Toward Explaining the Transformative Power of Talk about, around, and for Writing

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This article provides an initial approach for capturing moments of talk about, around, and for writing to explain why writing groups and writing conferences are so often considered "transformative" for the people involved. After describing the widespread and yet disparate transformations so often attributed to collaborative writing talk, I introduce applied conversation analysis (CA) as a method for getting at what is often difficult to identify, document, and explain: the intricacies of moments that underlie, if not directly account for, transformations. At the core of this article, I present a case study of a writer, Susan, and tutor, Kim, and analyze their talk and embodied interactions around writing. In particular, two sequences of their talk—the first an example of "troubles telling," or attending to a reported trouble (Jefferson, 1981, 1984, 1988) and the second an enactment of humor that names asymmetrical power relations (Holmes, 2000)—illustrate the ways in which building affiliative relationships might allow for naming and poking fun at, if not restructuring, power relations. Further, self-reports from interview data indicate how the occasions of talk between Susan and Kim mark shifts in thinking about themselves, their writing, and their commitments—shifts that can be attributed to their relational, affiliative interactions and that provide supporting evidence for the transformative power of collaborative writing talk.

> "You write down your world and then you read it to other people and they affirm you for it."
>
> —member of the Tenderloin Women Writers Workshop
> (as cited in Gere, 1994, p. 76)

Experience and research suggest that there is much power in sharing writing, hearing it affirmed, and bearing witness to the lives of others. Many accounts of social interactions around writing similarly claim there is something powerful and transformative when writers talk about their work in progress, particularly in small groups or one-with-one.[1] As a number of researchers have found, whether in writing groups (e.g., Gere, 1994; Heller, 1997), co-authoring partnerships (Day & Eodice, 2001; Ede & Lunsford, 1990), feedback groups (Caswell, 2007; Whitney,

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2008), or writing conferences (Denny, 2010; Gillespie, Hughes, & Kail, 2007), writers who meet together over time report developing not only their writing skills and confidence but also their relationships with others and connections in the community. But how do we explain what may be so powerful about these social interactions about writing? What might account for the transformative power so widely attributed to collaborative writing talk?

In this article, I take on this methodological difficulty by asking how we can better document the moments that underlie or even bring about transformations. We do not yet have good explanations in the literature accounting for the power of talk *about, around,* and *for* writing to facilitate personal and social transformations for writers and their communities. And yet the literature attributes a range of important shifts to these interactions—shifts in beliefs, actions, and ways of being in the world, shifts that are wound up with the work of revising text while in relationship. This article does not attempt to chronicle all transformations (i.e., all shifts attributed to the talk and embodied action around writing) or even to pin down the definition of transformation, as it is nebulous and constantly in flux. Rather, I present here a methodological approach for better understanding how these transformations (shifts) come about when writers meet to talk about their work in progress.

In what follows, I report on a case study in order to illustrate the methodological possibilities of applied conversation analysis (CA). Through this case, applied CA shows us at least three types of transformation and how these emerge in embodied, in-the-moment talk and interaction. First, I begin by highlighting the ways in which collaborative writing talk[2] is described in the literature as especially meaningful, powerful, and transformative for all those involved. Second, I introduce the methodological approach of applied CA and describe how it provides a lens for analyzing the talk and interactions that take place around writing. Third, by turning to a case study, I "test" CA as an approach for documenting and accounting for the power of embodied interactions around writing. Drawing on ethnographic interviews and videotaped writing conferences, I trace how a writer, Susan, and a tutor, Kim (the participants' chosen pseudonyms) enact an affiliative relationship in the moment, as seen through an extended span of "troubles telling," or talk that attends to a reported trouble (Jefferson, 1984, 1988; Jefferson & Lee, 1981), and through use of humor to name and contest power (Holmes, 2000). Finally, I describe three types of transformation that arise in the case study: (1) raising critical consciousness, (2) restructuring power relations, and (3) building affiliative relationships (with affiliation making the other two possible). My aim in describing these transformations is to illustrate the value of attending to particular moments that underlie, if not directly account for, the many widespread transformations attributed to collaborative writing talk.

Collaborative Writing Talk as Meaningful, Powerful, and Transformative

That collaborative writing talk has transformative power for individuals and their social networks is asserted by researchers of both community-based and campus writing groups and conferencing programs. In her study of the Tenderloin Women Writers Workshop, for instance, Heller (1997) describes how writing group members become composers and agents of their own lives by witnessing others' struggles and successes. Participants of the group, she says, "came to be reassured that they had lived lives that were of value and that could be—through the precision of their own words—felt, understood, and remembered by others" (p. 18). For these writers, the personal is made social, political, material, and economic when shared with and read by others. O'Reilley (1993) similarly finds that writing groups "force us to stake out the terrain between our own and other people's view of reality" (p. 33) and, in doing so, allow for "inner peace" (p. 33) as fellow writers read, respond to, and inspire one's work. Gere (1994) documents additional and alternative transformations when tracing how members of writing groups testify to the power of these groups to, among a host of other outcomes, "build community," "address local problems," "enhance their self-esteem," "gain confidence," "hone their craft as writers," "begin to think of themselves as writers," and use "writing to alter the material conditions of their lives" (pp. 76-77). The presence of others—and the acts of seeking feedback and bearing witness to others' words—seems to contribute to the power of collaborative writing talk to, as some participants in the National Writing Project (NWP) have reported, "chang[e] my life" (Whitney, 2008, p. 144).

Confirming and extending the accounts from writing groups, literature on writing centers suggests that one-with-one conferences lead to especially meaningful and mutually transformative experiences for both writers and tutors. Writing centers are credited with a range of cognitive, motivational, and affective outcomes (Thompson, 2009). These range from helping individuals learn to "work with others collaboratively and effectively" (Gillespie, Hughes, & Kail, 2007, p. 41) to motivating students to continue writing and to push through barriers to success such as testing, tracking, and remediation (Bishop, 1993). Denny (2010) says that writing centers regularly "witness magical, rich moments," with "students sharing life stories that leave tutors in tears, laughter, anger" (p. 21). In fact, transformations may also be significant for tutors. Writing center researcher Harris (2002), for example, has argued that "for those of us who tutor and are personally and professionally enriched by the experience, tutoring is the most effective form of teaching we have encountered" (p. 194). Tutors can "[develop] the ability to see ourselves as the Other, to recognize the limits of our worldviews and our cultural assumptions and to regard our discursive practices from the perspectives of those outside the mainstream discourse" (Grimm, 1999, p. 14). In total, a belief in "the good" of writing conferences is so widely shared that it operates under the surface

as a warrant throughout literature in the field. Transformative learning has been argued to regularly occur in writing centers (e.g., Boquet, 2002; Bruffee, 1984; Denny, 2010; Fallon, 2010; Grimm, 1999; Lunsford, 1991), and yet because it is often assumed, it is rarely explained. Rarely, if ever, do we see *why*, *how*, or *when* transformations come about.

