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Peer tutoring and social dynamics in higher education

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Peer tutoring in Higher Education is being used with increasing frequency to aid in student learning, motivation, and empowerment. Although an extensive body of research documents the efficacy of such programs, it exhibits a surprising lack of awareness of the social dynamics involved. This study focuses on peer tutors and students as they interact in higher education classrooms. Results indicate that this interaction does not always occur smoothly and that tutors often spend an inordinate amount of time engaged in impression management. Additionally, findings suggest that the tutor/student relationship can be rife with misunderstanding and power struggle.

In the past 20 years, educators have increasingly turned to alternative strategies for advancing student learning and improving the traditional education system. One strategy is peer tutoring: students teaching other students. Peer tutoring programs are being developed and integrated with traditional programs to help meet calls for accountability, provide better assessment, and improve outcomes for various stakeholders, including administrators, instructors, and students (Miller, 2000; Mino & Butler, 1997; Topping & Ehly, 1998).

The scope and function of peer tutoring programs is wide, focusing on benefits that include elimination of the typical hierarchical structure (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Lopez, 1999), increased motivation and learning for students and tutors (Miller & MacGilchrist, 1996; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997), and empowerment for tutors (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Parkin & McKegany, 2000). The majority of available research and literature on peer tutoring has focused on preparation, theoretical frameworks, and assessment (see Falchikov, 2001; Topping, 1996, for extensive reviews), and most extant research is limited to a focus on younger children (Coolahan *et al.*, 2000; Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996). While there are some studies that focus on higher education (e.g. Kochenour *et al.*, 1996; Newcomb & Wilson, 1966; Saunders, 1992),

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the relationships and interactions that occur when peer tutors are available in classrooms are under researched. This virtual absence is surprising given that providing a social interactional context for learning is often listed as a major goal of peer tutoring (Topping, 1996; Topping & Ehly, 1998).

To help add to the body of knowledge concerning how peer tutors function in higher education classrooms, this study describes the implementation of a peer tutoring program that uses previous research as a foundation and that focuses on the social dynamics occurring among students, tutors, and instructors.

Theoretical Background

Peer tutoring involves those of the same societal group or social standing educating one another when one peer has more expertise or knowledge. Tutoring interchanges range from formal teaching in the classroom to sharing information in social settings. In general, peer tutors help other students either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups by continuing classroom discussions, developing study skills, evaluating work, resolving specific problems, and encouraging independent learning (Falchikov, 2001; Goodlad, 1998; Saunders, 1992). Peer tutoring results in motivation (Carroll, 1996; Falchikov, 2001; Fraser *et al.*, 1977; Millis & Cottell, 1998) and learning for students (Fraser *et al.*, 1977; Johnson & Johnson, 1985), as well as learning (Entwistle, 1997; Millis & Cottell, 1998) and empowerment for the tutors themselves (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Miller & MacGilchrist, 1996; Parkin & McKegany, 2000). In addition, peers are often considered the most powerful influence in undergraduate education, even more so than advisors and instructors (Duch *et al.*, 2001; Ender & Newton, 2000; Fortney *et al.*, 2001; Garside, 1996; Newcomb & Wilson, 1966).

Another reason for implementing peer tutoring in actual classroom contexts is economic savings (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Miller *et al.*, 2001; Miller & MacGilchrist, 1996; Parkin & McKegany, 2000). When departmental faculties are asked to teach more and more students with no increase in funding for additional instructors, peers can provide support in overenrolled classes.

A number of universities have implemented peer tutoring in programs, such as LEAP,¹ a nationally recognized learning community program for first-year students that involves peer tutors, faculty, and students in social and academic settings (e.g., University of Utah, 2006). This program seeks to lay a foundation in which incoming students receive advice and help from more experienced peers in a learning community. Although few peer tutoring programs are part of such formalized programs as LEAP or Supplemental Instruction (SI),² many universities have similarly implemented collaborative learning, cooperative learning, learning communities, power relationships, and experiential learning (Anderson & Colvin, 2003). Most peer programs focus more on content, but other programs aim to reduce dropout rates and target high-risk courses rather than high-risk students. In this way, peers are trained to model, advise, and facilitate rather than directly address curriculum content (Kochenour *et al.*, 1996).

