CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: TOWARD TEACHER/ STUDENT, CLASSROOM/CENTER HYBRID CHOICES

> Placing students and tutors at the center of classroom practice, on-location tutoring reforms classroom hierarchical relations and institutional structures; it shows students (tutors and the students with whom they work) that their work as knowledge makers matters and that they have much to contribute to one another, to faculty, and to the institution as a whole.
>
> — Laurie Grobman and Candace Spigelman

> The line it is drawn
> The curse it is cast
> The slow one now
> Will later be fast
> As the present now
> Will later be past
> The order is
> Rapidly fadin'
> And the first one now
> Will later be last
> For the times they are a-changin'
>
> — Bob Dylan

In the Introduction and Chapter One I discussed several variables that come into play as a result of the melding of the various parent instructional genres that inform the work of CBT. I explored the genealogy of CBT, theoretically locating it within the context of the classroom/center collaborative debate. I moved on to describe a taxonomy of the major parent genres that intermingle and hybridize in CBT—writing center tutoring, writing fellows programs, peer writing groups, and supplemental instruction—to offer participants an array of instructional choices and considerations that can at times confuse or overwhelm, and

at other times liberate and substantially supplement classroom and one-to-one teaching and tutoring. I then lingered in detail on the critical issues of authority, role and trust negotiation via the directive/nondirective tutoring continuum, placing special emphasis on reasons tutors may need to renegotiate the typical hands-off, nondirective one-to-one philosophy when negotiating the "play of differences" between one-to-one and one-to-more instructional situations.

I'd like to begin my concluding thoughts by returning to two questions—in relation to the directive/nondirective instructional continuum—I asked in the Introduction: What are teachers, tutors, and student writers getting out of these experiences, and what effects do these interactions have on participant instructional choices and identity formations as teachers and learners? And how soon should developing/developmental student writers, potential writing tutors, and classroom instructors or teaching assistants get involved in the authoritative, socially and personally complex acts of collaborative peer-to-peer teaching and learning? I'll begin by framing my tentative answers to these questions in terms of how the interrelated pedagogical concepts of authority/trust building and directive/nondirective instructional negotiations played out in all teams. I'll move on to offer some implications of the studies and stories presented in this book for one-to-one and small-group tutorials, peer review and response, and the various choices program leaders can consider in building, strengthening, or experimenting with CBT.

DIRECTIVE/NONDIRECTIVE TUTORING: IMPLICATIONS FOR TUTORING ONE-TO-ONE AND IN THE CLASSROOM

The true value of CBT, and the lessons learned from experiments in pushing the limits of pedagogical peer authority and expertise, lies in the choices it offers teachers, tutors, student writers, and program leaders and the implications these choices have on the places we work and the people we work with. When participants were brought into the closer instructional orbits afforded by CBT, the biggest adjustments they described as having to make involved negotiations of instructional authority and roles, which also brought up the gravity of mutual trust(worthiness). Megan, the tutor from Team Two, worried about being too teacherly. She expressed relief when she and Laura agreed on less-authoritative roles for her in the classroom. But, as the interview and questionnaire data illustrate, both Megan and the students ended up feeling that Megan did not meet her full potential as an in-class tutor. Bruffee's double-bind we spoke of in the Introduction was plainly elucidated in Megan's conflicted desire to be both a peer—to appear just like one of the students and to be subsequently approachable—and to offer as much help and support to these students as possible. In a

sense, the TA Laura trusted in Megan's abilities as an experienced writing center tutor to be able to balance directive/nondirective and teacherly/studently roles in the classroom; but Megan perhaps did not trust herself enough to lean a little more toward an authoritative role in the classroom, *even when offered and encouraged to act-out this role by Laura*. As the literature on CBT practice points to repeatedly, tutors put in closer contact with the expectations of the writing instructors with whom they are paired will have a difficult time negotiating their tutoring approach—often times swinging too far toward the extreme ends of the directive/nondirective instructional continuum. And as Laura described, even though she and Megan did a lot of planning of the course together, students did not seem to know that Megan was that involved with the design of the course. Perhaps if she had embraced her role as a co-designer of the course a bit more vocally, taken ownership of the course like the tutors from Team Six, students would have viewed her as, in fact, much more integral to their learning for the course.

