

## POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE IN THE WRITING CENTER

*Anita Varma*  
*Vassar College*

As a first-generation South Asian American student,<sup>1</sup> I have gradually become aware that my identity deviates from what many students would expect to find in a writing center consultant. When I joined the writing center as a consultant,<sup>2</sup> I had expected that my job would entail ample reading and ample listening. I had not realized that I might be doing some of the talking, nor did I expect my ethnic background to play a role in consultation conversations. During my first weeks as a consultant, some students seemed to be sizing me up quickly in order to determine whether I would truly be able to offer them help with their papers, while others exhibited a genuine interest in hearing about their fellow student's background. I soon found that after my shifts in the writing center, I had little recollection of what the papers I had read were about (since during a busy two-hour shift, I might read and discuss as many as five papers). I did, however, remember the individuals and the unexpected (and sometimes uncomfortable) questions they asked about my background. Those who knew me from my involvement with the campus newspaper rarely asked me these questions, and were instead often deferential to my suggestions about their drafts since they would interpret my comments as those of an editor rather than a peer. Sometimes, a student's curiosity and deference merged, as demonstrated when students seemed palpably surprised and even impressed that someone who looks so visibly different (and foreign) would have the verbal acuity to be an editor and a writing consultant. Specifically, some students have explicitly presumed that I am a non-native English-speaker and articulated this presumption through the backhanded compliment of "Your English is really good. When did you learn to speak it?"

Loaded moments like these during writing center consultations call attention to politics of difference that, as they unfold, may both enhance and constrain conversation. While the writing center as a locus of interactions about politics of difference may seem surprising—since perhaps one would expect a multicultural center to be the primary space on college campuses for discussions of difference—the writing center is uniquely situated for discourse on difference because it explicitly fosters an interaction between students' academic identities and their social backgrounds (Geller et al.). Given that the writing center is often both a social and an academic hub on a college campus, the intersections with students of various backgrounds and identities that occur during consultations offer a unique opportunity for writing centers to continually reconsider their burgeoning roles.

One might ask, understandably, why the race or ethnicity of a consultant would matter to a client, and why I am arguing that writing center consultants should carefully accommodate such questions during consultations. One might even ask: if the mission of a writing center strays from being solely about writing and veers into developing ways to fruitfully navigate politics of difference, what practical service can it provide for the campus? Certainly, the foundational and functional purpose of the writing center is to provide help with the writing process. Writing centers should be maintained as places for writers to develop and grow, and consultations should not wholly morph into discussions of identity that are unrelated to the paper draft at hand. Nevertheless, the potential for writing centers transcends exclusively learning about topic sentences and paragraph order. Writing centers are poised

to serve as a space in which students (and directors) might forge new ways of negotiating politics of difference. In this article, I will configure writing centers as contact zones through my examination of the ways in which I have navigated politics of difference in my own writing center as a consultant who is part of an ethnic minority (Geller et al. 97; Rihn 1). In Andrew Rihn's "Not Playing It Safe: Tutoring an Ethic of Diversity within a Non-diverse Environment," Rihn references Mary Louise Pratt, who describes contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt 607, qtd. in Rihn 2). My main argument, drawing on my experience as a writing consultant and extending Geller et al., Rihn, and Pratt, is that writing centers are thick contact zones in which both consultants and clients are navigating politics of difference, and that there are ways for existing training tools to be used in the service of preparing consultants for the difficult conversations or fraught unspoken moments that may arise in the writing center—particularly during the pretextual stage of consultations.

In *The Everyday Writing Center*, Anne Ellen Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, and Elizabeth H. Boquet go beyond observing and reflecting on intermittent moments of tension during consultations and instead advocate proactive change: "We suggest that writing centers need to be involved in anti-racism work on their own campuses and beyond, even though the work is hard, especially when it may challenge our cherished views of ourselves as fair and impartial and our centers as inherently inclusive" (91). Here, Geller et al. emphasize the broader responsibilities attached to the position of being a writing center director. Tutors' experiences within consultations and staff meetings differ from directors', but may operate in tandem with directors' efforts to shape the writing center as a nuanced academic and social space where difficult conversations unfold. We might ask ourselves if it is also possible to find ways to encourage clients to use these same techniques when they are startled into awareness of the palpable ways in which a consultant may deviate from a client's expectations of what an accomplished peer writer looks and acts like. These jolts of awareness during a writing center consultation speak to what Nancy Grimm calls "a fixed notion of literacy, a singular standard, [which] closes down understanding" (544). In my experience, these fixed notions of literacy that many students carry with them into the writing center are often intertwined with stagnant notions about which physical or linguistic qualities would signal that a peer embodies superior or inferior writing abilities.

