elective course offered in the College of Commerce. Seniors who major in Management, as well as business graduate students who are allowed to use the class for their graduate school requirements, normally sign up for the course. The course is taught by Professor David Dorf -- a Clinical Professor with over 30 years of experience as a small business owner and business consultant. The syllabus for the course states:

This course is designed to offer education and training in the art of management consulting as it applies to smaller firms or non-profit organizations. The overall purpose of the course is the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will enable students to provide management advice to non-profits, entrepreneurs and businesspersons and other organizations to improve the performance of those organizations. (Dorf MGT 486 Syllabus Fall 2009)

I chose this course as part of the research setting because Professor Dorf is considered a *primary stakeholder* for purposes of this study. In other words, he recognizes the importance of students' ability to clearly communicate in writing for a business audience, he incorporates multiple writing assignments into his curriculum, and he encourages his students to use the Writing Center. He also expressed his willingness to assist me in my data collection by reviewing the transcripts of the tutorials, being available for interviews, and allowing both me and a generalist tutor to observe his classroom throughout the semester. In the next section, I explain the significance of Professor Dorf agreeing to have us sit in on his class.

3.2.2 Research Participants

Robert Stake, a noted qualitative research scholar, outlines several criteria for selecting case study participants. The first criterion is to capitalize on what the researcher can learn. Cases should be selected to lead us to understandings and/or to assertions. Another criterion to consider is the uniqueness and contexts of the selections (236). Michael Quinn Patton adds credence to these criteria by advocating selection of information-rich cases dependent upon the study's purpose and resources. He further describes these information-rich cases as those from

which “one can learn a great deal about matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study” (242).

Because the theoretical framework for my study is based on previous research in genre knowledge and discourse community theories claiming that an individual’s enculturation into a discourse community increases her genre knowledge, I identified participants for this study as generalists who were not “enculturated” into the business discourse community to evoke a purposeful sample. In order to do this, I screened the generalist candidates for genre knowledge. Screening involves the collection and analysis of empirical data to determine if candidates fit the selection criteria. In this study, the criteria for “generalist” participants was based on their lack of previous business writing and professional workplace experience. The tutors were chosen after answering questions about their education and professional experience with the business community (see Appendix A for the questionnaire). After reviewing that information, I contacted eligible candidates for a semi-structured interview to obtain more information about their genre knowledge of the business community (see Appendix B for the interview questions). From these candidates, I selected the final two “generalist” participants.

To be considered a “generalist” as per the definition being used in this study, an individual’s responses to the survey and interview questions reflected the individual’s limited and/or insufficient knowledge of business social practices (most especially a lack of understanding of business writing as a social practice). Essentially, “generalist” status was determined based on the tutors’ previous experiences with workplace writing, their previous

workplace experiences, their general life experiences concerning the business world -- including personal histories and their previous educational experiences taking courses in business or business-related subjects.

After finding two generalists -- in this study they were both females -- I randomly assigned them to a different training method for providing feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks, specifically on business writing. Each method offered the generalists a different perspective of the business community's written discourse conventions. The first generalist (Lisa) spent part of her regularly scheduled Writing Center tutoring hours undertaking the mini-ethnography method for providing discipline-specific feedback (see Lerner, "Insider as Outsider"; Walker; Thonus). This method required her to observe the MGT 486 classroom (which met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8am-9:15am) and take field notes. At the time this study took place, Lisa was in the first semester of a Master of the Arts degree in English. In my initial interview with Lisa, I learned that she had never worked in a white-collar environment, taken a business course, taught business writing, or composed a business document.

The second generalist (Harriet) read Business Writing hand-outs that I provided. The hand-outs were taken from a well-known and frequently linked Online Writing Lab (OWL) maintained by Purdue University (the hand-outs are freely accessible as long as Purdue University's OWL receives acknowledgment for the use of the materials). At the time this study occurred, Harriet was also in her first semester of a Master of the Arts degree in English. I learned in my initial interview with Harriet that, like Lisa, she had never worked in a white-collar

environment, taken a business course, taught business writing, or composed a business document.

In sum, both generalists received the same standard Writing Center tutor training, kept a Tutor Report Log as per Hemmeter, Lebduska, and Thompson's "Writing Center Assessment" guidelines (see Appendix C for the "Tutor Report Log Sheet"), and used part of their regular tutoring hours either to spend time in Professor Dorf's MGT 486 classroom or to review Business Writing hand-outs.

All MGT 486 students were eligible to participate in this study, because Professor Dorf required them to seek feedback from the Writing Center on drafts of their two major writing assignments. Therefore, everyone enrolled in the course had the same incentive to visit the Writing Center for feedback on MGT 486 writing tasks. I spoke to Professor Dorf's class before students began visiting the Writing Center with their first assignment and explained the study as well as the procedure to follow if they volunteered to participate in the study.

3.3 Case Study Methods

3.3.1 Data Collection Instruments

Robert Yin, president of an evaluation research firm and prolific scholar on case study research methodology, states that the theoretical framework of a study should determine the methods the researcher utilizes. Beach et al. maintain that successful empirical research is possible only if the study's methods and variables are specified after developing clear and

concise research questions. This descriptive, instrumental, collective case study took place within a theoretical discussion of genre and discourse communities in which I sought to answer the overarching question, “How does genre knowledge affect the quality of feedback that generalists provide on discipline-specific writing tasks?” In order to answer this question, I used the following guiding research questions: 1) What kind of feedback does an expert member of a discourse community provide on discipline-specific writing tasks? 2) How does an expert member of a specific disciplinary discourse community rate the quality of generalists’ feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks? 3) Why does the expert member rate the quality of the feedback a certain way? 4) What kind of feedback do generalists provide on discipline-specific writing tasks before and after they receive training about disciplinary discourse communities? 5) What are the steps for the various training methods that generalists undertake to learn about a disciplinary discourse community? 6) How are the generalists’ levels of genre knowledge affected by different training methods about a disciplinary discourse community?

Based on these questions, I collected the following five types of data between September and December of 2009 after receiving IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval: 1) direct field observations; 2) participant field notes; 3) in-depth, structured, and semi-structured interviews; 4) audio-recorded and transcribed tutorial sessions; and 5) document analysis. Below I provide a more thorough explanation of each of these data types.

- 1) *Direct field observations* included three MGT 486 classroom visits which were selected after I coordinated my schedule with Professor Dorf and Lisa (the class met

on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 8am to 9:15am). Patton supports naturalist observations and describes the “field” as a cultural setting. In a study heavily grounded in theories of genre knowledge and discourse communities, where the effects of different methods of investigating a discourse community on a generalist’s genre knowledge is being examined, naturalistic observations were fitting. Patton endorses conducting observations to understand contextual settings because they are crucial to holistic study.

Visiting the MGT 486 classroom allowed me to understand the participants’ experiences: the generalist undertaking the in-class immersion training method, the students enrolled in the course, and Professor Dorf conducting his class. In Stake’s description of case study research, he remarks that the researcher should use observations to better understand the case and therefore observations should focus on the intrinsic issues of the case (17). Thus, I focus on the issues raised in the discourse community and genre theory literature and recorded observations such as Professor Dorf’s interactions with his students, the kinds of explicit instructions he gave, if and how he discussed written conventions of the business community, any information he shared about workplace values and norms, what appeared to be tacitly accepted knowledge, and the interactions the students had with each other. My classroom observations also served as a comparison to Lisa’s field notes, discussed next.

2) *Participant field notes* included written records of what Lisa observed during her time in the MGT 486 classroom. Because one of my research questions focused on the steps generalists take for various training methods when learning about a disciplinary discourse community, Lisa kept a record of her classroom observations as part of the immersion training method. She was directed to take notes on what she observed during the class, but I did stipulate or even suggest what activities and practices she should record.

I instructed Lisa to enclose recorded verbatim speech in quotation marks, and to document information such as the date and time of arrival to the research site. These notes became a primary source for generating questions during my semi-structured interviews with Lisa about what she observed in the classroom, for comparing what I noted about the class to what she noted, for discussing with Professor Dorf what his goals for the class were, and ultimately for analyzing the generalist's genre knowledge.

3) Because case studies value *in-depth interviews* with study participants (Creswell), I conducted *semi-structured interviews* with Lisa and Harriet and the MGT 486 students to whom they provided feedback. Stake contends that interviews are important because they allow the participants to give their descriptions and interpretations of the context; thus, these interviews allowed me to obtain more depth and details about the tutors' genre knowledge. Having the capability for participant-

interpretation, along with the opportunity to follow up with participants in the midst of the study, allowed me to better determine what factors contributed to each generalist's genre knowledge. Interview questions were designed to acquire descriptions and explanations of possible links between the relationships being explored in this study.

Because theories of genre and discourse community are central to the theoretical framework for this study, the first interview with Lisa and Harriet was held to gather detailed information about their backgrounds in order to note circumstances that might have already shaped their genre knowledge of the business discourse community (personal life, education, workplace experience, etc.). This interview was semi-structured, beginning with a list of questions while allowing for an open-ended discussion on a topic and for exploration of possible relevant links to the study's issues. During this interview, I also acquired signatures on the IRB consent forms (see Appendix D for a copy of the approved consent form that all participants signed). I also conducted follow-up interviews with the tutor participants after their tutorial sessions using the questions in Appendix E. I interviewed the tutee participants after the first and second tutorial sessions to ask them questions about their own experiences in the business discourse community (see Appendix F for a list of these questions), as well as questions about their impressions of the tutor's genre knowledge.

“Elite” interviewing was integral to this study as an on-going data collection procedure. This kind of interview involves “someone in a position of authority, or especially expert or authoritative, people who are capable of giving answers with insight and comprehensive grasp of what it is you are researching” (Gillham 63). In this study, Professor Dorf fit the description of an expert who was capable of offering insight into the business discourse community and what it means for the generalist tutors to provide “quality” feedback. I conducted interviews with Professor Dorf to discuss the business discourse community as well as criteria for “quality feedback” and genre knowledge within that discourse community. These interviews were relatively unstructured because: a) Professor Dorf knows more about Small Business Consulting and the business community than I do, and therefore he could tell *me* what questions I should be asking and what I need to know about quality feedback and genre knowledge in this community; and b) by virtue of his authority and experience Professor Dorf had his own structuring of his knowledge (64).

I also conducted more *structured interviews* with Professor Dorf to discuss the generalists’ feedback on the Environmental Analysis Report drafts (due September 17), and the Status Update Report drafts (due October 17). To economize Professor Dorf’s time during the interviews, I used the *plus-minus interview* method (de Jong). Using this method, Professor Dorf placed pluses and minuses where he had positive or negative comments about portions of the transcribed sessions between the

generalists and business students. I then discussed the pluses and minuses during the interview, which guided the discussion, and I asked Professor Dorf whether he believed the generalists' feedback showed an awareness or lack thereof for specialist genre knowledge.

- 4) All tutorial sessions were also *audio-recorded and transcribed* so that I could read the transcripts and examine them in accordance with the theoretical underpinnings of the study, and so that I could discuss the transcripts with Professor Dorf. First, I reviewed discussions that the generalists and the student writers had during the tutorial sessions for instances when the generalists' comments indicated genre knowledge of the business discourse community at large, the Small Business Consulting discourse community, and the MGT 486 discourse community.

Determining what comments suggested genre knowledge required Professor Dorf's input because, as stated above, he is the expert member of the discourse community with the ability to assess whether a generalist's remarks indicated an awareness of the discourse community's shared knowledge and social practices. After determining the generalists' levels of genre knowledge, the transcripts were evaluated to determine the quality of feedback provided to the student writers. I used Professor Dorf's input to measure this "quality" issue as well.

The requirements for recording a generalist's first tutorial session with a business student were that: a) it involved a MGT 486 student; b) the MGT 486 student had

signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study; and c) the MGT 486 student was seeking feedback on the Environmental Analysis Report draft, due for a grade in MGT 486. The requirements for a generalist's second tutorial session to be recorded were that: a) it involved a MGT 486 student; b) the MGT 486 student had signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study; and c) the MGT 486 student was seeking feedback on a Status Update Report draft, due for a grade in MGT 486. Thus, there were four recorded tutorial sessions in all, and of the four tutorial sessions, three of them involved different MGT 486 students.

5) Written documents for *document analysis* were collected, including the generalists' Tutor Report Logs, Lisa's field notes, Professor Dorf's syllabus, and the MGT 486 student participants' Environmental Analysis Report drafts and Status Update Report drafts.

3.3.2 Data Gathering Procedures

Because case study research has time limitations, I first determined the critical aspects of the data gathering process and guidelines for conducting the case study (Stake). Based on Stake's guidelines for collecting data, I:

- 1) made initial face-to-face meeting with generalist tutors, conducted semi-structured interviews to narrow down candidate pool to final two participants, gave consent forms to participants, and discussed a time schedule for observations and interviews

based on Professor Dorf's syllabus and tutor work and class schedules (Wednesday, September 9);

- 2) ascertained participant demographics during the initial meeting and began exploration of business workplace experiences and backgrounds;
- 3) explained to each generalist during the second meeting the training method that she would be using to learn about providing feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks (both tutors kept Tutor Report Logs);
- 4) made field notes during scheduled observations of classroom lessons (Tuesday, September 15; Thursday, September 24; Thursday, October 15)
- 5) audio-recorded and transcribed tutorial sessions (Sunday, September 13, and Monday, September 14, for the first tutorial session; Monday, October 12, and Thursday, October 15, for the second tutorial session);
- 6) conducted follow-up interviews with tutors and student writers after observing classrooms and transcribing tutorial sessions; and
- 7) collected student writer drafts and searched for patterns within all data to begin making interpretations.

3.3.3 Analysis

Data analysis is the process of methodically probing, examining, classifying, and categorizing data collected in a research project to make sense of and communicate the findings

(Stake). The data analysis process in the case study tradition upholds the goals of my study because it allows for methodological reduction to take place (Creswell). Because many different factors potentially played a part in the generalist tutors' genre knowledge, my ability to recognize themes or clusters of factors that support the connection between genre knowledge and feedback quality gave me a more thorough understanding of these tutors' experiences. Because it would be difficult to quantify what Beach et al. would refer to as an "intuited sense" of the generalists' genre knowledge, I coded the data according to relevant themes and categories taken from the genre and discourse community theory literature.

First, I use discourse analysis principles to analyze the tutorial transcripts to note the instances where generalists displayed "genre knowledge" (as defined by Berkenkotter and Huckin in "Rethinking Genre" 488) based on the generalists' discussions of form (such as grammar, punctuation, and format) and content (specifically, discipline-specific material) in the students' writing tasks. I also used the generalists' Report Logs to note passages that exhibited certain levels of genre knowledge, and I used the follow-up interviews with the generalists to ask questions about the tutorial sessions and the Report Logs that gave me a more holistic view of their genre knowledge. Additionally, I used data collected from the interviews with Professor Dorf and with the tutees to substantiate the evaluation of the generalist's genre knowledge. Once the data were coded according to relevant themes and categories, I developed tentative hypotheses about differences in genre knowledge and quality feedback.

To analyze the quality of feedback the generalists provided, I used the tutorial transcripts, the interviews with Professor Dorf, and document analysis of the students' writing assignments (both the Environmental Analysis drafts and the Status Update Report drafts). The tutorial transcripts allowed me to present Professor Dorf with the feedback the generalists provided so that he could discuss the quality of the feedback with me. The interviews allowed me to ask Professor Dorf about his evaluation of the generalists' feedback and to determine the characteristics of quality feedback according to an expert in the business discourse community. A document analysis of the students' assignments allowed me to describe the features of the students' writing that were available for the generalists to comment on, and to compare that information with what the generalists actually noted.

3.3.4 Verification Procedures

Creswell maintains that verification procedures promote qualitative research as “a distinct approach, a legitimate mode of inquiry in its own right” (201). Patton stresses trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility when conducting quality, useful research studies. Researchers achieve credibility when they seek “honest, meaningful, credible, and empirically supported findings” (51). Creswell identifies triangulation as one method of verification for qualitative research that uses “multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (203; see also Thonus, “Triangulation in the Writing Center”). In this study, I used observations, Report Logs, interviews, and document analysis.

Another method of verification recommended by Creswell is member checking. This method involves sharing the research findings and interpretations with the participants. In this study, member checking with Professor Dorf is more than a verification procedure -- it was an integral part of my data collection and determining feedback quality. For verification purposes, I checked with Harriet and Lisa about my findings and interpretations of their genre knowledge by conducting follow-up interviews.

Creswell also recommends “thick description” as a verification method. He notes that rich, thick description is necessary to determine whether a study’s information is transferrable to other situations with “shared characteristics” (203). Rich, thick description was critical to this study in order to fully describe the contextual setting and experiences of the generalists. The nature of a case study requires selection of participants that will allow for in-depth information. Thus, the study’s findings are not intended to be generalized, but to provide a more rich and authentic description of generalists working in a campus-wide writing center who provide feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIRST CONTACT BETWEEN DIVERSE DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES

In this chapter, I present the findings and analysis of the first tutorial sessions between Harriet and Lisa and the students from the Small Business Consulting course. These first tutorial sessions occurred soon after I had determined that Harriet and Lisa were unfamiliar with written genres used by members of the business discourse community. I begin with a description of the genre that both tutors dealt with in their sessions and then move into a discussion about each tutor and the feedback she provides. I am interested in how the tutors display their genre knowledge and the connection between levels of genre knowledge and feedback quality. To that end, I divide the chapter into the following four-part discussion: 1) form, 2) content, 3) form-content, and 4) discourse community membership and genre knowledge. In these sections, I discuss the tutors' attention to the form of the writing tasks, their comments about discipline-specific content, their explanations of content-form connections in the texts, and their awareness of shifting roles and audiences within different discourse communities. Throughout the sections, I analyze the tutors' discourse to explore their levels of genre knowledge, paying particular attention to when and how they share their authority with the tutees. I am especially sensitized to hedging, self-mentions, and explanatory phrases as strategic indicators of the tutors' knowledge (or lack thereof) of form and content in business writing. In the process of analyzing the discourse, I also discuss any implicit beliefs the tutors might display about a universal notion of "good writing," as well as their own shifting feelings of confidence and self-efficacy, and I bring

in corroborating evidence from the Tutor Report Logs as well as the interviews I conduct with them.

Finally, I integrate Professors Dorf's comments about the quality of the tutors' feedback into the discussion of their genre knowledge so I can make connections between the two concepts. This chapter presents the discursive features of both tutors' first encounter with writing tasks common to the business discourse community, and it also serves as a template for Chapter Five, wherein I will also be analyzing the tutors' discourse from their tutorial sessions with business students. The connection between genre knowledge and feedback quality in that chapter will also be made in light of the fact that the tutors will have explored the business discourse community in two different ways. In Chapter Six, I lay out the significant discursive similarities and differences between the tutors' first and second tutorial sessions and discuss the implications of the findings.

4.1 The *Environmental Analysis Report* Genre

To better understand the kind of feedback tutors provide for business students with whom they meet, one must first understand the genre within which students are writing. Drawing upon the definition of "genre" introduced in the previous chapter, here I explain the assignment that the business students bring to the writing center in terms of a "typified rhetorical action based in a recurrent situation" (Miller 159). The assignment that the students bring with them for the first tutorial session is an Environmental Analysis Report, which is a "typified rhetorical action" that

takes place in the business discourse community. The recurrent situation is one in which business consultants research and present preliminary findings on the issues the business owners (the consultants' clients) face when making decisions about business opportunities. Thus, the rhetorical action is to provide information that can enhance the kind of client "knowledge that leads to effective decision making" (Wickham 156).

An effective Environmental Analysis Report orders and organizes information about the analysis strategies used and data collected so it can inform decision-making (Wickham 156). Key in this description is the integration of form and content -- the emphasis is on both the strategies and data (the content) as well as how it ordered and organized. Form and content work together to achieve the over-arching purpose: informed decision-making. The required textbook that the students use in their Small Business Consulting course, *The Advice Business: Essential Tools for Management Consulting*, also provides this information about writing reports: "The format of the report drives the main argument. It indicates which ideas or data are of equivalent importance and which are subordinate, and how these data or ideas support the key points of the argument or analysis" (Fombrun and Nevins 117).

Content typically contained in an Environmental Analysis Report includes three important analysis strategies. Business consultants refer to these strategies as the "SWOT" model, the "PEST" model (Wickham 198), and "Porter's Five Forces" (internal forces, external forces, competitors, new entrants, and producers of complementary products/services). Each strategy provides a framework for evaluating the environment in which the business operates

(157). They are tools to remind consultants (and students who are consultants-in-training) to consider certain types of factors. Once the writer identifies the factors affecting the business, the next steps are to analyze and forecast the effect these issues might have for the business in the future. Over time, the Environmental Analysis Report genre and its features became accepted and expected by the business discourse community as part of “doing business consulting.” And as Hyland notes, genres are “community constraints on discourse [that] both restrict how something can be said and authorize the writer as someone competent to say it” (*Disciplinary Discourses* 141).

Professor Dorf informed me that he has the following expectations for the students’

Environmental Analysis Reports:

- only the most relevant factors are identified and given further analysis, because not all factors are equally relevant
- the different stages of the analysis are easy to find
- the language used is appropriate for the audiences who will be reading the document (the professor and the particular client)
- data are effectively converted into visual codes that can inform decision making. (Dorf interview November 9, 2009)

In the following exchange between Harriet and Paul, I briefly explain the context of the session in terms of Paul’s background and the document he brings to the session. I then examine Harriet’s discourse for indications of her beliefs about writing, content, and form, as well as her genre knowledge (in other words, her understanding of form’s relationship to content). I weave Professor Dorf’s comments about the quality of Harriet’s feedback, as well as relevant details from my interviews with Harriet, into the discussion.

4.2 Harriet and Paul: To Share or not to Share, that is the Question

The business student (Paul) who meets with Harriet is a junior Management major who has taken Business Writing, a course required of all business majors in which they learn how to write various workplace genres, including a major project that requires students to create a report for a real-world business audience rather than a teacher; when I ask Paul if he considers himself part of the business community, he responds: *Kinda, I guess.* (Paul interview September 15, 2009). Paul brings in a draft of his team's Environmental Analysis Report (see Appendix G for a copy of the draft, with identifying information removed) that consists of several different sections with no coherent organization, format, font, or content. The report did not have an introduction or a conclusion -- important elements that this particular genre traditionally includes (and that Professor Dorf expected the students to include).

In my interview with Professor Dorf, he notes several instances where important details are missing or incorrect. In one case, the missing details are directly related to format: the report first draft discusses "PEST" factors, but only elaborates in separate sections on the "S" (sociocultural) and the "T" (technological) factors. Professor Dorf is so taken aback by the difference between Paul's final product (which elaborates on all four "PEST" factors) and the first draft that he tells me: *That is so totally unfamiliar to me. I'm wondering if they didn't change the whole thing before they turned it in* (Dorf interview November 16, 2009). It is

obvious to him that Paul has cut and pasted sections together to create a document and has not yet made the formatting or the content cohesive.

4.2.1 Discussion of Form

In this section, I examine the instances during Harriet and Paul's tutorial session in which Harriet discusses form, such as micro-level grammatical form concerns like syntax and punctuation, or more macro-level formatting concerns like organization and visual impression. Harriet's discussion of form focuses mainly on what and "how" Paul has written the document. In other words, she does not ask him "why" he wrote what he did, though I note the times where Harriet comes close to engaging in this kind of dialogue in the form-content discussion later in this section describing Harriet's tutorial. The majority of the feedback Harriet offers Paul that is not hedged or couched as a question occurs during discussions of form in their tutorial session. Her comments focus on common discourse conventions of academic writing such as rules of punctuation and grammar, whether Paul has a strong thesis statement, or whether the text complies with the visual criteria for particular written conventions. As in the previous section, I will examine Harriet's discussion of form as it occurs chronologically in the conversation.

After she has finished reading, Harriet seeks further clarification about the document's form, asking Paul: *Is this outline part of a larger paper?* Interestingly, there had been no mention of an "outline" or a "paper" while setting the agenda for the session. Both of these terms are commonly used in academic discourse to describe writing tasks, so here it seems as

though Harriet is interpreting the text from the perspective of a member of the academic discourse community. Paul responds by giving Harriet a more thorough explanation about the report, but he does not answer whether the text he has brought to the writing center is an “outline” or if it is a complete draft of a “paper.”

In response to Paul’s description of the project, Harriet asks him: *So you don’t really need me to look at this to be a coherent paper?* Paul responds: *There needs to be some cohesion, it’s just I have no idea how to format something like this.* Here is Paul’s first mention of a specific issue that he is having with the document, and it is related to formatting. Harriet assures Paul: *I think this is good shading*, and she makes sure again to use a self-mention so as to indicate that it is her (non-expert) opinion. The draft that Paul brought in to the writing center contains several shaded areas that cover headings, entire sections, and random words. Professor Dorf places a “negative” sign beside this feedback, and when I ask him about it he tells me that the shading is ineffective and distracting and that in fact the final report that Paul turned in did not contain the shading.

In response to Harriet’s question, Paul tells her that the document is part of a group project and that he has only just met with his teammates, explaining: *I just got that 30 minutes ago and just put it all together. I did my section and other people did theirs.* This moment seems like an opportunity to discuss with Paul how he and his group are writing the document together, what they consider as they write, and why certain features are important to consider for an Environmental Analysis report. But Harriet’s next comment is: *It’s a group project, right? I’m*

just gonna note some things that you can take back to them. Here, Harriet has determined that she has enough knowledge about writing the report to be able to write down notes for Paul to share with his teammates. Later on in the session, we learn that her notes focus on matters of form -- primarily punctuation and grammar issues.

Harriet has embraced a “HOCs before LOCs” (“higher order concerns” before “lower order concerns”) writing center pedagogy, as discussed in McAndrew and Reigstad’s *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Tutors* (42). Harriet’s pedagogy manifests itself as “content before form,” because it is not until the very end of the session that she revisits her list and remarks on matters of form in Paul’s document. As the session winds up, she tells him: *I think everything else is concluded pretty well, other than that there’s just a couple of style things. There were a couple of grammar, punctuation things that went on. I just wanted to kinda try to make a list of them.* One can see in this exchange that Harriet begins with the hedging and self-mentions that focus on the subject-matter (*I think everything else is concluded pretty well*), which invites Paul to contribute to the discussion by agreeing, correcting, or expanding on Harriet’s utterance. She then moves quickly to a definitive statement about the grammar and punctuation issues in Paul’s document that she feels confident enough to capture in a list.

Harriet continues in a lengthy utterance about form:

I noticed that different places throughout here, you spell and capitalize ‘A Frame’ differently. And then grammar-wise there’s a couple places where there’s run-on sentences, so the basic rule is that if you have two clauses either make it two sentences or separate with a semicolon. There were a couple of really good semicolon usages here which makes me happy

because I love semicolons. Or a comma followed by a conjunction. The basic test is if you can split it into sentences then it's a complex sentence. Also, this is a really standard mistake which I made until like two years ago. 'However,' 'therefore,' and there's a couple of others that aren't coming to mind right now, you precede with a semicolon, not a comma. I like 'howevers,' but I learned that you have to put a semicolon in front of them, not a comma, so that's just something to look for. I think there were one or two places where there were missing an apostrophe for a possessive, but I'm sure it's just something was looked over.

Harriet's single hedge (*I think there were one or two places where they were missing an apostrophe for a possessive*) might occur because she does not know the specifics of Paul's project, as opposed to not knowing whether the word required an apostrophe or not. The hedge provides an opportunity for Paul to offer his content knowledge. Harriet's self-mentions downplay what could be conceived as negative feedback (*this is a really standard mistake which I made until like two years ago*) and express her validation and approval for what Paul has written. In this instance, then, the self-mentions do not function to encourage Paul to share his content knowledge; rather, they call attention to the fact that Harriet offers advice as a non-member of the business discourse community, which she might use to strengthen the validity of her feedback.

