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Masters in English Language Education

(by coursework and research report)

Applied English Language Studies

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Research Report

Becoming a writing consultant:

The initial experiences of working in an academic Writing Centre

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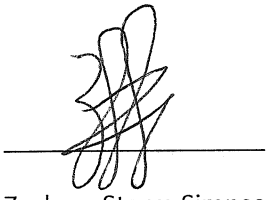
Ms Belinda Mendelowitz

and

Prof Hilary Janks

Declaration of originality

I, Zachary Storm Simpson (ID number: 8306085019084), declare that this research report is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree at any other university. It is submitted for the degree Master of Arts in English Language Education at the University of Johannesburg. In addition, where additional sources have been used, they have been referenced according to accepted procedures.



Zachary Storm Simpson

7 July 2009

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following people for contributions, big and small, to this project:

my supervisors: Belinda Mendelowitz and Hilary Janks, for too much to mention here, but particularly –

Belinda: for having had just the right reading to extricate me from theoretical quicksand

Hilary: for making everything seem manageable and ... well, simple (relatively speaking, of course)

Both Belinda and Hilary: for teaching me that there is not always one right answer and that ambiguity is my friend and I should play with it,

Carolyn McKinney who played a pivotal role in the design and conceptualisation of this project,

my family and friends for putting up with simply not seeing me for months on end, and for withstanding the fact that I became increasingly one-dimensional. I hope that I will soon 'get a life',

Pia Lamberti – in gratitude for your mentorship,

the rest of my colleagues, past and present, at the Learning Centre / Academic Development Centre at the University of Johannesburg,

Elspeth Kempe – my metaphor buddy – and the rest of our writing group, for feedback on early drafts of chapters of this research report,

and the UJ writing consultants of 2008 for agreeing to be part of this research – your contribution was, of course, the greatest.

Abstract

Becoming a writing consultant: The initial experiences of working in an academic Writing Centre

This study is located in an academic Writing Centre and examines the development of the postgraduate students who work in the Centre as part-time peer writing tutors, or writing consultants. The study is concerned with the ways in which the new, or first-time, consultants' entry into the consultant-experience affects their understandings of academic writing, themselves as writers in the academy and themselves as teachers of academic writing. In order to achieve this aim, I make use of a two-pronged methodological approach: I collect artefacts of the consultants' individual written reflection and I observe the consultants' participation in group discussion. This is in line with the theoretical framework of the study: communities of practice. The communities of practice literature suggests that learning, meaning and knowledge are developed through participation in practice. As such, it takes place at the nexus of the social and the individual, hence a methodological approach that attempts to gain access to both the individual and the social. The results of the study are four-fold. First, this research shows that each consultant enters into the consultant-experience with a particular blend of attitudes to and conceptualisations of academic writing. Second, it finds that these conceptualisations of academic writing bear directly on the approach to the teaching of academic writing that each consultant adopts. The study then shows that entry into the consultant-experience is characterised by increasing participation in the community of writing consultants but, finally, that this participation is characterised by contradictory statements of belief, which nevertheless appear to represent the beginning of a process of change in which old and new co-exist. The study thus contributes to the literature on teacher change, showing it to be a complex process that takes place in an uneven and non-linear fashion and demonstrating that it is impacted on by a number of factors.

Chapter one: Introduction

> "Much have I learned from my teachers, even more from my colleagues, but from my students, most of all"
>
> (The Talmud, Ta'anit 7A, in Nash, 2004: 55)

This quote reminds me of the common adage that we learn best through teaching. Through having to explain certain concepts to students, one is compelled to think through those concepts more deeply than before and clarify one's own understanding. This was certainly my experience as a peer writing tutor. Assisting novice student writers informed my own writing practice and developed my own writer-identity in ways more profound and more useful than was the influence of any of my teachers, colleagues or friends at any level of education. Having had this experience as a peer writing tutor, and now fulfilling the role of a Writing Centre co-ordinator, it was of personal importance to document the experiences of Writing Centre consultants, or peer writing tutors. On one level, this importance stemmed from a desire to document the processes that I had undergone myself. On another level, as co-ordinator of the Writing Centre, I knew that the success of the Centre largely depended on the consultants' own development, not just as writing consultants, but also as writers.

Aim and Rationale

The goal of the Writing Centre is to assist students in navigating their apprenticeship into the academic community so that they can write in ways that are appropriate in higher education, but also so that these students become aware that the university is a conglomeration of disciplinary communities each placing unique expectations on them. With this goal in mind and in response to my personal investments in this research project (described above), in this research project I seek to gain an understanding of the consultant-experience and its impact, if any, on the consultant's own relations to academic writing and to the teaching of academic writing. Indeed, an individual's meaning-making habits inform the ways in which that individual constructs texts (Lillis, 2001: 48). This is because the construction of a text is a 'becoming' in that we align ourselves with discourses to which we subscribe and distance ourselves from those which we reject (Lillis, 2001: 48). In this research I am attempting to observe the 'becoming' of the peer writing tutors (or writing consultants) that staff the Writing Centre. That is to say, I observe the ways in which entry into the consultant-experience allows the consultants to find "new ways to mean" as writers (Lillis, 2001: 49).

I also seek to examine whether or not the consultants' understandings of academic writing undergo change during the consultant-experience, through their interactions with fellow writing consultants and through the experience of having to assist novice academic writers. This goal was informed by Gee's (1996: ix) argument that the way we think, feel and speak is informed by the social groups that have moulded us. In pursuing this goal, the project is also heavily informed by the notion that writer's identities change as they come into contact with new communities (Ivanič, 1998: 83).

In addition, given that the role of the writing consultant is to mediate students' participation in literacy practices through expert apprenticeship of novice writers, in this research I attempt to ascertain the extent to which the consultants see themselves as 'expert' writers, the extent to which they can articulate the conventions of essayist literacy practices, and the extent to which these two factors begin to change as the consultants enter the consultant-experience.

This research differs from research that has been undertaken previously and which is referenced herein, in that it focuses less on the "discoursal construction of writer identity for students in Higher Education" (Ivanič, 1998: 335) than it does on arguing that writing is one manifestation of the shifting identity that comes with apprenticeship into new discourse communities (bearing in mind that discourse involves language as well as ways of thinking, acting or valuing). This is done by examining not just identity in writing, but also identity as teachers of writing, thus examining the extent to which the consultants 'learn' about writing (and thereby change as writers) through engaging in the teaching of academic writing.

This research is part of a larger project which aims to describe the effect that the consultant-experience has on consultants' understandings of academic writing, their understandings of themselves as academic writers and their understandings of themselves as teachers of academic writing. In this particular 'slice' of this larger research project, my aims are much the same. However, I will be focusing only on the consultants' entry into the consultant-experience (that is their initial training and the first two months of their consultancy experience) and will only be examining the experiences of newly-appointed, first-time writing consultants and not those consultants who already have writing consultancy experience.

Research Question

As discussed above, this research aims to describe the consultants' entry into the consultant-experience and to analyse it in terms of the changes that occur in the writing-identity of the postgraduate students chosen as writing consultants. It is with this aim in mind that this research seeks to address the following question:

- how does the consultants' entry into the consultant-experience affect their understandings of academic writing and their understandings of themselves as both postgraduate academic writers and teachers of academic writing?

This question is informed by the notion that social identities are not "hermetically sealed, but leak into one another" (Ivanič, 1998: 104). This is important for the reason that Goffman (in Ivanič, 1998: 104) outlines: when someone enters a new social role, they are generally expected to bring other discourses to bear on adopting their new social role. This is in line with Gee's (1996: 141) observation that learning should lead to "meta-knowledge, to seeing how the Discourses you have already got (not just language) relate to those you are attempting to acquire, and how the ones you are trying to acquire relate to self and society".

Finally, then, this research project is aimed at potentially resolving an inherent paradox in teaching academic writing. This paradox relates to the fact that while teaching academic literacy facilitates participation, it also socializes into a dominant practice (Lillis, 2001: 158). This paradox is 'lived out' in this research in that the consultants' training, mentoring and development is aimed at providing them with the 'tools' they need to help students to write in ways that are appropriate in the academy, but at the same time attempting to instil a certain measure of criticality and sensitivity towards disempowering institutional discourses.

Chapter two: Literature review and theoretical framework

> "Who we are and what we can be – what we can study, how we can write about that which we study – is tied to how a knowledge system disciplines itself and its members"
>
> (Richardson, 2000: 939)

Three bodies of literature have had a particular bearing on the design of this project and the analysis of the data collected. The first of these is literature on academic writing. In particular, my ideas about academic writing are heavily informed by two approaches to academic writing: as social practice and as process. Hence I begin my discussion herein by outlining what I understand, based on the literature, about these two approaches to academic writing. I then, because my study is concerned with questions of change, examine the literature on teacher change, particularly that literature that focuses on changing teachers' attitudes towards writing. Finally, I discuss communities of practice. I do this because I argue that the Writing Centre consultants form such a community of practice and that it is within this community that their own development is fostered. Because of this, I place particular emphasis on questions of learning and identity within communities of practice.

Approaches to academic writing

Problems with student writing today are often blamed on the increasingly diverse nature of student bodies in South Africa and elsewhere, which serves to locate within these students a deficiency of some description (Lillis, 2001: 21). Hence, there is talk of a deficit model of student writing. This model arises out of an approach to student writing that Lea and Street (1998) call the academic skills approach. This approach focuses on grammar rules, syntax, spelling and punctuation as indicators of successful writing (Lea, 2008: 231). Within this approach, these problems are seen as relatively easy to solve (Lillis, 2001: 22) and the skills are viewed as applicable across all contexts of writing (Lea and Stierer, 2000). Within this approach, the individual is emphasised as the source of problems with writing (Lea and Stierer, 2000: 3).

Lea and Street (1998) then identify a second approach to student writing in higher education: the academic socialization approach. Within this approach successful writing is defined in terms of the extent to which students demonstrate their acculturation into the discourses and genres of academic writing (Lea, 2008: 231). This view stems from an understanding of each academic

discipline as having its own norms and conventions (Starfield, 2007: 877). But, this conceptualizes writing only as induction into these norms and conventions and ignores both that students bring discourses with them to higher education and that academic disciplinary discourses are dynamic (Starfield, 2007: 877).

A third model of student writing that Lea and Street (1998) identify is the academic literacies approach. This approach suggests that academic writing is not only about certain study skills or being socialized into certain practices but that it is instead also about identity, epistemology, discourse and power (Lea and Stierer, 2000: 7). This is because writing is an expression of cultural, institutional and ideological values (Jones, Turner and Street, 1999: xxii). The use of literacies, rather than literacy, implies that literacy is not a singular skill that can be applied across all contexts as implied by the skills approach (Lea, 2008). This approach thus sees literacies as social practices because they are embedded in discourse (Lea and Stierer, 2000: 2) and because students are, in various and complex ways, either included in or excluded from discourses (Starfield, 2007: 878).

In this study, I use these models as a framework to examine the discourses of writing that inform the consultants talk about academic writing and the teaching thereof.

Literacies as social practices

Language is a social process; it is part of society and is conditioned by other parts of society (Fairclough, 2001: 18 – 19). Because of this, literacy (as a way of using language), must be seen as the product of on-going social interaction (Ivanič, 1998: 62). This forms the basis of a social theory of literacy. Such a theory is concerned with people's ways of using language, their literacy practices, which involve not only individual feelings and attitudes but also social rules and relationships (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 6). Literacy practices are ways of working with and around literacy that reflect the value placed on literacy and the types of literacies that are privileged in certain contexts (Ivanič, 1998: 65). These literacy practices are informed by social institutions and in many domains, certain literacy practices are favoured over others (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 7). However, these practices are not static, but instead change with the institutions and discourses which inform them (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 12). Literacy practices are thus social practices, which implies that specific literacy practices have particular uses and implications (Street, 1984: 103).

One particular domain in which certain literacy practices are privileged over others is higher education. It is for this reason that the notion of academic literacies has become popular. I borrow from Gee (1996: 143) who defines literacy as mastery of a secondary discourse and define academic literacy as control over academic discourse. Working in a South African university, Hewlett (1996) shows how unclear the conventions of academic literacy practices are to those not familiar with academic discourse. She also identifies three approaches to academic literacies that share much in common with Lea and Street's (1998) models of student writing: the functional approach, the cultural approach and the critical approach (Hewlett, 1996: 90). The first sees academic literacy as having acquired the technical skills of academic discourse, the second sees academic literacy as having been inducted into the culture of academia and the third challenges conceptions of academic literacy and instead supports students in challenging the dominant discursive practices that characterize higher education.

The reason Hewlett calls for such challenge of conventional notions of academic literacies is because the knowledge-making practices within the university are plural rather than singular and therefore, academic literacy practices need to be negotiated with students through making students aware of how these practices are different from literacy practices in other domains (Hewlett, 1996: 97). Angelil-Carter (2000a: 113 – 114), meanwhile, shows that one very practical implication of this discrepancy is the prevalence of plagiarism which she sites as a result of a lack of academic literacy rather than a problem of lack of academic integrity. This shows how academic writing is implicated in a particular epistemological and sociocultural framework which needs to be unpacked if student academic writing is to be holistically developed and investigated.