In sum, peer tutoring contributions range from providing support for other students by being counselors or advisors to being trainers where previous experience lends itself to helping others, to being expert instructors in a tutoring situation. Beyond defining peer tutors and understanding contexts where their services might be applicable, it is also important to understand what happens when peer tutors interact with other students and instructional staff. Overall, Goodlad (1998) suggests, 'By involving learners in responsibility for their own, and more importantly, *other people's* education, [this involvement] increases social interaction' (p. 16) and transforms learning from a private to a social activity.

Although each group has its own personality and unique interactive pattern, peer tutoring may have some predictable effects on classroom dynamics. This study is an analysis of the effects of peer tutors, who are neither teacher nor student, on not just instructors and students but also the tutors themselves.

Method

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred over an 18-month period, from April 2003 through December 2004, when a peer tutoring program was developed for the communication department at a large public university in Utah. Two contexts shaped this study: the peer tutoring course itself and the following tutoring internship.

Training course. A training course titled Peer Tutoring Seminar was developed based on reviews of peer tutoring in higher education (Goldschmid & Goldschmid, 1976; Topping, 1996) and existing literature on the subject (Ender & Newton, 2000; Falchikov, 2001; Gillespie & Lerner, 2004; Goodlad, 1998; Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Mazur, 1997; McKeachie, 1999). The course enrolled 13 women and 12 men; each student granted research access to all work. In my role as instructor, I used Ender and Newton's (2000) *Students Helping Students: A Guide for Peer Educators on College Campuses* as the course textbook because of its focus on college students in general rather than a specific subject, as well as its inclusion of such topics as intercultural competence, interpersonal skills, and use of campus resources.

Peer Tutoring Seminar was a formal, upper-division course focused on providing undergraduate students with training in pedagogical theories, principles, and skills necessary for successful tutoring. The course explored communication, interaction, and identity concepts and also covered diversity, research, socioemotional bonding, community outreach, and instructional issues. Overarching questions that the course centered upon included:

- What is the role of a peer tutor/advisor?
- What are communicative strategies for peer/instructional relationships?
- What are some ethical considerations of instruction and evaluation?
- What types of skills do peer tutors and advisors need?
- What types of tutoring skills are needed for the department?

Throughout the semester, at least twice weekly for a period of 16 weeks, tutors posted comments on WebCT³ discussion boards about what they learned in class. The following is an example of a posting⁴:

What do I have to be ready to explain? as suggested by [the guest speaker]. I believe that is good premise for which to prepare to assist in the teaching, and coaching of students or whatever leadership assignment roles that are expected of one. This is because there is always going to be questions for which a response is expected. Granted the t.a., tutor, etc. does not have to have the right answer, but at least know where the inquirer can be directed. (Discussion 671)

A weekly journal was also required for the tutors and students. These journals were self-reflective in nature, the only requirement being that entries pertained to tutoring experiences both in and out of class for the week. The following is an example of a typical entry from a tutor:

I never really thought too much about peer tutoring before but when it really comes down to it we are doing it often with our peers. I know countless times I have helped others when they are confused and likewise they have helped me. (Journal 28)

Tutor internship. Students who wanted to practice what they learned were asked to submit a brief resume the second month of the training course and to complete an application to become a peer tutor or advisor intern for the communication department during the following semester. The internship was for three hours of upper-division course work and was considered a practicum for the training course. Ultimately, nine students applied and were accepted for the tutoring practicum, including three graduate students.

The internship for all nine students consisted of serving as mentors and facilitators in one of two introductory, large lecture style courses. The six undergraduates (five men, one woman) met with me weekly to discuss concerns, receive help with problems, gain support from each other, and reflect on their own experiences. The majority of the students enrolled in the introductory courses were between the ages of 18 and 25 and fairly evenly divided between male and female. Most were majoring in communication. Extra credit was offered by the professors of both classes for students who were willing to submit weekly journals concerning their interactions with the tutors. There were 230 students between the two classes, and tutors were assigned to groups ranging from five to seven members each.