Interesting to note is that Harriet thoroughly explains why and how to use a semicolon in a way that Paul would feasibly be able to make the correction as he revised his current document and on future texts that he composes, but she gives him these rules without reference to a specific context. If we are to assume that she is referring to the rules known by members of the academic discourse community (because she has established throughout the tutorial session that she is not

familiar with business writing, and in our interview before the session she makes clear that she does not consider herself to be a part of the business discourse community), then she is also assuming that the same rules and explanations are relevant -- universal, even -- for the discourse community Paul wants to enter. In fact, Harriet essentially says as much when telling Paul:

Yeah, I'm sure that most of this you know, I just want to make sure you have a little 'cheat sheet' here in case if nothing else you can double-check and think 'ah, I forgot to look for apostrophes'.

Here again, Harriet is seeking to provide Paul with a scaffold that he can use beyond the tutorial session. She is confident enough in her knowledge of punctuation and grammar that she creates a "cheat sheet" for him that can serve as a sort of reference guide when he leaves the writing center.

As the session comes to an end, Paul reiterates his concern from the beginning of the conversation, asking Harriet directly: *So how do you feel about the format of it, like how it's different. Is it fine, you think?* Harriet responds: *You mean, separated into these paragraphs? To me it makes sense. It made it easy for me not really knowing anything about this to be able to follow along.* In this utterance, Harriet responds to Paul's *you think?* and answers the question from her perspective. With this response she does not explain what Environmental Analysis Report format features are appropriate for members of the business discourse community, nor does she engage Paul in a discussion about the audience whose interests the genre serves. Though she makes a move to discuss the purpose of the format (*It made it easy for me not really knowing anything about this to be able to follow along*), she does not explain why these

considerations are important for the particular genre that Paul is using. Nor does she discuss with Paul how and why different ways of creatively formatting the Environmental Analysis report might enhance its effectiveness. Professor Dorf gives Harriet a positive mark for her comment about how the document's format should make the information easy to follow along, noting that "her instincts were correct" even if she was not sure about what a person in the business community expects in an Environmental Analysis Report. But Professor Dorf does note that the overall format of the document that Paul works on with Harriet is not as easy to read as it could be because it is fragmented and inconsistent.

In Harriet's final utterance, her language is noticeably confident and explanative, and also noticeable is the focus on form. She tells Paul:

This 'ect.' here, this is an incredibly common mistake. It's actually e-t-c, not e-c-t because the word is etcetera, and I think because a lot of people pronounce it "ecetera" it's very common. I don't think I noticed any missing words or anything like that, but it's always a good idea before you turn something in to read it aloud. One of the ladies working in the writing center says she likes to start with the last sentence and read it backwards. Or even read it in your head but make sure you're reading every single word. Read it in your head like you're reading it aloud so that way you know if you left out a 'the' or something. I don't think I noticed anything like that, but that's just something. And then you just had a couple of places where the spacing is weird or the font is weird, but like you said you had to email it to each other or something, so that's probably why. But other than that it seems like, I mean it's organized well, everything seems to make sense.

Here, Harriet is directive and uses far fewer hedges than when she discusses content-related issues with Paul. Notably in this passage, Harriet mainly discusses mechanical issues such as

punctuation, missing or misspelled words, and general impressions about visual aspects of spacing and typography. Thus, she seems more comfortable finding and pointing out these problems, likely because these are the normal discourse conventions that she is familiar with and most sensitized to notice. She is able to explain to Paul the reasoning behind the spelling of “etc.” (*because the word is etcetera*) and she gives him a clear directive on how edit his own work in the future for such “very common” issues (*read it in your head but make sure you’re reading every single word*). It is when Harriet begins to discuss the organization and “higher-order concerns” that she reverts back to the hedges (*it seems like, I mean, seems to make sense*).

Paul briefly interjects a comment about capitalization and Harriet picks up off of Paul’s short statement, continuing in a lengthy utterance to offer more directive feedback about form:

Yeah, I’m not sure of the official way to write ‘Wal-Mart’ but I do think you have to capitalize the ‘M.’ And then Home Depot, and ‘Craftsman.’ I don’t think there are any more, but just go through and double-check all of that. But other than that, you just need to just kind of wrap it up here in this paragraph.

Here again, Harriet’s use of such directive phrases as *you have to, go through and double-check all of that, wrap it up here* indicates that she is much more confident in giving feedback concerning academic discourse conventions such as mechanics and the need for a “conclusion” that can “wrap it up.” Harriet then follows up with this feedback: *Make sure it’s something you want to talk about. But other than that I think you structure it well, it makes sense to me. I don’t know anything about business.* It appears as though the idea of reorganization is not worth pursuing, possibly because Harriet realizes that both she and Paul have no expert knowledge to

share on this matter. She goes on to proffer a reason why Paul does not have knowledge about formatting (*I guess this was someone else's section?*) and to reiterate once more why she does not have the knowledge to share about formatting (*I don't know anything about business*).

What this section highlights above all is that when Harriet discusses form in this first tutorial session, her feedback is given with minimal hedging in straight-forward statements that convey a sense of universality in the written discourse conventions used across the different discourse communities to which she and Paul belong.

4.2.2 Content Discussion

Harriet's feedback about content is predominantly unrelated to form, and in these moments of "formless" content feedback she uses more hedges and self-mentions than any other time in the session. Professor Dorf marks Harriet's feedback on content at various levels of quality, ranging from substandard (low) to specialist (high) quality. The inconsistency in Harriet's "content" feedback quality appears to be directly related to whether the content is appropriate for the genre in which Paul is writing. That is, when Harriet provided low quality feedback on content, it was because the feedback was inappropriate for the Environmental Analysis Report (as opposed to a literature essay). Likewise, when she provided high quality feedback on content, it was because the feedback was appropriate for the Environmental Analysis Report.

Harriet spends little time setting up the context of the document with Paul before she moves on to reading over the text. After asking Paul straightforward questions about what the assignment is and asking him to explain what “Environmental Analysis” means, Harriet reads over the document. After reading the text, Harriet asks Paul if he wants her to read his document like “a coherent paper,” adding: *It made sense to me. I don't know anything about business at all, as you probably figured out, but it did make sense to me. It seemed logical.* Here, Harriet makes a general statement about the overall logic of Paul’s document; but without indicating whether she is referring to form or content, one is left to wonder whether she is considering both of these concepts together, or if she is referring only to one or the other in this statement.

Also in this utterance, Harriet uses the personal markers “me” and “I”, which have important discursive functions here and throughout the tutorial session. As Christina Samson notes in “Interaction in Written Economics Lectures: The Meta-Discursive Role of Person Markers,” self-mentions (the use of personal pronouns that Samson refers to as “person markers”) have interpersonal meta-discursive functions. They express a speaker’s “socially defined person circumscribed by his/her disciplinary community” (200), as well as establish her authority on a subject and positions towards less expert interactants, and enforce asymmetry. In this instance, Harriet’s use of “me” and “I” focus attention on her non-expert status regarding business subject matter as she makes it explicit that she is an outsider in the business discourse community.

Harriet also adds a phrase indicating her lack of knowledge (*I don't know anything about business at all*). "I don't know" phrases often indicate an individual's declaration of insufficient knowledge so as to justify their utterances (see Diani). They also serve as hedges, along with words and phrases such as "seems," "in a way," "sort of," "kind of," "I mean," "I think," and "I guess" (Simpson-Vlach 304). "Hedging" is generally taken to mean those expressions in language which make messages speculative, that is to say, they "convey inexactitude, or in one way or another mitigate or reduce the strength of the assertions that speakers or writers make" (Mauranen 174).

Though hedging is used also as a politeness strategy to mitigate criticism (what Brown and Levinson refer to as "face-threatening acts"), hedging is more common in the humanities because of the "personal nature of the opinion expressed" (Simpson-Vlach 307). In this instance, Harriet's hedging does not appear to serve as a mitigator because she is not offering Paul any negative criticism. The fact that Harriet combines the hedge with the phrase "at all" is intriguing, because *at all* is as an "intensifier" -- what Mauranen also refers to as an "emphasiser" (189). That is to say, the intensifier functions to emphasize the significance of the concept that it adjoins. In this instance, Harriet seeks to emphasize her lack of content knowledge about business in general, and she wants Paul to be aware of this fact at the beginning of the tutorial session.

As I discussed the tutorial session transcripts with Professor Dorf, he showed a heightened awareness about comments such as these in which the tutors made self-deprecating

remarks about their lack of business content knowledge and professional writing conventions; he viewed it as a reduction in credibility more than an effective way to build solidarity or establish an egalitarian atmosphere. In this part of the session, Harriet reduces her credibility, possibly to reduce her authority and in an attempt to increase Paul's agency in the interaction, but it is a detriment to the quality of feedback that she offers ("it made sense to me") because she offers the feedback by way of a self-mention: *to me*. Thus, she makes sure to establish that she is not offering the feedback as a knowledgeable member of the discourse community that Paul is considering as he writes, but she does not explain what would be logical to a member of another discourse community -- ideally the audience who Paul likely had in mind as he was composing the document -- nor does she attempt to engage in that conversation with him. Professor Dorf gives Harriet low marks for the quality of her feedback here. Harriet also displays low genre knowledge for the feedback, as she does not provide any explanation to support her comments. Nor does Harriet engage Paul in a discussion about what members of the discourse community for which he writes would consider "logical" content for an Environmental Analysis Report.

The next time Harriet provides feedback on content in the session, she does the same thing, asking Paul: *One question I have -- I don't know if maybe this is the kind of thing that goes on in this sort of assignment -- but I'm interested to know what the price would be on this item.* Harriet's admission that she does not know details about the content of the report gives Paul the opportunity to share that information, if he has the knowledge. In this instance, he does know these details, and he tells Harriet that they need to be included in an Environmental Analysis

Report. Paul explains to her: *It needs to be in there, and I have the prices right there, but that definitely needs to be in there.* Professor Dorf gives Harriet positive marks for raising this content-related issue because it is something that the intended audience likely would want to know, but he adds that if Paul had not known whether this content was appropriate to include in the report, then he might not have benefited from Harriet's comments. That is to say, Harriet did not offer an explanation for why she was interested in the specific content. She did not suggest that her query was related to the particular document or the discourse community for which Paul wrote. Therefore, the quality of her feedback is not connected to a display of genre knowledge.

Moving on, Harriet continues to point out content-related issues. She asks Paul: *I think there was something that I saw, a census or something -- of course there's a new census coming out this year -- so usage-wise where you say that the "country is currently experiencing a growth rate of 83%" is that current data or is that from the 2000 census?* When Paul answers with a simple *I do not know*, Harriet elaborates on this issue by saying: *I'm just going to make a note to look at it, because if it's from the 2000 census you probably don't want to say "current" because that was nine years ago.* Here the use of the word "probably" is Harriet's signal that her feedback is tentative, or that she is attempting to mitigate face-threatening criticism. Either way, her explanation does not suggest why the revision would be important for the Environmental Analysis Report genre or appropriate for a member of the business discourse community. Professor Dorf gives Harriet a positive mark for this feedback, explaining to me that Harriet points out a valid content issue that Paul would be diligent to follow up on, though he tells me

that for this particular report it is not necessary to go into this kind of detail. Thus, Harriet's feedback is high quality, but again her explanation indicates her lack of genre knowledge.

Harriet continues to hedge and call attention to her position as an outsider when she tells

Paul:

I don't know, this might be extraneous information that wouldn't be relevant to you and it might just be questions that I ask that won't necessarily be relevant to your assignment because I'm not a business person, but I'm interested just to know if that's the current gross rate, if there's a way to maybe approximate what the southeastern region population is now.

Harriet uses five hedges (*I don't know, might, might, just, and maybe*) in this single sentence as she attempts to provide Paul with feedback about what to consider as he continues working on his document. The most likely explanation for the hedges is not that Harriet predominantly wants to instill a sense of agency in Paul or that she is taking care to be non-directive, but that she is unsure about her feedback as a non-member of the business discourse community and her lack of familiarity with the normal conventions and expectations of what content to include in this particular genre. In addition to her explicit admission here that she is "not a business person," my pre- and post-interviews with Harriet and the Tutor Report Logs that she completes corroborate this idea.

Though Paul does not seem to have much to contribute to the conversation that Harriet attempts to engage him in here, Professor Dorf gave positive marks to Harriet for her comments. When I asked him to elaborate, he explained that Harriet asked about the kind of information that

the business reader would want to know, such as the southeastern region's population. These details are appropriate for Paul's client, and the reader would expect to find such information in this specific Environmental Analysis report. I asked Professor Dorf if he had an idea of how Harriet might have known to ask such questions since she had not discussed Paul's client in any significant detail with him and the report itself did not suggest that the client would need or want to know this information. I also pointed out all of the instances in which Harriet makes explicit mention of her lack of business discourse community knowledge. Professor Dorf's reply was that he believed that she was responding to concepts that most people who are consumers in an American society might be confused by or want to know more about in an informative document.

Rather than inviting Paul to elaborate or contribute more to this issue in his document, Harriet continues on to another content issue, beginning again by acknowledging her lack of knowledge:

I don't know if it's actually important. I guess with this paragraph, with the 'sociocultural paragraph,' you maybe want to talk about the implications of what you're saying, because you talk about how students make money, but does this mean that, like why do you consider that, what kind of conclusions can you draw from these?

Here again Harriet offers feedback that is content-specific, even after she has established multiple times at this point in the session that she is not a member of the business discourse community and that she is unfamiliar with business writing conventions, which is most likely

why she makes sure to hedge when commenting on the document (*I don't know, I guess, you maybe want to*).

After Paul attempts to elaborate on the implications, Harriet responds:

I think you could maybe just kinda put maybe just like a concluding sentence, I guess. Because you went into talking about how most students pay for tuition with loans or their parents to manage in similar ways. Do you mean that they're spending more money from loans or parents?

Again, the heavy use of hedges and self-mentions here (*I think, maybe, maybe just, I guess*) render the explanation that Harriet offers here (*Because you went into. . .*) not so much a way to explain the genre that Paul is using in terms of its purpose, features, context, stakeholders, or discourse community, but more to *justify* her advice as a non-member of the business discourse community. Harriet continues:

Okay. So, it sounds like maybe what you're saying is that mostly it would be parents that are purchasing this? So, I don't know if you are maybe suggesting that some of the marketing needs to be towards parents at all. I just feel like this paragraph leaves me hanging a little bit, like I don't know exactly why you're talking about it I guess. Maybe you could expand on that.

Here again, Harriet offers content feedback with multiple hedges and self-mentions (*maybe, I don't know, I just feel, Maybe you could*). In my interview with Professor Dorf, he noted that Harriet's comment here is helpful because Paul should consider that he is missing important information that would strengthen his analysis for a specific client. In this sense, the quality of Harriet's comment meets a high quality "specialist" standard, but the comment itself falls under

the “neutral” genre knowledge level category, for it is an attempt to ask general questions about the content’s appropriateness, rather than offer an explanation or attempt to discuss whose interests are served in terms of their values, backgrounds, statuses, educations, and needs. It is likely that Harriet uses hedges and self-mentions because she cannot offer an authoritative explanation about the appropriateness of the content for the specific reader and larger business discourse community.

Interestingly then, is the fact that Harriet even focuses her comments on content. She possibly does so because it is an opportunity for the exchange of shared knowledge. In other words, she assumes that Paul has the content knowledge to respond to her questions and to discuss whether her impressions (all of the self-mentions) are valid. Thus, Harriet might stay away from genre issues (that is to say, she does not pursue discussions about how content and form relate and serve a purpose for the particular audience and discourse community) because neither she nor Paul seem able to contribute to that discussion. A discussion about the report as a genre would therefore not provide opportunities for the creation of shared knowledge or the reduction of Harriet’s institutional authority.

When concluding the session, Harriet revisits content issues, telling Paul:

It made sense to me. The only place where I got lost at all was in the ‘sociocultural’ and that’s probably because there were so many numbers and I really don’t do numbers. Although as I said it did seem like maybe you need to include a sentence there, but as long as this type of format is standard and acceptable to have these headers, I think that’s helpful and it made it a little bit easier. I

guess 'sociocultural' and 'technological' are parts of 'PEST' analysis?

Here again, Harriet offers feedback mainly from her perspective (*to me, I got lost, I think, I guess*), and she is able to explain her confusion with the format (*because there were so many numbers and I really don't do numbers*), but she only considers a different stakeholder and his discourse community when she provides the hedged feedback: *maybe you need to include a sentence there, but as long as this type of format is standard and acceptable, and I guess "sociocultural" and "technological" are parts of "PEST" analysis?* And even here, the feedback is still related to content, and not form. Professor Dorf notes that Harriet does not mention that important sections of the PEST analysis are missing (he exclaims: *She mentions the 'S' and the 'T', but where's the 'P' and the 'E'?*), and he gives her negative marks for the quality of her feedback. Thus, Harriet's lack of content knowledge about the elements of a "PEST analysis" hinder her ability to offer quality feedback on formatting -- an issue of genre knowledge, because these specific sections have a particular placement in an Environmental Analysis Report.

Summing up, Harriet reiterates: *I do think that makes sense. And obviously, like I said, I'm not an expert on this, but it seemed to me like you were talking about important things, things that you know if I was starting a business I would want to hear about.* Harriet continues to the end to offer feedback while underscoring her status as a non-member of the business discourse community. While she clearly indicates her non-expert status, it is as though Harriet

uses this identity as a means to discuss the content in Paul's document. That is, because she is a non-expert, Harriet believes that she can imagine what a layperson starting a business would want to know.

Though she might not realize it, Harriet's non-expert status also is related to her inability to discuss the document's format more thoroughly (i.e., more rhetorically). By the time Harriet moves on to what she considers to be "lower-order concerns" (McAndrew and Reigstad 56), she has made sure to position herself as a non-member of the business discourse community. She has focused on what Paul as the writer wants to convey in the report and what the content means to her, but the discussion has not included explanations or questions about what members of the discourse community actually expect to see in an Environmental Analysis Report.

4.2.3 Form-Content Discussion

In this section, I discuss the two instances in which Harriet referred to both form and content in the same utterance. While these moments occur the least frequently in the session, they are also the moments that receive the most positive remarks from Professor Dorf in terms of quality feedback from a specialist perspective. At one point during the session, Harriet responds to Paul's question about formatting with a self-mention and a hedge: *Actually, I think it's a good thing, but I feel like it might actually go a little bit better at the end, but that may just be because, you know, because I'm not familiar with the product.* She then moves into a lengthier explanation of her comment that seems to show an awareness of what a member from the

particular discourse community for which Paul writes might be concerned: *Because some of the things you address in these paragraphs kinda give a little bit better context of what they are, but I don't know if anyone who's familiar with the product will feel that way.*

Professor Dorf tells me that this is quality feedback, and that in fact the product details that Paul provides are acceptable at the beginning of the report because they provide important information for his particular reader: they show that Paul and his teammates are familiar with the product that they will be promoting, and they ensure that the writer and reader have the same understanding about the product for increased clarity in communication at this stage and throughout the project. Thus, in this instance, the quality of Harriet's feedback is connected to a display of her heightened genre knowledge, for she discusses generic features (the organization of the content, for example) with reference to a particular audience (individuals familiar with the product).

In another exchange in which Paul has asked Harriet about an issue relating to form (specifically regarding whether Paul has correctly formatted the name of his client's company), Harriet answers him with: *I don't know if maybe your entrepreneur has a way that he uses it. I think that's probably a judgment call on your all's part, though I would tend to think that when you're defining something it's better to discuss it after you define it.* Here again, Harriet shows an awareness that Paul is writing his document for a particular business reader and she encourages Paul to consider the correct format for the company's name throughout the Environmental Analysis Report by referring to the audience whose interests are served.

Professor Dorf also picks up on this feedback and indicates that it is high quality. In this utterance, Harriet also combines hedges with self-mentions and tag questions to defer the decision-making to Paul. The topic at issue involves discipline-specific content which is outside the purview of Harriet's expertise, so she offers tentative feedback. Though she does not provide Paul with an explanation about what the purpose of "defining before discussing" would be for the reader of this report in this particular context, Harriet appears to hedge this feedback by telling Paul: *But I don't know that it's necessarily completely out of place at the beginning*. She struggles between the two discourse communities that she knows she needs to be engaging during this tutorial session, and she is loathe to give Paul directive feedback when she is not sure what the conventions are for the assignment. Like with the previous comment, Harriet's quality of feedback is connected to a higher level of genre knowledge, as she shows awareness that the effectiveness of the form of the content is reliant on the intended audience and purpose.

4.2.4 Discourse Community Membership and Genre Knowledge

Overall, Harriet displays the genre knowledge level of a generalist for the majority of the session as she speaks of texts/textual practices in separate terms of content and form, rather than holistically (Tardy 24). Writing is separate from content; the format (the report's sections) is distinct from the individual sentences and punctuation that Harriet focuses on during the session -- she does not discuss the integration of those sentences and punctuation in the larger picture of a complete report, she never moves past the text that Paul brings in and what he ultimately wants

his text to do for his reader, which is why the majority of her comments focus on what the text does for *her*.

Harriet's Tutor Report Log and follow-up interview corroborate this interpretation, for she notes her low self-efficacy and low self-confidence in working with Paul because she lacks knowledge of business writing. She mentions that she did not know where to begin with him because he had brought in an outline, which indicates that she finds strength in responding to a text -- the *writing* -- rather than the content, further evidence of her separation of writing from content and context. My discussion with Professor Dorf about Harriet's feedback during the tutorial session also corroborates this interpretation, for he notes instances where she does not mention key sections of an Environmental Analysis report that a person familiar with that genre would highlight. Notably, the only mechanical errors that Professor Dorf marks are misspellings; he does not make any marks about the punctuation issues that Harriet spent so much time writing out for Paul. My discussion with Paul about Harriet's feedback indicates that he most distinctly remembers her comments about punctuation and grammar, and that he does not consider her a member of the business discourse community.

4.3 Lisa and Simon: Finding a Discursive Comfort Zone

In this section, I briefly explain the context of the first tutorial session between Lisa and Simon in terms of Simon's background and the document he brings to the session. I then use the same four-part discourse discussion as I do above in Harriet's session to examine Lisa's

discourse for indications of her beliefs about writing, content, and form, as well as her genre knowledge. I weave Professor Dorf's comments about the quality of Lisa's feedback, as well as relevant details from my interviews with Lisa, into the discussion.

The business student (Simon) who meets with Lisa is a graduate student in the joint MBA/JD program who has also taken a required Business Writing course. He was an English major as an undergrad at a small liberal arts school, and he occasionally laments during the tutorial sessions that legal writing and business writing are "cold" and "not flowery" unlike the writing he did for his English courses. Simon tells me that he has experience writing in different workplace genres, and when I ask him whether he considers himself part of the business community, he responds: *Not really*. (Simon interview September 16, 2009). Simon brings in a draft of his team's Environmental Analysis report that includes sections, paragraphs, analysis, and visuals (see Appendix H for a copy of the draft, with identifying information removed). The draft is similar to the final report that Simon's team turns in because Professor Dorf notes the similarities between the two documents during our interview.

4.3.1 Discussion of Form

Though I analyze Lisa's discussion of form first in my examination of her tutorial session with Simon, she actually does not engage Simon in any decontextualized discussion about form until the end of the session. Most noticeable in these last moments when Lisa does discuss form unrelated to content is that she uses the most confident and cooperative language of the session.

After a lengthy conversation about the document's content, which I discuss in the next section, Lisa transitions to a discussion about form using language that almost seems like she is reclaiming a sense of authority by introducing a topic about which she has expert knowledge.

She tells Simon:

There are a couple of, I guess, lower-order concerns that we can look at in here. Just grammar and syntax, how to make your writing a little more concise, because I imagine in the business world time is money. And just some things that are, you know the English language, you know, not wrong, but just 'less right.' Like this: 'there are.' Don't start a word with 'there are.' So can you think of a way to rephrase the sentence so that it doesn't begin with that?

By ending with this question, Lisa maintains the cooperative nature of their interaction by inviting Simon to revise the sentence himself.

Lisa's use of the term *lower-order concerns* is a distinctive phrase in composition and writing center scholarship, and possibly something that Simon is not familiar with. Lisa provides a brief description (*just grammar and syntax*) of what this term means, as well as an explanation of why it is important (*how to make your writing a little more concise because I imagine in the business world time is money*). Here, Lisa's explanation does not exhibit a high level of genre knowledge because she does not explain the connection between content and form; rather, she offers a vague statement about the business world's focus on time efficiency. Of note here is that she offers feedback on mechanics and grammar, which are topics of discussion in academic discourse, especially within the English disciplinary discourse community.

Professor Dorf gives Lisa positive marks for her feedback, though when I ask him to elaborate his reasoning, he tells me that these are the kinds of comments he expects her to provide as an English graduate student who works in the writing center. Because Lisa makes it a point in her session to be inclusive, she follows the directive with a question that invites a response (*So can you think of a way. . .?*), to which Simon says: *I guess you could start with 'this industry.'* *I could put 'this industry' in the front and then say something like 'This industry presents few barriers to entry' or something like that.* Simon's hedges and minimizers (*I guess, I could, something like that*) convey that he is uncertain about his answer. Lisa gives him positive reinforcement by telling him: *Right. Something like that is good.* But she does not explain why Simon's revision is effective in terms of the genre he is using or the audience to whom he writing. Essentially, Lisa shows support for the change that Simon makes to the sentence by reiterating his uncertainty (*something like that*), rather than discussing why "something like that" change is "good."

Simon then seeks out an explanation, asking Lisa: *'There are' is just not good to start a sentence with?* to which Lisa tells him:

Yeah, they don't like it. You get a big 'shame-shame' when you do that. That and also the passive voice, but I'm not sure how they feel about that in business writing, because I know in science writing they love the passive voice. They want you to put it for everything. In English writing, I've heard of professors who if they find more than two passive verbs they just stop reading your paper -- they are that serious about it. So, depending on how business writing usually goes when you look at some samples, because I'm not sure. I should look up on that.

This passage once again shows Lisa's discursive attempts to maneuver between two discourse communities. She begins with a definitive statement about writing in a specific discourse community, and she introduces the term *they* to refer to members of the academic discourse community (*they don't like it*). This term carries over into Lisa's discussion about writing in other disciplines, as she wonders out loud what conventions *they* (in other words, the members of other discourse communities) expect their members to follow. The only explanation that she offers for not using "there are" at the beginning of the sentence is to rely on the authority of the expert members of the academic discourse community and to apply this rule even-handedly to the expectations of the business discourse community.

Additionally, Lisa does not use the inclusive *we* terms that she has previously used in the session. She makes an overt suggestion that Simon look at samples of business writing (*when you look at some samples*) and considers how she should do her own independent research on the matter (*I should look up on that*). This separation of roles suggests that Lisa understands that neither she nor Simon has any knowledge to share on the matter, so the next step is to independently investigate the issue. Lisa relies on her previous experience with genres in English writing and science writing as evidence for her feedback. By admitting that she *should look up on it* when referring to business writing conventions, she implicitly promotes the use of what Tardy refers to as "textual interaction" to learn the practices of another discourse community. Notably, when I ask Professor Dorf whether the comments that Lisa provides are of

the quality that a member of the business discourse community might offer, he remarks: *No, but that's not what I expect her to be able to do.* Professor Dorf only expects Lisa to be able to offer feedback on what Professor Dorf considers “writing issues.”

The notable thing about the two instances where Professor Dorf made double positive marks on Lisa's feedback is that these moments were when she either displayed a higher level of genre knowledge or acknowledged the variability in business writing compared to academic writing. Curiously, even though Lisa readily admits that she does not know whether *they* accept passive voice in business writing, she points out a passive voice passage in Simon's document and tells him: *I know I saw one. . . Oh here it is. "More culture-driven events will be replaced by high level of competition."* So, *"High level of competition will replace culture-driven events" will be the easy way to switch it around. Make sure that the thing that's acting, that's doing the acting, is in the subject.* Here Lisa is providing directive feedback to Simon on a matter which she admittedly does not know: the discourse community's expectations. Even more, she has just told Simon that she needs to research passive voice usage in business writing and that the significance of the issue “depends” on what Simon finds in the samples he examines. Yet Lisa provides explicit feedback on the passive voice in Simon's text and even gives him an explanation for her suggested revision. Because Lisa wraps up the session immediately after providing this feedback, her comments suggest that she wants to end by offering expert knowledge on a topic that Simon would not likely have access to elsewhere.