### **Reasonable Pretextual Conversations**

All consultations begin (or should begin) with introductions. As described in *St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, the pretextual conversation starts "the process of developing the interpersonal relationship that will guide [the consultation]" (Murphy and Sherwood 5). Beyond establishing a simple kinship between consultants and clients, pretextual conversations may literalize the notion of audience by establishing for clients that though their papers are being written for a specific class, the potential or imagined audience of their prose extends beyond a single professor (Rumbarger; Rihn 3). Also, while the pretextual conversation usually begins at the outset of the consultation, it need not be isolated to the first part of a consultation—instead, pretextual (or paratextual) conversations can be considered any interactions between consultant and client that take place during the consultation but are unrelated to the paper at hand. As such, pretextual conversations may occur before, during, or after discussions of the client's draft.

Introductions at the start of a pretextual conversation, however, do not start and end with verbalized self-identifications. A black consultant need not say, "My name is Michelle and I am black"

in order for her peer to glean or presume information based on her appearance. Likewise, my physical appearance includes visual cues that telegraph “foreignness” to the all-American student beside me, who might assume that the brown-skinned woman with gold Indian jewelry and bangles must be an immigrant. In the case of immigrant families or students, appearance might also suggest bilingualism, and bilingualism might signify membership in a subaltern minority group. Therefore, it is understandable—though perhaps not entirely pleasing to the person on the receiving end of the question—that a naïve college student who has not had much exposure to members of subaltern groups might make some incorrect assumptions about a writing partner during a consultation.

The first time a student made an obvious assumption about me by asking me when I learned to speak English, I was taken aback. Why did the student (who is a white, American woman) ask this question after our consultation? Was it my word choice? My grammar? Did my use of language reveal some flaw that I did not realize was present? Since I grew up in a household of bilingual speakers, I am conscious of certain enunciations and mannerisms that echo my Indian parents’ accents. Did these enunciations ring loudly in the student’s ears during the consultation, such that they marked me as a non-native speaker?

From a sociological perspective, the experience is a classic example of systematic racism. As Geller et al. write:

If systematic racism works to convince whites that they are inherently better and therefore deserve the privileges that accrue to them through racism, it also works to convince people of color that they are not quite good enough—or at least that their qualifications are always in doubt. People of color internalize their own oppression much as whites internalize superiority. These perceptions become part of the lens through which we see the everyday—and they make everyday racism seem normal, natural, only to be expected. (89)

My first reaction to the client’s question about my language ability did not draw on these reflections of race and racism. Instead, I was perplexed, puzzled, and also surprised at myself: the fact that I clung to the negative connotations of being a non-native speaker seemed contrary to my long-held belief that mastering more than one language is a sign of high accomplishment, since I had been surrounded by successful bilingual people all my life. Yet I had the nagging sense that the student envisioned me at home speaking only Hindi and pushing aside English whenever possible. This imaginary Hindi-speaking student is completely unlike me, because in fact, I do not speak Hindi at home.

My parents, who emigrated from Bihar, India, in the late 1970s, taught my older brother and older sister to speak a dialect of Hindi called Bhojpuri before teaching them to speak English. I, however, received no such instruction and have always solely spoken English. From adolescence onward, I have acquired the ability to understand my grandparents’ and parents’ Bhojpuri, along with a smattering of Hindi from Bollywood films and Indian satellite television programs, but I have never acquired a conversational mastery of the language. Ironically, while my positions as a writing center consultant and a student journalist have hinged on my ability to articulate myself in written English, I am completely illiterate in written Hindi.

In my college’s writing center, as I can assume is sometimes the case in other writing centers, consultants often perpetuate deeply flawed presumptions about international students by lumping them together with learning disabled students. Consultants do so, based on my observations, as a result of their problematic expectation that all international students are “ESL” and therefore “challenged.” In my case as a consultant, being told by a client that I presented as a non-native English-

speaker quickly became discomfiting when coupled with frustrating memories of peers construing non-native English-speakers and writers as inferior by default.