Transformation itself is a nebulous idea, one that Whitney (2008) defined in response to Mezirow's (1991) articulation of transformational learning experiences as developmental events. Whitney found that "changes in self-definition, identity, and ways of life" (p. 170) as well as "gains in competence and confidence" (p. 175) explain, at least in part, claims that NWP "changed my life." In this context, transformation involves moving from "triggering" events to "living in the new frame" (p. 177). The range of possible triggering events and possible new frames suggests the difficulty of capturing the very moments that account for transformation. While there is much literature suggesting that occasions of collaborative writing talk offer significant transformations for all those involved, there is much less tangible evidence of why these transformations exist or how they come about socially—in groups or one-with-one, in the community or at school. To begin identifying and explaining the potential power of these embodied interactions around writing, I turn next to a methodological approach—applied conversation analysis—that I argue is well suited to capturing the moments that might account for these transformations. I introduce applied CA in the context of the research design and case study that follow.

Research Design: Attending Closely to Moments of Interactions

Study Overview

The case study comes from a larger mixed-method project. I followed tutor-writer pairs involved in ongoing writing conferences over time, recorded their one-with-one writing conferences, and conducted semi-structured interviews about their evolving relationships. The data set, therefore, includes two types of data: (1) approximately 60 hours of audio/videotaped writing conferences (more than 80 single sessions of 30 to 90-minutes in length) and (2) over 30 hours of interviews with writers and tutors involved in long-term relationships. In total, the data represent 52 participants: 23 as part of ongoing tutor-writer pairs with in-depth involvement of up to six months and an additional 29 participants for one-time videotaping.

Rationale for Case Study

From this larger data set, I present here a case study to illustrate a methodological approach I believe can help us document and explain what is so widely described as transformations in talk about, around, and for writing. Specifically, I home in on a span of talk between the writer Susan and the tutor Kim, illustrating the use of applied conversation analysis for studying social interactions around writing. In

excerpted minutes from a writing center conference, Susan and Kim co-construct an extended span of "troubles talk"—talk that attends to a reported problem—about the larger context for their weekly meetings: Susan's writing for her graduate preliminary exam. This span ends with humor and laughter directed toward me (the researcher) and the video camera, drawing attention to the institutional context in which the writing and interactions take place. I selected this case from the larger data set as it introduces multiple ways of looking at talk around writing: specifically, troubles telling and the use of humor as two "views" into what this methodological lens might allow. Further, the case is provocative for thinking about how writing opens an occasion for larger relationship-building. Even when Susan and Kim are talking away from the text, they are responding to the larger context for their relationship and the troubles associated with writing. They are also representative of the many participants in the larger study, as they build a strong affiliative relationship, which can be seen in the moment and is confirmed by self-reports in interviews.

Conversation Analysis (CA) and Applied CA Methods

To study the embodied action in writing conferences, I draw on conversation analysis (CA), which, from its inception, has been both a theory of language and a methodological approach for explaining the social, structural, and sequential nature of talk-in-interaction. Like many scholars of language and social interaction, conversation analysts understand talk as not simply referring to the world, but actually enacting and creating it. Growing out of ethnomethodology (see, e.g., Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Maynard & Clayman, 1991),[3] one primary assumption of CA is that interaction is structurally organized, meaning that what is often perceived as the messiness of human communication can be studied systematically and used to understand how speakers and recipients endow meaning to interactions in the moment. Accordingly, I draw on CA because it provides a means for studying talk and gesture as *actions*, although I interpret them within their larger social and structural meanings. CA can help us, for example, analyze "in detail the way participants jointly construct the interaction and at the same time constitute the context, including participants' identities" (Stubbe et al., 2003, p. 358).

In addressing criticisms of CA from the perspective of linguistic anthropology, Duranti (1997) has described CA as a "powerful tool," even while arguing for new directions, specifically toward mixed-method and interdisciplinary uses of CA (p. 278). Duranti explains that as part of a mixed-method approach, CA both enriches other studies and can be enriched: "Just as it is important for anyone working on everyday speech to recognize the type of recurrent patterns and preferences unveiled by conversation analysts, it is equally important for anyone working on conversation to realize that such mundane exchanges acquire their meaning from

inside as well as from the outside of the exchanges themselves" (p. 278). Duranti's call for mixed-method work not only informs the current study but also resonates with the ways that CA is now being used in applied ways.

While developed to understand ordinary conversation, CA is increasingly adapted for applied uses (e.g., see discussions by ten Have, 2007; Antaki, 2011). CA can be both "pure" and "applied," and there are multiple forms of applied CA. Antaki (2011) has identified six kinds of applied CA: foundational, social-problem oriented, communicational, diagnostic, institutional, and interventionist (p. 1).[4] Through applied uses, CA has helped in understanding a range of institutional talk, including talk in workplace meetings (Ford, 2008), delivery of diagnostic news (Maynard, 2003), radio phone-in calls (Thornborrow, 2002), and classroom discourse (Olinger, 2011; Rampton, Roberts, Leung, & Harris, 2002). It has also been augmented by ethnographic research (e.g., Ford, 2008; Olinger, 2011) and used as part of critical and feminist studies (e.g., Kitzinger, 2008; Kitzinger and Frith, 1999). My study fits within applied CA as characterized above: I draw on social-problem oriented applied CA to study one-with-one writing conferences as a manifestation of institutional talk.

My Analytical Approach

Because I collected two different types of data—videotaped writing conferences and semi-structured interviews with participants—my analytical approach is also two-pronged, drawing on applied CA to analyze the talk-in-interaction of writing conferences and on qualitative coding to analyze self-reports from interviews. To analyze the writing conferences, I began by viewing and taking notes on the videotaped interactions, identifying interactional patterns both across the conferences recorded for each tutor-writer pair *and* across the different tutor-writer pairs in the study. These initial notes—along the lines of what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call "memo-writing" (p. 217)—allowed me to organize data and to choose spans of interaction that I then transcribed closely in the tradition of CA. The resulting transcription process allowed me to attend closely to the naturally occurring recorded data and to represent that data through notations. Briefly, transcript notations represent the contour and production of speech; the coordination and timing of vocalizations; and the production of non-verbal actions, including gesture, gaze, and positioning. These notations (originally developed by Jefferson and in ongoing revision today) attempt to communicate the range of interactional information participants had access to in the moment of interaction (see Appendix for a list of notations).[5]

By transcribing and reviewing spans of talk within the writing conferences, I worked to identify how participants jointly constructed social actions. Although I came to the project with a critical question about transformation, my analysis began with what was observable. From the beginning, I looked at how social

structuring was visible—how it was displayed, negotiated, and restructured in the moment. I was especially interested in how participants enacted affiliation and negotiated power within writing conferences, and so I transcribed and attended most closely to those moments in which participants were observably "doing" friendship or "acting" collegial. This analytical process allowed me to focus, for example, on how participants oriented to each other or ideas under discussion through the use of verbal continuers and response tokens (e.g., "yeah," "right," "oh"). As another example, I noted the pursuit of intimacy through mirrored body language or through repetition or mimicry of speech. Through repeated viewings, transcription, and participation in interdisciplinary CA data analysis sessions, I came to analyze closely the spans of troubles telling and humor that I focus on in this case study and that I found significant for understanding transformations around, about, and for writing.