4.3.2 Content Discussion

Lisa's session begins with Simon confessing that he has never had a writing center consultation before, and he tells her: *I haven't even really written much for 'business-y' type, unemotional writing. My experience with prose has been more like flowery, I guess. So that would probably be my issue.* Simon continues on without interruption, telling Lisa: *I have written just a few paragraphs doing a Five-Forces Analysis of the event production industry in Tuscaloosa.* When Lisa finally has the opportunity to respond, she asks Simon to elaborate on content: *Uh, first could you explain the assignment to me? I don't know what a Five-Forces Analysis is.* Here, Lisa places the subject-matter authority squarely in Simon's hands by asking him whether he can explain the assignment to her and by revealing that she does not have that kind of expert content knowledge.

Simon provides an explanation of the assignment in which he identifies the document by name (an "Environmental Analysis"), followed by a lengthy description of what he has completed so far on the assignment. Simon's description remains at the content level throughout the entire explanation except for a digression to recount his impressions of business writing as "dry" and "boring." Because Simon spends the majority of his explanation detailing what content belongs in the report, concluding with a nod to the purpose of the assignment (*we don't make any sort of recommendations or anything*), it is apparent that he does not consider the format or the rhetorical context of the report to be necessary for Lisa to understand the assignment.

Accordingly, Lisa follows up with a question to clarify the content, rather than form or purpose: *What are the five forces you're working with in this paper?* Simon responds using language that is common for members of the business discourse community: *These are just a couple of paragraphs about rivalry, a couple of very short paragraphs that I'm going to get more into, I just haven't even done a lot of research yet on threat of new entrants and the bargaining power of suppliers.* He continues, telling her: *And this will eventually stretch to two pages.* Rather than asking Simon to elaborate on the issues of form that he mentions, Lisa asks him a question about content knowledge: *Okay, now your audience for these things is going to be another person who knows the lingo and things like that -- who are other business people? Or is it for someone like me who doesn't know?*

Here, Lisa makes a couple of significant rhetorical moves: first, she brings the discussion around to audience analysis -- a kind of analysis she likely has more experience doing in academic writing; second, she clues Simon in to her lack of business content knowledge. In this way, she establishes that her role in the tutorial session is not to function as a member of the business discourse community, and thus she makes sure to communicate that she can and will offer feedback from an outsider's perspective. With this comment, Lisa also gives Simon the opportunity to share his expert knowledge, for Lisa must rely on Simon in order to understand the assignment's content and intended audience. Just as Professor Dorf had noted about Harriet and Paul's session, he comments at this point in Simon and Lisa's session that *nothing would have gotten accomplished* if Simon had not been able to supply the missing information.

4.3.3 Form-Content Discussion

Lisa determines from Simon that the document's reader is a member of the business discourse community, and she then tells him: *I should read over this real quick*, the agenda having apparently been set. Lisa reads the document for two minutes and then she immediately moves into giving Simon feedback, having no more questions for him to clarify. She tells him:

There were in this section -- the "Rivalry" section -- there was one point where I thought it could be a little clearer. And I understood it after I read it the second time, but you should just try to find a way to make it a little, make it flow a little better. You say "this is the ability of Trius to carve out its niche. We'll determine how much concern." And like I said, I got it after the second time, but it's a little, it doesn't flow quite right with the sentence before it. So I think we should try to find another way to say that.

With these comments Lisa offers directive feedback on content (a specific point in the "Rivalry" section) as well as form (the flow of the sentences and word choice). Thus, she is indicating that she has both subject-matter knowledge and formal knowledge, though earlier she told Simon that she did not have business knowledge and shifted issues of content over to Simon to answer. Lisa uses a self-mention (*I thought it could be a little clearer*) when she offers the advice, which emphasizes that her feedback is from the perspective of a non-member of the business discourse community. Explaining that she understood Simon's point after reading it twice, Lisa gives him a directive (*you should just try to find a way to make it a little, make it flow a little better*), without using a hedge or a self-mention. Though Lisa does use minimizers (*just, a little*) when

offering the feedback, this could be a politeness move (see Brown and Levinson), but it might likely be a way to reduce the authoritativeness of the feedback because she is not completely certain of the validity of the remark due to her non-membership status.

Professor Dorf notes that Lisa provides quality feedback here. Notably missing, however, is an explanation in terms of genre of *why* Simon should revise for flow and *why* he should find another way to word his prose. For example, Lisa does not suggest that improving flow or reconsidering the word choice could improve the “Rivalry” section because Simon makes several valid points that are important for a reader to understand, and stylistic revisions might strengthen his claims and better serve his purpose (which is to convince his reader). Possibly because Lisa does not provide an opening for dialogic interaction via a question or the need for Simon to add to the discussion with any expert content knowledge, Simon simply says: *Okay*. In fact, Simon might be responding to Lisa’s use of *we* at the conclusion of this exchange. This inclusive term suggests that together the two of them can revise the word choice to make the section flow better. Lisa might have already done her part by pointing out the issue, because she directs Simon: *So, try to think of another way you can make that same point. But make it a little more concise, a little more clear*. Here, Lisa is more specific about what she means by *doesn’t flow quite right* and *find another way to say that* because she tells Simon that he should aim to make the sentence *more concise*. Again, Professor Dorf considers this to be quality advice; but yet again, Lisa does not explain *why* Simon should focus on revising for concision.

Thus, the feedback is high quality but is not directly related to the low level of genre knowledge that Lisa displays.

Simon offers up a revised sentence for consideration: *If Trius is able to carve out a niche in this industry, rivalry will not be a concern.* Lisa gives her approval, telling him: *Yes, I think that's better. Or not much of a concern, because I'm sure there will always be some rivalry.*

With this feedback, Lisa provides her own revision for how to word the content that Simon includes. She goes so far as to offer an explanation for her advice that includes a confident pronouncement of her content knowledge (*because I'm sure. . .*). She again uses a self-mention (*I think*) both to show that she is part of this collaborative “we” effort that she has initiated and to indicate that she is hedging, still offering feedback from a distinct perspective as a person who is not a member of the business discourse community. Simon responds: *Okay*, as though to confirm the revision because Lisa is satisfied with the change, which shows the deference that he gives her opinion. Notably, Professor Dorf does not mark this comment as either positive or negative.

Lisa continues:

And this next part where you say that it's part of a community of operators, I think that might should be in a different paragraph. Because you're talking about -- here you're talking about the fact that it's two different concepts. Here it is going to be unique. Here it is going to be a part of the community. So, indent there, flush out a little more somehow with, I don't know. . . .

Here again Lisa provides directive feedback about content and form by telling him how to revise the form because of the particular content (*I think that might should be in a different paragraph and indent there, flush out a little more*). Thus, Lisa takes on both roles that she and Simon had initially separately assumed as well as roles that Lisa had insinuated that they would perform collaboratively when she uses the phrase *we should*. Though she does use a self-mention and hedge (*I think that might*) to offer the advice as tentative and as clearly from her particular perspective, Lisa quickly moves into a brief explanation of why the content should be organized differently. This explanation would suggest that she has genre knowledge, even though she has established that she is not familiar with either the Environmental Analysis report genre or the subject matter.

Upon closer inspection, however, the explanation seems rooted in the genre knowledge that Lisa likely has acquired from her prior experience writing academic literary essays. She recognizes that two separate topics overlap in the same paragraph, thus directing Simon to *indent* where he begins discussing the new topic and to *flush out* a complete new paragraph. Professor Dorf gives Lisa a positive, quality feedback mark for recognizing that the content would be easier for the reader to understand if it was separated into two sections. But the explanation for the revision is a general description of what Lisa perceives as a non-member of the business discourse community, rather than a specific explanation of the rhetorical function of the revision for the genre.

At the first obvious instance that Lisa indicates a lack of content knowledge when she says *I don't know*. . . and trails off, Simon takes the opportunity to interject in the discussion and ask Lisa to clarify what she means by *flush out* -- a familiar phrase in the academic, literary discourse community, but not entirely familiar to Simon, for he asks: *That'll mean 'say more'?* Perhaps sensing that there is an imbalance of shared knowledge in the discussion, Lisa answers Simon with a mix of confident statements and uncertain hedges:

Yes. And I'm not sure how these generally work because I've never written one myself before, but I mean obviously you're presenting this to the person whose company it is so they don't really need details about their company. But I'm just wondering if, I don't know, that's how I write, I'm an English major, so I put in more and more to make it clearer, but I guess that's fine in this instance, is that how they usually read? You've read samples before, right?

Here, Lisa is able to answer Simon's question with a matter-of-fact *Yes* because she is in familiar territory when she responds to inquiries about academic discourse. She quickly transitions into a much less assertive tone that underscores her lack of knowledge for the discipline-specific writing task at hand as she uses phrases such as *I'm not sure, I've never written one myself, I'm just wondering, I don't know, I guess*.

In addition to using the self-mentions and hedges, Lisa explicitly describes how and why she writes for the discourse community to which she belongs and which she suggests might be unique (*that's how I write, I'm an English major, so I put in more and more to make it clearer*). She asks Simon a question about the genre (*is that how they usually read?*) and indicates that having at least read other examples of the genre might be helpful in this instance (*You've read*

samples before, right?). It is interesting, then, that Lisa would give Simon the directive feedback: *you're presenting this to the person whose company it is so they don't really need details about their company*. This kind of comment, especially because it immediately follows Lisa's admission of non-expert status, again shows the separation of content from form when analyzing and discussing texts. Lisa offers this discipline-specific advice about the document's content even after she has told Simon that she has never written an Environmental Analysis report and is *not sure how these generally work*.

Though Professor Dorf also considers this advice to be quality, Lisa does not offer an explanation for the directive feedback in terms of generic rhetorical features. She seems comfortable commenting on the text as it relates to issues of audience analysis (*you're presenting this to the person whose company it is so they don't really need details about their company*), but she does not relate this feedback to the specific elements of the Environmental Analysis report genre. By asking Simon these questions, Lisa makes a few significant moves. First, she provides Simon with an opportunity to share knowledge that only he can offer in this situation since Lisa is not familiar with the Environmental Analysis report genre, or even how or why a member of the business discourse community might write one. Second, she shows that she relies on her prior experience with academic writing to offer this initial feedback on an unfamiliar genre (*that's how I write, I'm an English major, so I put in more and more to make it clearer*). But she also understands that her own experiences might not correspond to what is appropriate in the business discourse community, which is why she asks Simon for his input (*is that how they*

usually read?). Third, when Lisa asks Simon whether he has read samples, her question is in the form of a statement with a clarifier on the end (*You've read samples before, right?*) which implies that she expects for him to have read models and already be familiar with the form of the genre. That is to say, this question suggests that Simon should bring knowledge about the form of the genre to their discussion.

Simon responds to Lisa, indicating that though he is familiar with the form and content that belong in individual sections of an Environmental Analysis report, he does not have the knowledge to share about how to compose the final comprehensive report. After listening to Simon's explanation, Lisa tells him: *I get it. So you're kinda branching out here.* She picks up on the idea that Simon is bending the five-forces analysis genre if he is trying to "write a chart," but she does not inquire as to why he would do that in the report or what purpose forgoing the standard generic features of a five-forces analysis would serve in the report. Simon seems to want to make sure that Lisa understands that he in fact does not want to "branch out" and he tells her: *This will probably accompany a chart. I will probably end up making a chart after I make all of this.*

Without engaging Simon in a discussion of why and how he would create a chart (thus picking up on his use of the term *probably*, suggesting his uncertainty about creating a chart), Lisa moves on and says: *Alright, for right now. What are your other two forces going to be? Do you know yet?* Perhaps Lisa purposefully returns to a discussion about content because Simon likely will have more knowledge to share, or perhaps she does so because she has no expert

knowledge herself to share about charts and other formatting issues. Interestingly, though, Lisa makes the statement *Alright, for right now* which connotes that she has the knowledge to make this definitive pronouncement of approval for Simon's idea about creating a chart. Moving quickly into the two questions that invite a response from Simon also shows that Lisa's declaration has ended the exchange about this matter. Notably, Professor Dorf does not give Lisa a positive or negative mark for this comment and the change in direction, though he did give Simon a positive mark for mentioning that he will probably create a chart.

Continuing on, Simon answers Lisa in an uninterrupted utterance in which he answers a question about content with a lengthy explanation of the form of the Environmental Analysis. In doing so, he shows the importance of form in directing the content that he thinks about including (for example, *this is a guy who might not know about Five Forces and all that, so some sort of introductory paragraph about Five Forces analysis*). Also important to note is that though Simon already seems to have the required knowledge about what he wants to include in the report and in what order to put it, he still uses hedged words and phrases that suggest an uncertainty about the form he might use, such as *some sort of introductory paragraph*. These terms indicate that he still might benefit from another's expert opinion on these matters of form.

Again Lisa responds with comments about discipline-specific content, rather than addressing Simon's apparent doubt about the form. She does, however, make an implicit suggestion about the connection between content and the document's introduction (that is, its form) when she tells him:

I'm wondering if it would be appropriate to, maybe it would be better to add more details in to show the client that you do know about their company, you're not just, you didn't just see Event Production and go straight to writing about the Event Production industry in general, not necessarily specifically to the client. So I'm wondering if there might be a way to work in more details about that, like the part where you talk about them wanting to compete with Red Mountain Entertainment. I thought that was interesting because it gave me a feel for who the client is.

Lisa makes it clear here with the hedges and the self-mentions that her feedback is tentative and from her specific perspective. Perhaps she still feels as though she is more capable of providing helpful feedback on matters of content than form, especially if she offers it from her particular viewpoint while encouraging Simon to consider the intended reader. After all, she does have “expert” knowledge of her own interests and perceptions that she can offer. Notably, however, Lisa does seem to suggest that she is discussing the introduction (*show the client that you do know about their company . . . you didn't just . . . go straight to writing about the event production industry*). In this way, Lisa is promoting attention to the Environmental Analysis report genre as content guided by form, even if implicitly or unconsciously. Of course, Lisa's hedging could also be a way to engage in a more collaborative discussion with Simon by showing enough doubt and lack of knowledge to encourage Simon to share his knowledge in response to the *I'm wondering if* and *maybe* hedges.

Professor Dorf marks this passage in the transcript with two positive marks -- one of two instances that he does so in this conversation. He tells me that the feedback Lisa provides here is of a specialist standard. Tellingly, I believe, Lisa has made an attempt to connect form and

content and to provide an explanation for the connection. Thus, this passage is also where she shows her highest level of genre knowledge in the session. When Simon simply responds, *Okay*, Lisa goes on: *And it shows him that you've been paying attention. So, I wonder if you might could find other places to work in details in about his plan and his hopes for the company. It shows him that you've been paying attention.*

At this point, Simon asks Lisa if he can make another writing center appointment to see her, and Lisa informs him that he can, telling him:

Alright, we are going to do a little bit of freewriting. You're going to get started on your introduction. Just take ten minutes or so, don't try to make it good, grammatically correct or anything like that, just write out anything that comes to your mind and we'll go through it, sort out the good from the bad, that kind of thing. Alright, go to it.

Here, Lisa has Simon engage in an “invention” exercise, which is a common activity used in process-based approaches to writing. That is, the focus is simply on the writer’s ability to articulate ideas -- as Lisa says, *anything that comes to your mind*. Teachers who promote invention activities such as freewriting hope that writers will discover their thoughts by putting pen to paper without the constraint of form. As part of the process strategy (a student-centered approach that asks student writers to begin with what they know in an isolated, monologic activity), Lisa leaves Simon alone while he writes, going so far as to leave the room and shut the door behind her. We will see that she does not have him perform this activity in the next session.

Interesting to note in this passage is that though Lisa gives Simon the directive to freewrite on his own, the language she uses attempts to keep the situation collaborative (*we are going to do a little bit of freewriting, and we'll go through it*). Also interesting is Lisa's pronouncement that after Simon is done freewriting, they will *sort out the good from the bad*, though she has just told him *don't try to make it good, grammatically correct, or anything like that*. She most likely wants Simon not to worry about mechanics and grammar and to focus primarily on whether his content is "bad" or "good." Thus, when Lisa tells Simon that together they will sort out the bad from the good, she indicates that she will be able to help him evaluate the quality of the content he puts down in the allotted ten minutes. When Lisa returns, she takes the notes that Simon has been writing by hand for the past ten minutes, and the first comment that she makes after reading over Simon's notes is: *I especially like this sentence you've got right here*. Lisa does not elaborate on why she singles this specific sentence out, nor does she ask Simon why he wrote what he did. She continues:

I think this is a really good start on the introduction. I think it's a good explanation of the Five Forces because a person starting a business may not be familiar with these concepts, they're just starting a business. So I imagine that you'd need to explain that to them, because I certainly don't know.

Here, Lisa offers more positive approval for Simon's content, and the use of hedges and self-mentions like *I think*, *I imagine*, and *I certainly don't know* indicate that her validation is not directive and is offered from the perspective of a non-member of the business discourse community. In this context, though, Lisa's non-member status actually gives her feedback more

credibility because, as she mentions, the intended reader also might lack the knowledge that she does.

Lisa moves on in the discussion, telling Simon:

While you were writing I was looking over this last part -- the bargaining part of the suppliers, and I was thinking that you could, I mean how many different things must you need to set up an event like a concert or something, food and workers to carry things, contractors, and the wood and plastic to build the platforms, ticket takers, I could go on and on. Again, not that I'm an expert in this, but you could try to compare the different suppliers to each other saying you would have more power to bargain with lighting people or more power to bargain with the crafts service people, things like that. Maybe going into a little detail on the different approaches.

Here again, Lisa's feedback focuses strictly on content and she hedges with minimizers and self-mentions (*I was thinking that you could, not that I'm an expert in this, maybe going into a little detail*) so that her advice is less directive, which signals her uncertainty as well as mitigates any "face-threatening acts." Professor Dorf marks this feedback as positive because Lisa introduces valid issues for Simon to consider, but she does not exhibit a high level of genre knowledge in this passage for she does not explain the purpose of including these details in the context of the Environmental Analysis report genre. Thus, quality feedback and genre knowledge are not directly related.

Simon responds by sharing knowledge that would help Lisa better understand the report's context, possibly because of the tentativeness of Lisa's feedback and her explicit acknowledgement of her non-expert status. He explains the normal operations of a small

company, which underscores his expert content knowledge. Then without pausing to allow Lisa to respond, Simon continues: *Sometimes I use the word “amalgamation.” I wish I could find a simpler way to say it. I wish I could think of an easy word and not the big word.* This quick move to a topic that is more common in the academic discourse community that Lisa belongs to might be Simon’s way of maintaining the collaborative discussion that has been established. He assumes that Lisa has the expert knowledge on this matter, so he provides a way for her to enter the discussion and share her knowledge because he has just shared his expert knowledge. Simon tells Lisa that he doubts there is an entry for “amalgamation,” Lisa responds: *There probably is. Look it up when you go home and we’ll see. I’ll look it up, too.*

Here Lisa is quick to offer an opinion on Simon’s comment, and though she does use the word *probably*, which does not indicate definitive knowledge, noticeably lacking here is a phrase such as *I think* or *I guess*, as Lisa so frequently uses throughout the conversation when offering her opinion. The absence of such a phrase likely relates to the fact that Lisa is discussing an issue familiar to her field of expertise -- word choice and using a thesaurus. Maybe because the statement is not definitive, Lisa immediately adds a command to suggest that she is in control over decision-making for this issue: *Look it up when you go home.* She adds: *and we’ll see. I’ll look it up, too* to mitigate the directiveness of the order and signal that she is subject to the same “rules” as he is, thus she is not in a true position of authority even though she just assumed the authority to charge Simon with a task.

What follows is an interesting discursive passage of attempts to appear authoritative and inexpert at the same moment as Lisa tells Simon:

Alright, I think this is a really good start on the introduction. I think it's a good explanation of the five forces because a person starting a business may not be familiar with these concepts, they're just starting a business. So I imagine that you'd need to explain it to them, because I certainly don't know.

Here again Lisa uses the *I think* and *I imagine* constructions to indicate that she offers the feedback from her specific (and uncertain) perspective, which she has repeatedly referred to throughout the session in terms of being unknowledgeable about business and expert about academic discourse. Interesting to note is that Lisa uses the term *introduction* but does not indicate whether she understands the nature of an introduction in an Environmental Analysis report versus an introduction in an academic paper. As she has done throughout the session, Lisa provides a more thorough analysis of the content than the form, as expressed by providing a justification for her comment starting with the word “because” (*it's a good explanation of the five forces because. . .*).

When giving Simon a directive (*you'd need to explain it to them*), Lisa surrounds the statement with phrases that underscore her lack of knowledge (*I imagine* and *I certainly don't know*). In this way, she communicates that the instruction is actually speculative; even more, Lisa indicates that the feedback is from her individual perspective, which she already has established as one of non-membership in the discourse community for which Simon is writing. This construction also allows Lisa to end her comment with a move that invites Simon to

respond to her uncertainty by sharing the relevant, expert knowledge that only he can provide in this situation. She leaves room for Simon to have an authoritative role in the discussion. Simon tells Lisa: *Some of these people are just full of ideas, but haven't really had the nuts-and-bolts training.* Here he essentially places Lisa within a group of people who share her background, which in turn validates Lisa's unfamiliarity with the discourse community and the content that belongs in the Environmental Analysis report.

4.3.4 Discourse Community Membership and Genre Knowledge

Overall, Lisa also displays the genre knowledge level of a generalist, because for the majority of the session she speaks of texts/textual practices in separate terms of content and form, rather than holistically (Tardy 24). Though she does make comments that address content and form at the same time, the connection between the two concepts is not at the genre level. In other words, she does not explain why the content effectively fits into the particular form that Simon uses. Similar to Harriet's feedback, Lisa points out surface-level issues but does not discuss the integration of individual sentences and punctuation in the context of a complete business document. Writing is separate from content, and the format (the report's sections) is distinct from the individual sentences and punctuation that Lisa focuses on during the session. Though Lisa asks more audience-aware questions, she also never takes the next step to ask Simon what he wants the text to do for the intended reader, which is why the majority of her comments focus on what the text does for *her*.

Lisa's Tutor Report Log and follow-up interview corroborate this interpretation, for she notes her low self-efficacy and low self-confidence in working with Simon because she lacks knowledge of business writing. My discussion with Professor Dorf about Lisa's feedback during the tutorial session also corroborates this interpretation, for he notes instances where she does not mention key sections of an Environmental Analysis report that a person familiar with that genre would highlight. My discussion with Simon about Lisa's feedback indicates that he was not expecting her to be able to comment on more than surface-level features such as punctuation and grammar, and that he does not consider her to be a member of the business discourse community.

In the next chapter I present the findings from Harriet's and Lisa's second tutorial session exchanges. The second tutorial session took place after the distinct methods Harriet and Lisa used to examine the business discourse community, as described in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER FIVE

SECOND CONTACT BETWEEN DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES

In this chapter, I present the findings and analysis of the second tutorial sessions between Harriet and Lisa and the students from the Small Business Consulting course. These second tutorial sessions occurred almost one month after the first sessions, and during this month, Harriet and Lisa learned about the written conventions of the business discourse community in different ways, as described in Chapter Three. To summarize their separate situations: Harriet read business guidebooks, examined model business documents (business reports completed in Professor Dorf's previous courses), and familiarized herself with the business writing sections on Purdue University's OWL. Lisa sat in Professor Dorf's Small Business Consulting course on three different days and took field notes of her observations. Just as in Chapter Four, I begin with a description of the genre that both tutors dealt with in their sessions and then move into a discussion about the feedback that each tutor provides. I am still interested in how the tutors display their genre knowledge in their discussions of content and form, as well as the connection between their levels of genre knowledge and feedback quality.

Once again, I divide each tutors' session into the following four-part discourse discussion: 1) form, 2) content, 3) form-content, and 4) discourse community membership and genre knowledge. In these sections, I discuss the tutors' attention to the form of the writing tasks, their comments about discipline-specific content, their explanations of content-form connections in the texts, and their awareness of shifting roles and audiences within different

discourse communities. As in the previous chapter, in each of these sections I analyze the tutors' discourse to explore their levels of genre knowledge, paying particular attention to when and how they share their authority with the tutees. I am especially sensitized to hedging, self-mentions, and explanatory phrases as strategic indicators of the tutors' knowledge (or lack thereof) of form and content in business writing. In the process of analyzing the discourse, I also discuss any implicit beliefs the tutors might display about a universal notion of "good writing," as well as their own shifting feelings of confidence and self-efficacy, and I bring in corroborating evidence from the Tutor Report Logs as well as the interviews I conduct with them. Throughout this chapter, I integrate Professors Dorf's comments about the quality of the tutors' feedback from the second tutorial sessions. In Chapter Six, I lay out the significant discursive similarities and differences between the tutors' first and second tutorial sessions and discuss the implications of the findings.

5.1 The *Status Update Report* Genre

Like an *Environmental Analysis* report, a *Status Update* report (also referred to as an "interim report" in the workplace (Fombrun and Nevins 112)) is another "typified rhetorical action based in a recurrent situation" in the business discourse community. The recurrent situation for a Status Update report is one in which a business consultant has created a model of the client's situation, formulated hypotheses, gathered and analyzed data to test the hypotheses, and prepared to make recommendations to the client. This report is "designed to demonstrate

progress and gain ‘buy-in’ that the project is proceeding on track and in scope” (112). An effective Status Update report (or, interim report) is attentive to both form and subject matter and serves to help the client “understand the problems and then be willing to make changes for improvement” (119).

In my interview with Professor Dorf, he informed me that his expectations of the Status Update report are that:

- only the most relevant details of the project are included and explained, because not all details are equally relevant
- the language used is appropriate for the audiences who will be reading the document (the professor and the particular client)
- data are effectively converted into visual codes that can inform decision making. (Dorf interview November 9, 2009)

In the following exchange between Harriet and Ron, I briefly explain the context of the session in terms of Ron’s background and the document he brings to the session. I then examine Harriet’s discourse for indications of her beliefs about writing, content, and form, as well as her genre knowledge. I weave Professor Dorf’s comments about the quality of Harriet’s feedback, as well as relevant details from my follow-up interview with Harriet and her Tutor Report Log, into the discussion.

5.2 The Discourse Community Pages: Learning Written Conventions with Models & Guidebooks

The business student (Ron) who meets with Harriet is a graduate student in the Master's in Business Administration Program who has taken a Business Writing course in the past and has some workplace writing experience. When I ask Ron if he considers himself part of the business community, he responds: *Yeah, I think so.* (student interview September 15, 2009). Ron brings in a draft of his team's Status Update report (see Appendix I for a copy of the draft, with identifying information removed) that he believes is nearly complete, except for some formatting issues. In my interview with Professor Dorf, he notes that Ron's document is well-organized and contains relevant content, but that he has mislabeled some of the content. Professor Dorf tells me: *[Ron] calls them figures and they're not figures. They're lists. So it should either say "attachment" or "appendix." I mean, it doesn't matter whether you're English or whatever, everybody uses the same style book -- and that tells you what a figure and what a chart is and what a table and a graph is.* When I ask Professor Dorf why these formatting issues matter, he tells me: *if it's not formatted the way they ask for it, they won't even read it.* Important to know when contextualizing these findings is that Harriet had three model documents (business report samples from Professor Dorf's previous Small Business Consulting courses) at her disposal throughout the session.

5.2.1 Discussion of Form

As this section will relate, in Harriet's session with Ron, she makes nearly the same amount and kinds of comments about form as she does in her session with Paul one month

earlier. This means that once again the majority of her feedback about “form” matters are contextualized from the perspective of a member of the academic discourse community, even though she had access to business writing guidebooks, on-line materials, and sample documents. Again, I examine Harriet’s discussion of form as it occurs chronologically in the conversation.