Academic writing as social practice

Current discourse on academic writing is limited in that it works against widening epistemic access to higher education (Lillis, 2001: 1). This is because higher education has not been acknowledged as a social institution with a particular sociocultural history and a particular range of practices (Lillis, 2001: 20). Neglecting this fact has sustained the cultures of power (that is, the rules for participation that govern talking, behaving and, indeed, writing) that characterize higher education (Delpit, 1988: 85), not just in South Africa but in countries around the world. The implication of this is that students must, in order to be successful, be apprenticed into the discourses of the academic community.

Furthermore, the development of student academic writing is a process that occurs within particular institutional frameworks (Starfield, 2007: 883). This is because, upon entering university, students are expected to operate within literacy practices that are culturally and epistemologically bound to institutions of higher education. That is to say, higher education as an institution operates within a particular history and privileges particular practices (Lillis, 2001: 20). Not only are these practices unfamiliar to students, but they may, depending on factors such as school attended and cultural capital, also contradict the practices that students are already familiar with. That is to say, the demands made on students in terms of academic ways of knowing and writing may conflict with their primary ways of knowing and more familiar ways of writing (Lea and Stierer, 2000: 11). Hewlett (1996: 92) illustrates this point by arguing that, because the dominant knowledge-making practice in schools in South Africa (and, perhaps elsewhere) is rote learning, students often have to 'un-learn' the strategy that promoted their success at school in order to be successful at university.

It is for this reason that academic writing needs to be seen as social practice, as located within institutions that operate within particular discourses that carry particular conventions (Kamler and Thomson, 2006: 5), and students who are engaged in writing need to be seen as 'doing' writing in a socially situated way (Lillis, 2001: 31). Table 1, below, summarizes what it means to approach writing as social practice rather than as skill.

Skills Approach	Practice Approach
writing is an individual act	writing is a social act
the individual is autonomous and socially neutral	language constructs identities
language is transparent	language constructs meaning
literacy is autonomous and universal	literacy is numerous, varied and socially situated
essayist literacy is appropriate	essayist literacy is privileged
academic conventions taken for granted	sees academic conventions as contested and contestable

Table 1: A 'Skills' approach to writing versus a 'practice' approach (Lillis, 2001: 31)

However, writing pedagogy has failed to foreground the idea that writing is shaped by social, institutional and historical forces (Starfield, 2007: 875). Instead, the conventions that dictate what counts as good writing are taken for granted rather than being stated to students (Lea and Stierer, 2000: 4). This is often done in subtle ways. For example, Kamler and Thomson (2006: 4) argue against the notion of 'writing up' research because it neglects the fact that writing is a representation of reality rather than an expression of truth. Indeed, as Lea and Stierer (2000: 13) argue, writing is far from mere transmission of knowledge, but is instead an active knowledge-making enterprise.

The social, institutional and historical forces that shape academic writing impact upon all students whether postgraduate or undergraduate or first or second language English speakers (Starfield, 2007: 876). But, a debate exists as to whether or not it is possible to speak of academic literacy practices that are privileged throughout the university (or at least across most of the disciplines), or whether each discipline constitutes its own free-standing, entirely unique discourse. I take Bartholomae's (1985: 144) point that writing, thinking and learning become increasingly field specific, the higher the level of competence required, but also agree with Thesen (1997: 491) who argues that, although disciplines differ, there are a core set of practices that characterize higher education, such as argument as a privileged mode of knowledge construction and use of sources, amongst others. Elbow (1991) disagrees with this, saying that there is no such thing as academic discourse as each discipline is its own discourse (135) and that, in a context such as that of a Writing Centre (located outside of any discipline), it is only possible to teach the principle of discourse variation (142).

Similarly, Lea and Stierer (2000: 3 – 4) suggest that an understanding of writing relies on an understanding of the dominant knowledge-making practices within a particular discipline. But, I would argue that in most disciplines (within the humanities and social sciences, in particular) the dominant knowledge-making practice is the academic essay. Starfield (2007: 876) refers to this as the social legitimization of essayist literacy within academic discourse. Furthermore, Lillis (2001: 20) contends that the academic essay, as a particular way of constructing knowledge, has become both privileged and taken for granted in academia and Angelil-Carter (2000a: 115) sites the formal academic essay as a particularly powerful genre because of its importance in determining the success of students.

But, there is what Lillis (2001: 53) calls "institutional mystery" around the conventions of essayist literacy. As such, these conventions are implied in writing pedagogy but are not made explicit to students (55), because they are as invisible to tutors and lecturers as they are to students, in many cases (75). Indeed, what is problematic about academic writing is not only this institutional mystery that surrounds it but also the contradictory directives which often characterise it (for example, the dual need to establish one's own voice but simultaneously draw on the voices of others). Lillis (2001: 115) goes on to further suggest that essayist literacy is a product of Western rationality and cites a number of binary oppositions implied in this practice, such as the privileging of linearity over circularity, appeals to authority over personal experience, and logic over emotion.

It is this 'alien' nature of essayist literacy that is the cause of many of the difficulties that students' experience in academic writing. This has been explained in various ways. Ivanič (1998: 222), for example, argues that often essays are seen by students as mere exercises to be carried out, with little importance in their lives or careers, thus promoting uncommitted writing and learning. Similarly, Lillis (2001: 122) suggests that essayist literacy appears to construct writing as uninvolved with actual readers and writers and that it privileges certain identities over others (25). Finally, Angelil-Carter (2000a: 41) contends that the academic essay is a pretence for a scholarly journal article which installs students as impostors in the writing they do in higher education because of their simultaneous legitimacy and illegitimacy as members of the academic community.

Writing as process

Understanding academic writing as a social practice does not preclude also adopting a process orientation towards academic writing. Whereas the one views it as implicated in cultural, epistemological and ideological practices, the other views it not as mere reproduction of ideas, but as an important method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000). To understand writing as process is to understand it as discovery (Zamel, 1987), in which students do not simply regurgitate knowledge, but instead are engaged in a process of finding out about their topics and themselves through writing (Richardson, 2000: 923). A particularly important difference between a process approach to academic writing and a more product-oriented approach is that between reproduction and construction. According to Zamel (1987: 268), a product-oriented approach would see writing as reproducing in print ideas that are pre-existent in the mind. In contrast, understanding writing as process sees the act of writing as involved in exploring one's thoughts and uncovering new thoughts through writing, thereby engaging in the creative construction of meaning (Tsui, 1996:97).

Understanding writing as process has a number of important implications for writing pedagogy. This is because traditional writing pedagogy often creates a sense of passivity or even resistance on the part of student writers (Lensmire, 2000: 12). A process approach to the teaching of academic writing necessitates that students maintain control and ownership of their own writing so that they can be allowed to makes sense of the world for themselves (Lensmire, 2000). This would engender commitment to writing rather than resistance. This is in contrast to traditional writing pedagogy that tells students to write only when they know exactly what they want to say, rather than allowing them to write in order to discover new knowledge, thereby shutting down creativity on the part of writers and inhibiting their full engagement with their writing (Richardson, 2000: 924). Because of this, Lensmire (2000) calls for writing pedagogy to be decentred and student-led, and for feedback on student writing to be focused on student-writers' intentions and goals. Indeed, because writing is a process of discovery, writers seldom know what their end product will look like and, because of this, writing pedagogy that focuses exclusively on form ignores how ideas come to be generated initially (Zamel, 1987: 267). Understanding writing as a process requires of teachers of writing to allow students to engage in adventurous play in writing in which their roles as writers are not tightly scripted, as is the case in much traditional writing pedagogy (Lensmire, 2000). This is in contrast to many traditional approaches that focus on writing purely for assessment, rather than for learning, and that focus on grammatical accuracy, both of which cause student-writers to experience a high degree of anxiety when writing (Tsui, 1996).

Teacher change

The aim of this study (as discussed in chapter one, above) is to examine writing consultants' changing attitudes towards writing and the teaching thereof. As such, previous literature on teacher change has heavily informed the analysis and interpretation of the data and forms an important part of this literature study.

In the previous section, a dichotomy was established between adopting a process approach to academic writing and a product approach. However, the difference need not be dichotomous. Instead, there are moments in a process-approach to academic writing in which product and form become of particular concern. However, traditional writing pedagogy has made product and form the primary, often exclusive, point of focus. Such a focus on product and form appears to stem from a behaviourist model of teaching. Such approaches continue to remain common today despite the sociocultural turn in education (Johnson, 2006: 236 - 237). Although some studies (Scott and

Rodgers, 1995; Tsui, 1996) present teacher change as fairly simple to enact, much of the literature on teacher change demonstrates the fact that changing teachers' attitudes towards writing is not a simple, linear process but that it is instead complex and takes place over long periods of time (Courtland and Welsh, 1990; Kennedy, 1998; Wilson, 1994). Indeed, teacher learning is a life-long activity (Johnson, 2006: 239).

There are numerous reasons to account for this. In particular, the literature points out five factors that inhibit change in teachers' attitudes towards writing. The first of these is that teachers' initial assumptions, beliefs and practices are difficult to break. When teachers enter into the teaching-experience, they rely on their prior experiences to make decisions and interpret situations (Kennedy, 1998: 3, Shi and Cumming, 1995: 104). This means that they are likely to teach in much the same way as they were taught (Winer, 1992: 62; Kennedy, 1998: 184). For this reason, teachers' assumptions about teaching and about their role as teachers as well as the practices they employ come to have a direct bearing on teacher change (Courtland et al, 1987: 307). With regard to writing in particular, teachers' own prior experiences with writing may be a significant obstacle to initiating change (Wilson, 1994: 28). These beliefs are particularly resistant to change because they are abstract, formed early in life, associated with deep emotions (often fear and anxiety), connected to their self-image (particularly as teachers) and are often mutually reinforcing (Kennedy, 1998). In addition, because such changes take place internally, it is difficult to chart changes in attitudes towards writing (Winer, 1992: 58).

A second reason for the difficulty of change is that teachers often see value in their current practices. They are thus reluctant to change (Courtland et al, 1987: 308). Courtland et al (1987) argue that the first step towards change is making a decision to change. Such a decision is unlikely to be made if teachers attach particular value to their current practices. Indeed, as Wilson (1994: 30) points out, often teachers do not agree that grammar and mechanical correctness are not the most important aspect of academic writing. Without a decision to change and a belief in change, teachers are unlikely to take ownership of their own change processes (Courtland et al, 1987: 315). It is because of teachers' attachment to their current values and beliefs that Wilson (1994: 21) identifies change as occurring in three stages: initial resistance, conversion and continued uncertainty. This suggests that despite being 'won over' after their initial resistance, they may continue to be unconvinced by their new knowledge and ideas. It is for this reason that, even when teachers do adopt new beliefs, they do not necessarily abandon the old ones (Kennedy, 1998: 188).

A third factor that may inhibit teacher change is the difference between teachers' espoused practice and their actual practice. Teachers, including writing teachers, may often hold a particular belief but claim to hold a different one (Kennedy, 1998: 4). Kennedy (1998) refers to this as a discrepancy between teachers' espoused ideals and immediate concerns in practice. In instances where such a discrepancy exists, Courtland et al (1987: 316) suggest that confrontation would enable teachers to become aware of the lack of congruence between their espoused and practiced ideas. It is this discrepancy that may also account for Kennedy's (1998) finding that teacher education programmes had a greater influence on teacher's espoused ideals than it did on their practice.

A fourth reason is teachers' desire to ensure that their students achieve institutional success. In a study of teacher change, Tsui (1996) describes an instance in which a teacher found it difficult to implement a process approach to writing because it conflicted with what was expected of the curriculum and the teacher in question was concerned that the students may be penalised. Wilson (1994: 27) further argues that teachers often resort to old practices because they are preoccupied with ensuring that students meet institutional expectations.

Finally, teachers' attitudes may also be resistant to change because it is easier for those teachers to resort to old practices. This relates to teacher ability. In some instances, teachers may agree with certain beliefs but be unable, in practice, to implement them (Kennedy, 1998: 171). With regard to writing, it has been shown that teachers often find it easier to resort to error-correction, than to engage with student writing at other levels (Kennedy, 1998: 171). Wilson (1994: 26) also found that writing teachers resort to old practices because they struggle to translate new approaches to different and varying contexts.

Another factor that is important in promoting teacher change is collegial support (Wilson, 1994: 44). Indeed, professional development does not take place only through formal training and development, but also through access to social and professional networks (Johnson, 2006: 243). Thus, participation in such networks is crucial to teacher learning (Johnson, 2006: 244). In addition, engagement in practice itself also offers avenues for development (Johnson, 2006: 243). It is these opportunities for learning offered by engagement in practice and participation in communities that necessitates an understanding of how participation n practice fosters learning and development. To reach such an understanding, I now turn to the notion of communities of practice.

Participation, learning and identity in communities of practice

Communities of practice are social networks that come about through their members' mutual engagement in a joint enterprise through the use of a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 73). Although these members may have different interests and make diverse contributions as well as even hold varying points of view, they form a community of practice through their shared understanding of the practice of their community (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 98). Wenger (1998: 125 – 126) identifies the following as some of the characteristics of a community of practice: sustained relationships, shared ways of doing, near-mutual agreement on who belongs, knowledge of each others' strengths, use of specific tools, shared jargon and shared perspectives on the world. Communities of practice are driven by their primary element: participation. Participation refers to engagement in the practice/s of a social community and, in so doing, developing an identity within that community (Wenger, 1998: 4). Furthermore, participation refers to doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging (Wenger, 1998: 56). Members participate within communities of practice to varying degrees: some are peripheral participants, whereas others are full participants (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 37). Peripheral participation involves being located within, but on the outskirts of, the social community (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 36).

