



Imagining the New Community: The Writing Center's Hidden Antagonisms after the Neoliberal Turn

Authors Tony Iantosca

anthony.iantoca@kbcc.cuny.edu

English Department | Kingsborough Community College (CUNY)

Abstract This paper reimagines writing center labor's place within the university's production of knowledge after neoliberalism. This positioning of writing center labor reveals parallels and affinities with the "feminized" characteristics of service sector labor, a type of work which has proliferated after deindustrialization. While I explore dimensions of writing center work that this positioning reveals, important limits to these parallels emerge, and within and beyond these descriptive limits I advocate redefinitions of writing center labor. Accordingly, I assert that this work escapes economic measure while embodying an ethos that is antithetical to the neoliberal imaginary's individualist assumptions. The constantly shifting, emergent identities of students and tutors, alongside the writing center's activation of the feminist care ethic through social production, are what characterize this challenge to forces shaping the university in the context of neoliberalism.

Keywords Writing Centers | Neoliberalism | Service Sector | Affective Labor | Knowledge Production



www.imagojournal.it





1. Introduction

The dominant figure that neoliberal ideology and policy encourages, the imagined embodiment of the values and concerns of neoliberal values and ethos, has become what Lazzarato (2013:14) has called “the entrepreneur of the self,” an individual who transforms into an enterprise that “manages skills as economic resources to be capitalized.” With this figure as our ideal, we measure actions against a market-oriented calculus that determines their utility by examining how well our decisions serve the individual interest. To the extent that there is a social framework, it is composed of enterprising individuals foregrounded by this imagined ideal. It is on this basis, and upon this ideological edifice, that many concrete material changes have been made to our everyday lives over the last forty years.

One site of value production where this imaginary figure is especially dominant is within American colleges and universities, which have come to more closely resemble other sites of value production after deindustrialization and the rise of neoliberalism. In particular, those who work in academic support services, such as the tutors that work in writing centers, increasingly share characteristics, practices and working conditions with service sector workers. Similar to what many have called the “feminized” character of the labor that takes place within such sites of value production, I believe that recasting the labor of the writing center tutor can uncover the emergent figure of the caring worker whose labor actively calls into question the individualized, autonomous value-producer imagined as the ideal embodiment of neoliberal values. Thus, in seeking the affinities the writing center tutor shares with service-sector labor, an entirely different figure can begin to influence who we imagine ourselves to be beyond these sites of value production. It is my hope that this imagined figure that emerges carries an inherent antagonism to neoliberal values and ethos. As one site of value-production in a larger socioeconomic landscape, the university-based clash between these two figures—the acquisitive, self-interested individual on the one hand, and the inherently social and caring identity of the tutor on the other—mirrors conflicting conceptions of the person at work in our society today. This clash is especially important considering that, among what is often produced and encouraged in sites of value production today, a specific type of subjectivity or disposition has emerged as one of the most significant outputs or products in the paradigm of cognitive capitalism. To more fully explore the conflicts between these two imaginaries, and the emergent figure the tutor’s labor represents, it will be necessary to first situate readers in the dominant debates taking place in university writing center studies over the last three or four decades, as historically these debates run parallel to the ravaging of the public sphere wrought by neoliberal policy.

For audiences outside of the American context, the definition of the writing center, and the specific types of work that occur there, may be unfamiliar. The writing center is an on-campus site where students who are struggling with writing in any discipline



can sign up for tutoring, and where tutors and students work to develop the student writer's skills over time, emphasizing the importance of the student's process rather than an individual paper or assignment. A certain consensus about this "process over product" approach has emerged over the last thirty-five years, a consensus grounded in one of our field's foundational texts, Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center" (1984). As we will see, the political and social implications of these debates, and how the tutor's work can be positioned in contrast to the neoliberal imaginary's ideal knowledge-products, are ripe for investigation.