Observations. As researcher, I engaged in participant observation throughout the entire study (in both the training course and internship) and collected extensive field notes. I also observed the participants to achieve understanding of the nature of a phenomenon, rather than assessing its magnitude or distribution (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Using this method, I spent time with the participants, participated in routine activities, and informally observed and recorded observations (Spradley, 1980).⁵

Because students seemed to view me as an authority figure, rarely opening up and talking to me, field notes largely consisted of observations rather than personal conversations. Here is an example of my field notes taken during the training course:

After [the guest speaker] left we spent a few minutes and talked about what kinds of things [she] said that were applicable to tutoring situations. The students brought out the following: need to be committed, need to not be casual about values and assumptions of values, socializing takes time, really listen to people and don't assume you know the problem, not everyone is a good tutor for everyone, need to help people understand the culture of the situation/department, ask about previous experiences, take them on a physical tour instead of just talking about facilities if they are advising. (Field notes, 28 Oct. 03)

I became a de facto part of the two internship classes to develop active participation. While never a fully invested student in either class, I was a familiar face; had complete access to everyone involved; interacted with students, tutors, and instructors on an almost daily basis; and was occasionally treated as a confidant by all three subject positions (Foucault, 1972).⁶ DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) indicate that this type of interaction and reciprocity is key to building trust and rapport with informants.

Since diverse sources and data are crucial for qualitative research aimed at theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), additional data were gathered through discussion postings, interviews, reflection papers, and weekly journal entries, as students and instructors participated in the program for four months and tutors for eight months.

Interviews. Interviews ranged from 10 to 45 minutes, with the majority lasting 15 to 20 minutes. Interview subjects consisted of all tutors, both instructors, and students from each of the two classes who were willing to meet with me. I conducted 52 interviews in my office, audio taping and transcribing all of the interviews myself. The interview questions were chosen by me based on questions students asked me throughout the semester as well as my interactions in those classes. An outline of the interviews is included in Table 1.

Data Analysis

In this study, I worked from the data, using a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This entails a process of analytic induction in which meanings are inferred from the data collected rather than imposed from another

Table 1. Outline for interviews with students, tutors, and instructors

-
- a. How would you define a peer tutor?
 - b. Do you see the role of tutor as being any different from that of a TA?
 - c. Do you see any benefits for having tutors in the classroom?
 - d. Do you see any risks?
 - e. What are your impressions of the tutors in the class so far?
 - f. Have you worked with a tutor?
 - g. Is there anything that needs to happen for the tutors to be more effective?
-

source, such as a theory. As Smythe and Nikolai (2002) explain, ‘For instructional planners, the value of a grounded theory analysis is substantial, emergent themes are the products of a specific constituent group’s perceived needs rather than assumptions or traditions endorsed by administrators or academics’ (p. 165). In engaging in research informed by grounded theory, I was interested in identifying emerging patterns in the data that provided an insider’s perspective on peer tutoring and its effect on classroom dynamics.

Coding. Coding took place during a number of stages. First, as soon as I began taking field notes, even before the training semester began, I categorized the raw data and labeled the categories with properties and dimensions. For example, after each day’s transcriptions, I used two procedures. I did a line-by-line analysis, making notes about particular words that could lead to a category. For instance, if a journal entry read, ‘I’m not sure what the definition of a peer tutor is,’ I would code that both as *definition* and as *confusion*. Next, I made notes about what types of patterns might be occurring. For example, the first day in the training semester I asked the students to write a message on WebCT. Three students posted messages about how they never went to administration for help—they always went to another student. As I investigated these posts, I began by reflecting on what these students were talking about and under what label these comments might best fit. My initial codes included challenges and resistance to administration, informal socialization, and influence of peers. Ultimately, the codes incorporated relationships, power, resistance, confusion, local performances, expectations, definitions, socialization, and impression management.

