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Communication, Learning and Social Support at the Speaking Center: A Communities of Practice Perspective

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family who inspired and encouraged the initiation and completion of this project. This would have not been possible without you. Thank you to my father for driving me to forensic competitions, helping me question my assumptions, and always debating me. Thank you to my mother for teaching me about your love of art, crafts, and gardening and the reminders to take care of myself. Thank you to my daughters, for asking the questions that revealed and gave voice to my own feminist awareness and reminding me that we can do hard things. To my sister, the ultimate cheerleader, for always believing I could and should pursue this goal. Thank you to my husband for sharing in the successes and holding my hand through the challenges. This project could also not have happened without the tutors in this study as well as those before and after this study. Finally, thank you to my dissertation committee for their support and help over the years.

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ABSTRACT

In response to increasing demand for public speaking instruction, more institutions are establishing campus speaking centers staffed by student tutors. Peer tutors provide clients with a range of supports in the speech-making process, including suggestions for speech content and organization and for improving delivery during simulated practice sessions. This study investigates patterns of peer interaction in one campus speaking center to understand the dynamics of peer support in a non-classroom setting and how they may create the conditions for student learning. This ethnographic study conceptualized speaking center activities and the practice of oral communication skills development through the lens of communities of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998). The CoP perspective conceptualizes learning as something accomplished through participation in a real-world setting, and assumes that individuals learn through interacting with other people, using the setting and applications that would normally make use of the knowledge. Informed by the CoP model and communication perspectives on social support, this study identifies the communication processes that create and maintain the speaking center as a community of practice and the ways in which the participants' formed their identities as "expert" tutors through their participation. The key findings in this study include: 1) *The role of physical space in community dynamics*. The unique location and layout played an important role in the social organization of this non-classroom setting, in particular being able to observe and consult with one another allowed for mutual engagement. 2) *Improvisation as a key resource*. Dealing with the spatial constraints encouraged flexibility as a key element of this community. Given the ever-changing nature of the space and actors,

adaptability and being able to improvise, were part of daily interactions. 3) *Learning through participation: The "Teaching Curriculum" vs. "Learning Curriculum".* At the center, learning can be understood as occurring when a newcomer learns to participate and talk the talk of a tutor. At the same time that members are participating in the learning curriculum, they are making use of a teaching curriculum in the form of tools of the community. Still, other less curriculum-based learning occurs informally, backstage and in-between the formal tutoring context. 4) *Developing a shared repertoire of communication resources*. The speaking center tutors' shared repertoire included framing, a process of recognizing and adapting to shifting definitions of the situation; the activity of giving feedback, which is a complex processes of giving advice and criticism while reassuring clients through face-saving strategies; prioritizing the amount and scope of feedback; and finding common ground by sharing personal experience as a way of building trust and as enhancing the learning climate. 5) *Learning as collaborative*. Tutors recognized that each of them had specialized knowledge. In tutoring consultations, they felt free to call on one another's expertise and also to share their own. This willingness to share resources had practical value as a way of helping clients. These processes invoke issues of identity construction for participants. 6) *The Relational Basis of Peer Tutoring.* In this community, tutors established common ground with clients by disclosing their own struggles with public speaking. As status equals, tutors seemed to feel free to reveal their personal experiences as a way of showing their solidarity with clients and motivating them to persevere, and also to share strategies that had worked for them. The implications of these findings for practitioners interested in establishing campus speaking centers are also discussed.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

A prominent feature in many general education curricula is the basic communication course. According to Morreale et al., (2006), the course is a cornerstone of communication education at colleges and universities across the United States, often providing students' first exposure to the communication discipline. Both academic accrediting agencies and employers emphasize the importance of building competencies that include leadership and teamwork along with writing and problem-solving skills and verbal communication (Ruiz-Mesa & Broeckelman-Post, 2018). Employers, in particular, view students' preparation in these areas as "a career investment that will endure the test of time and will be translatable to new contexts in a rapidly changing world" (Ruiz-Mesa & Broeckelman-Post, 2018, p. 207). These skills are advanced in the basic course (Morrealle 2006; 2016). Some versions employ a public speaking model while others take a hybrid form, combining interpersonal, group, and public speaking (Morreale, 2016, p. 343). Regardless of the format, public speaking instruction plays an important role in the course.

Although the demand for the basic course is strong and speaking-across-the-curriculum initiatives are becoming more common, classroom instruction is usually not adequate on its own to address students' needs for mentoring and support. For this reason, instructors may require students to visit a campus facility known as a communication lab or speaking center (Hobgood, 2000). Von Till (2012) argues that "communication centers have proven themselves to be

invaluable in contributing to student success, retention, and graduation by providing pedagogical support for students" (p. xi). These centers are staffed largely by student peers who provide clients with preparation and confidence-building for public speaking as well as preparation for group projects, interviews, and other needs (Schwartzman, 2011). As a practice, peer tutoring has a long history, traceable to the ancient Greeks. Yet as Topping (1996) explains, peer tutors have often been viewed simply as surrogate teachers, a view that implies a very linear model of knowledge transmitted from tutor to tutee. Only recently has peer tutoring interaction begun to be recognized as "qualitatively different from that between a teacher and a student, and involve[ing] different advantages and disadvantages" (p. 322).

In this dissertation I describe the results of a ethnographic study of one college speaking center in order to better understand the dynamics of help-giving. The study investigates patterns of peer interaction to understand how communication in a non-classroom setting emphasizing processes of peer collaboration and support, creates the conditions for student learning. In the remainder of this chapter I present a summary of relevant literature and show how it provides a foundation for the research questions I will address. I begin by describing key issues and challenges in public speaking pedagogy. I also describe how, as a public speaking instructor, I had an opportunity to establish a speaking center that would serve as a support for traditional classroom instruction. This center and its staff of peer tutors served as my research site. Following the review of literature and the story of how this particular speaking center came about, I outline the Community of Practice perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that frames my approach to understanding communication and relationships at the speaking center. In subsequent chapters I will describe my methodological approach, the results of the study, and, finally, reflect on my findings.

Key Issues and Approaches to Public Speaking Pedagogy

We are called to speak in public all the time—in job interviews, at work, in school, in clubs, and in multiple other contexts. Even so, public speaking courses can be overwhelming for students who are dealing with public speaking anxiety (PSA) (LeFebvre, et al., 2018). LeFebvre and colleagues define PSA as "a type of communication anxiety that stimulates excessive physiological arousal and/or negative cognitive thoughts related to expected or actual public speaking" (p. 349-350). Communication research has documented that public speaking is the single most common fear across ages, genders, education levels, or even preparation and social skills (Horwitz, 2002, p. 3). LeFebvre and colleagues point out that up to 80% of the population experiences context-based communication anxiety, with over 70% of these anxieties related to public speaking. Recognizing that approximately 1.3 million students (Bebee, 2013) take an introductory communication course each year, it can be assumed that more than 910,000 students may currently experience moderate to high anxiety (LeFebvre, et al., 2018). Given that enrollment has increased at two and four-year schools (Morreale et al., 2016), this population of students struggling with PSA is probably continuing to grow. The experience of PSA can have long-term effects, in particular the avoidance of public speaking situations both in the classroom and other everyday contexts (LeFebvre, et al., 2018).

Studies have suggested that speaking anxiety has serious consequences for academic performance. Students who had high CA were significantly more likely to drop out and attain lower grade point averages than those who had low CA (Yook, 2006, p. 6). At the same time, some scholars suggest that "traditional public speaking courses may actually have had a negative impact on highly apprehensive students" (Ellis, 1995, p. 65).

Key to enhancing the speaker's self-confidence has been the ability to manage the perception of threat. Thus a fundamental part of the classroom instruction involves enabling

students to manage the fears that lead to PSA (Robinson, 1997; LeFebvre, et al., 2018, Morreale, 2016). Learning how to realistically view one's physical arousal appears to be critical in controlling the internal dialogue and channeling this energy into a confident demeanor. Increasingly, instructors have sought to increase students' self-awareness of these internal processes as a way of strengthening their performance skills. Robinson's (1997) national survey of instructional methods indicated that instructors were treating apprehensive students during their regular class time in a variety of ways, including: concentrating on a skills training approach; creating a supportive and positive classroom environment; recognizing students' CA as normal; and teaching techniques that helped students handle feelings of apprehension (p. 188). Unfortunately, these goals entail time-consuming activities which may be difficult to provide in traditional classrooms, particularly when classes are large.

As Robinson's survey indicates, instructors seem to consider the creation of a climate in which students see others in the classroom (both students and instructor) as a supportive audience as important to their learning (Beatty, 1988; Robinson, 1997). Yet even though several decades of research argued for the positive effects on student performance arising from supportive classroom interactions, questions remain about what constitutes a supportive climate or how support should be offered (Priem & Solomon, 2009, p. 90). A study by Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield (2010), for example, revealed the importance of positive connectedness, defined as "student-to-student perceptions of supportive and cooperative communication environment in the classroom" (Dwyer et al., 2004, p. 267). Similarly, Rosenfeld, Richman, and Bowen (1998) argued that while a supportive instructor was necessary in promoting positive outcomes, the instructor alone was not sufficient. Showing support through active listening and through giving tangible assistance was equally important (p. 318). Hyde and Ruth (2002) also

found that students were more likely to participate in class if they considered the climate to be supportive. Although it was difficult to demonstrate conclusively how support should be offered, these researchers agreed that classroom peers are an essential element.

In recent years, researchers across the social sciences have made contributions to our understanding of support. Sociologists tend to theorize social support as integration within a social network, whereas the psychological perspective is concerned with the cognitive and emotional processes of individuals. Most of the research informed by the psychological perspective has been linked by a focus on the perceived availability of support, which, according to Burleson & Macgeorge (2002) "is viewed as buffering the individual against stress and its health-damaging effects, as well as enhancing the individual's coping and performance" (p. 380). However, researchers acknowledge there are practical and methodological difficulties in observing the delivery and perception of support in real-world settings.

Such issues are particularly complex in those classes consisting of students with communication apprehension. Ayers (1990) focused on the ethical implications of anxiety in the classroom, arguing:

> [w]e cannot continue to overlook the harm we are inflicting on such people. Up to this point, we could take comfort in the belief that creating a supportive class environment was enough to help people deal with AA [audience anxiety], but the person with extreme AA is not likely to perceive the environment as supportive. We have all encountered such students and have been puzzled as to their reaction to our 'non-threatening' classrooms. The brute fact is that this person perceives our classroom to be threatening no matter how much we try to convince him or her otherwise (p. 290).

Ayers' point suggests that instructors' attempts to create a "supportive," non-threatening context cannot ensure that all participants will respond as anticipated; a supportive environment cannot be legislated although instructors can create the conditions in which support may be more likely to arise. Given the possibility of discrepancies in individuals' perceptions, it may be helpful to shift from a view of support as an individual state or emotion to understanding how it has arisen conjointly in interaction between participants (Cronen, 1995), a view more compatible with a situated learning perspective. Taking a more interactional view of support fits with the CoP perspective used here because it recognizes the importance of relationships among participants in the learning process.

From this perspective communication scholars' Goldsmith and Fitch's (1997) study of advice-giving is helpful in revealing the interactive nature of supportive acts. Recognizing that the communicative processes of support arise conjointly in interactions between participants, the authors examined advice as one type of support and found that the reaction to advice relied heavily on situational and cultural context (p. 455). Their study advanced understanding of the specific dynamics of advice-giving, focusing especially on the "symbolic and rhetorical dimensions of giving and receiving support rather than simply measuring frequency or amount of support" (ibid). Their study showed that both advice givers and receivers struggle with conflicting goals. Advice givers strive to balance contradictions between being "supportive" and being "honest." At the same time, receivers run the risk of appearing as less than competent because they are asking for advice, although they may be seen as ungrateful if they question or reject advice that is well-meant. In navigating these tensions, "[p]articipants in advice-giving interactions attend to salient features of the episode," (ibid): for example, how close is the relationship, or is the advice-giver seen as having the necessary expertise. Whether advice-

giving episodes are read by the participants as supportive or unsupportive is the result of a complex interplay of elements.

Moving Beyond the Classroom: The Communication Center as a Pedagogical Context

In response to the unique needs and challenges facing students and instructors, many institutions are turning to speaking centers as a way to enhance public speaking instruction. When resources such as faculty time and classroom space are limited, speaking centers offer practical solutions. The speaking center model is founded on a recognition that to succeed in public speaking, students require opportunities for rehearsal prior to performance that are difficult to provide in the classroom or during faculty office hours. A single student dropping in to receive coaching on a speech might leave other students waiting to meet with the faculty member before the conclusion of office hours. Scheduling additional appointments with students to aid them in their preparation can be difficult among all the other obligations undertaken by full-time faculty.

An added layer of challenges arises for part-time instructors and graduate teaching assistants who teach speech. Morreale et al (2006) found that 71.5% of responding institutions use GTAs to teach their basic course and 29.5% rely on part-time faculty (Morreale, 2006, p. 424). In holding their required office hours, it often becomes disruptive to have students presenting their speeches and receiving critique in the shared spaces where other adjunct faculty members are also hosting their office hours.

In communication centers, students can receive a full range of services that the classroom, one-on-one meetings in a faculty office or adjunct meeting spot do not achieve, no matter how dedicated the faculty member. Communication centers have been beneficial for both students and faculty because the numbers of hours are difficult to absorb into regular semester

office hours by the nature of the richness of the tutoring activity itself. Centers have also assisted faculty across the curriculum who assigned public speaking activities but who themselves were not classically trained in the field of speech communication.

Although focus and missions have varied, the overall goal of communication centers is to serve broader audiences and perform more diverse functions than their predecessors, narrowly defined as speech labs, which solely focused on public speaking. The labs that began in the late 1980's started in small spaces with limited equipment, and some, according to Von Till (2012) started in closets. Schwartzman (2011) defined communication centers broadly as "sites or the clusters of personnel devoted to developing oral communication skills at institutions of higher learning" (p. 58). Some centers existed solely for the support of courses in oral communication, while others supported a broader goal of communication development across the curriculum. Currently, communication centers strive to "hone the communication competencies of faculty, staff, and students, often spanning preparation for group projects, information-gathering interviews, stylistic and content development, interpersonal interactions, and confidence-building for public presentations" (ibid). Over the past thirty years, communication centers have grown, center leaders have organized professionally, and scholarship on communication centers has expanded. Currently there are one hundred and fifty centers that are registered with the National Association of Communication Centers.

By providing pedagogical support for students, Von Till (2012) argues, communication centers have "proven themselves to be invaluable in contributing to student success, retention, and graduation" (p. xi). Examining the relationship between communication centers and retention, Yook (2006) found that variables affecting rates of retention such as academic performance, social interaction with students and faculty, mentoring and peer support, and

involvement in campus activities, are ones that are affected by the work of communication centers. Several studies exploring the link between academic performance and communication centers argue that communication centers helped student speeches become more coherent and cogent, thus enhancing the quality of academic performance (Kangas-Dwyer, 2006; Neher, 2003; Yook, 2006 in Yook, 2012, p. 5).

An important element in speaking centers is the presence of peer tutors. The communication between the providers of communication support services, referred to as peer consultants, tutors, or mentors and the users of services (clients, students, or tutees) determined the success of the centers. Because peer tutors are trained to listen to the assignment requirements and needs of the student, they are thought to offer a significant advantage in their ability to provide "targeted feedback for improvement during simulated speaking event practice sessions" (Yook, 2006, p. 66). Wilson (2012) claims that the peer tutors are no longer interacting solely as students but are now occupying a "liminal space" between the roles of student and teachers (p. 57). Thus when students interact with communication staff members, "they are 'rehearsing' and becoming more comfortable with interacting with those in a position of relative power in the instructional process" (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Perrine, 1998 in Yook, 2012, p. 5). In addition, Moust and Schmidt (1994a) found that students viewed peer tutors as more understanding of their problems than staff tutors and more interested in their personal situations, as well as less authoritarian. The literature on writing centers adds a somewhat more nuanced picture regarding the tensions that arise in the peer tutor/tutee relationship (Bruffee, 1995; Toppings, 1996; Olson, 1984 ; and Boquet, 1999). Healy (1991) explains that "…tutoring in general and the writing conference in particular can

cast tutors and tutees in a variety of roles" (p. 42). If tutors find themselves negotiating a variety of roles, such as, facilitator, supporter, guide, etc., and "if they need to be able to shift roles to fit the demands of a particular tutoring situation, then the potential for role ambiguity and role conflict seems fairly obvious" (Healy, p. 43). Some tutors experienced insecurity in their role and lack of expertise (Boquet, 1999, p. 464). Negotiation of the inherent tensions in the peer tutor relationships is what Maugh (2012) advances as "the art of tutoring that relies on the skill of reading and understanding the clients' state of mind and then working with the knowledge the client already possesses to advance their written and spoken ideas" (p. 180). Bruffee (1995) explains that ultimately:

> What peer tutor and tutee do together is not write or edit, or least of all proofread. What they do together is converse. They converse about the subject and about the assignment. They converse about, in an academic context, their own relationship and the relationship between student and teacher. Most of all they converse about and *pursuant to* writing (p. 94).

According to Morreale (2006), it has been an accepted premise and research indicates that speaking centers or labs enhance the learning of students in the basic course. However, the use of labs is still the exception rather than the norm. Communication center/oral communication labs were only available at 42.9% of two-year schools and 21.6% of four-year schools (Morreale et al., 2016, p. 348). These researchers suspected that "there are numerous reasons for the nonproliferation of these labs, although, in all probability, a suitable budget and securing a qualified staff may be central stumbling blocks" (Morreale, 2006, p. 429).

Given the rise of communication centers, and the renewed focus on peer support in undergraduate learning environments, communication scholars have had a unique opportunity to study support in action and, in the process, to document how communication pedagogy has been expanding with the development of communication centers. Through this practice-based project, I have attempted to add to our understanding of how undergraduate students gain expertise as peer mentors. By studying peer support as situated in a specific learning context I seek to add to our overall understanding of supportive communication, and of negotiated processes of learning, and of identity construction in group settings. Viewing speaking center activities and the practice of oral communication skills development through the lens of communities of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) provides a useful perspective on these processes.

Creating an Alternative: The Formation of a Campus Speaking Center

As I think back on the events that led to the formation of the speaking center, I recall that my desire for a speech coaching/rehearsal space stemmed mainly from frustration with my workspace. At the time I was a full-time term faculty on a one-year renewable contract. Instructors across multiple disciplines were contained in a shared building. The space was nicknamed by faculty that spent their office hours in it as the "Bull-Pen" since it once served as a cattle barn. Sixteen cubicle offices with doors and open ceilings were housed in a large brick building with no insulation. Colleagues in this space often jokingly complained about having to listen to students rehearse with me. Occasionally, they joined in, offering resources and suggestions. Sometimes to find more privacy, I took the student outside to a quiet shaded space or went in search of an empty classroom. But as awkward as the Bull-Pen was for meeting and rehearsing with students, I was glad to no longer have to rely on the adjunct common work room available to adjunct faculty. That space had to serve multiple disciplines

and also served as a communal mailroom, copier/printing workspace, and lounge with a microwave and refrigerator. Eventually, because of the problematic nature of space and disruption to others, I reserved rooms in the library (student meeting rooms) so that I could meet with students who needed face-to-face rehearsal and coaching. But these small spaces were cramped and were vastly different from the spaces they would be speaking in.

In addition to the limitations of these out-of-class meeting spaces, I recall one particular incident that captures the intrusive and awkward nature of rehearsal and oral editing in the traditional classroom context. I invited a speech/theatre colleague to my class as a guest speaker. He led the class in vocal drills similar to a singer rehearsing scales until a professor in an adjoining classroom interrupted and demanded we stop due to the disruption. I did not fully appreciate the impact of our practice on the professor and her class until I ran into her at a faculty social event. When I introduced myself she exclaimed to me and the eight or ten colleagues she was standing with, "Oh you're the professor of the 'orgasm' class. It sounded like you were all having orgasms."

As an instructor of public speaking for sixteen years, I've held positions as adjunct, term, and full-time faculty member at two and four-year schools (college and university; public and private) and witnessed the consequences of a lack of institutional support for public speaking instruction. Many students need help with public speaking assignments given across the curriculum. Classroom instruction is usually not adequate on its own and, thus, non-classroom resources are especially important. Yet even though the demand is strong and growing for oral communication skills development, and across-the-curriculum initiatives are common, deficiencies in resources are still the norm.

In the Fall of 2010, while I was a full-time instructor at Hillcrest University (HU)[1], I had an opportunity to create a space that would serve as a facility for training and skill development. I had seen at my three previous institutions how disciplines such as English and Mathematics gained additional support through tutors and labs, for example with a campus writing lab, so I made the argument to my department chair that the campus community would benefit from such a center. I shared with my department chair my dream of a space for speech support services.

