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Message from the President

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One of the joys of serving as NEAA President-Elect for the past two years was coordinating the annual student writing competitions. Here is how that works: each spring, papers crafted by undergraduate and graduate writers scattered across institutions are gathered. The Executive Committee meets, discusses and chooses exemplary writing. And, we witness that writing lives in many places.

What an antidote to the darker side of writing that we too often read. Even while preparing this article for the August **NEAA News** that darker side faces me on the front page of the New York Times:

At Rhode Island College, a freshman copied and pasted from a Web site’s frequently asked questions page about homelessness – and did not think he needed to credit a source in his assignment because the page did not include author information (Gabriel 2010: A1).

How refreshing it is to review many examples of well worded, carefully designed and thought provoking scholarship. In 2010, two essays were awarded the John Omohundro Undergraduate Paper Prize for outstanding writing. We did not award the M. Estellie Smith Graduate Paper Prize this year.

The two award winners were Peter Greco (St. John’s University) for *Achieving “New Sudan” in Syracuse, NY: Transnationalism among Southern Sudanese Refugees*, and Alicia Kristen Roberts (Rhode

Island College) for *Tutors' Tales: Rituals of Initiation in Rhode Island College's Writing Center*. Both papers are printed in this edition of the **NEAA News**.

Each paper shares common attributes. Greco writes from the experiences of working with Sudanese families. Roberts draws from the day-to-day contact she has with student writers. Both are situated in structured environments: Greco credits St. Vincent de Paul Church in Syracuse; Roberts acknowledges Rhode Island College's Writing Center. Their scholarship is local, occurring in places to which they can return. Research and writing are processes that unfold.

Sometimes local is equated with provincial, but Greco examines global dynamics. His families are transnational, displaced by the forces of "Arabism and Africanism that sparked a lengthy and horrific civil war" (Greco 2010: 3). These Southern Sudanese are resettled "Lost Boys," men, women and children. They are refugees in Syracuse busily creating a "New Sudan," an idealism rooted in African experiences and immersed in American values.

Applied research has been labeled atheoretical, but Roberts' Writing Center became her ethnological laboratory. Her responsibility is to tutor, to steer each writer toward authentic prose, if not to develop a personal voice in each essay. However, she discovers "a Community of Practice, formed around the daily activities of tutoring" (Roberts 2010: 4). Tutor storytelling and rites of passage are keys to the organization of her Writing Center and to the practices it fosters.

Both papers are exhibitions of the writing lives that created them. Every year the NEAA, through its prizes, and through the many papers that are presented in its sessions encourages thinking and expression. The NEAA is a "Community of Practice" and the Omohundro and Smith Paper Prizes are models for promoting writing practices.

Peter Greco and Alicia Roberts arrived as freshmen at their respective institution little expecting to receive awards for their writing from the Northeastern Anthropological Association a few years later. Greco acknowledges Dr. Anne Gavin and Dr. Barrett Brenton, as well as the Graduate Admissions Program at St. Johns University for providing intellectual and other necessary assistances. Similarly, Alicia Roberts benefited from the mentoring of Dr. Edgar Martin del Campo, Prof. Meg Carroll and Prof. Claudine Griggs, as well as the DeStefano Family Award. Mentors and institutional support were crucial to their writing lives, and the NEAA will continue in its support of writing as Dr. Donald Pollack (SUNY at Buffalo) coordinates the 2011 John Omohundro and M. Estellie Smith paper competitions.

At the start of this semester, tell stories about exemplary writing and the lives of writers. Let others know that writing lives and encourage writers to prepare for the 51st Annual NEAA Conference at Franklin and Pierce University in 2011.

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MARCH 25 & 26 2011
NEAA Conference to be held at Franklin Pierce University,
Rindge, New Hampshire

Organize a panel, Give a paper, Meet new colleagues, Network,
Run for a NEAA position, Apply for a Student Travel Grant,
Enter your paper or poster in the graduate or undergraduate paper contest,
Explore New Hampshire, And so much more.....

ANNOUNCING THE NEAA BULLETIN

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We are pleased to announce the publication of the *NEAA Bulletin* in honor of the Northeastern Anthropological Association's 50th Anniversary. The Bulletin is a peer-reviewed journal published regularly by the Northeastern Anthropological Association. The series is designed to promote and disseminate original, high quality scholarship by Anthropologists situated or doing work in the Northeastern United States. The Bulletin is intended for professional anthropologists and students and publishes research covering the four fields of anthropology and applied work. The Bulletin will be available through the NEAA website and as a printed edition.

The theme for the forthcoming issue, to be released winter 2011, focuses on new formulations of boundedness and mobility referencing the 2010 conference theme "Borders, Margins and Passages". Global change and transnational practices have great potential to reshape anthropological treatment of the culture concept. Treating "margins" and marginal status as culturally productive zones has been one outgrowth of this critical reimagining of community, space, and movement. Increasingly, cultural anthropologists have become concerned with reconceptualizing how we think about national borders, international barriers, as well as human and cultural mobility, in relation to colonial legacies, nationalism, and the practices of immigrant, refugee, and diasporic populations. This issue brings together cultural anthropologists across regional specializations to detail the ways boundaries and mobility, observed in particular localities, can be rethought in relation to larger global processes that are currently shifting ethnographic research and theoretical models within anthropology.