The nature of the second type of data—semi-structured interviews conducted with participants involved in ongoing writing conferences—was different and so necessitated a different analytical approach: qualitative coding. The interviews were *not* intended to shape analysis of the talk-in-interaction, but to complement the writing conferences by contextualizing what was observable. In contrast with the videotaped writing conferences, these interviews were only audio-recorded and transcribed. Participants' self-reports helped to answer questions about who the writers and tutors are, what they learn from each other, and what they write and revise week-to-week. In total, the interviews served two goals: (1) providing the fuller stories behind the writing conferences and (2) providing insights into participants' reported transformations and perceived value of one-with-one writing conferences.

My process of qualitative coding involved reading interview transcripts line-by-line, identifying patterns and outliers, and showing contrasts and comparisons—goals of qualitative coding, as explained by Miles and Huberman (1994). I began with three broad coding categories—three types of transformation suggested in the literature: (1) raising critical consciousness, (2) building affiliative relationships, and (3) redistributing power relations. As I coded the transcripts for manifestations of these transformations, there emerged five additional categories describing the interactional work that participants reported doing to attain all three:

1. *voices*—having another person's voice in your head
2. *humor*—using humor to connect, to make light of trouble, to critique
3. *respect*—feeling respected, giving respect, finding strength through respect
4. *appreciative inquiry*—identifying strengths, offering praise and encouragement, focusing on what's working well even when there's lots to critique
5. *not alone*—coming to recognize that you're not alone, not an anomaly; hearing others' stories and finding strength together.

Throughout the coding process, I operationalized these codes by providing definitions and illustrative examples quoted from the interview transcripts. By transcribing and analyzing interviews and then by considering them alongside the writing conferences, I was able to characterize the nature of participants' evolving relationships. Perhaps most notably, the interviews allowed me to introduce participants, as I do next in the case study that follows.

Case Study: Transformations through Telling Troubles and Humor

In this section, I first give context for the case study, describing the writer Susan's and tutor Kim's shared history[6] of ongoing writing conferences, and I then analyze a span of interaction that captures their working process and relationship in microcosm. Kim and Susan meet weekly in the university's writing center,[7] where Kim is a professional staff member and Susan a doctoral student in social work. At the time of my study, Susan and Kim had been meeting over eight months, and during this time, Kim supported Susan as she underwent a failed preliminary exam, devastating defense, and ultimately successful revision. Toward explaining transformation through collaborative writing talk, their relationship illustrates the value of affiliative relationship-building. It also indicates how redistributing power relations can occur not only between two participants in a writing conference, but also for individuals within a larger institutional context. At the same time, their partnership highlights the role of writing as both a catalyst for their talk and as a site for coming to care deeply about another person and what they care about (e.g., inequities experienced by and appropriated from another person). Sequences of troubles telling and humor from writing conferences illustrate how a range of important shifts might arise from this talk and can be traced to particular moments. The self-reports from interviews further confirm the connectedness of various transformations and their relevance to occasions of talk about writing.

Meeting over Time: Analysis of Interview Data

Kim and Susan have built solidarity as two older[8] women challenging the academic status quo and negotiating a demoralizing structure at a large, public, predominantly white university. During their time working together, Susan completed her preliminary exam, a literature review and description of methodology, which she submitted, but did not pass. Kim and Susan describe this let-down as a turning point, cementing what they describe as an already-strong relationship by making them allies aligned for a common goal and against an outside "threat," whether that is identified as satisfying committee members with disparate expectations or jumping a hurdle toward degree completion. Kim reports that shared disappointment strengthened their relationship: "When she got that terrible news about the prelim not making it, I think that really knit us together because then we had a hyper-aware sense. We are both extra committed and invested in this now. We

need each other; we're going to do this. Like allies, even more so."[9] Susan calls her prelim defense a "visceral ripping" and explains that her adviser had "steered me wrong" and her committee had "not given adequate direction." Kim still worried that she had let Susan down, but instead, Susan insisted Kim had been her greatest support—her one source of consistency throughout the prelim exam process. Both Susan and Kim describe their "regrouping" after the bad news as a process of recognizing their surprise and devastation, making jokes, reconciling, and recommitting themselves to "slogging through" the hard work of revision. In fact, Kim and Susan report they became "doubly committed" to each other, to Susan's project, and to shared success, as "we're in this together." Shared disappointment over the prelim exam and the need for regrouping propelled Susan and Kim from initial liking into affiliative relationship-building while also providing motivation for them to participate in a process of redistributing power relations. Their affiliative work occurred throughout revision of the prelim exam, which Susan successfully passed with the second submission.

In many ways, Kim and Susan tell a story of liking each other from the start, but deepening this connectedness over eight months of revising the prelim exam and, along the way, discovering shared history—e.g., living in the same small town, experiencing the same health problems, being the same age (late 30s, early 40s). Susan and Kim have established common roots in their childhoods—they both grew up in the Midwest—and Kim has related the stresses and hopes associated with her process of adopting a second child. These shared lived experiences are present despite differences in race, class, and institutional status: Susan is a White woman and Kim an Asian-American; Susan is living on a student's stipend, while Kim is an academic staff member with a Ph.D. in a two-income household. The differences indicate that Kim and Susan are engaged in the cross-racial relationship-building O'Brien (2001) identifies as underlying, if not driving, individuals' commitments to anti-oppression work as one type of larger social transformation.[10] Yet, in interviews, Susan and Kim do not discuss their differences, but emphasize their similarities and enjoyment spending time with each other:

> Kim: I <u>really</u>, <u>really</u> enjoy meeting with Susan. You know, we're about the same age, we have a lot of, you know, we live in the same town, we have a lot of shared interests. I find it very refreshing how open, how generous Susan is with sharing her experiences, her challenges. I think that's played a large role in helping us be effective partners together as well as helping me become a better tutor.

> Susan: I trust wholeheartedly [Kim's] skills as a writing instructor, guide, person, but I also trust her as a human being. That was important for me. We found that we share a lot of similarities. We actually both live in the same tiny little town out in [Pike] County oddly enough. We're both the same age. We have these little similarities. She's just real.

Of significance to this project, Kim and Susan tie their shared experiences to the effectiveness of their work together. Both Kim and Susan call each other "friend," while Kim also refers to Susan as a "colleague," and Susan calls Kim "my writing guide" and "writing person." Their roles, therefore, link their personal and professional lives: even as Kim and Susan build a friendship through their meetings, they do so with the aim of giving effective writing feedback and successfully completing Susan's preliminary exam.