Meanwhile, the university's "First-Year Experience" program added a larger oral communication component to their curriculum. My chair felt this was a great opportunity for me to gain the attention of those who could make the center a reality and arranged a meeting with the director. We were able to secure a commitment of sponsorship of paid first-year peer mentors as speech tutors under my direction. The eight tutors and I began our twice a week two-hour free tutoring sessions. I spent time in the beginning of Fall 2010 announcing this new free service. I stuffed faculty mailboxes with promotional flyers and the tutors made large posters to hang in the main hall. Some even got out their chalk and made sidewalk chalk signs promoting the speaking center.

In addition to finding a workable site, the biggest hurdle was funding. By September 2010 I had five tutors who were paid through the First-Year Experience program and two volunteers who were former speech students of mine, but I wanted more hours and a permanent site. At this stage we were all working together for the entire workshop time in a reserved room in the library. During this twice a week, two-hour block of tutoring time we also hosted a speech club meeting. I only started the club because I wanted the speaking center's tutoring information promoted in the weekly announcement of club and campus events that was emailed to the entire

[1] In order to protect the identity of the participants, Hillcrest University (HU) is a pseudonym.

university faculty and students. At the time, this was the best way to advertise our services. However, when I first approached the group responsible for the weekly announcement I was told they only posted information about clubs, not student services, so I created a club and used the workshops as a club event. While I tried to be resourceful, the institutional bureaucracy and lack of formal administrative support frustrated me.

My department chair and I continued to meet with administrators and faculty to discover our options, possibilities, and best alliances. We asked how others obtained lines for additional faculty and funding for their programs. Over the next four semesters, the First-Year Experience increased the number of tutors and the number of hours they were funding for tutors. After two years, Speech Department faculty, the Chair and the Dean, were in agreement that the department would pay for additional tutor pay and I had a small budget line for center supplies. In the middle of a two-year university expansion I was transferred to a larger office and this eventually morphed into an even larger office and a commandeered hallway with two filing cabinets, five tables and twelve chairs.

A significant motivation for me in starting the center was my disappointment with students' final work. I disliked having to deduct points from presentations, especially when I knew that with just a little bit of rehearsal, or if they could just slow their rate of speaking and breathe, they would perform so much better. I often wanted to slow down the instructional process with a "pause and rewind button." I wanted to pause during the speeches and explain what students were doing that needed improvement, or sometimes just calm them down. And to be honest, I have had occasions, when students started to hyperventilate or cry, when I did pause the presentation by asking them to stop and walk with me into the hallway. I would lead

them in a few deep breaths and ask them to keep breathing, review their notes, and step back in after the next speaker. Speakers need to practice hearing themselves speak.

I also created the center because I dreaded student reactions when I had to announce a new speech assignment in class. The students' eyes glazed; they became tense and the energy shifted in the room. Behnke & Sawyer's (1999) research explains the shift I perceived. They reported that "the highest level of psychological speech state anxiety occurs, not during the speech, but during the anticipatory period before the presentation begins. In fact, the highest peak of that anxiety for most student speakers occurs immediately after the public speaking assignment is announced in class" (Witt & Behnke, 2006, p. 168-169). That anxiety was palpable in my classroom. But now, even though I was forcing them to do something they didn't want to do, I could tell them about the speaking center. The center offered support in the entire speech making process: brainstorming, researching, outlining, rehearsing, and developing visual aids; and there were peer tutors available to help students prepare for their speeches. I encouraged them to stop by and just get to know us. I offered class extra credit for visiting with a tutor. I noticed that simply offering this option eased some of the discomfort I felt for making them anxious.

Another reason for starting the Speaking Center was to gain institutional recognition for work that had been largely invisible. I was doing numerous private, off-the-record meetings and coaching sessions with administrators, IT staff, and other colleagues, in addition to meeting individually with students. Those who wanted a private appointment with me would email or approach me at face-to-face events, meetings, and even waiting in line at Einstein Bagels. What I found most interesting was that many of those who sought me out were privately suffering or feeling that their reputations and careers were at risk. I listened to their

accounts, including the worst moments when they felt their body betray them, causing them to faint, throw up, break out in hives, blush, have tunnel vision, sweat, shake, or struggle to breathe deeply. Those who took the step to contact me privately recognized that being able to speak to others in both small and large group situations was an urgent professional concern.

The tutors and I worked with students, staff and faculty on topics ranging from articulation and pronunciation development; design and formatting with PowerPoint and Prezi; and planning presentations, to simply speaking up in meetings. My philosophy was to support anyone who walked through our door: student, faculty, staff, and alumni. Even delivery, maintenance and campus subcontracted service workers requested suggestions and feedback regarding events like an upcoming best man speech, a church or social function, or general strategies to cope with anxiety in various speaking situations. Thus, in addition to complementing classroom instruction, I saw the center as addressing a larger need for assistance with public speaking in everyday life. My aim was to provide a resource and supportive environment to develop all these skills.

The Tutor Training Process: Learning by Doing

One of the things that excited me most was the possibility of exploring alternatives to traditional classroom instruction. Although I had been teaching public speaking for six years when I started the speaking center, I adopted a different approach to training peer tutors from my usual classroom process. Rather than covering concepts and course material sequentially followed by testing, I began by orienting tutors to the new role they were assuming. To give them an overview of the subject matter, I laid out all the materials —textbooks, my personal books, notes and tutor reference binders that contained handouts, upcoming speech contest information sheets, speech club applications, visitation slips, and sample speech critique forms.

Then depending on what was going on at that time, I slowly talked through the center's mission, history/purpose, and unpredictable nature of the workshops and individual tutoring/coaching sessions since we never knew how many people would attend and what we would be focusing on.

Most importantly, I tried to take advantage of hands-on opportunities for learning. Often I waited until we were working with a client who needed help with something, for example, a particular organizational pattern or strategy; the need to narrow a topic or focus the thesis statement; or simply managing communication apprehension or performance anxiety. Once I identified the help they needed, I reviewed the goals with both client and tutor. If the subject was something the tutor was comfortable covering, the tutor and client moved from my desk to one of the five circular tables I had at the center. I was always in earshot and often visited groups to interject suggestions or act as a sounding board for ideas or concept development.

When there were no clients, I often initiated impromptu workshops. After a review of a sample student video, a discussion of a speech they observed in their own classes or at the center, I asked new and established tutors the same question, "What would you say to the speaker if he or she were here?" Depending on their impromptu responses and feedback to their hypothetical client, we then determined the area to concentrate on for that day. I might also probe topics that resonated with my personal and professional agendas (e.g., using gender neutral language, developing inclusive examples, the importance of face-saving feedback, etc.). My approach to training was to encourage tutors' continuous engagement with clients and each other as an ongoing part of our practice. This engagement led to conversations that highlighted divergent viewpoints and values.

One particular day serves as an example of a typical day at the center. This vignette captures the tone, joint activities and mutual accountability in our interactions. As I was going over the center resources with a new tutor, Juan, a student poked his head around the corner. He had his speech on notecards and was carrying his laptop with a PowerPoint presentation that he would deliver that evening. Juan and I left the books and journal articles and focused our attention completely on our new client. After the student presented his speech, I offered a few suggestions. Juan had also written down several comments, so I asked if he had any suggestions to add. We had not discussed this process in the little bit of training we had done before this student showed up, but the tutor was a former student and I knew he had a high level of focus and immediacy. On his list was a suggestion to add more vocal variety. I could not help but smile at this. He was in my speech class a year ago, and my most frequent critique was of his monotone voice and lack of energy. And here he was, sitting next to me, overviewing and providing examples of effective vocal variety. Not only was he identifying the sections that needed work, but he was also providing demonstrations with vocal inflection to support his suggestion. These were the kinds of moments that spoke most eloquently to me about the potential for student growth through the peer tutoring experience.

Two new visitors peeked around the corner and I asked Juan if he could do another rehearsal run-through with our current client on his own. He assured me that he could, so I greeted the new visitors in the hallway. They were graduate students seeking help on a paired debate assignment. I checked in with the tutor and then I came back to the debaters. As the tutor walked out with the student he was helping, I saw him smiling and encouraging the student to come back and let us know how it went. I commented to our visitor that I heard a lot more energy and enthusiasm in his last run-through. I purposely spoke loudly so that new students

could see that this was a friendly, supportive place, but I also wanted the tutor to know that I appreciated his initiative and enthusiasm on his first day of tutoring.

Three of the more experienced tutors arrived, and I introduced them to the new tutor. At this point another student appeared who had a speech to give at an upcoming conference and had prepared her PowerPoint presentation along with a brief outline. We only had twenty minutes left, so she asked if she could make an appointment for another time but I suggested she present her speech now. She said that she didn't want to hold the four of us up. She was energized and told us that this was a wonderful academic service, and she wished she had known about it sooner. Everyone encouraged her to present since no one was in a rush to leave. In remembering this moment I am reminded of how I often overheard tutors making arrangements, without financial compensation, to meet outside of our scheduled workshop times in order to assist clients in their rehearsals. What struck me at the time was how easily our new tutor adapted to our group. As we scrambled around to straighten up the chairs, tables, podium, and handouts in the center while closing for the day, I joked with Juan that hands-on experience always made the best training.

As this vignette suggests, the tutors joined and transitioned into this role by engaging directly with clients. It gives a sense of the emergent nature of our practices as we collectively engaged in the process of becoming active participants in our speech tutoring community. I tried in my teaching role to involve the tutors in open discussion about our tutoring practice, incorporating their suggestions where possible, to enable confirmation of their input. As the center director, I wanted the tutors and speech club members to help design our practice from their perspective as students and members of a learning community.

As a researcher, I was curious about the meanings that are created around peer interactions. I wanted to make sense of the moments of focused attention and the giving and receiving of assistance. I found that my experience of attempting to create supportive learning environments for public speaking instruction —in the classroom, tutoring center, and university community—is compatible with situated learning perspectives, particularly with the emphasis on interpersonal relationships as key to the learning process. I have observed speakers attaching value and attributing their success and improvement in their skill development to the face-to-face support they receive from others. Through this project, I seek to add to our understanding of how support is understood in the peer-led learning context of the communication center.

In the following section, I introduce the Communities of Practice model and show how it offers a framework for exploring questions about the nature of communication in the teaching and learning activities of the speaking center.

The Community of Practice Perspective

Approaching speaking center activities through the lens of communities of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is helpful for understanding social interaction in a non-classroom educational setting. A community of practice refers to a specific type of social context characterized by processes of situated learning. Situated learning theory, a general theory of knowledge acquisition, conceptualizes learning as the process that occurs if you put a learner in a real world situation (authentic context) with the opportunity to interact with other people using the setting and applications that would normally make use of that knowledge. Essentially, the theory posits that people "learn from one another, through observing and modeling" (Kerno and Mace, 2010, p. 79). Researchers operating from a situated learning perspective concentrate on asking what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place,

rather than focusing on what kinds of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.14).

At the Speaking Center I observed clients (students, faculty and staff) interacting with others to explore oral communication theory and practice. In contrast to cognitive approaches to learning, which view knowledge as "something people have," the social theory of learning views knowledge as "something people do" (Pastoors, 2007, p. 22). Learning is seen as located in the processes of co-participation, rather than in the heads of individuals (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.13). Thus, the attention of the researcher working from a CoP perspective is focused less on the individual as a "learner" and more on social interactions within the setting and how they constitute the community of practice as a whole.

Applications of the CoP Model

Although CoPs have existed for centuries, Lave and Wenger (1991) are credited for recognizing and articulating the essential characteristics and providing a model that has offered a means to analyze and describe the communicative nature of learning, as participants moved from being novices to full practitioners. Since Wenger (1998) articulated these characteristics, elements and dualities, CoPs have been observed in various contexts ranging from business and government to education, for example, in professional associations and civic life (Kerno & Mace, 2010, p. 79), and among Ph.D. students seeking emotional and academic support (Janson & Howard, 2004). The CoP framework has appealed to organizational communication scholars as a "practical means to evaluate the communicative processes of organizational knowledge" (Iverson & McPhee, 2008). A diverse section of occupational communities have also been explored from a CoP perspective, ranging from airplane pilots (Hutchins & Klausen, 1996), nurses (Bennar, 1994), and educators (Grisham et al., Knight, 2002), to insurance claims

processors (Wegner, 1998), engineers (Kunda, 1992), inter-organizational groups (Kavanaghy & Kelly, 2002; Lathlean & LeMay, 2002), and virtual communities (Bieber et al., 2002), all of which have been conceptualized as communities that share a practice (Iverson & McPhee, 2008).

Scholars working from a CoP perspective have struggled with how best to conceptualize "community," given that it is defined fairly broadly as a group of people connected by a common interest (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The term community does not necessarily imply a group with well-defined boundaries. Instructional design researchers West & Williams (2017) draw on Wenger's work in arguing that "the concept of community emerges as an ambiguous term in many social science fields" (p.1571). Their study focuses on communities within schools where the students were the major participants and learners. After an extensive review of the literature using the keywords learning, community, practice and education, they provide four different ways of conceptualizing boundaries of a community: access (who is present?); relationships (who feels connected and accepted?); vision (who shares the same vision or purpose?); and function (who has been organized to achieve some goal?) (p. 1571). All of these defining characteristics of learning communities are present in CoPs. But of particular interest in this study is the boundary defined by "vision" because the presence of a shared vision for the community involves the "evolution of the members' identities as part of the purposeful community" (p. 1576). Drawing on Wenger (1998), authors West and Williams (2017) point out that ultimately "part of the individual identity is related to the community identity" (p. 1576).

Several lines of research have begun to address communication processes within CoPs. Management scholars Styhre et al.'s (2006) study of construction project workers brings particular attention to verbal and nonverbal interaction. They argue that more focus is needed on communities of practice that rely on verbal interaction rather than written documentation.

Among the construction workers they studied, individuals were sharing know-how and experiences through embodied interactions and the use of tools and machinery rather than through written texts. Smith's (2005) study also sheds light on communication processes, suggesting that the transition from novice to expert involves learning both discipline-specific content and pedagogy, and also norms for how to talk in the community of practice (Smith, 2005). With this focus on ways of speaking, Smith invites us to recognize the importance of learning the local language as part of "what it means to join and participate authentically and competently in a community of practice" (p. 69). This study also addresses issues of intergenerational conflict between established and novice teachers. Smith raises the issue of how new members find ways of challenging assumptions within the community; that is, how do members negotiate tensions involved in these generational encounters? Their study reveals the difficulty of "power-based negotiations" as novice and experienced teachers practice together (p. 69). An important point from their study is that the focus on becoming a competent member of the community, while important, does not encourage the explicit negotiation of different ideas. However, when members interact:

> through the lens of collaboration and negotiation—seeing beyond the process of getting immediate competence—the possibility exists for everyone's learning, newcomers and experts, to be enhanced (ibid).

Also encouraging the challenging of community assumptions, Freeburg (2018) focuses on turning a classroom into a CoP. He argues that when classrooms are turned into an adapted CoP, instructors are freer to move beyond texts or canons of their discipline as the students create and discover "noncanonical" knowledge. This knowledge includes new ideas that may

conflict with or extend the existing information about a given subject or discipline. Freeburg (2018) argues that the existing texts for any discipline, as found in the typical classroom, are insufficient for student learning. In explaining this collaborative approach he states:

> More than mere pedagogical techniques, this is an approach to how instructors view classrooms and the students within them. Instructors recognize and trust the unique insights of students as they bring them into the practice of knowledge creation—a practice central to a knowledge economy (p. 92).

These studies provide a foundation to imagine new spaces for CoPs and the knowledge they offer. Yet despite the diversity of applications, there seems to have been little work applying the model to speaking centers.

As previously mentioned, Wenger's theory of communities of practice reframes the constructs of "learning," "knowledge," and "identity" by suggesting that they are ultimately social processes arising from the collective engagement among members of a community (Swieringa, 2009, p. 148). For the speaking center tutors, their practice and primary activity was assisting clients in developing their oral communication skills. As the vignette describing a typical day illustrated, this practice involved a high degree of learning by doing and improvisation. The tutors were drawn together through their activities and by sharing what they learned while engaging in those activities. Each day, as the center tutors waited for clients to stop by, they worked on their own oral communication skills in practicing and developing their own presentations, including class assignments, competitions, internships, conferences, etc. Instead of my assigning projects, the members voluntarily rehearsed and discussed their own selected projects. This accommodation to the specific interests and preferences of participants is

one of the features that is thought to encourage long-term involvement in a CoP (see for example Azevedo, 2013).

Analytic Tools within the CoP Model

Lave and Wenger (1991) use a spatial metaphor to describe the process of socialization, and knowledge acquisition. They describe CoP participants as moving from the "periphery" of the community to the center, in a "centripetal direction" as they become mature practitioners. This movement is motivated by newcomers' desires to become full practitioners. They argue that "communities of practice have histories and developmental cycles, and reproduce themselves in such a way that the transformation of newcomers into old-timers becomes unremarkably integral to the practice" (p.122). This process of transformation for the "apprentice" involves several, simultaneous role performances: status subordinate, learning practitioner, sole responsible agent in minor parts of the performance, aspiring expert, and so forth (p. 23).

The recruitment and training of tutors at the center followed processes that were roughly similar. Although many of the tutors had a natural ability and excelled as public speakers, I liked recruiting tutors whose communication skills and competence did not come naturally. They were often more empathetic to fellow students seeking assistance. In addition, I strived to recruit those students who wanted to continue practicing and growing in their communication skills, a progression that can be viewed in CoP terms, as movement from the "periphery" of the community to its "center."

As Iverson and McPhee (2002) point out, CoP theory offers a schema for analyzing knowledge as a process by focusing on three key elements: mutual engagement, shared

repertoire, and negotiation of a joint enterprise which together, enact a CoP. These three core elements represent the community's dimensions of practice.

First, mutual engagement allows for knowledge to be shared and enacted and provides the source of coherence for a community. The second characteristic, coherence is "the negotiation of a joint enterprise that keeps a community of practice together" (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). The joint enterprise emerges among the participants in the very process of pursuing it. In emphasizing emergence, Wenger points to the members' negotiated response to their situation: the idea that the enterprise belongs to them in a profound sense "in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control" (ibid). Iverson and McPhee (2008) point out that it is the negotiation through which participants gain mastery and become knowers, and thus "creators of the enterprise" (p. 190).

The third characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence is the development of a shared repertoire of language and symbols. Over time, the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). The repertoire of a CoP can include daily routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of existence, and which have become part of its practice (p. 83). Iverson and McPhee (2008) explain that shared repertoire includes all the knowledge, capabilities, and shared symbols operating within the group of people.

Speaking centers offer intriguing sites for exploring teaching and learning outside the traditional classroom setting. Specifically, they offer opportunities to understand how the experience of learning may be transformed through a shift in the learning context, where context refers to both the physical space and its cultural norms. This dissertation seeks to understand processes of help-giving among peer tutors and between tutors and clients in a facility devoted to

student support. Understanding the support process and how students view supportive learning environments is a crucial area for communication research, particularly as learning contexts expand to include non-classroom spaces. Informed by the Communities of Practice model and communication perspectives on social support, my dissertation explores the following interrelated questions:

RQ1: What are the communication processes that create and maintain the Speaking Center as a community of practice? Here, I was particularly interested in how social support is enacted, and how, in giving feedback, peer tutors negotiate the contradictions between being supportive and giving criticism.

I also addressed a second research question:

RQ2: How are participants' identities as expert tutors and learners formed through participation in the speaking center? That is, as novice participants develop skills in giving feedback, how are their identities as "experts" created and maintained?

In the next chapter I discuss the methodological frameworks, the data, and the analytical stance I take in exploring my research questions.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Case Study Approach

In light of the goal of this project, to understand the social organization of the speaking center as an environment for learning, and the conceptual framework of Communities of Practice, this dissertation used a case study approach. The speaking center setting seemed to offer me a unique opportunity to understand the tutors' perspectives on the meanings and the process of peer support in an undergraduate learning community. Researchers adopting a CoP perspective often make use of case studies (see for example, Iverson & McPhee, 2008; Azevedo, 2013; Styhre, et al., 2006) in which the purpose is to gather comprehensive information about a specific community. According to Tracy (2019), case studies involve in-depth contextual analyses of a particular instance of a naturalistic phenomenon, such as a person, an organization, a program, an event, or a geographical location (p. 61). They are particularly useful when one seeks to understand some particular problem or situation in depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information (Noor, 2008). Case studies have a long history in educational settings, particularly where the focus is on educational programs and classroom dynamics (Bassey, 1999). Educational case studies are sometimes evaluative, where the researcher provides information to administrators or teachers regarding the worth of a program. However case studies can also be ethnographic, which is the approach guiding this project. Ethnographic case studies attempt to

bring to light the cultural norms operating in the setting, including patterns of behavior of which the actors may not be aware (Stenhouse, 1988).