Yet, I must qualify these statements regarding Megan's engagement with in-class activities, and the course as a whole, as she did take an active role in peer review. One interesting consideration for future peer review facilitation efforts is the idea of the "meta-tutor" (Decker). Recall Julian trying to live up to what he felt was his role as "reserved advisor," a tutor who does not try to necessarily give suggestions directly to student papers, but rather tries to provide suggestions to students on how to tutor each other. This idea becomes problematic in light of the directive/nondirective continuum. If tutors are trying to be good meta-tutors, and, like Julian, speaking too much about revising in the abstract, then they may only confuse students. I do not think there is anything wrong—indeed it might be better in many cases—if the peer review facilitator is willing to play a role closer to just another student reviewer. Then students in that particular response group would gain the benefits of direct modeling of things to comment on. Encouraging the use of a mix of direct suggestions along with the sorts of open-ended questioning and prompting that lead other members of the response group to contribute, might be a better way to think about preparing tutors for peer response facilitation. By the second session I believe Megan had realized a great mix—one that allowed for substantial *conversational momentum* between students—encouraging students to rapidly and energetically uptake each other's responses and suggestions.

Madeleine from Team Three felt she was authoritative but not authoritarian—an important distinction—in the classroom. Madeleine referred to herself as a "discussion participant" in the classroom. But she, the instructor Sydney, and the students clearly intimated that Madeleine was really much more like a discussion leader. Sydney described how her initial misgivings about Madeleine

began to transform as she came to realize that what she initially perceived as Madeleine's weakness actually ended up being her strength—Madeleine's willingness to act as a conversation leader, even antagonist, during class discussions. Paulo Freire believed this was an important, and often overlooked, aspect of teaching. In his last book *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire urged

> It is not only of interest to students but extremely important
> to students to perceive the differences that exist among teach-
> ers over the comprehension, interpretation, and appreciation,
> sometimes widely differing, of problems and questions that
> arise in the day-to-day learning situations of the classroom.
> (24)

I linked Madeleine's instructional style to patterns of AAVE communication in Chapter Three. It may have been a combination of Madeleine's more natural AAVE communicative patterns, coupled with her passion for both the topic of the course and her desire to help these students do well in the course, that all contributed to her performances in the class. Mutual participant trust was a key factor in this partnership. Madeleine's willingness to take an active co-teaching role in the classroom added to the trust she earned from the students she interacted with on a day-to-day basis, and to the eventual trust (albeit qualified) she earned from Sydney. Yet, for all my conflicted feelings regarding Madeleine's highly directive style—whether or not her directives were a "good" thing—I cannot help but wish that she could have played a slightly less directive role during her one-to-ones. Especially as evidenced in that long session with the student who kept trying to voice her ideas and opinions, with all the attending overlaps and even heightened emotion involved, I wish that Madeleine could have balanced her passion for moving students toward more feasible interpretations of the text with more traditionally nondirective approaches demanding increased listening and open-ended questioning.

Going back to Harris's four categories—exploratory talk, acquisition of strategic knowledge, negotiation of assignment prompts and teacher comments, and affective concerns—we saw Sam helping students with aspects of all four. Harris's categories are important and can be linked to—and offer pedagogical answers to—other categorical conceptions of educational and professional learning and development. Chris Thaiss and Terry Zawacki, for example, posit that undergraduate students' conceptions of academic writing involve a complicated matrix of variables that include generalized standards of academic writing, disciplinary conventions, sub-disciplinary conventions, institutional and departmental cultures and policies, and personal goals and idiosyncratic likes and dislikes (from both student writers and their instructors). In their four-year study of

teachers and students engaged in writing across the disciplines at George Mason University, the authors argue that as students move through their undergraduate educations, negotiating these variables, they experience roughly three developmental stages: in the first stage they use their limited academic experience to construct a general view of academic writing as "what the teachers expect;" in the second stage, after encountering a number of different teacher expectations, students develop a sense of idiosyncrasy or "they all want different things;" and in the third stage, which not all students reach, "a sense of coherence-within-diversity, understanding expectations as a rich mix of many ingredients" (139).

