Nathalie Singh-Corcoran

Review: *How We Teach Writing Tutors* edited by Karen Gabrielle Johnson and Ted Roggenbuck, with Digital Editor Crystal Conzo

How We Teach Writing Tutors (2019), edited by Karen Gabrielle Johnson & Ted Roggenbuck, digitally edited by Crystal Conzo, and published by *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, marks a first for the writing center community: the first fully online book devoted to writing center scholarship. In their foreword, the editors indicate that an open-access, writing center-focused, digital edited collection (DEC) is overdue because writing center professionals have long faced barriers to accessing scholarship (e.g., journal subscriptions are expensive; not all libraries subscribe to the relevant databases). The editors also explain that because of the potential to reach a wider audience, open-access publications such as *How We Teach Writing Tutors* could lead to more scholarship from a more diverse writing center community, including global writing center scholars. I'll add one other reason to appreciate the DEC: the abbreviated time to publication, especially in contrast to a print book.

While the DEC's implications are wide-reaching, *How We Teach Writing Tutors* was born of a more practical exigency: Johnson and Roggenbuck had more publishable submissions then they could include in their September/ October 2017 *WLN*, guest-edited issue "What We Believe and Why: Edu-

cating Writing Tutors." In this respect, and within the body of book-length writing center scholarship, *How We Teach Writing Tutors* is somewhat akin to Susan Lawrence & Terri Zawacki's *Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Support Graduate Writing* (2018). *Re/Writing the Center* was also born of a *WLN* guest-edited issue, and like *How We Teach Writing Tutors*, some of the chapters are extensions of the original *WLN* issues. Both collections contain ample literature reviews, reflective-practitioner pieces, and mixed-methods research. But the two collections differ in overall emphasis, audience, and mode. *Re/Writing the Center* focuses on graduate student writers and is for readers whose centers already support or are about to support that population. *How We Teach Writing Tutors* is much broader in scope: the 18 chapters cover 11 different topics. In addition to the three chapters addressing graduate student concerns, readers can expect to find chapters discussing new director professional development, writing center certification, philosophies of tutoring, theories informing tutoring practice, tutor professional behavior, antiracism, tutoring online, multimodal/multimedial tutoring, multilingual writing support, and cross-program tutor training. In addition, the DEC is not bound by the medium of print, and so the 32 authors of the chapters make use of video, audio, images, and hyperlinks.

Digital Potluck

In *How We Teach Writing Tutors*, there's a little something for everyone: international and US administrators, tutors, staff, and other stakeholders. The collection is a kind of digital potluck, and I think that was the goal. After all, the theme of the collection—tutor education—is broad. It encompasses the eleven topics covered in the DEC plus hundreds more. In an attempt to harmonize the numerous topics, Johnson & Roggenbuck divided the collection's chapters into three sections: Part I, External Concerns that Affect Tutor Education; Part II, Methods and Frameworks for Tutor Development; and Part III, Specific Foci within Tutor Education Programs. However, as I was reading the essays in the collection, I had a difficult time determining the logic behind the placement of essays. The DEC employs an organizational frame, but there is little editorial signposting suggesting the *why* behind the frame.

Editors typically set out their vision for an edited collection in their preface. They explain why the collection is needed, what gap it is filling, what questions it tries to answer, and how it's organized. Many of these rhetorical elements are missing from the preface to *How We Teach Writing Tutors*. Johnson & Roggenbuck explain the necessity of the medium but not of the content itself. To better orient readers to the collection, I wish the editors had provided brief explanations of each section or at least a sense of what they meant by *external concerns*, *methods*, *frameworks*, or *specific foci*—either in the preface itself or as

hover text. This critique isn't meant to be unkind, unappreciative of the editors' efforts, or to suggest the collection lacks value. In fact, I believe that readers will find *How We Teach Writing Tutors* useful for their own writing center contexts and that some of the articles are exemplars of their genre (more about those individual pieces later). I also raise this issue early in my review because this critique greatly influences how I've shaped my content going forward.

An Alternate Frame

As I was preparing to write this review, I began to understand one of the many challenges the editors must have faced when they were putting together the collection. How does one take eleven topics—graduate student concerns, new director professional development, writing center certification, philosophies of tutoring, theories informing tutoring practice, tutor professional behavior, antiracism, tutoring online, multimodal/multimedial tutoring, multilingual writing support, and cross-program tutor training—and organize them into broader content sections? I also faced my own set of challenges in writing this review. How could I show my appreciation for the collection and discuss it in a thoughtful manner? I thought it might help if I created an alternate organizational frame, a purely practical activity, so that I could more thoroughly discuss the content. However, upon completing the activity, I thought the reframing might also be helpful for *WCJ* readers as they engaged with *How We Teach Writing Tutors*, and so not only do I share my frame in a table below, but I also use it to construct the rest of my review.