At the beginning of the session, Ron clarifies that his main concern is not on the actual arrangement of the appendices, but rather how he should label the appendices. Essentially, he seeks advice on a “form” issue; in this case, whether to label the appendices as “Table 1, 2, 3, and 4” or as “Appendix 1, 2, 3, etc.” After this clarification, Harriet comments: *I think “Appendix” might be a better word because they’re not really figures. Yeah, and they’re not really tables, either.* Harriet still uses hedges and self-mentions here (*might, not really, I think*), indicating her awareness of the discipline-specific writing knowledge she does and does not have, even in matters of form. She seems to be relying on any prior experience she has with tables, figures, and appendices to provide this feedback, rather than referring to actual business writing examples or credible outside sources to support her advice. Harriet goes on, in fact, to say:

I think that “Appendix” might be a better word, and really they go in the order that you discuss those things in the paper which makes sense and is the easiest, you know, if someone is reading this along and has to stop half-way through and flip back to it, that’s the easiest. But yeah, I think that “Appendix” is probably the better word to use than “figure,” but I feel like that way to go makes sense, but if you end up re-organizing the paper you just want to make sure that your appendices are going in the same order.

At this point Ron asks Harriet to clarify whether she means that the appendices move in the *chronological order of the paper itself*, and Harriet confirms, saying: *Yeah. But yeah, I think that "Appendix" is probably a better word than "figure."* At this point, Harriet has told Ron four times that she thinks that "Appendix" is a better word to use than "figure," but without an explanation of why in terms of the conventional features of a report genre, the purpose of an appendix for the audience whose interests are served by it, the appropriateness of an appendix for the particular discourse community who uses it, or whether there are implications for creative variations of incorporating the appendices. Rather, Harriet uses discourse markers such as *I think* and *I feel* that convey that she offers the feedback from her perspective, based on her prior experience with this issue. She also uses words and phrases such as *might*, *you know*, and *probably* to downplay her authoritative role in the situation and open up the discussion for an exchange of ideas.

Interesting to note is that Harriet also uses the term "paper" twice, which indicates that she is interpreting Ron's document from the perspective of someone in the academic discourse community, as opposed to assuming the perspective of the audience who likely will be reading the text as a "report." Again, Professor Dorf gives Harriet a neutral mark for suggesting that Ron use the word "Appendix" but mentions *it's like she didn't understand his question at first* and that *she should have just grabbed that reference and looked*.

Moving on, Ron asks Harriet whether he should put each Appendix on a separate page, as he has done, or whether he should continue on the same page with a new appendix. Harriet tells

Ron: *As far as I know, the way you've done it is fine, but let me see if I can find anything on here.* By “here,” Harriet refers to Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL) that she has pulled up on the computer where she and Ron are sitting. She continues, still referring to the OWL:

This is a section on business writing and let me just see if I can find anything that says otherwise. As far as I know a new page is the appropriate way to do it, that's the way I've always seen it. Let me just look quickly here and see if anything comes up. Yeah, I don't see anything that says specific rules. But I think that is standard. I know that's the way it usually comes in books.

Harriet’s utterances make it clear that her feedback is from her distinct perspective (*as far as I know, I think, the way I've always seen it, I know*). Even more, she makes it explicit that she is relying on her prior experience with books, as opposed to business documents such as the sample reports that she had access to before the tutorial session. That is to say, she is drawing upon her expert knowledge of the discourse conventions within the academic discourse community to offer feedback about what the business discourse community expects and accepts.

Professor Dorf gives Harriet positive marks for her feedback here because she correctly assumes that appendices belong on separate pages in the report, but Harriet’s genre knowledge level is low in this exchange because her only explanation for why the advice is “appropriate” or “standard” is *that's the way I've always seen it* and *that's the way it usually comes in books*.

When she cannot find the “specific rules” on the OWL, Harriet relies on whatever prior experience she has had with appendices to make a reasonable inference about business writing

conventions. All of the self-mentions and hedges surrounding the feedback indicate that though Harriet is familiar with the form and usage of appendices in other contexts, she also understands that the form has discipline-specific applications about which she does not necessarily have expert knowledge. Essentially, Harriet recognizes that an understanding of both form and content is important to be able to offer feedback on appendices.

Harriet also points out an issue with the visual impression of the appendices, giving Ron some nondirective feedback about formatting: *And one other thing about the appendices is that it gets cut off a little bit here.* Ron attempts to explain that his data is “not formattable” or compatible with the word processing software he is using, and even more he claims: *there’s another column after that and they’re completely useless columns to us.* Harriet suggests to him: *I was going to say if there’s any way that you can take the image and format it in some other program and then just cut off those columns that you don’t need, it just might look a little bit better.* Again, Harriet’s comments here focus strictly on the visual impression of the document, and she does not discuss why such formatting revisions would be appropriate or expected in terms of the genre’s features, purpose, or audience. In this move, Harriet’s minimizers and hedges (*I was going to say, just might, a little bit*) seem more like strategies to mitigate the face-threatening acts of providing a directive, as opposed to a sign of uncertainty. She does not use any self-mentions here, which indicates that she does not feel the need to pronounce her feedback as from the perspective of a non-member of the business discourse community. That is to say, she seems to believe that her feedback is valid and reliable because she is familiar with

the visual impression of business documents, possibly because she has looked over sample business reports prior to this tutorial session. In this sense, it is as though one canonical form will fit with equal appropriateness into any context, including the text under discussion.

Harriet goes on to discuss the process of making revisions to the format, telling Ron:

It's an easy problem. I mean it's not, you know what I mean. It's a common problem, is what I'm trying to say, putting images into a Word doc. But if you can find a way, like find someone who knows how to PhotoShop, or sometimes even MicroSoft picture manager, if you can crop it and then insert it, it kind of depends on what file text it is.

Again, Harriet's feedback here focuses on visual impression -- in this case she is concerned with how to deal with computer software issues to maintain a certain visual impression. Though she does use self-mentions such as *I mean* and *I'm trying to say*, thus highlighting that her feedback is offered from her personal perspective, the lack of hedges indicate that Harriet refers to herself to make her advice more clear, as opposed to less certain. Her reference to *easy problem* and *common problem* conveys that she is drawing upon prior experience to offer advice to Ron, which also explains her more self-assured tone. This utterance also corroborates her philosophy of scaffolded learning, for she recommends that Ron seek out someone who is more expert with certain computer programs.

Ron then explains to Harriet that he did not want to spend time formatting the visuals on his draft, justifying his actions by telling her: *You see, I didn't want to go through with all that because I knew that once I did that I would have to go back and reformat once I added different things in and stuff like that.* Rather than discuss what "different things" Ron might add to the

document and the implications of those additions in terms of the report's format, purpose, and audience, Harriet gives Ron the following advice: *Yeah. If it's like the last thing you do before you turn it in.* This entire exchange conveys Harriet's confidence in providing feedback about formatting issues, but noticeably missing is any discussion about how format decisions are based on discipline-specific content. Professor Dorf gives Harriet positive marks for pointing out the visual discrepancy in Ron's report, as well as positive marks for explaining how Ron could go about fixing the issue. When I ask Professor Dorf whether he believes Harriet's feedback meets the quality standard of a "specialist" in the business discourse community, he notes that a specialist would have likely discussed the point of including the content as well as its format: *[Ron] says that he has other stuff to add, and [Harriet] says that she understands what he's saying, but you have to figure it out before he turns it in.* Thus, because Harriet's genre knowledge here is low (as she does not connect form with content), and her feedback quality meets a generalist standard, genre knowledge and feedback quality are somewhat related.

Continuing on, Harriet transitions to a grammatical concern but actually discusses formatting issues first when she tells Ron: *There were a couple of things I noticed, mostly grammatical. Although my first question, I guess is in Figure One. You have this bold, and I don't know if that was just an error.* Based on Harriet's personal tutoring philosophy of scaffolding, she possibly takes up formatting concerns because it allows for a mutual exchange of knowledge before she discusses a subject for which she likely will be the sole expert. Furthermore, Harriet might feel as though she has the ability to point out this potential problem

with the report's format because it is different from the sample business documents she reviewed prior to this tutorial session. She does not explicitly mention these samples, however, and she uses hedges such as *I guess* and *I don't know if*, which convey her sense of uncertainty when faced with an unfamiliar genre. These hedges also invite Ron to share his expert knowledge by giving him an opportunity to inform Harriet about what she does not know. At this moment, however, Ron does not respond to Harriet's implicit invitation to share his knowledge, which raises the question of whether Ron has the knowledge to share at all.

Harriet then begins her discussion of grammatical errors by getting straight to the point: *Last paragraph. This comma is unnecessary because you don't have two independent clauses. The second one here can't stand alone as a sentence so you just use the conjunction without the comma.* The difference between the feedback Harriet offers on discipline-specific issues of formatting and her comments here about grammar is markedly clear. She directs Ron to a specific location in the document ("last paragraph"), points to a specific issue ("this comma is unnecessary"), and provides a thorough explanation to support her comment (which Harriet makes explicit by using the term "because"). Just as Ron used business jargon such as "overall primary goal," "deliverable," and "strategy," Harriet displays her expert knowledge by using academic grammar speak. In addition to referring to Ron's last report section as a "paragraph," she talks about independent clauses, "stand alone" sentences, and conjunctions. Though Harriet's explanation of the commas shows her knowledge of grammar, she still does not explain how removing the punctuation then affects the content. In other words, there is no discussion

about how the audience might interpret the text differently depending on whether or not Ron includes an unnecessary comma. The instruction that Harriet provides Ron on commas indicates that she considers punctuation an issue where Ron needs direct intervention as opposed to open-ended questioning.

Just as quickly, though, Harriet reinvokes the discourse of the academic community and moves into a grammatical discussion. She points out to Ron: *And then paragraph four, you say that “less than 50 units,” but it should actually be “fewer.” “Fewer” deals with numbers, “less” deals with amounts. Does that make sense?* Harriet still refers to sections of the report as numbered paragraphs, signifying until the very end that she does not interpret the text from a functional perspective (that is to say, her academic discourse indicates that she is unaware how the separate parts of Ron’s document serve distinct purposes). Even more, Harriet points out the technical error in Ron’s text but does not explain the effect of the revision in terms of the report’s purpose, audience, or conventional expectations. Professor Dorf gives Harriet a positive mark for the feedback, explaining to me that this is not knowledge that he would expect a member of the business discourse community to have and that *Ron probably learned something new about technical terms that he can use later*. So while Professor Dorf does not tell me directly about the quality of Harriet’s feedback from a specialist’s perspective, he suggests that Harriet offers quality feedback in this exchange because she explained her academic discourse community terms in a way that a member of the business discourse community could understand and incorporate in later texts.

Harriet continues on with her grammar discussion, telling Ron: *It's one of those nit-picky things I do. And then here you need another comma, I think it's after "managers." Is that your entire parenthetical?* Here Harriet admits that her advice stems from a personal idiosyncrasy (most likely formed from experiences in the academic discourse community), rather than a clear consciousness of how seemingly universal rules of grammar function in Ron's report. She then points out more missing punctuation and asks Ron about a "parenthetical" -- a term that is more likely to be used by and have meaning for members of the academic discourse community. Ron simply responds: *Uh-huh.* Maybe because Ron does not engage in a discussion about the nit-picky comments, the missing comma, or the parenthetical, Harriet begins to wrap up the session. She summarizes: *Okay. Those were the only things that I really saw, other than the stuff we talked about with the appendices.* Interestingly, Harriet does not mention anything in this brief summary about the lengthy discussion that she and Ron had concerning the different stakeholders in the report.

Though Harriet does not ask a question or seem to invite a response in this utterance, Ron indicates that he is still concerned about the appendices when he asks: *If I were to go back and rename these, would I just call it "Appendix 1," "Appendix 2," "Appendix 3"?* As before, Harriet does not refer to the model business reports she has with her, nor does she attempt to discuss the matter by referring to Ron's document as a report in the context of the business discourse community. Instead, obviously referring to her prior experience with academic papers, Harriet provides Ron with tentative advice, telling him: *That's fine. Or you would just call it*

“Appendix A,” “Appendix B,” I don’t know that it matters -- letters or numbers. I’ve traditionally done letters, but I’m not sure. She asks Ron if he had any other concerns, and he tells her: *My biggest thing was the appendix.* The session ends on this note, with Harriet telling Ron: *Alright, you’re good to go.*

5.2.2 Content Discussion

Harriet discusses content during the second tutorial session less than she does in the first tutorial session, and her feedback about content is still noticeably unrelated to form in this conversation. She also continues to use more hedges and self-mentions when she attempts to engage in a more content-related discussion with the student. Professor Dorf shows a heightened awareness of Harriet’s “outsider” status during these moments, as I will note in this section. Harriet begins her second session with a simple: *What are you working on?* Ron informs her that he is working on a small consulting project “Status Update” and Harriet responds: *Can you just go ahead and explain to me what that means because I’m not familiar.* She trails off at the end of this utterance, opening up the floor for Ron’s reply. Already Harriet establishes at the beginning of the session that she is not a member of the discourse community that is familiar with terms such as “status update” or has content knowledge about small consulting projects. Ron provides Harriet with a detailed explanation of the class, the major project assigned in the course, and the parameters of the report he is writing. Specifically, he tells her: *This is pretty*

much like a mid-term update, or a status update for exactly what we've done so far, what we need to do, you know -- pretty much just put everything in writing.

With this information, Harriet tells Ron: *Alright. Well let me take a look and then we can talk.* Noticeably missing here are any questions to elicit information about the genre in which Ron is writing, or the audience for whom Ron writes. Maybe because Ron describes the assignment as “just putting everything in writing,” Harriet does not think she needs any more context to be able to offer her feedback. After all, she has been looking over decontextualized business writing handbooks and materials for the past month since her first tutorial session with Paul. The notion of content as separate from “writing” likely makes sense to Harriet. After Harriet begins reading the draft, Ron explains to her that much of the material he includes is evidence to show the work that he has completed on the consulting project so far. Harriet responds positively to this information, telling Ron: *Okay, yeah. I was going to say that these do not look like something.* Again she trails off at the end of this utterance, as though she does not know how to complete the thought or that she is reliant on Ron to supply the missing information, as he is the one with content knowledge.

Notably, Harriet uses the phrase “look not like” in an attempt to explain her thoughts about the part of Ron’s document that actually serves a different purpose from the other part (in other words, the appendix versus the body). I find this interesting because Harriet was given model documents to look over and refer to in preparation for this second tutorial session with a business student, and so she seems to have implicitly picked up on the visual impression of those

texts, though she does not indicate that she connects a function to the form. Harriet next asks Ron: *First of all, is there anything specifically that you wanted to work on?* Here, she essentially relies on him to share his knowledge of the business discourse community conventions that are important enough to focus on as she goes back over the text.

Ron responds that one of the questions he has is whether there is a better way to organize the appendix, and he tells Harriet: *There are things we haven't included yet, and there are things that we still have to do, so those things I still have to include. But really just the only question I have is how to organize the appendix.* Ron's response also conveys that he does not connect content and form, because as Professor Dorf points out, Ron asks the "wrong question" about organizing the appendix when he actually just needs to know about labeling the appendix. In other words, Ron's question about organization suggests a misunderstanding about the content's function.

Harriet similarly seems confused about the nature of the appendix, for she offers the following feedback: *Okay, um, it seemed like . . . I mean, I feel like it's organized pretty well.* Here, Harriet responds to Ron's question literally, and she offers her opinion about the content's organization. Harriet's hedges and self-mentions (*seemed like, I mean, I feel like*) convey her hesitancy to offer an authoritative comment about the structure of the appendix, and these discursive features underscore that her feedback is from her perspective as a non-member of the business discourse community. Harriet does not offer an explanation for why the appendix is "organized pretty well" for the report genre in which Ron writes or for the audience who will be

reading it. Professor Dorf marks this comment as low quality, remarking that *[Ron's] not asking how it's organized; they're just in there*. The genre knowledge level that Harriet displays here is also low because she does not mention or make any connection to the genre in her comment.

Thus, low feedback quality and low genre knowledge level are connected here.

Harriet moves on to another part of the document that was unclear to her as an “outsider,” and she tells Ron: *I think that I had a question about that whole sentence. Yeah, I just wasn't clear about what this whole sentence meant. And maybe it will be completely clear to your audience, but it wasn't clear to me. I'm not sure what “rather than the banks” refers to*. Harriet explicitly demarcates herself as someone outside of Ron's discourse community, for she acknowledges that she is not the intended audience. She juxtaposes the idea of “completely clear to your audience” with “wasn't clear to me,” but by ending with *I'm not sure what “rather than the banks” refers to*, she does not link her confusion about content to her membership in another discourse community. Though Harriet does not discuss how the sentence should function in the report according to its purpose and what the intended audience already knows and expects, she does provide an opening for Ron to respond to her uncertainty about the content's clarity. Not surprisingly, then, Ron asks Harriet: *So would it be more clear if it said “rather than banks as customers”?*

Harriet responds: *You know, let me read it again because I think it could be that I just wasn't reading it and thinking the right way*. She then briefly re-reads Ron's document and adds: *I think it probably does make sense now. I just wasn't thinking properly, I think. I think it does*

make sense, I was just thinking bank customers, not “My College Movers” customers. Here, Harriet seems to believe that she actually can be a part of the intended audience if she can read and think “the right way.” After reading over the text again, Harriet gives Ron a tentative endorsement for the sentence, using multiple hedges (*I think, probably, I was just thinking*). The confusing aspect of these utterances is that the role Harriet assumes as she reads the document is unclear, thus interpreting all of the *I think* self-mentions is difficult. In other words, the quality of Harriet’s feedback depends on whether she believes that re-reading the document now allows her to provide feedback from the perspective of an intended audience member, or whether she still knows that she can only provide feedback as a non-member of the intended audience’s discourse community. Professor Dorf does not give Harriet a positive or negative mark for her comments, explaining: *the advice is very general and doesn’t really add anything to the report.* Her comments also display a low level of genre knowledge because the explanation for her approval is based on a general statement about her thought process (she tells Ron that she “just wasn’t thinking properly” during her original assessment). Thus, low genre knowledge is linked to neutral feedback quality in this instance.

Later in the session, Harriet sums up her remarks with a mixture of utterances that convey the multiple discourse communities in which she attempts to maneuver: *Um, other than that, I only just really saw a few grammar things. I mean it seems to flow pretty well. Like I said, I don’t know a lot about business writing, but it’s organized well. I can follow it.* Here she mentions concepts common to discussions of “good writing” in the academic discourse

community, such as grammar and flow, and she revisits the higher-order concern of organization. Harriet couches her remarks about flow with her use of hedges and self-mentions (*I mean it seems*), and she defends her approval of Ron's organization with the explicit restatement that she does not "know a lot about business writing" as well as a self-mention (*I can follow it*). Once again, the hedges appear at a moment when Harriet implicitly discusses content matters (the "it" she refers to here is the document's content, even though she does not point out specific micro- or macro-level instances in the text that "flow pretty well" or are "organized well"). Harriet's self-mentions serve to remind Ron that Harriet is not a member of the discourse community for which he writes. Again, however, rather than elaborating on what she means when she says that the report "seems to flow pretty well" or that it is "organized well," Harriet moves into a detailed discussion about grammatical issues in Ron's document.

5.2.3 Form-Content Discussion

In this section, I discuss the instances in which Harriet refers to both form and content in the same utterance. In light of how Harriet explored the written conventions of the business discourse community, I find these comments interesting because none of them are connected to the business writing materials or model documents to which she had access. The next chapter discusses why I believe a disconnect still remained in Harriet's form and content discussions even after she examined guidebooks and model documents.

After going over grammatical issues, Harriet returns to content matters by asking Ron about a recurrent word in his report: *What is the “niche” you’re referring to?* Ron explains what he means by “niche,” and rather than elaborating on what she had hoped to do with the information, Harriet moves on, saying:

Um, “owner of these homes” is okay, or “their needs” is okay, but “their” and “owner” don’t go together. So, I’m not sure which way you want to change that. It’s probably better to say that “the owner of each home,” or something like that, um, just so that it doesn’t sound like one person owns all of the homes. And, okay, the second paragraph, you talk about the second stakeholder, but I don’t remember seeing anything on the first page.

Here, Harriet appears caught between two different discourse communities as she effectively reestablishes her expertise in providing feedback on grammatical issues, while also hedging as she seems aware that her feedback is dependent on the document’s content. She uses hedges and minimizers (*I’m not sure, probably better, something like that*) when making the form-content explanation (*so that it doesn’t sound like*). The hedging occurs during a grammar explanation, which is a realm where Harriet already has established her expertise, most likely because the discussion is moving into the realm of the business discourse community. Ron interjects a question (*About the first stakeholder?*) -- this time without an overt invitation. Almost as though she must defend her lack of content knowledge, Harriet exclaims: *I don’t know if you phrased it another way and I just didn’t understand it.* Harriet might feel as though she has gone beyond what she can rightfully provide Ron in terms of expertise, and she falls back on comments about audience, telling him:

Alright, like with so many things, as long as it's clear to your audience, it's fine. If you think there's a chance that your audience might not immediately understand that, since you are making a point of saying specifically that there is a second stakeholder, it makes sense consistency-wise I think to specifically identify the first stakeholder, just so that your reader doesn't stop. Even if they are intimately familiar with business, I still would imagine that they might stop and be like, "wait a minute, who was the first one again." So, I mean it's a judgment call on your part.

Harriet offers him this advice as though he still requires her final approval, for she begins this utterance with *Alright*, uses conditional phrases like *as long as* and *if you think*, and then expresses her decision with *it's fine*. What is interesting in Harriet's discussions about audience, including this one, is that though she mentions the potential reader and what such a person might actually be thinking, Harriet never asks Ron a direct question about the audience. That is to say, she never learns about the readers and how the document serves them in terms of their values, backgrounds, statuses, educations, and needs, which is an indicator of "genre knowledge."

Harriet's use of self-mentions such as *I think* and *I still would imagine* indicate that she continues to rely on her own prior experiences and knowledge to offer feedback to Ron, even though she refers to an abstract "reader" and "they." Even more, Harriet offers her opinion of what she imagines people who are "intimately familiar with business" will think when they read Ron's document. After appealing to both her own and Ron's discourse communities to suggest what he should do, Harriet tells Ron that it is his "judgment call." Rather than making the judgment call on his own, Ron seeks Harriet's affirmation, asking: *I could say "along with banks and foreclosed real-estate managers, the second stakeholders are"?* Rather than

reiterating that it is Ron's judgment call, Harriet tells him: *Yep, you could say that. I just feel like this is a place where you could do some sort of rephrasing somewhere just to, you know, really clarify.* Harriet's follow-up utterance after her confident confirmation is revealing. She quickly minimizes the authority in her original statement with multiple hedges (*I just feel like, somewhere, some sort of, just to*) that convey a vagueness in her feedback (she tells Ron that he "could do some sort of" rephrasing) and an uncertainty in her reasoning (her explanation is essentially summed up as "just to, you know, really clarify"). Harriet's discourse features indicate that she at least intuitively understands the relation between form and content, because she attempts to provide an explanation, though vague, as to why Ron might revise his syntax and word choice.

Interesting to note is that though Harriet refers to the document's audience, her understanding of how this concept relates to the report genre seems unclear. Ron tells her that he ultimately is writing the document as an informative and persuasive "deliverable" and that he has made formatting decisions based on the needs of his immediate audience (in this case, his teammates). Thus, Harriet's comments seem at cross purposes when she acknowledges a need to consider the audience yet provides feedback approving of Ron's text from the explicit perspective of a member of the academic discourse community. Professor Dorf notes that this feedback is neither of high, "specialist" nor low quality, which again shows the connection between Harriet's low genre knowledge and neutral feedback quality.

5.2.4 Discourse Community Membership and Genre Knowledge

Overall, Harriet again displays a generalist's genre knowledge level for the majority of the session as she speaks of texts/textual practices in separate terms of content and form, rather than holistically. She provides many of the same stylistic comments without offering explanations about the relevance of the revisions for the particular discourse community in which Ron writes. Harriet's Tutor Report Log also indicates that she still provides feedback from her perspective as a member of the academic discourse community, for her written response to the question concerning the "major weakness" and area of the session that "needs improvement" is: *My lack of self-confidence about this session, really. I started out feeling very confident because of my last session with a business student, but my confidence fell as I saw how little I could do with the paper.* She reiterates this sentiment in the follow-up interview when she tells me:

I guess I felt like I had more to talk about with [Paul] because his work was a little bit rougher; he had a much rougher draft, so we had a lot more to talk about. Ron was already so knowledgeable, like he's pretty much all together. He knew what he was doing. And it was already really well put together and it flowed really well, so I was like "here's a couple of grammar things."

When I asked Harriet how she knew it "was well put together" she responds: *Well, it made sense. I don't know anything about business writing, of course, but it flowed well and was organized well.* I asked her to expand on this idea, prodding her with: *What do you mean by that? It was organized well for what?* She responded:

I guess because I haven't done a lot of business papers it's hard to compare it to other business papers. But just compared to other papers

that I see in general it didn't jump around at all. Both of these papers -- well not papers -- reports, I guess -- they both were organized under headings which I find really helpful especially because it's not something that I'm familiar with. So that helps me follow it and I assume that it helps those who know about business who are reading it also.

Harriet and I discuss how the session could have been different if Ron might have been less knowledgeable, and she raises multiple issues for discussion: disciplinary discourse communities, universal ways of writing, and the concept of interdiscursivity. She explains:

The writing process is kinda like the scientific method that you learn as a kid because, because I remember that hypothesis was number two, evidence was number three, results was number four, conclusion was five. But you do the same thing in writing except you don't call it a "hypothesis," you call it a "thesis," in most situations. So everything I think as far as I know, every type of writing has to follow that general idea. So even if I don't know what they're talking about I can still see if it does that. So I do feel comfortable with these basic standards of writing that are pretty universal.

When I asked her to expound upon her idea of a "universal standard of writing," Harriet explains, as she thumbs through the sample business report: *With these business papers it has been a little bit different, because they're not "papers" so much. They're not supposed to put forward a thesis and prove it so much as put forward suggestions.* She goes on to relate: *I was looking at this report before the session and it's not a paper; it's a report. Flipping through here obviously it's not a huge paper; you know it's just a report, it's divided up. I almost feel like, this is such a terrible thing to say, but I wish I could write my English papers like this.* Harriet appears almost ashamed to express this thought to me, and I ask her what she thinks her English

professor would think if she turned in a literature paper formatted like a business report. *I'm pretty sure my professor would fail me*, she insists.

What is the most interesting to me in this final session is that Harriet never refers to the samples of the reports she has had the opportunity to examine since her first session with Paul (and that she has in front of her while talking with Ron). In our interview, I asked Harriet why she did not refer to the sample documents she had, and she admits: *I forgot it was here. I didn't remember to look at it. In general I tend to avoid samples. I just finished a paper this week and she had sent us sample papers and I had never looked at them.* Harriet goes on to explain that she does not like to “be persuaded” by samples, adding:

Which is probably not a good thing in tutoring because I don't know what I'm talking about. It makes sense in something like business writing where I don't know anything about it. Because it's one thing if I'm doing an English paper and I know what I'm talking about and I'm not looking at a sample paper because I've done book reviews or whatever, but I haven't done a final report or any kind of business report so it does make sense to have a sample here.

Later on we discuss the difference between essays, papers, and business reports, and Harriet remarks: *I tend to think of [these genres] in the same way. So I guess I need to reevaluate the way I think about them because when someone says “paper” to me I automatically think introductory paragraph ends in a thesis, seven pages or whatever, body, concluding paragraph.*

In exchanges such as these during this final interview, I sense that Harriet understands the concept of multiple discourse communities, even though she speaks of universal writing standards and does not consider using the sample reports during her session. At one point, she

tells me: *I just have to reevaluate. You know, different disciplines have different terminology. I only really know the terminology in my own discipline.* Harriet's Tutor Report Log also corroborates this opinion, for after her session with Ron she writes: *We discussed basic comma rules. We also talked about clarity, which was often a matter of me asking whether an audience familiar with business terminology would understand portions of the paper that were confusing to me.* Harriet shows her audience-awareness here concerning matters of terminology, and I ask her if she also has the same audience-awareness for format decisions. She admits:

I think that's one of the things that's challenging about dealing with any kind of paper outside of English, because I feel like so much of my familiarity with my own field was from doing it. You know like I've done conference papers so I know what's appropriate for a conference paper, and I know what's appropriate for a conference atmosphere.