Sam emerged as what I have come to believe as one of the most sophisticated and methodologically sound of any tutor I've witnessed during one-to-one tutorials, moving students perhaps at least toward Thaiss and Zawacki's second stage. But she may even be helping developmental students, well in advance of disciplinary courses, toward awareness of the third stage. The authors claim that the data from the instructors and students they studied point to the notion that third-stage students experience a mix of personal goals with disciplinary expectations. Of all the tutors, Sam encouraged the most exploratory talk with students—students generally spoke much more and were much more invested in the one-to-one tutorials. As Megan finally realized in facilitating peer response groups, Sam realized tremendous conversational momentum with students. Sam helped nudge students toward acquisition of strategic knowledge by focusing primarily on the big picture with each student's paper: she usually spent much time talking—and getting students to talk about—their claim. She spent considerable time talking (and listening) about structural issues like topic sentences and how they should relate to the claim. Her ability not to get too caught up with the assignment prompts or teacher comments actually seemed to work in her favor; she appeared focused on the writing and the writer she was working with rather than worry unnecessarily about the prompt. All of these moves took into account both the students' purposes and Sam's knowledge of academic discourse from the disciplines of Biology and English. And, more implicitly I would argue, Sam tended to students' affective needs largely by just listening carefully to their concerns, allowing plenty of time for them to think through ideas. From my experience, she provides a fine model of the sorts of moves all tutors and teachers can consider: careful note-taking; careful listening; and a primary concern with HOCs, though with a concurrent sense of when to pay attention to and when to defer LOCs. Whether tutoring in typical writing center one-to-one settings, or tutoring in a writing fellows program, or even facilitating peer response in the classroom, Sam's methods have much to offer.

The uneasy relationship between all participants from Team One provides complex, somewhat troubling, and yet equally important implications for this

study. Julian's sense of himself—even during his limited classroom presence during peer reviews—as "reserved advisor" and the gross lack of communication between he and Anne combined to co-construct this cautionary tale of CBT. Julian did not attend class, or even stay in regular communication, enough to know the nuances of Anne's expectations very well. Yet in all his interactions with students, he still tried hard to stay within what he felt were her expectations (primarily via assignment prompts and what students were *telling* him they thought Anne wanted). Anne felt that the lack of communication was all her fault and repeatedly during our interview expressed regret for not interacting more closely with Julian. But she also intimated that she felt students and Julian did not get to know each other well enough on an individual basis to enable Julian to move past his nondirective approach toward a method that might take into account the more individualistic needs of each student. Still, I find great value in this cautionary tale, value that points to our growth and development as a (sub)field. Like Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta, I "take it as a sign of writing center studies' increasing sense of its own identity, as well as its increasing security as a field of study, that we can admit such 'failures' and then move on to create productive, important knowledge from these events" (9). In their laudable work on writing center assessment, Ellen Schendel and William Macauley agree "It is necessary that we become able to accept mistakes and doubts for ourselves ..." and add, "yet it is not sufficient. We have a responsibility to others, as well, especially those for whom we are connections to the field, representatives of how our field works, leaders in our local centers, regional writing center communities, and beyond" (173-74). Julian's experiences also have something to contribute to discussions of writing teachers'/tutors' education and development. His intelligence coupled with his desire to help cannot be denied. But some of Julian's personality traits may make him (and tutors with similar traits) more suitable as an in-class tutor. (And I would say the same, to some degree, about Madeleine.) Julian is expressive and loves to engage in stimulating conversation. It was apparent in his one-to-one tutorials that if the students had been as verbose as he, than the dynamics of the tutorials might have been very different. Especially with this group of students, Julian might have served a better instructional niche if he had been an in-class tutor. There his ability to talk with some fluency about the texts, to offer his opinions and counter-opinions could have been put to better use.