Eight months into their relationship, when I began videotaping their writing conferences, Kim and Susan were focused on revising the new prelim paper. This central writing task structures their weekly meetings, focuses their discussions of social issues, and raises moments of troubles telling in the data to follow. Susan is writing to effect change for children who become primary caregivers to their parents or others at an early age, a situation often linked with families' socioeconomic status and access to healthcare. After a number of years as a practicing social worker, Susan entered her doctoral program with a desire to make policy changes. Kim describes her commitment to Susan in terms of their relationship, but also in terms of her belief in and support of Susan's project, which aligns with Kim's personal experience navigating local adoption agencies. As an endorsement of Susan's commitments and an indication of the consciousness-raising work often attributed to writing and collaborative writing talk, Kim reports that Susan's research is broadening her own understandings and provoking her to consider the experiences of children as caregivers:

> Her topic is one I had not thought about a whole lot before I met her. The idea of children being caregivers to their parents is not something I've experienced directly. Once we started talking about it, I started to become more aware of how complicated different family situations can be. Also, going on this adoption journey, I don't think it's just serendipitous that we're working together. I think there's maybe something larger at issue here where I think I've developed additional empathy for what others, what families are going through. You know, their own challenges, hardships, if it's medical or whatever. About responsibilities that some children may have to shoulder well before their time. I think that's definitely made me more aware and hopefully an open and compassionate person too. Just realizing that these situations are complex, having recognition of them. I mean, I've talked with [my spouse] about Susan's project and I'm like "Oh, you know, this student is working on blah, blah, blah." And then we'll end up having a conversation about kids and family dynamics. So that's been really helpful.

Arguably, a transformation has occurred as Susan has already influenced another person (Kim) to consider and attend to challenges faced by children as caregivers and has raised her awareness about their needs and family situations (i.e., raising critical consciousness). Kim, in turn, reports sharing these new insights with a family member, thereby extending the reach of Susan's project through relational

networks: from Susan to Kim and from Kim to Kim's spouse. In this way, we see evidence that Susan's writing functions as a catalyst for talk that raises attention to underlying social problems. And it is the talk in close, paired relationships—and not the writing on its own—that provokes a new awareness of and concern about this problem.

In my initial analysis of their interviews, I believed that Kim's close relationship with Susan acted as the primary motivation for Kim to develop insights and interest in this subject: analysis that supports cross-disciplinary research on the way affiliative relationships (O'Brien, 2001) lead people to commit themselves to social justice work. Upon further review, however, I see that just as the relationship may motivate Kim's interest in Susan's research, so too might a shared context for understanding the importance of children as caregivers (i.e., Kim's participation in an adoption process) strengthen the affiliative relationship they have built. This is to say that transformations attributed to collaborative writing talk may arise from multiple sources: the writing itself, the life experience participants bring to the interaction, and the larger contexts for the talk. This case study helps to illustrate how relationship-building is wound up with critical consciousness, new commitments, and even the ability to challenge asymmetrical power relations in the moment and over time. Further, I will argue that these types of transformations—along with others beyond the scope of this article—*can* be seen in moments of interaction, so I turn now to the videotaped data and to a span in which Kim and Susan engage in what Jefferson (1984, 1988) called "troubles talk," or attending to a reported trouble.

Moments of Interaction: Analysis of a Videotaped Writing Conference

Close attention to moments of interaction allows us to see how in building their affiliative relationship, Kim and Susan subvert larger institutional power, as they align as two older women challenging dominant systems within academia. Evidence of their positioning as allies against the academic status quo can be seen throughout a ten-minute span of troubles talk in which Susan reports her anxieties over submitting her revised prelim paper, speculates on her committee's likely reaction, plans her final revisions, and speculates on the relative insignificance of this exam in light of a friend's recent death. As a microcosm of their ongoing relationship and writing conferencing, this span of talk illustrates the ways in which Kim and Susan orient to each other and "do" affiliation in their interactions. Specifically, their troubles talk includes the components Jefferson (1984, 1988) finds characteristic of affiliative responses in such activities, which express empathy, heighten emotions, and move from distance to intimacy.

This span of talk occurs one week before Susan submits her revised prelim paper to her adviser. Susan begins the writing conference by giving Kim a "walk through" her paper. Twelve minutes into the hour-long conference, Kim confirms the submission date:[11]

1 K: [and your goal you're turning this in on-]
2 [*((leaning over table; body positioned toward S))*]
3 S: We[dnesday *((shuffling/straightening papers))*]
4 K: [Wednesday]
5 (.)
6 S: [yeah]
7 K: [°excellent°]
8 S: cause then I have to meet with (my adviser) on Friday
→ 9 K: .hh *((head and body move backward with in-breath as though the*
10 *wind has been taken out of her))*
11 S: [she wants to see it before we meet]
12 [*((straightening papers throughout; closes eyes; grimace settles into*
13 *tight lips; rolls eyes and then clicks teeth))*]
→ 14 S: Yeah (.) [I know]
15 [*((simultaneously scrunches her nose, lowers her head, and*
16 *lowers the pitch of her voice as in a whine))*]
17 K: [*((facing S; smiling; nodding))*]
18 S: [eugh *((holds grimace))*]
19 K: ok, (.) all right. good.
→ 20 S: °I'm going have [to have a shot of bourbon or something°]
21 K: [so she was going to see it before you meet?] does that mean
22 you >maybe< have the opportunity to (.) revise (.) tweak (.) before-
23 S: *((shrugs shoulders slowly, then right hand grabs ink pen and pops the top))*
24 S: hh. you know. I don't know. *((shakes head as in no))* I-maybe.
25 K: maybe.
26 S: [maybe.]
27 [*((nods head as in yes))*]
28 S: I wouldn't be surprised if she wants to see it, and kinda read over it
29 and give me some suggestions before it goes to committee

As an initiation of troubles talk, communication here is largely through gesture, facial expression, and non-lexical sounds (e.g., in- and out-breaths). Kim embodies the trouble when she pairs an in-breath with her head and body moving backward (lines 9-10), as though the wind has been taken out of her. An understanding of what is *not* said—exactly why showing the prelim to her adviser warrants "a shot of bourbon" (line 20, as marked by the arrow)—seems to be shared by the two participants. When Susan whines, "I know" (arrowed lines 14–16), whatever is "known" allows Kim both to smile (as though there's an inside joke) and then

to show uptake through nodding her head and going on to ask for information about whether this deadline means "you maybe have the opportunity to revise, tweak" (line 22). For the next ten minutes, in a pattern that I have found characterizes many of the writing conferences I recorded, a pattern that involves jointly produced co-complaining and advice-giving, Susan and Kim engage in troubles telling. Specifically, Susan reports her disappointment at being asked to resubmit her prelim paper, her uncertainty that this new version is "what her committee wants," her questioning of her decision to return to school in pursuit of a doctoral degree, and, ultimately, her sense that school-related stresses are trivial in relation to the larger questions of life arising from her friend's recent death.