The notion of communities of practice offers a theory of learning as a situated activity (Hanks, 1991). This is because, within communities of practice, learning occurs through participation in the social world (Wenger, 1998:3). Learning is thus defined as legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 31). The implication of this is that, when examining learning, the individual alone ceases to be the unit of analysis and is replaced by the individual within the social world (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 49). Put more simply, learning is about engaging in and contributing to the practices of social communities (Wenger, 1998: 7) and is about the individual's developing relation to the practices of certain communities and his or her participation within these practices.

Wenger (1998: 95) suggests that learning in communities of practice involves three elements: discovering how to interact with fellow members, understanding the enterprise of the community, and developing the repertoire needed to engage in that enterprise. The implication of this is that learning is not a way of understanding the world, but a way of acting in the world (Hanks, 1991: 24). For such learning to take place, members must have access to fellow members and must also have the legitimacy to make contributions (Wenger, 1998: 184). Furthermore, they need access to the symbols, tools, language and artefacts used in the practice (Wenger, 1998: 184).

However, learning is about moving from legitimate peripherality towards becoming a full participant (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 53). This means mastering new activities, tasks and understandings that enable participation in broader systems of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 153). Learning thus implies *becoming* a different type of person (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 153 – italics added). Indeed, the title of this project begins with the word 'becoming' and, as such, is concerned intrinsically with questions of learning. However, if learning is about becoming a different person, it also raises questions of identity. Indeed, questions of identity are inseparable from notions of practice, community and learning (Wenger, 1998: 145). As Wenger (1998: 215) continues, learning changes who we are and is thus, rather than involved with the accumulation of skills, a process of becoming. Learning as legitimate peripheral participation further involves becoming able to talk (and be silent) as a full participant within that community would do (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 105).

In short, our identities are shaped by participation in practices (Wenger, 1998: 149). This means, practically-speaking for the purposes of this research project, becoming a writing consultant involves taking on the label 'writing consultant' and giving this label meaning by engaging in the practice of writing consultancy (Wenger, 1998: 150). Another aspect of learning and identity within communities of practice is the notion of learning trajectories. Identity is a "constant becoming" and is temporal (Wenger, 1998). This means that our learning trajectories dictate the extent to which we become (or wish to become) full participants in a community of practice. Practically speaking, once again, in the case of the writing consultants, their sense of trajectory extends beyond the consultant-experience as they seek to move on to other careers. Finally, identity is defined not only by the communities of practice that we choose to participate in, but also by those communities that we choose not to participate in (Wenger, 1998: 164).

Conclusion: writing, learning and identity

Questions of identity and learning in academic writing have, until recently, been under-researched because of the traditional conception of academic writing as objective and impersonal (Starfield, 2007 881). According to Ivanič (1998: 17), there is a link between writing and identity. This is not only because identity is constructed through individuals adopting ideologically informed ways of being and understanding reality, but also because writers' identities change as they come into contact with new communities. In her research, Ivanič (1998) examines the construction of writers' identities. She argues, using one particular case study, that students draw on academic discourse in their writing as well as the discourses they bring with them and it is this mixture of discourses that

makes each writer unique in that they draw upon these discourses in different ways and to different degrees (84 – 86). In addition, Ivanič (1998) examines how writers are expected to present a version of themselves that is congruent with the reader's expectations, how linguistic features construct writers as having bought into the values and beliefs (or not) of the academic institution, how multiple "possibilities of self-hood" exist for writers within the academic discourse community, and how writers position themselves by taking a stance against dominant discourses.

In her work, Lillis (2001) also acknowledges the importance of identity in writing. She argues that students, rather than being homogenous in nature, bring a range of cultural and social experiences to higher education (4 – 6). Failure to acknowledge this impacts on students in that they must 'edit out' their own views, their own identities, and it impacts on the institution itself in that new meanings and new understandings are potentially lost (104). In particular, however, Lillis (2001) suggests that when students write they are in a process of becoming, of making themselves (48). This process of becoming is about finding new ways to mean through finding new ways to be (49, 91). In the South African context, the work of Thesen (1997) is relevant here. She shows how institutional discourses around widened access to higher education have created subject positions such as 'disadvantaged', 'under-prepared' and 'second language' students (490) and goes on to suggest that research should do more to examine the ways in which students account for themselves as writers (507).

Identity is also foregrounded in the work of Kamler and Thomson (2006) in Australia. They argue that writing involves producing representations of self and is thus identity work (15). They argue that identity is a narrative told about ourselves based on the expectations of others and therefore different across differing contexts (16 – 17). They, as was discussed above, see identity as performative and view writing as one way in which identities are performed, in that when students write, they perform their intellectual capabilities and, importantly, their scholarly identities (25). Kamler and Thomson (2006: 18) also argue that identity-shift is implicated in learning in that one changes from the self to the self that knows more. In other words, as learning takes place, students perform their learning which reflects a shift in identity.

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to provide insight into the ways in which the literature discussed herein has been used in the design and implementation of this research. In the chapters that follow, I hope to make these connections clearer` by first outlining the methods used (chapter

three) and then using the literature to analyse the consultants' entry into the consultant-experience (chapters four and five).

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

> "You are a scholar if you have a passion for language and writing. You are a scholar if you are driven to understand what makes yourself and others tick."
> (Nash, 2004: 46)

Research site and participants

This research is located in an academic Writing Centre at a city-based, South African university. The Writing Centre offers one-to-one consultancy services to all registered students of the university, across all Faculties and all levels of study. The philosophy of the Centre is informed by notions of writing as a meaning-making process (Zamel, 1987) and as a social practice (Lillis, 2001). The primary role of the Writing Centre is conceived of as being to talk to writers and allow them to talk about their writing (North, 2003). However, the Writing Centre also seeks to "de-mystify" (Lillis, 2001; Lensmire, 2000) the conventions of academic writing, rendering them visible to students, particularly those students whose cultural and epistemological resources are far-removed from those assumed in academia.

The Writing Centre is staffed by postgraduate students who are called writing consultants. The consultants are selected based on their interpersonal skills as well as, of course, their own writing abilities. As such, all of the writing consultants have been identified as having particularly effective communication skills, particularly when using the genres privileged in academic writing. In total, the Centre had eight consultants during the year in which this study was undertaken. However, because this study was concerned with the consultants' entry into the consultant-experience, two consultants were excluded from the study because of their having worked in the Centre in the previous year. In addition, another consultant was excluded from the study, despite being a first-time consultant, because he failed to attend the final meeting of the first quarter and, as such, there was limited data that referred to him. In all, five consultants form the focus of this research.

Although biographical and demographic information have not shaped my analysis of the data, I include a brief description of the five participants in this study. Their pseudonyms are Danica, Linda, Leila, Lacey and Heather. All of the participants are female postgraduate students aged between 21 and 27 who have all been successful in their previous studies, with three having been selected for membership of the Golden Key International Honour Society. At the time of the study, two of the consultants were embarking on a Masters degree: Heather (in Anthropology) and Danica (in

Philosophy). Linda, on the other hand, was beginning an Honours degree in Anthropology. Lacey had completed an Honours degree in English Literature a couple of years previously and was not studying over the research period. Finally, Leila had completed an Honours degree in Linguistics and was embarking on her second year of a second undergraduate degree in Corporate Communication.

Before moving on to discuss the research methods used in this study, it is important to define the consultant-experience, as this is necessary background for the methods used. Upon being selected to work in the Writing Centre, the consultants are requested to attend a three-day orientation and development workshop, which takes place a week or two prior to the commencement of the academic year. When the academic year begins, each consultant spends between four and nine hours per week consulting with students. In addition to the initial training, the consultants are also expected to attend a weekly meeting[1] throughout their time spent as a writing consultant. The function of these meetings is to run through administrative notices for that week and to discuss problems that have arisen during the week. There is also a strong element of training, mentoring and development in these meetings with different themes being covered each week such as argument in writing, coherence and cohesion, plagiarism and so on. This initial and on-going development and mentorship is not the only factor impacting on the consultants' developing approaches towards academic writing; instead, two other factors also play such a role. These are their experiences of working with student writing in the Centre as well as their continued experience of engaging in their own academic writing. For the purposes of my research question, I define the consultant-experience as encapsulating all three of these forces. I do this because the consultant-experience does not exclude the consultants' student-experiences, and because it would be impossible to separate the impact of each of these factors.

Research paradigm

This study makes use of a qualitative research design. This decision was taken because qualitative methods are able to examine practice as it occurs as well as the ways in which social interaction is enacted (Silverman, 2000b: 832). In addition, the nature of the questions asked in this study also necessitates a preference for the analysis of words rather than numbers which is a defining characteristic of qualitative research (Silverman, 2000a: 8). Indeed, a large part of the focus of the research is on the discourses of writing that inform the talk between the writing consultants.

[1] The practice of holding weekly training meetings with consultants originated from New York University and was first used in South Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand Writing Centre

Despite these advantages, many argue that qualitative research provides for findings that do not meet the criteria of reliability and validity. However, my concern in this study is not with the generalization of findings so as to account for the experiences of writing consultants in all, or even most, contexts. Instead, I am concerned with describing and analysing the experiences of the consultants in the context of my particular research site with a view to perhaps encouraging others to undertake similar research in their own contexts. It is hoped that study in further contexts will be undertaken which may yield more complex and nuanced understandings of the consultant-experience (or the experience of any novice teacher of academic writing and, perhaps, writing in general) and of the process of teacher change.

In fact, at this point it may be pertinent to refer once more to the theoretical epistemological underpinnings for this research, namely post-structuralism. From this paradigm, I borrow the idea that meaning is a (temporary) coming into being and that language is a way of realizing a particular way of being that is value-laden and temporary (Schwandt, 2000: 198). Thus, Schwandt (2000: 198) continues, there is an assumption that language is not neutral, but is permeated with values. In my study, I assume that certain values are attached to academic writing, what it means to be a writer within the university and what it means to teach academic writing and I aim to examine which values the writing consultants subscribe to and how this changes over the course of the first two months of their work as consultants.

Data collection

Within the above-mentioned qualitative research design, two strands of data were collected in this study: artefacts of individual reflection and participant observation of group discussion. The combination of these strands of data was of particular importance in this study because of its concern with questions of learning, identity and change. Indeed, as Wenger (1998: 7) argues, for individuals, learning is about engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. The combination of collecting artefacts of individual reflection and observing group discussion allowed me to examine the extent to which participation in a community of peer writing tutors, or writing consultants, was initiating learning and shifting the identities of the consultants.

In terms of the collection of artefacts of individual reflection, a number of data-pieces were collected. As was mentioned above, the consultants had to attend an initial three-day induction workshop. During this workshop, four artefacts of individual reflection were collected. The first of

these was the consultants' metaphor for academic writing which enabled me to gather an initial idea of the ways in which the consultants view themselves as writers as well as the way they view writing. For the idea of using metaphor in examining writer identity, I am indebted to Kamler and Thomson (2006). They argue that metaphors are a representation and are thus useful for examining how writers see themselves as well as how they see the task of writing (Kamler and Thomson, 2006: 32). The purpose of such metaphors resides in the fact that metaphor is a means of using everyday language to structure our reality (Burnham, 1992: 130).

I also asked the consultants to write their own writing histories. This entailed thinking back to significant past experiences with writing that they felt had informed the way they understand and approach writing. In this exercise, I asked them to pay particular attention to academic writing, though they did not have to focus exclusively on this. In addition, I asked the consultants to write reflectively in describing their own 'writing processes'. That is, I asked them to think back to their last piece of extended academic writing and describe the process they went through in producing that text in as much detail as possible. Finally, at the beginning of the final day of the initial orientation workshop, I asked the consultants to engage in written reflection on how the training and development they had undergone over the previous two days might change the way they approach writing and might inform their approach to teaching academic writing in the Writing Centre.

These written reflections as well as the metaphors discussed in the previous paragraph will be used as initial data. Such reflection is a not unusual method for stimulating reflective thought about writing during the Writing Centre's initial training workshop. That is to say, the data that was gathered would have been produced regardless of this research study. Thus, this naturally-occurring data has been classified as artefacts for the purposes of this research project. However, these were not the only artefacts collected during the course of this research. At the end of the research period, I asked the consultants to engage in written reflection on how the consultant-experience had informed (if at all) their own writing practices. The importance of such reflection cannot be underestimated because, as Ivanič (1998: 115) argues, writers' reflections on their own writing processes provides a complex picture of the writing process and, therefore, writer's own perceptions of themselves as writers need to be viewed as a powerful methodological tool.

As mentioned above, the second strand of data collected in this project was collected through participant observation of group discussion. In total, eight group discussions were observed in this

way. Five of these discussions took place during the initial three-day consultant development workshop. The first of these was a discussion around the consultants' metaphors (discussed above). Similarly, there was also a discussion around the consultants' descriptions of their own 'writing processes'. However, there were also discussions around the notion of academic writing as social practice, the role of grammar in academic writing and, finally, there was a verbal group reflection on how the first day's training might inform the consultants' approach to their work in the Writing Centre. In addition to this, I also undertook participant observation of three of the weekly meetings conducted over the research period. The first two of these were meetings in which the consultants were asked to take part in role-plays[2] of problematic Writing Centre situations. The third was the meeting at the end of the research period which took the form of a guided group reflection. Although a total of six meetings took place during the research period, the remaining three had a predominantly administrative focus and it was decided that they would not be useful to the study.