Taken, in sum, Teams Five and Six from Chapter Four—in stark contrast to Team One—offer the true promise of CBT. The participants from Team Five and Six represent what I would classify as organic, home-grown partnerships that took full advantage of the teaching and learning situations they were engaged in. As one of the leaders of the writing program at SCSU, I was put into a position of authority and decision-making outside of the writing center. So

instead of recruiting tutors from writing centers, as I did at the UW, I recruited students directly from the same sort of developmental course they would subsequently tutor in. These tutors took the collaborative lessons they learned from having recently taken the course themselves and paid them forward to fellow students they mirrored the diversity of—allowing, importantly—for a closer zone of proximal development and a more truly peer-to-peer learning ecology. The participants in Team Five and Six illustrate what can occur when trust and care are taken to the next level.

Returning to those *Framework* habits of mind mentioned in the Introduction, the results from Team Six seem highly promising: Curiosity? Check. Openness? Check. Engagement? Check. Creativity? Check. And so forth ... Two tutors and an instructor who could care less about whether they were being (or allowing others to be) too directive or nondirective, too controlling or intrusive in their pedagogical interventions ended up realizing a fruitful balance. As with Gina from Team Five and Madeleine from Team Three, their only real concern seemed to be: what can I do to help these students grow and develop confidence and perhaps some competence in their writing performances for that particular course? In the process, we saw Team Six (and to some extent Teams Three and Five) also approaching and pushing the boundaries of their expertise—pushing, especially, the conceived notions of what their roles and authority can or should be. We saw what can happen when young developing writers, thinkers and learners trust in their own authority and take some initiative. The "American Dream Museum Exhibit" assignment vividly showcases the potential of tutors leading the charge, blurring the lines between tutor, student, and teacher—pushing conventional pedagogical boundaries. In collaboratively conceiving of and designing the assignment, Kim and Penny thoughtfully and thought-provokingly scaffolded interactive, problem-posing activities that challenged all students, while at the same time providing ample instructional support—even when the structurally-sanctioned authority of the course, Jake, was not physically present.

In the spirit of "where are they now?" I'd like to briefly report on what I know about the tutors. From the UW tutors, Sam applied and was accepted into a Ph.D. program in English with a focus on Composition and Rhetoric at a major, Midwest research university. For the SCSU tutors, as of April 2013, Gina is a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, working on her master's degree. When I asked her if she thought her experience with CBT has had any lasting effects she wrote:

> Today I have a major role in establishing better policies
> and procedures for an organization that works with abused
> children. With the confidence I gained from course-based

> tutoring I have done extremely well at my internship. I have supervisors and program managers asking for my feedback and opinion in changing and establishing new policies. During course-based tutoring I gained a voice that I continue to use today. I am currently at a point in my life where I would have never imagined myself being. I have always been a driven person but never a confident person until I participated in course-based tutoring.

Penny is finishing her Elementary Education requirements as a student teacher. She felt that her experiences with course-based tutoring helped prepare her for her recent successes and future goals: she was captain of the SCSU field hockey team; she studied abroad in Brisbane, Australia, and traveled through the country; and she hoped to return to SCSU in Fall 2013 to get her master's and have her own classroom by Fall of 2014. Like Bradley Hughes, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail, in "What They Take with Them," I believe that the lessons learned, lessons in responsible leadership and mentorship, clear communication, and reflective practice will travel far beyond those courses, for all participants.