Overall, 47 student papers and 17,276 lines of data were used for the analysis and interpretations. Open coding resulted in approximately 2,430 coded units, and all but 220 were accommodated in the data-mining process. After the initial coding and development of themes, I focused on the following research questions which were of equal importance; findings are discussed later in this article:

1. How do students, instructors, and tutors respond to the experience of initiating peer tutoring into the curriculum?
2. How do students, instructors, and tutors come to understand the peer tutor role?
3. What is the response of the peer tutors to the experience of tutoring?
4. How are power and resistance constituted, perceived, and comprehended in classrooms that include peer tutors?

After collecting the data and searching for emergent themes, I began coding around a single category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), searching for connections between a category and its subcategories and exploring both structure and process. For example, after I had more than ten occurrences within a particular category, I sought possible groupings or subcategories, as in this example of verbatim comments from the *role* category (the numbers indicate how many lines of discussion were coded under this subcategory):

- Difficult 127
- Confusion 18
- Tutoring needs to take a backseat to personal study 4
- Challenges are greater than expected 14
 - Difficult situations make tutors not want to be proactive 5
 - Struggled with place in class 7
 - Input wasn't welcome 2
- Accusations make role difficult 3
- Don't feel like part of class 1
- Don't feel like tutor 1
- When not actively contributing, status is in jeopardy 3
 - Group members seem to pull away 3
- Resistance 33
 - Authority in group 18
 - Tutors are not helping out 4
 - Students don't trust tutors 11
- Part of class, part not 2
- Can't bullshit 2
- Need help as a tutor, at times 2

As I continued with axial coding, I looked at reactions from participants, examined the particular type of interaction (e.g. in or outside of class, one-on-one, or group), and consequences. I scrutinized ways that categories and subcategories such as roles and confusion were related to one another. Instead of just identifying topics, I was looking more for where, when, how, and why.

In the final phase of coding, core categories and relationships among those categories were validated, refined, and developed. At this point, the five main categories or themes were challenges of new subject positions, socialization, power, resistance, and impression management. I then reviewed the data from beginning to end, as well as the previous coding steps, to search for internal consistency and gaps in logic. My aim was to find overall themes and discover the relationships among them. During the coding process, I continually compared codes with data to increase validity.

Especially important in the coding process were deviant cases because they tested the rule. Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicate that once researchers link sub-themes with deviant cases, the next step is to find a central theme that ties many sub-themes together. For example, the biggest deviance that occurred in this research was when words did not fit actions. Informants would say they utilized tutors and appreciated having them in the class, yet tutors would say—and observations backed this up—that students were not including them in group discussions or requesting help with problems. The theme that fit these together was resistance. The informants resisted telling me information that they thought might be construed as negative. At the same time, however, they resisted having tutors as part of their groups. This resistance did not really become apparent until I compared tutor journal entries, student interviews, and observations of both.

I blind-coded all transcripts, removing all identifying information. Periodically, over the course of the 18 months, I subjected the transcripts to subsequent blind codings. Finally, excerpts, codes, and findings were discussed with tutors, students, and instructors for verification. Additionally, a senior faculty member served as a research auditor.

Using a grounded theory approach allowed me to uncover discrepancies, find patterns, and build theoretical concepts, rather than examining the data with a particular theoretical perspective.

Results of study

Overall, results indicated that interaction and relationships are key in both describing and implementing a peer tutoring program, especially one that is not skill based, such as math or science. They highlighted the challenges of initiating and understanding new subject positions as students moved to the role of peer tutor and were integrated into classrooms, the need for impression management, and issues of power and resistance.

Challenges

The majority of peer tutoring literature has focused on logistics—the ‘how’ of peer tutoring. The present research, however, demonstrates the importance of training not only for tutors but also for students and instructors. Data addressing research question 1 revealed that the role of peer tutor was not yet established as a cultural object, at least in the communication department, and consequently, did not exist as a resource for this initial group. Because this role was not yet established, students, instructors, and tutors all responded to the tutor with varying degrees of confusion:

Student: None of us had ever had a peer tutor before so it’s hard to gauge that experience because there’s really no effect to compare it to previously in our lives so that’s how I was. I was like, ‘Well, this will be interesting.’ (Interview 23)