Participant observation is defined by the fact that the observer takes part in the event being observed (Swann, 1994: 27). In fact, Adler and Adler (in Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000: 675) would perhaps define the observation used in this research as "complete-member researcher" observation. This is because I am studying a setting of which I am already a fully-fledged member and because my position necessitates that I be committed to my research participants' values and goals. The explicit focus of my observations was on the interaction among the writing consultants during the course of the first quarter. This is because talk is the primary medium through which social interaction is enacted (Silverman, 2000b: 821). However, there are problematic factors that need to be borne in mind when observing talk in interaction. Swann (1994: 27) identifies such a problem, this being that people may misrepresent their abilities in their talk. They do this by adopting coping strategies that give the appearance that they are more able than what they in fact are.

Data from my observation of the weekly meetings with the writing consultants was collected in the form of audio-recordings. The purpose of audio recording the above-mentioned group discussions was to overcome the problem of being a fully-fledged participant in what I was observing, which precluded me from taking detailed notes during the discussions. After collecting the above data, the audio-recordings of the writing consultants' discussions were transcribed. Much time and energy was spent on this transcription because participant observation is inherently idiosyncratic and,

[2] The idea of using role-play (as well as some of the role-plays used) were taken from: Murphy, C. and Sherwood, S. The St Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors. New York: St Martin's Press.

therefore, the quality of the transcriptions determines whether the data is usable or not (Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000: 676).

Data analysis

After transcription, the group discussions and artefacts were analysed. Rather than any one over-arching data analysis technique being used, a hybrid of such techniques was used. However, my data analysis was based on the assumption that language use in a social group is informed by the values, habits and beliefs of the group (Heath, 1983: 11). One data analysis method used was discourse analysis. This method was used because everything people do is informed by discourse (Punch, 1998: 226). Gee (1996: 96) extends this notion by arguing that people's speech communicates far more than what was actually said. According to Gee (1996: 91), language use is always driven either by status or solidarity and variable language use is indicative of differing social identities (Gee, 1996: 93). However, language is embedded in social institutions and this embedded-ness informs individuals' sense-making practices (Gee, 1996: 90).

Discourse analysis, therefore, is concerned with identifying the ways in which discourse stems from a particular sociocultural means of making sense (Gee, 1996: 101). The discourse analysis that is most suited to qualitative social research is concerned with identifying how people and their activities are informed by particular discourses (Punch, 1998: 227). It thus involves viewing talk and text (the two types of data that will be collected in this research) as social practice (Punch, 1998: 227 – 228). Furthermore, it involves examining how ways of being are enacted and constructed through language and how these ways of being are "shared by and lived out in a variety of ways by the social group" (Gee, 1996: 115 – 116). In order to help me identify the discourses that informed the consultants' talk about writing, I also undertook a thematic content analysis of the data, which enabled me to identify recurring patterns and ruptures (Foucault, 1972) that occurred, both in the data produced by each consultant but also across all of the data.

In addition, I also made use of metaphor analysis so as to ascertain the consultants' attitudes towards academic writing. In this regard, I relied on a method outlined by the Metaphor Network (n.d.). This method involved three stages. The first stage requires one to examine the texts produced by a particular participant and identify linguistic metaphors – words that have the potential to be interpreted metaphorically. Thereafter, it was necessary to identify the topic of each linguistic metaphor, that is, the literal referent of the metaphor (in this particular case, I was only

concerned with metaphors that referred to any aspect of writing). Finally, the metaphors were grouped so as to identify systematic metaphors – metaphors for writing that occurred numerous times in the data produced by that participant. Such systematic metaphors reveal ingrained ways of thinking about writing on the part of individuals. As Deignan (2005: 4) argues, "[w]riters talk of writing in terms of cooking or gardening [for example] because they think of it like that". When analysing the data, I sought answers to the following questions, that have assisted me to answer my primary research question stated in chapter one, above:

- What topics emerge as significant in the consultants' discussions?
- To what extent do the consultants participate in discussion with their peers?
- What is the nature of their participation?
- What do the consultants say about their writing and about their experiences in the Writing Centre?
- Which discourses of writing appear to inform the consultants' discussion?
- Does this change as they begin to be apprenticed as writing consultants?

In the remaining chapters, I have, in all references to the data, made use of a particular coding system. This coding system was devised so that readers of this report can more easily identify at which period of the research the data was produced and whether the data was taken from group discussion or individual written reflection. Table two, below, lists the codes used in this regard.

Spoken / Written?	When collected?	Full code	Data included in this code:
Group Discussion (GD)	Initial Training (IT)	(GD, IT)	• Discussions of consultants' metaphors • Discussion of consultants' description of own 'writing process' • Discussion of academic writing as social practice • Discussion of role of grammar in academic writing • Group reflection on first day of initial training
	During first quarter (Q1)	(GD, Q1)	• Consultant role-play [1] • Consultant role-play [2]
	End of first quarter (EoQ)	(GD, EoQ)	• Guided group reflection on first quarter

Spoken / Written?	When collected?	Full code	Data included in this code:
Written artefact (WA)	Initial training (IT)	(WA, IT)	• Metaphor for academic writing • Writing history • Description of own writing process • Written reflection on initial training
	End of first quarter (EoQ)	(WA, EoQ)	• Written reflection on first quarter

Table 2: Codes used in chapters four and five to refer to the data collected

In my discussion and analysis, I have tried to make these details fairly clear, but I feel that presenting the data with these codes will provide further clarity for my readers.

Ethical considerations

By way of concluding this discussion of the design employed in my research, I would like to discuss some ethical considerations that have informed my research. My research design, as outlined here, is intrinsically linked to the idea of collaborative research. Such collaborative research involves participation of the researcher *and* the research participants (Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000: 675). Thus, within collaborative research, the research design ceases to be, simply, a method for inquiry, but instead becomes a context for interaction between researchers and research participants (Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000: 676) and, therefore, beneficial for the participants.

I would argue that the collaborative nature of this research can be seen in the fact that the artefacts collected during the course of the study, while certainly informing my research, are also aimed at developing the writing consultants' understandings of themselves as writers within the university and as teachers of academic writing. This is done through a strong emphasis on reflection, on practice and experience, as a means for learning. It must also be noted that the consultants were not expected to undertake any activities outside of what is usually expected of writing consultants in the Writing Centre. I would therefore argue that the consultants, rather than being disadvantaged in any way through their involvement in this research project, have benefitted from the research as it aimed to describe (and ultimately promote) their own learning and development as writers and as teachers of academic writing.

Nevertheless, no pressure was placed on consultants to take part in the study. During the initial training, a detailed description of my research was provided and consent was obtained from those writing consultants who agreed to participate in the research. Furthermore, confidentiality was assured and has been strictly enforced. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the consultants involved in the project.

Limitations of the study

Two primary limitations of the study can be identified. The first relates to the period of time over which the research was conducted. Because change is a complex phenomenon, a study which takes place over a longer period of time would yield more substantive results. Despite this, the two month research period did yield positive results and allowed me as researcher to witness the 'small beginnings' of change on the part of the writing consultants.

The second limitation of the study is methodological. The methodology was limited in two senses. Firstly, because the decision was taken not to observe the consultants in consultation with student-writers, I had to rely on their espoused practice as I did not have access to their enacted practice. However, this decision was taken because of the need for this research to be unobtrusive and for consultants not to perceive the research as a smoke-screen for an evaluation of their performance. Secondly, and also in the interest of the research not being perceived as a threat by the consultants, the decision was taken not to analyse any of the consultants' own academic writing. This meant that it was difficult to identify change on the part of the consultants-as-writers. As such, my analysis and interpretation focuses predominantly on the consultants' understandings of academic writing and their development as teachers of academic writing.

Chapter Four: Two postgraduate students' entry into the consultant-experience

> "[I]n teaching writing we are tacitly teaching a version of reality and the student's place and mode of operation in it"
>
> (Berlin, in Elbow, 1991: 139)

As has already been mentioned in the introductory chapter, I have three central concerns in this study. These are as follows:

- In what ways do the writing consultants' understandings of academic writing change over the course of the first quarter of the academic year?
- In what ways do the consultants' understandings of themselves as writers in the academy change over this same period?
- In what ways do the consultants' understandings of what it means to 'teach' academic writing change during this time?

Change, however, is complex. People do not merely assimilate information, but instead bring their range of prior experiences to bear on their learning. As such, "change is messy and idiosyncratic" (Wilson, 1994: 100). Given this, it is impossible, due to space constraints, to do full justice to the complexities of all five research participants' processes of change during their first two months as peer writing tutors. In order to illustrate the messy and idiosyncratic change processes initiated through entry into the consultant-experience, in this chapter I focus on just two consultants: Linda and Danica. By doing this, I hope to illustrate the complexity that underscores changes in attitudes towards writing.

This discussion serves as a basis for the following chapter in which I 'un-crease' these ambiguities and complexities and attempt to identify, using the remainder of the consultants (Leila, Heather and Lacey), a number of observations that can be made about postgraduate students' entry into the consultant-experience. Indeed, such 'un-creasing' is at best superficial as the 'folds' remain visible. However, whereas in this chapter I foreground these folds, in chapter five I mention them more briefly for the sake of the argument presented therein.

Danica – "his grammar was just terrible"

It would appear that Danica aligns herself with a 'skills' approach to student writing (Ivanič, 2004: 227), a characteristic of which is that language is seen as a transparent conduit for meaning (Lillis, 2001: 31). There is much evidence that Danica brings such a perspective to her experience of being a writing consultant. For example, in discussion around the role of grammar in academic writing, Danica states that "communicating clearly is using grammar and your spelling should be correct because meaning could be completely misconstrued if you just not using grammar and your spelling is completely wayward" (GD, IT). In this way, Danica appears to locate herself within what Johns (1997: 6) calls a "traditional view of literacy", a characteristic of which is a predominant focus on grammar. That Danica places particular emphasis on grammar can be seen in the fact that when, in the initial consultant orientation workshop, the consultants were asked to give their opinion on the statement 'correct grammar and spelling is what makes writing good', Danica stated that she agreed with the statement, and went on to argue that "anyone can think up a good story, whether or not you can *put it down on paper* is entirely up to you" (italics added – GD, IT). The italicized words illustrate Zamel's (1987: 267) contention that a focus on form ignores how ideas *come to be on paper* in the first place and neglects the fact that writing is a process of discovery, wherein writing itself promotes the generation of new ideas.

Further evidence that Danica operates from within a traditional view of literacy resides in the fact that, when asked to choose a metaphor for grammar (from the following list: scaffolding, map book, algebraic system and blueprint), Danica chose the map book metaphor as the best representation of grammar. She explained her choice by saying that to "convey an idea you'd have to use the grammar ... in order to give an idea of where to go" (GD, IT). Once again, this illustrates Johns' (1997: 6) view that within traditional conceptions of literacy, texts are not open to multiple interpretations. Instead, there is a sense that writing is seen here as a perfect conduit for expressing pre-existent meaning.

That Danica chooses the metaphor of a map book to represent grammar is of particular significance in the data which Danica produced because metaphors of travel are common in her talk and reflection around writing. For example, in her metaphor for writing, Danica speaks about writing as "entering a maze" and having to find the exit with the aid of a "faulty compass and a badly smudged guide / map" (WA, IT). Similarly, in her description of her writing process, she uses words such as "proceeded", "reached", "avenues" and "proceeding" to describe this process (WA, IT). In addition,

in discussion of her writing process, she speaks about the importance she places on "mapping" her writing first, so that she does not "get lost" later in the writing process (GD, IT).

The prevalence of travel metaphors in her talk around writing might appear to suggest that the writer engages in a personal journey of discovery when writing. However, there are no references (metaphoric or otherwise – except an isolated use of the word 'explore') that would suggest that this is in fact the case. Instead, Danica, in her writing metaphor, writes that "the exit is the first place you head for" (WA, IT), in this way foregrounding an orientation towards writing as product, rather than on writing as process. This, combined with the fact that Danica displays a preoccupation with form over meaning-making suggests a focus on writing as display (Barnes, 1976), rather than as inseparable from the construction of knowledge.

After the discussion on grammar in which Danica initially strongly expressed her concern that correct grammar and spelling are of utmost importance in writing, I asked whether listening to the ideas of others and the input that I had provided on the functional role of grammar in academic writing had in any way changed the way she would approach her work with student academic writing. Her response was as follows:

> I probably would have looked at grammar first and I know I shouldn't have, I probably would have. Cuz, I know the content is probably more important, it's just that going about trying to umm, establish what's important, when it comes to content is a bit more difficult than doing grammar, so it would be easier to just climb in and fix their grammar (GD, IT).

What Danica says here is certainly true. If language is "a neutral vehicle for expressing pre-existent meaning, rather than a site of struggle in which meaning is produced" (Kamler, 2001: 38), it is easier to work alongside students to improve their writing.

However, this moment of insight does not lead to developed practice on Danica's part. This is evident in the fact that on both occasions on which she was asked to speak about problematic encounters she had had with students in the Writing Centre, Danica mentions students whose grammar was problematic. About the first she says, "I couldn't read a word that she had written ... all of it was incorrect, grammar, syntax, everything" (GD, Q1), and about the second she says, "his grammar was just terrible" (GD, EoQ). In saying this, she appears resistant to conceptualising writing as involving adventurous play around meaning-making (Lensmire, 2000: 44) and instead

predominantly attends to the formal aspects of students' writing when working in the Writing Centre. Nevertheless, despite this resistance, at the end of the first quarter, Danica reflects on the impact the consultant-experience has had on her own writing and writes that she "realized by looking at others' work just how flexible language is and how playful one can become when approaching a text" (WA, EoQ). In saying this, she appears to embrace Lensmire's call for adventure in writing and engagement in play around meaning-making.