CHOICE MATTERS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CBT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

This book's central research question asked: How can what we know about peer tutoring one-to-one and in small groups—especially the implications of directive and nondirective tutoring strategies and methods brought to light in these case studies—inform our work with students in writing centers and other tutoring programs, as well as in classrooms? In answer, this book explored a myriad of ways that tutors in a variety of situations negotiated directive and nondirective strategies while trying to build rapport and trust with fellow students and instructors. In sum, and with the caveat that context might influence the feasibility of any given choice, I offer the following suggestions involving some of the strategic choices CBT practitioners have for successful practice with one-to-one and small-group tutorials, as well other possible classroom activities. These choices radiate from my suggestions for overall design and planning (Figure 5). Some suggestions might also be applicable to other related pedagogical practices, for example: teacher-student conferences, both one-to-one and small-group; writing center tutoring, again both one-to-one and in small groups; or writing classroom collaborative and group activities. (Note that some suggestions for one-to-one tutoring also apply to small-group peer response and vice-versa.)

OVERALL DESIGN AND PLANNING

- Instructors and tutors should be made aware of *different models of CBT*, both more (tutors like Megan, Madeleine, Gina, Kim, and Penny attending class every day) and less (tutors like Sam not attending class and/or not doing the readings) collaborative designs. Then they should be allowed to choose, as closely as possible, which model they feel might best work for them.
- Have an *early meeting between instructor and tutor* (and coordinator perhaps) during which some tentative roles and expectations are laid out in advance. Be sure to let students know what these roles and expectations are as early as possible.
- Participants should *talk, plan, and reflect with each other on a regular basis*, via email, phone, or face-to-face. Frequent meetings, or online chat forums (blackboard, Skype, or even Facebook, for example) could be used to help facilitate dialogue and communication.
- Directors and coordinators should consider *ongoing development and education* just as important as initial orientations. Tutors could be asked to read current (as in the work of Thompson and colleagues) and/or foundational (like Harris's "Talking") articles in writing center and composition journals during any down time.
- As with the *Framework* and accompanying WPA Outcomes Statement, CBT practitioners, in relation to their respective programs, could develop *learning outcomes or goals*. I would suggest starting with Harris's four aspects for how tutors can assist writers, mentioned repeatedly throughout this book, that she gleaned from hundreds of student responses and years of ground-breaking research and practice. These goals could incorporate the *Framework* habits of mind more generally, and other teaching/learning needs of tutors, tutees, and centers/institutions more specifically. Participant attitudes and other "incipient actions" (Burke *Philosophy* 1, 10-11, 168-9, 379-82; *Grammar* 235-47, 294; *Rhetoric* 50, 90-5) could thereby be coordinated with desired teaching and learning outcomes. These goals can then help guide tutor education courses, and continuing director/tutor development.

ONE-TO-ONE TUTORING

- Whether tutors attend class every day or sometimes or not at all—if tutors will be conducting one-to-one tutorials outside of class—*have*

students sign up for one-to-ones early in the term so that students and tutor get to know each other as early as possible and so that dialogue about students and the curriculum can start ASAP.

- Students can be offered *shorter 25-minute, or longer 50-minute appointments*, or their choice of either given the situation.
- Tutors should read a student writer's entire paper before making definitive comments. While reading (whether or not the tutor or tutee reads aloud), tutors can take *detailed notes*—a descriptive outline could be especially helpful—and ask students to either take notes as well or follow along and help construct notes with the tutor (and perhaps audio-record the session on their smartphone). We saw all of these moves showcased in detail by Sam during her tutorials in Chapter Three.
- Tutors should be familiar with the intricacies of the *directive/nondirective continuum* in relation to one-to-one tutoring—and develop strategies for negotiating when to be more directive and when to be more facilitative.