If you are interested in serving as a Guest Editor for a future special issue of the NEAA Bulletin, please contact E. Pierre Morenon (pmorenon@ric.edu) to discuss proposed themes.

Achieving “New Sudan” in Syracuse, NY: Transnationalism Among Southern Sudanese Refugees

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Abstract

The concept of “New Sudan” serves as a symbol and rallying cry for the Southern Sudanese. It is a transnational idea in seeking to promote peace and harmony in a war-torn region as well as prosperity and education in an adopted homeland. Transnationalism, as a concept of cultural dynamism, takes on diverse forms that vary both between and within groups. The forces that cause a people’s migration to a new nation provide insight into the transnational behavior or practices of a particular group. Drawn from a summer spent conducting ethnographic research among refugee families in Syracuse, NY, this paper discusses conflicts in degrees of acculturation and transnationalism between generations of refugees and the influence that kinship and gender roles has on this process. Examples of effects of the geo-political struggles that caused the exodus and resettlement of Sudanese refugees in Syracuse are numerous and have had a deep impact on the culture of the refugees. Exhibited in various households among the community is a cultural conflict emerging across generational lines, one that incorporates transnational differences.

As mulukhiyah and hard boiled eggs simmer, several children attentively observe the afternoon Disney Channel line-up in one room, while their mother, Alek, watches Arabic television and talks on a cell phone to someone in Egypt in another. All this happens under the gaze of a framed image of President and Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) Lt. General Salva Kiir that hangs above the living room couch in a subsidized apartment of a Syracuse public housing complex. This paper highlights my ethnographic fieldwork exposure to Southern Sudanese refugee homes and families living in the urban landscape of Syracuse, NY and the cultural dynamics that are occurring as they emerge into what I will refer to as a post-resettlement community. The Southern Sudanese have a history of varied cultural influences and have had to endure the ongoing political and cultural struggle between Arabism and Africanism (Deng 1995). When speaking in general terms based on geographic and political boundaries, this group is known as the Southern Sudanese. However, ethnically the general population group exhibits vast heterogeneity with culturally distinct groups such as the Nuer, Acholi, and Dinka. It is the same conflicting embodiments of Arabism and Africanism that sparked a lengthy and horrific civil war ultimately driving many Southern Sudanese to the United States. The experience of Southern Sudanese refugees is an example of what Stein’s description of a kinetic analysis of refugees refers to as having undergone an “acute movement” (Stein 1981). In the U.S., the Southern Sudanese refugees have maintained a sense of Southern Sudanese culture, while encountering yet another external national and cultural influence. The nature of this cultural fluctuation exhibits qualities that represent both their original and adopted homelands and thus demonstrates transnational behavior as a result of the resettlement process.

The dichotomous nature of the demonstration of transnationalism between generations of Sudanese refugees became starkly apparent as a result of my opportunity to interact among this vibrant community in their homes and around their families. In the initial stages of developing this study, my intention was to explore the community networks and their impact on acculturation among the “Lost Boys” population

of Syracuse, however when I arrived in Syracuse I was introduced to a “new” community of working-class urban families, with a focus on the mothers and children, seeking advancement as refugees in American society. It was a result of my lack of contact with a now successful, yet scattered “Lost Boys” cohort, that my vital relationship with Sister Joana Baidoo I.H.M developed. My unique access was made possible through her dedicated work supporting the refugees in their continuing cross-continental struggle to survive and succeed.

This is the refugee community not being featured in documentaries, in local news articles or going on book tours. They may not be getting a Master’s degree at an Upstate college in hopes of using it to help their people in Sudan, but this community is helping Sudan in a very different way. The heroic recounts of “The Lost Boys” flight and remarkable perseverance toward succeeding in America are nothing short of remarkable. There is no question that the coverage that they have been given is both well-deserved and sheds light on the condition of refugees in America. However, this paper seeks to shed light on the current status of what constitutes a vast majority of Southern Sudanese living in America, the large working-class families struggling in forgotten urban enclaves. I had only limited contact with the adult male portion of the refugee families because most worked ten to twelve hour shifts at various manufacturing and warehouse occupations. The dynamic of a family constantly off to work, to school, and constantly aspiring toward a benevolent goal made for a vibrant research environment. Focusing the attention on these families with respect to both the gender roles of mothers and daughters and the role that cultural change will play in the likelihood that the second generation of this recent refugee group will improve the chances that they are able to achieve the dreams that they hold for themselves. “Right now, the shining star of hope in the refugee community hailing from Sudan is not the “Lost Boys,” but the women and children taking advantage of both empowering experiences and educational opportunities. (Greco 2009).