Tutor: I have not heard from [the student] since I introduced myself, though he made me believe that he would be asking many questions. I will need to make sure that he has not lost my email. [The student] is the only other person in my group to contact me by email saying, ‘Thanks for contact info. We plan on using you as a resource, so see you Tuesday.’ Despite my emails to the group I feel out of touch with them. I am sure this is due to most of them not having met me in person. I am going to email them today and ask them all to please meet with me at the back of the lecture hall 10 minutes before class this Tuesday so we can all meet and get caught up on where we stand with upcoming projects. (Journal 524)

I talked to this particular undergraduate tutor after the incident noted above. He indicated that he had to readjust his vision of tutoring—that he had to cater to the students instead.

These examples support Callero’s (1994) findings that suggest if a role is not yet conventionalized, it cannot aid in the construction of social action. There were mixed

or uncertain expectations as to what would happen in the classrooms, that is, how individuals would utilize tutors or imbue meaningfulness into the role. As a result, the peer tutor role could not be used as a resource until some sort of academic socialization took place.

Because socialization had to occur even as the peer tutor role was being performed, tutors, students, and instructors, in response to research question 2, discovered that the title did not invoke a consistent set of expectations. Some students wanted the tutors to do their work for them while others wanted the tutors to stay out of the way unless they were called upon, saying such things as: 'It is hard to explain what the objective is when the students don't want to even listen to understand, they just want a cut and dry answer, so they can do the assignment (Journal 1155)' and 'It's like they wanted me to contribute but I couldn't in the way they wanted me. They wanted me to write their stuff but I'm not going to do that (Interview 36).'

Tutors themselves sometimes even wondered if their position was needed: 'I ask myself if a tutor is really necessary. If you could ask a friend for help, wouldn't that be easier? Would it be even more convenient? More comfortable?' (Journal 61). This was especially true when they felt like they were not being used as a resource by the students in the class:

The peer tutor situation is a little different than I had expected because I am not really doing any tutoring so to speak. I have helped some students out with some of the problems that they have had, but I don't think of it as being actual tutor work. All the things that I have had to do thus far are things that I could have done just as a friendly classmate as if someone next to me in class asked a question. I'm not too sure the role of the peer tutor exists and I think it comes down to being more personable with everyone and just sort of being friendly and open to asking and answering questions together. (Journal 606)

Approximately 10% of the students wondered if having tutors in the class was undermining the work that the instructor should be doing. Another 10% felt that tutoring was devaluing the work and learning that the students needed to be doing themselves. Students might have a false sense of security in that if they do not do their work, they can just go to a peer tutor and get the answers, or 'If you have an assertive peer tutor who thinks they have all the right answers, then all of that learning would be circumvented. The peer tutor would just say, "Come to me for the right answer and I'll spoon feed it"' (Interview 48).

However, the tutoring process was more than simply disconnected expectations of what the tutor role would mean for students, instructors, and tutors. What became apparent through analysis was that the position of tutor was in continual negotiation throughout the semester as tutors acquired the knowledge and skills that enabled them to enact their roles, and as students and instructors learned what to expect from the tutors (Brim, 1966).

Impression management

In answering research question 3 'What is the response of the peer tutors to the experience of tutoring?' tutors were forced to continually engage in impression

management. They were presenting a new role to the classroom—at least for both instructors and the majority of the students. Thus, they had to define their role and manage the way that others viewed them.

Tedeschi and Norman (1985) claim self-presentation is ‘a set of behaviors designed by an actor to establish particular identities in the eyes of various audiences ... self-presentations are attempts to influence others to perceive the actor as having a particular identity’ (p. 293). The peer tutors had to convince the other students in the classes that though they were students just like everyone else, they had additional insight and credibility that allowed them to function as a resource apart from the instructional staff. Tutors started out making comments such as, ‘As far as the role I played, I don’t know how much of a tool I was used. I mean, I didn’t feel I was used much (Interview 40).’ Other tutors said such things as:

I kind of wish I would have been able to do more for the students like more of an active role, but I don’t think, I couldn’t have done anything to change that. I think it’s up to the class and up to the students themselves if they want to take advantage of it. (Interview 41)