Peer Response Facilitation

- If tutors and students are unfamiliar with each other, tutors might allow for some light-hearted banter or *casual conversation* so participants might warm up to one another before getting to the task at hand as we saw happening especially with Teams Five and Six in Chapter Four.
- Tutors should practice *a mix of directive suggestions and modeling with nondirective open-ended questions and follow-up questions* (as we vividly saw with Megan in Chapter Four) so that student writers receive the benefits of specific modeling and so they can also take ownership of their own and their peer group members' learning.
- Tutors should allow for plenty of *wait-time and pauses* during peer response sessions, in order to allow enough time for students to process information and formulate a response (similar to how Sam allowed for during one-to-one tutorials).
- Instructors can experiment with *various elements of peer response* including: having students balance between how much writing versus how much conversation they engage in, and how much and in what ways instructors and tutors intervene and interact with each group in and out of the classroom (see Corbett, LaFrance, and Decker; Corbett and LaFrance *Student*; Corbett "Great").
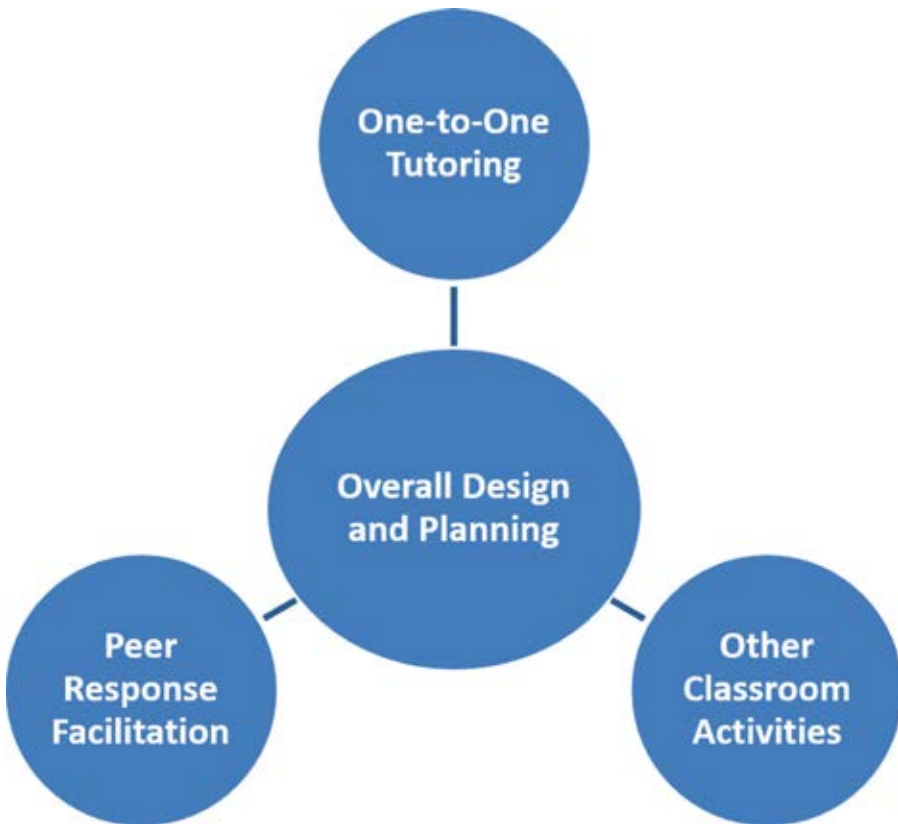
Figure 5: CBT choices.

OTHER CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Tutors do not necessarily need to be in class on a day-to-day basis. What's more important is that when they are there, *all participants have a role to play* and everyone knows what they are.
- *Tutor personalities can be utilized* on their own terms, but instructors can also foster interpersonal opportunities that might expand tutor approaches to interacting with fellow students. Shyer tutors (or students holding back, like Megan), for example, could be gently encouraged to speak up in class if they feel they have something important to contribute. More talkative students (like Madeleine) could be nudged to balance their comments with questions and prompts that might encourage other students in class to participate or take

intellectual risks.

- Tutors can be encouraged to *take some authority and ownership* in the design and orchestration of the class: they can help design and lead the implementation of lesson plans and assignments as we saw with Team Six; and they can share their own writing and learning experiences, strategies and processes liberally with their peers as we saw especially with Teams Five and Six.