In the roughly thirty years since North's essay, subsequent scholars have continuously attempted to describe, define or delimit the bounds of our work in various ways. At times, scholars carve out a space for the writing center within the university, positioning tutors between professor and peer (Harris, 1995), while in other cases they attend to the scope and limits of tutoring practice in the interest of developing approaches that can improve our work. However, as Elizabeth Boquet and Neal Lerner (2008:182) have recently remarked in their discussion of the centrality of these concerns in general—and of Stephen North's famous axioms in particular—a great deal of scholarship that has appeared in the *Writing Center Journal*, has dealt primarily with "an application of ideas or theories developed outside of writing center work to one-to-one tutoring." Scholars in this tendency emphasize the day-to-day practice of tutoring without expanding how we see our work in a broader social, economic or political context. Laura Greenfield's (2019: 10) book *Radical Writing Center Praxis: a Paradigm for Ethical Political Engagement* is a welcome departure from this trend, as she forwards an explicitly political agenda for writing center theory and practice, one that necessitates a wider scope that considers scholarship "by those engaged in various social movements, transformative projects, and varied disciplinary research."

In light of Boquet and Lerner's observation of the limited scope of writing center scholarship, and in response to Greenfield's rallying cry to broaden our scope, what follows is an attempt to do just that. Accordingly, I examine recent theories on the feminization of service sector labor in the wake of deindustrialization and neoliberalism. In doing so, I hope to recast the figure of the writing center tutor by examining what the rise of neoliberalism and the service sector economy over the last forty years allow us to see about the subversive and liberatory potential of the ethos of tutoring work, an ethos which I believe can be captured when the tutor's work is reimagined to consider its caring disposition as well as its stance towards knowledge production as social, collaborative and collective. Each of these adjectives is used to illustrate the extent to which this reimagined figure of the tutor presents a challenge to the acquisitive and entrepreneurial individual to which the neoliberal imaginary, and its concrete policies, encourage us to adhere. As the ideal service sector worker increasingly embodies and enacts traits normally associated with care work—traits which bear a striking resemblance to those encouraged by writing center scholars—I



will also explore the parallel transformations of colleges and universities and the American workplace, as well as the limited descriptive ability of these parallels.

It is important to acknowledge the notable exceptions to the limited scope to which Boquet, Lerner and Greenfield call our attention. In contrast to the data-driven inquiries that have dominated writing center studies in recent years, which make our work more legible to a market-based framework, authors such as Harry Denny (2008), Nancy Grimm (2009), Jackie Grutsch-McKinney (2013), and Randall Monty (2019), have done important work that considers the more social and political dimensions of tutoring work. In particular, Grimm (2009:24) has stated that writing center practitioners and scholars can encourage students to view relations of power as constructed, and from there to critique those relations, “provided that they are willing to adopt new conceptual frameworks.” Similar in spirit to the work of these authors, what I hope to do is slightly different in that I show that the broad economic and political changes to which Monty (2019: par. 8-19) refers in his recent *Praxis* article have ramifications for how our field defines and imagines the role of a tutor, within the institutional contexts of colleges and universities, but also within the broader social field these societal changes have produced. In turn, the reimagined figure of the tutor I have in mind has broad resonance for our society’s social imaginary. Not only is the writing center *not* some separate space from the rest of the university, but as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (1999: 155, 161) have argued, the university cannot be considered as a separate space from other sites of value production in our economy and society. The work that occurs in our centers should not be seen as separate from value-producing contexts both within and beyond the university. Both the broad changes that have marked economies and societies in the global north over the last thirty to forty years and the particular changes in the character and meaning of labor should be considered legitimate for investigation and relevant to the work of the writing center tutor.