Here Harriet introduces the idea of experiential learning, which I am interested in following in our conversation, so I continue with that theme, asking her: *Are you relying on your own experiences to guide how you assist the students you work with?* Harriet tells me: *If it's an English paper or a History paper, or really anything in the Humanities I feel confident.*

Continuing on, Harriet relates that students who are working on papers in non-English courses and who visit the Writing Center *are at a higher level; they know what is standard in their discipline and they're able to think.* I follow up and ask her what happens if, for example, the professor wants to see a certain business report format but the student is not aware of that requirement. Harriet replies that she would tell the professor: *I'm not responsible for knowing what you require. I say I'm not a business writer; I'm not familiar with the standards of business*

writing. *Your students didn't have a copy of the standards of business writing and your student wasn't familiar with them.*"

I lead Harriet into a discussion about "HOCS before LOCS," because this topic is most clearly related to her genre knowledge in the second session. When I ask Harriet her impression of the sample reports, she tells me: *With the first session I was surprised to get that format and not an actual paper, but the more I thought about it, it makes sense because as far as I can tell it accomplishes its goals in a really structured manner.* I ask her to expand on what she means by "structure" and she responds: *I guess I mean, mostly, the flow and organization. "HOCS" above "LOCS" -- higher-order concerns above lower-order concerns.* Wanting Harriet to elaborate further, I ask her whether format would have been a higher-order concern to work on with Ron. After thinking about the question for a moment, Harriet tells me: *I guess in that case it would have technically been a lower-order concern because it's just an issue of basic structure and terminology. I mean it's important but it's more just an issue of formatting than theoretical. I guess I think of lower order concerns as concrete rules versus critical thinking.* And then in an essential dismissal of the socio-cognitive understanding of genre (which states that content and form are interconnected), Harriet claims: *It really just came down to whether you call it a "figure" or an "appendix." It changes what the reader expects to see, but it doesn't change the content at all, I guess.*

I come back to these issues in Chapter Six when I discuss the similarities and differences between the tutors and their tutorial sessions and discuss the implications of their different

discourse community explorations. In the following exchange between Lisa and Simon, I briefly explain the context of the session in terms of the document Simon brings to the session. I then examine Lisa's discourse for indications of her beliefs about writing, content, and form, as well as her genre knowledge. I weave Professor Dorf's comments about the quality of Lisa's feedback, as well as relevant details from my follow-up interview with Lisa and her Tutor Report Log, into the discussion.

5.3 Lisa and Simon: Getting to Know You, Getting to Know all About You

For the second tutorial session with a business student, Lisa again meets with Simon. During this meeting, Simon brings in a draft of his team's Status Update Report (see Appendix J for a copy of the draft, with identifying information removed) with one section in particular that he wants to discuss, out of five total sections. In my interview with Professor Dorf, he remarks that the final report that Simon's team turned in was *not good business writing because it was really hokey, almost like a short story format* (Dorf interview November 16, 2009). I show Professor Dorf the draft and ask him if it is similar to the final that Simon's team turned in, and he tells me that it is in terms of both format and content.

5.3.1 Discussion of Form

After a brief discussion about the report and the section Simon wants to focus on during the session, Lisa reads over his draft for three minutes, and then looks up and tells him *I really*

like your last paragraph. I think it made it pretty strong. She does not provide an explanation or a reason for this feedback, and Lisa includes an intensifier here (*really*) that signals how confident she is in her comment. Notably, she does not adopt Simon's use of the term *section* though he has just used the term three times when explaining the format of the report. The "Conclusion" consists of a single block paragraph that gives Lisa the option of referring to it as either a "section" or a technical "paragraph," and she confidently chooses to refer to it as a "paragraph." I believe that this confidence comes from the fact that the "Conclusion" also reads more like an English paper:

Hopefully, this report reflects some of the energy and optimism that fuels Trius Live. The company has lofty goals, and our team has been presented with the task of putting together a blueprint for the foundation beneath those aspirations. It has not been easy, but with each meeting, with each miniscule piece of the puzzle fitting into place, a different kind of social scene in Tuscaloosa becomes that much more of a reality.

The allusions, metaphors, and poetic language of this final section are more reminiscent of a literature essay than a business report, which might be why Lisa seems more self-assured in her opinion.

Eventually, Lisa moves into a discussion of commas: *Alright. Here, we just forgot our comma. Commas are probably the biggest problem I see on people's papers. Definitely. They end up putting it in wrong, or just forget.* This feedback is decontextualized from the genre that Simon is working on, as Lisa refers to "people's papers" and does not discuss what it means to

insert a comma “wrong” or what difference it makes if one “forgets” a comma in a business report.

Continuing on to another topic about which she also has expert knowledge, Lisa points out a sentence-level problem and tells Simon: *This first sentence was just a little awkward to me. Something about “attempted to have a hands-off approach” -- it’s just a little chunky.* Here again we see Lisa using a minimizer (*just a little*), a hedge (*something about*), and a self-mention (*to me*) to offer this feedback to Simon. All of these discourse markers indicate that she actually is uncertain about a topic on which she should have expert knowledge (that is to say, matters of syntax are normally examined in the academic discourse community). Thus, Lisa’s less confident tone is out of the ordinary, for she has been consistently more directive about issues that she has previous experience dealing with in her literary studies. This hesitancy after having sat in Professor Dorf’s classroom possibly could have to do with her self-consciousness that the audience has different expectations, thus even issues of syntax might be different than what she might once have suggested. Lisa demonstrates an understanding that she requires a content expert’s knowledge before she could offer more directive feedback about sentence form.

At one point in the session, Simon marvels at the function of the work he’s doing in Professor Dorf’s class, and he engages Lisa in a discussion on how to improve the document: *I mean, it seems like we’re producing documents, you know, not just “oh look at my paper, I wrote a report.” I think it would be more cohesive if I could get everything in one section.* Rather than discussing what the overall purpose of the report is, whether “getting everything in one section”

serves the interests of the audience, or what the conventions of a report genre are in terms of formatting certain information, Lisa responds (to what I would label as Simon's "full disclosure") with: *That could be the kind of thing you put in appendices. Have full charts and everything.* Simon is excited about this option, and he adds: *Right, and that's very "document-y."* Lisa tells him: *I'm finally writing papers with appendices in them and it makes me feel like a grown-up.*

What is interesting about Lisa's final response is that she shares her relevant experience as a member of the academic discourse community with Simon at a moment when Simon is "thinking through" and realizing the purpose of the report for the first time. Simon's use of the term "document" here is synonymous with "deliverable" in business discourse. In other words, a "document" is a written text that actually serves a purpose for the reader, rather than simply showing off the writer's knowledge to an already knowledgeable reader like a "paper" does. The multiple hedges in Simon's language (*it seems like, it's like, not just, I think, probably, somehow*) signals that he still is not certain what his purpose is in writing the report.

The underlying issue here, then, is that Lisa's literature papers with their appendices do not serve the same purpose as Simon's report does. Therefore, Lisa likely has a different perception than a member of the business discourse community of how Simon's appendices should function. Yet, the two of them do not spend any time discussing appendices in terms of audience expectations, or the connections between content, form, and function. Though Professor Dorf tells me that he is concerned that Simon might not have a clear idea of what

information belongs in the appendix at the end of the tutorial session, Professor Dorf is neutral about Lisa's feedback here. Lisa's genre knowledge level is low because, as detailed above, there was feedback at such a broad level of generality that the description becomes superficial and lacks an explanation connecting her comments on form to the report as a genre.

Simon continues on, considering his client's response to the report: *I think it would somehow make it more clear if he just wanted some information he could go there. Like what if he just wanted to know all the quotes we got on caterers or security people or stuff like that?*

This passage is enlightening for several reasons. First, it shows a fundamental lack of shared knowledge about what kind of genre Simon is writing, because he does not know the basic features of the report, either. Second, it further corroborates my own classroom observations as well as Lisa's field notes that no business writing genres (particularly business reports) were being discussed in the classroom. Third, it indicates that Simon was not familiar with a business report genre from experience in a different venue, whether in another course or a job. At this point in the session, it is all too clear that Lisa and Simon have been operating under the assumption that the other person knows the features of the genre Simon should be using for this assignment.

Finally, Lisa announces she is finished discussing grammar and she shifts gears quickly, saying: *That was all the grammar stuff I saw. So, this is just part of the report?* When Simon tells her that yes, they have only been going over part of his report, Lisa asks him: *What other parts are there?* Interesting to note is that at the moment in the session when Lisa is done with

“all the grammar stuff,” she begins to focus on the generic features of the report, even referring to the document as a “report” now. This moment also shows the dichotomy that exists between notions of form and content, as Lisa discussed the text with Simon for several minutes before asking him about its format. In the final minutes of their session, Simon also talks more, and with more self-assuredness because Lisa engages him in a strategic discussion about how to creatively communicate his content knowledge. In other words, the content is directing the form at this point in the session -- and not in any explicitly connected way, either.

Lisa’s final comment to Simon is a directive about form, unrelated to content or a discussion of the report genre: *Also, watch for redundancies, not just with words, but things like a summary sentence like “this was bad” and then the second sentence will be like “Jimmy got stabbed in the throat.” You could just put “Jimmy got stabbed in the throat.” You know that that was bad.* Simon signals that he understands her point and tells her: *Gotcha -- efficiency.* Lisa asks Simon if there is anything else he wants to talk about and the session ends. What is interesting about Lisa’s final utterance is that she uses a more literary analogy to make the point, rather than using a metaphor more relevant to the business discourse community, but that Simon still translates the analogy into business terms (“gotcha -- efficiency”). Perhaps the analogy was effective because Lisa was familiar with multiple discourse communities.

5.3.2 Content Discussion

Lisa's discussion of content in her second tutorial session with Simon is significantly different from her first tutorial session providing feedback on a business writing task. Though she still hedges, she also uses more directive statements than the month before when discussing content matters, and though they are still mainly unrelated to form, she contextualizes them with a more relevant business discourse community audience in mind. It is during the discussions of content that Lisa also seems to shift the most between discourse communities. Professor Dorf marks some of the content feedback Lisa provides as low quality, and I discuss the implications of these findings in the next chapter.

As I noted earlier, Lisa's comment about the effectiveness of the "Conclusion" is less assured, as shown by her use of the terms *I think* and *pretty* to minimize the authority of the statement, as she essentially is commenting on the impact of the Conclusion's content on the document. By downplaying this feedback, Lisa indicates that she lacks knowledge to be able to make a more firm statement about the Conclusion's overall effect on the report. The *I think* also informs Simon that the positive impression is clearly from Lisa's perspective, which is still very much that of a member of the academic community. Yet even though Lisa tells me in her final interview that she still does not consider herself a member of the business community, by the time of this second tutorial session she has sat in on three of Professor Dorf's classes, and she does tell me that she has a better idea of what Professor Dorf is looking for (Lisa Interview October 15, 2009).

What is also interesting about this comment is Professor Dorf's response to it, as he notes what is unstated in it. During our discussion of this second session, Professor Dorf tells me that Simon's mention of including an "issues we've had to deal with" section should have sparked a conversation about unnecessary content for this kind of report. Essentially, Professor Dorf claims, this genre is meant to provide information that the small business client needs to know about issues that relate to and affect the business, not excuses about why the consulting team is behind schedule or unprepared. Thus, in the very beginning of the session, Lisa's comments suggest that she is actually at a low genre knowledge level, even though she acknowledges that Simon is working with a discipline-specific genre, because she fails to provide an explanation for her comment about why she likes his last paragraph or why she thinks it strengthens his document, she continues to use language of the academic discourse community to discuss the report, and she does not recognize that Simon includes details that are not appropriate in this genre for this audience, while praising the parts of the document that have a more traditional academic style.

Lisa quickly moves into specific questions about the audience for the document, asking Simon: *So, is this for the client or is this for Mr. Dorf?* By mentioning both *client* and *Mr. Dorf*, Lisa indicates that she is familiar with Simon's assignment and the audience for whom he is writing -- a move that she could not make during the first tutorial session. Simon's response is uncertain and he wonders out loud whether he should keep or delete the discussion of his team's apathy during the project. Professor Dorf notes that this is an instance in which Simon should

have been questioned about whether including information about his group's apathy in the report is actually appropriate for any of the readers given the expectations of the genre Simon writes. Again, what was left unsaid indicated Lisa's lack of genre knowledge, which correlated to a substandard quality of feedback.

Yet rather than discussing the inappropriateness of the content of what Simon has included for this particular genre, Lisa endorses Simon's statement, telling him: *That's what I was thinking, too. I was wondering if this was going to Brice -- that's his name, isn't it?* Here, Lisa establishes solidarity with Simon by acknowledging a shared assumption (rather than shared knowledge) about who the reader of the document will be. By repeating the word *think* that Simon has just used, Lisa seems to suggest that she also thinks Simon's document is "an accurate reflection" for Professor Dorf. Lisa possibly shares this sentiment because she has sat in on the course, but according to Professor Dorf's comments, neither Lisa nor Simon are truly "knowledgeable" about what he expects. This lack of knowledge could have more to do with a lack of genre knowledge versus a lack of rhetorical awareness of Professor Dorf's knowledge about the situation or the social distance between Simon and Professor Dorf. In fact, Professor Dorf gives Lisa positive marks for her audience-awareness and for knowing *the right question to ask* about whether Simon has considered the client for whom he writes.

Here, and at even greater length later on in the session, we see that Lisa and Simon are sensitive to rhetorical concerns, assuming that Professor Dorf is the reader. Though they wonder about how much negative detail to include in the report, neither Lisa nor Simon question the

relevancy of including these details in the first place, much less dedicating an entire section to this kind of information. Professor Dorf's comments during our interview indicate that these considerations, and ultimately Simon's final draft, disregard the conventions of the genre in which Simon should be writing because the kind of report that Simon composes, according to Professor Dorf, should contain certain clearly marked and expected information, and intra-group issues are not typically expected. I find it interesting that both Lisa and Simon can speak freely about the rhetorical situation, but they seem unfamiliar with the generic features of the report. Based on my own classroom observations and Lisa's field notes, as well as interviews with the business students and with Professor Dorf himself, no explicit discussions of the report genre ever took place in the classroom. Thus, the lack of discussion and knowledge about generic features during the tutorial session are understandable, as is Lisa's continued reliance on terms and examples from academic genres with which she has had previous experience.

Lisa goes so far as to tell Simon: *However you want to delete those, you can keep one "issue."* Here, Lisa does not provide any explanation for this instruction, so the problem could be one of style, semantics, convention, or personal preference, among others. The directive command suggests that Lisa is discussing an academic discourse convention, but her feedback, if implemented, also affects the report's content. Simon simply responds: *One "issue"* and Lisa reiterates *One "issue."* Both Lisa and Simon are invested in the rephrasing effort to serve Simon's purpose of avoiding "a bad grade," and the discussion never mentions how this revision should focus on the purpose of the genre in which Simon writes. Nor does Lisa discuss concepts

of free-writing, such as why and how to use it as an “invention” strategy before actually drafting the document. Thus, Lisa displays a low level of genre knowledge in this exchange which corresponds with the low quality rating Professor Dorf gives her feedback.

Lisa then moves on to the next section in Simon’s report, still referring to the sections as paragraphs, and she reintroduces the topic of audience, saying: *These two paragraphs, that was just my one question was whether or not it was appropriate to tell the client if it is not going well. I think that talking about how you dealt with problems that came up that weren’t anyone’s fault.* Lisa trails off at the end, having introduced her one “minimal” issue (with the minimizer *just my one question*) and invited Simon to share his knowledge as a complement to the hedged knowledge Lisa offers as a member of a different discourse community (with the self-mention *I think*). Professor Dorf gives Lisa negative marks for this feedback, telling me that the suggestions she makes are not helpful because they are just as “needless” as Simon’s original wording. He explains that it is not the word choice that is the issue, but rather the content itself. In other words, this kind of information does not belong anywhere in this particular document because it is not expected or appropriate, and the section itself -- the form of the document, essentially -- should have been discussed and ultimately deleted. Professor Dorf notes that Simon’s writing *reads like “free-writing”* and he adds: *that’s not a good thing.*

After giving Simon the go-ahead to use one of two terms, Lisa points to specific passages in the document and tells Simon:

I know what you meant here, but I think maybe you need to explain it: “present more pressing concerns” -- I suppose you mean “immediate”? Just the phrasing is a little. . . you need a little bit more clarity. Here, too: “easily be brushed aside” -- maybe specify that it’s in their mindset, because here it just sounds like it doesn’t matter.

Again, Lisa’s feedback seems to be a textual analysis of Simon’s word choice and how the words Simon uses will ultimately affect him as the writer. Though she has a better understanding of who Simon writes for, Lisa does not shape her feedback around the audience’s expectations of the words, sentences, and sections included in the report genre.

The session continues on as a word choice brainstorming discussion, for Simon asks Lisa: *Is this the appropriate usage of the word “palatable” there?* to which Lisa offers a definitive response with no explanation: *Yeah, you can use it there.* She then moves on quickly to the next issue in the document, which is another problem with word selection. The word “arcane” is an issue for Lisa, but she does not explain why. Simon admits that he thought twice about using the word as he drafted the document, and Lisa tells him: *Let’s look it up.* Her inclusive language conveys a sense of solidarity about the need for this action, as neither of them have any expert knowledge to share on the matter. The meaning, then, of Lisa’s inclusiveness also signals that she is moving toward a more conscious understanding of the context-dependent relationship of form and content. In other words, while she can point out the odd use of the word “arcane” in Simon’s report because she is sensitive to its usage in her own community’s discourse, she does not offer an explanation in this situation because she is not familiar with the typical business report as a genre.

At another point in the session, Simon again asks for her advice concerning word choice, and Lisa provides the following feedback: *“taken” or “attempted” will both work. Because “attempted” makes it sound like you may not necessarily be successful.* Here again her content feedback is unrelated to the report as a genre, though Lisa does seem aware of how the specific audience might respond to what Simon writes. Professor Dorf gives Lisa a positive mark for her feedback here, but he tells me that it is not because of what it means for Simon, but because of what it means to him as the audience reading a report. Thus, though Professor Dorf marks Lisa’s feedback here as high quality, it is unrelated to her low genre knowledge as she does not provide an explanation about *why* the revision is effective for the report genre.

5.3.3 Form-Content Discussion

In this section I examine the instances in which Lisa connects both form and content in the feedback that she provides. These comments are noticeably different from the form-content comments in the first session as Lisa attempts to incorporate some of her new business classroom experiences into the feedback. Most interesting is that this attempt to bring in relevant classroom knowledge also elicits some of Professor Dorf’s most negative remarks about the quality of Lisa’s feedback. I respond specifically to that disconnect in the final chapter when I discuss the implications of these findings.

After Simon explains the report’s sections, he tells her that he is most concerned about one section in which he must describe a large event, telling Lisa: *All we’ve done so far is*

gathered a bunch of information and I would hate to simply regurgitate it. Lisa listens to

Simon's concerns and suggests:

One way I guess could be to actually describe the party from the standpoint of someone who is at the party. You know, actually say what's going on, which band, something like that. So it would be a little more narrative, it's got a little more personality than just a list of facts.

Here, Lisa shows Simon that she respects his concerns for creating an unimaginative document as she suggests that he use a "narrative" style with more "personality." Though the self-mentions and minimizers (*I guess, something like that, a little, just*) are hedges that convey her uncertainty about formatting the content, Lisa continues on after giving Simon this advice in what seems to be an attempt to explain her feedback. She asks Simon to remind her of the man who visited Professor Dorf's class who did the PowerPoint presentation, and after Simon refreshes her memory she continues: *One thing I've noticed from your class is that personality is definitely necessary to real success in the business world.*

With these comments, Lisa draws upon her prior experience in Professor Dorf's classroom to connect what she noticed about the business discourse community from the guest speaker's PowerPoint presentation to the current document Simon is writing for a member of the same discourse community. Because the speaker seemed to have "personality," Lisa encourages Simon's desire to infuse his report with more personality. For this exchange, Professor Dorf gives Lisa both positive and negative marks. He tells me that personality is important and so this is a valid comment, but that lists are a normal part of this kind of report and that "a little more

narrative” in this case turned into an entire story for the final document that Simon and his group turned in, which was not expected or appropriate for this assignment. Thus, while Professor Dorf does not reject “personality” or creativity in a report, he tells me that Simon *did not know where to draw the line*. While Lisa’s general comment about business success and personality receives a positive evaluation from Professor Dorf, the specific feedback in which she suggests using a narrative style receives a substandard quality rating. Lisa’s comments also exhibit a low level of genre knowledge for several reasons. First, when Simon expresses his disdain for unoriginal lists and “regurgitation” of information, Lisa does not explain why lists are a conventional feature of the report genre. Nor does she explain how the form (in this case, the list) actually serves multiple stakeholders’ purposes. Nor does she engage Simon in a discussion about why a more narrative style might or might not be a creative variation of the genre that could enhance its effectiveness.

Lisa understands the importance of knowing who the audience is when composing the text, and she tells Simon: *I would check on that with him. Definitely. Just to make sure that this is the proper tone for the audience, whoever the audience is*. Professor Dorf gives Lisa a positive mark for this comment, again noting that she brings Simon’s attention to the relevant issue, even if she is not offering him the answer. Though she receives positive marks for her feedback, Lisa’s explanation only demonstrates a standard level of genre knowledge, as she does not connect her reasoning with the generic features of the report. Rather, she refers to a common rhetorical concept, but she has the insight of knowing that Simon is not just writing a typical

academic paper and that he likely has more than one reader to consider when composing the document.

Moving on, Lisa announces to Simon: *Now, we'll just go over little grammar problems.* The use of the term *now* explicitly orients the discussion on what Lisa has to say (Schiffrin 245), and it is a confident move as it makes sure Simon is keyed to the fact that what she is about to say is important. Interestingly, she immediately uses the word *just* as an attempt to reduce the significance of the discussion about grammar, as though she understands that grammar should be downplayed as a topic of discussion in the session. As Lisa continues on, however, she provides Simon with feedback that suggests she is mixing concepts of content and form into her definition of “grammar problems.” She tells Simon: *First of all, in this first sentence, I'm not 100% if this is the right word because “issues” doesn't necessarily have a negative connotation, which is what you're talking about in this. So maybe I'm a little confused at first. So maybe you can change that word.* In other words, Lisa seems aware that a specific word used in the report should correspond to the overall content Simon includes in a section. Thus, she might need content knowledge to better understand the context in which he wants to use the term. She begins the statement strongly (*First of all, in this first sentence*), having just established that she will be discussing “grammar problems,” which is her area of expertise. Yet, as she begins to transition into her feedback, Lisa first conveys an awareness that content (*what you're talking about*) is significant to word choice in the document, and she offers a brief explanation (*because “issues” doesn't necessarily have a negative connotation*).

After all of her hedging (*I'm not 100%, doesn't necessarily, maybe*), Lisa finally offers Simon her nondirective advice to change a word in his document. While the explanation that Lisa offers accounts for the semantics of a word as it relates to the text's content, the explanation does not display a high level of genre knowledge. That is, she does not discuss why the change would make the report more effective in terms of the report's purpose and the appropriateness for the particular audience. Professor Dorf is neutral about her feedback, telling me that it was not a problem in the document, but that it is "not a big deal" if Simon changes the word to something else. In other words, it is not required that Simon use the word "issues" here, and so at least Lisa is not flouting a convention unknowingly.

At the end of the session, Lisa wants to provide Simon with some last-minute, unsolicited advice, telling him:

My advice to you on the technical aspects of the writing are to make it as efficient as possible. If you can say something in two words instead of five, say it in two words. They think it sounds formal, but really it's just taking up space -- saying "in order that" when really you could just say "because." People say "in order to" or "in order that." And "in order to" you just replace with "to." Or "because of" just cut out the "of" -- streamline it. Few words as possible. It's probably applicable to business writing because time is money.

Here Lisa demonstrates the difficulty of trying to work within two different discourse communities at once, as there are overlapping terms and concepts, and what seems to be feedback possibly working at cross-purposes. Lisa is directive in this move as she gives Simon straight-forward instruction with no hedging, and she clearly situates herself as the tutor giving

guidance to the listener when she starts with *my advice to you*. She seems to want to reestablish her role as the tutor who should have some parting direction for the tutee, which is at odds with the collaborative tone she maintained throughout the session. In this move, Lisa also reinvokes the elusive “they” for what essentially becomes a straw man argument for her feedback, much as she did while discussing a “technical aspect” of Simon’s document in the first tutorial session. She does not clarify who this “they” entity is, but she likely is referring to members of the academic discourse community just as she was in the first session. The phrases *but really it’s just* and *really you could just* are Lisa’s way of showing that she can cross boundaries between the two discourse communities as she informs Simon that what the academic discourse community expects and values is not “really” what the business discourse community expects and values.

Professor Dorf gives Lisa positive marks for offering quality feedback about efficient prose, but Lisa does not display a high level of genre knowledge with these comments as the only explanation she offers is the hedged statement: *It’s probably applicable to business writing because time is money*. Lisa does not mention how making the writing more efficient would serve the purpose of the specific genre or why the intended audience would be interested in prose that took up less space. Rather, she speaks in generalities about business writing and comes up with her own examples to make a point about being efficient, without reference to why this concept is important for Simon’s document as a report genre or for a specific passage in the report.

5.3.4 Discourse Community Membership and Genre Knowledge

Overall, Lisa displays a genre knowledge level of a generalist because for the majority of the session she speaks of texts/textual practices in separate terms of content and form, rather than holistically. The most noticeable difference in feedback between her first and second sessions comes from her heightened audience-awareness and the questions that focus on how the intended audience might respond, rather than just on how she reacts as a reader. Lisa's Tutor Report Log, field notes, and follow-up interview also indicate that she has shifted perspectives in the kind of feedback she provides. For example, her field notes on the first day of Professor Dorf's class suggest that she is getting to know the environment, as she writes comments like: *the building is much nicer than the English building; the chairs are unusual in that they are attached to the long tables and swivel to one side; the room seems a bit austere -- the walls are a cold gray-blue, the tables and floor are white and shiny; all students are dressed casually*. This description is much different from what Lisa notices on the second day of Professor Dorf's class, when she writes: *a guest came in and shook everyone's hand and introduced himself; he tells jokes and anecdotes; he speaks like he's having a conversation; he uses business jargon; he is engaging*. Even more telling is what Lisa writes on the third day of Professor Dorf's class: *We're helping them write reports, not essays*. The main difference between these descriptions is that Lisa's focus is shifting and she is picking up on features that members of the business discourse community most likely consider important for their interactions -- both in speaking and writing.

Lisa reiterates this sentiment in the follow-up interview when I ask her whether her expectations changed between the first and last times she met with Simon, and whether sitting in Professor Dorf's class on three different occasions had anything to do with that change. She tells me: *Definitely. I have more of a feeling for how [Simon's] class works. It's unique, and I won't have this experience in the future, but I actually know about his class and what his teacher is expecting.* I then ask Lisa to expand on what she thought Professor Dorf expects, based on her classroom observations, and she responds: *I imagine that he expects people to just know, to just go out and do it. I imagine that he expects efficiency and that it should come through in the writing.* I next ask whether Professor Dorf ever mentioned what a report looks like, what is in a report, or how it is structured. Lisa is adamant in her reply: *No he did not. The only time I ever heard him mention writing is when he said, "Go to the Writing Center. They're just going to help you on grammar and syntax because they don't know what an Environmental Analysis is or a Midterm Report are."* When I ask how she feels about that comment, Lisa responds: *That makes my job easier since I don't have to go around looking this stuff up.*

Lisa and I discuss how the session could have been different if she had not sat in Professor Dorf's class, and she raises issues of disciplinary discourse communities, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity. She explains:

I wouldn't know the details of the project. I wouldn't know that this would likely go to the client, or maybe just the teacher. I would probably be more comfortable just sticking to grammar and syntax. I definitely wouldn't have asked about the intended audience because it would never

have occurred to me that it would be going to an actual person in the real live business world.