In addition to these contradictory impulses with regard to the value, role and place of grammar in writing, the contradictions in Danica's espoused attitudes towards academic writing also filter into her approach to students' difficulties with academic writing. To illustrate this, another moment of insight that Danica appears to experience during her first two months as a writing consultant relates to the fact that "academic discourse is not anybody's home language and is closer to the home discourses of some than it is to others" (Angelil-Carter, 2000a: 9). This can be seen in Danica's statement, at the end of the research period, that:

> [students] were spoon fed this information [in school] and now they, well discuss the underlying themes of so and so and how do they go, what is a theme, how do they go about finding it, how do they go about discussing, so I think it's a major problem as well (GD, EoQ).

Here, Danica illustrates Paxton's (2007: 52) contention that, students' practice of 'fact-telling' is due to their reliance on the discourses that ensured their success at school. Based on this, it would appear that Danica experiences a move towards understanding the "triple disadvantage" of many students in higher education today: having to learn the conventions of academic writing, coping with working in a second or additional language and overcoming a history of poor schooling (Leibowitz, 2000: 22).

However, despite such moments of insight, Danica continues to operate from a deficit perspective on student writing. After encountering the above-mentioned student whose grammar was "just terrible", she argues that "if we have these kind of students, why don't we make some form of a, like a class" (GD, EoQ). Danica showed a particular commitment to this idea of the development of a language 'skills' class for students who Danica appears to argue are deficient in terms of linguistic resources and are thus in need of remediation. In doing so, Danica displays a resistance to the idea that academic writing practices are implicated in epistemological practices and, as such, the

development of student writing is not simply about locating deficiencies in students themselves (Starfield, 2007: 883).

Thus, both in her conceptualization of the place of grammar in writing, and in her understanding of the ideologically problematic nature of academic writing practices, Danica exhibits contradictory attitudes. Accounting for these contradictions is no easy task. On the one hand, Danica's contradictory attitudes may result from a keen awareness of students' positions of relative powerlessness within institutions of higher education. Indeed, if writing is understood as a socio-politically constructed practice, this would require that the ways in which writing becomes manifest be open to contestation and change (Ivanič, 2004: 238). But, current power-relations within the university dictate that students are not able to challenge the writing conventions that are imposed on them – not, at least, without the risk of censure. Simply put, it is, at present, students who must adapt and the university which remains the same. Because of this, Wilson (1994: 27) explains, teachers of writing often continue to make use of old practices because they are preoccupied with ensuring students meet what is expected of them and achieve institutional success. Perhaps then, Danica's tendency towards deficit-izing students' writing is an attempt to enable those students to garner institutional success – an aim often at odds with that of empowering students as writers in their own right.

On the other hand, the contradictions evident in her talk around writing may point to a lack of confidence (or perhaps, ability) on Danica's part. It may be the case that, although Danica, has adopted new ideas, she is unable to implement these new ideas in practice, thus illustrating Kennedy's (1998: 171) contention that there may be a mismatch between teachers' adopted beliefs and what they actually know how to do. Because of this lack of confidence in the 'new' ways she learns through her experiences in the Writing Centre, she resorts back to her 'old' ways. This is because it would appear that Danica may feel inadequate when engaging with student academic writing at the level of ideas rather than at the level of mechanics. This accounts for the fact that the acquisition of new beliefs does not presuppose the abandonment of old ones (Kennedy, 1998: 188).

Such an interpretation is given greater weight when one considers that Danica's own success as a student-writer is due, in no small part, to her ability to identify dominant discourses and adapt her own behaviour so as to fit in with those dominant discourses. Her ability to 'shape-shift' in this way as, I believe, successful writers (particularly at undergraduate level) are required to do allows her to identify the dominant discourse in her new community of writing consultants and adopt socially

sanctioned ideas about writing. This may account for why she espouses these ideas but is unable to put them into practice.

Linda – "it gives you a reason for being"

Linda also expresses particularly strong feelings about the importance of grammar and mechanical correctness in academic writing. Like Danica, she also agreed with the statement that 'spelling and grammar is what makes writing good'. When asked to explain why she agreed, she stated that "the meaning of something overrides everything else but you still got a reputation to establish with your reader, like the perception they have of you will really affect what they make of you" (GD, IT). She goes on to say that "not everyone is going to take the time to say, well hell I'm having trouble reading this but let's look for meaning" (GD, IT). And, she concludes: "I wouldn't seriously consider an argument from someone who couldn't spell the word" (GD, IT). The similarity here with Danica's stated attitudes towards writing is clear to see.

However, although she makes these statements within the context of a discussion on grammar, what also becomes clear is that in the rest of her talk around academic writing she adopts an entirely different perspective: one that sees academic writing as involved with the construction of meaning. This is evident in her metaphor for academic writing, where she, in contrast to Danica, appears to foreground writing as both process (rather than product) and as a meaning-making practice:

> Start with the edges
> Not having the picture inside the box
> Filling in the gaps – colour, shape, theme
> Realize that the whole has a 'vapour' about it, a resonance that none of the parts had
> The rush of cheering that, the completed and realization that you were worthy of that puzzle
> Then realizing that there are larger puzzles, that your completed puzzle is merely the piece of somebody else's puzzle, of a collective puzzle of the academic world.
> You realize your 'smallness' because it is not the 'masterpiece' you thought it was – the complete puzzle, but a mere piece.
> The realization I am contributing to it. Although I am realizing my insignificance I am also realizing that because I have created a piece, the bigger puzzle would be incomplete without it.
> "Boundless puzzle" – University / knowledge (WA, IT)

That Linda's view of writing is that it is a process of knowledge construction is also evident in her description of her writing process in which she writes of *applying* the information she found to her area of research, she *explores* areas of information, she *points out* common themes, she writes of the emergence of "unexpected avenues" and she ends up changing her argument (WA, IT). In this way, Linda appears to have adopted the notion that writing is a way of finding out about oneself and about the world, rather than mere knowledge telling (Richardson, 2000: 923).

In addition, Linda conceptualises the writer as particularly agentive in the writing process. This is most obvious in that she installs the writer as the one who builds the puzzle, but is also evident in a statement she makes during the initial consultant development workshop:

> you have choice over the topic, you have choice over the arguments that you present, you have choice over the conclusions that you draw, umm, even in describing something you have choice over what you omit (GD, IT)

In emphasising the choices that writers have in the production of their texts, Linda appears to be referring to the fact that writers produce discoursal selves in their writing because, in the choices they make, they align themselves with particular positions (Ivanič, 1998: 32).

Furthermore, what is striking about Linda's talk about academic writing is that she gives little sense of experiencing any degree of antagonism towards the conventions of academic writing. In contrast, she feels that her identity is, in fact, complemented by these conventions. For example, in her writing history, she writes that "academic writing has not created a new identity but rather solidified and validated the identity I have been forming for all areas of my life" (GD, IT). When asked if at any point she had felt constrained by the conventions of academic writing, she states that:

> I don't view it as constraining at all, it's just a different way of presenting yourself in your way because no matter what you do, like you [Zach] said it is going to be subjective but the points that you choose to present they may be in somebody else's book, but you chose to take them out of it and so I don't think there is so much of that, that conflict (GD, IT)

Here, Linda suggests that, in using the ideas of others (a fundamental characteristic of academic writing – Johns, 1997: 62; Badenhorst, 2007: 6), she, as student-writer, is not assuming an identity that is different and potentially at odds with her other social identities, but that she is instead extending herself into the texts that she writes through her own personal agency in compiling those

words and ideas. Indeed, in order for students to appropriately adopt the meaning-making practices of the university, they must adopt a position of power and assume the right to speak, even if their readers are more knowledgeable about the topic than themselves (Bartholomae, 1985: 140).

But, this lack of antagonism points to an important factor to consider, namely the extent to which Linda's understandings of the conventions of academic writing are implicit. Because she so firmly locates herself in the discourse in which she operates, there is much evidence that her understandings of the conventions or rules of that discourse are, in fact, implicit. It appears that just as one develops an implicit understanding of how to build a puzzle ("Start with the edges / Not having the picture inside the box" – WA, IT), so too have her past experiences with literacy generally and writing in particular (she tells, in her writing history, of doing much 'academic' writing in high school – WA, IT)) afforded her an implicit understanding of how to engage in academic writing practices. This supports the view that the acquisition of academic literacy is impacted upon by home literacy and the cultural capital students bring with them.

Nevertheless, Linda's conceptualisation of academic writing as a personal meaning-making practice translates into an approach to novice-student writing that emphasises the use of academic writing to achieve particular social goals and claim power for themselves in all domains of their lives. This is evident in Linda's contention that:

> I think if you have an understanding or a reverence or appreciation for knowledge creation and what it can do, umm, you realize that in creating an academic identity, you empower yourself in all other areas of life too, you recognize your world (GD, IT)

and:

> when you are writing an essay you are backing up your thoughts and your thoughts mean something and if you can do the same in other areas of your life, if you can present arguments to different people in other areas of your life, it validates you being there, it gives you a reason for being (GD, IT)

In making these points, Linda suggests that academic writing should not merely serve the goal of institutional success but should lead to personal growth that can extend beyond students' time in Higher Education into their work and throughout their lives. Indeed, as Gee (1996: 141) argues, "good classroom instruction ... can and should lead to meta-knowledge, to seeing how the Discourses you have already got (not just the languages) relate to those you are attempting to acquire, and how

the ones you are trying to acquire relate to self and society". Furthermore, learners invest in literacy practices because they expect to gain symbolic and material resources (Norton Pierce, 1995). It is for this reason, Linda appears to argue, that students' maintenance of ownership over their writing is crucial.

Thus, it would appear that, although Linda articulates clear beliefs in the importance of mechanical correctness in academic writing (within the context of a discussion on grammar), this is not her primary concern with academic writing. Instead, I would argue that three factors most strongly inform her conceptions of academic writing. The first of these is that writing is intricately tied to the construction of meaning. Another is her belief that writing should be linked to the achievement of students' social goals. Finally, her implicit understanding and adoption of academic writing practices is an important consideration as Linda has adopted the ways of being in the academy to the extent that she is apparently unaware of her deep immersion in these practices.

In this way, Linda's firm location within the discourse of her discipline presents a specific disadvantage. That is, as Gee (1996) argues, that being located within a discourse prevents one from questioning and critiquing that discourse, and as Delpit (1988: 85) argues, those who hold power are least aware of existing power relations. This appears to ring true in Linda's case. During one discussion during the initial workshop, Linda and another, more experienced consultant entered into a lengthy discussion about how some students find it difficult to adopt certain academic writing practices because these represent ways of knowing and being that are unfamiliar to those students and, in some instances, may be at odds with students' primary ways of knowing and being.

The gist of the discussion is as follows: Linda begins by arguing that academic writing does not present any tensions in one's identity, but that it empowers and develops one's identity and one's understanding of the world. I then stated my agreement with her but said that for many students, this is not an easy process. Linda then argued that we could show them how the conventions of academic writing (she used argument in particular) can empower them as individuals. The other consultant interjected arguing that some students' social identities are at odds with the academic enterprise and that what Linda had just suggested was not as straightforward as Linda had assumed it to be. Linda then indicated that she didn't understand what kinds of social identities would present such challenges. The other consultant then referred to Alistair Pennycook's (1996) work on plagiarism in which he shows how questions around plagiarism are often complicated by different social understandings of intellectual property and fair use of intellectual work. Linda then brought

the discussion to a close by stating that she agreed with the other consultant and "didn't think of those possibilities" (GD, IT).

What this exchange demonstrates is that Linda is initially unable to understand the ways in which the conventions and practices of academic writing could disadvantage certain kinds of writers. She appears to assume that, because her identity is so closely allied with that of academia, there is little identity-work being done with students as they are apprenticed into new ways of meaning and of being at university. Indeed, as Starfield (2007: 881) argues, the place of identity in research on writing has, until recently, been neglected due to the perpetuation of perspectives on writing that see it as impersonal and objective. However, Linda's acknowledgement that she had not considered these issues before suggests that already, at this early stage of the consultant-experience, she is undergoing change and is finding new ways of being, both as writer and as a peer writing tutor.

However, it is unrealistic to expect that such change should occur as simply as this. Indeed, as Wilson (1994: 21) discovered in a study on teacher change, teachers go through three stages when confronted with changes in attitudes: resistance, conversion and continued uncertainty. At this point in time, Linda has expressed resistance and undergone conversion. But, there is every reason to expect that she will experience continued uncertainty. It is perhaps these stages of change that account for Kennedy's (1998: 18) finding that teachers' espoused ideals, which they embrace in discussion about teaching, are often inconsistent with their immediate concerns when dealing with students. Indeed, when one is concerned with teacher change, teachers must be given time as well as opportunities to reflect on their experiences (Wilson, 1994: 105).