A common criticism of case studies is a presumed lack of scientific rigor and reliability and their failure to address the issues of generalizability. However, a number of writers have questioned this framing as an overly narrow view of research goals. For example Simons (1996) argues that the advantage of case study is its uniqueness, and the potential it holds for uncovering complexity in particular contexts. Similarly Tracy (2019) explains the trade off between generalizable claims and more in-depth inquiry, suggesting that in case studies researchers describe and interpret a contextual scene (rather than separating out specific variables). The goal is to examine interactions and patterns of causes and effects (rather than delineating specific causal pathways). Furthermore case studies involving participant observation entail empathic engagement with those in the scene rather than creating distance and perceived objectivity (Tracy, 2019, p. 61). Similarly Noor (2008) emphasizes the unique strengths of case study as enabling the researcher to gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon, that is, a "round picture in which many sources of evidence were used" (Noor, 2008, p. 1603). In educational settings the holistic nature of case study has been particularly helpful. Rather than reducing the learning process to independent, isolated parts, it can reveal relationships among aspects of the process, for example the ways that peer relationships and teacher-student relationships influence each other, and their role in the overall system (see for example, Patton, 1990).

Once the choice of case study has been made, researchers may use a variety of data collection methods, including interviews, participant observation, and surveys, as well as different analytic approaches, ranging from thick description, to narrative, or grounded theory or other techniques to shed light on the case at hand (Tracy, 2019, p. 62). In studying CoPs,

numerous researchers have used ethnographic methods in the data gathering and analysis of specific communities. For example, Graven (2004) used qualitative ethnography, which allowed the researcher to perform the dual role of both coordinator of a mathematics teacher education project called the Program for Leader Educators in Senior-phase Math and researcher of a longitudinal study of the phenomenon of confidence in math teachers learning. In his study of an amateur astronomer community, Azevedo (2013) also followed the participant observation tradition of ethnography. Membership in this amateur group allowed the author to participate in extended collective and private observational hours that non-members were not admitted to. Smith's (2005) ethnographic case study of student teachers involved participant observation at a Midwestern University as the university supervisor for student teachers in the study which allowed for understanding from an insider's perspective how cooperating teachers and student teachers negotiate different ways of talking about teaching and planning in their co-planning conversations. Participant observation is especially valuable in these examples because researchers could later construct the scenes in detail to take readers "into" the settings that were observed.

Erickson (1985) writes that in researching educational settings, it is important to understand and document the details of practice, to answer the questions: What is happening in this particular setting? How are happenings organized? And what do these actions mean to the actors involved in them? At the same time, Tracy (2013) notes that participant observation or fieldwork is valuable for understanding behavior and interactions that are taken-for-granted and therefore not talked about, what she calls "tacit meanings" (p. 78). Through direct experience in a setting, researchers can gain information that would otherwise not be available. Including

interviewing along with observation provides a way of understanding participants' perspectives and the meanings they attach to events.

According to Tracy (2013), ethnography combines two ancient Greek words: *ethnos*, which meant 'tribe, nation, people' and *graphein,* 'to write.' Tracy (2013) explains that ethnographers are able to understand meanings through extensive engagement in a context, in contrast to the assumptions of distanced objectivity in traditional scientific research. Qualitative data obtained through observation and interviewing provides an understanding of cultural activities that one might otherwise miss in a more structured study or experiment (Tracy, 2013, p. 5).

Obtaining Institutional Review Board Approval

The process of obtaining approval from the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board required that I first obtain approval from Hillcrest University. Thus, I first submitted a proposal for research to the Hillcrest University IRB Committee Chair in which I described my plan to conduct observations and interviews with tutors, along with my effort to ensure that students would not feel pressured to participate in the study. I also stated that my dissertation and all other forms of my published research would ensure confidentiality for the participants and protect the anonymity of the University. The proposal met the criteria for the HU exempt review because the study was being conducted in an educational setting and would involve normal educational practices that were unlikely to adversely impact student learning. I received approval from HU on September 22, 2014 (see Appendix A).

Next, I submitted a research proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of South Florida September 24, 2014. I requested it to be reviewed via an expedited review because the research met the criteria for minimal risk to human subjects. Once approval

was granted (see Appendix B), I began recruiting participants by sending an individual email to each of the tutors inviting them to participate in the study and giving my contact information. They were informed via email that they have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study and they should not feel that there was any pressure to take part in the study (see Appendix C). To qualify for inclusion tutors had to be currently enrolled at HU and working as a speaking center tutor. All eleven tutors agreed to take part (see Appendix D).

Data Collection Procedures

There were three kinds of data that made up the corpus of materials for this dissertation. The first kind consisted of my detailed observations of center activities, including patterns of participation and routines among tutors and between tutors and clients. In addition I conducted informal interviews to get participants' perspectives on specific episodes soon after they occurred, and, later, in-depth interviews to elicit their reflections on the tutoring experience as a whole. This data collection period of participant observation and interviewing spans five months between November 2014 to May 2015. Although that was the period of formal data collection, I had already had extensive experience in the setting. As the founder and director of the center, I spent six years guiding and participating in and documenting the tutoring practice of forty-five peer tutors (both paid and volunteer) who comprised the staff.

As center director, my duties included holding private appointments for clients, and overseeing tutoring activities, which took place in twice a week sessions for a total of thirteen to fifteen hours each week. At any given time, there were likely to be two or three tutors present as well as approximately one to five clients. During the period of observation, I kept fieldnotes, in which I first jotted down all the phrases, quotes, and key words I remembered being mentioned during the observations, as well as impressions of gestures and body movements. Observational

data is the basis for ethnographic description in which the researcher attempts to convey to readers an understanding of day-to-day talk and activities in the scene (Patton, 1990).

After the tutoring session, I went back to my fieldnotes and filled in more details, recollections, questions and notes for future consideration. In the initial analysis of my field notes, I asked myself questions such as: What are the informal routines enacted by participants at the center? How is peer feedback offered and how is it received? Are certain features of the situation associated with more effective or less effective peer feedback?

The second kind of data was based on the informal interviewing that occurred after tutoring. In these impromptu exchanges I asked tutors questions about their perceptions of what just happened during a given tutor/tutee interaction or what made a session more or less successful? I jotted down my impressions of these conversations as part of my fieldnotes.

The third type of data included material gathered through in-depth interviewing which was aimed at exploring more general understandings of the tutoring process and the role of tutor (see Appendix E for interview questions). In these interviews I tried to elicit stories and anecdotes that captured significant moments in tutors' experiences, including difficult, challenging and successful tutoring experiences. These latter interviews were recorded and 86 pages transcribed. Decisions about transcribing, in particular the level of detail to include, are challenging (Ochs, 1979). Given the objectives of this project, I was mainly interested in capturing the interview's informational content. Therefore, verbatim transcriptions were adequate for my purposes.

Methods of Data Analysis

In qualitative and ethnographic studies, analysis often progresses from specific observations to inferring more general patterns without presupposing in advance what the

patterns or important dimensions will be. This inductive approach, which allows patterns to emerge, is the principal technique used in grounded theory method (Patton, 1990). Although, my project attempted to stay close to participants' perspectives and meanings, I used sensitizing concepts to help orient my fieldwork. Sensitizing concepts "provide a basic framework highlighting the importance of certain kinds of events, activities, and behaviors" (Patton, 1990, p. 217). They are theories or interpretative devices drawn from former scholarship that serve as jumping-off points for qualitative study. As background ideas, they offer frameworks or "lenses" through which researchers see, organize, and experience the research problem (Tracy, 2013, p. 28). Even though the inductive nature of qualitative inquiry emphasizes the importance of being open to whatever one can learn during fieldwork, having a way of organizing the complexity of the data is often necessary (Patton, 1990). In this case study, the sensitizing concepts included the three core elements from Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) concept of CoPs: "mutual engagement," "negotiation of a joint enterprise," and "shared repertoire." In addition, other concepts such as "newcomer," "feedback," "collaboration," and "identity" were drawn from the literature on CoPs and on peer tutoring. These concepts represent ways of breaking the complex reality into distinguishable parts (Patton, 1990) and as Tracy (2013) explains, they help narrow and focus perception in scenes that are complex and overflowing with multiple issues.

During the initial "data immersion phases" (Tracy, 2013, p. 188), I read through the fieldnotes, vignettes, and interviews to familiarize myself with the data, continually asking myself, *What is happening? What strikes me as significant?* (Tracy, 2013, p. 189). Initially I tried to set aside my frameworks and sensitizing concepts. I began "primary-cycle coding" where I examined the data and "assigned words or phrases that captured their essence" (Tracy, 2013, p.

188). Making these annotations, I documented what was occurring within participants' responses and my fieldnotes and I noted events and descriptions that had common references or conceptual features. In reviewing the first level codes, I noticed patterns emerging, resembling what Tracy referred to as the melding of "the participants' *in vivo* voices with the researcher's structure and rhythm" (Tracy, 2013, p. 254). After reading the data several times, I noted forty-six first level codes (see Appendix F) and compiled them into a master list. At the next stage of analysis I began to make interpretations (Tracy, 2013, p.194), referring to the sensitizing concepts to theorize and explain the patterns I observed in the different types of data. I also noticed some new themes emerge, for example the issue of physical space. The design and accessibility of the space played a central role in how the tutors understood their activities.

In presenting my findings I tried to provide rich ethnographic descriptions so that readers can see how my interpretations are developed. In organizing the discussion, I borrow from Spradley's (1980) descriptive matrix for presenting ethnographic material, in particular his descriptive categories of space, actors, goals, and activities. Throughout the analysis, I include quotations from participants to illustrate the meanings they attached to their activities and to their membership in the speaking center community. I also include several ethnographic vignettes. These short narrative pieces are a way of crystallizing important aspects of a case study (Steinhouse, 1988) while also providing a close-up view of actors and interactions.

Researcher Roles and Researcher Reflexivity

As several writers have noted, researchers' personal experiences often draw them to certain topics (Kram, 1985). The impetus for this dissertation was my long-term involvement with HU's speaking center. I began as the center's founder and moved to the role of director. During this time period my focus gradually shifted from administrative issues and the center's

practical, day-to-day operations to curiosity about the tutor role and the tutors' learning process and I decided to make this the focus of my project. Throughout my research I was situated as both an observer and participant in the lives of those who were being studied (Lofland, 2006). This embodied connection to the research participants makes this type of project different from other kinds of research where investigators are not themselves a sustained presence in a naturally occurring situation. As Frey (2000) explains, in fieldwork-based studies, "researchers serve as the instruments through which data are collected, [thus] they rely on tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge in addition to propositional knowledge (expressible in language form)…" (p. 26). That is, in placing themselves within the everyday lives of others, researchers have been exposed to many aspects of social life that can only be seen and felt rather than reported. By contrast, non-fieldwork studies rely on documents, interviews, experimental simulations, and other sources of data that are more removed from the researcher's direct observation of the ongoing natural settings.

My dual role has important implications for this study. In this project I found several challenges related to my multiple roles at the center. As someone who participated for so long in the Center's day-to-day activities, I had a familiarity with the setting. Because of this, events that might stand out to an outside researcher were likely to appear "natural" and obvious to me. My prior assumptions, including certain values and views about what makes for success and failure in learning contexts, could potentially influence how I perceived and evaluated the tutoring processes I was observing. Furthermore I had to take care to recognize that what was significant to the participants might not be significant to me as the director and "expert." In short, I am not a student peer tutor. Recognizing these multiple involvements as much as possible, I have tried to be transparent about how I arrived at my findings.

A particular challenge while conducting this research was the tension between the roles of insider (center director) and outsider (researcher). Dwyer & Buckle (2009) explain that "*insider research* refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also a member (Kanuha, 2000) so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants" (p. 58). On one hand, my status as center director allowed me research access. As Dwyer & Buckle (2009) note, membership in the community frequently allows researchers more rapid and complete acceptance by their participants. On the other hand, this dual role can create confusion when the researcher responds to the participants or analyzes the data from a perspective other than that of researcher.

A solution to these tensions is to try to bridge the distance between the roles of director and researcher, and take a position in what Dwyer & Buckle (2009) explain as the "space between" in which researchers accept the position of being both insider and outsider rather than insider "or" outsider (p. 54). This duality of roles challenges the dichotomy of insider versus outsider status in order to preserve more of the complexity of the subject matter. In approaching this project from a naturalistic stance I have tried to maintain the richness of the setting while recognizing the partiality and context-specific nature of this account.

I have tried throughout the analysis to be reflexive and to make my own values, stances and ideology known. I recognize that because I am an observer, participant, and stakeholder I will always have a degree of partiality. Antonacopoulou and Tsoukas (2002) explained reflexivity in research as a kind of self-awareness in which we are aware of the partiality of our accounts, how we are partial, and how our accounts incorporate assumptions of which we are not ordinarily aware; in other words, as they say, to "reflect on our reflections" (p. 859) and; to accept that the observer is not detached from the system observed, but rather gets as close to the

system as possible, to properly understand its dynamics. As I conducted the study, in particular as I interviewed participants, I kept in mind the ways I was perceived as both "interviewer" and "director." How interviewees made sense of and responded to my interview questions was influenced by their perceptions of me and the identities they were ascribing to me (Jorgenson, 1991) as they spoke with me.

The following two chapters will offer the results of my study. I begin in the next chapter by describing how the center activities demonstrate key features of a CoP, including the feature of situated learning as tutors move from newcomer to expert role. I also describe how individual expertise became recognized as a shared community resource, and how tutors coordinated their help-giving activities to take advantage of these strengths.

CHAPTER 3:

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY FEATURES

Accessing a Unique Community

Entering the speaking center visitors accessed and engaged with a unique non-classroom context whose primary purpose is the development of oral communication skills. In this chapter I will explore how this group fits Wenger-Trayner's (2015) concept of communities of practice as groups of people with a common goal and interest in bettering their practices or procedures through regular interaction (p. 1). Wenger's theory of communities of practice (CoP) offers a way to describe learning, knowledge creation, and identity construction as occurring in the collective engagement among members of a community rather than within individuals (Swieringa, 2009, p. 148). In the case of the speaking center, the "practices" were activities aimed at enhancing communication skills both for center visitors (clients) as well as among the peer tutors themselves. The tutors and I, in my role as director, were drawn together and engaged in a joint enterprise through our activities and by sharing with each other what we had learned while in the process of these activities.

As the following analysis will show, communication operated at multiple levels in this setting. Oral communication instruction and support was the expressed objective of the center and its staff. However, communication in the form of day-to-day participation served to organize the center as a community. As Dewey (1916) long ago observed, "the terms *common*, *communication*, and *community* share more than an etymology; they are functionally intertwined.

Communication, as Dewey argued, "is the process by which common goals and aspirations are forged; in turn, these serve as the galvanizing forces for the creation, maintenance, and transformation of communities over time'" (Thorne, 2011, pg. 304). Through their participation, community members established norms and built collaborative relationships. These relationships are the ties that bind the members together as a social entity.

What is crucial to forming a CoP is a shared domain, in this case developing public speaking skills. The community members, in pursing their interests in the domain, engaged in joint activities and discussions. Another critical element was the practice— activities through which "members become practitioners and develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems" (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2). As a lens for understanding the speaking center, the notion of practice is central because it conceptualizes the learning process in social terms, as participation in the practices of a particular community (Wenger, 2010; Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). A CoP is not simply "a club of friends or a network of connections between people" (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p.1). For example, a college "speech club" or "math club" may unite student members around a shared interest, but clubs don't necessarily entail the element of practice as central. While a CoP, like a club, has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest, membership implies something more, a commitment to the domain, and a shared competence that develops and distinguishes members from other people.

To organize the presentation of findings in this chapter, I will employ a series of categories drawn both from Spradley's (1980) descriptive matrix for ethnographic research combined with key concepts from Lave and Wenger's (1991; 1998) concept of CoP. To begin, I will focus on Spradley's analytic categories of "space" or the physical location and setting of

center activities; "actors," here, the twelve people who made up this community; and "goals," or the things participants sought to accomplish either explicitly or implicitly. In Ch. 5 I will explore the category of "activities" with particular focus on the specific communication practices that defined this community. Space, actors, goals and activities are among the common concepts in ethnographic description that enable the researcher to break the complex data into manageable parts.[2] Here, they enabled me to analyze the cultural context of the Center for Public Speaking and, most importantly, to show how it revealed features of a CoP. I found physical space to be a significant element that contributed in both positive and negative ways to the center's identity and to participants' behavior. The analysis showed that in spite of its limitations, the physical space afforded unique learning opportunities and had a direct impact on the nature of community practices. With regard to the second category, actors, I will describe how participants came to be associated with the center and what participation meant to the members. In this section I will discuss the idea of levels of participation, and identify individuals as either "core" or "active" participants. This distinction is important because it speaks to the process by which members' identities changed over time. Finally, I will discuss goals as it relates to those of the center's stated mission and participants' expressed goals, as well as the informal "incidental" (Wenger-Trayner, 2015) learning that occurred as a bi-product of everyday interaction in the center.

Setting and Scene: Physical Space as Constraint and Resource

Scholars have long recognized that setting, and in particular the physical environment, has a profound influence on human behavior (Altman, 1975). However in the literature on oral communication apprehension, the role of physical space is rarely mentioned although it is

[2] Spradley's (1980) complete matrix includes the categories of space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal and feeling. Many of these dimensions correspond to Hymes' S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G model, a mnemonic guide for identifying and describing components of communication in a speech community.

addressed indirectly through discussions of audience size. Researchers have found that speakers exhibit more anxiety when exposed to audiences of greater size and expertise (Bodie, 2010, p. 81).

As discussed in chapter 1, there were 70 speaking centers, speech labs, and communications centers listed on the national registry of centers. Some are single room spaces; others are labs with multiple rooms. Some are housed within academic services centers and others are parts of departments. Our setting, like many of these, was not a dedicated facility, but rather a mixed-use space whose function shifted daily and even hourly between "faculty office" and "speaking center." As a result of these arrangements, the center had struggled with issues of visibility, access, and adequacy of space ever since it moved from its previous location in the library to its current spot.

Politics of Space

The research literature suggests parallels between writing, speaking, and communication centers with regard to pedagogical issues and the allocation of physical space (Schweitzer, 2017). Schweitzer explained that students who utilized these centers were no longer dealing only in one mode of communication. They were bringing written and oral communication assignments into the centers to work on, and as well were often expected to incorporate visual or even aural elements into their assignments. Having different centers dedicated to written and oral communication complicated this administrative issue of finding adequate space. One common challenge facing these settings was the negotiation of space among competing stakeholders. Reynolds (1998) explained that the writing center workers have long had to deal with the politics of space, whether this involved seeking reduced section sizes, finding adequate space for a writing center, or fighting for space among those competing disciplines. And like

writing center staff, speaking and communication center staff occupied a space where communication was taught, learned, and imparted very differently than in a classroom. As Reynolds (1998) argued:

> Place does matter; surroundings do have an effect on learning or attitudes towards learning, and material spaces have a political edge. In short, *where* writing instruction takes place has everything to do with *how* (Reynolds, 1998, p. 20).

As Reynolds contended, space mattered at the speaking center. My experience in regards to the speaking center mirrored many of the dynamics Nicolas (2004) called attention to as the spatial politics that were commonplace in the writing center community. Centers are often difficult to find, as they are located in hard-to-reach areas of campus, such as basements or repurposed storage areas, and are managed by people with limited institutional influence. Space reflects power dynamics and suggests "[…] the power and the value attached to who or what occupies it. Put simply, space on college campus signifies legitimization" (Nicolas, 2004, p. 107).

The tutors and I referred to the physical space as the "speaking center." Officially, on the website, directory, and to faculty or administration, it was referred to as the "HU Center for Public Speaking." The center was housed in a shared faculty office adjacent to and including a public hallway; it was reachable via a confusing hunt through a dark, old building, out the back door across a small parking lot and into a small wing of a plain white building.

Two small, university-approved beige signs with "Center for Public Speaking" and an arrow pointing the visitor in our direction, hung on the exterior of the building, but they were hard to see. In an effort to orient first-time visitors, I started hanging bright yellow signs at the front entrance of the building and others with arrows pointing the visitor in our direction on the

walls and doors down the hallway. I also taped a final direction and encouraging note to the back door stating: "You are almost there! HU Center for Public Speaking and faculty offices are located through this door and to the left." When I confirmed appointments, I always sent a campus map and told visitors to follow the yellow signs. I learned that some professors liked to send their class on scavenger hunts to find the center and meet with our staff to discuss services or get a selfie as proof of having found the center. Some visitors even made jokes referencing following the yellow brick road when they arrived. They joked that they were fearful of a flying monkey jumping out of one of the storage rooms in the old, dark building, alluding to the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. In case a visitor was too scared or confused to walk through the building and decided to walk around the back of the building to get to our space, each day I put out three yard signs around the perimeter of the building. These bright yellow signs with bold black lettering guided students to the center. Tutors and I put them out and took them down each day since they were not university approved for permanent display.

The center was housed within an office that I shared with a full-time term faculty member. As campus offices go, this was a large room and included space in the hallway.