One might contend that clients should never voice questions about a tutor's language ability in the academic space of the writing center. The student coming for help, it could be argued, should focus on how to improve his or her paper rather than inquiring about the consultant's background—and the consultant should insist and maintain strict boundary lines. Truncating the pretextual conversation in favor of the consultant's comfort, however, ultimately hinders the consultation process. As John Blazina notes in "What Does Difficulty Mean in the Writing Tutorial?", "The writing tutorial can be a very personal relationship. . . . [Student clients] may well respond defensively with shyness and discouragement." In order to combat shyness and discomfort, many consultant training guides suggest making efforts to build personal relationships with student clients. I would further contend that conversations about personal identity, as preludes to discussing academic content, can and should take place in a setting like the writing center. These discussions need not avoid topics that make students uncomfortable, such as race, class, or gender. Avoiding issues of difference simply perpetuates discomfort by shoving politics of difference further to the margins. Without a frank pretextual conversation, the consultation will likely be less effective since the students may be grappling with the awkwardness of not knowing their writing partner while attempting to engage in the intimate task of revising a person's written work.

A pretextual conversation in the contact zone of the writing center is not, of course, a sanctioned time when the client can bluntly ask any personal question that comes to mind without any regard for how the question is framed. Instead, when such conversations take place in the academic and social space of the writing center, participants should implicitly commit to maintaining a level of decorum that is expected in student discourse (analogous to classroom decorum). This discourse welcomes civil disagreement, discussion, and challenges—provided that they are articulated in reasonable ways.

Extending political philosopher Iris Marion Young's description of "reasonableness" to writing center discourse is one way to interrogate where the boundaries of the pretextual conversation might lie. In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young writes, "Reasonable people often have crazy ideas; what makes them reasonable is their willingness to listen to others who want to explain to them why their ideas are incorrect or inappropriate" (24). Since the pedagogical model of a writing center consultation hinges on consultants and clients listening to each other (during both the pretextual and textual conversation), "reasonableness" becomes an effective way of describing (ideal) interactions about politics of difference occurring in the writing center.<sup>3</sup>

The student's question about my language ability did not inherently violate any of the criteria for participants in democratic discourse as defined by Young. Yet the appropriateness of the student's question remains unclear, since the manner in which she expressed it signals a lack of concern about how it might be received. As Young writes:

A public consists of a plurality of different individual and collective experiences, histories, commitments, ideals, interests and goals that face one another to discuss collective problems under a common set of procedures. When members of such a public speak to one another, they know they are answerable to that plurality of others; this access that others have to their point of view makes them careful about expressing themselves. This plural public-speaking context requires participants to express themselves in ways accountable to all those plural others. (25)

The notion of accountability is important here, particularly because writing centers are often in

the business of making students accountable for their rhetoric. I see part of the role of a consultant as urging students to be critically aware of their place in a plural, public-speaking context like a college writing center. Reasonable academic discourse should not require clients and consultants to ignore markers of difference but instead should encourage consultants and clients alike to address them, whether subtly or explicitly. Certainly, the visual cues I supply with my physical appearance or the auditory cue I give when I introduce myself by pronouncing my Indian name correctly could lead a student to inquire about my background. Curiosity is not necessarily contentious—but the manner in which a student expresses this curiosity, and the ways in which a consultant responds, are critical to moving a conversation about difference forward. In the case of the student asking when I learned English, her blunt tone and visible disappointment when I explained that I am a native English-speaker signaled, for me, that hers was a question asked in hopes of confirming a presumption and reaffirming a stereotype of students who do not appear to be white Americans, rather than a question asked out of genuine desire to gain a better understanding of a fellow student.

At the same time, the responsibility of fostering a reasonable pretextual conversation does not lie solely with the student client's ability to ask imaginative, sensitive questions during a consultation—the consultant must also be prepared to simultaneously mediate and participate in the discussion. A consultant's responses to questions about his or her own identity will naturally vary, since each consultant is as unique as his or her story.