One cannot fully grasp the refugee condition without exploring the range of stages that constitutes the refugee experience, from flight and camp behavior to adjustment/acclimation and residual states (Stein 1981). The current state and stage that is the focus of this study is the adjustment and acculturation phase, or one could say a phase of post-resettlement. Most refugees arrived shortly after 2000 and seem to be in a post-resettlement phase in that they are increasingly responsible for providing for their own needs. Less resources are being provided to the refugees and more and more is being expected of them. For example, refugee children formerly enrolled in a Syracuse Catholic elementary school are now attending public city schools because they are no longer provided with the funds to continue paying tuition. Also, while the male portion of the population may have jobs and speak English, the female population would benefit from an extended period of resettlement in order to achieve similar competencies. A more complete and extended period of resettlement consisting of dedication of public and private resources to English language training, driving instructions, and simple tasks such as interpreting bills and school forms would improve the present ability of Sudanese women to function in such daily family-centered tasks. In attempting to analyze the adjustment process via the refugees themselves on one hand and the programs in place to assist them on the other, the latter half of this “split screen” approach seemed to be lacking (Stein 1981). Besides the few individuals affiliated with the St. Vincent de Paul Church who connected me to this community, there was little by way of structured programs targeted specifically at Sudanese refugees at the time of my fieldwork. The community was in a stage of adjustment and acculturation and that provided the basis for this study.

My examples of transnationalism and subsequent analysis are based on observations obtained while conducting ethnographic research during the summer of 2009 among mostly Dinka Southern Sudanese

refugees living in lower-class urban neighborhoods in the city of Syracuse, NY. On a weekly basis, Sr. Joana Baidoo I.H.M, head of St. Vincent DePaul Refugee Committee and I visited and interacted with refugee families in among the most intimate of settings, the home. For that brief, but memorable, period I was fortunate to immerse myself in the culture and witness visible examples of cultural flow, diffusion and transnationalism. Interactions with the families in a domestic setting provided insight into kinship and gender roles, as well as unique family dynamics that are critical to understanding the topic of cultural and generational variation stemming from the assimilation process.

The concept of “New Sudan,” originally seen displayed in various living rooms and on doors over a flag of the Autonomous Government of Southern Sudan, was symbolic of a pattern that I observed in many aspects within the Sudanese home. The term “New Sudan” takes on two closely linked meanings and in turn emphasizes the idea of cultural deterritorialization as a disassociation between culture and locality, as well as the eventual participation in two cultures (Hopper 2008). In the African, sense, “New Sudan” is a hope for lasting peace, equality, freedom and benevolent leadership for a Southern Sudan plagued for decades by the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) which pitted the powers of Khartoum and the Arab North against the ethnically diverse, Christian and “animistic” South (Holtzman 2008). This is a straightforward aspiration of a people who have experienced violence and oppression in their homeland. The other meaning speaks more to cultural deterritorialization as well as Abusharaf’s concept of the Sudanese “nation in absentia.” This idea of a more open and unified approach to Southern Sudanese nationalism abroad is certainly exhibited in the cases I observed (Abusharaf 2002). Within the refugee community there is a sense that the empowerment and success that can be had in the U.S., mostly through hard work and education, will create a cohesive and peaceful Sudanese community that is similar to the one that was severed by the bloody Civil War two decades ago. Idealism is a trait present in the hearts and minds of many of the refugees for their nation, their family, and lastly, themselves. The type of idealism embodied in the words “New Sudan” have crossed borders and have had significant impacts on communities in Sudan and those in which the refugees have been resettled. Struggle, tied closely to both the peace process and the assimilation process, is a common thread in the Sudanese refugee experience. As the struggles continue to this day, the sense of hope, perseverance and dedication in both situations have remained.

The transnational characteristics of the Sudanese refugees are unique in comparison with other migrant groups in a few regards. Firstly, unlike transnationalism driven by global capitalism, the Southern Sudanese exodus stems instead from geo-political power struggles and the resulting international relief efforts. A conversation that I had with a refugee woman and a mother of two sons expressed her hope that her sons get an education and succeed in America in honor and memory of their father that was killed in Sudan. It was not uncommon to have children being taken care of as their own by friends or relatives because their parents were lost or displaced during the war. The community of refugees displays an intense focus on survival in terms of preservation of a Sudanese national identity, as well as the subsequent development of an American one with education clearly topping the list of priorities among refugee families. The motives and inspiration for those motives differ between the refugee and the economic migrant. A characteristic of transnationalism that is not exclusive to Southern Sudanese refugees, but common in many violence-affected parts of Sub-Saharan Africa is the process of “double transnationalism” as a result of a multi-layered history of displacement. Refugees living in America were resettled through efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees often after years of living in refugee camps or abroad in Egypt, Kenya, and Ethiopia. After an arduous interview process and a great deal of paperwork they were resettled across the U.S. The refugee camp culture, especially those involving kinship are visible in the government subsidized housing projects of Syracuse. There is a great

deal of communal child care and ability for children to play in the courtyards of the dense space that comprises the Pioneer Homes Public Housing, similar to the environment and behavior of refugee camps, or African villages in general. Connections with relatives that are still living in Egypt and Ethiopia are common via telephone, and return trips occur intermittently, mostly by men. The political and social situation in Africa has and continues to have implications on transnationalist aspects of refugees resettled in America.