Throughout the ten minutes of troubles talk, Kim produces for Susan all four of the affiliative responses that Jefferson (1988) finds heighten intimacy in troubles telling: diagnoses, reports of related (similar or contrastive) experiences, relationalized remedies, and prognoses (p. 429). Jefferson argues that these affiliative responses help to move conversants from distant stances to intimate ones (a concept very much like what Noddings [1984] calls "cared-for" and "caring-for"). I found writers in this study making these affiliative moves, as they (1) explained the origin of the trouble or assessed the nature of it (diagnoses of trouble); (2) shared similar or contrastive experiences from their own lives or from the lives of others in their social network (reports of related experience); (3) suggested a likely outcome or next action to resolve the trouble, often with problem-solving and thinking collaboratively about what to do next (relationalized remedies); and (4) assessed the probable outcome or suggested a positive resolution to the trouble (affirmative prognoses). The fact that Susan and Kim produce these affiliative responses indicates a move toward intimacy, as does the length of their troubles telling, in which they extend, indulge, and linger over the troubles. By extending the troubles telling (rather than speeding on to attend to "business as usual," or, in this case, to respond to the draft), Susan and Kim participate in the affiliative relationship-building that might account for wider transformations attributed to writing and writing talk. The following excerpt, taken from the last minute of their troubles talk, provides evidence of these affiliative responses:

→539 K: and in a lots of ways:, for what it's worth. (.) this <u>is</u> the place where a
540 lot of people uhm (.) may struggle
541 (0.2)
542 S: [oh rea::lly?]
543 K: [or if they]'re gonna struggle, they're probably gonna struggle a lot
544 [where] you are right now.
545 S: [really?] Ok.
546 K: [prelim proposal, maybe dissertation proposal. and then]

547 S: [*((nodding head, furrowing brow, tightening lips throughout; gaze at S))*]
548 K: and in the process of kinda clarifyin- =here's what I want to do. (.)
549 persuading other people that. you're gonna do it.
550 (.)
551 K: and here you have good reasons for [uh, (.) uh::] hmm
552 S: [.hh (.) uhm::]
553 K: kind of embarking on this research journey, then it's mayb- =gonna
554 become, (.) uh- in most cases, >more and more< your own.
555 S: [yeah:::]
556 [*((nodding intensifies in speed, seeming to emphasis yeah; still furrowing*
557 *brow, but relaxes jaw; gaze remains toward S))*]
558 K: and you're gonna- =you're the specialist in this area. you know these
559 kids. you se[e wh:at the,] (.) you know the effects are, and maybe
560 S: [uh hum]
561 K: where some changes could be made. (.)uhm and you could- you
562 already know that better than any of your committee members, so: you
563 know kind of this tension between <what they want from you and::>
564 S: °(hh)°
565 K: [what you know and what you wa- yeah. Yeah.]
566 S: [*((nodding continues; pulls lips back and then into a smile; continues*
567 nodding *and gazing at S))*]
568 K: >it's not going to go on forever.<
569 S: NO huh huh huh
570 K: so::: heh heh he
571 (0.2)
572 S: <I. hope. Not. [MY. GOD.>]
573 [*((leans fully over table and paper as though bowing))*]
574 K: [aft-]
575 K: after next week even. °yeah, you'll be much farther along [in the process°
576 S: [I mean like I
577 said. I'm assuming there:'ll be <one> more [draft,]
578 [*((leaning over paper))*]
579 K: oh? [Bu- [*((nodding head))*]
580 S: [bu:t:, you know? [>Whatever.<]
581 K: [uh hum] it's not >gonna go on for
582 years and years,< so.
583 S: .hh huh ok.
584 K: ok.

Here Kim provides a *related experience* from her years of tutoring graduate students, normalizing the troubles of writing Susan has shared: "For what it's worth, this is the place where a lot of people may struggle" (arrowed lines 539–540). She follows this experience with an *affirmative prognosis* for the new prelim exam, now emphasizing Susan's ability to write and encouraging her to take ownership over her work: "In this process of kind of clarifying 'here's what I want to do,' persuading other people that you're going to do it, and here you have good reasons for kind of embarking on this research journey, then it's going to become, in most cases, more and more your own" (lines 548-554). In both of these responses, Kim names the trouble and brings into light what she calls in the interview "this seemingly mandatory suffering of graduate school," a suffering connected with writing and its reception by Susan's advisers.

When Kim provides a second *affirmative prognosis* in the arrowed lines 558-561, she moves from the challenges of graduate school to reminding Susan of her own expertise, now connecting life and work experiences with the ability to write these experiences and to claim that expertise. Kim reinforces Susan's qualifications: "You're gonna- you're the specialist in this area. You know these kids; you see what know the effects are, and maybe where some change could be made" (lines 558-561). Here Kim revises her projection of Susan as a "specialist" in the future tense ("gonna," as in "you're going to be") to a statement of her current position ("you're," or "you are now"). By repairing her speech mid-utterance, Kim emphasizes Susan's current status and qualifications to write, thereby reframing her institutional power to assert her right to speak. Susan, in turn, moves from withdrawn body language, a furrowed brow, and tight lips (line 547) through emphatic head nodding and elongation and emphasis of "yeah" (lines 555-557) to a smile that creeps in as Susan continues nodding (lines 566-567). Kim's *relationalized remedies* are largely encouragement for Susan to recognize and appreciate her own work. Through acknowledging both the troubles associated with Susan's role as a graduate student and the credentials (i.e., experience) she already brings to her research, Kim not only affiliates with Susan but also positions herself and Susan in solidarity—outside and against the academic status quo. Significantly, Kim uses the writing context as a way to establish Susan's credentials: Susan's life experiences become actualized as she writes them into her prelim paper and brings them into the university. In this way, Kim and Susan's affiliative relationship contributes to Susan's ability to negotiate her own role and assert some power as she rewrites her prelim paper, drawing more from previous work experience than her current graduate student status.

To understand further how these responses might underlie or lead to transformations (or at least affiliative relationship-building), it is important to know how conversations about troubles often move quickly toward closure with optimistic projections, such as "He'll recover" (Jefferson, 1988, p. 431); with invocation of

the status quo or "it's such a beautiful morning" (p. 432); and through making light of the trouble with "everything'll be good" (p. 434). These common closures can preserve the status quo by directing conversation away from collaborative problem-solving and intimate affiliation among participants. In contrast, Susan and Kim minimally produce these close-implicative elements and do so only at the end of the ten-minute span of troubles telling. In this final minute, Kim and Susan produce several closures: "it's not going to go on forever" (arrowed line 568), "yeah, you'll be much farther along in the process" (line 575), "it's not going to go on for years and years" (lines 581-582), and "just keep your eye on the prize" (line 635, which follows below). Even when Kim and Susan move toward closing, they still orient to the trouble and to each other as friends and colleagues. In this way, Kim delays advice-giving, distinguishing this writing conference from a "service encounter," in which Jefferson and Lee (1981) found service providers prematurely give advice, which leads recipients to reject it. As Kim avoids speeding toward optimistic projections, invocation of the status quo, or making light of the trouble, she appears more concerned with supporting Susan and with signaling an openness to future interactions about troubles than in maintaining the "business" of writing centers. In short, Kim responds to Susan's troubles in ways that show affiliation and care—and simultaneously diverge from the common pattern of limiting troubles talk that maintains distant relationships (both in service encounters and more generally).