### **Learning about Poise and Power in the Writing Center**

After my initial reaction of dismay, I began to develop productive ways to react and respond to questions about my language background. A few weeks after the discomfiting consultation, I was working in the writing center during a shift we had “doubled up” because it was a high traffic time.<sup>4</sup> The consultant working that particular shift with me was Michelle,<sup>5</sup> a senior English and political science major from North Carolina who is black and who had been a writing center consultant for two years longer than I had. Since no clients had arrived yet, Michelle and I were chatting about our backgrounds when Michelle asked whether I had ever been to India. Far more comfortable with this kind of inquiry, which did not call into question my linguistic abilities as a writing consultant, I explained that I had traveled to India several times for summer visits. I then asked Michelle how she decided on her academic course of study, and she said that she had found a valuable mentor in a faculty member, also black, who had encouraged her to embrace her Southern black identity and accent, and “to show that I’m smart and black and I talk like this” without apology. I had noticed that during consultations, Michelle nonchalantly inserted vernacular speech and regionalisms during both pretextual and textual conversations. Michelle’s decision not to conform her speech to an academic-sounding oration could be a kind of invitation to conversation in itself, or it could simply be a statement that is open to interpretation. Warmed by her willingness to share her personal reflections with me, I mentioned my experience with the student who had asked about my English-speaking background, and I alluded to my dismay. Michelle replied, “People will do that, but after a while it’s just like, ‘Here I am, I can help you with your paper, and you’re going to think what you’re going to think about me.’”

Michelle’s words did not have an instant effect on me, but their long-term impact was twofold: first, the conversation we had was what I consider to be a model of the type of open, reasonable, and democratic interactions that consultants should strive to have with clients (and with each other). Second, I have gradually started using her tactic of maintaining poise when new clients ask me when or how I learned English. As a South Asian American consultant, my experiences as a minority are

obviously distinct from Michelle's or other black consultants', given that our histories in the academy are characterized by markedly different types of struggles for inclusion. Nevertheless, Michelle's frank confidence and the ease with which she spoke about retaining her type of speech while showcasing her academic abilities provided me with a goal that I have subsequently set for myself: to learn to conduct myself with calm, unwavering composure similar to hers when the issue of language—and, implicitly, my ability, as a brown-skinned daughter of immigrants, to be a writing consultant—enters a session.

### **Tools for Transformational Change**

What tools can writing centers use in the service of instilling confidence in consultants, particularly those who visibly embody “difference”? How might writing center directors help consultants with difficult conversations, while also using such moments to enhance the center's role in supporting a diverse college community? It might be impossible to fully answer these questions in a short article, or with my own limited experience, but I have been exposed to a few techniques in my training that I think, with expansion, would help consultants face and manage difficult pretextual conversations. The tools I will discuss are premised on placing high value on transformational change, as Geller et al. do. They write, “Transformational change engages other ways of thinking and acting. It is collaborative, process-oriented, holistic in the sense that it requires an attentiveness to the systematic and institutional context from which conflict emerges” (104). Furthermore, Grimm urges in “Rearticulating the Work of the Writing Center” that writing centers “be less tuned to helping writers master community conventions and more tuned to developing the capacity of the staff to entertain multiple perspectives, to resist binary alignments, to think in systematic and complicated ways about literacy practices, to manage emotional reactivity, to gather evidence, and to explore the contradictions in literacy work” (546). The following set of tools for tutor training would contribute to developing the kinds of skills that Grimm advocates.

Fostering an atmosphere of trust among writing center consultants can result in what I have found to be the most useful kind of large-group discussion about diversity: one that takes place without prior planning or prompting. Recently, informal discussions about politics of difference in my college's writing center took place during staff meetings. Additionally, more structured conversations occurred at a workshop about consulting and stress facilitated by a member of our college's counseling services. In both cases, the topic of difference grew organically out of the group's conversation, and neither of these meetings had a set agenda of discussing diversity in the writing center. On yet another occasion, one of our most dynamic staff discussions occurred when the staff was talking about how clients respond to consultants who are social science or natural science majors. Many clients expect that consultants will be English majors, and when greeted by a science major, they seem surprised (or even doubtful of the consultant's prose-writing abilities). Our discussion of this phenomenon was broad enough that consultants of all majors and backgrounds could participate; it established a sense of common experience and camaraderie among consultants, and provided a segue into a discussion about various kinds of presumptions that clients make about consultants, including presumptions about race and ethnicity.