I ask Lisa whether she considers herself a member of the business discourse community from having sat in Professor Dorf's class, and she explains: *Definitely not, just way on the sidelines. I feel like I have a bit more insight into it.* She goes on to discuss her heightened audience-awareness from sitting in the classroom, telling me: *I see how people work in it more; the different personalities. And I see Professor [Dorf's] attitude toward the students, you know -- just do it. If that's how it is in undergrad and grad school, it's going to be a lot more intense in the real business world.* I ask Lisa whether there was anything about Professor Dorf and his class that she would have liked to get to know better if she had more time, and she mentions that she would have wanted him to discuss writing more and to show sample reports, explaining: *Even if he had just shown it to them and I hadn't been there, they would have had a better idea. Because once they get here, they can tell us what they need better. Because if they don't even know then how are we supposed to know.* Lisa touches on the notion of content knowledge with this comment, and I ask her to elaborate on what she would do if neither person in a tutorial session has discipline-specific genre knowledge, to which she admits:

If I have no indication that there was supposed to be a format to it, it would be a regular plain ol' essay. You know, I'd probably be advising them to make sure that there was an introduction and a conclusion. It would probably turn out like an English paper, because that's what I would know. I would ask if their teacher had given them any examples, but while in the Writing Center I might try to pull one up and see if we could find an example in the correct format.

What I find the most interesting in this final session is that Lisa's actions during the second tutorial session with Simon substantiate this admission. She had no indication that there was a specific format for Simon's report, nor was she familiar with specific discourse conventions such as verbal expression and word choice. Thus, the feedback she provided to Simon was very much "like an English paper," though she does show an awareness that Simon is writing for a specific audience in the session. Audience-awareness, however, is not synonymous with genre knowledge, as Lisa's feedback and our discussion signal. In our interview, I asked Lisa whether she also incorporated the "HOCs" above "LOCs" mantra into her session with Simon, and she explains: *I think that's [Harriet's] phrase. But definitely make sure that the content is right before you make sure that the technical aspects are right. Make sure its saying what it needs to say. And I always preface it by saying I don't know anything about this, I'm going to do what I can with it.* Lisa informs me that she is more confident dealing with grammar and punctuation when assisting student writers from unfamiliar disciplines, so I ask why she bothers with content concerns. *Because it's the goal here,* she replies.

Later on in the interview, Lisa and I discuss how her experience sitting in Professor Dorf's class, specifically the third one where she made the note about "reports," affected the way she approached her session with Simon. She elaborates on the experience: *Well, it told me that I wasn't dealing with a traditional format of introduction, body, conclusion -- I couldn't go at it like that. When [Simon] brought it in, it had specific headings and that kind of thing, so I'm like okay I get it a little better now; this is very structured.* Lisa notes that sitting in the class also

helped her understand differences in tone: *From what I know of Professor [Dorf], he's going to have a more forthright, time is money, snap-snap, chop-to-it tone.* But even more importantly,

Lisa informs me:

I learned what some of these students are working with and that I can't necessarily count on a teacher because sometimes they'll come in and they don't know what they're supposed to do, and I get a little frustrated with them and I'm thinking why don't they know this? I was thinking that maybe they just weren't paying attention, and now I know that some teachers aren't clear and they're just like, "here it is, do it, peace out, I'm going to lunch."

Following up on this comment, I ask her to elaborate on the "major weakness" she notes in her second Tutor Report Log: *maybe I need to do more research on business writing.* Lisa explains that she means: *Formatting stuff, the kind of thing that's required. I would want to read more and get a feel for the writing. A good example. I have English teachers that do that.* In a comment that sounds similar to something Harriet said during her final interview, Lisa tells me: *We're English people. We've been reading poetry and philosophy and that kind of stuff for ages. The whole humanities, we're good with the humanities -- we can do that until the cows come home. The formats are usually the same; the tone is usually the same or similar.*

In exchanges such as these during this final interview, I sense that Lisa understands the concept of multiple discourse communities that have particular written discourse conventions. I even believe that she grasps the notion of genre as a rhetorical response to a recurrent situation, although she does not make these explicit connections during her tutorial session. At one point she tells me: *A model would be great. Maybe even having spoken to the teacher and having him*

explain what he wants from them. Knowing the format -- that had to be all Simon because I didn't know. I had to trust that he knew what he was supposed to do. I come back to these issues in Chapter Six when I discuss the similarities and differences between the tutors and their tutorial sessions and discuss the implications of their different discourse community explorations.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Each individual makes a different set of generalizations, over a lifetime, based on a different set of experiences with discourse, about what the possibilities are for shaping and adapting to the world via language. (Johnstone 44)

This final chapter discusses the major assertions of my analysis of the tutorial sessions and implications for future research. I begin by returning to the purpose of the study and reviewing the research methods utilized in the study. Following these sections I make an argument for re-imagining the writing center as a “disco zone” in which writing centers promote themselves as sites where writing is discussed explicitly as a disciplinary discourse convention. I end with a future research agenda that suggests a way to promote the disco zone. I take care to acknowledge that, as with any new and different idea, re-envisioning the writing center is risky. But in the spirit of genre theory, I understand the conventional boundaries that I seek to extend, and I believe multiple stakeholders stand to gain.

The study’s purpose was to explore the connection between generalist writing center consultants’ genre knowledge and feedback before and after exposures to a discipline-specific discourse community. In addition, I was also guided by the following sub-research questions: 1) What is the connection between generalist tutors’ genre knowledge and feedback quality on discipline-specific writing tasks? 2) How does a generalist tutor’s genre knowledge change after undergoing a specific tutor training method? 3) What is the difference in feedback quality on

discipline-specific writing tasks after generalist tutors undergo different training methods? and 4) What is the connection between the generalists' self-confidence and genre knowledge levels? I used a descriptive multiple case study design employing a purposeful sample of two writing center consultants identified as generalists. Case study data sources included transcribed audio-recordings, semi-structured interviews, documents, and field notes from classroom observations.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate how prior knowledge about a discourse community, whether through an introduction to the discipline-specific documents that members of the discourse community compose and engage in or through an introduction to the actual interactions of members of the discourse community, plays an integral role in increasing the tutors' self-efficacy and self-confidence and in increasing the connection between quality of feedback and heightened levels of genre knowledge. That is to say, when the tutors had a more specific/clear understanding of the discourse community that the student writers were involved in, more opportunities for "accurate" interdiscursivity were available. When the tutors were more aware of the available means of interdiscursivity (specifically, the connections between the conventions of their own discourse community and those of the business discourse community), they were more confident in their feedback (as evidenced by the reduced hedges and their statements made during the final interviews).

In the end, Lisa showed the most improvement in her level of genre knowledge from the first tutorial session to the second, for she demonstrated an enhanced ability to make connections between content and form. The connections between content and form are indicated by

explanatory phrases such as “because,” “and so,” and “the reason is,” which Professor Dorf also noted were linked to instances of high quality feedback. The following sections explain in greater detail what the changes in types of comments and feedback quality indicate about how the generalists’ genre knowledge might have changed after their different exposures to the business discourse community.

6.1 Changes between Tutorial Sessions: Pre- and Post-Discourse Training

6.1.1 Feedback about Form

Noticeably, Harriet made nearly the same type of comments about form during the first and second tutorial sessions. That is, her feedback about form across both sessions involved academic explanations of punctuation and grammar, without reference to the business discourse community or the specific genre in which the two students were writing. For example, in Harriet’s first session, she tells Paul: *There were one or two places where there were missing an apostrophe for a possessive.* Then in her second session, she tells Ron: *I think there was an “s” missing.* The significance of these comments is that in neither session does Harriet follow up her feedback with a discussion of what these types of errors mean for the business discourse community, the intended reader, or why they are important to consider in a business report genre.

Lisa, on the other hand, made more comments about form during the second tutorial session. Additionally, these comments were not the same type as the feedback on form in the first tutorial session. For example, during Lisa’s first meeting with Simon she made comments

about form that she contextualized in the academic discourse community, such as: *So, “high level of competition will replace culture driven events” will be the easy way to switch it around. Make sure that the thing that’s acting, that’s doing the action, is in the subject.* In her second meeting with Simon, more of Lisa’s feedback on form referred to the business discourse community, for example: *People say “in order to” or “in order that”. And “in order to” you just replace with “to.” Or “often because of” just cut out the “of” -- streamline it -- few words as possible. It’s probably applicable to business writing because time is money.* When I asked Lisa why she made so many comments about formal features during the second tutorial session, she said that it was because she heard Professor Dorf tell his students during the last class she sat in on that they should visit the writing center for help with punctuation, grammar, and syntax, so that was what she was going to pay attention to.

6.1.2 Feedback about Content

Interestingly, both Lisa and Harriet made more comments about content in their first tutorial sessions than their second. With the reduction in comments about content also came a noticeable reduction in hedges. This finding is significant because even though Lisa sat in Professor Dorf’s class on three separate occasions, she did not attempt to discuss the content of the document. Because many subject matter teachers are concerned that tutors who are familiar with the content of the course or the assignment will be more likely to appropriate a student writer’s work, thus leading to potential ethical dilemmas, this is an important finding.

6.1.3 Feedback about Form and Content

Only Lisa made more comments about the connection between form and content in the second session. Specifically, Lisa used more explanatory phrases in the second session that provided a bridge from the immediate context to future similar contexts the student writer might encounter. For example, in the first tutorial Lisa provided the following feedback: *I'm wondering if there might be a way to work in more details about the part where you talk about them wanting to compete with Red Mountain Entertainment. I thought that was interesting because it gave me a feel for who the client is.* Whereas, in the second tutorial she provided feedback such as: *People say "in order to" or "in order that". And "in order to" you just replace with "to." Or "often because of" just cut out the "of" -- streamline it -- few words as possible. It's probably applicable to business writing because time is money.* Lisa's comments from the first tutorial session display how focused she is on her own reaction to the writing as a member of the academic discourse community. In the second tutorial session, she shows a heightened awareness of the discourse community for which Simon writes, even though she was providing feedback primarily about form.

Harriet, on the other hand, does not show any change in the feedback from her first to second tutorial sessions that connects matters of form and content. In fact, she does not attempt to offer nearly as much feedback on anything other than form during the second tutorial session, the majority of which sounds similar to the following: *This comma is unnecessary because you*

don't have two independent clauses. The second one here can't stand alone as a sentence so you just use the conjunction without the comma. That is to say, the comments still refer to the same matters of form that she focused on in the first tutorial session, without any mention of the genre's purpose, discourse community, or intended reader. The couple of times that Harriet does mention the document's audience during the second tutorial session, she does not do so to expound upon an issue of form, but rather to explain her lack of knowledge, for example: *I just wasn't clear about what this whole sentence meant. And maybe it will be completely clear to your audience, but it wasn't clear to me.*

6.1.4 Discourse Community Membership and Genre Knowledge

The differences between Harriet and Lisa's feedback in the second tutorial are more pronounced than in the first tutorial session where they both had the same relative knowledge about the language of the business community. They both had the same lack of experience with the business discourse community and its genres, and so the fact that they shared so many common features in their utterances and in the quality of their feedback on the Environmental Analysis report makes sense. By their second tutorial session, each generalist had experienced the business discourse community, but in different forms. Thus, they had different possibilities for shaping and adapting to the discipline-specific text the business students brought into the writing center.

Johnstone writes that “prior texts shaped to new contexts, old expectations drawn on in new situations -- are at the heart of how discourse works” (163). I found that both Harriet and Lisa were still drawing heavily on their “old expectations” of academic writing during the second tutorial as they continued to discuss form unrelated to content. The most noticeable difference between their feedback is that Lisa asks more audience-aware questions during the second session than Harriet. Additionally, Lisa uses less self-mentions during her second session, while Harriet continues to use as many self-mentions as she does during her first session. This difference indicates that Lisa is more aware of disciplinary subtleties in order to ask audience-oriented questions, while Harriet still offers feedback from her perspective as a member of the academic discourse community.

Noticeably, both Lisa and Harriet use more directive statements in the second tutorial session. The primary difference is that the majority of Lisa’s directive statements in the second tutorial session are couched in explanations of community conventions. On the other hand, Harriet still refers to herself as the target audience (and therefore, the target discourse community) when she makes the directive statements in the second tutorial session. The most striking aspect about Harriet’s second tutorial session is her continued reliance on prior knowledge when offering feedback on matters of form, even when she has access to model business reports. Though she looks up the rule for how to label appendices on Purdue’s OWL (to no avail), she does not use the model documents I gave her to examine and use after her first tutorial session with a business student.

6.1.5 Feedback Quality

Professor Dorf notes more instances of quality feedback in Lisa's second session and in Harriet's first session. The majority of the "specialist quality feedback" occurs at moments when Harriet and Lisa connect form and content or display an awareness of issues important to the business discourse community. Professor Dorf did not mark decontextualized feedback on matters of form such as punctuation and grammar as "specialist" quality, though he did note that the tutors' attention to these matters was "high quality" and what he would expect them to do. I address the dichotomy that Professor Dorf makes between these different kinds of quality feedback in the final section of this conclusion.

In addition to differences in discourse features, types of comments, and feedback quality, I also note whether the generalists demonstrated any changes in the directiveness of their feedback between the first and second sessions. These shifts in directiveness also correspond to the generalists' feelings of self-efficacy and confidence during the sessions, which I discuss in the sections below.

6.1.6 Levels of Confidence/Self-Efficacy

In the post-interviews, both Harriet and Lisa informed me that they felt more confident discussing the business writing task in the second tutorial session. They attribute their increased confidence to having worked on a similar writing task in their first tutorial session. Interestingly, Harriet mentions in the post-interview that she feels as though she had more to contribute during

the first tutorial session, which is also the session in which she made significantly more comments about the document's content. In the second session with Ron, she says that she did not have much to offer. This comment is striking to me, because Ron had come to the session with a specific question about his report's format, which Harriet most likely could have answered accurately and confidently (thus offering Ron the feedback he sought) if she had been willing to use the report model documents provided to her. Harriet seems to believe that she must be able to remark about the document's content to be able to contribute something valuable to the discussion; thus, she viewed the focus on form in the second session as less productive. Lisa's self-efficacy increased from the first tutorial session to the second as she realized that she was not expected to comment on content and as she became more conscious of members' expectations from a discipline-specific discourse community. Her comment that she needs to "do more research on business writing" explains the use of discourse features in the second session that indicate less confidence (for example, hedges) or a heightened awareness of her outsider perspective (for example, self-mentions).

The final sections detail the implications of these conclusions, as well as future research possibilities that logically extend from questions raised by this exploratory study. The first section argues that if the campus-wide writing center is a space where multiple discourses intermingle, then interdiscursivity is a key component of a successful session. I suggest that renaming writing centers as "discourse zones" better represents the philosophy, mission, and objectives on which most writing centers are founded. Ultimately, this renaming also means re-

envisioning and clarifying what it means to be a writing consultant. Thus, I also suggest that using the terms “discourse specialist” better reflects the expected role of the consultant during a tutorial session.

This new, specific terminology has more than technical significance; it also has rhetorical consequence. “Discourse” rhetoric emphasizes the talking that occurs during a tutorial session, as well as the notion that talk focuses on the specific language of a discipline (what is commonly referred to in terms of disciplinary “discourse”). Based on comments that Professor Dorf and the business students made during their interviews, as well as Lisa’s insights from sitting in Professor Dorf’s class, members of non-English disciplinary discourse communities seem to misunderstand the goals and purposes of the writing center. At times, though, the generalists themselves seem conflicted about their responsibilities as writing center consultants, which further signals how the writing center might be a misunderstood space. Therefore, this study also raises issues about the need to improve communication between writing centers and the multiple stakeholders they aim to benefit.

Such improved communication means reaching out to faculty and students in non-English disciplinary discourse communities, with a focus on encouraging these stakeholders to critically reflect on the purpose for participating in a tutorial session, as well as what to expect during a tutorial session. Promoting critical reflection requires members of the writing center discourse community to share information about what they do and why they do it. In sharing this kind of information, individuals invested in writing centers will promote an interdiscursivity

about their own discourse community that must happen in order to overcome the “grammar garage,” “fix-it shop,” “editing services” stigma that writing centers currently endure. If writing centers are in fact “all about talk,” as North claims they are, then a charge to engage in more dialogue with stakeholders who are unfamiliar with writing center work should be taken up as a pedagogically sound and meaningful challenge.

With this current study, I seek to take up Nancy Grimm’s charge issued years ago in which she called for scholars to begin “[t]hinking of writing centers as linguistic contact zones” (6). By exploring connections of genre knowledge levels and feedback quality for generalists working with discipline-specific writing tasks, I attempt to “open a dialogue with . . . the institution as a whole” (Grimm 6). I now suggest that writing centers follow up on these findings and explore whether generalists work more effectively with discipline-specific writing tasks if they learn about the discourse community in which the writing task takes place in two ways: immersion in the discourse community and a familiarity with typical written texts of the discourse community. Specifically, I suggest that writing centers consider new practices not yet imagined with their names and their consultant training methods. The next sections discuss the reasoning behind these suggestions, based on the findings of the current study.

6.2 New Practices Not Yet Imagined: The Writing Center as a DISCOurse Zone

Using different terminology is a way to rethink the writing center as an interdisciplinary space and to begin new conversations about what writing centers do, why they operate in certain

ways, who they benefit, and how they can remain relevant and effective for multiple discourse communities. Since their first inception in the 1890s, much debate has centered on what to name writing centers, as recounted by Neal Lerner in *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory* (2009). First called “writing laboratories” or “writing clinics,” these spaces appeared, disappeared, and reappeared along with first-year English composition courses (Lerner 2). During the open admissions era, “writing centers” appeared as such (Boquet, “Our Little Secret”). According to Lerner, this conscious name change was an attempt to proclaim “centrality to student learning -- in name, at least,” as well as “a rejection of the laboratory past” when labs were remedial spaces for removing students’ writing deficiencies (*The Idea 2*). Lerner regrets this name change, though, lamenting that “the loss of the writing laboratory is the loss of a possibility,” for what was lost in the name change from writing lab to writing center “were experiments in teaching and learning” (2-3). He imagines a more “experimental future” for writing centers, with hands-on learning by doing that overcomes an educational system at cross-purposes: faced with rising enrollments, yet obsessed with cost savings, efficiencies, and reliance on less-expensive graduate student labor (Lerner 3).

Lerner notes that though “the fields of writing and science might strike many as completely different if not diametrically opposed,” once he began to research their histories more closely, he realized how much they shared (*The Idea 3*). Lerner makes the analogy between experimental labs and writing in terms of process principles, rhetorical contexts, and “cultural capital” (5). Though he takes care to argue for a writing laboratory as a method and not

necessarily a physical site, the history that Lerner traces follows writing labs, clinics, and centers as physical spaces on college and university campuses. Just as Lerner makes a strong historical connection between two seemingly dissimilar fields to support calling the writing center a “writing lab,” I also make a strong historical connection between two seemingly dissimilar fields (music and writing) to support renaming the writing center (as a “DISCOurse zone”).

Why another name, then? These two case studies corroborate the myths, misconceptions, and misunderstandings that Lerner recounts in his history of writing centers in *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory*, and future research should extend these findings while attempting to reinvigorate the image of the writing center as an interdisciplinary space. The notion of a writing center as a grammar and punctuation clinic seems to be pervasive, particularly among “content” teachers who might not understand the connection between content and form for themselves, might not have the time to make connections between content and form in the writing tasks that they discuss and assign, or might have the time to do so but think that it is “not their job.” Lerner writes that the primary purpose of the first stand-alone writing clinics was so that “grammar could be similarly shunted off. . . and stop taking up considerable amounts of class time” (30). In Lerner’s detailed history of the writing lab/clinic/center, the general consensus seems to be that they were places for “removing deficiencies,” rather than opportunities to discuss writing as meaning-making. This study demonstrates that this attitude still prevails among different stakeholders. During class, Professor Dorf remarked to his students that they should visit the writing center for help with punctuation, grammar, and syntax; both Harriet and

Lisa admit that they are more confident discussing punctuation and grammar, especially in unfamiliar disciplinary writing tasks. In the sessions that Harriet and Lisa spent more time discussing content, the business students remembered the feedback about punctuation and grammar above all else; Ron explained that he had thought the writing center was only for English people or Journalism students.

Understandably, renaming the writing center by removing the very term “writing” might seem risky, because then why would anyone visit the writing center? How would it maintain business? These are relevant questions, and they represent why empirical research is so important when making innovative, thoughtful changes based on reasoned findings. Changing the name of the writing center to a “discourse zone” is not an end-all solution to the issues that lore, researched history, and these case studies present. Rather, it is another opportunity for more directed research on whether such a change makes a difference in how multiple stakeholders on campus perceive the writing center; how the writing center conceives its consultant training methods; how consultants discuss unfamiliar discipline-specific writing tasks; and how consultants’ self-efficacy and confidence might be affected.

I believe that as long as the writing center maintains this name, or some version of “clinic” or “lab,” it will have a difficult time overcoming its history as a site of remediation, fundamental grammar garage, or academic writing fix-it shop. The findings of this study show that attitudes and beliefs about the writing center among members of multiple discourse communities on campus align with Lerner’s extensive history of these contested spaces. A new

name is an opportunity for the writing center to reintroduce itself to various stakeholders and begin anew with a mission and philosophy not rooted in a stormy past. Without preconceptions about what occurs in this space, the renamed writing center will have the opportunity to spread the word about what goes on there, who works there, who is invited in, and why they should go. With innovation comes risk, but implementing change based on theory and research is what is missing in writing center scholarship. Thus, instituting a name change should only be the first step of an on-going research agenda. In the next section I introduce where I believe this research agenda should begin: at the disco.

6.2.1 Putting “Discourse” at the Center of the Writing Center: Overcoming the Myth of Transience

Writing centers struggle to overcome the myth of transience, both in practice and in perception, especially as many of them are currently realized as de facto WAC programs on college and university campuses. In other words, for campuses without an official WAC program, the writing center often assumes that function by default as students from different disciplines seek assistance on their discipline-specific writing tasks at the writing center. The tutorial discussions should then concern which disciplinary discourse conventions to emphasize, yet so often the session participants believe that a “universal writing standard” exists.

What is clear from the findings is that Lisa and Harriet are more confident discussing matters of form specific to the academic discourse community. Though Lisa makes greater

strides than Harriet toward discussing the business discourse community during the second tutorial session, she still confesses a lack of confidence in relating to business writing. If the explicit goal of the second session was a discussion of the discourse community, rather than a strict focus on the written text, then Lisa might not have been concerned with her lack of business writing knowledge. However, most likely because she works in a “writing center,” Lisa considered the main focus of the session to be the written text. In turn, she was less sure about how to connect the writing explicitly to the business discourse community, as she had not seen it clearly connected in the business classes that she attended.

Harriet, on the other hand, had focused solely on aspects of “business writing” as she looked over the business writing guidebooks, sample documents, and online materials. Thus, when she remarked that her confidence fell during her second session when she saw how little she could do with Ron’s writing, it was likely because she viewed her job in the “writing center” as one concerned with the actual written text, rather than context. That is to say, she did not consider engaging in a discussion about the discourse community for which Ron wrote as part of her writing center consultant job description. She never referred to the sample documents as representative artifacts produced by that discourse community that could provide clues to Ron’s questions about form. In both sessions, Harriet focuses on “writing” issues that she likely believes cut across disciplinary discourse communities, though she does not make any explicit statements about the separate discourse communities in either session. Business writing is a

decontextualized concept, as she uses the on-line source to attempt to find a rule about formatting, rather than discussing the discipline-specific genre she holds in her hand.

Even more, Professor Dorf remarked that the generalists' comments about punctuation and grammar are what he expected them to provide his business students, because "that's what they know." He does not expect Harriet or Lisa to be able to engage in discussions about the business discourse community, so he is impressed when they attempt to discuss subject matter, but also wary of some of the feedback that they offer. Professor Dorf does not think that his students should go to the writing center for feedback on specific issues about the discourse community, for he seems to distinguish clearly between the spaces where his students should discuss writing and where they should discuss the business discourse community. Lisa notices that Professor Dorf does not use his classroom to discuss writing, and so she possibly picks up on his assumption that writing is separate from content. Having this first-hand knowledge of how writing is not mentioned in a content course that assigns major writing assignments and then expects students to receive help in the writing center on their work is eye-opening, and the opportunities for discourse discussions between consultants and content teachers could be fruitful for everyone involved.

6.2.2 Discos as Discourse Communities

In the end, putting the discourse into the writing center requires dialogue about discourse communities both within and outside the physical space where tutorial sessions occur, as well as

within and outside traditional tutorial relationships. In other words, consultants should discuss the connection between writing and content within different disciplinary discourse communities with multiple stakeholders: other writing consultants, student writers, and content teachers. If more consultants made connections the same way Lisa did when she sat in Professor Dorf's class and showed an interest in learning about a different discourse community, we would have more opportunity for dialogue with content teachers as well as more interdiscursive discussions with discipline-specific student writers. A campus abuzz with dialogue and interdiscursivity would be reminiscent of a disco, which has a history "full of lessons about the relationship between musical form, music industry strategies, and ideas of musical authorship" (Straw 204). The similarities to what occurs in a writing center are tremendous, as many of the conversations taking place there deal with lessons about the relationship between written form, writing strategies, and ideas of authorship.

Even more, the writing center's history has parallels to the history of the disco, for as music historian Peter Shapiro writes, "Disco's very birth was the result of the big bang between contradictory impulses: exclusion and inclusion" (30). Writing centers were founded on a contradictory impulse of exclusion and inclusion, and Carino points out this disco-like similarity when he notes in "Early Writing Centers: Toward a History" that though a separate writing lab showed "respect for individual student abilities," it also "fostered the view of the lab as the venue of the inferior student" (110). Just as discos had the ability "to bring together people of varying colors, races, ideologies, sexual preferences and social financial levels, in an ecumenical

dialog” (153; Radcliffe 40), writing centers are grounded in principles of collaborative learning (Bruffee) and “reflective dialogue” (McAndrew and Reigstad 4). As a site of collaboration and talking, a writing center -- like a disco -- fundamentally “opposes totalitarianism and alienation and encourages communitarianism and connectedness” (McAndrew and Reigstad 5).

6.2.3 Breaking Down the Writing Center as a Discourse Zone

In this section, I break down the discourse zone, point for point, and what each element represents in the re-imagined writing center. An important aspect of this newly conceived space is that it is marketed on campus with enthusiasm and knowledge about different disciplinary discourse communities. A foundational principle of the writing center as a disco is that it makes a concerted effort to understand the discourse conventions of the stakeholders who will frequent it, and getting outside of the physical space to make connections is imperative. That said, listed below are the major elements that belong in the physical space and how they serve to strengthen the connections made between the re-envisioned writing center and stakeholders across campus.

1. DJ’s: These are the renamed writing consultants in the reconfigured writing center.

The name is a play on the term “disc jockey” but actually derives from “discourse jockey.” The DJ must be able to explain his or her title and role in the session, which means that DJ’s should have a clear understanding of diverse disciplinary discourse communities and a firm disbelief in the myth of transience.

2. DJ booths: These are the individual areas where DJ's and student writers sit together to discuss and reflect on written discourse conventions, among other things. These areas are safe spaces for student writers to mix and re-mix their work with the guidance of an expert who can provide rhetorically-conscious feedback.
3. Turntables: These objects will be placed in each DJ booth to remind the DJ's and student writers that both are in positions of equal authority during a session. DJ's should be able to explain the concept of collaboration and knowledge sharing.
4. Disco Balls: These reflective mirrored balls will be placed at each DJ booth to remind participants at the turntable that writing is a reflective practice and that discussing one's work can shed light on the writer, reader, document, and larger social context.
5. R.A.P. sheets: These post-session write-up documents are what writing center administrators sometimes refer to as "Tutor Log Sheets" (McAndrew & Reigstad 133), or a "Tutoring Journal" (Ryan & Zimmerelli 4). The acronym stands for *Reflect About Practice*.

The next section discusses the overarching philosophy of the disco and what actually occurs in this space so that the connections are maintained once stakeholders leave.