The first section of this paper will define neoliberalism in an effort to bring scholarship on the topic to bear on corresponding changes to the university’s orientation towards the use of knowledge and its adoption of neoliberal rhetoric and ideology. I will show how these historical shifts have had deleterious effects on what we imagine the university’s purpose and potential to be. From there, it will be easier to situate the writing center within the social and political background mentioned above. With that context in mind, I will use Harney and Moten’s (1999) book chapter “Doing Academic Work” as a framework for a more specific examination of correlations between recent writing center scholarship on affective/emotional labor and the rise of the service sector economy in the deindustrialized American landscape. Considering how colleges and universities often undercompensate tutors, it is important to recognize the broader devaluing of what Cristina Morini (2007: 42-43) among others has called “feminized labor.” Finally, I will show how these correlations with service sector labor do not capture all of the salient dimensions of writing center labor, which shares a great deal of the motivations and ethics of caring labor. In doing so, I look at



the ways in which tutoring work already carries an inherently political potential, as it produces not merely marketable skills in students and tutors but also potentially antagonistic subjectivities. These can in turn undermine the dominant values of individualism and self-interest, and can call into question the self-interested figure that neoliberal policy encourages as an ideological justification. I conclude by examining how this coproduction of both knowledge and subjectivity can also undermine dominant assumptions about identity and knowledge production. Each of these characteristics of writing center labor may resemble the tensions and antagonisms at work in many fields after the neoliberal turn.

2. Defining the Neoliberal University

Before discussing how the writing center is situated within, and affected by, the neoliberal corporate university, it will be necessary to review briefly the term “neoliberal” itself. Much has been written on the matter, but perhaps the most well-articulated definition of neoliberalism comes from economic geographer David Harvey. Neoliberalism, in his account, is an ideological, economic and political project that posits unrestrained “individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” as the primary guarantors of “human well-being.” (Harvey, 2005: 2). The material and economic effects of neoliberalism on American society and culture rely in large part on ideological justifications, which themselves come to appear more and more “natural” the more acutely the economic effects are felt. The restructuring of social programs to emphasize the personal responsibility of beneficiaries, the privatization of previously public services, the appending of conditions to previously-guaranteed economic rights, are all tangible effects of neoliberalism that reinforce their legitimacy through a rhetorical framework that imagines individuals, as opposed to societies, to be responsible for their own well-being. The effects on the discourse are often subtle but significant, and can be noted in a change in the language we use to discuss public democratic processes in terms borrowed from the private sector. For example, sociologist Lester K. Spence (2015:xxiv) has written that it is common to hear people describe public officials we have elected or voted out as hired or fired, casting the voter as a miniature boss rather than a political actor. A similar rhetoric is operative when politicians encourage taxpayers to see publicly funded institutions as entities they have a right to measure and restrict by virtue of their financial “investment” alone, giving city, state and federal governments the ability to “restrict and expand funding at the shift of political or economic winds.” (Denny, 2008: 144). Neoliberalism’s ideological and discursive effects thus translate into economic and material ones, directly influencing whom we imagine ourselves to be as social and political subjects.

Colleges and universities, especially public ones, are prone to these effects of the neoliberal turn, as are the writing centers that operate within them. However, examining the literature on writing centers over the past forty years, the period during



which most scholars agree neoliberalism firmly took hold, comparatively little has been written on the effects this shift has had on writing center work. As noted, Denny (2008) and Monty (2019) represent welcome exceptions to this, but in the main much writing center scholarship disregards the economic, material and ideological positioning of tutoring work in larger societal trends. For me, a study that takes as its framework the corporatized neoliberal academy is important because, as the Academic Coordinator at the community college writing center where I work, I have noticed that the students with which our tutors interact on a daily basis are often the most vulnerable in society, and often come directly from the communities most ravaged by neoliberal policy. Boquet (1999) has shown how writing centers began to proliferate at colleges and universities across the United States after the movement towards open admissions allowed greater numbers of disadvantaged students to attend college, many of whom were seen by these institutions as lacking the necessary literacies to succeed in higher education. This expansion roughly correlates with neoliberal policy's early experiments. As we will see, since the neoliberal turn and the attendant corporatizing of the university, it is often those who are most essential to the university's basic functioning, such as writing center tutors and adjunct writing instructors, whose labor is the least valued and whose positions have been made the most tenuous.