They have to understand that we weren’t there to give the right or wrong answers but merely to show them possible ways to come up with their own right answers. I’m not sure if everyone really grasped the idea and the role that we were playing in the class. (Journal 1181)

Students wanted the tutors to fulfill the role of tutor (whatever they saw that as), but at the same time they suspected ulterior motives. One tutor said:

The very first role that I took was to say, ‘Here’s my own personal motives of being here ... and, this is everyone’s position and it’s all on the table, okay.’ Even as clear as that was throughout the semester they kept saying, ‘Are you secretly taking notes? Are you a narc?’ You know, what’s going on? (Interview 48)

This sort of comment sheds additional light on research question 1 as it shows students’ responses to peer tutors. One student even indicated that unless the tutors were useful to them, their group did not even want to make space for them.

The risk is if they’re really not performing. Again, they’re just an unnecessary obstacle really. They become an impediment to the process rather than an asset ... I think he needs to become more assertive in reinforcing his resourceability—I don’t know what the word is—the fact that he’s a resource, I’m here to help. (Interview 20)

However, after being able to help a student, one tutor commented, ‘I have to validate my reason for being there—that I can be helpful for them—that’s why I’m there. Then they accept me as a tutor (Interview 36).’ Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) support this affirmation of knowledge as necessary for one’s self-identity and the impressions of others: ‘The construction of knowledge and skills are key resources for regulating identity ... as knowledge defines the knower: what one is capable of doing (or expected to be able to do) frames who one “is”’ (p. 630).

Schlenker (1985) defines *identity* as ‘a theory (schema) of an individual that describes, interrelates, and explains their relevant features, characteristics, and experiences’ (p. 68). In this particular case, peer tutors spent an entire semester learning what would be expected of them as tutors and what behaviors would be helpful (i.e.

listening, editing papers, being open to others' views, ethical treatment of others, time management skills). None of these tutors had any prior experience tutoring, and as they entered the classrooms, they had to repeatedly establish, in a variety of ways, their identity and position. The following quotes demonstrate some of this identity work tutors expressed to me. 'I told them not to put "peer tutor" after my name and one person said, "So, you're not into the authority stuff, huh?" I don't like the power position' (Field notes, 5 March 04).

I try to present myself as someone that, you know, I didn't want to come off as an authoritative person anyway, but, wanted to be someone that they could just throw ideas off of and just provide feedback to them. (Interview 40)

As next explained, dramaturgical phases and negotiation also contributed to the way that identity was constructed.

Dramaturgical phases. In support of Fairhurst and Sarr's (1996) dramaturgical impression management phases, tutors utilized framing, scripting, staging, and performing to respond to the experience of tutoring. They set up their role by talking about it among themselves and with students. They reiterated the role when they explained and directed their performance, especially when telling students the parameters of what they would and would not do (i.e. not writing papers for the students).

Negotiating position. Helping students become peer tutors involves much more than teaching them tutoring techniques—it also involves training them to understand the position they will occupy. Data from this study demonstrated that peer tutors assume they will be wanted and encouraged in their role. Students in the training course made such comments as, 'What better opportunity for a success story than through helping others to better educate themselves!?' (Journal 175) and 'I like helping others get what they need' (Journal 403).

Data also underscore the way tutors viewed themselves as just being a student but also helping others. Reality, however, does not always match assumptions because peer tutoring relies on interaction, as next illustrated:

My group finally talked to me again last week. It made me feel as if I could actually help them with their projects. But no one has contacted me since. They still haven't informed me of where we are meeting this week, so I am flip flopping back and forth about feeling helpful. I know that they have split into groups and have assigned each person a group. Once again I was not assigned a group and so I feel I am looking out in the hall, rather than helping my group. I still use words such as: us, we, my group, but I am still an outsider. The group seems to be doing well with out me. (Journal 1147)

I don't think that the peer tutor and what that actually means, and how that's defined, and what they're supposed to do, and what their role is, was clear. We just based our interaction with our peer tutor. But, different groups had different ... very different ... and one group I know said, 'Well, I don't think our peer tutor should guide us so much because it should be our decision' and so ... I liked having the observer and then plus, when we were getting ready to do some of our case studies and how to approach it you know, he made

some suggestions about different ways we could approach developing these case studies and without telling us how, what to do exactly, different ways of looking at it and we thought that was beneficial. I don't think it hurt anything at all. (Interview 43)

Students viewed tutors as having a particular subject position beyond their role. As soon as tutors walked through the door, they changed, in the eyes of the students, from being 'one of them' to having at least a perception of power. As interactions occurred, tutors had to continually adapt their performance to assert that image to others.