Nevertheless, while it is important to point out that change is not a simple process and that Linda's acknowledgement that she had not considered "those possibilities" does not imply immediate and dramatic change, there is evidence that this moment of insight on Linda's part does translate into changed beliefs. The fact that she does begin to take cognizance of the fact that students enter into University with identity positions that are often quite distant from those privileged by the academy, becomes clear in her reflection on the initial consultant development workshop.

> I will have an understanding now what other people view writing and what it means to their world from a different perspective. Because I have had this realization I will be better able to focus on the practical, tangible and structural aspects of someone's writing – but I hope not to do so to such an extent that I

> cannot convey some of my understanding about why writing is so special (WA, IT).

Linda's use of strong verb forms ("I will") in this speech act raises concern. It is as if Linda conceptualizes her own change as having taken place in a rather simplistic and linear fashion. It does not suggest an understanding that implementing such change, in practice, may prove difficult. Nevertheless, in this quote, Linda reflects on her realization that the broader social, cultural and political contexts for students' lives and for their writing cannot be ignored (Lensmire, 2000: 19), and she does appear to 'own' change in her writing practice in a much more practical, tangible and 'real' way than Danica does.

This realization, of the university as particular cultural entity, filters into much of her subsequent talk about writing. In particular, at the end of the research period, Linda empathizes with the requirements placed on students in higher education such as "actually going and finding the library and asking how to find a journal and things like that it requires a lot of, you know, you need to be self-starter, and independent, and the school system doesn't foster that" (GD, EoQ). Here, Linda expresses the realization that the university represents a unique cultural system that is different in myriad ways from the culture of schooling which tends to require students to regurgitate information from textbooks, thus inculcating a belief that knowledge exists as a set of facts to be memorized (Angelil-Carter, 2000b: 165). Because of this, students 'culture', the selves that they bring with them to the university, need to be aligned with the institutional culture, which has severe repercussions for students' sense of themselves. It is with these repercussions that Linda appears to empathize.

In addition, it would appear that Linda experiences a realization that, because the university represents a particular cultural system, it fosters an attitude towards writing that sees the text as separate from the writer. This is evident in the following reflection at the end of the first quarter of the academic year:

> Okay, so basically, what I was saying is that to, to, foster this thought that writing is an extension of oneself, so once it's an expression and an extension of oneself, once it is that then the students have some form of control and ownership of that expression, and then it becomes, the responsibility is on them to grow and maintain and foster this development of expression which has become their own, and in opposition to what often happens is that writing is seen as something apart from the student, like the grammar and the structure, that's something the university puts on writing ... (GD, EoQ)

An objective distance between the writer and the written is a fundamental characteristic of academic writing (Johns, 1997: 60). However, in this reflection, Linda appears to make the point that the conventions of academic writing that lead to the text being seen by students as separate from themselves have the effect of alienating students from their engagement in academic writing, a point borne out by Angelil-Carter (2000a: 122), who argues that this alienation is the result of students' backgrounds not being legitimated within the academy.

In addition, Linda applies her realization that academic writing fosters a sense of detachment on the part of student-writers from their writing to her own experiences as a writer. This is evident in her written reflection on how her entry into the consultant-experience has informed her own writing practice:

> I think my experience at the Writing Centre has impacted my own writing in that it has strengthened my ability to be able to 'stand apart' from my writing. While it is important to view one's writing as an extension of one's identity, being able to look at ones writing as a stranger to it allows the 'depth perception' that comes with distance. As such, I am able to better see the 'depth' of my arguments and the extent of my original thought. (WA, EoQ)

It would appear that Linda's realization that academic writing practices construct the writer as separate from the text translates into an ability to 'see' herself, as writer, present in the texts she produces. She does this by being able to identify what Angelil-Carter (2000b: 168) calls an "authorial presence, an agency that plays with [and] speaks to and within the voices of others", and what Ivanič (1998: 32) calls a "discoursal self". Indeed, Ivanič goes on to argue that the negotiation of a discoursal self is an integral part of writing as there is "no such thing as 'impersonal writing'" (1998: 32). I would argue that the 'depth perception' that Linda mentions in her reflection allows her to further improve her (already well-developed) ability to manage the writing process to achieve the dual goals of writing in a personal (and personally significant) way while still observing the conventions of academic writing (Elbow, 1994: 127).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the complexity that is encountered when attempting to identify processes of change on the part of novice peer writing tutors, or writing consultants. I did this by presenting two particular case studies. The first, Danica, entered into the consultant-

experience with a traditional view of literacy practices, one that is concerned with form and correctness rather than with meaning-making. In addition, it was shown that, during the course of the first two months of her consultant-experience, Danica showed little change or development in her attitudes towards writing or towards teaching writing. Instead, although she espoused certain beliefs, her practice contradicted those beliefs. It is uncertain as to whether this is due to her preoccupation with ensuring students' institutional success or whether it is a result of an inability on Danica's part to engage with student writing at the level of ideas, or indeed, if other factors come to bear on her resistance to change.

In contrast, Linda entered into the consultant-experience with a similar perspective on the importance of mechanics but with a simultaneous conception of academic writing as a meaning-making practice. However, because of her complete adoption and immersion in academic discourses, she is unaware of how these discourses serve to disenfranchise those who are located outside of them. Although she comes to realize this, this realization does not occur in a simple, straightforward manner. Nevertheless, albeit limited, Linda does display some change or development in her understandings of academic writing. This appears to confirm Kennedy's (1998: 176) assertion that change is far more likely to occur if teachers' personal orientations are consistent with that of the programme (or in this case, experience) they undergo.

In the chapter that follows, I build on these two cases by positing various observations that I believe can be made about the process of becoming a writing consultant.

Chapter Five: Becoming a writing consultant – four observations

> "Our students are all too deprived of the joy of watching how their thinking goes onto the paper, how their ideas get shaped into words and expressions, and above all, to see how their buildings and castles could have always been rebuilt with blocks combined in new and different arrangements."
>
> (Li, 1991, in Tsui, 1996: 97)

In this research, I work from the assumption that, because identity is *socially* constructed, writer's identities change as they come into contact with new discourse communities (Ivanič, 1998: 83). However, the previous chapter has shown that such change does not occur in a simple, linear way. Instead, the acquisition of new knowledge and beliefs leads to competing beliefs vying for supremacy causing change to occur in a one step forward, one step back manner (Courtland et al, 1987: 313). In this chapter, I offer four observations about the change processes undergone by each of the novice writing consultants that form the basis of this study. In offering these four observations I am aware of the fact that I am 'smoothing' out much of the complexity evident in the process of becoming a writing consultant. Indeed, these four observations manifest themselves in very different ways in each of the five first-time consultants. I hope to show some of this complexity in the discussion that follows but, for reasons of space, I am unable to do full justice to this 'messiness'.

Nevertheless, the four areas I address in this chapter are as follows. First, I argue that each student enters the consultant-experience with a unique construction of academic writing. I then show how these unique understandings of academic writing translate into particular approaches to the teaching of academic writing. Thirdly, I show that entry into the consultant-experience is characterised by increasing participation in a community of peer writing tutors and, finally, that it is characterised by moments of insight (which have the potential to lead to change) and moments of resistance (which diminish the possibility of change). To make these arguments, I draw on the data produced by the three participants that were not discussed in the previous chapter: Leila, Lacey and Heather.

Blended constructions of academic writing

Each of the five student-writers in this study enters the consultant-experience with specific discursive constructions of academic writing. Tsui (1996: 106) argues that writing should be

understood as an intellectual activity, a creative act and a technical skill. In this regard, it can be seen that the consultants' constructions of writing blend these views of writing, each in unique ways. For example, the previous chapter showed that whereas Danica enters the consultant-experience with a predominant understanding of academic writing as a technical skill, Linda primarily adopts a view of academic writing as an intellectual activity, despite also placing strong emphasis on it as technical skill. To further illustrate this aspect of my argument, I introduce the case of Lacey.

For Lacey, it would appear that writing is an activity undertaken in an almost instinctive or primal manner. This is evident in her description of her own writing process in which she mentions herself as writer as "hunting out" texts and needing time to "gather material", before having to "sort through" ideas (WA, IT). In this way, Lacey uses metaphorical references to a foraging animal or primitive human to conceptualise the writing process. In addition, in discussion around writing (at the beginning of the year), Lacey states her belief that "everyone has [the ability to write] in their nature, everyone can do it, but it has to be nurtured" (GD, IT). I would argue that Lacey's foregrounding of writing as an innate human activity translates into a view of writing as a personal meaning-making tool. Just as a small animal forages for food, so too does the writer forage for meaning through engagement in the writing process. Zamel (1987: 267) argues that evidence that this is in fact the case can be found in the fact that writers seldom know what their end product will look like. In this way, in contrast to Danica, Lacey conceives of writing as far more than the presentation, or reproduction of ideas. Instead, it is intrinsically tied to the construction of knowledge (Lea and Stierer, 2000).

However, in her talk around writing, Lacey also uses a number of metaphors of mechanical processing. She tells of using her rough notes as an "organizational mechanism" that provides "areas of focus" (WA, IT), of being able to "distil" arguments (WA, IT) and she uses words such as "form", "mould", "frame" and "modify" to describe the writing process (GD, IT). In this way, she both illustrates and contradicts Zamel's (1987: 270) proposition that students that become preoccupied with language and form experience writing as a "mechanical exercise" whereas those that do not, experience it as a "creative act of discovery". This is because Lacey privileges academic writing as a vehicle for the creative construction of meaning but also, simultaneously, as a mechanical exercise. Indeed, the two are not mutually exclusive: writing is, at once and always, an intellectual activity, a creative act *and* a technical skill. Writing is a technical skill undertaken within broader contexts of meaning-making and creativity. Here, Lacey, in contrast to Danica in the

previous chapter, chooses to foreground the mechanical and the creative and intellectual dimensions of academic writing.

It is perhaps this particular blended conceptualisation of academic writing (as evident in the metaphors she uses in her talk about it) that accounts for the tensions present in Lacey's metaphor for writing:

> Writing is a conversation with all the people in my head while dancing a specific dance with a partner you don't know in a loud room.
>
> Trying to learn the steps, invent new steps that fit the music, while at the same time wondering if you closed the garage door and making polite conversation with your partner and all the people in your head (WA, IT).

As Lacey states in explaining her metaphor, "you need to stick to the steps but there is also the desire to break free and create new steps" (GD, IT). In applying this tension to the task of academic writing, she states that "it's sort of a ... tension between the form that you should be using and [being creative]", between "the desire to write how I want to and then just kind of mould it into an academic form" (GD, IT). Indeed, it is this tension that prompts some to label writing pedagogy as "a pedagogy of induction and mastery" (Lee, in Kamler, 2001: 24) in which students are expected to conform to the Behaviourist idea of learning as habit-formation. It is perhaps for this reason that, in her writing history, Lacey writes: "I enjoy most creative writing with no intended audience, 'unstructured' and fragmented prose poems" (WA, IT). Even though she does enjoy distilling argument, she enjoys *most* the freedom of writing with no intended audience. Thus, she echoes Lensmire's (2000: 36) call for student-writers to be allowed to engage in adventurous writing in which their roles are not so tightly scripted.

It can thus be seen that Lacey illustrates all three of Tsui's (1996: 106) proposed understandings of writing: as technical (mechanical) skill, as creative act and as intellectual activity. In a similar way, each of the consultants enters into the consultant-experience with a particular blend of conceptions of academic writing which point to a particular blend of realizations of the self as writer. But, these blended conceptions also translate into particular blends of realizations of the self as teacher of academic writing.

The 'writing' / 'teaching writing' nexus

The consultants' constructions of academic writing come to bear directly on the approach they take towards writing tutoring. This can be seen across all five participants. However, I make use of Heather in this section to illustrate the point. Heather's metaphor for academic writing is water. She writes that:

> Like water, I see writing as fluid until some form is created. We pour water into a glass and its form / structure is created. Water appears in the form of ice, water changes its structure when existing in a teapot compared to a pool. When you throw a stone in the pond, ripples form and like those ripples writing has depth and different layers to it. Therefore, like water, writing is structured creatively in a form the writer wants the text to exist in. This structure may be in a simple introduction, body and conclusion, or even in the form of creativity, scientific writing or even a funny comic strip. So, like water, I see writing as fluid until its form or structure is created by the writer (WA, IT).

In this metaphor, there is little mention of writing as about ideas or as having substance. Instead, the focus is on form and structure (those two words mentioned no fewer than 12 times in her metaphor). By way of comparison, Johns (1997: 8) describes a traditional view of literacy using a similar metaphor for language and writing: "[s]entences are seen as mere formal patterns, and texts are portrayed to students as empty jars with predefined configurations into which content is poured". The similarity between Johns' metaphoric description of a skills discourse on writing and Heather's metaphor for academic writing is striking. It suggests that Heather, as was the case with Danica in the previous chapter, enters the consultant-experience with what Lea (2008: 231) calls an academic skills approach to student writing which focuses on the rules of grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation that define students writing as successful or not. Indeed, this is a simplification because the fact that Heather states that writing has "depth and different layers to it" would suggest that she also acknowledges academic writing as a meaning-making enterprise. In addition, Heather does allude to a degree of writer-agency through her reference to the writer as the one who creates and chooses the form and structure. Nevertheless, the bulk of the data does suggest that Heather operates from a skills discourse (Ivanič, 2004: 227) on academic writing, in much the same way that Danica does, as discussed in the previous chapter.