Displays of transnationalism, specifically relating back to Sudan, cover the areas of the economy, political movements, humanitarian efforts, and entertainment. The flow of remittances to developing countries accounts for a \$338 billion industry according to 2009 World Bank statistics. The traditional transnationalist process of sending remittances is somewhat absent in the Sudanese refugee community for a variety of factors. The first being that surviving economically in the United States, often on solely the husband's income, is difficult enough as it is, especially when providing for large families that most often have five or more young children. Secondly, the state of Sudan is less adapted to receiving such payments, and many relatives are not living in Sudan at all. Sudan's official language, as designated by Khartoum yet widely spoken by most all Southern Sudanese alongside other languages like Dinka or Nuer, is Arabic. While visiting the homes, Sudanese mothers would often be watching North African Arabic-language television programs purchased via satellite while tending to housework and speaking Dinka to their children. Among the most notable instances of transnationalism is the humanitarian work being done by a group of first-wave refugee Sudanese "Lost Boys."

Photos on the wall and support for President Barack Obama serves as a unique example of transnationalism in that through their support of President Obama, the Sudanese refugees are relating to both his African origins, as well as the prospect of hope that he represents for America as president, especially amidst the difficult times faced by the nation and the refugees. Interactions with the families in a domestic setting provided insight into kinship roles and family dynamics, and critical to understanding the topic of cultural and generational variation stemming from the assimilation process. While Obama represents the American side of the issue, there were also instances of strong connections originating in Sudan. One of the most enlightening events that I was able to attend that summer was a celebration to commemorate the founding of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) on May 16th. In the auditorium of Henninger high school, the Sudanese community from across New York State gathered for this celebration through memories of the past and hope of for the future. With chapters in five Upstate cities, the SPLA/M remains active, mobilizes, and informs on the situation in Southern Sudan within the United States. The political activism and dialogue that occurred at this meeting, while at times controversial, was among the most explicit examples of transnationalism and freedom that I witnessed. This was one instance where entire families gathered to hear speeches and sing songs of the fight for liberation, and where generations seemed in sync in their relation to a common past. Engaging their children such events represents the desire of refugee parents to maintain a bond between their children and aspects of Southern Sudan, but the question remains whether or not extended socialization in American society will cause such a bond to weaken and fall forgotten.

The aforementioned transnationalistic behavior is occurring predominately in adult refugees while children experienced a more rapid and natural process of assimilation. One cannot deny the presence of transnationalism among the children's generation due to the close bonds of kinship among the Sudanese, however I assert that evidence of transnationalism is less present among the younger generation, while assimilation comes with less difficulty for this group. A trip to the zoo on a warm July afternoon served as a culminating event after a week-long summer day camp for Southern Sudanese refugee children

residing within the city. An intriguing glimpse into the state of adjustment and acculturation among present and future generations of Southern Sudanese in America resulted from a conversation that I had with a group of early adolescent boys. It was not about culture, nationality, or political movements, but the always popular concept among adolescents, dating. I asked them if they remember and early life in Ethiopia and Kenya, or if they are aware that it is incredibly unique that they are able to flawlessly speak and operate in various social and familial settings using three languages, Dinka, Arabic and English. They swiftly dismissed and seemed unconcerned with these details of their lives, and more interested in American dating practices, such as whether or not I had a girlfriend and if she was “white” or not. Exploration into American life is a characteristic that defines the experience of the second generation of Sudanese refugees.

In his work, Phillip Kelly seeks to conceptualize transnational differences across generations by exploring the ideas of transnationalism as a temporary phenomenon, as well as the fluctuation of degrees of transnationalism through his idea of the “transience of transnationalism (Kelly 2003).” The generational gap in transnationalism is evident in children’s use and proficiency in English, the adaptation of urban clothing and music tastes, and most contentious among the community is the adaptation of Western values that Sudanese parents feel stray from the values of family, Christianity, and Sudanese culture. English and much of what the refugee children learn about American culture is a result of the socialization process that occurs in the public schools that they attend, an opportunity that is not as available to their parents. When children are home from school and take control of the television that is perpetually on, as Holtzman corroborates in *Nuer Journeys, Nuer Lives*, the channel is always Disney or Nickelodeon. Tuning in to American television, in contrast to the Arabic programming, that they enjoy make them no different than any other American child who is exposed to this form of entertainment. Boys love to play football in the housing project courtyards, while girls enjoy Miley Cyrus and High School Musical. The fact that such a large majority of the refugees live in the lower class urban neighborhoods of Syracuse alongside a large African-American population has resulted in the children adopting urban street styles of dress such as fashionable sneakers and baggy clothes. Parents are concerned based on these factors that their children are assimilating to harmful parts of American culture, including laziness in school and church, sexual activity, substance use, and general lack of adequate respect for their parents, elders, and the Sudanese community.

The approximately thirty families directly served by Sr. Joana represent a community with its own unique attributes and needs. The Southern Sudanese community constitutes some of the most recent members of the centuries-old African Diaspora. Demographically, the refugee group consists of only two generations, and thus lacks the impact that grandparents play in supporting kinship structure and household dynamics. The families are large; with most of the average of five children per family under the age of fourteen. This community defies traditional definitions of linking a people and culture with geographic space. Twenty-first century forces that drive global interconnectedness provide for the existence of a community that experiences interplay between two continents and constant cultural restructuring based on new experiences. My investigation of transnational culture and the shifts occurring in that particular area of interest is accompanied by aspects of a transnational community at large. Two distinct forces that seem to be at work defining the refugee community is that of individualism and social capital (Hyland 2005). The Southern Sudanese are faced with the competing realities that individualism in terms of employment and education is a major facet of success in America, while dedication to the social capital that comes with interaction with their Sudanese compatriots and the American community can improve social, if not economic, adjustment. Sunday morning religious services and the subsequent “coffee hour” served as an example of social capital as a high priority in

Sudanese community relations, as well as an example of the Durkheimian function of religion as a social binding through a sense of idealism, and in the case of the refugee community, the hope is for peace, prosperity, and all that is embodied in the concept of “New Sudan.”