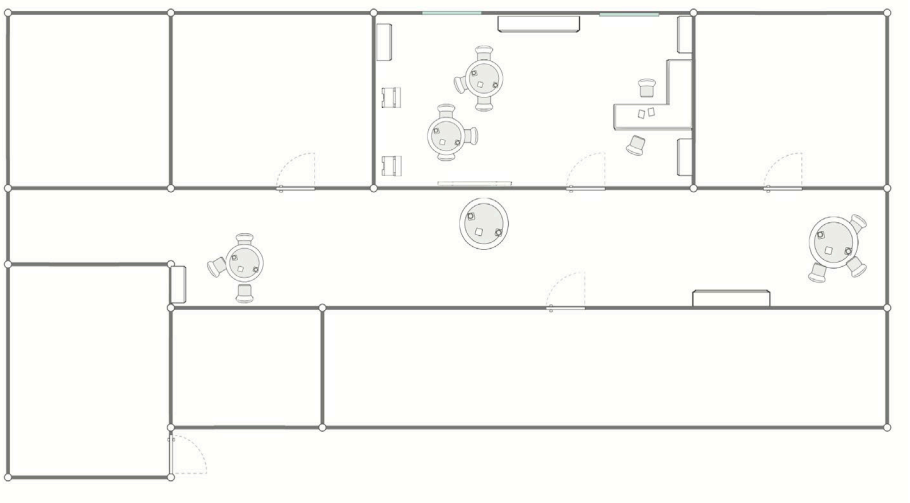

Figure 1: Speaking center layout and surrounding area.

The room was approximately 15 feet wide and 18 feet long. It was large enough for an L shape desk, two metal bookshelves, a tall filing cabinet, two wooden round tables, two wheeled podiums and eight chairs. My office mate and I worked alternating day schedules that allowed each of us access to the space without interruption by the other. During my time in the office, it was the "HU Center for Public Speaking" and I ran it in the capacity of a paid coordinator of the center. On alternating days, my office mate used the space as an office in the capacity of a faculty member—meeting with students enrolled in her classes, grading, and preparing for classes. She did not meet with center clients.

Since I shared this space with another faculty member, and due to the impermanent nature of my employment[3], I did not hang any personal items, only flyers for the center and for the upcoming campus-wide speech contest on the office door. The other faculty member and I each had our own bookshelf where we stored our books and displayed some personal items. I had a basket with snacks (granola bars, pretzels, dried fruit) and a few puzzles, pictures of my daughters and grandchildren, and my diploma. The room was painted white and had blue gray carpet. We shared the filing cabinet, each of us with two drawers. When I was present and tutoring was being conducted with clients, the space served as an officially recognized learning space and university-sponsored center. It was a technologically modern room with access to computer hook ups and a projector display for PowerPoint and video; these features contributed to the sense of the space as a traditional learning space. However the activities of the center were not limited to formal tutoring. At times when clients were absent, this same office space

[3] I had taken the advice of a superior early in my career not to personalize my office space too much since I was a fulltime contingent faculty member, not a permanent one. I had been instructed to move my office a total of six times in twelve years via email and was given little advance preparation, but the moves were always framed in a positive tone (e.g., closer to my classes, center, out of construction zones, etc.). I made it a habit to only decorate the tall black filing case (the same kind in every office). I never drilled holes in the wall—too permanent—but I propped my diploma and small 5 x 7 wooden award plaques on the bookshelf or filing cabinet with small stacks of books.

doubled as an informal meeting place for the tutors and me; at such times, we talked about weekend plans and events; worked on a large 1000 piece puzzle; ate and discussed life events—classes, assignments, roommate drama, internships, interviews, next semester's classes, clubs, organizations, break-ups, family conflicts, losses, and other personal issues. Although unrelated to our center objectives, I considered discussion of these topics during "backstage" moments as opportunities for personal development, a theme I will explore in more detail in my discussion of "goals" below.

The hallway adjacent to the office was approximately 8 feet wide and 20 feet long with two filing cabinets, three tables and extra chairs. I kept one of the circular tables pushed up against the wall so that it was the first thing visitors saw when they opened the outside glass door. I kept fresh flowers or a seasonal ornamental potted plant, a bowl of candy, flyers about the center and upcoming events on the table. Counting the tables in the hallway and in the office, I had five work areas and my desk to work with depending on how many visitors showed up. The hallway was a useful spillover space from my office, but there were often people coming and going to the other faculty members' offices next to me (a dance and a speech faculty member). If our space was too full and the weather was nice, a tutor would take a client outside and work. On days with no visitors the tutors and I would often walk the perimeter of the building or sit at a bench outside of the center in a grassy shaded area. One of my favorite group pictures with the tutors was taken outside under a big tree surrounded by tropical plants.

Public / Private Tensions

Compared to the reserved classroom in the library that we had used the previous year, this office was an improvement. It felt more permanent than the old library space and I was pleased with the relocation and wanted to make the best of it. But it still was not an entirely

effective space for our purposes because of the large size and open-plan layout of the room. At any given time a client who may have been anticipating a private (one-on-one) consultation with a peer tutor, could walk into this new space and face a professor, up to five peer tutors, and one or more additional clients all in one room, with even a few in the hallway working. And since there were limited days and times that we could use the space, I did not offer to reschedule any students who dropped in, even if we were crowded. If they were willing to brave the long walk, old dark building and maze to find us, they deserved to be helped.

Our large "one-room school house" space was different from other kinds of tutoring spaces that students might have been used to. Some tutors entering the center for the first time, expected to find a more differentiated physical space that might have typically been found in a writing center. The "traditional" tutoring center model was designed for private one-to-one interactions and more availability for multiple appointments at once. For example, our campus writing center had small, cubical-like spaces with a small table and two chairs. However, I viewed our services as aiming for maximum flexibility in providing one-to-one private tutoring while also being able to accommodate anyone who showed up. This space called on our ability to adapt to constant variation, both in the numbers of clients at any one time and in their specific needs, but many of the tutors seemed to enjoy the challenge of making it work. In fact, flexibility was a key element of this community and part of our "shared repertoire" of communal resources. Often clients became audience members for other clients rehearsing for a speech. The open plan had the advantage of fostering mutual engagement. For example if someone showed up and needed to rehearse or videotape their speech, we would ask if the client currently in the space would be willing to participate as an audience member. For those who were not interested or were under time constraints, we suggested that the client work on their own outline

or visual aid in the hallway and step back in when we were done rehearsing or recording. Or a tutor or I would step out in the hallway and work with the client at one of the three tables in the hallway.

While I valued the flexibility that this space afforded, some tutors voiced their disappointment with our setting in comparison to the writing center and their concern over the awkward nature of the space and lack of privacy. When I asked what she would change, or do differently at the center, tutor Abigail explained:

> It's a little daunting to walk into a room and have three tutors sitting there and there is another student [getting tutored] at the same time. And a lot of students get nervous enough in front of the tutors and in front of you, and then having another student there as well, it's like, "oh my goodness, like this is enough anxiety right here! I don't even want to do it in front of my class!"

Abigail empathetically connected with what was for many the awkwardness of this anxiety-ridden situation—visiting this setting and space for the first time. Visitors to the space verbalized reactions such as these:

> "This is the speaking center?! Aren't there private rooms to work in?"
>
> "Do I have to rehearse in front of everyone?"
>
> "Wow, there are a lot of eyes on me!"

Such comments reflected the reactions some students had to the open, "exposed" nature of the physical setting. But in contrast to Abigail and many clients, other tutors like Jess and Brielle felt that the space needed to be less private and even more like a classroom environment to help

prepare the students for a classroom context. When I asked what she hopes for the center's future, tutor Jess explained her perspective on space:

> I think that sometimes students would like to give a presentation like in a classroom setting. For some students it's just getting in front of the class and figuring out that they're in a huge room and they are the only one speaking. As of now the speech center can't really help students with that.

More typically, however, the reactions of clients to our space revealed students' expectations of tutoring as something that occurs privately. In these cases, they often requested a private meeting with an available tutor or with me during slower times.

Overall, when viewed from the client's perspective, the experience of physically entering the center entailed a confusing journey through a dark, old building, across a parking lot to a small building, where they were faced with a space that is both unfamiliar and for some unsettling. Clients and tutors were often surprised by the overall inaccessibility combined with the lack of privacy. Another tutor, Andrew, had been the recipient of clients' confused questions and when I asked what he would change about the center he highlighted what was for many of them an awkward and anxiety-ridden situation:

> They come in and they think it's this big formal analysis. There's the tutors, here's me, there's the professor, you know 'all-knowing and I'm cut off' and it's definitely an interesting position to be in, as maybe a student coming in for the first time and seeing five different sets of eyes on you and they're all looking at you, and so it might be a little stressful.

He and other tutors framed this first-time experience from a client's perspective; the client was uncomfortable and desired privacy. But I suspected that his question masked a concern among the tutors about their own privacy needs and discomfort with being observed by me, by their peers, and by clients.

Although the tutors acknowledged the clients' discomfort, they also noted that if the tutoring sessions were private they would not be learning *from each other*, a crucial feature of CoPs. Beth explained the benefits of having multiple tutors present and being able to observe and consult with them:

> [Int: Okay and what have you learned from your experience as a tutor?...]
>
> […] interacting with the other tutors I just see that there are other things that I guess you can miss. That is what I really like about just having more than just one tutor here. While I myself have to say that I'm very keen to [work with] PowerPoint presentations, that's like my thing, I'm really able to like iron those out. However, when it comes to, for instance, the situation we are having currently…the more scientific presentations, since that's not my major …it wouldn't benefit the student for me to give any information about how to organize that, because to me it was maybe organized the right way. But Jess, another speech tutor here [and Science major], is able to give her own expertise with that as well.

Beth's emphasis on her PowerPoint expertise gave a sense of how community members gained a unique place and identity. Even if someone else was initially working with a client, if a PowerPoint was displayed, Beth readily joined in the critique and discussion. This dynamic,

which was facilitated by features of the physical space, exemplified the first of Wenger's key sources of coherence in a CoP: "mutual engagement," which allowed for knowledge to be shared and enacted. As Wenger argued, the process of working together created differences as well as commonalities among members. The members "specialize, gain a reputation, make trouble, and distinguish themselves as much as they develop shared ways of doing things" (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). Beth's identity as a PowerPoint expert, and other tutors' willingness to accept her input, illustrated a "mutual relationship" (p. 76) which recognized that mutual engagement "does not entail homogeneity, but it does create a relationships among people […] In this sense, a community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships" (ibid).

Andrew also discussed the task distribution, suggesting that tutors felt they needed each other to provide adequate support to clients. For example, he referred to the non-verbal signal Abigail often used when requesting his assistance as "Abigail with her help eyes." When needing another tutor's assistance, Andrew noted that there were some nonverbal signals between the tutors. In this example, Abigail would ask Andrew for assistance with a client without speaking. She signaled Andrew with her "help eyes." He read them as "help me, this is you, take this." He explained how achieving coordination among tutors was an aspect of learning the role when I asked about the nonverbals used at the center:

> [Int: Can you think of any nonverbals that are unique to the center?]
>
> […] You have to definitely know their personality and what they're really into…I know that Abigail is into kids and she's majoring in education. So if someone comes in and they say 'hey, I'm an education major and I have to do this,' I kind of look at Abigail and give her the 'this is all you' kind of look without saying it.

These comments indicated that qualities of mutual engagement not only arose out of the tutors' daily interactions, but they were enabled by the open plan nature of the space. Unless a tutor went out into the hallway with a client, we would have sight lines to each other at all times, so that we could assess other tutors' needs and availability to help. These comments also point to the tacit nature of the tutors' relations of accountability, a term Wenger uses in referring to a shared sense of what matters and is important as well as what to do and not to do, what to pay attention to and what to ignore.

In my role as director I recognized that this space was all that was available at the time. It could get crowded, and yet I liked the bustling nature, energy, and ability to observe and interact with everyone (e.g., clients, tutors, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni). I viewed the space and the setting as what we had to work with and it was better than our previous location—a classroom on the second floor of the campus library. I told myself, and the tutors who expressed their concerns about the space and location, that we would make the best of it for the semester. In my mind I rationalized the tutors' and clients' complaints: who knows what administration will decide about my position, the center's existence, the tutors' funding, or where they will be moving me next?

Actors

Spradley (1980) argued that every social situation includes people who are considered particular kinds of actors. At the speaking center, although the visitors, mainly students but sometimes faculty and staff, were the main clientele, they were not the regular community participants in Lave and Wenger's sense since, as recipients of services, they came and went. For this project, participant refers to the tutors, and myself as center director. There were twelve members in this community. Ten of the twelve members were upper-class students who

successfully completed the First-Year Experience program and became "peer mentors." This mentoring program was composed of a two-course sequence, which was designed for and required of all first-year students. The goal of this program was to help students adjust to college, succeed in their academic pursuits and lay down plans for career paths that they would pursue after college. Full-time faculty taught the one-hour graded course and were paired with a student mentor. These peer mentors offered additional support to new students both academically and socially as they helped new students connect to the HU community. They also supported the faculty member and often taught or lead a class lecture or discussion.

The twelve participants of this study include:

Name	**Race**	**Sex**	**Major**	**Role**	**Number of hours worked per week**
Andrew	white	male	entrepreneurship	tutor	6 to 8 hours
Abigail	white	female	education	tutor	2 to 6 hours
Ann Marie	white	female	communication	director	15 to 20 hours
Beth	black	female	prelaw	tutor	1 hour
Jess	Asian	female	science	tutor	1 hour
Emily	white	female	sociology	tutor	2 to 4 hours
Gloria	white	female	film	tutor	2 hours
Keisha	white	female	marketing	tutor	1 hour
Madeline	white	female	education	tutor	1 hour
Samantha	white	female	education	tutor	1 hour
Victor	white	male	communication	tutor	2 hours
Henry	white	male	science	tutor	2 to 4 hours

Figure 2: Tutor name, race, sex, major, role, number of hours worked per week.

Through an ongoing relationship with the First-Year Experience program administrators, and my personal persistence in requests for advice, direction, grants, hidden funding lines, etc., I was fortunate to receive support from the program in the form of paid peer mentors. These were presumed to be academically responsible students. They were required to work one to two hours per week with one of the seven academic support services initiatives. I accepted all who signed up and interviewed with me.

In addition to differences in major, students worked varying amounts of time and this variation in the time they spent together and their levels of participation contributed to how they became socialized in the group. All of the tutors at the center knew of each other, some had worked together, some had gone through mentor training with the First-Year Experience program; however, unlike the workshops in the library, throughout the period of the study, the tutors never all worked in the same space together. They worked in various dyads and triads depending on the day and time they were available and scheduled. During the Fall 2014 term, walk-in tutoring was available every Monday and Wednesday from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and in the Spring 2015 term every Monday and Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tutors were scheduled during these time periods with some overlap of tutors during busy times. I was primarily present throughout all of the scheduled days and times.

Group Roles: From Newcomer to Expert

According to Wenger and his associates, there are three general levels of community participation ranging from "core" to "active" to "peripheral" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). This classification of members into these groups is central to the CoP model, however classification is not always a straightforward process and my observations did not completely

correspond to the predefined categories. For example, time investment is one aspect of participation but it may not have aligned with a member's view of his or her level of commitment; members may have perceived themselves as being far more engaged than "number of hours" spent at the center would indicate. How participants manifested the different criteria of inclusion may lead to different outcomes in how they are classified. I observed that the speaking center community generally exhibited only two of these levels, the first being what Wenger called a "small core group" that takes on projects, is invested in promoting the center, and works toward advancing the learning mission of the center (p. 56). I placed Abigail, Andrew, as well as myself in this group because we showed the most consistent involvement and, I sensed, were the most identified with the center's mission. When asked to describe her role and work at the center, Abigail's comments illustrated her understanding of her role and showed how it aligned with Wenger's notion of "core":

> I would describe my role as I'm a tutor. So when people come in and need help I kind of assist them in figuring out what they need help in. Like what kind of help they are looking for and then we go from there and decide what we really need to do to help them. Like either we might have them take an assessment or have them practice or have them brainstorm topics and stuff like that. And then I also have a role in promoting the center, kind of just getting the word out about it…We made a Facebook page and so I work a lot with the Facebook page. I post a lot on there and then we also post flyers around campus and we have the whole speaking series and we've tabled and passed out flyers for that.

Abigail described her role, in part, as evaluating client needs. What was significant was that she described it using some of the vocabulary of the community with terms like "brainstorm" and "assessment." The use of such terms was one way in which membership in the community was signaled (Iverson and McPhee, 2008). Furthermore, Abigail initiated and created the Facebook page for the center. This work was not a part of the center's stated mission but was nevertheless significant in increasing the client base. Since my traditional method of hanging flyers and word of mouth was not bringing in the higher number of clients we desired, she came up with a social media solution to better engage students' interest:

> [Int: Ok. You mentioned the facebook, why do you think that was a way to help to get the word out.]
>
> They might not stop and read a poster that's hanging on the wall, but if they see something come up on their newsfeed, and it sparks their interest and they've been having some speech anxiety, but they didn't really know what to do about it. And they didn't know the center existed, and then they see it pop up on their Facebook because their friends have been liking the page. Then maybe that will trigger something in their mind that says, "Hey I can go visit the speaking center." And then as soon as we get one student in they can tell their friends and then it's just like a snowball effect.

On another occasion Abigail offered to assist student mentors in the first-year experience with the development of their in-class presentations. A faculty member contacted Abigail directly and asked her to give a presentation to her class about the Center's services. This was great news and I called everyone's attention to it. She said she needed our help to design a presentation and rehearse. She mentioned wanting to take pictures of the center, give outline

handouts and teach them some breathing techniques and power poses. It was evident that she had been thinking about the presentation and had a plan.

Because of Abigail's social media outreach, within a few hours of her creation of the Facebook page, I received a message from Andrew, a sophomore who had just transferred from Minnesota. He wanted to get involved with the speaking center as a volunteer tutor until a paid position became available. Like Abigail, Andrew ended up as "core" member because of his willingness to volunteer his time and the fact that he spent more time tutoring than any other tutor. He assisted with privately scheduled group work (outside of normal hours), special arranged workshops, and participated in the campus-wide speech contest that I ran and the center sponsored with the communication department.

Beyond the core group are two additional categories of members, "active" and "peripheral." (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Active members, also comprising 15 to 20 percent, "attend meetings regularly and participate occasionally in the community forums, but without the regularity or intensity of the core group" (p. 56). Peripheral members, comprising 65 to 75 percent, seldom participate and "keep to the sidelines, watching the interaction of the core and active members" (p. 56). However my experience in the center differed from the hypothesized model. Due to our reliance on peer tutors to perform the basic tasks, few tutors could remain peripheral for very long. Thus I classified all the remaining participants as active, including Beth, Emily, Gloria, Henry, Jess, Keisha, Victor, Madeline, and Samantha. All actively participated in the daily work of the center in various ways, initially by simply greeting clients who entered, offering them a seat, presenting the sign-in sheet and asking them what they hoped to accomplish from the visit. This initial interaction could lead to the tutor working with the client one-to-one or helping them set up if they wanted to present their speech for feedback.

If a client wanted to have their visual aid reviewed, a tutor would ask for their computer and connect it to the screen. If they did not have a computer with them, we offered the center's spare computer.

I tried where possible to facilitate their involvement with clients. For instance if any of these tutors happened to arrive while I was working with a client, I would introduce the tutor to the client and update them on what we were covering. They would often join in, and other times break off into their own groups, particularly if another tutor or client showed up. Even when there were not clients present, members interacted with each other or worked on developing their tutoring skills. In an interview, Keisha explained how the tutors came to take responsibility for being ready when a client entered, saying, "I've learned that although we might not always have a student here, that you can always be proactively working … Just keeping yourself engaged for whatever other type of assignment is going to come your way." Her account illustrated how a participant came to adopt the behavioral standards of the community by observing those around her.

Wenger and his colleagues argued that a large proportion of community members are *peripheral,* rarely participating, but instead, keeping to the sidelines, watching the core and active members. Yet these peripheral activities are an essential dimension of communities of practice since the members are learning from listening to the discussions of others (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). In this CoP, none of the tutors could be characterized as peripheral for a sustained period, but they weaved in and out of that role.

For example, my field notes documented one rainy afternoon when there were no visitors. I knew from past experience rainy days were slow. Students had to exit one building and walk in an open area to our small annex. Andrew and I were the only ones there and we

were working on an upcoming presentation when Gloria came in reading a book. Gloria often wasn't actively engaged in speaking center activities. If she realized she wasn't immediately needed she would pull out her cellphone or computer. I often had to draw her in. She deposited her things and began questioning us, "What is this presentation for?" Andrew explained our working thesis: student employment is an opportunity to make connections, develop your professional presence, and apply some of the things you are learning. We started brainstorming what would engage the audience. Our audience was other student employees through the university organizations that employ student workers and representatives of the Dean of Students office.