This conceptualisation of academic writing impacts on the ways in which Heather approaches the task of writing tutoring. For example, at the beginning of the research period, I asked the consultants how they had become 'good' writers. Heather attributed her success to "learning from

my mistakes" (GD, IT). Because of this, I found it interesting when, later in the term she stated the following:

> by using questions, we make the student think about what the, where they've gone wrong and what they need to fix, so they actually learning, whereas with feedback the use of evaluation, it's more of your own evaluations and you sort of telling them and they just gonna go and fix it, whereas by using questions to make them think about it, they learn where they went wrong (GD, EoQ)

In saying this, Heather appears to see the job of the writing tutor as identifying mistakes, which the student is then to "fix" and it is in this way that students begin to acquire what Heather sees as writing 'skills'. In other words, she operates from the belief that students need merely to acquire certain skills so as to overcome the challenges they face in their academic writing. But, this neglects the fact that academic writing is an expression of cultural, institutional and ideological values (Jones, Turner and Street, 1999: xxii).

Perhaps as a result of this, Heather appears to pay little attention to students' intentions in their writing. This is evident in the following extract from a consultation role-play in which Heather was asked to act as the writing consultant:

> Well, firstly, when we deal with essays, especially the general essay structure, you would have your introduction, body, conclusion. So, when we doing this, maybe we should start from scratch and maybe get more of a structure. Okay, so start with your introduction, and then go onto your body and then go into your conclusion, so that we know how to go about writing this essay, so how would you start this topic? (GD, Q1)

In this comment, Heather places little importance on what the students' goal in the paper was. Instead, she immediately begins focusing on pouring the ideas into an appropriate structure (to return to her own metaphor for writing). While it is the case that an understanding of the conventions of the academic essay is crucial to student success (Angelil-Carter, 2000a: 115), it is also important that feedback on student's writing also 'populate' students' writing with intention and help students to achieve those intentions (Lillis, 2001: 138; Lensmire, 2000: 14).

Using Heather as an example in this section has illustrated the fact that teachers' attitudes towards writing are informed primarily by their own ways of learning (Kennedy, 1998: 184). That is to say, they teach according to the ways they themselves learnt to write which informed their attitudes

towards writing during the course of their development as writers. This section and the previous one have focused on the attitudes towards writing and towards teaching writing that the consultants bring with them to the consultant-experience. The next two observations pertain to what happens, by way of change, during and after their entry into the consultant-experience.

Increasing participation in a community of peer writing tutors

Table 3, below, provides a breakdown of the consultants' contribution to group discussions both at the beginning of the research period and at the end. The table shows that, with the exception of Lacey, in terms of raw percentage of words spoken during each discussion, the participation rates of all the first-time consultants increased between the two discussions. In fact, overall, the first-time consultants contributed 31% of total talk in a discussion period at the beginning of the academic year and this increased by more than half, to 47%, in the discussion recorded at the end of the first quarter. Such an analysis of the total talk contributions of the consultants' is important as language use is related to issues of legitimate participation and access to peripherality within communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 105), such as that of the community of writing consultants.

		Word count			
		Initial Training W/shop		**Final meeting**	
		Words spoken	*% of total*	*Words spoken*	*% of total*
Zach		**2300**	**37%**	**2189**	**27%**
Returning consultants (2)		**1989**	**32%**	**2067**	**26%**
Total: first time consultants		**1929**	**31%**	**3780**	**47%**
First time consultants	Linda	854	13%	1631	20%
	Leila	434	7%	760	9%
	Lacey	347	5%	398	5%
	Heather	81	1%	521	6%
	Danica	213	3%	470	6%
Total: all consultants		**6218**	**100%**	**8036**	**100%**

Table 3: Breakdown of consultants' contributions to group discussion (by word count)[3]

[3] One consultant did not attend the final meeting of the quarter. To preserve the integrity of the comparison, his contributions (or 'talk') are not included in this word count

However, the first-time consultants' average rate of participation remains (with the exception of Linda) lower than those of the returning consultants. This is to be expected as the consultants, as apprentices in a new community of practice, would need initial access to legitimate peripheral participation before gradually moving towards full participation. Nevertheless, a limited discourse analysis of the consultants' talk demonstrates that the consultants' participation is increasingly volunteered, rather than elicited, and increasingly directed at their peers, rather than at myself as facilitator. Tables 4 and 5, below, summarize the results of this discourse analysis.

As can be seen in Table 4, in a group discussion period at the beginning of the academic year, over 40% of the consultants' contributions were elicited rather than volunteered and the vast majority of their contributions were directed at me, rather than at one of their peers. In contrast, in the group discussion that took place at the end of the first quarter (Table 5), only about 10% of their contributions were elicited and less than half were directed at me.

		Contributions				
		Elicited	*Volun-teered*	*Directed at Zach*	*Directed at other*	*Total*
Returning consultants aggregated		**5**	**13**	**13**	**5**	**18**
First time consultants aggregated		**16**	**22**	**32**	**6**	**38**
First time consultants disaggregated	Linda	0	9	6	3	9
	Leila	7	7	13	1	14
	Lacey	6	3	8	1	9
	Heather	0	2	2	0	2
	Danica	3	1	3	1	4
All consultants aggregated		**21**	**35**	**45**	**11**	**56**

Table 4: Summary of discourse analysis of the consultants' participation in group discussion – beginning of academic year[4]

The fact that the consultants' participation is increasingly volunteered rather than elicited suggests an increasing confidence on the part of the first-time consultants in their participation in a community of writing consultants. That is to say, they are becoming increasingly confident in their ability to talk as full participants in this community, which is a key characteristic of learning as

[4] One consultant did not attend the final meeting of the quarter. To preserve the integrity of the comparison, his contributions (or 'talk') are not included in this discourse analysis

legitimate peripheral participation within a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 105). Similarly, the fact that their participation is increasingly multi-directional rather than centred around me as facilitator, illustrates Lave and Wenger's (1991: 105) contention that language use in learning in communities of practices is not about the transmission of knowledge but rather about legitimate peripheral participation with their fellow community members.

		Contributions				
		Elicited	*Volun-teered*	*Directed at Zach*	*Directed at other*	*Total*
Returning consultants aggregated		**2**	**34**	**14**	**22**	**36**
First time consultants aggregated		**11**	**74**	**41**	**44**	**85**
First time consultants disaggregated	Linda	4	22	10	16	26
	Leila	0	32	13	19	32
	Lacey	2	6	6	2	8
	Heather	3	5	6	2	8
	Danica	2	9	6	5	11
All consultants aggregated		**13**	**108**	**55**	**66**	**121**

Table 5: Summary of discourse analysis of the consultants' participation in group discussion – end of first quarter

However, learning is not simply a developing relation to particular communities, but is also a developing relation to particular activities (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 53). As such, although analysing the consultants' participation within a community of their peers suggests a developing relation to this community, attention still needs to be given to the nature of the consultants' contributions, that is their changing / unchanging relation to the activities of writing and teaching writing. In particular, questions should be asked as to which topics the consultants take up as particularly important and what kinds of contributions each consultant offers. It is to these questions that I now turn. This discussion is framed within the concepts of moments of resistance (to change) and moments of insight (that open up the possibility of change) on the part of each consultant.

(Un)changing relations to academic writing and teaching writing

Earlier in this chapter, it was shown that Heather enters the consultant-experience with an internalised conception of academic writing as mastery over discreet skills. It was also shown that

this translates into a 'fix-it' approach to teaching writing. There is some, albeit little, evidence that Heather's perception of writing changes over the course of her first quarter as a writing consultant. For example, although she states that she strongly agrees that correct spelling and grammar is what makes writing good, after listening to the ideas presented by other consultants she states that she thinks she "would go to more neutral" (GD, IT). In saying this, she appears to take on an understanding of academic writing as "tied to the construction of knowledge, rather than its transmission" (Lea and Stierer, 2000: 13). However, the lack of specificity in her answer suggests that she has not fully engaged with the 'new ideas' presented in the discussion.

It is perhaps because of this that this moment of insight does not translate into developed practice. At the end of the first quarter, in a reflection on why students have difficulties in writing, she states that:

> I think because what is expected in university is very different from what they are taught in school, so, I mean, their writing skills in school are not, well obviously they're developed to a certain extent, what they expected of them academically and I find with a lot of students, filling that gap is a problem, just getting, getting, learning the structure, the few skills that they need and then they fine, after they understand what they expected of, they okay (GD, EoQ).

In saying this, Heather appears to be acknowledging that the conventions that underpin academic writing are contingent upon cultural, ideological and epistemological factors that some (if not all) students do not have access to and, further, appears to be calling for these conventions (these "expectations") to be made explicit. However, Heather goes on to argue that the acquisition of these conventions is simply a matter of having their skill set 'topped up' ("filled"). She states that once their "gap" in skills has been filled, the students are "fine" or "okay". Thus, there appears to be a resistance on Heather's part to seeing students as taking on "the particular ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing" that characterize academic discourses (Bartholomae, 1985: 134).

This is in contrast to Lacey who, on reflecting on how the initial three-day development workshop might inform her approach to working with student-writers in the Writing Centre, states that:

> I hadn't really thought of the identity issue much before. Ja, it makes their struggle as opposed to just thinking of it in terms of content and language, the process of adopting a new identity I think is quite a useful one in terms of their struggle (GD, IT)

It would appear that in this realisation, Lacey is becoming aware of the fact that as students enter into a phase of interim literacy (as they undergo the transition from school literacy to academic literacies), their identities begin to shift and become more closely aligned with the institution (Paxton, 2007: 46 – 48). However, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which this realization is borne out in her practice.

This is indeed symptomatic of studies such as this that seek to examine change on the part of writing teachers. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it is unrealistic to expect that such moments of insight necessarily translate into developed practice. Instead, they serve merely to establish a possibility for change in time. The final case I now present, that of Leila, is particularly useful to illustrate this.

Leila's metaphor for academic writing is somewhat different from those of the other consultants:

> Writing is like a veld fire in winter. It burns everything it can from a small spark and then smoulders for days. It leaves everything barren and dark, but after spring rain everything is greener than it was before (WA, IT).

In this metaphor, writing is a natural phenomenon. It is not impacted upon by the environment; instead, it ultimately extinguishes itself. This metaphor takes on particular significance when, in a discussion about how the consultants came to be 'good' writers, Leila states that "some people obviously struggle with writing, maybe there is something natural, ... we obviously maybe have more natural talent to write better than other people" (GD, IT). In this way, just as fires are (usually) naturally-occurring coincidences, so too then is the ability to write well an accident of nature. It is little surprising that this belief may exist amongst successful student-writers because academic writing is premised on conventions that are largely invisible to lecturers, tutors and, in particular, students (Lillis, 2001: 75). Thus, perspectives that 'naturalise' academic writing practices are not particularly uncommon.

Leila's 'naturalisation' of academic writing practices may have particular implications for her work as a writing consultant. Her understanding of the conventions of academic writing is largely implicit and she maintains that despite having "no formal guidance on how to structure an essay / argument", she "just had this idea that you should have an introduction, you should have a conclusion and something in between" (GD, IT). She refers to this as a "sixth sense" (GD, IT). While this "sixth sense" has no doubt stood her in good stead as a writer, it has not allowed her the

opportunity to witness the extent to which essayist literacy works within a particular framework of rationality that privileges certain values over others – linearity over circularity to quote one example (Lillis, 2001: 115).

Because of this implicit knowledge about academic writing practices, Leila is, in a sense, resistant to seeing how the acquisition of academic literacies might be difficult for some students. When pressed to account for how she "just had this idea" about conventional essay structure, she states that:

> Well, it just, it sort of makes sense cuz logically if you want to write about something and it's not something creative you need to sort of introduce your topic or whatever you're going to be writing about and then you have to answer the question in your essay cuz that's what you're supposed to do and then you supposed to conclude it at the end because you don't want to leave it hanging, it just seems logical to me (GD, IT).

In saying this, particularly in her double appeal to logic, she illustrates the argument that the privileging of the values of the 'new middle class' within literacy practices serves to maintain the power, authority and control of this middle class (Gee, 1996: 36). It also illustrates the extent to which essayist literacy practices are taken-for-granted and how they may disadvantage those without easy access to these practices (Angelil-Carter, 2000a: 14) particularly if the institution as a whole is culturally strange to students, as it is to most students in institutions of higher education today. It is for this reason that there have been calls for writing pedagogy to 'demystify' (Lensmire, 2000; Lillis, 2001) academic writing. Also, merely making the conventions of academic writing explicit does not necessarily mean that students will internalise these conventions. Making them explicit is but a first step towards developing student academic writing.

There is some evidence that Leila begins to become aware of these issues during the course of her first quarter as a writing consultant. At the end of this period, Leila states that:

> another thing that I've seen a lot of the students that come to the Writing Centre, they, they do not know what is expected of them, they do not know how to even approach an essay let alone actually answer the question, so it does make it a bit tricky (GD, EoQ)

In saying this, Leila appears to be alluding to the fact that the foundations upon which academic writing practices are built are 'hidden from view' of the students, and there is thus a cultural and epistemological divide between what students bring to their experience of writing at university and

what is expected of them by the academy. Bartholomae (1985: 146) describes this divide by suggesting that students' essays exist on a continuum between their primary discourses (that they bring with them) and the discourses of the academic disciplines in which they write. In other words, in this moment, Leila appears to speak to a realization that academic literacy practices are intrinsic to the knowledge-making practices of disciplinary discourse communities (Starfield, 2007: 883).

