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## Letters (3)

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So, it seems doubly odd to move into discussion of “Master” classes in music as a viable model for the “handing down” of knowledge (141). Granted, they disclaim slightly when they say such practices can “run amok,” but they suggest that if writing centers know enough about these practices, they can “prevent abusive application” (142). To say that it is all right for an art studio instructor to “[dab] some pigment on the student’s canvas and [transform] the impact of the picture” sounds like a strange way to characterize the interaction between tutor and student writer (143). Shamoon and Burns assume that the transference of that experts’ “domain-specific repertoire” (143) will insure some kind of “cognitive shift” necessary for emulation and learning (143). Thus, I think that when they shift to using Muriel Harris’ experience with a novice writer—i.e., her modeling and reversing roles strategy—they are making false comparisons. Professor Harris’ modeling invention as *she* does it is very different than dabbing paint on a student’s canvas.

All in all, though they conclude by claiming writing centers need *both* nondirective and directive tutoring, the models they choose do not make that a strong argument for me.

Cynthia Haynes  
University of Texas-Dallas

*Linda Shamoon and Deborah Burns Respond*

We would like to respond to several points raised by Cynthia Haynes-Burton in her letter about our article, “A Critique of Pure Tutoring.”

Haynes-Burton begins her letter by objecting to our description of current tutoring practices as rooted in “orthodoxy” and based on “codes of behavior” that are “accepted as articles of faith.” She suggests that our language “not only denigrates current and successful writing center pedagogical theory, it denigrates religion itself.” We are a little amused by her reading of our text. We used the religious references metaphorically to illustrate that many writing centers adhere to a set of tutoring practices out of ideological zeal rather than out of critical practice. That ideology is rooted in process-centered pedagogy and takes little account of disciplinary contexts or current work in social and new rhetorical theory. We have problems with the faith many current practitioners place in the process paradigm, with its universalizing tendencies and treatment of texts as monuments to individualism. Faith is an integral part of religion, but it has little place in teaching and tutoring. So, to faithfully follow the process paradigm without considering alternatives that would expand writing center tutoring seems to be an

attempt (protests notwithstanding) to maintain dominant practices.

In another area Haynes-Burton surprises us. She questions the legitimacy of our claim that modeling and direct tutoring can promote the “cognitive shift necessary for emulation and learning.” There is a wealth of research on expertise, pointing to the ways in which modeling and direct instruction gives access to specialized knowledge and practices. Cheryl Geisler’s *Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise* is particularly informative along this line of thought, as is Robert Brooke’s “Modeling a Writer’s Identity: Reading and Imitation in the Writing Classroom” (both cited in our article). Both sources confirm that when professionals model their expertise for students, they demonstrate how to do important disciplinary tasks. This modeling inevitably touches upon other tasks, behaviors, and attitudes, and upon ways of interpreting the world. In other words, modeling allows professionals to display their expertise in all of its complexity. Modeling, whether it be Muriel Harris’ side-by-side demonstrations or more interventionist modes, delivers a whole, complex package of being a professional—of being a writer, of being a painter, of being a musician, and so on. When students latch onto ways of doing and seeing, then they are probably making a cognitive shift that is central both to self-expression and participation in a community.

Obviously, our critique of indirect tutoring is partly based on observing tutoring in disciplines other than writing. Haynes-Burton suggests that our examples from art and music are unconvincing. We, on the other hand, find it hard not to be convinced when students who are engaged in an act of creative production receive genuinely helpful one-on-one tutoring—whether that tutoring aids in the creation of a painting, a piece of music, an essay, or a paper. In each case the student is trying to paint, write, or play not just anything, but something within the context (confines) of a particular classroom or disciplinary community. In addition, most of the time, the instructor, tutor, and student value the products and creative expressions of that community, valuing them enough to want to participate in and add to them. In each case, however, there is a lot to learn about expressing oneself in that community. There are modes of expression that make sense and communicate to others, there are traditions that resonate with meaning, and there are extremely sophisticated techniques that take lots of practice to master (yes, master). We are interested in the many ways in which that learning can be facilitated. When we look at art and music, we see that sometimes direct tutoring and modeling are very helpful.

Now, this line of thought does lead both Haynes-Burton and us to questions concerning individual expression, communal change, and issues of power. As practitioners of composition studies in America, we are all particularly sensitive to these questions. We offer a three-part answer. The first part of our answer may seem contradictory but is, nonetheless, true.

To begin with, mastery of the forms of communal expression creates the possibility for individual expression. For example, when a musician learns the typical scales, chord progressions, and patterns of sound in a particular kind of music, then she has something with which to express herself musically; she will be able to express and communicate an enormous range of feelings or musical ideas. Without these forms of expression she can express little. Similarly with paint, brush and canvas; similarly with words, sentences, paragraphs. But the student is not born knowing these forms of expressions. Typically, she learns them or absorbs from the innumerable examples around her. However, in everyday practice these forms of expression are not usually self-consciously articulated, even by expert practitioners. Direct tutoring and modeling, on the other hand, *does* articulate and highlight crucial aspects of expression, thus helping to facilitate both mastery and expressive performance.

Second, we maintain that no community is isolated, and disciplinary or expressive communities are particularly subject to change. In fact, in expressive communities change occurs rapidly when new people join in and are granted access to the means of expression. New people bring with them their ways of expressing themselves and their insights about established practices. The question is, how do we make the means of expression most accessible? As writing teachers and tutors, we maintain that sometimes we could bring in the most marginalized people faster by modeling and direct tutoring than by indirect approaches. Modeling and direct tutoring lay bare the communally respected techniques of expression while offering support during the first hesitant attempts at practice. With modeling and direct tutoring, newcomers would not need to guess at what techniques are needed to participate.

Third, Haynes-Burton suggests that we ignore issues of power among professors, tutors, and students. There is no doubt that issues of power arise in our analysis of teaching, tutoring, and disciplinary access. However, issues of power are in the system itself. We did not invent them and we are not exacerbating them by our analysis. In fact, one way to lay bare and deal with power relationships is to explain the system and lay bare the means of access. The current position of writing centers with their general—or more accurately “naive”—tutoring does not necessarily empower the student vis-a-vis the system or vis-a-vis disciplinary writing. It is our notion that a social, discipline-based pedagogy of writing and tutoring would include a specialist, knowledgeable tutor who might be trained and ready to discuss with students and with professors issues relating to modes of expression, communication, access, and power. We view this as one of the concrete changes that might occur in writing center practice if we really explore and put into action notions of writing from social and disciplinary perspectives.

Finally, Haynes Burton claims that we think modeling and direct

tutoring should replace current tutoring practices. This is not the case; in our first paragraph we state, “. . . we are currently struggling with radically oppositional practices in tutoring, and we are contemplating the places of these oppositional practices in our writing center.” However, given the current situation in writing centers, where one kind of pedagogy rules, we are forced to make a very strong case for the legitimacy of alternative practices. In doing this, we follow in the tradition of those composition scholars who look closely at the behavior of successful writers in the “real world” and point out where real-world experience clashes with composition theory. Simply put, we can no longer ignore the fact that many successful writers have benefited from direct tutoring, and we ought to take a fresh look at what this might mean for current writing center practice. Haynes-Burton and other readers may bristle while reading our article, choosing to take a metaphor literally or to misconstrue our words on hierarchy as an endorsement of slavery. Rather than bristle in reply, we invite our critics to join us as we probe further into areas that “go without saying” in composition studies, including concepts of originality, plagiarism, imitation, interpretation, self-expression, and ways to tutor writing.

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