6.3 Scaffolding in "Contact Zones": Pratt-ian "Zones of Proximal Development"

The disco would operate as a contact zone where DJ's are scaffolding in their booths. "Scaffolding" is a term often used in educational psychology, defined as "the informational or

coordinative supportive behaviors that one or more persons engage in for the benefit of another . . . to reduce the demands of a particular problem for the sake of the eventual solution to the whole problem” (Bickhard 43). Scaffolding is associated with Lev Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development,” which is the range of an individual’s potential that is realized by interacting with “more capable others” (Kamberelis and Bovino 144). Isabelle Thompson writes extensively about how consultants scaffold student writers’ learning in “Scaffolding in the Writing Center,” which both Harriet and Lisa inform me they had to read while working in the writing center. In this article, Thompson explains the four scaffolding stages of the zone of proximal development, which are: 1) “intersubjective” collaboration, where the consultant and student writer share knowledge and responsibility for successfully completing the task; 2) “ongoing diagnosis,” in which the consultant has “a thorough understanding of how to accomplish the task” and can “assess what the student can do”; 3) “dialogic and interactive” engagement; and 4) “fading,” where the student internalizes the task and the consultant no longer has to externally represent it (421).

The findings from the two case studies also show that both Harriet and Lisa are concerned with providing scaffolds for student writers who visit the writing center. That is, they strive to foster a Vygotskian zone of proximal development in which they seek to realize the range of the business students’ potential as writers. The issue, however, is whether the students’ potential can be realized as members of the business discourse community if they are interacting with generalist writing consultants. According to Thompson, for a consultant to successfully

scaffold students' learning, she "needs knowledge of the task and knowledge of the student so that feedback will be 'appropriate for this tutee in this task at this point in task mastery'" (420; citing Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976, 97). While the sessions were collaborative and interactive, and both Harriet and Lisa showed some improvement in understanding the discipline-specific writing task during the second session, after learning about the disciplinary discourse community in separate ways, they seemed most different in their knowledge of the students. That is, Lisa seemed more conscious of Simon's role as a member of a distinct discourse community.

If a writing center consultant is to successfully scaffold a student writers' learning, then the consultant must be the "more capable other." Consultants who assist students on discipline-specific writing tasks should, therefore, offer "informational or coordinative" support about the disciplinary discourse conventions. Consultants who likely will be working with students from different disciplines also will be providing feedback on different genres (Kiedaisch and Dinitz). We therefore should focus on improving interdiscursive skills generally so that these tutors are more confident when working with students from disciplines outside of their discursive comfort zones. In other words, consultants should have more contact with other "contact zones" -- those "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt 33), as well as ways of "identifying with the ideas, interests, histories, and attitudes of others" (40).

Just as Harriet believed she needed to provide a scaffold for the student writers she worked with so they could understand "good writing" concepts, tutors also need a scaffold in order to provide feedback on writing from other disciplines. That is, generalist tutors need a

support system when they are presented with a text from an unfamiliar discourse community. If writing centers are to be more than grammar garages or fix-it shops for surface-level features; if they are to be spaces where higher-order critical thinking and transferable knowledge is promoted; if they are to be staffed by generalist consultants; and if they are to hold themselves out as valuable resources to the entire campus, then they must first confront the “myth of transience.” To do this requires tutors to understand that more than one definition of “good writing” exists, and that what counts as successful writing depends on multiple factors, such as the disciplinary discourse community, the particular genre, and the rhetorical situation. It also requires consultants to interact with faculty from across the disciplines in order to understand the role that writing and writing instruction play in other disciplinary discourse communities. These kinds of interactions can be enlightening for writing center consultants, as they were in this study, for they can highlight the differences in attitudes about writing as well as how and why it should be discussed. Even more, though, these interactions will expand the contact zone of the writing center outside of its static physical location, as consultants will make connections in other spaces on campus.

Understanding how writing is or is not taught within other disciplinary discourse communities can give tutors a better sense of what student writers know about writing, as well as how and why they approach a writing task in a certain way. Brammer, Amare, and Campbell discuss this concept in their article “Culture Shock: Teaching Writing within Interdisciplinary Contact Zones.” After conducting interviews with faculty members from various disciplinary

discourse communities on campus, these researchers determined that different faculty often had different beliefs and practices about writing. Even more, they found that “when writing faculty limit cross-disciplinary discussion to characteristics of good writing only, discipline stereotypes are reinforced, and communication may be restricted” (1). To overcome this situation, Brammer, Amare, and Campbell advocate the following three things: 1) awareness of disciplinary differences, 2) knowledge of how other disciplines value, define, and practice writing, and 3) new critical thinking and communication skills based on awareness and knowledge (1).

Writing centers as much as writing faculty can also limit cross-disciplinary dialogue about the characteristics of “good writing” and reinforce disciplinary stereotypes. The primary purpose of a Disco Zone will be to heed Brammer, Amare, and Campbell’s advice and increase awareness and knowledge about disciplinary discourse differences, and then develop new critical thinking and communication skills based on that awareness and knowledge. Enhanced awareness of what happens in discipline-specific classrooms can improve the interdiscursivity in the tutorial session, as the tutor will have had an opportunity to recognize common terms and concepts important to members of the discourse community. Being sensitive to certain terms and concepts is crucial in providing meaningful feedback appropriate for a specific tutee on a specific task at a specific point in task mastery.

Ultimately, we can begin with the generalist’s prior knowledge -- her comfort discussing issues of form, for example -- and encourage her to think about this prior knowledge in terms of genre. That is, we should encourage consultants who lack discipline-specific content knowledge

to continue discussing form (to maintain their sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence during tutorial sessions), while at the same time acknowledging its inseparability from content. We should take advantage of their experience with formal concepts in academic writing and raise their “form-content consciousness” when dealing with unfamiliar genres. Much of this consciousness-raising involves consultants learning to make connections about why forms are used in different disciplinary discourse communities, rather than knowing decontextualized subject matter. Thus, more emphasis should be placed on reviewing model documents in conjunction with situated learning about the discourse community. The goal should be to educate writing center consultants to rethink genre from a sociocognitive perspective (see Berkenkotter and Huckin, “Rethinking Genre”), thereby enhancing their genre knowledge. By enhancing their genre knowledge, consultants will understand the significance of connecting discussions of form with discussions of content, so they will not consider model documents solely as sources for brainstorming about content. Rather, they will also use model documents as ways to engage student writers about purpose, audience, and content, and to spark discussions about similarities and differences between discourse communities.

The goal should not be to simply place the tutors in the classrooms and hope they acquire the appropriate language and conventions of the discourse community, but also provide them with a heuristic that they can use to be more sensitized to what is relevant. As I look back over Lisa’s field notes, I notice that she was sensitive to matters of content rather than form in the classroom. It was only until the third class that she finally noted that Professor Dorf was

discussing “reports” as opposed to academic papers. If Lisa had a heuristic to use as a scaffold, she might have been more sensitized to determining the purpose (that is, the *why*) of the written work the students were assigned, as opposed to the content (the *what*).

6.4 Future Research Agenda: Promoting the Disco Zone

In this final section I reiterate the main points in support of implementing the name change from Writing Center to Disco Zone, so that future research can explore whether such a re-imaging might positively affect multiple stakeholders.

Both Lisa and Harriet mention the term “scaffolding” during their interviews, and they are conscious of the goal of providing the business students with the sort of information that will help them beyond the immediate tutorial session (as Lisa remarks: “it’s a ‘teach a man to fish so that he can eat for life’ mentality”). As consultants attempt to provide feedback on writing from different disciplinary discourse communities, their knowledge of how written conventions translate across discourses is critical to whether they can scaffold effectively. Expert knowledge of writing principles concerning punctuation, grammar, and style that are typically examined in the academic discourse community will not sustain writers from different disciplines when a session concludes. These writers require feedback connecting explanations of form and content within the context of their own discourse communities’ written conventions. For this reason, I suggest that we consider consultants as “discourse specialists,” since this term better describes

their role, as they work with writers composing texts for English and non-English disciplinary discourse communities alike.

That is to say, using the description “discourse specialist” avoids the “myth of transience” by rejecting the following two concepts: 1) the idea that a generalist consultant should be able to provide quality feedback on any and all discipline-specific writing task, and 2) the idea that a single, universal “good” way of writing, applicable across all discourse communities, exists. The distinguishing characteristics of *discourse specialists* are that they have the following expertise: 1) the ability to make interdiscursive connections between discourse communities; 2) the ability to recognize the specific strengths and weaknesses of writing tasks in the contexts of different discourse communities; and 3) the ability to explain those differences accurately and confidently while promoting the exchange of shared knowledge with student writers from diverse disciplines. This description purposefully does not mention anything about the ability to discuss “good writing,” because this ability is specific to an individual who has expertise in “good” writing for a specific discourse community, and who knows why it is considered “good” for that discourse community. Discourse specialists will not hold themselves out as experts on “good writing” generally, though quite often, the consultants who work in writing centers have the ability to discuss “good writing” according to academic discourse community standards. Yet, if we are not ready or willing to rename consultants more specifically (and appropriately) as “academic writing tutors,” I suggest that we consider renaming them as *discourse specialists* and then train them as such. When most stakeholders

believe they know what writing centers already do, as well as what “good writing” means, dialogue can be stifled and the disco remains underground.

The *discourse specialist* description ties in well with the “disco zone” metaphor, so that a discourse specialist who works in disco zone would be referred to as a “discourse jockey”; in other words: a DJ. The similarities between writing center consultants and DJ’s are worth discussing at length, and I refer extensively to the historical work done by music historians Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton to show this connection. In their “Introduction” to *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, Brewster and Broughton have this to say about how “star DJ’s” do their jobs:

Today’s star DJ uses records as building blocks, stringing them together in an improvised narrative to create a “set”. . . By dramatically emphasizing the connections between songs, by juxtaposing them or by seamlessly overlaying them, the modern club DJ is not so much presenting discrete records as combining them to make something new. (8)

From the same “Introduction,” Brewster and Broughton discuss the difficulties of a DJ’s job:

Even at the purely technical level a DJ’s job is reasonably demanding. . . there is a lot about the noble craft that must be learnt and can be taught. In bringing together a series of records to create a single, flowing, meaningful (or at least effective) performance, you do need a certain level of skill. You have to know the structure of each of the songs you’re going to play, you must have a vaguely musical ear to hear whether two tunes are in complementary keys, and in order to seamlessly merge two separate tracks, you must have a quite precise sense of rhythm. (8)

Brewster and Broughton then elaborate on the invaluable skills that successful DJs already possess:

Most good DJs will have a highly reliable musical memory and a firm understanding of song construction. And you obviously need to know the

equipment involved: your turntables, your mixer, your amplifier and any other sound processing devices you might be using. A quick glance into the DJ booth at any club should convince you that this can be pretty complex. (9)

They also explain what it takes to become a truly good DJ, if one is willing to work at it:

To become a good DJ you have to develop the *hunger*. . . Certainly, before you can call yourself a DJ you need to show you can generate a cohesive musical atmosphere. In most cases this means making people dance. The essence of the DJ's craft is selecting which records to play and in what order. Doing this better or worse than others is the profession's basic yardstick. But while it might sound simple enough, successfully programming an evening of records (or even just an hour) is vastly harder than you might think. Try it. Even with a box full of great tunes, choosing songs to keep people dancing -- holding their attention without throwing them off and without making them bored -- requires a great deal of skill. For some it comes instinctively, for others it's a matter of experience, an ability gained from years of watching people dance. To really pull it off you need to understand records in terms of their precise effects on an audience. (9-10)

Producer Norman Cook, known in mainstream pop culture as the famous DJ "Fatboy Slim," has this to say about the difference between good and bad DJing: "A good DJ is always looking at the crowd, seeing what they like, seeing whether it's working; communicating with them. . . And a bad DJ is always looking down at the decks and just doing whatever they practiced in their bedroom, regardless of whether the crowd are [sic] enjoying it or not" (quoted in Brewster and Broughton 11).

Even more, Brewster and Broughton lament the DJ's misunderstood position in the literature, claiming that despite the DJ's "pivotal role, to this day the established forums of . . . criticism remain almost completely ignorant of who the DJ is, what he does and why

he has become so important” (17). But when the DJ has been recognized in the literature, it is the DJ’s “independence and the fact that he can wield considerable influence over a large audience have regularly brought him into conflict with establishment forces, and the DJ’s history has a rich subtext of power struggles” (16). Writing centers also share a similar history of power struggles, as they must contend with accusations of questionable or even unethical conduct from those who take issue with directive tutoring (Shamoon and Burns; Trimbur), the definition of plagiarism (Clark and Healy), and the ability to “make meaning” (Cooper).

Any good DJ knows that genres do not constrain; rather, they are the impetus for creative genius. They know how to use the genres, what can make people move, who moves to what, how people will respond; they use the boundaries, pushing them, creating new music, but always with the undercurrent of a familiar beat so that the audience can move along. When the beat changes, it is purposeful -- the audience knows it. Ultimately, discos succeeded because of “fundamental characteristics of the music, in the ways in which it was produced, and in the role played by distinctive performers within it” (Straw 205). Successful discos were the ones where disc jockies called out titles of songs and names of performers before playing the record (or they would at least place the record’s cover on the DJ booth’s window). By doing so, the disc jockies attempted to overcome “the dancers’ relative uninterest in distinguishing musical selections,” as well as “the disc jockies’ concealment of professional knowledge” (205). Professor Will Straw, author of the *Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop*, claims that discos ultimately collapsed because they could not deal with the unending problem of “granting distinctiveness to

performances and performers within an unbroken sequence of musical tracks” where “the identity of recordings and their performers often went unmentioned” (205). Writing centers might go the way of the disco for similar reasons if they do not consider how to deal with student writers’ relative uninterest (or inability) to distinguish between the written conventions of different disciplinary discourse communities, as well as their consultants’ “concealment of professional knowledge.” In other words, consultants who can “grant distinctiveness” to the written conventions of different discourse communities have a professional knowledge (what I would call “genre knowledge”) that they should share.

In this study, Harriet and Lisa showed the beginnings of becoming successful DJs, and Lisa especially was able to identify certain texts and “performers” during her second session with Simon. Possibly with more practice, they both would be able to more accurately and confidently “grant distinctiveness” to the different discourse communities in which they moved.

6.4.1 Future Research

Based on the results of these case studies, several directions for future research seem warranted. First, longitudinal research using both exploratory and experimental case-study designs is needed to more fully understand the changing levels of consultants’ developing knowledge of genres. Future research should consider examining tutor training that involves an introduction to the conventions of different discourse communities via a combination of classroom immersion and model document review. Subject matter teachers also can benefit from

having discourse specialists in their classrooms who can engage with them about the writing assignments and the students' reactions to the assignments. Essentially, discourse specialists should demonstrate an ability to explain why certain forms are valuable and reliable. Such explanations then would engage student writers in a dialogue about how form and content work together strategically to create meaning for an intended audience. In this way, a focus on genre knowledge has the potential to do more than enhance the quality of feedback that tutors provide on discipline-specific writing tasks. It also creates opportunities for shared knowledge, which in turn reduces tutors' authority and empowers student writers -- two fundamental goals of writing centers.

Though not generalizable, case studies offer invaluable insight into a specific situation and allow us to glean information about individual experiences that would otherwise go undetected. Particularly with the two major areas of focus in this study: writing centers and writing in the disciplines, case studies make sense. Writing centers are based on an attempt to understand writers and their writing in context, and to provide feedback that accounts for multiple variables that would otherwise go undetected. Writing in the disciplines is based on the concept that a generalizable, universally accepted standard of "good writing" does not exist. In other words, different disciplines have their own written discourse conventions that require a level of sensitization in order to detect them, understand them, and strategically manipulate them for specific situations.

Specifically, future research should follow up on the findings presented here and create studies focusing on the following questions: 1) Does the quality of feedback provided by generalist tutors on discipline-specific writing tasks improve after they review model documents *and* learn about the discourse community via discipline-specific content courses?; 2) Does the likelihood change for student writers incorporating the feedback that generalist tutors provide depending on whether the tutor uses hedges, self-mentions, and other authority-reducing discourse features?; 3) Do generalist tutors feel more confident providing feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks after learning about the discourse community via discipline-specific content courses?

Ultimately, I hope that writing centers consider transitioning to “Disco Zones,” complete with DJ’s, turntables, and disco booths. A new image, with new terminology and new methods of interaction, could better raise writing consultants’ awareness, knowledge, and interdiscursive skills when assisting student writers from diverse disciplinary discourse communities. Just as importantly, “disco zone” research is a way to raise awareness among the many stakeholders who do not understand who writing consultants are, what they do, or why they are so important. While this study offers insight into consultants’, students’, and teachers’ experiences with discipline-specific feedback in a campus-wide writing center, it also provides a new way to discuss what it means to work in a writing center. Thus, in the context of writing centers and genre and discourse community theories, we should continue to explore what David Mancuso, disco’s founding father, says about what it means to DJ: “Basically, you have one foot on the

dancefloor and one in the booth” (Brewston and Broughton 12). Writing centers that embrace this philosophy will advocate a socio-epistemic view of writing instruction and feedback that could strengthen their interdisciplinary relationships across campus.

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APPENDIX A

GENERALIST PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was administered as a Pre-screening survey during the Writing Center Staff Meeting on September 9, 2009. The questions were designed so I could narrow down the pool of possible candidates to two participants who met generalist genre knowledge standards as defined by the literature. If staff members answered “no” to all of these questions then they were eligible to volunteer as a generalist for the study.

1. Have you ever held a white-collar job?
2. Have you ever studied, formally or informally, business management or consulting?
3. Have you ever taken any classes on business subjects?
4. Have you ever taught any classes dealing with business topics, including business or professional writing?
5. Do any of your close family members or friends work for a business organization?
6. Do you regularly discuss or seek out information about the business world?
7. Do you know what an “Environmental Analysis Report” is?
8. Do you know what a “Status Update Report” is?
9. Have you ever composed a business document?
10. Do you consider yourself part of the business community?
11. Do you consider yourself a specialist in business or professional writing?

APPENDIX B

GENRE KNOWLEDGE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever worked in a Writing Center?
2. What are your expectations of working in the Writing Center?
3. Did you work in between your time in undergraduate and graduate school?
4. What kind of job responsibilities did you have in previous jobs?
5. Do you read business books or news?
6. Have you ever taken a seminar on a topic related to business management?
7. What kind of classes did you take as an undergrad?
8. What program are you currently in as a graduate student?
9. What community/communities do you consider yourself a part of, personally and/or professionally?
10. Do you consider yourself a specialist in any kind of writing? If so, what kind?

APPENDIX C

TUTOR REPORT LOG SHEET

Tutor Name:

Student Writer Name:

Date:

Introduction:

- 1) How did the consultation begin?
- 2) Did you immediately discuss the assignment? Why or why not?

Setting the Agenda:

- 1) Who set the agenda?
- 2) What was put on the agenda?

Discussion:

- 1) What was the first thing you discussed?
- 2) Why was this the first thing you discussed?
- 3) What other issues did you discuss during the session?

Resolution:

- 1) How did the session end?
- 2) Did you give the student any parting advice?

Reflection²:

² Questions adapted from Jim Bell's "Tutor Training and Reflection on Practice." *The Writing Center Journal* 21.2 (2001): 79-98.

1) Describe how you feel about the different discussion (whether they were collaborative, frustrating, helpful, slow, fun, etc.). If different discussions had different “vibes,” please share your thoughts!

2) What was the major strength of the session? Why?

3) What was the major weakness of the session? What could you do to improve it?

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called Tutor Genre Knowledge and Feedback Quality of Discipline-Specific Writing Tasks. The study is being done by Erin Kane who is a doctoral student, along with Kim Sydow Campbell, a professor at the University supervising Erin in this study.

What is this study about?

This study is being done to find out how writing center tutors' knowledge of a discipline's social practices affect the quality of feedback they offer on discipline-specific writing tasks. Specifically, this study will examine the connection between different ways tutors learn about a discipline's written conventions and the feedback they then provide to students.

Why is this study important--What good will the results do?

Answers to these questions will help writing center directors to better train their tutors to provide students from across the disciplines with more quality feedback on discipline-specific writing tasks. Providing more quality feedback on written work completed for readers outside of the English Department will make writing centers more valuable as a place on campus that offers effective services for students from many different disciplines seeking assistance with their written documents.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?

You have been asked to be in this study because you are a Writing Center tutor or a student in the College of Commerce and Business Administration currently enrolled in Professor David Ford's fall 2009 "Small Business Consulting" MGT 486 course.

How many people besides me will be in this study?

About eight other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be tape-recorded during your Writing Center tutorial sessions, and then asked questions by a researcher regarding your sessions. If you decide to participate in this study, you will have a minimum of two tutorial sessions to attend.

How much time will I spend being in this study?

This study lasts as long as your tutorial sessions last, as well as about 10-15 minutes after the tutorial session ends.

Will I be paid for being in this study?

You will not be paid for being in this study.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

There will be no cost to you except for your time in completing the surveys and answering questions after your tutorial sessions.

Can the researcher take me out of this study?

The researcher may take you out of this study if she feels that you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen to me if I am in this study?

This study encourages you to receive feedback on your business writing documents from knowledgeable Writing Center tutors who will help you improve your writing. The feedback that the tutors provide ideally will increase your chances of success in MGT 486 and in the workplace.

What are the benefits to scientists or society?

This study will help Writing Center administrators realize the benefits of training tutors using specific training methods to better serve students seeking assistance with discipline-specific written work, which will ultimately help build a more successful Writing Center. The study will also help tutors to better recognize and improve their knowledge of another discipline's social practices to have more effective tutorial sessions. Business people in general may benefit from hiring employees who are more skilled in business writing.

What are the risks (dangers or harm) to me if I am in this study?

There are no predicted risks to you from being in this study.

How will my confidentiality (privacy) be protected? What will happen to the information the study keeps on me?

Your identity will be known only to the Writing Center tutors and the researchers. Audiotapes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. An ID number will be used to identify you on all documents, including the interview transcripts and surveys that you complete.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?

The alternative is not to participate.

What are my rights as a participant?

Taking part in this study is voluntary—it is your free choice. You may choose not to take part at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions about the study later on, please call the investigator Erin Kane at 478-747-0075. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at (205)348-5152.

I have read this consent form. The study has been explained to me. I understand what I will be asked to do. I freely agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Research Participant Date

Check here if you would like to receive a copy of the study results and provide an email address to which results can be sent.

email: _____

Investigator Date

APPENDIX E

GENERALIST POST-TUTORIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Did your expectations of the kinds of students you would be assisting stay the same or change since you first began working in the Writing Center (e.g. their writing abilities; their subject matter knowledge; the kinds of assignments)?
- 2) How do you feel about your session in which you gave feedback on the “Environmental Analysis”? Do you think you were able to provide effective feedback?
- 3) How did you provide feedback to the student writer on the “Environmental Analysis”? Outside sources? Personal experience? Training techniques you were learning along with the other Writing Center tutors?
- 4) Did your method of providing feedback on the “Status Update” Report stay the same? Why or why not?
- 5) Is your tutoring philosophy the same?
- 6) What feedback strategies seem to be the most effective in your sessions and why?
- 7) Are you more confident giving feedback on business writing now?
- 8) Do you consider yourself part of the business community now?
- 9) Do you consider yourself a specialist in any kind of writing?

APPENDIX F

STUDENT WRITER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Coming into your tutorial session today, what were your expectations of the kind of help you would be receiving (e.g. your tutor's subject matter knowledge; writing abilities; familiarity with the assignment)?
- 2) What was the most positive outcome of your session today?
- 3) What was the least helpful aspect of your session today?
- 4) What kind of feedback did you receive on the ["Environmental Analysis"] (both specific and general)?
- 5) How would you describe your tutor's "feedback style"? For example, did your tutor ask a lot of questions? Make authoritative statements? Admit uncertainty?
- 6) Do you consider yourself part of the business community now? Why or why not?
- 7) What community/communities do you consider yourself a part of, personally and/or professionally? Why?
- 8) Would you consider yourself part of the Small Business Consulting community?
- 9) Do you consider yourself a specialist in business writing now?
- 10) Do you consider yourself a specialist in another kind of writing?
- 11) Do you think your tutor is a member of the business community and/or another group?
- 12) Do you think your tutor is a specialist in business writing? Why or why not?

APPENDIX G

PAUL ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS DRAFT

AFrame Shelving

Internal Environmental Analysis

1. **Company Culture: relaxed, friendly, and professional. Very open easy to work with. Customer service and commutation are key.**
2. **Company Image: collared casual, professional but not intimidating.**
3. **Organizational Structure: everyone has individual responsibilities but all opinions are welcome and respected.**
4. **Key Staff: 10 employees; responsibilities vary between manufacturing, sales, and production**
5. **Access to natural resources: American resources, manufactured in America. Hinged shutters from Texas supplier. Board manufactured in Daytona Beach, Fl.**
6. **Position on the experience curve (experience with the product; sales, marketing, manufacturing, ect.): manufactured, marketed, and financed entire project by himself. Just now organizing all aspects of aframe to begin streamlining of manufacturing and marketing.**
7. **Operational Efficiency: need to centralize for shipping reasons. Different sources needed to collect parts to manufacture final product. Not very efficient; needs to be organized and streamlined.**
8. **Operational Capacity: small time now. Once manufacturing is under one roof and sales/marketing is staffed the operational capacity will be much broader.**

9. **Brand Awareness: new product. Need to overcome public's hesitation with "change" in shelving industry.**
10. **Market Share (or predicted market share of shelving industry): once established a frame will take a large percentage of the market share. 7%-15%**
11. **Financial Resources: 0 loans, self financed,**
12. **Patents and Trade Secrets: patented, trademarked.**

INFORMATION HIGHLIGHT KEY

- pros

- cons

External Opportunity and Threats

Opportunities:

Consumers

The lower the price of a product the more likely it is to be successful, however, our product "A Frame Shelving" is a luxury item that needs to target the more high-end sector of society. One of A frames unique qualities is its diversity. A frames can be used as shelves or they can double into headboards for beds and TV entertainment centers. When perceived in this light A frame shelving can be seen as different things or many different people. Thusly, A frames can be targeted to a large scale of the population; primary leading towards midlevel households. Another possible customer is the college student, we will use this semester as A frame consulting to target the best platforms to market our product and the right people to talk to in order get our product to the most consumers.

Competitors

A frame shelving's biggest competitors we believe will be the furniture stores that carry high-end shelves. In Tuscaloosa those would be Spiller Furniture, Your Way Furniture, Orange Crate,

Chestnut Furniture; their target customers mainly include those in the household. Competitors abroad include Havertys, Pier 1, Target, Wal-mart these stores target the household, but also make college students a priority. Therefore, these retailers represent perhaps our greatest competition. They can possibly beat our prices, however I don't believe their shelving can offer the diversity and durability that A Frame can.

Market Trends

It has been a market trend since our economy has been down to make things with the lowest price possible. This strategy may work for other products, but our item cannot be marketed that way. A frames are unique for their quality and durability so the customer will expect to pay a little more for a quality piece of furniture. Another market trend in college towns has been to market your product at public events. Being in a college town like Tuscaloosa we have ample opportunities to get A frames out into the public eye.

Threats:

The biggest single threat or concern that we have is to have a copycat item surface itself into the marketplace. Mr. Clark, however has taken the appropriate measure to ensure that something like this can't happen. His use of a trademark will guarantee that A frame shelving can't be copied, and if someone does they will be prosecuted in court.

Pest Analysis

Socio-cultural

There are several socio-cultural factors affecting the target market. According to the Census Bureau, the total population of the Southeastern region (defined as Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) was around 49,211,197 in 2000, and the country is currently experiencing a growth rate of around 0.883%. Census data for 2000 shows that within the market, the median age is 35, and the median household income is \$37,045. In the region, the population of the target age group (15-34) was around 16,564,025, and 243,275 people were enrolled in either college or graduate school. Nationwide in 2008, 31% of students attending a four year institution participated in the labor force. College students have many varied sources of income including, their parents, full or part time jobs, and student loans. Most students pay for tuition through loans or their parents. Expenses are generally managed in similar ways.