LOOKING BACK WHILE LOOKING FORWARD: DIVERSITY AND CHOICE IN RECRUITMENT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND ASSESSMENT

This study has also made me question how, where, and why we recruit peer tutors. I believe—like Nelson—that we should seriously consider concerted efforts toward recruiting for more diversity in centers and programs that have been staffed predominantly by mainstream students. Though the data clearly show that a white, mainstream tutor can identify and assist nonmainstream and diverse students, as in the case of Megan and especially Sam and Penny, we clearly saw the benefits of having a tutor like Madeleine, a tutor who did indeed mirror the UW EOP students' diversity, or a tutor like Gina, who struggles with an LD like the student Max, working closely with their peers. Students like Madeleine, Gina, Kim, and Penny—students who themselves took the developmental course, who learned lessons in how to navigate that course successfully— offer an exceptionally promising model of mirroring peer diversity that takes Vygotsky's ZPD closely to heart. The cover image of this book—the Roman god Janus on a priceless coin—symbolizes the value of that promise. Double-faced Janus, looking simultaneously forward and backward in time, was the god of transitions, journeys, doors, gates, boundaries, endings, and beginnings. This book has offered intimate gazes into the developmental transitions of students, tutors, instructors, and researcher. Readers might look back on what this book has to offer as they look forward in their programmatic and pedagogical decision making: boundary-pushing between writing centers/peer tutoring programs and classrooms, between directive/nondirective instruction, between what it means to be a teacher/student. A student like Gina who works closely under an instructor like Mya with students/future tutors like Kim and Penny provides an example of interpersonal continuity from course to course and student/tutor to student/tutor. Further, this model can provide insights into how diverse students transition from high school to college writing and learning environments, especially if we listen closely to their stories. Yet we might consider a more advanced student like Sam as a diverse tutor herself due to the fact that she was a double

major. When Sam originally applied and interviewed to be a peer tutor for the English Department Writing Center, she was not hired by the director. Later, while recruiting course-based tutors, I re-interviewed Sam. Despite feeling that her personality was a bit too "low key," I brought her aboard anyway. Perhaps her multifarious experiences in navigating writing course boundaries and intersections between the humanities and natural sciences aided in her salutary tutoring strategies (see Thaiss and Zawacki 106). Maybe her low-key demeanor contributed to her commendable listening skills. If diverse students in their many guises do not apply to be tutors, then we should search them out—actively recruiting for talent and cultural and academic diversity—for our diverse writing programs, centers, and classrooms.

Once we've recruited for as much diversity and talent as possible, we can then make relevant choices on where and how to focus our research and assessment. I have advocated for a multi-method approach whenever possible, one that, if you will, methodologically mirrors the diversity of the participants involved in CBT-inspired research and practices. I want to see some researchers continue to focus on the sorts of pragmatic questions of tutoring style and method that have generated RAD case-study research from Spigelman, Thompson and colleagues, White-Farnham, Dyehouse and Finer, me, and others. I also want us to continue to build usable, authentic means of assessment that can help CBT practitioners successfully close the assessment loop, uniting learning outcomes with the habits of mind that undergird and can open the doors to successful, satisfying teaching and writing performances (see Schendel and Macauley; Johnson). But I hope others will continue to stay open and curious when they begin to hear boundary-pushing stories that warrant following up on. And when the chance arises to do both, I want our field(s) to embrace the multi-perspectives that multi-method research can deliver. By staying open, curious, and persistent in our efforts toward more hybrid, multi-method research, we can provide for more of the types of authentic assessment that can link creative processes and performances, habits of mind, identity formations, and student, teacher, and instructor success and satisfaction.

We have choices in our quests for synergistic teaching, learning, and trust. And we should welcome all colleagues, at all levels—slow and fast—ready and willing to accompany us in our journeys.