The alternate frame is inspired by a table Holly Ryan shares in her lead article for *How We Teach Writing Tutors*, "First Things First: An Introduction to Administration at the New Director's Retreat." In this piece, Ryan generously offers readers her materials from the Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association's New Directors Retreat, an event akin to the International Writing Centers Association's Summer Institute, but tailored specifically to new members of the profession in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Toward the end of "First Things First," Ryan provides a two-column table in which she identifies frequently asked questions from new writing center directors in one column and readings that respond to those questions in a second column. Rather than provide questions in my table, I offer content categories and corresponding articles. I've identified three content categories for *How We Teach Writing Tutors*: 1) RAD Research on Tutor Education; 2) Reflexive Practice; and 3) Models for Tutor Education. This kind of methodological framing helped me anchor the articles in ways I could not with the original, broader framing.

As I formed the categories, I was influenced by Dana Driscoll & Sherry Perdue's (2012) "Theory, Lore, and More: An Analysis of RAD Research in the *Writing Center Journal*, 1980–2009" and Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, & Steve

Price's (2011) "Mapping Knowledge-Making in Writing Center Research: A Taxonomy of Methodologies." In Table 1, the articles in the first category, RAD Research on Tutor Education, all respond in some way to Driscoll & Perdue's call for replicable, aggregable, and data-supported scholarship while those in the second category exemplify Ligget, Jordan, & Price's explication of "Reflexive Practice."

Table 1

RAD Research on Tutor Education	
These articles all provide research on tutor education that situates individual topics within the context of scholarship on the field. They each offer a detailed methods section and explain the rationale for selection of participants (if methods involved human subjects). They offer a discussion and implications of results, and they each may also nod to future work (Driscoll & Perdue, 2012, pp. 21–23).	• Julia Bleakney, "Ongoing Writing Tutor Education: Models and Practices" • Russell Carpenter, Scott Whiddon, & Courtnie Morin, "Understanding What Certifications Mean for Writing Centers: Analyzing a Pilot Program via Regional Organization" • Kelsey Hixon-Bowles & Roger Powell, "Self-Efficacy and the Relationship between Tutoring and Writing" • Mary Pigliacelli, "Practitioner Action Research on Writing Center Tutor Education: Critical Discourse Analysis of Reflections on Video-recorded Sessions" • Rebecca Crews & Katie Garahan, "The Role of the Tutor in Developing and Facilitating Writing Center Workshops" • Katrina Bell, "Our Professional Descendants: Preparing Graduate Writing Consultants"

Reflexive Practice *These articles are practitioner inquiry pieces that examine tutor education through a local and critical lens. They go beyond anecdote and measure practices against extant literature. Many of the writers of Reflexive Practice pieces also explore the social and political dimensions of tutor education as they reflect on their own beliefs and how they came to hold them (Ligget, Jordan, & Price, 2011, pp. 56-59).*	• Elisabeth H. Buck, "From CRLA to For-Credit Course: The New Director's Guide to Assessing Tutor Education" • Craig Medvecky, "Enter the Dragon: Graduate Tutor Education in the Hall of Mirrors" • Lisa Cahill, Molly Rentschler, Kelly Chase, Darby Simpson, & Jessica Jones, "Developing and Implementing Core Principles for Tutor Education: Administrative Goals and Tutor Perspectives" • Jared Featherstone, Rodolfo Barrett, & Maya Chandler, "The Mindful Tutor" • Kristina Aikens, "Prioritizing Antiracism in Writing Tutor Education"
Model Programs *These articles provide clear, pragmatic, and thorough descriptions of tutor education programs at work, and they provide insight into their program histories. Abundant resources are also available in accompanying appendices.*	• Holly Ryan, "First Things First: An Introduction to Administration at a New Directors' Retreat" • Crystal Conzo, "Exploring and Enhancing Writing Tutors' Resource-Seeking Behaviors" • Tom Earles & Leigh Ryan, "Teaching, Learning, and Practicing Professionalism in the Writing Center" • Jessica Clements, "The Role of New Media Expertise in Shaping Writing Consultations" • Dan Gallagher & Aimee Maxfield, "Learning Online to Tutor Online" • Katherine DeLuca & Hsing-Yin Cynthia Lin, "Developing a Multilingual and Interdisciplinary Writing Center: Reviewing Goals and Activities from the Graduate Writing Consultant Workshop" • Sarah Peterson Pittock & Erica Cirrillo-McCarthy, "Let's Meet in the Lounge: Toward a Cohesive Tutoring Pedagogy in a Writing and Speaking Center"