Post-resettlement research and services deserve greater anthropological exploration and attention among both academic and host communities. The body of knowledge addressing the flight and initial resettlement phases is vast, yet as these refugees become part of the fabric of American society the question arises as to whether or not we are addressing the changes that are perpetually taking place in the life and culture of refugee families. Policy changes must start with the extension of adjustment services such as rent, employment, education, and transportation past the first six months. Secondly, the focus of post-resettlement efforts must be placed firmly on the most vulnerable of Southern Sudanese refugees in the U.S., women and children. Fathers and husbands provide economically for the refugee family as well as acting as a social liaison to the greater community. Due to lack of English proficiency and domestic responsibilities, refugee women are often not granted the same prospect to explore opportunities outside of the domestic sphere. In not specifically addressing this part of the Sudanese refugee population, we risk the negative consequences of feelings of isolation, identity confusion and the perpetuation of poverty (Duany 2001). Mothers who are better able to operate in American society will greatly improve not only their own condition, but also the efficacy of their relationship with their children regarding responsibilities and socialization. Future ethnographic research will prove especially insightful regarding this and related topics. As the currently young second generation of refugees reaches high school it will be important to document the state of culture and the relationship with the elder members of the community, as well as with the idea of a “New Sudan.” Discussing the effect that the specific urban environment has on the families will be vital because a neglected and dangerous urban neighborhood creates a shift in the characteristics of the populations that live there. The status and role of women remains an essential area of study, especially that which discusses how the desire and need for a dual income household will effect women and the family dynamic of the Sudanese refugee community. As the population of Southern Sudanese refugees continues to change and develop, it will become more clearly evident that the hopes embodied in a “New Sudan” are directly linked and interchangeable with their development as a unique part of the American social and cultural fabric.

Acknowledgements

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you. My experience among you serves as a constant reminder of the strength needed to maintain the hope and righteousness that most easily slips away during life's constant demands. It is their faces and stories that inspired me this academic year and will continue in the future.

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Tutor's Tales: Rituals of Initiation in Rhode Island College's Writing Center

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Abstract

Rhode Island College's Writing Center has a culture into which students must be initiated before becoming tutors. Drawing from their common academic background (habitus), new tutors adopt the Discourse patterns of the community from old tutors, perpetuating values and solidifying group identification. This paper examines the significance of three rituals to the process of initiation, forming the foundation of a larger study of narratives of transformation in this story-swapping culture.

Introduction

Stories are everywhere in Rhode Island College's Writing Center. Not just as literature to be read or assignments to be revised, but as an integral part of Writing Center "culture." Tutors talk about the fun or frustration of their last appointment in the Tutor Lounge. They share the latest news from their personal lives around the student clericals' desk. In the Journals, they can read stories, written by tutors here and gone, about everything from identity crises to learning how to knit. In staff meetings, tutors blur the line between personal and work-related narratives because their common initiation experience has shown them that their work is informed by their personal narratives.

After working in the Writing Center for a year, I began to question how tutors, the core subgroup of the Writing Center, become part of this story-swapping culture. I also looked at the characteristics the stories

have from a literary perspective and how the stories influence Writing Center culture. Based on my initial observations, I hypothesized that the narratives the community shares of tutoring and life experiences have a common structure that is learned and perpetuated through group participation. The commonalities of the narratives in turn reinforce a sense of shared group identity. This paper focuses how new tutors acquire their new group identity by looking at the initiation rituals which integrate new tutors into the community.

The Writing Center: a Community of Practice

While well known in the composition discipline, Rhode Island College's Writing Center still merits a detailed description of its design and function. The Writing Center is a place for anyone in the college community to seek "peer tutoring" on their writing. The writers can stop by for a "walk-in" appointment, but typically they call or come in to schedule their appointment with a tutor of their choice. The appointments last fifty minutes, allowing tutors on duty ten minutes of personal time each hour in which they can hang out in the Tutor Lounge. Even when not on duty, tutors are often found in that small but personal space talking and relaxing. Since Rhode Island College is a small state college, most tutors are undergraduates. Many of them are recommended to become tutors by professors who understand the qualifications needed. Other times students seek to become tutors on their own, enlisting recommendations and submitting examples of their writing. More than a few tutors began working at the Writing Center as student clerical. Various activities demonstrate that all of the staff members are part of the Writing Center community, but by becoming tutors these clericals join the tight-knit subgroup of the community that is the focus of my research.

New tutors must complete the staff education course, "Writing Center Theory and Practice" (more commonly referred to by tutors as "the Summer Workshop"). For the first half of the summer, the new tutors and most of the old tutors meet with the director once a week for about three hours. In the second half of the summer, meetings continue as new tutors begin working a couple of hours a week. At the end of the summer, the director and tutors share their "Final Reflection" pieces at a Writing Center party. In the Fall, the new tutors begin tutoring with regular hours and responsibilities.