An examination of the character of writing center labor in this context, and the broader effects on the daily work writing tutors perform, follows below. But here I would like to turn to the specific marks neoliberalism continues to leave on the university in order to firmly establish that the institutions within which writing centers are situated share some of the same burdens other workplaces – especially those in the public sector – share in the wake of the neoliberal turn. Examining the tension between material and structural realities of the corporate university, Monty (2019: par. 17) writes that a “central contradiction of neoliberalism” and of its emergence in the discourse of the neoliberal academy, is that as an ideology it “preaches individual success but remains reliant on overt actions of public support.” Here, Monty connects the rhetoric that the neoliberal imaginary makes possible with the material contradictions that emerge when this rhetoric translates into structural changes at public colleges and universities. At the publicly funded community college where I work, this rhetoric is evident when high-level administrators encourage professors as well as writing center staff to emphasize to their students the concept of the “growth mindset” should these students be faced with academic difficulty. It is notable that rather than encouraging faculty to help students critically examine the economic and political structures that inhibit the well-being of our students and their communities, we are instead asked to place the burden of success on the individual student's mindset, thus reifying the idealized figure on which the neoliberal imaginary rests. Placing the emphasis on individual responsibility in the context of a public university that has been subject to neoliberal reform has the ideological effect of justifying broader material changes, such as funding cuts to academic programs and centers.



Among the changes to which our college has been subject is the increased reliance of certain programs on private grant funding in the wake of budget cuts. As the administration at our university has evidently chosen not to raise the wages of writing center tutors beyond the state-mandated minimum, writing center administrators have had to rely on private grants to retain certain tutors who may have otherwise left for more secure employment. All the while, we have been asked, like many writing centers, to prove our economic feasibility, a trend which Denny (2010: 144) writes indicates “the influence of corporate-style management discourses and philosophy on college education.”

The effects of this discourse and philosophy on the subjective experience of attending college have been shown to have ramifications for how students understand the role and purpose of education in society more broadly. Referring to recent changes to the Danish educational system, Risager and Thorup write specifically of the Study Progress Reform, which sought to shorten the amount of time students spend in degree programs and courses by automatically signing them up for exams and future classes and “by contractually committing the universities to shorten students’ study periods.” The authors note that in spatial terms – that is, with regards to its position in the larger society – the university is here reimagined as a “stepping stone or relay station between education and...the labour market and employment.” (Risager and Thorup, 2016: 12). Temporally, students are encouraged to move as quickly as possible through their study programs, and to adopt this “stepping stone” view towards their own education, and towards the time they spend on it. This changes the peculiar experience of time that may have once pervaded the space of many universities, an experience of time significantly *not* concerned with outside market forces, but with the value of study and the joy of inquiry regardless of speed and efficiency demands that so dominate the labor of many workers in other sectors (Risager and Thorup, 2016: 13). Thus, the spatiotemporal positioning of an educational institution, and how we conceive of its functioning, can have direct effects on the subjective experiences students have during the course of their study.

At the college where I work, our tutors regularly meet with students enrolled in a program similar in spirit to the Danish “Study Progress” reform, called ASAP. This program provides financial help to students’ tuition costs, as well as free access to public transportation, through money from both public grants and a conglomeration of four private foundations. However, the state’s Executive Budget cut \$2.5 million from ASAP in the 2018-19 fiscal year (Ackerman and Wright, 2018: 8). This funding gap is likely to increase the program’s dependence on private foundations. That the program must rely on the benevolence of private foundations to assist low-income students at a public institution reveals yet another instance of market-like constraints imposed on education. Efficiency demands trickle down: students are obligated to maintain full-time status and graduate within two years, often taking summer and winter semester courses to do so. Thus, students who are most in need are not afforded the “luxury” of viewing academic time as inherently valuable, precluding the possibility of a more



open, exploratory and inquisitive approach to education and replacing this potentially antagonistic approach with one that centers the career-focused, entrepreneurial individual as its ideal. In the marketing rhetoric found on ASAP's website, students are referred to as investments, a metaphor in which students become capital from which this program, and its benefactors, expect to see returns. Risager and Thorup's (2016: 12-13) spatiotemporal shifts in the public understanding of education are evident in the ideology suggested by the rhetoric this program employs as well as in its funding streams.¹