Andrew stood and began to perform and rehearse for his upcoming speaking role: "Everything builds…this might not be your career goal [student employment] but you are developing life skills...many alumni return and work at HU…" It became evident Andrew was giving a pep talk for student employment. It sounded good to me, but Gloria was not so thrilled about student employment. She was frustrated with the changing requirements and the added responsibility of working at the speaking center, but she did not distance herself from our rehearsal. She did not take out her phone or open her book, but kept talking to us, interjecting suggestions, and laughing. When Andrew mentioned connections he was reminded of the networking principle of six degrees of separation. Gloria mentioned Kevin Bacon and the Visa commercial that demonstrated this principle that any two people on Earth are six or fewer acquaintance links apart, and suggested we use it as a humorous attention getter for our presentation. Although Gloria was often peripheral she played a very important role in developing this presentation. Her vocalization of her frustration with campus student

employment allowed us to better analyze and relate to our audience, some of who might also be frustrated with student employment.

Only one tutor, Samantha, was a true "newcomer" relative to the other members, since she started in the second semester of this study. Despite this, she did not reveal any constraints in offering feedback to a client on her first day. For this novice participant the shift to the role of active participant was almost immediate. The day she started, there were two other tutors and myself present and I was reviewing the center policies when a client came in. We all stopped what we were doing and listened to the client's speech. Even though it was Samantha's first day she did not hesitate in offering her feedback to the client. This example illustrated how in this context a "novice" participant can enact the identity of knowledgeable expert from the time they first join the center.

Most often tutors spent their time in the center actively engaging with clients or with each other. However, a tutor might have started out the session in a peripheral role if another tutor was assisting a client. As Keisha's comment, above, suggests, a tutor might have observed or worked on something else, in a peripheral role until needed. In this sense, participants displayed frequent, even daily, movement "between" levels (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 57).

Developing Expertise: Learning to Read the Client

Giving clients feedback was perhaps the main activity of the speaking center and a central feature of our tutoring practice. Learning when and how to give appropriate feedback was a central point of discussion and a valued expertise within the community. It was also an activity that some tutors were initially hesitant to undertake and thus a place to observe the movement from limited to full participation. No one ever said they were afraid to give feedback, but they seemed to feel the need to delay voicing their comments out of respect for my role as center

director and faculty member. Since I was often in the room during the tutoring I noticed a pattern in which many of the tutors would initially "hang back," in effect taking a peripheral role to me until they received a signal of approval from me to interject and actively give feedback to the client. I learned more about the meaning of this hesitation from Henry who explained during our interview that he and other tutors would look to me for guidance in how to proceed with the client:

> Well, I think with your position you control that valve, right? I think if me or any of the other speech tutors are thinking 'Oh I don't know if I should say something' or, 'I don't know how I should go about addressing this specific thing,' and you kind of throw something out, that maybe implied something and you kind of tip toe around it and you're okay with it and you start talking about the things you wanted to explicitly, and bam! That's the okay, go, and everyone can jump in and we can start talking about it. That's the floodgate. So, I think your role in that is you have the experience, you know what you're doing, and you know how far you can push and take something and the second you give the go, that opens it up for everyone. So you serve as that linchpin.

Henry used various metaphors to describe my role in signaling the moment to join the conversation, such as "controlling the valve," opening the "floodgate," and the "linchpin." His comments suggested that participants were deeply aware of different roles and degrees of expertise. Even in a non-classroom setting, tutors deferred to the teacher's authority. Not only did participants become familiar with my cues about when to begin sharing feedback but over time all of the tutors came to recognize the importance of "reading" the client carefully

themselves. Several, including Andrew, emphasized this in their interviews as they discussed their ability to read clients:

> That's where a little bit of body language reading comes in. If they're sitting there really reserved, maybe sitting back in the chair, not really engaged in what you are saying, then you say, 'You know what, go ahead, work on this one thing, deep breathing. Go ahead, work on it, come back, and then we will work on the next thing and save those notes.' But if they are engaged, leaning on the desk, leaning towards you, eye contact, all that stuff […] I take another half an hour of their time to do this one more thing that I really want to do.

Andrew's ability and confidence in being able to read his client is apparent in this description. It also shows his awareness of the importance of prioritizing the feedback depending on time availability and client receptiveness.

During this interview, Andrew also referenced an often-discussed theme about phone interviews, saying, "We talked about phone interviews and it's really hard to read…what the other person is thinking. Do I shut up? Do I keep talking? Do they like what I'm saying? Do they not? So obviously the physical interaction and communication and body language is a huge aspect of everything that we do."

Andrew was referring to a client that visited the center for phone interview assistance. After the client left, the tutors and I had a long discussion about the awkward nature of phone interviews. This included the difficulty of reading the interviewer and knowing how much to elaborate. During our conversation, the tutors recognized the similarities between tutoring clients and phone interviews. In addition, Andrew's statement about the difficulty of interpreting

clients' perceptions of his feedback, like the difficulty of interpreting cues in phone interviews (e.g., Do I shut up? Do I keep talking? Do they like what I'm saying? Do they not?) illustrated his sensitivity to the different types of clients, a topic I address further in Chapter 5.

Like Andrew, Abigail emphasized the importance of learning to perceive and interpret client reactions. In a portion of her interview she described how she distinguished between client responses. However, when I asked her if she could remember a session that didn't go well, she brought up the tension felt when the client was not engaged or receptive to the feedback. She replied, "I think when I would consider it not going well is when the client came in and was so nervous to be here that they weren't even absorbing anything we were saying."

I then asked her, "And how do you know they are not absorbing it?"

She replied, "Because they kind of look dazed. They kind of look confused. They don't look comfortable in their chair. You kind of have to perceive their body language and see if they, see if they want help."

Interpreting clients' nonverbal and verbal communication was a critical element in a tutor's practice. Learning to interpret cues, from me and from the client, was important to calibrating their participation in the community. As shown in the examples, it was something that they shared and identified with. Furthermore, this expertise was discovered through observation and through processes of trial and error. In the following chapter I will explore in more detail the communicative aspects of the tutors' practice by examining the feedback process through frameworks of empathic listening and facework.

Goals: Negotiation of a Joint Enterprise

As center director I was aware of the need to have clearly specified and, ideally, measurable goals. Having clear and measurable goals was a requirement for meaningful

evaluation of program outcomes, which, in turn, was necessary for decisions about funding allocations. The overarching goal and mission of the speaking center was to enhance oral communication skills and offer support services (e.g., speech organization, delivery coaching, PowerPoint design, etc.). However the discussion of goals was complicated by the fact that they appeared differently across different levels of this group.

In addition to the overarching aim of this community, which was to assist clients' communication skills development, each tutor had individual goals and desired outcomes of their work at the center. Their reasons for joining the speaking center were diverse. I considered the development of individual goals, and recognition of individual preferences, as important elements in this community. Because funding for paying experienced tutors was extremely limited, I did not seek tutors on the basis of a preferred skillset, for example, having "good communication skills," or being friendly and outgoing, but instead relied on cross-University initiatives to provide applicants that did not have to be paid out of the center's budget. The hope was that an applicant with a sincere interest in public speaking would acquire the necessary interactive skills and social competence through on-the-job practice.

I wrote the following description of the tutor position, which was compiled with eight other cross-University initiatives and distributed to the student-mentors for the list of initiatives they had to choose from:

> HU Center for Public Speaking Tutor: This position allows mentors to provide public speaking support services to speech center clients. Applicants must have an interest in public speaking and a willingness to develop their own oral communication competencies while assisting others. There will be ongoing

> training, but it is preferred that tutors have successfully passed a Public Speaking class (SPE 200 or 208).
>
> Duties Include:
> Greet, welcome, and assist clients in filling out a registration form.
> Identify the client's goal(s) for the meeting.
> Assist with brainstorming and organizing speech topics.
> Provide mindful and encouraging listening signals during rehearsals.
> Provide constructive feedback that highlight the client's skills and areas that need to be worked on.
> Assess support materials used in presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, handouts, posters, etc.).
> Provide feedback that assists in clients creating understandable, purposeful, audience-centered, and professional presentation aids.

This list emphasized interactive skills that were both social (e.g. greeting clients, providing listening cues) and technical (providing constructive feedback). However, what I saw as a primary goal, and tried to emphasize in this description, was the dual nature of the goal: for tutors to develop their own oral communication competencies while assisting others. I wanted to create a space for professional socialization in which tutors could develop their own skills in listening, including the ability to listen mindfully, empathetically, and critically; along with confident delivery, organization, and research. Some of the topics I would pose to them daily were aimed at getting them to give updates on their classes, projects, jobs and job prospects; at other times we discussed interpersonal strategies to deal with conflicts with peers, faculty and university administrators; and we sometimes shared more personal dilemmas such as mental or emotional health issues.

Each day, as the center tutors waited for clients to stop by, they worked on their own skills by practicing and developing their own presentations for their personal and academic goals, including class assignments, competitions, internships, conferences, etc. Since these members voluntarily rehearsed and discussed their selected projects, as opposed to my assigning

projects as would occur in a traditional classroom, they were engaged in their practice and participating in a joint practice of personal communication skills and peer tutoring skills development.

What was also noteworthy was that the quest for fulfillment of the members' individual goals added to the development of a community byproduct because of the collective nature of the speaking center enterprise. Knowledge was expressed as tutors explained and demonstrated to others the processes of oral communication competency and even more broadly, as they learned from and with each other how to provide helpful and supportive feedback and assistance.

Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning

One feature of CoPs is the nature of learning as incidental rather than as necessarily purposeful. CoPs are "formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1). This "definition allows for, but does not assume, intentionality: learning can be the reason the community comes together or an incidental outcome of member's interactions" (p. 1). For example, there were times at the speaking center when no clients were present. We used those times as opportunities to work on tutors' individual goals and develop their professionalism through role-playing/rehearsing for their future job interviews, internships, scholarships, and leadership roles; and practicing conflict management skills, such as dealing with difficult or resistant clients. These were activities, which I would label as non-formal learning, in that they are facilitated by me as director-coordinator of the center, but are not conducted in a setting such as a classroom (Eshach, 2007), in which learning is more structured—that is the main element of formal learning. But there were also times when conversations went in different directions and toward more personal topics, such as conflicts with parents or roommates. These conversations were not led by me but were more

informal, in that they were tutor-initiated and dependent upon input from everyone present. Nevertheless, these were learning experiences in which the tutors were able take away new and helpful information, and strategies for dealing with their personal conflicts.

While personal life issues sometimes spilled over during the formal act of tutoring, there was a professionalism that kept these topics at bay when clients were present. However, when clients were not present, and discussions among the community members became more sensitive, there were opportunities for other types of learning. I sometimes felt tension, wondering if personal conversations were "off-topic," since they were not related to tutoring clients. However these interactions opened space for a different kind of conversation in which learning could happen informally. As Eshach (2007) explained, "Informal learning applies to situations in life that come about spontaneously; for example, within the family circle, the neighborhood, and so on." (p. 173). In the speaking center, tutors learned informally by way of venting their life problems such as conflicts with parents and the push-and-pull between independent college life and parental control. According to my field notes, one day a 20-year old female tutor came in visibly upset because her parents wanted to stop paying her tuition in order to make her come home for religious counseling. We discovered that she was refusing to lie to them about having premarital sex, and was trying to establish her own set of rules for life as a young adult. She was trying to figure out how she could live on her own and pay her own tuition. I ended up finding the name of a financial aid counselor at the school and wrote down the information for her.

On that same day, according to my field notes, a male tutor, who was in the room the entire time and participated in the conversation, got into an argument with his mom over the phone, also regarding money and parental control. After he disconnected from the call, I tried to offer a parent's perspective regarding how much they have invested in his education. This

informal discussion between us presented an opportunity for him to consider a more mature way of understanding the dilemma and expressing himself. It was in these backstage moments that participants had opportunities for informally learning about how to orient to college life, how to deal with difficult roommates, and how to discuss their anxiety about being peer mentors. In other words, they discussed, processed and learned from each other, and from me, how to navigate the multiple roles they performed beyond "tutor".

Because other faculty members were in earshot of these personal discussions, I initially struggled with the idea that I should be providing the tutors with more structure, and perhaps introducing formal content, in order to discourage them from introducing such personal subject matter into the learning setting. At the same time, having an opportunity to share something of their non-academic experiences was a key aspect of the community's unique climate and seemed to me to enhance members' sense of belonging. One day, on impulse, I brought in jigsaw puzzles that we could work on during down time. Though we continued to discuss personal issues while working on the puzzles, the puzzles had a soothing effect that seemed to keep participants from launching into lengthy personal stories. The majority said they hadn't done a puzzle in years. A few had never completed one. As a completely non-instrumental activity not typically associated with an academic setting, the puzzles turned out to be an effective vehicle for facilitating conversations and deepening rapport among the members. In addition, the puzzles also enhanced the overall tone of the environment of this speech community. One tutor explained, "I think it actually helps having games out and puzzles because it looks like a very friendly welcoming environment."

Figure 3: First center completed puzzle (500 piece)

Figure 4: Second completed puzzle (1000 piece)

Summary

This chapter applied elements of Spradley's (1980) descriptive matrix for ethnographic research, particular the dimensions of space, participants and goals, combined with Lave and Wenger's (1991; 1998) concept of CoP to understand this unique, non-classroom context. As shown in this chapter, the practice of this community was highly interactive as tutors engaged with clients and with each other. By joining in the center activities they had many opportunities to communicate with each other and "to function as a team that works together" (McPhee p.

184); that is, to demonstrate "mutual engagement." It is the element of mutual engagement that allows the other features of the CoP, shared repertoire and joint enterprise, to be developed. These key concepts combined to enhance understanding of learning as a socially situated process.

Communication operated on many levels in the center, including the formal help-giving of tutoring encounters, where specific content was conveyed to clients, and in the more informal interactions that defined relationships among the community members. In the following chapter I look in more detail at communication between tutors and clients, focusing on the dynamics of giving clients feedback, and including the related processes of facework and empathic listening.

CHAPTER 4:

COMMUNICATIVE REPERTOIRES IN THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

Improvisation in Action: An Illustration

Andrew walks into the center with a new client. He introduces her to me as Abby, his girlfriend's roommate who wants to rehearse for her interview at the Florida aquarium scheduled for later today. When she went for her initial interview, the interviewers handed her a packet of information about spotted stingrays and told her to come back and give a 5-minute speech. She will be presenting in front of the tank of spotted stingrays to her interviewer, but was instructed to pretend that there was an audience of mixed ages listening to her presentation.

When I heard this I responded with, "Wow! That's a performance interview!" It had been awhile since I had worked with someone doing this type of role-playing interview in the form of an "expert" performance. I am happy and excited to have a prepared and motivated visitor. And, I know that the best advertisement is word of mouth. Andrew is bringing someone important in his social circle to the speaking center, which gives a sense of how he has embraced the tutor role as part of his identity.

I jump up. "Great! Pretend like this wall is your tank." I point to the wall in the front of the room. I ask what she was most concerned about and she says her use of "ums" and her accent. She says she knows the content, has rehearsed, made symbols for the main points and has written them on her hand but since she knows the material well enough she rubbed them off. That's an interesting way to learn material, I think to myself. She tells us that she already

rehearsed in front of Samantha (a speech tutor) and Samantha had said it was great.

"Well that's encouraging," I say.

"Yes, but she's my friend, she always says that."

She says she wants an "honest" opinion. She wants feedback the tutors would call "harsh" and "no sugar coating." Her interview was in four hours.

Again, I point to a blank wall in the office and say, "That is your tank of stingrays." Laughing, she makes her way to the wall. Dragging chairs closer to the wall, I set the stage, "And we will be your audience. Andrew is the college student, I'm a grandma, and this is little Joey." I said with a smile. Andrew sits in a chair and looks attentively on. His expression, a raised eyebrow and tentative smile, seems to ask, "What is Professor Coats up too now?!"

I put the doll in the chair in front of my desk. After looking at the small white label on the doll's chest, the client asks, laughing, "What's a dammit doll?" I read the label for her—which get's her laughing even more. Little Joey is a small yellow stuffed doll with purple hair that I keep near my desk. His label explains his intended purpose: "Whenever things don't go so well, and you want to hit the wall and yell, here's a little dammit doll, that you can't do without. Just grasp it firmly by the legs and find a place to slam it. And as you whack the stuffing out yell 'Dammit! Dammit! Dammit!'"

We rehearse with Abby, making suggestions about hand gestures and vocal inflection. Her body is tense, her movement is stiff, and her voice is tight. She states that the hardest part is feeling like an imposter. We point out that she knows more about the topic now than when she started preparing. Andrew says,"It's okay. They don't expect you to be an expert. It's all about your confidence. Just own it. You know more than you realize." After two more full rehearsals of her spotted stingray presentation, I tell her that her interest is coming through. Each time, I

suggest that she use more expansive gestures. At one point, she starts to discuss the stingray, saying "I will gesture to it when I get to this section." She was "rehearsing," but I wanted her to be in the moment. I jump up and stand beside her and gesture to the blank wall. She laughs, and plays along. She picks up from the part of her presentation where she needed to refer to the wall as the "tank" of stingrays, pointing out features.

The more she gestures and creates a scene for us, the more her interest and enthusiasm becomes evident. By the end of the session she is smiling, and we are complementing the believability of her role-taking. With that she tells us she has to get ready and with words of encouragement from Andrew and me, she races out of the center.

* * *

I began this chapter with this particular vignette both because it recalled ideas from the last chapter and illustrated several themes that will be explored in the sections that follow. Overall, the scene reflected the emergent quality of center activities, and, in particular, our collective ability to "improvise" by identifying and working through problems in the course of our tutoring sessions. As discussed in Chapter 3, a key constraint we faced is that the center only has one large room. At the same time, we did not know who, why or how many would attend, making it difficult to plan an agenda. We tutored, coached, instructed, brainstormed, organized, debated, and trained all during our twice a week sessions. As we negotiated the space, staff availability, and client needs on a daily basis, we were continually called to collaborate in improvising solutions. In Abby's case, the solution involved redefining the whole situation as a "pretend" interview to change the meaning of what was happening. Framing the situation as make believe or "play" (Goffman, 1974) offered advantages over a straightforward discussion of the client's speech. According to Goffman, to frame something is to establish an organizing

definition of the situation that answers the question, “What is it that’s going on here?” (p. 8). Frame also serves to create a particular climate of expectation and emotion. In this case, framing the session as a pretend interview increased the client’s involvement and heightened her awareness of how the elements of delivery such as gestures, modulation, and tone operated together. By allowing herself to be brought into a playful “pretend” frame (“Pretend this wall is your tank”), the client began to see that she could experiment, and that “mistakes” were allowed. This episode illustrated the importance of spontaneity and improvisation in coaxing many clients out of their hesitation and reticence. A willingness to improvise was a key element in creating a supportive and confirming communication climate, which is another major theme of this chapter.

Framing is an important concept in understanding the center’s shared repertoire. As newcomers adapted to the tutor role they were learning to recognize various contextual frames, which were different from an ordinary classroom. In the process they learned to behave in context appropriate ways, and to manage shifts from one frame to another. For example many of our routine activities were conducted in a serious, “professional” frame. Each day, as clients arrived for tutoring we begin by inviting them to take a seat, and review the services we provide while pointing out what they needed to complete on the intake form. Sometimes when a client walked in, dazed by the professional setting and tone, a tutor’s smile and wave to come over and take a seat could alter the frame or “key”[4] to a less formal, friendly peer encounter.

More obvious frame shifts occurred when members shift into a “play” frame, which happened often in backstage moments when clients were not around. Then the tutors and I would shift to role-playing interviews, presentations, rehearse for their class projects or

[4] Keys are clues that establish the "tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done" (Hymes, 1967, p. 62) which can change numerous times during an interaction. Keys are highly fluid, and are not static categories, but can shift moment to moment.

presentations promoting the center. These episodes often took on a silly tone with laughter and joking and short moments of embodying an unfamiliar or uncomfortable professional role such as an interviewee, presenter to a new audience, competitor, defendant, political activist, or scholarship seeker. Initially I found these informal backstage moments confusing, just as Goffman (1974) described: the "…occasions when we must wait until things are almost over before discovering what has been occurring and occasions of our own activity when we can considerably put off deciding what to claim we have been doing" (pg. 2). Sometimes the most random, inconsequential topic could lead into a spontaneous role-play. What was interesting was how when a "play" frame was initiated, it would be recognized and accepted by everyone, illustrating the willingness to improvise, which was a significant aspect of our mutual engagement as a CoP and created a particular climate of expectation and emotion.

In the remainder of this chapter I will look more closely at the forms of participation in the activities of the center, with "activities" being the third primary element in every social situation (Spradley, 1980, p. 41). Individuals' behavior at the center fell into recognizable patterns of activities: welcoming, listening to visitors' concerns and assessing their needs, and giving suggestions for improvement. Many of these elements were part of the general process of giving feedback, which was a vital, on-going element of our practice and began the moment a client entered the center. I will turn now to look at the help-giving dynamic, with a focus on the tensions involved in giving feedback to peers. As I will discuss, feedback involved complex processes of giving advice and criticism while reassuring clients through face-saving strategies. Finally, because a significant portion of advice-giving centers on clients' speech anxiety I will show how tutors negotiated disclosing their own struggles and strategies for managing this anxiety.