Transitions

The collage of name tags on the back wall is different now, Spring of 2010, than when I first arrived in Summer 2008. Over half of the tutors graduated last year, leaving their roles to be filled by a combination of our previous student clerical, friends of tutors, and new faces. The professional clerical worker and the director retired at that same time. The office outside and around the corner no longer promotes chaos on its door as it has for the past twenty years in which Meg Carroll directed; it is occupied by Claudine Griggs, the new director. Claudine has the difficult task of blending the values of the Writing Center with her own values as she leads the community into a new era. When she participated as a student in the Summer Workshop of 2008, she shared her preference for order and structure. This preference has been a dynamic contribution to the Writing Center.

With so many changes in such a short period of time, this has been an especially fruitful opportunity to study the "culture" of the Writing Center. Typically, the beliefs and practices of the Writing Center are transmitted from a large group of old tutors to a small group of new tutors, with complete population replacement occurring only every four years or so. This acts as a microcosm in which the length of

tutors' academic study is equivalent to the lifetime of the individuals in larger cultures. This year, however, population replacement at the Writing Center is especially condensed. None of the tutors or staff from prior to Summer 2009 will remain next year, except for the director who began as a student the year before. For this reason, the transitional year of 2009 which is the focus of my research is significant in understanding how generational shifts affect the reproduction of culture.

Research Question

Theory

In order to understand the role of stories in conversation within the Writing Center, I drew from a theoretical framework combining Bourdieu's work on 'habitus' and Gee's work on Discourse. Bourdieu provides an understanding of the social contexts of behavior, using the term habitus to mean, "one's habitual way of being in the world as an embodied social being" (Gee 1999). Gee provides tools for a more in-depth look at the Discourse of the Writing Center. He defines discourse as language in use and then focuses on the study of Discourses with a capital "D," which is the use of language to perform socially recognizable identities and activities. Using these two frameworks as a means to define "culture" in the Writing Center creates an emphasis on everyday expressions of group values and identity, which makes sense given that the Writing Center is a Community of Practice, formed around the daily activities of tutoring (Holmes 2001). Tutors do not immediately belong to the Writing Center, but rather must continually perform the role of tutor in order to establish their shared identity.

Methods

The significance of social contexts necessitated participant observation as my primary mode of research. After receiving approval by the Committee for Research with Human Participants, I began observing last summer's weekly Workshop meetings. These meetings always begin with 15-30 minutes of casual conversation while the tutors enjoy pepperoni and "the Writing Center Special" pizza. The director then typically begins the "class" with a short agenda before opening the floor for tutors to share their written Responses to the assigned readings of the week. The meetings follow a curriculum of critical-thought literature formulated through years of input to the director from "old tutors" (tutors who completed the workshop the year before). Discussion of the readings is sometimes followed by activities related to the theme of the week (racism, ESL, literacy). Other times it is followed by grammar, community-building, and mock-tutoring activities, the former of which occur primarily early in the summer and the latter of which occur toward the end. After the Workshop ended, I began observing the biweekly meetings of the Fall semester (which were less structured but also included pizza followed by an agenda), as well as some general conversation around the Writing Center.

Unlike the notes of my observations, I hoped with the interviews to elicit both contextual data and specific narratives in detail. Unfortunately, I began with questions seeking specific data (year of becoming a tutor, most significant part of Writing Center), which lent the interview a formal quality not conducive to narratives; I countered the rapport I had with the interviewees as member of the community (Holmes 2001). As a result of this mistake, tutors responded in a formal and somewhat-proselytizing tone. In a few cases, increasing in number as I became more practiced, interviewees did become comfortable enough to share with me as they normally would, namely when I asked general questions before specific questions or after the "interview" (defined by prepared questions and note taking) was

over. Transcriptions of these interviews yielded interesting data on the varying backgrounds and perspectives of the tutors.

In order to acquire the narratives that were the original focus of my research, I also accessed the Journal archives. The Journals are 4-inch binders filled with material contributed by the tutors. Most often, this material consists of journal entries which tutors are required to write weekly or biweekly, including the Responses from the Workshop. It also includes excerpts, articles, tutor-created poetry and artwork, political cartoons, and the results of writing activities done during meetings. For my research, the individual entries were most important for obtaining detailed narrative content which could not be efficiently recorded in the meetings and which were not often offered in interviews. According to Rodriguez and Baber (2007), research into archives like the Writing Center Journals is significant because:

[The data] is non-reactive (i.e., the researcher does not influence people's responses) [...] It supports the study of cultural processes through time. And it is possible to study topics that might be too politically or socially controversial to study first-hand."

All of these benefits apply to my research, though it must be taken into account that the most recent entries were written after tutors were aware they were being studied. The ability to look back in time is especially important to my research on the trajectory of tutors' experiences, key to both my analysis of the process of initiation and tutors' narratives of their own sense of transformation.

Hypothesis

Based on the preliminary observations during my first year as a tutor and the anthropological data collected during my second year, tutors come from a relatively common academic habitus which allows them to more easily partake in Writing Center Discourse and be initiated into the culture of the community. Narratives and oral participation are the key means of initiation into and expression of Writing Center values such as personal development, altruism, and group support. As tutors become increasingly involved in the Writing Center interests and Discourse, they become agents of the community's culture, responsible for both its reproduction and growth.