This analysis of troubles talk is *not* to indicate that transformations necessarily emerge from talk about writing focused on problems and solutions. Instead, it is one indication of the writers' willingness to sustain difficult discussions, to share personal experiences, to build relationships, and to challenge institutional structures. It also indicates that transformations might emerge from the sense that talk about writing can (or even should) diverge from "business as usual," from the vulnerability of sharing one's writing that encourages writers and readers to build a trusting relationship, or from numerous other factors associated with writing itself. Because of the difficulty, frustrations, and confusions so frequently associated with writing, talk about writing may often produce troubles telling, which may also allow writers to reach intimacy in their relationships more quickly than other types of casual conversation.

Just as this case study indicates that troubles telling can display and strengthen writers' relationships, so too does it show how humor may allow writers to expose and alter their positions of power. Through a sociolinguistic study of how humor functions in four New Zealand government agencies, Holmes (2000) found that humor can either reinforce or subvert usual power structures, as it can be used as "an acceptable strategy to help superiors maintain a position of power but also as a strategy used by subordinates to license challenges to the power structures

within which they operate, and as a legitimizing strategy in attempts at subverting the repressive or coercive discourse of superiors" (p. 159). Holmes notes that humor can be used to build and maintain power relations, but it can also be used to "reduce inequalities" (p. 160), to "express solidarity" (p. 164), to "promote social cohesion" (p. 165), to "reduce asymmetry" (p. 165), and to display "consensus, conflict, and control" (p. 166). Participants can "do power" implicitly or explicitly, but importantly, humor offers subordinates the means to express risky opinions and to contest power structures.

In Kim and Susan's writing conferences, there are a number of instances of humor, including the transition Kim and Susan make from the ten minutes of troubles talk back into reading aloud and reviewing Susan's draft. In this instance, Susan initiates humor by looking directly into the video camera and offering the researcher an apology for off-topic talk. The turn to the camera does not change the relationship Kim and Susan are performing throughout their writing conferences and the videotaping of these conferences. It does, however, allow them to give commentary on the enactment of their relationship for an outside academic audience. In essence, they are enacting their relationship as tutor/writer and professional staff/graduate student for view, and the camera provides an additional presence that Susan and Kim recognize in naming the roles, while also contesting the asymmetry within them. While these roles would not be characteristic of all talk about writing, they are part of the asymmetrical and institutional power at play in Kim and Susan's writing conferences.

In what follows, Kim and Susan orient to the camera, rather than to each other, even as they take turns producing laughter:

→ 635 S: you just keep your eye on the prize and say this (.) is why I'm doing
636 this. and I'm not gonna get <u>bogged down</u> in, (.) uh:
637 K: °hum:mum°
638 S: you know, hh yeah.
639 (0.2)
640 S: *((teeth click sound))* <u>ok.</u>
641 (0.2)
→ 642 S: [SORRY Beth. [heh heh HUH HUH HUH HUH]
643 [*((gazes ahead into camera; smiles widely and then flattens & broadens*
644 *lips; scrunches nose and diverts gaze, producing a "guilty child" look))*]
645 K: [heh heh YES. were you able to get all that?]
646 [*((gaze straight to camera; body leaning fwd over table))*]
647 S: [huh he he]
648 K: [HUH HUH HUH HUH heh heh]
→ 649 S: sorry. Yeah, you didn't know this was gonna be a little therapy session.

650 <u>but</u> we prom- =we're >gettin: to work< now.
651 K: ok, all right, *((leans over S's paper, shifts gaze back toward S))*
652 S: all right. so starting with *((now also gazes away from camera and at K))*
653 (0.2)
654 K: thank you, (.) by the way <u>so</u> much, for bringing me through that kind
655 of gloss[ing of the]
656 S: [oh yeah]

Starting in the arrowed line 642, Susan and Kim jointly produce laughter and overlap in speech and gesture. Kim asks, "Were you able to get all that?" (line 645), while Susan produces a wide smile, broadening her mouth in what might be considered a "guilty child" look (lines 643-644). She offers an explanation: "Yeah, you didn't know this was gonna be a little therapy session, but we prom- we're gettin to work now" (lines 649-650, as signaled by arrow). With the announcement of the transition back to work, laughter ends, and Kim says she appreciates their earlier "glossing" of the draft (lines 654–655), referring back to the preview of Susan's text that began the writing conference and led into the troubles telling span.

As a form of humor, even as Kim and Susan build solidarity in this exchange, they call attention to power relations both within their asymmetrical roles and in terms of expectations for accomplishing "work" during a writing center conference. First, Susan's initiation of humor and the joint laughter she and Kim produce build solidarity by poking fun at the supposed need for a "therapy session" (line 649). Embedded in Susan's naming of the talk as a "therapy session" is the naming of Kim and Susan's relative roles: Susan as a subordinate, as someone seeking and receiving "therapy" (i.e., support, advice, consolation) *from* a service provider, her instructor/therapist Kim. Susan makes light of her stance of someone "being counseled," but the joint production of laughter likely could result only from the shared recognition/reading that Susan and Kim's official roles are not so straightforward, but blurred by the affiliative relationship that allows for the troubles telling and advice giving that Susan names "therapy." It is precisely in the personal, off-topic talk that Kim and Susan disrupt their roles of instructor and student, and it is in reference to this talk that they are able to make light of their asymmetrical power relations.

Second, Susan and Kim's use of humor here serves as an excuse for what might be considered an improper use of time within an instructional writing conference. The placement of this humor marks the end of troubles talk—that is, talk not explicitly about the draft and, therefore, potentially inappropriate in a professional, academic, university-sanctioned space. As a transition into reviewing the paper, this talk is directed toward the camera and toward me as a researcher "monitoring" their conversations. In this way, the camera serves as an all-seeing

eye watching over Susan and Kim's actions, so that as they address this powerful surveillance source, they do so with an excuse and promise that "we're gettin' to work now" (line 650). Without the jointly produced laughter, this promise could easily be read as following an official policy to "stick to the text," but the humor seems to call into question any such implicit policy (one does not actually exist, but is implied by their meeting in a university writing center). Both Susan and Kim laugh in a playful way, indicating a light, rather than serious, concern for being off-task, and in doing so, they subvert the institutional power over their individual writing conferences. Not only have they taken the time for what Susan calls a "therapy session," but they also have laughed about it. Even Susan's "guilty child" (scrunched-nose and diverted-eyes) look seems to flaunt the inappropriate activity to anyone who would criticize their time off-task, so the excuse is not truly apologetic, but instead brazen in subverting institutional authority. This instance of humor, then, strengthens Holmes's (2000) claims that humor can challenge power. As Kim and Susan show affiliation in laughter and in their joking response to the camera, they express solidarity and, in the moment, reduce the inequality between their own asymmetrical power roles while subverting institutional power that structures their weekly sessions.