In writing centers where consultants might seem reluctant or resistant to discussing hot-button issues of difference, directors might purposefully devote specific moments during staff meetings to considering politics of difference in the writing center. Yet reducing the issue of diversity in the writing center to a few token moments during staff meetings runs the risk of being counterproductive.

Still, if executed with acknowledgement of this potential downside, such allotted time could instead signal to consultants that their writing center director recognizes the writing center as a contact zone, and that the director embraces a broader role of writing centers on college campuses as spaces for navigating politics of difference.

The presence or absence of a director during discussions of politics of difference can affect the ease with which consultants speak. When I was first hired to be a consultant, we had one meeting with two graduating consultants. Our director did not attend this meeting because she wanted new consultants to have the opportunity to ask completely frank questions of their predecessors. This conversation was especially useful since we were able to raise issues and voice concerns that seemed student-specific without worrying what an authority figure thought of our concerns. On the other hand, a director's presence during staff discussions can offer structure and a sense of security to consultants. Specifically, the director can assure that conversations do not dissolve into *ad hominem* attacks on clients who may have asked naïve questions about a consultant's background. Building trust between consultants while cultivating consultants' patience—mixed with criticism—with clients who ask problematic questions is an element of a community of writers that warrants dedicated effort.

A more structured tool for reflection than oral discussions is described by Roger H. Munger, Ilene Rubenstein, and Edna Burow in "Observation, Interaction, and Reflection: The Foundation for Tutor Training." Munger and his collaborators write about the value of having consultants keep journals in which they discuss their experiences "both as observer and as tutor." According to Munger et al., "the element of reflection over time . . . allows for synthesis and evaluation by holistically and organically combining and recombining knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis" (4). Munger et al.'s article is framed around how consultants can better serve a diverse body of clients, but their suggestions can be extended to helping a diverse set of consultants navigate their positions *vis-à-vis* their clients as well. These journals could serve as an alternative (or supplement) to the public nature of discussing experiences in a staff meeting.

My first written reflection on diversity in the writing center was analogous to a journal entry. Our writing center director had asked all consultants to write a short testimonial about an experience with diversity in the writing center. The task of drafting this piece was difficult, since I was concerned about appearing insecure about my ability to be a writing center consultant. Ultimately, I wrote about the student who asked about my English ability and language background. Although the piece was rather brief, the process of writing the narrative was valuable. Not only was I able to return to the written medium, in which I am most comfortable, but I also realized that my director's prompt for the testimonial meant that she was cognizant of the fact that conversations related to issues of diversity were taking place in the writing center. Her recognition of such experiences, and her willingness to read and listen to what we had written, made me inclined to trust her more, and made me more willing to speak honestly during staff discussions.

Aside from individual rumination on paper, Munger et al.'s advocacy of "talking to veteran tutors" resonates with me since I have frequently benefited from hearing about older colleagues' experiences (5). Above all, more experienced consultants have confidence that has been developed over time. Newer writing center consultants often look to veteran consultants as role models, and assume that they will have answers to uncertainties that plague younger college students. Discussions with veteran consultants can take place during structured staff meetings, or can be coordinated by coupling experienced and newly hired consultants together during shifts, as Michelle and I happened to be paired. Although these shifts will ideally be spent on drop-in consultations, there are often quiet

moments in which kinship between colleagues might grow and yield valuable advice. Pairs based exclusively on race or ethnic identity, however, would be far less useful. The expectation should be that two consultants can commiserate or reflect as students who share the same job, not that two individuals of the same race or ethnicity will necessarily have similar experiences. Furthermore, burdening the pairs with the explicit task of navigating racial difference would be dubious, since other types of difference would be structurally ignored. Establishing these pairs based on practical criteria, such as schedules and available hours, could (as they did in my experience) result in duos of consultants that generate lively conversations about their work, their differences, and their concerns about the writing center. These conversations might serve as a form of practice with a peer for conversations about difference with subsequent clients, since two consultants could find ways of broaching these subjects in friendly and reasonable ways.

Training tools related to diversity and difference should not exclude white American consultants. Discussions of difference can address the experiences of students of color while also addressing the ways that white American consultants negotiate identity during consultations. Frequently, clients make presumptions about white students' backgrounds based on gender or economic class; clients often assume that a white student at an elite college is from a wealthy American family, thus erasing or misconstruing the range of potential layers of white students' identities.