Feedback as a Relational Process

Giving and receiving help was the primary dynamic of center interaction. Tutors recognized that providing help in the form of peer evaluation was a central aspect of their role. Acquiring skills in effective critique was a core aspect of their learning. However the development of skills was complicated by the roles and relationships between tutors and clients in this context. My observations revealed that giving feedback could be challenging for tutors, in part, because in evaluating their peers, the tutors were assuming a responsibility normally taken on by a trained teacher. Outside the speaking center context, clients and tutors behaved as status equals, which led some tutors to view their role as being an intermediary link between professors and clients.[5]

Yet in contrast to being status equals outside the center, the helping dynamic within the center required that clients see tutors as knowledgeable sources of information.[6] Further complicating the feedback process was that tutors must navigate the tension between giving criticism to their peers, a potentially face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) while also working to make clients feel supported and at ease.

The literature on peer tutoring in speaking center contexts has emphasized the importance of creating a climate of trust. Supportive climates have not only encouraged students' comprehension but have enabled them to feel comfortable engaging in a negotiation of meaning,

[5] In fact, several tutors described being a kind of generational bridge between me (Ann Marie) and the clients. As Andrew said, "My big role I guess, is maybe understanding pop culture maybe a little more than others." Similarly, Abigail often spent time helping me set up the center's Facebook page. She knew of my social media limitations and worked to teach me about posting and advertising. She emphasized to me the importance of connecting with "today's youth" through social media.

[6] Andrew described his role as being a live "Google" of instant information: There is a reason they come here…they want the face to face interaction and almost more of an immediate gratification saying this is my direct problem I cant find it in a book…I need help and getting the answer (*snapped his fingers*) right away just like, almost like Google."

a hallmark of collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1984; Hansen & Liu, 2005). The tutor/client social world was the tutoring session and interactions. To make clear the importance of a climate of trust for learning, I introduced the theme of supportiveness for those seeking assistance during my initial interviews with prospective tutors. In these first interviews, I would pull up our center's webpage[7] and point out our mission statement: "To enhance oral communication skills and offer support services at the Hillcrest University." I explained my interest and reasoning for developing the center: how, as an instructor, I was tired of checking off "needs work" on speech rubrics and didn't like giving F's. I looked outside of the classroom to create a peer-based environment devoid of many of the usual "defensive" communication characteristics, with the idea of providing students a non-graded space to improve their skills with peer support and input. Most importantly, I didn't want students to see the speaking center as an extension of the expectations and structure of a traditional classroom.

To further emphasize the importance of creating a safe environment for participation, I often showed tutors a one-page handout I used in my Interpersonal Communication class, at the interview or on their first day at the center. The handout was designed to introduce specific methods for building client rapport by outlining the characteristics of supportive and confirming communication climates (Gibb, 1961). It explained that supportive communication has been characterized by non-judgmental description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality, and provisionalism. At the speaking center this meant giving feedback that confirmed the inherent value in the speaker's message. The important thing in these interactions was for tutors to hone in on what the speaker was trying to say and to help them decide what choices

[7] University website: The Department of Speech recognizes that public speaking skills are essential for career success and civic participation. In addition to speech courses that expose students to the skills, understandings and competencies necessary in effective public speech performances, the department sponsors the HU Center for Public Speaking. The center's mission is to enhance oral communication skills and offer support services at Hillcrest University. We provide one-to-one tutoring and small group workshops with peer tutors. This free service is available to all students, faculty and staff.

regarding content, organization or delivery are preferable to others. Rather than adhering to any preconceived idea of what was right or wrong, tutors and clients engaged in a negotiation leading, ideally, to joint consensus about what made an effective speech. This process helped students to gain authority over their own knowledge (Bruffee, 1984). As tutors began to appreciate the benefits of a supportive orientation, they were also learning to adapt to a variety of demands and circumstances in a way that sparked creative solutions.

I noted in my fieldnotes that one prospective tutor pointed out during their initial interview, "Isn't it contradictory to be a tutor and speak in provisional terms?" Thus he seemed to sense the tensions involved in balancing evaluation and support of clients. For many tutors, the role implied having a base of knowledge and expertise. However I tried to encourage a different perspective, to think of tutoring as learning to facilitate the client's own process of self-evaluation. I explained to the tutor that, for example, a client may come in needing assistance on developing a thesis statement for his or her speech. We knew the definition of a thesis and how to write one, but we didn't know the *best* thesis for a given speech—there were multiple renditions and possibilities for any given speech depending on context, audience and assignment. Operating from a position of reflective awareness, the tutors learned to reflect on, "What is this person trying to achieve and how can I be most helpful."

In addition to explicitly teaching about the nature of confirming climates, I tried to model the expression of confirmation for tutors to show them how we "confirm" clients by recognizing and acknowledging the validity of their experience (Cissna & Anderson, 1994). Confirming the client began the moment they entered the center. From the quality of their handshake, to how they entered the room, and made eye contact, I made an immediate assessment and looked for opportunities to give positive feedback. For example, I might have said, "You have a confident

handshake" or if they had their outline or visual aid, "You're very organized and prepared. Just what we like to see!" While filling out the intake form (see Appendix G) with the client and explaining our services, a client might have volunteered, "I can't make eye contact," to which I might have replied, "Well you're doing a good job right now." Their response was usually, "Well, this is different. This is more conversational. I don't mind speaking to a few people, the problem is when I'm in front of the class." To this I replied numerous times, "Well maybe that's how you can approach this speech for class—a conversation with your classmates. We can work on that." To encourage tutors to be responsive to client needs, I looked for ways to model giving feedback on observed and evolving communication qualities during the in-take process while helping to create an agenda for the visit.

Since I primarily handled the in-take, I was often the first to greet and offer a seat to the client. I tried to shake the client's hand, while I stood, often leaning over my desk. I offered a seat, often nonverbally, gesturing to a chair in front of me. Since available tutor(s) were in the same room, they also responded nonverbally (looking up, shutting their laptop or sliding it away and making eye contact). I never had to say, "All tutors must put away their work when a client enters" or to formulate explicit rules. Yet, they heard me say, "It's so important that clients feel welcomed!" They also observed me always closing my laptop and focusing all of my attention on whoever entered.

Tutors came to understand the mission of the center and the expectations when people visited. Tutor Emily spoke to the overarching frame of our supportive practice when I asked her to describe her role and work at the center:

> …I think that the main role in being a tutor is being a support for the people who come in. Because many times they're, they're more than struggling with nerves

more than most anything else. Of course there are skills that people can improve on, but I think mostly when people come in they are looking for reassurance that their fears are not as scary as they seem.

Peer Feedback as a Tension-filled Process

Clients at the Speaking Center were diverse in their attitudes toward tutoring. They ranged from those who were "willing participants," ready to begin and open to feedback, to those who were actively resistant (verbally justifying and debating why they did what they did). Others appeared to be simply indifferent, giving minimal responses to feedback with little or no initiative to make changes, and still others seemed helpless (asking, in essence, "can you do it for me?"). Overall, however, I found the majority to be willing participants, receptive to learning.

Giving feedback was a core aspect of tutors' learning and practice, yet there was no typical feedback process. It always depended on the goals of the client and how much time was available. A tutor, Henry, explained, "There is not a typical session…There really isn't things that you do the same way, each time, the same process." Even though tutoring sessions were guided by key elements and considerations such as identifying the purpose for their visit, reviewing written and/or oral product, identifying strengths, and making suggestions for improvement; within this framework, tutors had the freedom to generate creative alternatives.

If a client came to us with prepared materials such as an outline, stack of note cards, written essay or nearly completed PowerPoint, we encouraged them to present their speeches to us then and there. Most clients did not come in wanting to stand before us and rehearse their speech. The process often took a little coaxing. For example, we might have said, "Your outline looks good, let's see how it sounds—talk it through—what is your attention getter? How will you start?" If they were receptive to reading their speech to us, we saw this as an opening to talk

about their body language. We might have suggested they stand so that they could breathe more effectively and project better. We might have pointed out the importance of being heard – "You can have the best outline and preparation, but if your audience can't hear you…"

Once a client was comfortable with standing and essentially giving their speech in front of us, we moved quickly to the ritual of readying the room for them. I would ask them to imagine and describe the room in which they would present their speech. We would always ask if their professor allowed notes. If so, we would give tips on how to use notes. If not, we would ask them how they are progressing with memorization and rehearsal. If they planned to use a podium in the actual, graded presentation of their speech, we would wheel our podium out and place it in the front of the room. Chairs would be moved, and the door would be closed, with a small opening so that one of the tutors could be ready to greet a newly arrived client.

If a client came to us in a different stage of the speech-writing process – if they were still in the note-taking or brainstorming phase, for example – we might have shown them our preparation outline template, which would help them organize the ideas, main points and support for their speech. The template (see Appendix H) was structured so that one side gave definitions of each element in a completed outline; while the other side was blank and ready for them to fill in. There was no protocol for when to use the template, but rather it was left to the tutor to sense when the template would be the most helpful tool.

The feedback was generally dependent on the level of preparation and so I encouraged tutors to attune themselves to the client's concerns regardless of where he or she was in the process. If a client seemed unprepared, saying they were still working on it, or expressed concern that they were not ready yet, we assured them that we were here to help and they could just read their notes aloud. We might have interrupted with real-time suggestions for

improvement, which allowed for immediate feedback and prevented them from feeling overwhelmed by a long list of corrections to make at the end of the session. All of this depended on the client – no two sessions were the same. We often prefaced any feedback by asking questions about how they felt in front of us—"How was that? How do you think that went? Was it difficult? How did that feel compared to your classroom experience?"

"Feedback" was itself a pervasive term used by both clients and tutors. Often clients shared what "critical" or "negative" feedback their professor and peers had already expressed (e.g. "My teacher said I have to come here to work on my organization," "My classmates said I have too many umms," or "I can't make eye contact"). If there was a specific complaint the client was working on, I usually asked after they presented a practice speech, "How did that compare to your class speech?" This usually would prompt clients to identify what they were struggling with and what they still needed to work on. Our part was to encourage. "We can work on that" was a common statement heard in the center.

Tutors talked frequently about the difficulty of giving critical feedback. Deciding what clients needed or wanted was a situated judgment based on how the tutor thought the client would respond. Part of the mastery and art of conveying feedback was knowing how much honesty and constructive criticism a client could absorb. As Andrew explained:

> [Int: How do you know what they can handle?]
>
> […] So obviously the physical interaction and communication and body language is a huge aspect of everything that we do.
>
> [Int: umhmm, and a hard thing to teach!]
>
> Yeah! It's a hard thing to teach and it's even harder to learn. But once you get a knack for what people are thinking and what they are doing, then you

> can really get down to, should I let this person go? Or, should I say, 'We'll take another half an hour and really get down to it.'

Andrew's comment was spoken with a sense of authority and illustrated his identification with the center's approach; as he said, "the physical interaction and communication is a huge aspect of everything we do." He spoke in a way that showed how the CoP could be a site for constructing identity around the acquisition of new expertise. That is, Andrew developed a sense of himself as someone who had a "knack" for what people were thinking. His self-identity was transformed in the course of interacting with clients and he began to see himself as a competent tutor. This quote also illustrated the nonroutine nature of tutoring practice. That is, it can't be solved with a formula but exemplifies "learning by doing" which has been a defining feature of CoPs (Wenger, 1998).

The ability to know what people were thinking and how much criticism they could handle was a shared goal and valued skill by the participants. Abigail, one of the tutors, described it as an ability to "know how to read the engaged and resistant client." Another tutor, Victor described the connection with clients and being able to gauge what a client could handle in the moments when "you both know, you know they know." Henry explained that, "You need to be very keen…you need to be responsive and reactive to the [client's] feedback." This ability to read a client's internal state was what Ward and Schwartzman (2009) described as emotional intelligence, which "enables the consultant to establish a means of trust" (p. 366). Elfenbein et al. (2007) explained that, "Individuals high in emotional recognition skill presumably are more accurate in obtaining information about other people's internal states, and they can use this information to navigate their social worlds" (p. 206). Analysis of qualitative survey data of

university and speaking center clients and consultants (Ward & Schwartman, 2009) has revealed that emotional intelligence, empathy and interpersonal trust are necessary underlying components of successful consultations. Being able to recognize, understand and manage clients', and their own, emotional states has contributed to creating a supportive environment that has allowed for learning.[8]

The ability to prioritize was also an element to effective feedback. There was always a tension between wanting to "get it all" and "not overwhelming the client." But what was overwhelming to one client might not be overwhelming to another. Sometimes clients were explicit in what they could handle stating, "Don't sugar coat it. Tell me straight-up," "Be brutal," or "I can take it." The scope and degree of honesty were fluctuating variables in the feedback process.

Since the scope of feedback varied and was dependent on why the client was visiting, the intake form[9] (see Appendix G) helped the tutors and myself narrow and identify what to work on with the client. The client completed the form and we reviewed it with them, which helped to identify their goals. At the end of the form there was a visit assessment, which asked the client if they believed their goal(s) were met for the session, and did they feel more prepared for their upcoming speech. The only consistent suggestion for improvement was a request for a more

[8] The idea of the center as a supportive community for nervous clients was a theme in several interviews. For example, Jess spoke of the center as being the client's "basal group," saying "The enthusiasm and support from the speech center is the basal group. The bottom support rock that raises you up and you stand on it and when you're in your speech you're like, 'Yeah, I went to the speech center and they thought it was good and my presentation is going to be great!' When people have that confirmation from other people and believe that their speech is better it's like the placebo effect. Whether or not there is a pill, they feel like their speech is going to be successful, like it must be successful …"

[9] This form was the fourth revision since the Fall of 2010 when the center began. Having gone through three revisions with input from tutors and comparison to other speaking centers' forms (Appendix K, L, and M), Appendix G is the final product. What was notable about our final registration form was professional appearance; clear and easy to read; and it clearly explained what could be accomplished during a session/visit. The majority of students strongly agreed (#4) that we were attentive and helpful. Once a client left, the tutors and I reviewed the form.

central location. The success of the feedback was dependent on being able to discover why the client was visiting and to give a preview of what we would be working on.

In addition to gauging the client's readiness for critique, a challenge in giving feedback was the need to evaluate multiple aspects of students' work, including offering suggestions for outlines, work cited support, visual aids (PowerPoint, Prezi, handouts), brainstorming for topics, and being able to respond to questions about how to handle the anxiety they were experiencing while preparing for or delivering a speech, interview, or group presentation. Across all of these content areas, tutors had to strike a balance between giving effective critique while also attending to students' needs to maintain a positive self-image (Trees Kerssen-Griep & Hess, 2009). Thus feedback was inherently tension filled, particularly when viewed as "constructive criticism." According to Vásquez (2004), constructive criticism has been a largely under-defined and under-theorized concept, even in publications whose purpose it was to instruct professionals on "how to give" constructive criticism (e.g., Abbott & Lyter, 1998; Booher, 1999; Koballa et al., 1992). Among others who have offered varied definitions, Lamborn, Fischer, & Pipp (1994) defined constructive criticism as instances "when a person honestly criticizes another in a way designed to promote growth or improvement with the underlying intention of being kind" (p. 495). This was the definition that described the overarching approach to feedback at the center. Interestingly, I found that students who speak English as a second language, are more forthcoming about their ability to handle constructive criticism. During an interview with Andrew when I asked him to describe when the tutoring process went well, he described his work tutoring a non-native English speaker, in particular the way he learned to negotiate her requests for feedback:

I was a little scared at first because of the whole, I don't know, the way she pronounced words frightened me, and how do I address this? I have never had to address that to a foreigner and saying 'you know you're really saying this wrong'…

Int: right…

…but it helped, she even helped me learning a little bit by saying,'you know, I know, I might not be saying this correctly, I need you to help.' So then everyone in the room stepped in and said, 'You know, Warren Buffet instead of Buffay.' Things you don't really think about.

Int: She gave you permission?

Yeah. It's almost permission, it's permission and also, 'I know I don't say this right, help me.' So [the client's] reaching out for help really gave me some comfort and really put me at ease a little bit. Overall she came back three or four times to get more help and say this is where its going […] and finally we ended up with a result that she was happy with and we were happy to show off, I guess, the public speaking center to say you know we helped her do this. So that was awesome for me personally. I'm sure for her as well because it went well.

Being scared by the prospect of pointing out mistakes in another's pronunciation was understandably a difficult situation for tutors and for myself. The desire to save clients' face and have them want to return (because who wants to go back to a place that made them feel bad about themselves?) was paramount to us. Yet this awkwardness eventually lead, at times, to

growth in the tutor's self-awareness. What was also evident was that even with permission to provide potential face-threatening feedback, tutors aimed to save face.

Addressing Face Needs as Part of Giving Feedback

The term "saving face" was a phrase that all tutors were introduced to as an aspect of creating a supportive climate. I explained face as a concept grounded in the idea that in our social interactions we attempt to guide the impressions that others form about us. Although Tracy (1990) has traced the concept of face to Chinese origins in the fourth century BC (p. 209), contemporary notions of face have been tied to the early work of Erving Goffman (1959). To Goffman (1967), "*face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p. 5). Our modern interpretation of this concept as having dignity or respectability in the eyes of others is recognizable in many situations ranging from everyday social interactions to situations where professional credibility is at stake. Tracy (1990) explains that, "In English speaking countries, face has become a staple of people's everday explanations of each other" (p. 210). We help others maintain face. We offer graceful exits to those who are in jeopardy of losing face; and sometimes when we have no investment in the person or the situation, we do nothing. Sometimes we challenge or threaten another's face.

"Facework" is the behavioral aspect of face and was observable in center interactions. Facework includes the communicative strategies through which individuals enact their own desired identites or support or challenge those of others (Goofman, 1967). Facework in the form of techniques for saving clients' face were an especially important element of our shared repertoire and something all tutors worked on. As Henry explained when I asked him what he has learned from his experience as a tutor:

> I've learned that you need to be as helpful as possible and there are lines that you need to be careful that you don't cross…Such as you don't want to, as you so lovingly refer to it as, face-attack. We don't want to face-attack people, and this is going to change person to person. I've learned how to deal with different people. That is a skill I have gained. I learned to deal with different people because the people you get at the speech center are all at different stages with what they need help with…So you learn to deal with all the different levels, because there is not a standard. You are getting a spectrum of people. So I think you get to learn how to deal with all those possibilities.

It's funny to me that Henry used the phrase, "as you so lovingly refer to it as, face-attack." Tracy (2008), drawing on Goffman (1967) explained that "Face-attack is a better way to label communicative acts that are (or are seen as) intentionally rude, disrespectful, and insulting" (pg. 173). Henry was known for his honesty, and at times he could be blunt or too direct, and we often discussed how he could lessen those qualities and minimize the threat to clients by being more tactful. Failure to soften potentially face-threatening comments increased the likelihood that the client would focus attention on trying to save face rather than concentrating their attention on the task at hand. In this sense, as Trees et al. (2009) explained, effective feedback in the form of constructive criticism required abilities "beyond simply being nice or friendly" (p. 399). According to these authors, when feedback was shaped by the tutor's awareness of clients' face needs, student performance improved significantly. For CoP members the challenge was not just learning about face threat but being able to apply the idea to individual clients. It involved accurately gauging their openness to direct suggestions.

Although I never obseved a tutor express feedback in an "intentionally rude, disrespectful, and insulting" way, it is important to note that tutors' intentionality did not always determine how the client would perceive the feedback. While many were not threatened by feedback on their delivery, others seemed to be more sensitive to the possibility of losing face as a "competent college student" when an error was pointed out in the content of their speech, such as if their source citation didn't support their argument or organization was lacking. Regardless of how a tutor might have intended to frame and deliver feedback, some clients appeared to take criticism personally, as an attack to their credibility. Yet what was overwhelming to one client might not be for another client.

Copland (2010) found that in some settings the group norm has been to allow critical feedback and "face threat" without it being taken as seriously face threatening. She has argued that in some settings, when expectations and the "rules of the game" were set beforehand, certain speech acts which might be face threatening in other contexts "are allowable as they belong to the normative ideals of the discourse context" (p. 3835). This dynamic was evident when the tutors shared their own work with each other. They expected the feedback from their peers to be honest and direct because they embraced the idea that evaluation was necessary for improvement. Some clients were also explicit in what they could handle saying, "Don't sugar coat it. Tell me straight-up," "Be brutal," or "I can take it." But others were more reluctant. They expressed a fear of direct feedback—and a desire to protect their self-image—when they said, "Be gentle with me," "Go easy on me," I'm really nervous" or "I haven't had time to rehearse. Don't expect much."

One way that tutors made nervous clients feel more comfortable was through establishing common ground by sharing their own personal challenges. Most tutors had had the experience

of a sudden loss of confidence or other disruption to a speech performance. As I discuss in the next section, sharing these stories was a way to establish a connection and an aid to clients' face-saving.