Like the earlier focus on troubles telling, this instance of humor also illustrates the ways in which Susan, not Kim, directs the course of their writing conference: first initiating the move into troubles talk and later transitioning their talk back toward the paper. In the interview, Susan discusses her own use of humor to address power:

> Particularly when you're in a setting where you're having your work critiqued and someone is there to critique, that can be a very complicated power control kind of setting. I think it can be taken poorly, but being able to infuse humor helps the situation. It makes it less painful sometimes.

Note here that Susan explains asymmetrical power with Kim *not* in terms of their roles as instructor and student, but instead as a person having her work critiqued and as a person doing the critiquing—pointing to the vulnerability in sharing one's writing with another. Susan has helped overcome this vulnerability through humor, saying, "I can laugh at myself, and I can laugh at my writing, and [Kim] can too." Throughout their writing conferences, Susan and Kim, like other writers in my study, enact transformations we might describe as building affiliative relationships, restructuring power relations, and raising critical consciousness. Because writing (and the revision and reworking involved in producing text) extends a moment of interaction, it may also intensify the transformations embedded in humor and in talk more generally.

Conclusion: Toward an Explanation of Transformations around, about, and for Writing

This case study provides evidence that moments of interaction among writers matter for, and may help account for, the range of transformations so widely attributed in the literature to talk about, around, and for writing. As illustrated in the case study, Kim and Susan offer each other a range of support, suggesting at least three types of transformation emerging from their interactions: raising critical consciousness, building affiliative relationships, and restructuring power relations. First, toward raising critical consciousness, Kim and Susan share troubles they face both in and out of their academic lives. Together, they raise awareness of issues that matter—such as constructing a shared concern about children as caregivers. With reminders to keep "unpacking" and "operationalizing" the ideas central to Susan's work (terms Kim and Susan both use in writing conferences and in their interviews), they also dig deeper into Susan's claims and refuse to accept easy answers, at the same time strengthening their individual awareness of the social problems motivating the research.[12] Second, in the process of building an affiliative relationship, they strengthen their individual commitments, while creating solidarity and telling stories that mirror each other to build a sense that, as Susan says, "I'm not working alone." Through an affiliative relationship, they more easily come to care about the other's lived experience and the values underlying the research and writing they review on an ongoing basis. Third, toward redistributing power relations, Kim and Susan name and poke fun at their own asymmetrical institutional roles (tutor and student), while writing *up* to audiences who have power over one's life (e.g., Susan's prelim committee). To succeed with Susan's prelim exam and to move toward her goal of gaining status as a dissertator and future faculty member, Susan and Kim engage in complex examinations of language and genres of writing. They also share resources that support academic success and create a sense of belonging in the large research university.

As a case study illustrative of patterns I found in the larger data set (that is, in many writing conferences of tutor-writer pairs meeting over time), Kim and Susan's talk about writing illustrates how transformations can emerge from deepening commitments to another person. Kim and Susan separately, but similarly, report in their interviews: "We're in this together." This togetherness is not a chummy, light camaraderie, but deep caring-for tied into ways of thinking, writing, and surviving in academia. Both Kim and Susan report in interviews that through working together, they've got the other person "in their heads," motivating and encouraging them as well as asking tough questions and giving advice. Specifically, when asked how working together has changed the ways they approach writing, both Susan and Kim indicate the importance of other people:

Susan: I told [Kim] that last time we met that not only do I now have my committee in

> my head, which is not good, but for better or for worse, I now have [Kim] in my head. Yeah, she's saying things like 'you said this and then you unpacked it and you did these points and you clarified here.' I can hear her saying those things, and I'd rather have her in my head than my committee. [laughter]

> Kim: [. . .] When I'm working on a proposal or some writing myself, I hear all my words coming back to me. And the fact that writing is hard! I sometimes go for periods when not writing myself, and then when I'm writing again, it hits me like a wall of bricks, remembering that it's hard work. And I hear my students' voices in my head as I'm trying to generate a paragraph. I definitely hear all the writers' voices influencing, guiding, comforting me as I go about my own writing process.

Here we see evidence of the accumulated impact of moments of interaction, as words seem to resonate long after writing conferences. These self-reports suggest the relational importance of having another person involved—even if only in one's head—throughout a recursive writing process. In collaborative revision, writers learn ways of writing, reading, listening, and, more broadly, interacting with others and acting in the world that are made possible by intimate conversations around writing. Further, talk about writing can promote concrete changes both in writers' personal lives (e.g., Susan passes her preliminary exams this second time around) and in their surrounding community (e.g., Kim shares what she learned from Susan's project with her spouse and reports bringing this new knowledge of "complex family dynamics" into an open adoption).

The findings here suggest that transformations may arise from multiple sources, including the spaces of interaction (outside the classroom and often in the community), the intimacy of interaction (as writers build trust and solidarity over time), the writing (which articulates and clarifies experiences and arguments at the same time as writing our worlds into being), the reading (through new learning and challenging assumptions), and the talk and listening (in moments of interaction that are, in themselves, actions that can be structured to resist and reorganize power relations). Whatever the source, these encounters appear filled with opportunities for transformation, as the range of self-reported benefits abound and as composition scholars consider writing groups and conferences as heightened educational experiences. Further, this case suggests that we need additional research to understand the role writing plays not only in provoking troubles telling (e.g., when writing is hard and leads to troubles), but also in resolving the troubles. Further research in this vein could help us understand how writing is involved in building and strengthening relationships, in asserting knowledge and expertise, and in communicating the right to belong within large and often alienating institutions such as the university.

In addition to providing insight into these transformations, the present study shows the potential of applied CA for investigating talk about, around, and for

writing. Certainly collaborative writing talk is not always good—and not all of the time.[13] Additional research, therefore, could help to clarify what accounts for various transformations around writing and what conditions make them possible. For writing centers, further research could help to clarify the current running underneath so many conversations attesting that the work is a powerful force for social change, or, as Denny (2010) maintains, "every bit as important and sustainable as the more dramatic forms of protest in the streets or speeches from podiums" (p. 7). As a final illustration, a 2008 conversation on the writing center (wcenter) listserv documents the assumptions that writing conferences lead to transformation. In response to the playful imperative "describe your writing center life in six words," over twenty replies were submitted, many emphasizing the power of conferencing to bring about change:

> "Talked lots; tried listening; learned more." —Frankie Condon (2008)
>
> "facing fear, creating relationships and change" —Vainis Aleksa (2008)
>
> "questions; light shed; opportunities for change" —Tamara Miles (2008)
>
> "Change an essay. Change yourself. Consult." —Michael Mattison (2008)

In these posts, we can see an emphasis on learning, opportunity, and transformation as well as the importance of listening, relationship-building, rethinking, and transforming the self. While these informal listserv responses do not carry the weight of empirical research, they do tap into the widespread belief that collaborative writing talk holds unique power to transform lives. Additional research combining conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis could help us better define "transformation" and develop curricula for cultivating transformative experiences around writing. By better accounting for widespread beliefs through empirical research, we can cultivate the power largely attributed to collaborative writing talk. And by better cultivating this power, we can more widely tap into these occasions for transforming lives, beginning with our own.