Preparing consultants with productive ways to engage with politics of difference in the writing center can be used in the service of priming them to address the rhetoric of clients' papers, in which clients might make latent assumptions about ethnic, gender, or class differences. After transitioning from the pretextual conversation into the textual conversation, consultants and clients alike must sustain a mutual commitment to reasonable discourse in order for the potential value of a writing center consultation to be fully realized.

## Notes

This paper was written during a summer project funded by the Ford Foundation. I served as an undergraduate Ford scholar for the associate director of my college's Learning and Teaching Center, who is also a member of the English department and a former writing center director. During the course of this project, I researched published works on writing center theory and writing center practices. As a writing center consultant, the perspective I brought to the theory differed from that of writing center directors (who are more commonly included in academic discourse about writing centers). To articulate the value of having a student consultant participate in the conversation about writing center theory and practice, Sue Dinitz and Jean Kiedaisch offer relevant remarks in "Creating Theory: Moving Tutors to the Center." They argue that "including tutors in the construction of theory is not just something we should do for their benefit, so that, in [Peter] Vandenberg's terms, they can 'write their way out [of their] subjugated role.' Rather, we see how writing center theory can be enriched by including tutor voices and perspectives. As the folks at the boundary of theory and practice, tutors are well positioned to explore the connections between them, to tease out the subtleties, the complications, the assumptions, the omissions in our theory and our practice, and to see how one might shed light on the other" (75). This paper is an attempt to join the conversation as a voice equipped with (albeit limited) experience as a peer consultant at a small, northeastern liberal arts college.

<sup>1</sup> I use the term South Asian American instead of Indian American or Asian American deliberately, in part because since coming to college I have been categorized as South Asian American. For an in-depth discussion of South Asian Americans as a cultural category, see Prema Kurien's "To Be or Not to Be South Asian: Contemporary Indian American Politics," originally published in the *Journal of Asian American Studies*.

<sup>2</sup> All writing center consultants at my institution are undergraduates.

<sup>3</sup> Young describes the features of effective participants in discourse in relation to theorizing about engaged democratic citizens, but these features can easily be applied to analyzing how citizens of the academy (including students) interact as well.

<sup>4</sup> During these "doubled" shifts, two consultants work side by side in the writing center space so that two clients can be helped at the same time.

<sup>5</sup> The student's name has been changed in order to preserve her privacy.

I would like to acknowledge Natalie Friedman (associate director of the Learning and Teaching Center and visiting assistant professor of English, Vassar College), who served as a Ford mentor, an independent study professor, and an invaluable writing consultant throughout the process of composing and revising this article.

### **Works Cited**

- Blazina, John. "What Does Difficulty Mean in the Writing Tutorial?" *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* (Fall 2005). 11 June 2007 <projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis>.
- Dinitz, Sue, and Jean Kiedaisch. "Creating Theory: Moving Tutors to the Center." *WritingCenter Journal* 23.2 (2003): 63–75.
- Geller, Anne Ellen, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, and Elizabeth H. Boquet. *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2007.
- Grimm, Nancy Maloney. "Rearticulating the Work of the Writing Center." *College Composition and Communication* 47.4 (1996): 523–48.
- Kurien, Prema. "To Be or Not to Be South Asian: Contemporary Indian American Politics." *Journal of Asian American Studies* (Oct. 2003): 261–88. Accessed through *Project Muse*, Vassar College Library. 12 July 2007 <muse.jhu.edu>.
- Munger, Roger H., Ilene Rubenstein, and Edna Burow. "Observation, Interaction, and Reflection: The Foundation for Tutor Training." *Writing Lab Newsletter* (Dec. 1996): 1–5.
- Murphy, Christina, and Steve Sherwood. *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*. New York: St. Martin's, 1995.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Ways of Reading*. 6th ed. Ed. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002. 605–26.
- Rihn, Andrew. "Not Playing It Safe: Tutoring an Ethic of Diversity within a Non-diverse Environment." *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* (Fall 2007). 17 June 2008 <projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis>.
- Rumbarger, Lee. Director of the writing center, Vassar College. Personal interview. 4 Nov. 2007.
- Young, Iris Marion. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.