In many ways, writing centers suspend the expectations that are dominant in other spaces at colleges and universities, providing tutors and students (and those who study them) an experience of a unique spatiotemporal dimension that is not possible in other sites on campus. This more open experience of time is at odds with orientations towards study time embodied in the image of the acquisitive, efficient and career-obsessed individual encouraged by market-oriented student support programs that promote such neoliberal ideals as the "growth mindset." In contrast to other sites on campus, a slower, more deliberative time predominates in writing centers, as the tutorial session's orientation towards efficiency takes cues from the directions in which lines of inquiry lead rather than from externally imposed efficiency demands. Tutors and students involve themselves and each other in open-ended exploratory discussions about topics around which assignments are organized. Of course, time restrictions on sessions still exert pressure on tutors and students, but many tutors can attest to the feeling that time's passing is often dictated by shifting targets, unpredictable though fruitful turns in conversation. By contrast, in the wake of the reforms to the Danish university system, Risager and Thorup (2016: 12-13) note that the implicit view of education embedded in this restructuring is that study is only worth something insofar as it can be economically valorized *after* the awarding of a degree, a view that sees the university and its time as simply another place for the production of a yet-to-be realized value. It is the individual student's responsibility to adhere to these new guidelines, to speed up the time they spend on academic labor in the broader societal production of skilled, marketable laborers, and, in so doing, to view their education as an endeavor whose purpose is to reify the self-interested figure neoliberal policy imagines as its ideal subject.

As we will see in the next section, tracing these developments is an important step to understanding the affinities writing center work shares with other sectors of the economy marked by neoliberalism, and to situating the labor of the tutor within value production in society as a whole. This positioning is especially clear in light of the frequent invocation of students as "paying customers," a conflation that further

¹ It is important to note that I am not questioning the efficacy of such a program, nor am I questioning the genuinely good intentions of those who work for it. I believe that a critical examination of this program, however, can illuminate in concrete terms the extent to which public colleges and universities have been marked by the neoliberal turn.



indicates the affinities tutoring work may share with sectors in which emotional labor, care work and service work have all convened to generate a new type of laborer. However, the definitions, contours and resonances of this labor are not exhausted by its subsumption into the corporate university. Specifically, tutoring labor has the potential to create intellectual, critical and often emotional experiences and subjectivities, which have resonance and import beyond economic measure for both tutors and students and for our society and culture more broadly.

3. Service Sector Work and Academic Labor: the Role of the Tutor

Although it may be difficult to imagine for many academic workers who likely see as a distinguishing feature of their labor its individual character, Harney and Moten (1999: 155-156) attempt to disabuse us of this misperception by emphasizing both the sociality of academic work and its social position in the production of value in society. Thinking the similarities to, and congruities with, other types of productive labor, the authors denote two types of “products” that leave the university: the knowledge that researchers and academics produce (for the private sector, and for the government) and the “student product.” The latter is enmeshed with notions of “job readiness, of relevance, of political correctness, of critical thinking, of higher education” which, with course tracks such as business writing or arts administration, constitute the product for which firms and taxpayers place orders (Harney and Moten, 1999: 162). Although emanating from a different political perspective, Grimm (2009: 23) more recently has forwarded a similar analysis, noting the writing center’s role in answering economic demands for better writing in workplace settings. In this sense, the writing center’s place in the production of value – whether that value is expressed as a marketable skill or a subjectivity trained in market ideals of efficiency – is clear. Similarly to other value producing institutions and firms, the field of writing center studies has often adopted management techniques that are specific to a new type of service sector labor on which those firms depend. The goal is the production of specific types of knowledge in specific types of subjects. Echoing these sentiments, Federici and Caffentzsis (2007: par. 1) write in reference to the concept of the edu-factory that “as was the factory, so now is the university.”