Cultural Patterns

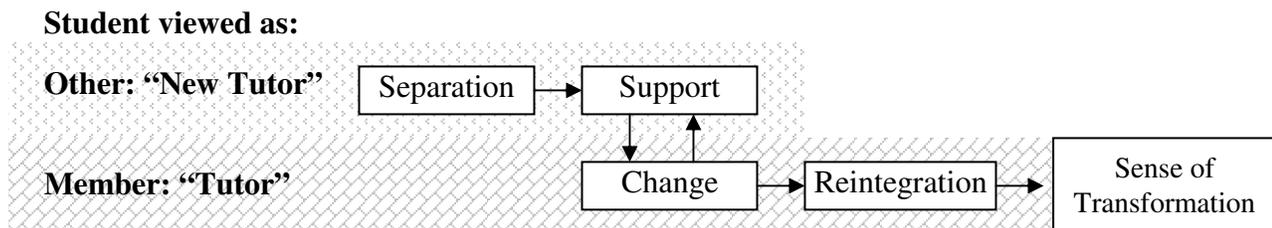
Becoming Tutors

Though the college requires that tutors receive staff training, it is essential for students to complete the Summer Workshop primarily to learn how to participate in the community. The Workshop is the social space in which students acquire the identity of tutor, indicated in part by how the community refers to them: first as students or applicants, then as "new tutors" once they begin the workshop, and finally simply as "tutors" upon their reintegration into academic life.

This seemingly simple method of initiation contains a number of social processes. Kreamer (1995), describing similar patterns of initiation in her study of the Kondi, outlines five essential components: separation from the larger society, social support, a change in dress, ritualized reintegration, and a sense of personal identity transformation among initiates. The Writing Center differs from this cross-cultural

comparison in that it relies more on discourse and social space than physical situations for the transformation process, although both cases use social and physical conditions. When analyzing these five components in terms of the Writing Center, I found that they benefit from being ordered not only linearly, but by the initiate’s relationship with the community through each experience, as seen below:

Figure 1: Five Components of Initiation



In the first phase of initiation, the student initiates are typically “removed” from mainstream academia, and thus the habitus to which they are accustomed. Although temporary separation is necessary, new tutors would have trouble adjusting to the discursive patterns of the curriculum and the other tutors without the skill in academic Discourse that qualified them to tutor. Bourdieu and Passerson (1997) attribute this “socially constituted disposition toward language” to habitus. The middle-class academic habitus favors language (especially writing) as a means of ideological negotiation; it also supports group acceptance as key to personal significance. These tendencies, or “tastes” as Bourdieu calls them, make new tutors receptive to important initiation practices, such as the writing and discussion of Response papers. The removal from that same academic habitus, brought about by the placement of the meetings in the summer and around the Writing Center table instead of in classrooms, is significant to the process of initiation. It puts tutors in a borderland between the two habitus and allows them to adjust their current tastes to the habitus of the Writing Center community and to adopt the lifestyle of a tutor.

In the second phase of initiation, old tutors participating in the workshop serve as mentors to new tutors, supporting them by appreciating their divergence from strict academic norms. As new tutors begin to defy the academic norms to which they have grown accustomed (such as not using “I”, presenting arguments in a logical sequence, being on one side of an argument, and sticking to the material at hand), they can begin to integrate personal feelings and stories into their discourse and receive feedback from the community. In preemptive response, old tutors allay fears of bending the rules with an easily recognized joke: as a preface to their own Response papers, old tutors look abashed and say, “I think I did it wrong.” By poking fun at this common behavior, old tutors make it difficult for new tutors to say it with any seriousness. At the same time, old tutors serve as a sounding board against which new tutors can try different modes of Discourse and different values. As in Cain’s (1991) study of an Alcoholics Anonymous group, tutors demonstrated subtle ways of encouraging conformity without negative reactions, demonstrating that even within support groups that value the unique qualities of the individuals, normal social forces are at work encouraging initiates to adapt to the ways of the community.

In the third phase, new tutors can begin to experiment with their identity because they are “new tutors,” suspended between being an “other” and being a “tutor.” As in Cook-Sather’s (2006) study of teacher preparation programs, new tutors exist in a liminal space shaped by regular interaction with old tutors. This allows them to take risks with their identity while adapting to the community. The Writing Center’s

former director, Meg Carroll (2008), describes this as “exploration of the jagged edge,” a phenomenon which allows community transformation through the agency of new participants. Once tutors are initiated, this ability to explore within the safety of liminality diminishes. Unlike with the secret Kondi society of Kreamer’s (1995) study, leaving liminality in the Writing Center is gradual, forming a continuum between being other and capable of exploration and being a stable member and mentor of the community. This is a result of the multiplicity of rituals of reintegration, the fourth phase, which I will soon describe in greater detail.