The categories and groupings are neither perfect nor absolute. In fact, some articles were more difficult to categorize than others. For example, I placed Conzo's "Exploring and Enhancing Writing Tutors' Resource-Seeking Behaviors" in the Model Programs category even though the research employs qualitative methods. But, taken as a whole, the article emphasizes the model of a tutor education *over* methods or reflexivity.

Other articles, such as Bleakney's "Ongoing Writing Tutor Education: Models and Practices," serve as excellent examples of their RAD genres. In her careful, mixed-methods study, Bleakney conducts a national survey and interviews members of the profession regarding their continued-tutor-education efforts. She concludes that any ongoing tutor education programs need to be clearly tied to initial tutor education, appropriately scaffolded, and collaborative at all levels. That is, tutors should take part in the design, delivery, and evaluation of any staff development.

Carpenter, Whiddon, & Morin's "Understanding What Certifications Mean for Writing Centers: Analyzing a Pilot Program via Regional Organization" also falls within the RAD category. In their mixed-methods study, the co-authors conduct both a survey and interviews to determine the efficacy of regional, writing center certification. They provide a clear, multi-stepped research process that could easily be replicated by other regionals. In fact, their more regional-certification-focus could especially be of benefit to international affiliates because the process and criteria for certification can be customized to serve diverse institutional contexts.

I highlight two articles in the Reflexive Practice category because the writers of each both emphasize and reflect on the social and political dimensions of tutor education: Featherstone, Barrett, & Chandler's "The Mindful Tutor" and Aikens's "Prioritizing Antiracism in Writing Tutor Education." In "The Mindful Tutor," Featherstone, Barrett, & Chandler explore the connections between meditation, mindfulness, and tutoring. They provide a thorough overview of the literature on meditation and on mindfulness, always with an eye toward writing center praxis. They explain how they integrate meditation and mindfulness in tutor education and argue that among other things, mindfulness and meditation help tutors further develop empathy, hone their focus, reduce stress, and develop an awareness of unconscious bias. As her title suggests, in "Prioritizing Antiracism in Writing Tutor Education," Aiken discusses how to advance antiracist writing center pedagogy. Like "The Mindful Tutor," "Prioritizing Antiracism" discusses relevant scholarship and its implications on writing center work. Aikens also talks about how the antiracist scholarship she includes in tutor education (productively) disrupts her staff's sense of Standard American English and themselves as users of it. She then offers guiding principles and resources for us to prioritize antiracist practices in our own centers. I especially appreciate all of the video content that is included

in the article: short videos explaining stereotype threat, code-meshing, and Jamilla Lyiscott's TED Talk on multiple Englishes.

It's not novelty, however, that I find most appealing in "The Mindful Tutor," "Prioritizing Antiracism in Writing Tutor Education," or any of the other articles I've placed in the Reflexive Practice category. Whenever I read such scholarship, I'm reminded of Kathleen O'Shaughnessy's (2004) *National Writing Project* resource, "Writing a Bicycle." She says, "I read books and articles by lots of teachers but not because I hope to find brand-new ideas in every text. I read them because each author has a unique way of looking at and talking about questions we all wrestle with" ("I have nothing new to say," para. 3). In other words, this kind of scholarship holds a magic mirror to our own spaces, and we get to see familiar ideas as they appear in someone else's writing center.

I would like to end this review by thanking the editors, Johnson & Roggenbuck, for starting a trend and curating a strong collection. *How We Teach Writing Tutors* is a solid first effort in the digital foray. More DECs are coming—*WLN* has two more in the works—and the genre will evolve. For example, I can imagine a collection full of multimodal essays more akin to articles we see in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. But in the end, *How We Teach Writing Tutors* does the same kind of thing a really good academic conference does—readers are left with plenty of good ideas to adapt to their own writing centers and even more ideas on which to ruminate.

References

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Nathalie Singh-Corcoran is Service Professor in the Department of English at West Virginia University and the Coordinator of the Eberly Writing Studio.