Technological

The most significant technological factors affecting the product are the internet and advancing manufacturing techniques. The internet is very important for marketing, product

awareness, and customer contact. Orders may currently be taken by phone or email, but when the business begins to grow, technology and the internet will play a major role. It will be very important to update the current website and take advantage of emerging trends.

Changing manufacturing techniques will also have a major effect on the business. New machinery, techniques, or materials could lower costs or change production practices. It will be necessary to stay abreast of changes in the manufacturing industry to be able to take advantage of emerging technologies.

APPENDIX H

SIMON ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS DRAFT

Porter's Five Forces Analysis of the Event Production Industry in Tuscaloosa

Porter's Five Forces is a tool used in marketing to isolate the factors that come together to make up the "reality" of an industry. It is not specific to any one company, but more of a broad picture of the way the industry works. "Forces" exert themselves on an industry regardless of who the particular player is. Players are simply unique in the way they react and deal with these forces. The Five Forces are the threat of new entrants, rivalry, availability of substitutes, the bargaining power of buyers and the bargaining power of suppliers. The bargaining power of suppliers, for instance, may depend on the availability of a certain commodity. If this commodity is necessary to an industry, every actor must carefully consider and maintain their relationships with suppliers.

Once this picture has been painted, a company can know where it can go when it understands the present situation before moving forward.

Event Production seems as though it is not one industry, but the coalescence of many industries.

Threat of New Entrants

There are few barriers to entry into this industry. Event production does not have a regulating or licensing body like the practice of medicine or law. Start-up costs are low. This industry thrives on ideas and on personal contact, not on costly raw materials. Therefore, the threat of new entrants is high.

Rivalry

Rivalry in this industry is not cause for much concern. Trius Live hopes to offer unique entertainment choices and broaden the array of options available to those seeking entertainment and culture. If Trius Live can carve out its niche, rivalry will not be much of a concern, at least early on.

Trius, however, has expressed some interest in competing with companies like Red Mountain Entertainment, which operates the Verizon Wireless Ampitheater and is producing the recent Taking Back Sunday Concert in Tuscaloosa. Red Mountain is also developing the ampitheater project in Tuscaloosa. If Trius wants to operate on this level, it will bring more

rivalry into play. At that point, the communal aspect of smaller, more culture-driven events will be replaced by a high level of competition.

For now, however, Trius Live is part of a community of operators, each offering viable and necessary choices. Operators should see each other as such, rather than seeing the others as rivals

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

Power of suppliers is quite high. Providers of sound & lighting equipment have unique products and expertise, each of which are absolutely necessary to Trius Live's operations.

APPENDIX I

RON STATUS UPDATE REPORT

TO: Professor [Dorf]
FROM: BCG (Group 4)
SUBJECT: Status Update
DATE: October 16, 2009

Background

Bama Consulting Group consists of five members: [Ron, Member One], [Member Two], [Member Three], [Member Four], and [Member Five]

BCG's consulting project is for client Parker Mattingly of My College Movers, a junk removal service. My College Movers uses college students (predominantly male) to handle the removal and disposal of "junk" from homes, office buildings, and other forms of property.

The project began with an initial meeting with the client where terms of project scope, expectations, and deliverables were discussed and agreed upon. From that meeting, a Letter of Engagement and Confidentiality Agreement were drafted, finalized, and turned in to Professor [Dorf] and the client.

The scope of the project, detailed in the Letter of Engagement, included developing a marketing plan for the junk removal service with focus on the strengths/weaknesses of different marketing avenues and developing a logo for the business. The outline of the marketing plan to be delivered to the client is included in the appendix as Figure 1.

Work Performed

Work on the marketing plan was broken down into phases, beginning with the identification of potential customer segments. Once customers were segmented, the segments were divided among the team members to be researched regarding the potential need for the service and viability of the target market.

From the analysis, three target markets were identified for further focus:

1. Foreclosed Homes
2. Real Estate and Property Managers
3. Storage Units

Foreclosed homes are owned by banks, but usually managed by real estate agents that specialize in the handling of foreclosed homes. This creates a unique challenge in capturing this niche as customers. My College Mover should target the managers of the homes as customers, rather than the banks. Figure 2 in the appendix lists the real estate agents in the greater Tuscaloosa area that handle the majority of foreclosed homes, along with their telephone numbers.

Figure 3 in the appendix shows the actual listings of the 112 foreclosed homes in the greater Tuscaloosa area as of the first week of October, 2009, as well as the foreclosed homes broken down by zip code. From these listings, the owner of these homes can be found and contacted regarding their need for a junk removal service.

The second stakeholder in the management of foreclosed homes are the neighbors whose home value will diminish with the increase in foreclosed homes in their immediate area. The most efficient method of contacting entire neighborhoods is not by going door-to-door, but rather by contacting neighborhood organizations and informing them of the service that is available. Figure 4 shows the listing of largest neighborhood organizations in the Tuscaloosa area, as well as the names of all of Tuscaloosa's neighborhoods, subdivisions, and settlements.

Storage units are another potential niche market for a junk removal service as they generally carry a bare-bones staff and often have the need for removing property from units that are abandoned or unpaid. After a discussion with a storage unit owner, it was determined that there is a need for a junk removal service among them.

Figure 4 shows the listings of all of the storage units in the city of Tuscaloosa along with telephone numbers. There are 24 mini-storages in the city of Tuscaloosa alone. These range from small (less than 50 units) to large (+400 units) facilities. A market plan for College Movers would be to meet with the owners of these facilities and explain the service he offers to them in case they are in need of this type of service now or in the future. I have compiled a list of these facilities and their telephone numbers as a deliverable to the client.

The next phase of the marketing plan coincided with the assignment due in class; an environmental scan. The environmental scan consisted of a SWOT Analysis, or an identification of the strengths and weaknesses internal to a company or organization and an identification of the external opportunities and threats that are in the industry/ environment, and a PEST Analysis. The PEST acronym stands for the political, economical, societal, and technological factors that affect not only the company, but the industry in which they compete as well.

The environmental scan was turned in previously in class and is not included in the appendices.

Work to be Performed

Further research and analysis into the second target market, Real Estate and Property managers remains to be finished. The college community creates a very cyclical and seasonal environment in which property managers are responsible for the preparing homes and apartments for rent to new tenants in the months of December, July, and August primarily. This puts a strain on the normal maintenance workers and creates an opportunity for the need of contracted or subcontracted junk removal service.

Completion of the marketing plan with a recommendation for a course of action is still to be performed, including further research and analysis into target markets and how to reach them. A complete company and competitor analysis remains unfinished in the final marketing plan. Alternative marketing strategies and projected revenue and expense figures also need to be worked on and will require communication with the client.

Figure 1

Marketing Plan Outline

- I. Executive Summary
 - a. A high level summary of the marketing plan and business
- II. The Challenge
 - a. Brief description of the product or service to be marketed and the associated goals (personal, financial, tactical, strategic, etc)

III. Situation Analysis (Environmental Analysis)

- a. Company Analysis
 - i. Goals, focus, culture, strengths, weaknesses
- b. Customer Analysis
 - i. Number, type, description, value drivers, decision process, concentration of customer base
- c. Competitor Analysis
 - i. Market position, Strengths, Weaknesses, Market share
- d. Suppliers
 - i. Distributors, joint ventures, etc.
- e. PEST Analysis
 - i. Political/Legal, Economic, Social/Cultural, Technological
- f. SWOT Analysis

IV. Market Segmentation

- a. Present a description of the market segmentation as follows:
 - i. Segment 1– Description, percent of sales, what they want, how they use the product/service, support requirements, how to reach them, price sensitivity
 - ii. Segment 2– (Same as above for next customer segment)

V. Alternative Marketing Strategies

- a. List and discuss alternatives that were considered before arriving at the recommended strategy. Alternatives might include discontinuing a positioning, rebranding, positioning, as a premium or value product/service.

VI. Selected marketing strategy

- a. Why the strategy was chosen, then the marketing mix decisions of how to reach the target market (4 P's)
- b. Product/Service
 - i. Brand name, quality, scope of service, warranty, packaging
- c. Price
 - i. Pricing strategy, expected volume, and decisions for price variables
 - ii. List price, discounts, bundling, payment terms and financing options
- d. Place (Distribution)
 - i. Channels, motivating the channels, evaluation of distributors, locations, logistics
- e. Promotion – How to reach the target market**
 - i. Advertising, including how much and which media
 - ii. Public relations
 - iii. Promotional campaigns
 - iv. Budget, break-even
 - v. Projected results

VII.Short and Long-term Projections

- a. Discuss the selected strategy's immediate effects, expected long-term results, and any special actions required to achieve them. Include forecasts for revenues and expenses as well as the results of break-even analysis.

VIII.Conclusion

- a. Summary of findings

Figure 2

Real estate agents in Tuscaloosa who deal with foreclosures

[information removed for privacy purposes]

Figure 3

Foreclosures in Tuscaloosa County

1	Details		Active	Aug 4, 2009	Culver Rd	Tuscaloosa	AL	35401		\$79,000	UN	
2	Details		Active	Oct 1, 2009	12th St Uni...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35401	2 / 2	\$370,000	CO	
3	Details		Active	Sep 28, 2009	10th St	Tuscaloosa	AL	35401	3 / 1	\$69,900	UN	
4	Details		Active	Sep 5, 2009	41st Ave	Tuscaloosa	AL	35401	3 / 1	\$47,700	UN	
5	Details		Active	Oct 3, 2009	38th Ave	Tuscaloosa	AL	35401	3 / 2	\$83,000	UN	
6	Details		Active	Apr 21, 2009	Ridgewood Rd	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$118,900	SF	
7	Details		Active	Nov 4, 2008	31st Ave E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	/ 0.5		SF	
8	Details		Active	Aug 10, 2009	The Highlands	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	5	\$129,900	LA	
9	Details		Active	Jun 5, 2009	23rd Ave E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$87,500	UN	
10	Details		Active	Sep 1, 2009	10th St Ne	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$31,900	SF	
11	Details		Active	Sep 10, 2009	Cherokee Rd	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	4 / 3	\$264,900	SF	
12	Details		Active	Sep 15, 2009	28th St E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	4 / 2	\$159,900	SF	
13	Details		Active	Feb 3, 2009	11th St E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404		\$24,500	SF	
14	Details		Active	Oct 5, 2009	40th Ave Ne	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 1		SF	
15	Details		Active	Sep 16, 2009	16th St Ne	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 1	\$54,900	SF	
16	Details		Active	Jul 7, 2009	42nd Ave E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$54,900	SF	
17	Details		Active	Sep 24, 2009	Crescent Ga...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$110,000	SF	
18	Details		Active	Sep 22, 2009	14th St	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 1	\$67,500	SF	
19	Details		Active	Aug 8, 2009	25th Ave E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$55,200	UN	
20	Details		NEW	Oct 10, 2009	6th St E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 1.5	\$71,000	UN	
21	Details		Active	Sep 17, 2009	26th Ave E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$67,900	SF	
22	Details		Active	Jul 1, 2009	Woodland Trce	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	2 / 2	\$109,900	UN	
23	Details		Active	Jul 24, 2009	Woodland Fo...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	4 / 4	\$174,900	SF	
24	Details		Active	Sep 13, 2009	Magnolia Pa...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	4 / 2.5	\$194,900	UN	

25	Details		Active	Aug 13, 2009	Spencer Dr	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$139,900	UN	
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28	Details		Active	Jul 5, 2009	Ashley Hill...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$149,900	SF	
29	Details		Active	Sep 21, 2009	Cotton Fiel...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$149,900	SF	
30	Details		Active	Jul 31, 2009	Eastbrook Dr	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$156,900	SF	
31	Details		Active	Sep 6, 2009	Hargrove Rd E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405		\$75,900	SF	
32	Details		Active	Sep 26, 2009	Parkside	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 1.5	\$90,000	UN	
33	Details		Active	Aug 24, 2009	Cambridge Ct	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 3	\$194,900	SF	
34	Details		NEW	Oct 8, 2009	Meadowood Dr	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 1		SF	
35	Details		Active	Sep 18, 2009	Carolyn Way	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$249,900	SF	
36	Details		Active	Aug 19, 2009	Wild Flower...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$238,900	SF	
37	Details		Active	Sep 23, 2009	Willow Ridg...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$137,000	SF	
38	Details		Active	Jul 27, 2009	30th St E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$143,980	SF	
39	Details		Active	Jun 26, 2009	55th St E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	4 / 1	\$69,900	SF	
40	Details		Active	Sep 23, 2009	Commodore D...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406	5 / 5	\$297,000	SF	
41	Details		Active	Jul 9, 2009	Woodridge Cir	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406	6 / 2	\$204,900	SF	
42	Details		Active	Oct 5, 2009	Acadian Way	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406			SF	
43	Details		Active	Oct 5, 2009	Evangeline Way	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406			SF	
44	Details		Active	Sep 28, 2009	Northridge Cir	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406			SF	
45	Details		Active	Sep 30, 2009	Shadyhill Rd	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406			SF	
46	Details		Active	Jun 19, 2008	Brackner Dr	Brookwood	AL	35444	3 / 2	\$134,900	UN	
47	Details		Active	Jul 22, 2009	Alabama Jun...	Brookwood	AL	35444	3 / 1	\$24,900	UN	
48	Details		Active	Jul 31, 2009	Panther Dr	Brookwood	AL	35444	3	\$99,900	SF	
49	Details		Active	Sep 16, 2009	Oakwood Cir	Brookwood	AL	35444	3 / 2	\$149,900	SF	
50	Details		Active	Jul 16, 2009	Flower Dr	Brookwood	AL	35444	5 / 3	\$145,900	UN	
51	Details		Active	Sep 28, 2009	Hemlock Ave	Brookwood	AL	35444	3 / 2	\$69,900	SF	
52	Details		Active	May 28, 2009	Romulus Chu...	Buhl	AL	35446	3 / 2	\$79,900	SF	
53	Details		Active	Jul 1, 2009	Jackson Joh...	Buhl	AL	35446	3 / 1	\$86,900	SF	
54	Details		Active	Oct 3, 2009	Stoneridge Dr	Coker	AL	35452	3 / 2	\$120,000	UN	
55	Details		Active	Apr 26, 2009	Eastdale Ln	Cottondale	AL	35453	3 / 2.5	\$124,900	UN	

56	Details		Active	Oct 13, 2008	Ashborough Dr	Cottondale	AL	35453	/ 1			SF
57	Details		Active	Jul 13, 2009	Forest Vall...	Cottondale	AL	35453	2 / 1	\$54,900		SF
58	Details		Active	Jul 21, 2009	Keenes Mill Rd	Cottondale	AL	35453	3 / 2	\$109,000		SF
59	Details		Active	Sep 27, 2009	Hagler Dr	Cottondale	AL	35453	3 / 2	\$134,900		UN
60	Details		Active	Sep 2, 2009	Forest Mill Dr	Cottondale	AL	35453	/ 1	\$145,900		SF
61	Details		Active	Jul 29, 2009	Huntland Dr	Cottondale	AL	35453	3 / 2	\$129,900		SF
62	Details		Active	Sep 14, 2009	Bear Creek ...	Cottondale	AL	35453				LA
63	Details		Active	Sep 9, 2009	Hagler Dr	Cottondale	AL	35453	3 / 2	\$134,900		SF
64	Details		Active	Aug 12, 2009	Mount Verno...	Duncanville	AL	35456	4 / 3	\$139,900		SF

65	Details		Active	Jul 6, 2009	Lee Bonner Rd	Elrod	AL	35458	3 / 2	\$55,900		SF
66	Details		Active	May 5, 2009	Echola Rd	Elrod	AL	35458	6 / 3	\$314,900		SF
67	Details		Active	Aug 31, 2009	Brookside Dr	Northport	AL	35473	3 / 2	\$149,900		SF
68	Details		Active	Jun 2, 2009	Creekview Trce	Northport	AL	35473	3 / 2	\$206,900		SF
69	Details		Active	May 28, 2009	Nuckols Cir	Northport	AL	35473	3 / 1	\$60,900		SF
70	Details		Active	Aug 10, 2009	323 Hwy 69s	Northport	AL	35475		\$69,900		LA
71	Details		Active	Aug 28, 2009	Smoketree Rd	Northport	AL	35475	3	\$82,000		MH
72	Details		Active	Jul 20, 2009	Huntington ...	Northport	AL	35475	3 / 2	\$143,500		UN
73	Details		Active	Sep 14, 2009	Harmony St	Northport	AL	35475		\$206,900		SF
74	Details		Active	May 5, 2009	Burks Pkwy	Northport	AL	35475	4 / 3	\$219,900		SF
75	Details		NEW	Oct 12, 2009	Bend Road	Northport	AL	35475		\$69,900		LA
76	Details		Active	Sep 1, 2009	7th St	Northport	AL	35476	3 / 3	\$36,500		MF
77	Details		Active	Sep 18, 2009	26th Ave	Northport	AL	35476	2 / 1	\$41,999		SF
78	Details		Active	Aug 10, 2009	Wesley Chap...	Ralph	AL	35480				SF
79	Details		Active	Oct 5, 2009	Wesley Chap...	Ralph	AL	35480				SF
80	Details		Active	Sep 7, 2009	Timberlane Rd	Ralph	AL	35480	4 / 2.5	\$152,900		UN
81	Details		Active	Aug 13, 2008	Hi Rd	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2	\$109,900		UN
82	Details		Active	Aug 11, 2009	Branch Ln	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2	\$22,000		MH
83	Details		Active	Jul 7, 2009	Parsons Drive	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2	\$88,900		SF
84	Details		Active	Sep 23, 2009	Meadow Run Dr	Vance	AL	35490		\$154,900		UN

85	Details		Active	Sep 2, 2009	Wiregrass Dr	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2.5	\$225,900	UN	
86	Details		Active	Sep 3, 2009	Mahaffey Cir	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2	\$118,900	UN	
87	Details		Active	Jul 22, 2009	Crisstown Rd	Vance	AL	35490	4 / 2	\$61,900	MH	
88	Details		Active	Jun 2, 2009	216 Box 18894	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2	\$72,900	SF	
89	Details		Active	Jun 25, 2009	Marsh Pkwy	Vance	AL	35490	3 / 2	\$114,900	SF	
90	Details		Inactive	Jul 20, 2009	Camp St Ne	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 1	\$36,000	SF	
91	Details		Inactive	Sep 12, 2009	2nd Pl Ne	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 2	\$69,000	UN	
92	Details		Inactive	Sep 22, 2008	Colonial Dr Ne	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404			SF	
93	Details		Inactive	Sep 14, 2009	25th Ave E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	3 / 1	\$30,000	SF	
94	Details		Inactive	Aug 8, 2009	Green Grove...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35404	4 / 2	\$90,000	UN	
95	Details		Inactive	Sep 12, 2009	37th St E	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$102,000	UN	
96	Details		Inactive	Sep 12, 2009	Manora Esta...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	4 / 2	\$114,000	UN	
97	Details		Inactive	Sep 10, 2009	Woodland Fo...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	4 / 2		SF	
98	Details		Inactive	Aug 27, 2009	Stonehill Ln	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	3 / 2	\$184,900	UN	
99	Details		Inactive	Sep 17, 2009	Empress Blvd	Tuscaloosa	AL	35405	4 / 1.5	\$169,900	UN	
100	Details		Inactive	Aug 10, 2009	122 Acadian...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406			SF	
101	Details		Inactive	Aug 10, 2009	100 Acadian...	Tuscaloosa	AL	35406			SF	
102	Details		Inactive	Aug 22, 2009	Lock 9 Rd # 9	Fosters	AL	35463	3 / 2	\$81,000	UN	
103	Details		Inactive	Apr 30, 2009	66th Ave	Northport	AL	35473	3 / 2	\$119,900	UN	
104	Details		Inactive	Sep 5, 2009	Thompsons Way	Northport	AL	35473	3 / 2	\$101,000	UN	
105	Details		Inactive	May 5, 2009	66th Ave	Northport	AL	35473	3 / 2	\$119,900	SF	
106	Details		Inactive	Aug 13, 2009	Mary Dr	Northport	AL	35475	4 / 3	\$39,900	UN	
107	Details		Inactive	Aug 9, 2009	Bayside Dr	Northport	AL	35475	3	\$114,900	SF	
108	Details		Inactive	Aug 20, 2009	Bend Road	Northport	AL	35475		\$69,900	LA	
109	Details		Inactive	Aug 6, 2009	7th St	Northport	AL	35476	3 / 3	\$36,500	UN	
110	Details		Inactive	Aug 9, 2009	Timber Hts	Ralph	AL	35480	3	\$156,900	SF	
111	Details		Inactive	Aug 10, 2009	5 Wesley Ch...	Ralph	AL	35480			SF	
112	Details		Inactive	Jun 22, 2009	Hi Rd	Vance	AL	35490		\$124,000	SF	

Foreclosures by area code:

35405: 22 homes

35401: 5 homes
35404: 20 homes
35406: 8 homes
35444: 6 homes
35446: 2 homes
35452: 1 home
35453: 9 homes
35456: 1 home
35458: 2 homes
35473: 6 homes
35475: 9 homes
35476: 3homes
35480: 5 homes
35490: 9 homes

Figure 4

List of Member Neighborhoods

- Greater Beech Hills and Cherokee Hills Neighborhood Association
- Rollingwood Neighborhood Association
- Forest Lake Neighborhood Association
- Arcadia/East Tuscaloosa Neighborhood Association
- Claymont/East Tuscaloosa Neighborhood Association
- Windsor Drive/East Tuscaloosa Neighborhood Association
- Druid Hills/East Tuscaloosa Neighborhood Association
- Glendale Gardens
- Hillsdale Neighborhood Association
- West Highland Neighborhood Association
- Audobon Place Neighborhood Association
- Sutton Skies Neighborhood Association (Sklyand Park/Sutton Place)

- Druid City Neighborhood Association
 - Woodridge Neighborhood Association
 - Woodland Hills Neighborhood Association
 - Lauderhill Neighborhood Association
 - The Glen Neighborhood Association
 - Guild's Wood Neighborhood Association
 - Willow Ridge
 - Third Street Neighborhood Association
 - Riverdale Neighborhood Association
- Tuscaloosa Neighborhoods, Subdivisions, and settlements**

Figure 5

[information removed for privacy purposes]

APPENDIX J

SIMON STATUS UPDATE REPORT

Introduction

Our primary vehicle for developing and applying our research thus far has been a mock event at a theoretical mansion either on the Black Warrior River or on Lake Tuscaloosa. Brice suggested the idea as a method of transitioning our project from simply gathering information to more of a "learn-by-doing" exercise. The mock event, "scheduled" for Friday, October 23rd, also provided a helpful deadline to help the team get motivated. Two perspectives on this event, one from an attendee and one from a planner, will constitute the bulk of this mid-term report. The other section of the report is made up of problems the group has successfully faced.

Mock Event at the Mansion

The radio spot described the function as a musico-cultural entertainment and networking event. You have no idea what to expect from an event like this, but it seems like the kind of function for which you felt like you needed to "dress to

impress.” Perhaps there’s even a theme, maybe a Hamptons-style white party or a Pink Party with a portion of proceeds going to Breast Cancer research. Whatever the event may be called, and whatever the event’s purpose, you find yourself on your way there.

You first pull into a culdesac in an upscale neighborhood. You begin to see cars lined up along the side of the road. An police officer, in uniform, is monitoring parking. Just by seeing this police officer helping with the event, you can make certain assumptions or draw certain conclusions. First, you may think that this is a legitimate event that has been authorized by the City of Tuscaloosa. Next, you will know that this is a well-organized event put together by a professional organization. Lastly, you will know that this will not be a typical night out in Tuscaloosa, most of which are spent at some college bar hearing a cover band playing the same songs to which you have been listening for 20 years. No, this is something completely different. This is Trius Live.

What you won’t necessarily know is that the police officer you see is an off-duty officer moonlighting for some extra money. Such officers are coordinated by Captain Kearney at the

Tuscaloosa Police Department and are available to offer security at public and private events for \$30/hr. You won't know that the producers of this event attained what the Police Department refers to as a "Parade License," and is the same paperwork that any organization files with the Police Department when they throw a large-scale event.

You won't know, but probably wouldn't be surprised to hear that the reason you heard that radio spot to begin with is because the producers sifted through the demographic information of every radio station in town to make sure to reach the right kind of people.

Next, you check the index card-size glossy flier that caught your eye at the register at the wine shop near your home. You normally see cheaply produced fliers with plain print on some neon paper, but this looked slick. This looked legit. You realized then that the flier matched the radio spot you heard. It not only matched in that it advertised the same event, it matched its tone, its attitude. You check the address on the flier to confirm the event's location, but really you already know which house it is because you hear the dull chatter of a crowd amidst a background of some laid-back groove that sounds

as if it may be coming from live music. You're not blown away by the noise. It's nothing that would bother the neighbors, but it might be just enough to draw them in. This is not a raging bachanal or a noise complaint waiting to happen. This is Trius Live.

Upon entering the party, you realize why you were coming to something dubbed an event, not just a party. What you see is a well-dressed crowd of people. You see a fully-stocked bar. You see a band playing the kind of neo-soul you might hear from The Roots or Erykah Badu. You see the kind of sound and lighting set-up you would expect at a concert in Birmingham or Atlanta. Hopefully, you see the kind of social scene Tuscaloosa has been missing out on.

What you don't necessarily see is a second off-duty police officer whose responsibility it is to check identification at the bar, the stack of paperwork, a \$100,000 insurance policy, and an assortment of other requirements that the producers had to comply with per Alabama Beverage Control and the city of Tuscaloosa. The producers of the event are recouping costs for the party on alcohol, but it took six weeks worth of application approval and over \$700 worth of permits to have that

opportunity. What you definitely don't see is a lifetime in the music industry that allowed the producers to make the kind of connections necessary to get a cutting-edge musical act and professional equipment at a fraction of what it might cost someone else.

You don't necessarily know which individuals put the party together, and you don't know when the next event goes down. One thing is for sure, though, you will be on the lookout for the next glossy flier at the wine shop that catches your eye.

Problems & Trouble Shooting

This project deals in ideas and creativity, but it is not immune from the reality. The issues in executing this project have ranged from communication to participation. Some of this has stemmed from unavoidable situations such as health issues, but the group has worked on remedying any issues and will continue to do so.

I. Absenteeism

The first problem, an unavoidable lack of participation, was addressed through a simple plan of redelegation. When a group member had to be out of town for two weeks, the rest of

the group simply redistributed the work and, upon the other group member's return, that group member volunteered to take on extra responsibility to make up for lost time. Now, as one of our members has welcomed a new child into her family, the group will attempt a similar redistribution.

II. Apathy

A second, and more complicated, problem stems from what could be described as a lack of motivation in executing the project's objectives.

I know that I, as project manager, have attempted to have a "hands-off" approach to management in the group. One problem with this approach may be that other classes present more immediate concerns. This project is more concerned with long-range goals and may be brushed aside more easily.

Our group has readjusted its focus by attempting to take the "big rocks" that make up the entire project and break them up into smaller, more palatable, pieces that can be achieved on a weekly basis. Team members now have clearly defined goals to achieve and topics to present at each weeks meeting.

III. Ambiguity

One of this project's main "problems" is also its greatest opportunity. Clients do not present consultants with simple,

mundane tasks to take care of, assignments that could easily be given to employees within an organization. Clients bring broad, overarching problems and it is the responsibility of the consultant to design and execute solutions to those problems.

Early on in this project, our group struggled to find direction and that resulted in some of the apathy discussed earlier. No one wanted to "spin their wheels" before they really knew exactly what to do. An uncomfortable solution to this problem has been to dive into the work, to keep an open mind and let the project's direction present itself. Whether it has been a first contact that has been able to offer nothing but more contacts, or a well-developed idea that did not turn out to be what the client was looking for, perhaps the greatest benefit of our early work on this project has been the refining, and perhaps redefining, of the scope, goals and execution of the project.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this report reflects some of the energy and optimism that fuels Trius Live. The company has lofty goals, and our team has been presented with the task of putting together a blueprint for the foundation beneath those

aspirations. It has not been easy, but with each meeting, with each miniscule piece of the puzzle fitting into place, a different kind of social scene in Tuscaloosa becomes that much more of reality.