Regardless of the gradual nature of reintegration, the key moment of initiation is when new tutors read their Final Reflection assignments at the last meeting. This event is the pinnacle of the fifth phase, when tutors reflect directly on their transformation. Most of these transformation narratives involve a shift in self-perceptions of identity from successful student to selfless tutor, reflecting the community’s value of altruism. They describe that their reasons for becoming a tutor before they began focused on their expertise, not their ability to help others. By applying Turner’s (1999) diagram of narrative structure, I established a tentative model for tutors’ narratives which takes them from an equilibrium of being a successful student to a new equilibrium of adaptation to Writing Center ideals brought about by the disruption of the initiation process. As with Nakono’s (2000) study of the life histories of those who choose “volunteering as a lifestyle choice” in Japan, tutors’ narratives often focus on the conflict between their desire to help and the mainstream value of economic success, key values of the Writing Center habitus and mainstream academic habitus respectively. Narratives thus serve as a tool for new tutors to reevaluate their own identities and reconceive of themselves as transformed.

Reintegration

As in the Kondi of Kreamer’s (1995) study, reintegration into the community occurs ritually, even if socially gradual. In the Writing Center, there are three rites of passage leading to reintegration. The first is the creation of the name tags, which occurs about halfway through the Summer Workshop. This ritual is planned after old tutors insist to the director that the new tutors need name tags so they can be included on the back wall, symbolizing the acceptance of new tutors by old tutors. Tutors encourage each other to make the name tags expressive of their personalities and interests, so that each year the wall reflects the flavor of the community as determined by the current composition. The ritual itself (with everyone gathered around the meeting table passing markers and construction paper) allows old tutors to show their approval of this change and further encourage new tutors in expression of their “unique” perspectives during liminality. It also reinforces a sense of community through self-deprecation and compliments of others’ works. The most important quality of this ritual, however, is that new tutors are afterward visually represented on the wall as part of the group.

The second ritual involves the community less and the individual tutor’s sense of identity more. The first appointment a tutor has with a writer is an event which seems to be universally ingrained in the mind of each of the tutors even after years of tutoring. They are naturally nervous when it arrives because it signifies the tremendous change from being a figurative to a practicing member of the community, much as this conference does for me. The first appointment occurs scheduled just like all the others, without pomp or circumstance. New tutors later retell discovering with a sense of fear or dread that a name has been written beside their own in the appointment book. Concerned about her capabilities, one tutor even considered rescheduling the appointment to be with another tutor. Afterward the first appointment, the students realize that tutoring is not beyond what they can handle, and feel much more comfortable identifying as a tutor. New tutors share their narrative of this first appointment at the next meeting, so

that the first appointment is not an entirely solitary ritual. In fact, sharing the narrative of the first appointment is significant because it allows new tutors an opportunity to utilize the values of the community in the way they tailor their narrative. Cheryl wrote, “My first session was a huge ego boost, because I felt happy and relieved that I helped someone.” She expresses the value of altruism, to which old tutors respond with supportive comments like, “See? This is the job for you.” Early tutoring experiences are characterized by an exaggeration of the feelings tutors continue to have, such as in one tutor’s comment, “Though I am constantly nervous about ‘helping the student enough,’ I leave almost every session feeling exhilarated.”

The third ritual is the last meeting of the Summer Workshops. While Carol directed the Writing Center, the final meeting was at the lake house that she owns. In 2009, the Writing Center had two final meetings. The first meeting was held in the same place as all the other meetings of the summer. The Chinese food on the windowsills (rather than pizza on the table) signified the continuation of a final-meeting tradition which had begun before anyone there could remember. The second meeting was held at Carol’s lake house, where tutors had pizza and snacks but participated in the usual festivities of being at the lake house. In this way, the ritual was divided into two parts, perhaps easing the transition for the tutors who were accustomed to the final meeting being at the lake house. This had the advantage of there being two opportunities to share Final Reflection pieces. As with the narratives of the first appointment, but to a greater degree, the process of reading aloud Final Reflection pieces allows tutors to express and reflect on Writing Center values. Recalling this event also allows recognition of values. For example, prior to the last meetings of 2009, old tutors would often talk about the Final Reflection of a retired tutor which used an artfully designed metaphor to describe the tutor’s personal development and relationship with the community. This summer, the values of personal development and the Writing Center as a support group were emphasized as a result of two events. First, at the Chinese-food meeting, Crystal talked about an illness in her family which has been hard on her and how the Writing Center has helped her through this difficult time in her life. This inspired a tutor who has the illness shared from his perspective at the lake house. Many new members of the community, including the director, reacted by sharing how impressed they were that the Writing Center community forms such a supportive environment that these two tutors would be comfortable sharing their tears with the group. These two pieces became a memorable example of the works of the Writing Center, reinforcing the values they express. When this final ritual of sharing is completed, it is clear that new tutors and old tutors feel comfortable as part of the same community; the distinctions of “old” and “new” are almost entirely done away with.

Conclusion

Ritualized reintegration is only one phase of tutors’ initiation into the Writing Center community, and initiation is only one of many social dynamics that shape the culture of the Writing Center. This understanding of the initiation process is useful to compare to tutors’ narratives of their transformation. It also demonstrates the values transmitted to new tutors, which in turn affects the way they tutor the college community. This transition period indicates that as the Writing Center continues to change, story-swapping and other traditions will continue, which will not only strengthen the community of tutors but make the Writing Center an effective institution for helping a diversity of writers.

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