Shared Knowledge of Speech Anxiety: "We've Been There"

Handling speech anxiety was a primary focus of our recruitment and outreach advertising and helping clients manage anxiety was a significant component of the community's practice. We featured the topic of speech anxiety on some of the centers' promotional flyers (see Appendix I). For example, a bear with a sad face was captioned, "I have to give a speech tomorrow, I can't bear it." Another flyer with blue butterflies all over it said, "Butterflies are normal. Visit the speaking center and get yours to fly in formation" (see Appendix J). Some students emailed me privately before coming to the center and others showed up for our open tutoring workshops at the suggestion of a colleague, instructor, friend, or prior client. Many of these clients expressed a need to deal with their nervousness. They displayed a variety of symptoms including, to varying degrees, crying, blushing, scratching hives, and even trying to suppress waves of nausea. These extreme cases were not the norm, but they did occur. The clients often described trying to convince themselves they shouldn't be nervous because they knew the material. Yet past experiences led them to believe they would have the same anxiety.

In some cases clients did not reveal their anxiety until well into the session, after other issues concerning speech content and organization had been addressed. But I had seen clients volunteering information about their anxiety right away and had even observed clients expressing their concern in front of a larger group including tutors and other clients. Such disclosures suggested that clients felt some safety in revealing their vulnerabilities to their peers. In disclosing these problems clients seemed to be looking for sympathy as much as specific

advice. At such times I had occasionally revealed to clients my own experiences of anxiety. I had experienced, could relate to, and empathized with the panic they were experiencing at that moment. Simply through a look, I could convey an understanding: "No really, I get it."

These situations highlighted our ongoing dilemma as practitioners about how best to balance being caring and supportive with offering honest evaluation of the client's performance. In response to such disclosures, tutors often pulled clients aside and discussed how they managed their own speech anxiety. Some tutors, for example, described to clients how they were able to reframe the event (e.g., it's not the end of the world, we will get through it, I rehearsed in front of others, I did deep breathing exercises, meditation, etc.).

Interpersonal communication theorists (see, for example, Taylor & Altman, 1987; Jourard, 1971) have suggested that disclosure by one person obligates the other to reciprocate, and this reciprocal dynamic is often in play between tutors and clients. Tutors perceived that having the ability to match a client's experience of apprehension was an important dimension of the helping relationship. The moments of mutual disclosure can be viewed as another type of frame shift when the "professional" frame of advice-giving shifts to a more peer friendly encounter. In interviews, several tutors said their personal experience helped them to be more supportive and understanding. When asked how being a tutor addressed her goals or needs, tutor Gloria explained:

> I noticed when I help people I use a lot of sympathy. For example, I say I know exactly how you feel. I talk extremely fast too. I know how to do breath control and all that jazz, so for me not only does it make me remember what I've learned more, it also forces me to follow through with those ideas. Because I would seem like a hypocrite if I wasn't […] Just

> being nervous in front of a crowd, talking too fast, mostly really being insecure in front of people, essentially. That's just a common fear or struggle that everyone shares and that makes my job easier because I try, and know, or at least think I know, how to appease that.

Gloria's willingness to share with clients her experience of talking too fast and being insecure in front of people may be partly due to the lack of status differences; as a student talking with another student she might feel relatively less constrained in sharing her vulnerabilities. However, she also recognized the benefits for clients in this type of personal sharing. As she said, it's a "common fear or struggle that everyone shares that makes my job easier," by reducing face threat in what was probably a difficult conversation. In another example, after I asked Beth to expand upon how she empathetically related to and calmed clients she said:

> I remember one time a student for her Pathways class was doing a moot court and I told her the eye contact, just the fear, not feeling like you're understanding what you're saying, like we've all been there. Even without moot court, the eye contact thing was definitely was one of the hardest things I had to get over. Now that I'm over that it's more just, I don't know, trying to tell my brain to shut up—haha!

In both examples, community members showed themselves as engaged in an emotional relationship with the clients they were helping. They expressed solidarity by drawing on embodied knowledge acquired from personal experience to motivate clients to persevere. Once again, there was no magic solution that worked for everybody, but tutors offered their

experiences provisionally, as practices that worked for them and could therefore be tried out by others.

In another example, when I asked about her worst public speaking experience, Keisha explained how her experience when she was younger shaped how she interacted with the clients. She started by explaining that she was reading a psalm in front of her church and she froze:

> I just remember it being really embarrassing, but after it, when we were across the street at the community center, I remember everyone came up and were just like, "You were fine, you were fine!" Even though I paused for five minutes probably from what I can remember. But that also taught me, you know, life goes on. Pick up. You'll do better next week.

During our interview, I asked her how this experience influenced how she interacts with the clients that she works with. Keisha explained, "Definitely be more empathetic. Especially when they come in so apprehensive, you know, you've been there, you drew the blank, if that's their fear, drawing the blank, then you can help them." I asked her how she knew they were apprehensive. She explained, "Not necessarily that I know that they are, though some students will tell you they are. You know, 'I don't really wanna do this!' But you just reassure them, you know. There are worse things!" Like Beth's account of struggling with eye contact, Keisha's story emphasized the self-awareness that she gained: "…that also taught me you know, life goes on. Pick up. You'll do better." Like Andrew, she projected a sense of confidence in knowing how to diagnose the problem and apply personal experience to the case at hand: "…if that's their fear, drawing the blank, then you can help them." The tutors' accounts showed how different types of knowledge come together in tutoring practice, including interpersonal

sensitivity to clients' anxieties (even if the anxiety is not openly expressed) combined with situational familiarity (e.g. recognizing the "fear of drawing a blank") as a particular type of anxiety that some clients have.

Overall observations and interviews revealed that high levels of disclosure among both clients and tutors were acceptable in the community. Finding common ground by sharing personal experience was seen as a way of building trust and as enhancing the learning climate. Thus knowledge about self-disclosure was an important part of tutors' competence. However, this competence also includes knowing when and how to tell these stories including how much to disclose. Viewing speech anxiety as an aspect of tutors' performance of the tutoring role suggests a new way of understanding anxiety. As with support and learning, anxiety is usually viewed in psychological rather than interactional terms. By observing how anxiety is produced in the presence of others and in response to their behavior, we can see speech anxiety, like support and learning, in a less psychological and more interactional light.

In addition to aiding individual clients, the exchange of personal information about speech anxiety could be a way to build a pool of shared knowledge, which is an important factor in any community of practice. Sharing stories like Keisha's served to establish a common frame of reference among the tutors. Through the recollection of their own embarrassing moments and anxiety, tutors were able to empathically relate to each other as well as to the experiences of their clients. In these sessions and interactions, tutors were acquiring practical know-how about the skillful use of empathy and self-disclosure.

This chapter demonstrated the emergent quality of center activities and the members' collective ability to collaborate in improvising solutions. This ability was a key element in creating a supportive and confirming communication climate. In addition, navigating the tension

between giving criticism—a potentially face-threatening act—and encouragement required an understanding and situated judgment based on how the tutor thought the client would react. As shown in this chapter, the community was a site for constructing identity around the acquisition of this interpersonal expertise. The skillful use of prioritizing feedback, finding common ground, and using self-disclosure were key elements of our shared repertoire. In the following chapter I discuss the implications for practice of this "learning by doing" experience, and I attempt to translate the findings into approaches and strategies that can be used by others interested in creating supportive learning environments.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

Overview of Findings

In recent years, higher education has witnessed a dramatic increase in the demand for public speaking instruction. While course offerings have expanded to meet this need, the growth in demand continues to pose unique challenges to instructors and to students. The skills-based nature of the subject matter, with its requirements for individual feedback and coaching are difficult for instructors to provide in a traditional classroom. Further complicating the instructional process is the fact that large numbers of students are struggling with public speaking anxiety. Many students report feeling apprehensive about giving speeches and presentations as they fear being negatively evaluated by their instructor and their peers (LeFebvre, et al., 2018). Thus in addition to developing and refining speaking skills, instructors must incorporate processes that aid students on a more personal level in building confidence and helping them manage feelings of apprehension.

In response to these demands, more institutions are directing resources to the creation of campus speaking centers staffed by student tutors. Peer tutors provide clients with a range of supports in the speech-making process, including suggestions for improving delivery during simulated practice sessions (Yook, 2006). Research suggests that the students perceived peer tutors as more understanding of their problems than staff tutors, more attuned to their perspectives, and less authoritarian, qualities which may be especially helpful in enhancing

students' self-confidence. Yet although a review of literature shows evidence of benefits to student clients, less attention has focused on how the tutors themselves are influenced by the tutoring experience.

In this research, I explored how undergraduate students enact the tutoring role through an ethnographic case study of one college speaking center. Using Lave and Wenger's (1991; 1998) concept of Communities of Practice as a conceptual framework, I attempted to understand the dynamics of help-giving, and the meaning of the experience for the tutors themselves. A CoP perspective conceptualizes learning as something accomplished through participation in a real-world setting. Situated learning theory, a general theory of knowledge acquisition, emphasizes processes of observing and modeling (Kerno & Mace, 2010) and the ability of individuals to learn through interacting with other people, using the setting and applications that would normally make use of the knowledge. Thus it has particular relevance to non-classroom contexts comprised of peer-mentors who teach and learn from each other and in which participation is voluntary. All speaking center members are encouraged to participate and add to the practice, including the clients; everyone's voice is valued.

Through my role as the director of a university speaking center, I had direct access to center activities. I was able to gather observational data documenting tutors' interactions as well as interview data to get a sense of how the tutors understood their roles and behavior. Using elements of the CoP model as sensitizing concepts, I addressed the following questions:
RQ1: What are the communication processes that create and maintain the Speaking Center as a community of practice? In particular, how is social support enacted, and how do peer tutors negotiate the contradictions between being supportive and giving criticism.

RQ2: How do participants construct identities as tutors through participation in the speaking center? That is, as novice participants develop skills in giving feedback, how are their identities as "experts" created and maintained?

Overview and Discussion of Key Findings

1. The Role of Physical Space in Community Dynamics

As shown through ethnographic description and vignettes, the practice of this community is highly interactive as tutors engage with clients and with each other. Communication operates on many levels, including the formal help-giving of tutoring encounters, where specific content is conveyed to clients, and in the form of informal interactions that define relationships among the community members day-to-day. The data also draw attention to the importance of physical space in the social organization of non-classroom settings. As shown in Chapter 3, in spite of the center's physical constraints, the space afforded unique learning opportunities. Regardless of the limitations and lack of privacy, the community members found benefits in having an open space where multiple tutors could be visibly present and available to each other. Being able to observe and consult with one another allowed for mutual engagement, the first of Lave and Wenger's three key elements. In this open space, knowledge could be shared and members' individual skills and assets could be acknowledged. In this way, the space contributed to Lave and Wenger's second element, the "negotiation of the joint enterprise" as the members' reached a common understanding of what was happening in this space. As Wenger (1998) explains, the joint enterprise belongs to participants in a profound sense "in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control" (p. 77). The tutors became accountable to each other and to me in order to make their shared space work for them. In other words, they implicitly claimed ownership of it as a speaking center while functioning within it as speaking center

tutors. Relations of mutual accountability were an integral part of the group, and while those relations were not a stated goal, they became part of their common assumptions and unique practice.

Another implication of space is the connection between space and institutional legitimacy. Before establishing the center, I was often engaging in informal or "backstage" pedagogical interactions such as giving advice to students or faculty about upcoming speeches, or listening to a colleague rehearse for a conference presentation. Typically these "casual" interactions, which sometimes took place in my office, but also during casual encounters around the campus, had no way of being officially recognized as professional contributions. The center allowed me to garner recognition once they began to take place in an institutionally recognized space.

2. Improvisation as a Key Resource

By identifying patterns in the use of space, this analysis draws attention to the important role of flexibility as an aspect of the community's practice. Dealing with the spatial constraints encouraged flexibility as a key element of this community. Flexibility became an important part of the shared repertoire of resources, the third of the key elements in Lave and Wenger's model. Given the ever-changing nature of the space and actors, adaptability and being able to improvise, for example by rearranging furniture or claiming the hallway as a workspace, were part of our daily interactions. As Sawyer (2011) explains, "In a general sense, improvisation is characteristic of any human action that is not fully scripted and determined […]" (p. 30). In the context of a CoP, improvisation appears to be especially important since mastery of the practice involves being able to adapt one's actions to an evolving set of circumstances (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 20). As the actors at this center master the tutoring role, they are also overcoming the challenges of the space, and even drawing advantages from the space (e.g., when unfamiliar

with the client's topic or field of study, a tutor could easily draw others with specialized knowledge into the interaction). Members learned where the resources were and how to access them in the space.

3. Learning through Participation: The "Teaching Curriculum" vs. "Learning Curriculum"

The concept of improvisation sheds light, here, on the kind of learning that occurs at the center, which can be understood in terms of Lave & Wenger's (1991) explanation of the differences between *learning curriculum* and *teaching curriculum.* A teaching curriculum supplies, limits, and structures resources for learning. It is "mediated through an instructor's participation, by an external view of what knowing is about" (p. 97). On the other hand, a learning curriculum emerges from participation and is specific to a certain situation. It's not something that can be removed from its context and applied to other situations, nor can it be used to create a hierarchy in which the teacher is placed above the student. A learning curriculum treats all as active participants and is a characteristic of the community, which allows for equality in the learning process.

At the center, learning can be understood as occurring when a newcomer learns to participate and talk the talk of a tutor: "For newcomers then the purpose is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 109). At the same time that members are participating in the learning curriculum, they are making use of a teaching curriculum in the form of tools of the community. One such tool is a binder sitting on every table, with photocopied sections of the textbook I use in my public speaking classes. We reference the binders if we are stuck or seeking some inspiration through effective examples. For example, when working on a thesis statement with a client, it is helpful to generate ideas by finding the definition and

examples of a thesis statement in the binder. This is learning through the tools of a traditional classroom, which are modified for the tutors' use. We had books and examples, but had to be more responsive to what the clients brought in.

Still, other less curriculum-based learning occurs informally, backstage and in-between the formal tutoring context. We take opportunities when clients are not present to work on tutors' personal goals and develop their professionalism through role playing/rehearsing for their future job interviews, internships, scholarships, leadership roles and interpersonal conflict management. Since these members voluntarily rehearse and discuss their selected projects, as opposed to my assigning projects (an aspect of a traditional classroom and teaching curriculum), they are learning through engagement, participating in a joint practice of personal communication skills and peer tutoring skills development.

4. Developing a Shared Repertoire of Communication Resources

Chapter 4 highlights the communication between tutors and clients, focusing on the dynamics of giving clients feedback, and including the related processes of facework and empathic listening. There is an emergent quality of center activities, and, as emphasized in the preceding section, our collective ability to improvise by identifying and working through problems in the course of our tutoring sessions. As we negotiate the availability of space, staff availability, and client needs on a daily basis, we are continually called to collaborate in improvising solutions. A willingness to improvise is a key element in creating a supportive and confirming communication climate.

Chapter 4 showed framing to be an important concept in understanding the center's shared repertoire. As newcomers adapt to the tutor role they are learning to recognize various contextual frames, which are different from an ordinary classroom. In the process they learned

to behave in context appropriate ways, and to manage shifts from one frame to another. For example many of our routine activities were conducted in a serious, "professional" frame. What was interesting was how when a "play" frame was initiated, it would be recognized and accepted by everyone, illustrating the willingness to improvise, which was a significant aspect of our mutual engagement as a CoP, and created a particular climate of expectation and emotion.

Another aspect of the shared repertoire was the activity of giving feedback. This involved complex processes of giving advice and criticism while reassuring clients through face-saving strategies. The feedback is generally dependent on the clients' level of preparation and so tutors learned to attune themselves to the client's concerns regardless of where he or she was in the process. The ability to prioritize was an important element to effective feedback. There was always a tension between wanting to "get it all" and "not overwhelming the client." Deciding what clients needed or wanted was a situated judgment based on how the tutor thought the client would respond.

Tutors also had to strike a balance between giving effective critique while attending to students' needs to maintain a positive self-image. They constantly navigated the tension between giving potentially face-threatening criticism to their peers, while also working to make clients feel supported and at ease. Being able to recognize, understand and manage clients', and their own, emotional states contributed to creating a supportive environment that allowed for learning. Facework in the form of techniques for saving clients' face were an especially important element of our shared repertoire and something all tutors worked on.

One way that tutors made nervous clients feel more comfortable was through establishing common ground by sharing their own personal challenges. Most tutors had had the experience of a sudden loss of confidence or other disruptions to a speech performance. Sharing these

stories openly with clients was a way to establish a connection and an aid to clients' face-saving. Thus tutors often pulled clients aside and discussed how they managed their own speech anxiety. Overall observations and interviews revealed that the high levels of disclosure among both clients and tutors were acceptable in the community. Finding common ground by sharing personal experience was seen as a way of building trust and as enhancing the learning climate. Thus knowledge about self-disclosure (when to disclose and how much) was an important part of tutors' competence.

5. Learning as Collaborative

"What is great about the center is that it is so collaborative, it's very, I mean it's like it's a community, umm and it's very comfortable which again, like this is obviously a tutor perspective not someone coming in, but it's why I like it…" Tutor Emily

Daily interaction at the center showed diverse forms and levels of collaboration. One of the more obvious ways in which collaboration was demonstrated was in the sharing of expertise. Tutors recognized that each of them had specialized knowledge. In some cases the knowledge pertained to specific subject matter (e.g. being a science major or education major) but it was also based on particular skills or background (e.g. familiarity with PowerPoint). In tutoring consultations, they felt free to call on one another's expertise and also to share their own. This willingness to share resources had practical value as a way of helping clients. But these exchanges also speak to the communicative basis of collaboration as it is constructed by the actions of the participants. They also illustrate a point made by Lewis (2006) in her review of

communication scholarship on collaboration about how such processes invoke issues of identity construction for both the self and collaborative partners (Lewis, 2006).

Daily activities in the speaking center showed other collaborative features as identified by Lewis (2006). She emphasizes the nonhierarchical nature of collaboration, that is, the absence of power and status differences among members, and also its emergent nature: that is, "it cannot be formally convened, but rather, it emerges when the participants choose to engage one another in a certain way or manner" (p. 183). In the consultation process, students worked together with clients to search for understanding and to problem-solve, conveying the attitude that the client's ideas had inherent value. In trying to help them decide what choices to make regarding content, organization or delivery of their speeches, the tutors approached the tutoring process as a kind of negotiation, leading to consensus about what made an effective speech. Such a process creates the conditions for truly collaborative learning, in the sense that tutors and clients gain authority over their own knowledge (Bruffee, 1984). In this way, students had an opportunity to see the speaking center as a different kind of learning context from the traditional classroom in which teaching and learning are understood as the passing down of a body of information from an expert to a novice.

6. The Relational Basis of Peer Tutoring

In this community, tutors established common ground with clients by disclosing their own struggles with public speaking. As status equals, tutors seemed to feel free to reveal their personal experiences as a way of showing their solidarity with clients and motivating them to persevere, and also to share strategies that had worked for them. The fact that tutors identified with their peers' struggles was an important resource in the problem-solving dynamic.

Implications for Practice

The HU Speaking Center reveals a different dynamic from the traditional classroom in which the instructor is positioned as the main authority. According to prevailing academic standards, we might question the benefits to students of being advised by other students since they lack the necessary expertise and credentials. The data gathered for this project do not include measures that would give specific evidence of the impact of tutoring on academic outcomes[10]. However my experience with this project has made clearer to me some of the dynamics that seemed to enrich the help-giving process. Understanding speaking center activities and the practice of providing communication skills development through a CoP lens has given me insights into the benefits to students of creating more collaborative learning environments. Thus I offer several ideas that may be useful to others involved in the design and operation of campus speaking centers.

A first insight is to recognize that speaking centers provide students with a sense of belonging beyond what is possible in a classroom setting. While close relationships can emerge in a classroom, the greater frequency of interaction, including opportunities for casual conversation, created a familiarity and the possibility of strong bonds with the other students. This connectedness among participants was the basis for the trust and also contributed to mutual engagement. Iverson and McPhee (2008) argue that mutual engagement is what connects members "to multiple knowledge sources" (p. 180).

A second insight is the importance of balancing structure and emergence: The traditional classroom tends to be defined by common rituals and a centralized structure. According to

[10] Each intake form had a section which asked the client if they believed their goal(s) were met for the session, and did they feel more prepared for their upcoming speech. The only consistent suggestion for improvement was a request for a more central location.