Appendix: Transcript Notations

For this article, transcript excerpts are simplified for access in reading, but the following notations are used to represent the basic prosody and interactional intricacies the system is designed to communicate:

- Punctuation represents intonation.
- Underlining and capitalization indicate emphasis and loudness.
- Degree signs ° indicate softness or barely audible speech.
- Inward arrows show faster speech, while outward arrows indicate a slower pace.

- Colons show stretched-out speech.
- Brackets mark overlapping speech or gesture, showing the onset and close of overlaps.
- Selected gestures, gaze, and bodily positioning are described in italics inside double parentheses. These non-verbal descriptions are extremely selective and highlight the moments most closely attended to in the analysis.
- Pauses are timed in tenths of seconds with (.) indicating a short, untimed pause.
- Indecipherable or possible hearings of an utterance are given inside parentheses.
- Laughter is represented by "heh" and "huh" (matching how the sound is produced).
- Inbreaths are captured as .hh and outbreaths by hh.
- Arrows to the left of line numbers signal a significant line.

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NOTES

1. Writing center researchers differ in their preferred language to describe writing conferences. Harris has long advocated the phrase *one-to-one*, which is built into the tag line of the *Writing Lab Newsletter*: "Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing." More common is the phrase *one-on-one*, which although being associated with most writing centers across the United States, has been criticized for its connection with confrontation or competitive sports language—for example, "one-on-one basketball" (personal communication, Muriel Harris, February 11, 2009). In contrast, the phrase I prefer—*one-with-one*—has been used infrequently, but, I believe, best captures the relational and affective nature of talk about writing. The preposition "with" communicates the importance of togetherness, relationships, and presence (truly being with another person). This phrase portrays an understanding of conferencing as a "community of practice," as discussed by the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* (Geller, Eodice, Condon, Carroll, & Boquet, 2006, pp. 82-86) and is used at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where Frankie Condon directs the writing center.
2. I use the terms *talk*, *conversation*, *social interactions*, and *embodied actions* as roughly equivalent terms for the range of *talk-in-interaction* that takes place in-person around writing.
3. CA began through intense collaboration between Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, who were students of Erving Goffman at UC-Berkeley and in close contact with Harold Garfinkel at UCLA, and Gail Jefferson, who studied with Sacks at UC-Irvine (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Maynard & Clayman, 1991). Heritage and Clayman (2010) explain that from Goffman, Sacks and Schegloff "took the notion that talk-in-interaction is a fundamental social domain that can be studied as an institutional entity in its own right" (p. 12), and from Garfinkel, they saw that "contributions advance the situation of interaction in an incremental, step-by-step fashion" (p. 12). Together these notions became the foundation for CA, which Sacks, Schegloff,

and Jefferson articulated in their 1974 publication "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-taking for Conversation."

4. Antaki (2011) explains the six kinds of applied CA as follows:

> *foundational*, where Conversation Analysis is applied to established areas of scholarship, with the intention of respecifying its foundations; *social-problem oriented*, where its micro approach is applied to the understanding of macro-social issues; *communicational*, where it offers complementary or alternative analyses of communication problems; *diagnostic*, where it reveals correlations between features of talk and underlying organic or psychological disorders; *institutional*, where it illuminates the workings of society's institutions; and—most recognisably as an applied discipline in the style of applied physics or applied maths—*interventionist*, where CA can be applied to a practical problem as it plays out in interaction, with the intention of bringing about some sort of change. (p. 1)

5. As analysts are becoming more attentive to the body, it is increasingly common to see images as part of transcripts. This is especially the case in pure CA research as opposed to a mixed-method study like mine, which takes into consideration participants' input and self-reports. When images are used in sociolinguistics research, the participants tend not to be identifiable. For this case study, however, Kim and Susan have shared their personal stories, and there are risks of including visuals (even when a line drawing filter is applied to blur images), especially as Susan is still working with her prelim (now dissertation) committee and has much at stake, as presented in the case study.

6. Kim and Susan chose these pseudonyms to represent themselves. Committed to participatory research and "member checks," I have received and woven into this piece feedback from both Kim and Susan.

7. Although I videotaped Kim and Susan's conferences in the writing center, they both report in interviews that meeting off-campus—in a greasy spoon café in their hometown, away from the university town—helped to build their relationship and define it as something more than university-sanctioned (i.e., as the beginning of friendship).

8. Kim and Susan identify as "older," both in interviews and during their writing conferences (e.g., when comparing their experiences to the "20-somethings" who are Susan's graduate student colleagues). Susan, in particular, sees herself as an "older" student who has returned to school with years of field experience as a practicing social worker that she feels are a liability, rather than an asset, to her success with the preliminary exam process.

9. All quotations are taken from interviews with Susan and Kim, unless otherwise noted or analyzed as talk-in-interaction from their writing conference.

10. Eileen O'Brien's sociological study *Whites Confront Racism* (2001) identifies strong motivators for action by describing how Whites come to anti-racism through a combination of factors, including activist networks, or friends introducing friends to anti-racism; turning points, or intensely emotional or cathartic events; and empathy, developed through "approximating experiences" that allow Whites to imagine racism for themselves. O'Brien (2001) finds that there are three types of approximating experiences: experiencing sexism or another type of oppression, witnessing racism of a close friend or family member, and noticing contradictions between beliefs and practices (p. 23–25). O'Brien's findings on approximating experiences, like educator N. Nodding's research (1984) on an ethic of care (understood as direct, face-to-face "caring-for"), indicate that commitments often arise through close relationships and care for others. A commitment to

anti-racism, like a commitment to social justice more generally, may be rooted in "receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (Noddings, 1984, p. 2), qualities of relationships that provide approximating experiences.

11. Line numbering begins with the entry into troubles telling (at number 1) and indicates the passage of time over the ten-minute span of talk (with later transcript lines running in the 500s and 600s).

12. In their analysis of biologists working in a molecular genetics lab, Amann and Knorr Cetina (1988) noted a *preference for disagreement* rather than the typically documented preference for agreement. Kim and Susan's acts of digging in deeper and refusing to accept easy answers—like their resistance to fast, early closure of troubles talk—may relate to this finding, particularly as Amann and Knorr Cetina suggest that disagreement and delay facilitate "a conclusion on which participants can proceed" (p. 152).

13. The belief in an almost universal and inherent "good" of writing conferences comes to the detriment of questioning how writing centers are still mired in institutional racism—e.g., see Greenfield & Rowan (2011). Or, see earlier research on how teacher-student conferences can reinforce uneven distribution of and access to resources—e.g., Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989).

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