The writing tutor would seem to occupy a similar position as the service sector worker with regards to the corporate university’s process of knowledge production. Furthermore, historically speaking, the proliferation of service sector work in the wake of deindustrialization and the expansion of writing centers in colleges and universities roughly correlates. Discussing her experience as an assistant director of two upstate New York writing centers, Dani Nier-Weber (2017: 104) has written that the students each center tutored were attending school to “create for themselves new opportunities after regional industries and other venues for local employment had diminished or



vanished altogether.” When production of knowledge does not necessarily run as smoothly as had been planned, writing tutors are there to service the needs of the students for whom access to academic discourse and the ability to subsist in a deindustrialized economic landscape has been challenging. The shift towards service sector work in previously industrialized countries in the global north is a trend that McDowell (2009: 30) has traced, noting that the jobs that expanded most rapidly in both Great Britain and the United States over the last thirty-five years have been jobs in the service sector. As noted, this thirty-five-year period is the same period during which Boquet traces an expansion of writing centers. Indeed, Nier-Weber (2017: 107) notes that multiple professional writing tutors and adjuncts at the college where she works “also worked a second job in retail—invariably Friday nights, it seemed—to make ends meet.” As in Nier-Weber’s observation, at our center a well-loved tutor (who recently moved on to other work) used to split her time between work at a big-box store and our center. These examples demonstrate the proximity of underpaid writing center work to other sites of service sector value production in the deindustrialized economy. This proximity can be further explored by examining parallel trends in how the two sites have incorporated the worker’s affective capabilities into the knowledge production process.

This subsumption of affect has been explored by McDowell’s (2009: 35) recent work on service sector labor. The author notes that service sector labor is often defined by copresence, that is, the presence of the recipient of the service and the producer of it in the same physical location. Also of note in her description of this type of labor is the necessity for an empathic emotional exchange in which the producer calls on her personality and her embodied presence to help the client in the production of services that must be produced and consumed in the same instance, or “delivered as they are produced” (McDowell, 2009: 30). In a passage that could well describe the interaction between writing center tutors and their tutees, McDowell (2009: 35) writes that the quality and satisfaction of the recipient of the service can largely hinge on whether or not the worker produces “an empathic emotional exchange” that leverages “‘people skills’ in close and often intimate encounters between workers and clients.” Later in her chapter on service sector labor, the author notes that work in consumer services coincides in many ways with work in “social services, such as health, welfare and education.” (McDowell, 2009: 38). Beyond the evident connection the author makes to the field of education, any writing center practitioner will recognize many of these features in everyday interactions between writing center tutor and tutee. Indeed, during professional development meetings this past fall semester, when tutors were asked to describe what they believed led to a successful session, they frequently pointed to empathic emotional exchanges as preconditions for student receptiveness and openness.

The affinities between service sector labor and writing center work, however, should not lead us to assume in this argument a devaluation of the work of the writing center tutor. Such an assumption would be problematic in what it would say about our



views of laborers in other sectors. This view would also reinscribe in our analysis a separation between the body and the mind, and perhaps between the emotion and the intellect, a risk that Caffentzsis and Federici (2007) have warned against when discussing the new place of the university in our society. Similarly, Cristina Morini and Andrea Fumagalli (2010: 235) write that studies of the transformed character of labor must not pursue “an approach whose only relevant object of study is the exclusive role played by knowledge.” Such insights are crucial for the argument I make, as they allow for the possibility that all work involves the *entire* worker, and that cognitive work is by no means superior to more embodied labor that also demands different but no less rigorous engagement from the worker. Indeed, in countering the supposed rationality of neoliberalism, a disruption of such rigid mind-body divisions can allow a different figure to come to the fore, one whose value is not determined on the basis of the efficiency of such divisions. The embodied presence necessary for the emotional-intellectual activity of tutors shows how these skills intertwine in a process of genuine human connection that likely exceeds the profit motive that neoliberal management and governance imagine all subjects share. Intrinsic value and genuine connection clearly escape the economic measure implied in the wage or in the production of future workers. As we will see, while the tutor occupies a singular position that the analogy to service sector work may help to partly illuminate—especially in structural terms, and in the tutor’s role in the larger production of knowledge—this analogy has descriptive and definitional limits when it comes to writing center work, which will in turn open the subversive potential writing center work carries.