Hansen (1989), the instructor's opening activities such as calling the class to order and setting the agenda for the day gives students a shared orientation of what to expect. Hansen argues that such behavior, *because* it is ritualized, is helpful by focusing students' attention and reminding them of their mutual commitments and obligations as "students" and "teachers" to the learning enterprise. Other institutionalized class dynamics require that students follow rules of turn-taking, sitting quietly and listening respectfully unless they have the floor. Even today students still raise hands in college classrooms to be recognized to speak and ask questions. Yet these implicit rules have the unintended effect of limiting students in their willingness to take initiative in the learning process. As I observed at the speaking center, a more emergent, bottom-up process evolved in which the tutors worked within the constraints of the center's goals and norms, for example, the norm of creating a confirming climate. Yet they had opportunities, without receiving specific directives from me, to self-organize in the way they identified clients' needs and decided how to address them. This combination of norms and structure on one hand, with space for creativity on the other, confirms Ellingson and Buzzanell's (1999) point that "when control is shared, participants feel as though they are in partnerships (p. 168)" (qtd. in Lewis, 2006, p. 193).

A third insight is the importance of seeing tutoring as a learning experience: The primary purpose of speaking centers is to develop and refine effective communication skills. An important factor in enhancing student success and the growth of communication competencies is to recognize that peer tutors are co-learners. They themselves are public speakers and in taking on the new role, they have to engage with the subject matter at a deeper level. At the same time, they are faced with new social pressures that go with the role, to be a supportive peer and a knowledgeable resource for clients. The relational skills involved in navigating these tensions is

an important part of the learning and speaking centers need to facilitate this learning by creating opportunities to explore and process these tensions. Another aspect of the learning process is its on-going nature. It begins when a newcomer learns to participate and talk the talk of a tutor and continues as the tutors introduce new resources into the community. Members are participating in and contributing to the learning curriculum continuously as they learn to speak the language of the speaking center even though they make use of some traditional teaching resources.

A final insight relates to the importance of providing opportunities for tutors to both observe, and then engage, in the practice. Center directors and paid staff model desired behavior to show newcomers how the community operates. Modeling supportive behavior, in particular various ways of confirming and validating clients' experience was an important part of my role. In particular confirming the client began the moment they entered the center. Tutors watched me as I interacted with clients, and then they had opportunities to practice what they observed; I often handed off the consultation to them as they demonstrated an understanding of the situation and client need. One of my key insights was that managers and administrators are an important part of the practice, not removed from it.

My Positionality and its Impact on the Research

As I reflect on the process of writing, one of the challenges was how to question practices that seemed very taken for granted. My role was problematic in the sense that I was both director and researcher. I report my findings as a stakeholder and I am not in the best position to see the center in all of its complexity, including the good and the bad. An outside observer may have seen more to question in the way the center operated and in the values we enacted. My interpretation of data was shaped by my emotional investment in the success of the center. However, I tried to be transparent in how I reached interpretations of the data and to give

detailed descriptions in order to show the reader my reasoning, rather than simply stating the findings.

Another aspect of my positionality was my close relationship with the tutors. I had a good rapport with the tutors and tried to create an egalitarian climate. But in the interviews, they continued to relate to me as a figure of authority who had knowledge and expertise. In some cases they might have reproduced in their responses what they thought I wanted to hear because they knew the project was important to me. In interviews I tried to get them to talk about their successes or challenges in working with clients but they overwhelmingly emphasized the positive nature of their experience. An additional influence on the data gathering was the IRB process. Having read the release form, terms like "study" and "human subjects" probably sounded very official and this formality might have contributed to their wanting to give me the "right" answer.

A subtle aspect of the power dynamic between me, as the researcher, and the participants concerns the use of the pronoun "we" in my reporting. I often reported events in which I was a participant, using a collective "we" (i.e. "we faced," "we offered," etc.). While the word "we" conveys my involvement, it also implies a shared perspective with the tutors. However, they may have constructed different impressions of the events or interpreted them differently from me. In hindsight, I might have conducted a process of member checking in which I shared my interpretations with participants and gave them opportunities to comment or even disagree.

Finally, a possible limitation of this study is that it focused on tutors at a single speaking center. A larger study involving comparisons of HU with other institutions would be an important next step to find out if the themes identified here apply to other speaking centers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Hillcrest University Approval Letter

To: USF IRB
From: Stephen [redacted] IRB [redacted]
Re: Ms. Coats research at the [redacted]
Date: September 22, 2014

We have reviewed Ms. Ann Coats' proposal for research to be conducted on the campus of the [redacted]. We found that it met the criteria for our exempt review, and so are in support of the proposed research, once approved by the IRB at the University of South Tampa, where Ms. Coats is pursuing her doctorate degree.

Sincerely,

Stephen [redacted]

Dr. Stephen [redacted]
IRB Committee Ch

Appendix B: USF IRB Approval

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

October 29, 2014

Ann Marie Coats
Communication
Tampa, FL 33548

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#: Pro00019268
Title: Communication, Learning and Social Support at the Speaking Center

Study Approval Period: 10/28/2014 to 10/28/2015

Dear Ms. Coats:

On 10/28/2014, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
USF Protocol Plan Coats 2014.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Coats Adult Version 1.docx.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Study

Hello {insert name of tutor}

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. I am asking you to take part in a research study (eIRB# 19268) titled *Communication, Learning and Social Support at the Speaking Center*.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of tutoring in an academic support group.

If you take part in this study, I will be asking you to talk about your stories, observations and reflections regarding tutoring at the XX Center for Public Speaking through a series of open-ended questions. I will be taking notes and recording our conversation.

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please email me back and we will arrange a day and time to meet.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Coats

Appendix D: Consent Form

XX Adult Consent Form

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # 19268

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

You are being asked to take part in a research study called:
Communication, Learning and Social Support at the Speaking Center

The person who is in charge of this research study is ***Ann Marie F. Coats*** This person is called the Principal Investigator. Dr. Jane Jorgenson, Department of Communication at USF, is guiding her in this research. The research will be conducted at XXX.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how student tutors negotiate participation and identity in academic communities, story their evolving identities, and their experiences as peer tutors. This study hopes to understand the student tutor's perspective and process of supporting peers which will add to our understanding of academic and social support. This study is being conducted for a dissertation.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to talk about your experiences, observations and reflections through a series of open-ended questions. I will be taking notes and audio-recording our observations. I will keep these tapes in my locked desk in a locked office. All electronic data

and transcripts with remain in a password protected computer. All identifiable tapes, transcripts, and notes with be securely disposed of in 5 years from the submittal of this report.

Total Number of Participants

About twenty individuals will take part in this study at XXX.

Alternatives

You do not have to participate in this research study.

Benefits

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty if you stop taking part in this study.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/ she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore make it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent.

_____ _____

Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix E: Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your role at the speaking center? (What is the work that you do?)
2. Why did you become a tutor?
3. How does being a tutor address your goals or needs?
4. What have you learned from your experience as a tutor?
5. What skills or qualities are important in a "good" tutor?
6. Can you describe a time when the tutoring process went well? (How were your suggestions received by the client?)
7. Can you remember a time when it didn't go well?
8. Is there anything you would do differently in the tutoring practices of the center?
9. What do you hope for the Center's and/or group's future?
10. Can you think of any terms, phrases or languaging that is unique to the center?
11. Can you think of any nonverbals that are unique to the center?
12. What is your worst public speaking experience?

Appendix F: 46 First Level Codes

1. *"know exactly how you feel"* (in vivo)
2. *worst experience*
3. *learned from worst experience*
4. *role/work*
5. *"generational bridge"*
6. *"basal group"*
7. *saving face*
8. *not listing everything*
9. *supportive*
10. *communication skills*
11. *"body language reading"*
12. *non verbals*
13. *"uniqueness of client and tutoring process—no typical"*
14. *"some like it harsh"*
15. *"learn more" when face is at stake/face threat*
16. *this community saves face and knows how to "gently" threaten face*
17. *process examples*
18. *my role, influence*
19. *Learned about self*
20. *learned from others*
21. *elements of a speech*
22. *Style and delivery*
23. *self improve, skill development, growth*
24. *"rewarding to help"*
25. *career/future*
26. *bracket bias*
27. *fellow tutor broke rule*
28. *Lack of respect*
29. *client doesn't practice*
30. *client blames tutor for lack of progress*
31. *client nervous*
32. *have to be harsh*
33. *don't know how to assist*
34. *resume guilt*
35. *frustration with school administrators*
36. *professors*—source of stress and frustration
37. *adult perspective*
38. *center's future change in respect*
39. *center's future increase in visitors and popularity*
40. *center's future more days, times, availability;*
41. *center's future required, deliberate, mandatory visits;*
42. *center's future space—privacy, layout, more like classroom;*
43. *center's future location-mx sites, central locations, classroom visits*
44. *center's future more volunteer tutors*
45. "see results—full circle"
46. *Client responsive and eager*

Appendix G: Intake Form

XX Center for Public Speaking Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Email:_____

Have you visited the Speech Center before?

Does your professor require this visit? If yes, what professor/course_____

Circle the following areas in which you are seeking assistance:

Topic Selection: *brainstorming discussion that assists in narrowing your topic*	**Research of Topic:** *review of possible databases and resources to effectively support your main ideas*	**Analyzing Audience:** *review and discussion of demographics and rhetorical strategies to appeal to your audience*	**Organizing Material:** *review possible organizational strategies to develop your main ideas*
Visual Aids: *assistance in creating understandable, purposeful, audience centered, and professional aids*	**Delivery:** *constructive feedback that highlights your current communication skills while identifying common areas (voice, body language, gestures, etc) for additional coaching*	**Recording and Evaluating:** *video recording, feedback and revision guidance*	**Managing Anxiety:** *resources and demonstration of breathing and focusing techniques to help manage public speaking anxiety and communication apprehension*

Visit Assessment (please complete at the conclusion of your visit)

Name of Speech Consultant(s) that assisted you:_____

Please circle the number below that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement:
Strongly Agree 4; Agree 3; Disagree 2; Strongly Disagree 1

1. My speech consultant(s) were attentive and helpful. 1 2 3 4
2. My goals were met for this session. 1 2 3 4
3. I feel better prepared for my next speaking situation. 1 2 3 4

Do you have any suggestions on how future visits could be improved?

How did you hear about the speech center?

Appendix H: Outline Template Worksheet

JAFFE 6th ed.

Content Outline (written in full sentences and formatted, pg. 195-197)
Title (give your speech a creative or catchy title)
General Purpose (to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to commemorate, pg. 79-80)
Specific Purpose (identify your desired audience response, pg. 81)
Organizational Pattern (identify the pattern you are using—see chapter 9)

Introduction

I. Attention getter (pg. 176-180)
II. Audience adaptation (motivate and give your audience a reason to listen, pg. 181)
III. Establish your credibility (explain your link to the topic, pg. 182)
IV. Thesis statement (a single declarative sentence that identifies the subject, pg. 82)
V. Preview (short summary the main ideas that you will develop in the speech, pg. 83)

Body
I. First main point (**number points and sub points may vary**)
- A. sub-point (support material)
- B. sub-point (support material)
  1. sub-point (support material)
  2. sub-point (support material)

Transition (summarizes where you've been and where you're going pg. 187)

II. Second main point
- A. sub-point (support material)
  1. sub-point (support material)
     a. sub-point (support material)

Transition (summarizes where you've been and where you're going pg. 187)

III. Third main point
- A. sub-point (support material)
- B. sub-point (support material)
  1. sub-point (support material)
  2. sub-point (support material)

Conclusion (see chapter 10)
I. Signal the end
II. Review your main points
III. Tie to the introduction (echo)
IV. End with impact! (clincher)

Works Cited or References: Be sure to cite your sources throughout your outline as you reference them (i.e. "According to…"; "In a recent article…"; "A study conducted by…"). Also, list all your sources you quoted from or referenced during your research in APA or MLA format.

Introduction

I. Attention getter:

II. Audience adaptation:

III. Establish your credibility:

IV. Thesis statement:

V. Preview:

Body

I. First main point
   - A.
   - B.
     1.
     2.

Transition:

II. Second main point
   - A.
     1.
        a.

Transition

III. Third main point
   - A.
   - B.
     1.
     2.

Conclusion

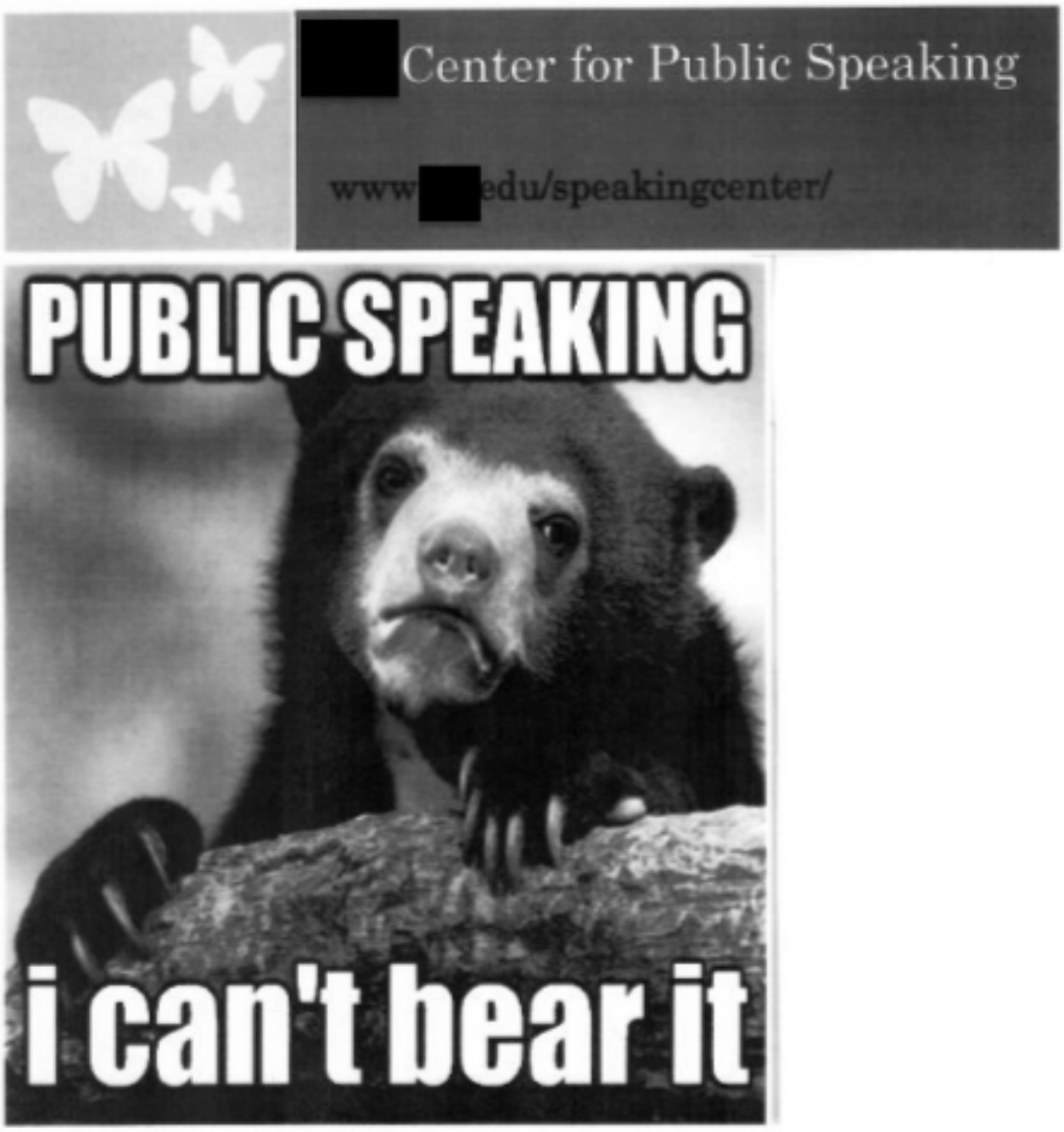
I. Signal the end

II. Review your main points

III. Tie to the introduction (echo)

IV. End with impact! (clincher)

Appendix I: Can’t Bear It



Appendix J: Butterflies

The Department of Speech

Center for Public Speaking

"Nerves and butterflies are fine—they're a physical sign that you're mentally ready and eager. You have to get the butterflies to fly in formation, that's the trick."
Steve Bull, footballer Wolverhampton Wanderers

Let us help you get your butterflies under control.

The speaking center offers assistance in:

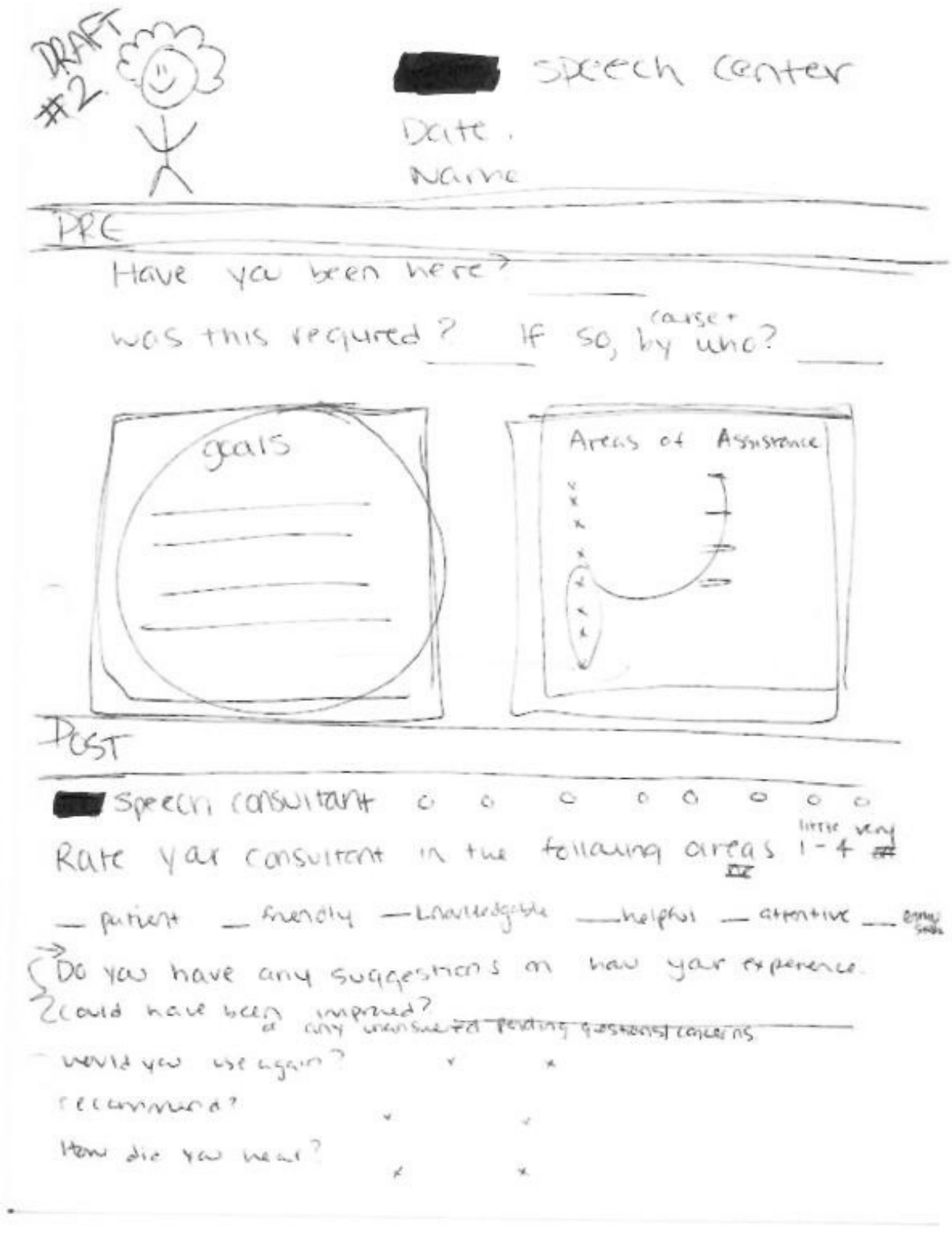
- Brainstorming speech topics
- Speech organization
- Delivery coaching
- PowerPoint presentation design

Contact:
Prof. Ann Marie Coats
acoats@

Appendix K: Original Speaking Center Sign-in Sheet

Your Name	Purpose for visit	Professor's Name	Year (FR,SO, JR, SR, Grad. Staff, Faculty)	Email address

Appendix L: Rough Drafts of Intake Form



Appendix M: Second Version of Intake Form

Welcome to the XX Center for Public Speaking

Date: _____

Client's name:_____

XX ID#:_____ **XX Email**:_____

Reason/goal for visit:_____

Please circle one category: Faculty Staff FirstYear Sophomore Junior Senior Grad. Student

First visit? Yes No

****

Your tutor will complete the rest of this form. You will receive a survey at the end of the semester. Completing the survey about your visit today will assist us in improving our services. Thank you!

Tutors name:_____ Client arrived @_____departed @_____

We discussed_____ **Strengths and Action Plan**

_____Topic selection and focus:

_____Researching the topic:

_____Analyzing the audience:

_____Organizing the material:

_____Delivering the presentation:

_____Using presentation aids:

_____Managing speech anxiety:

_____Other (please describe)