Nevertheless, in the same discussion Leila also appears to resist addressing questions around students' ownership or lack thereof of their own writing practices. This is evident in the following exchange:

> **Leila**: ... I also think that once students are, sort of express themselves better, their grammar does improve, on its own.
> **Z**: Once they're more committed to what they're expressing.
> **Leila**: Yes, and once they have a better idea of how to sort of express, and they've thought about it a bit more. (GD, EoQ)

Here, I take up Hewlett's (1996: 92) argument that students need to learn to take ownership of their writing in order to ensure their success at university, which is in contrast to school literacies that often promote rote learning which does not foster attitudes of commitment and ownership. Although Leila agrees with this point she does not extend it but instead changes the direction of the discussion towards students thinking about how to express themselves better. On one level this does call into question issues of students commitment to the ideas they express, but, on another level, it also appears to diminish the fact that writing is dependent not only on individuals but also on the possibilities that are afforded by their environment (Norton and Toohey, 2001: 312). Put differently, "*why* and *how* students write is not separable from their lives" (Kamler, 2001: 85).

Thus, Leila, in the course of one particular group discussion, on the one hand acknowledges that students' identity positions are removed from those assumed by academic literacy practices and, on the other hand, subtly resists notions of students' commitment to *what* they are writing existing as a pertinent factor influencing *how* they write. Such a discrepancy serves to illustrate the extent to which change often occurs at a surface level, with old beliefs simply being joined by new, albeit, contradictory ones (Wilson, 1994: 104).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered four observations about the process of becoming a writing consultant. I showed, firstly, that each student enters the consultant-experience with a particular blend of assumptions and beliefs about academic writing and, secondly, that these beliefs inform a particular set of assumptions and beliefs about the teaching of academic writing. Thirdly, the consultants' apprenticeship into a community of their peers was characterised by increased participation, but, finally, this participation was itself characterised by moments of both insight and resistance. These moments of resistance and insight appear to represent an "ongoing flow of reflective moments of monitoring in the context of engagement in a tacit practice... organised around trajectories of participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 54). However, these reflective moments do not necessarily translate into developed practice (either as writers or as writing consultants), at least not over the period examined herein. Instead, each consultant created what Wilson (1994: 41) calls a "contradictory patchwork quilt of old and new" beliefs. This is, in some ways, unsurprising as, because teachers' beliefs are formed early in life, are connected to their self-image (as teachers and as writers) and form a network of mutually reinforcing beliefs, they are particularly difficult to change (Kennedy, 1998: 186).

Indeed, there are numerous factors that could account for the consultants' lack of change over the research period concerned herein. It is to this question, as well as the implications this study has for student academic writing and Writing Centre practice, that I turn to in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

> "Change is a complex and somewhat painful process. It is time-consuming and fraught with many pitfalls. It is not black and white, with clearly delineated boundaries"
>
> (Courtland, Welsh and Kennedy, 1987: 317)

During the course of the consultants' entry into the consultant-experience, each writing consultant experienced both change and non-change in different aspects of the learning process. The same can be said of the consultants as a group. In this concluding chapter, I would like to reflect on the change that occurred among the group of consultants as a whole, before offering a number of factors besides the obvious (that change is a difficult, slow process) that may have further complicated change on the part of the writing consultants.

When examining the development of this group of first-time writing consultants, it becomes evident that the group as a whole took up, in particular, two new ideas introduced to them during the consultant-experience. First, all of them began, in varying ways, to acknowledge the cultural contingency of the University system. Some focus on the unstated expectations of academic writing. Others emphasise the discrepancy between school-based and academic literacies. Still others draw attention to the fact that students do not enter the University with the requisite cultural meaning-making resources. Perhaps as a result of this, all of the consultants also appeared to adopt a more empathic attitude towards students' difficulties with academic writing. In this regard, the particular 'leaders' of the group attitude appeared to be Linda and Leila. More so than the other consultants, it was Linda and Leila who took up the argument for greater empathy for students and for attempting to understand students' needs for validation and encouragement. It was clear that, by the end of the quarter, this attitude had become common amongst the writing consultants.

However, despite this, the consultant-group continued to operate from certain deficit discourses of student academic writing. There was still a predominant focus on 'fixing' student writing behaviour, particularly on the part of Danica and Heather. On reflection, however, I have come to believe that it is little surprising that this attitude remains pervasive amongst the consultants. It appears that, faced with the difficulties students experience in academic writing, the focus of attention can either be on changing students or on changing the University. While I believe that the University needs to change in order to allow more students to achieve success, I also know that the status of the

consultants, and unfortunately the Writing Centre as a whole, is such that they are not in a position to effect change at an institutional level.

Nevertheless, change did occur on the part of the consultants. For example, in the cases of Linda and Leila, their challenge was to make explicit their own implicit understandings of the 'rules' of academic writing. During the course of their first two months as writing consultants, they take up this challenge and this leads them towards an understanding of the ways in which academic writing conventions exist as separate (and often distant) from students own desires and intentions. This remains a path not fully travelled by either Linda or Leila as at the end of the research period, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that their learning and development will continue over the course of time. In the case of Danica and Heather, their challenge was to adopt a view of good academic writing as more than mere mechanical correctness. The evidence suggests that they do begin to adopt such a view but that their newly acquired ideas initially co-exist with their previously held beliefs. Thus, change does occur – but in a stop-start fashion.

The consultants' development as teachers of academic writing is of particular importance to me as most of them have expressed a desire to enter into academia and so, in their future roles, their status may be such that they can initiate change for the better in the way in which the University deals with divergent meaning-making practices. But, of course, the research period of this project, being only two months, was far too short for substantive change to be seen. This is particularly so when one considers that teacher learning is both normative and life-long (Johnson, 2006: 239). Indeed, studies by Courtland et al (1987) and Courtland and Welsh (1990) showed that teacher change is effected over a period of years rather than months. This is because teachers must adopt new knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs and behaviours, and doing this is a lengthy and messy process (Courtland et al, 1987: 308). The implication of this is that further research needs to be undertaken into how writing consultants' attitudes towards writing change over the course of a full year (and even longer) of service in an academic Writing Centre. It suggests that while change may be limited during the first two months, it may be the case that, as consultants become more familiar with their new understandings, their attitudes towards writing and approaches to teaching writing may shift in the long-term.

However, the relatively short period of this research is not the only factor that could inhibit change on the part of the postgraduate students employed as peer writing consultants. That is to say, there is no guarantee that substantive change will take place over the course of a full year or even longer.

This is because other factors may also inhibit or promote change in attitudes towards writing. In the remainder of this chapter, I'd like to suggest four other factors that may hinder change in the consultants' conceptualisations of academic writing and the teaching thereof.

The first of these relates to my own role in the research. The following quote from Lave and Wenger (1991: 112) serves to illustrate this:

> When the process of increasing participation is not the primary motivation for learning, it is often because "didactic caretakers" assume responsibility for motivating newcomers. In such circumstances, the focus of attention shifts from co-participation in practice to acting upon the person-to-be-changed.

What this means is that placing explicit focus on shifting the identities of members of a group or community may serve to stifle learning rather than enhance it. In other words, learning is far more likely to come about through natural participation in practice rather than through activities specifically designed to foster change. Whether or not my role in the research was that of a "didactic caretaker", an awareness of this has implications for me and, I believe, other peer writing tutor co-ordinators as it suggests that participatory interaction amongst peer writing tutors in which those tutors talk from 'within' a practice may prove more useful than activities in which tutors talk 'about' the practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 107). That is to say, it may prove more useful that the consultants engage in talk as consultants rather than about consulting. This could be achieved through engaging the consultants in further role-play activities.

Secondly, Wenger's (1998) notion of outbound trajectories may also allude to a factor inhibiting change on the part of peer writing consultants. This is because members of a community of practice who are on outbound trajectories do not see their membership in that community lasting for very long. Instead, they are attempting to move away from the centre of that community and join new communities. This is certainly the case with most of the writing consultants in this study. Because they are drawn from various Faculties and academic departments and their social goals include, in many cases, pursuing careers in their own disciplines, they are not invested in developing themselves as teachers of writing. As McKinney and Norton (2007: 195) argue, people invest in something because they assume that it will enhance their cultural capital which is defined as their knowledge, credentials and ways of thinking. But, these consultants are not moving towards the centre of the community of peer writing tutors but instead envision themselves moving out of that community and into new communities within their own discipline-areas.

This observation was certainly borne out amongst this particular group of consultants as two of them, Danica and Heather, failed to complete their years' service to the Writing Centre, resigning in favour of other opportunities that emerged for them. It is unclear what this implies for Writing Centre practice. Having peer writing tutors from a range of discipline areas presents the advantage that more focused writing development that takes cognizance of the unique knowledge-making practices and discourses of particular disciplines can take place. However, the question of trajectories suggests that consultants drawn from fields such as Linguistics and, in particular, Applied Language Studies, may be more invested in their own development as writing tutors because it will add, in more tangible ways, to the cultural capital that they may need in the future in their disciplines.

Thirdly, and closely linked to this idea, is the fact that the consultants' inbound trajectories may hamper changes in the way they understand writing and the teaching thereof. Their inbound trajectories comprise their prior experiences with writing and, in this regard, it must be remembered that these writing consultants are also successful writers. As such, it is unsurprising that they are reluctant to change their attitudes towards academic writing. The discourses which inform their approach to writing at university have stood them in good stead and continue to do so, and there is thus little need to critically reflect on those discourses and the implicit constructions of writing (and writers) they embody. This is because each of these student-writers have, albeit in varying ways, 'cracked the code' of academic writing. As Courtland et al (1987: 307) argue, the first step in effecting change is making a decision to change. Such a decision is unlikely to be made if there is no perceived value in change.

But, this raises questions about the kinds of writing tasks set for students and the ways in which writing is constructed within the university. It would appear that Bartholomae's (1985: 144) contention that academic writing too often requires of students to report on the work of academia, rather than participate in that work continues to ring true. In this way, students are constructed as illegitimate and marginal, rather than legitimate peripheral participants in the academic enterprise. A consequence of this is a view of writing as a tool for reflecting what is already known rather than a mode of learning. If it is the case that consultants perceive no value in change because their writing practices have garnered them institutional success, it would suggest a re-examination of the writing practices privileged within the university system as it may be failing to serve as a vehicle for the construction and extension of disciplinary knowledge, or as a tool for thinking.

A fourth factor I would like to offer is that, because the consultants' attitudes towards teaching writing are so heavily informed by their attitudes to writing, it may be the case that the key to development of both sets of attitudes resides in increasing involvement in writing activities. Indeed, as an unknown source (in Nash, 2004: 156) claims:

> "Reflection is not writing. Research is not writing. Note taking is not writing. Talking about writing is not writing. Reading is not writing. Reading about writing is not writing. Planning for writing is not writing. Writing is writing. Hear me say this again: *Writing is writing*"

However, merely engaging in writing in the same ways in which they have written in the past, will not serve to change the consultants' attitudes towards writing. Instead, consultants' may need to be engaged in writing in altogether 'new' ways. Wilson (1994: 23) found that significant changes in teacher's attitudes towards writing came about not through being exposed to new theory, but through being put through the process of writing in a new way as well as through collaboration with peers. For Writing Centre practice, this may imply a need for a much heavier focus on developing writing consultants as writers within disciplines, rather than the current predominant focus on developing them as writing teachers, tutors or consultants. This may involve more sessions in which the consultants talk about their own writing projects and workshopping these written projects with the group on a regular basis. It may also involve arranging writing workshops or retreats[5] in which the consultants work on their own writing but in a way that scaffolds different approaches to writing, particularly those that see writing as a mode of learning or discovery: free-writing, loop writing and so on. However, such initiatives may of course be hindered by logistical constraints.

In this research, I set out to describe the ways in which entry into the consultant-experience changed postgraduate students' understandings of academic writing, themselves as writers and themselves as teachers of academic writing. As a result of the design of the study, change was primarily evident in the consultants' understandings of academic writing and the teaching thereof. Change as writers was difficult to pinpoint without actually examining the consultants' writing, a methodological shortcoming which can be addressed in future research. The results of the study showed that change did occur over the course of the first two months of their consultant-experience, but that this change did not occur in a simple, linear fashion. This is because teachers often teach according

[5] The idea of writing retreats for consultants to work on and develop their own writing was one that I garnered from my interactions with Pam Nichols of the University of the Witwatersrand Writing Centre. Their annual consultant writing retreat has been common practice for several years (Nichols, P. 2007. *Personal communication*).

to the ways they were taught and these beliefs and practices are resistant to change (Kennedy, 1998). Practically, this means that if someone was taught writing as a set of grammar rules, they will tend to teach writing in this way as well (Kennedy, 1998: 3). This strong correlation between teachers' attitudes to writing and their subsequent approaches to teaching writing was evident in this study as well. In addition, it was shown that while the students' entry into the consultant-experience was characterised by increased participation amongst their peers, this participation was characterised by often contradictory moments of resistance and insight, thus illustrating Wilson's (1994: 106) description of teacher change as a "stuttering, subjective process of negotiation". In this concluding chapter, I have argued that further research needs to be undertaken into whether or not change does occur on the part of the consultants over an extended period of time, and have also identified other factors, besides time, that may hamper such change.

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> "[K]nowledge entails lived practices, not just accumulated information, and the processes of learning are negotiated with people in what they do".
> (Johnson, 2006: 237)

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