Changes in power and resistance

Peer tutors entering a classroom cannot automatically expect to be greeted with open arms and support from either instructors or students. In response to research question 4, both power and resistance issues were found to be inherent in the inclusion of peer tutors in a college classroom.

Instructors. In general, instructors did not exhibit overt resistance to tutors. However, resistance was demonstrated when instructors were initially solicited to participate in the program. Ultimately, only two agreed to participate, and both had previous exposure to the idea.

Instructors were also hesitant about the time requirement to fully integrate, train, and utilize tutors. One instructor indicated that he did not feel he had made good use of the tutors at all, that he was not prepared for time it would take to ensure that tutors were effective. Other reflective comments included:

There were moments when I wished ... there were moments in the class when I said, 'OK' to the class—'Involve yourself with the peer tutors. Here's the information.' And I wish I said, 'Here's what you can expect.' I'm sure I did but I just didn't emphasize it enough. (Interview 42)

[It] really requires substantially more dedicated time on the part of the instructor to get it going, to get it set up ... the design of the course has to be substantially heightened and there has to be a recognition by the peer tutor of their role and training set up and all of that infrastructure has to be put into place for it to work. (Interview 49)

Instructors from the two communication courses who provided the majority of data for this study, though they had a desire and willingness to include tutors, did not plan for, or make changes to include, the time necessary to fully train tutors. This was in spite of the fact that both recognized increased training and interaction with tutors would have been helpful and would have made the program more successful.

Students. Data show that some students at least initially assigned power to anyone occupying the role of tutor. At the same time, others did not grant that power, regardless of role, unless credibility was established. Some students refused to even accept tutors, viewing them as interfering with the opportunity to learn on their own. When asked about the role of a tutor, one student responded:

It's an opportunity for students to take spoon feeding if that's what they're looking to do—sliding by. I don't think that anywhere in the near future it's going to ... that it would like dampen the quality of a degree like from an institution or something like the quality of instructors might dampen the quality of a degree. Whereas, as if you go on to [a community college] as opposed to Harvard, you know, the quality of the education ... but, I can see that there is potential there that the quality of the education could be questioned if peer tutoring was a dominant force at an institution. (Interview 23)

Students questioned the role itself, inquiring why tutors were needed if they were paying tuition to be taught by instructors not peers, and what quality of education would occur if tutors became an integral part of higher education.

Joint production. Power and resistance are joint performances that begin in the reciprocity of a relationship. Despite the fact that tutors arrived in classrooms with the blessing of the instructional staff and with a formal role, many students did not automatically assign power to those tutors. They gained positional power as they demonstrated the ability to help the students *in ways that the students wanted to be helped*. Otherwise, there was great resistance from students. This became obvious when some students wanted extensive day-to-day help and others wanted to be left alone unless they sought the tutor's assistance: '[The tutor] told me his group first handed him the list of emails for the group as if he was the perceived authority. He refused to take it and after that he was included less in the group' (Field notes, 5 Feb. 04) and 'As he has been able to perform a meaningful role, his place in the group has become more accepted and stable' (Journal 294).

When the efforts and desires matched, tutors were granted power and students turned to the tutors for help. When they did not, students refused to include tutors. One tutor complained about how his group was resisting him:

He said the ways he has seen resistance are when he sent numerous emails to group members and none emailed him back. ... Another way is that the group decided to meet on Thursdays and not Tuesdays when this tutor cannot attend. After explaining his situation, his group went ahead with the Thursday plan not caring whether he could attend or not. [The tutor] hasn't really felt any personal resistance towards being a tutor however and has been dealing with the student resistance by being persistent in sending emails and making himself available and accessible both by email and personal contact. (Field notes, 5 Mar. 04)

Time and time again, tutors wrote in their journals, commented in their interviews, and expressed in the support class their confusion about why students were not asking them for help or were even actively excluding them from group meetings:

My group doesn't really keep me informed about what is going on. I find it difficult to really show my support for my group. But at the same time I can't tell them what they should be doing so I am sort of pushed out by my status as a peer tutor, and not a student. (Journal 617)

Tutors were nominally granted power but gained no privilege until a relationship was formed. This research thus highlights the fact that students are not passive recipients of power or culture—they have the power to accept or reject classroom practices,

even if this occurs in micropractices that are largely hidden to the instructor or others in power.

Understanding how power and resistance influence the enactment of a tutoring role creates a need for two areas not frequently discussed in peer tutoring literature. First, as a result of these findings, those involved in training peer tutors should stress the liminality or 'in-betweenness' of the position. Tutors can be a great asset in interacting with students on the same level and increasing understanding of the student position. They can also be a bridge between instructors and students, with characteristics of both and yet neither fully student nor fully instructor. Second, it is necessary to recognize that programs in early stages will engender more resistance than those that are already established.

As students and tutors interact and form relationships, it takes both parties to demonstrate power and/or resistance. This enactment took place in many different forms and at many different times in this study but always in the context of the particular relationship developed by individual tutors and students. This study demonstrates that power and resistance are reciprocal events in relationships and extends power and resistance research by demonstrating the strategies and tactics that take place through communicative means (Fassett & Warren, 2003).

Conclusions and directions for future research

Although peer tutoring is becoming more prevalent, administrators cannot assume that tutors will automatically be utilized, becoming an asset to the classroom. Instructors, tutors, and students all need to find a common ground about what it means to be, or use, a tutor in a particular classroom. This study focuses on communication classes, but it is also applicable to other fields.

Findings demonstrate that students, instructors, and tutors respond to peer tutoring according to previous experiences and expectations. In addition, tutors must continually manage the way they are viewed by others and establish, on an ongoing basis, their credibility and usefulness to students. Finally, power and resistance occur not in a vacuum but through continual negotiation and in the reciprocity of the relationship.

From this research, it is apparent that the use of peer tutors is not something that can be grafted onto a standard classroom configuration with automatic success—the system must be designed specifically with peer tutors in mind. It is a whole system of training and support concerning the socialization of students, teachers, and instructors in the interaction.

This study demonstrates the importance of the relationships that are formed as tutors, students, and instructors interact. Continued peer tutoring research should more closely examine this socialization with a focus on everyday interactions. Future research could emphasize the perspective of the instructor or provide a detailed contextualized examination of the interactions the tutor experiences and the impact on their academic socialization.

Future research should also focus on whether discursive forms change when the ages, education level, and/or genders of the actors change. In this study, the students

were young. Would older students utilize tutors less? Do females or males utilize tutors more? Do female students seek female tutors or vice versa? One student commented that her tutor was 'really cute.' Does physical appearance of tutors make a difference? Does the number of years of schooling students have achieved change their willingness to utilize tutors? Does the difficulty of the course change expectations and utilization of tutors? Future research should also examine the ages and the genders of tutors more closely. One pertinent question is, how does the interaction and discursive form change as ages and genders of students and tutors change? Qualitative communication research may identify more closely the specific types of discursive lines, obligations dictated, and rights given as ages and genders of participants change.

Notes

1. Though LEAP was formerly an acronym for Liberal Education Arts Program, it now is a stand-alone word that represents an entire program known solely as LEAP.
2. Supplemental instruction is provided by universities for high-population classes.
3. WebCT is an e-learning system used by some educational institutions.
4. Respondents' actual wording, spelling, and punctuation are used.
5. IRB approval was solicited and received.
6. Instead of viewing individuals as endowed with a particular identity, the term *subject position* refers to a rhetorically constructed and socially negotiated phenomenon as conceived by Michel Foucault (1972). In this research, the *subject position* refers to tutors, students, and instructors.

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