Nonetheless, it is striking to note the similarities between management and marketing literature written specifically for service-sector encounters and recent articles that writing center scholars have written studying tutor talk and its ability to build rapport, trust, care and a collaborative, shared sense of purpose. For example, Jo Mackiewicz and Isabelle Thompson’s (2013) article on motivational scaffolding and rapport draws connections between motivational scaffolding and the linguistic study of politeness. The authors claim that rapport and politeness influence student comfort in tutoring sessions, and that comfort in turn influences whether the student reports that she has been satisfied with the writing center conference (Mackiewicz and Thompson, 2013:41). Mirroring this insight, Dwayne D. Gremler and Kevin P. Gwinner (2000: 83) write in an article called “Customer-Employee Rapport in Service Relationships” that because of its intangibility, the service interaction is often difficult for customers to evaluate in concrete terms and therefore “consumers often look to other cues, such as aspects of the interaction, in assessing service quality.” Similar to Mackiewicz and Thompson’s claims, Gremler and Gwinner (2000: 90) write that definitions of rapport should include whether the customer has reported feeling comfortable in the service relationship, as this comfort leads to a more valuable



interaction from the firm's perspective² As Mackiewicz and Thompson note, writing center tutors often want to discourage a student's interest in a good grade as the central motivation for the tutoring session. If such efforts to convince the student of the intrinsic rather than extrinsic value of tutoring are successful, then, just like the service sector interaction, the service can be difficult to evaluate outside of the impression that the interaction leaves on students. What Gremler and Gwinner (2000: 83) call "interpersonal bonds" in the context of the customer service relationship bear an uncanny resemblance to aspects and attributes of sessions that writing center scholars and practitioners regularly encourage, and are indeed desirable outcomes of a session that drive student satisfaction. The final parallel to note between marketing and customer service research and writing center scholarship is the fact that, as Gremler and Gwinner (2000: 82) point out, in the service interaction customer and service sector worker "work together to produce the service." Again, here we can notice a similarity with the writing center interaction, in which tutor and student collaborate "in mutual negotiations during agenda setting" and "participate actively in collaboration" (Mackiewicz and Thompson, 2013: 41-42). Throughout, Gremler and Gwinner, and Mackiewicz and Thompson subject the social and emotional capacities of workers to an economic evaluation, which hinges on its ability to prove these skills rational and useful according to market logics. Such studies and the market-friendly conclusions at which they arrive only make sense if we accept the neoliberal imaginary's ideal, entrepreneurial figure as the measure—or limit—of our social aspirations and desires. But we must also emphasize that these limits do not exhaust the potential for us to discover in these interactions an emergent subversion of purely economic thinking, an unintended consequence of the service sector's leveraging of affective bonds for profit.

Just as Moten and Harney, as well as Federici and Caffentzsis, have theorized a certain intertwining of the academic work of professors and researchers with other sites of economic value production beyond the university, we can notice here an affinity writing center tutors share with workers in the service sector, which has expanded as economies have deindustrialized. This further contributes to a reading of writing centers in broad social, political and economic terms. Exploring this positioning will also allow us to see more clearly what is at stake when scholars attempt to measure what I am convinced is unmeasurable, using empirical research to standardize writing center practice in a way that "prioritizes market mechanisms that emphasize productivity and performance measures." (Monty, 2019: para. 26). We must not be naïve about the likely uses of such research by the neoliberal university in the contexts outlined above.

² In developing their theories of rapport, the authors have relied on evaluations and analyses of this concept from a wide variety of contexts, including the teacher-student relationship. Here, a concrete connection between the academy and the economic strategies of private firms is in evidence.



4. Feminization of Labor and the Writing Center Tutor

In what follows, I recount two highly relevant moments from the weekly staff meetings that I convene as the writing center's Academic Coordinator. As I narrate these incidents, the reader may wonder about methodological considerations as well as about specific methods of data collection. In line with this paper's anticapitalist ethos, I have consciously chosen not to subject these anecdotes to any quantifiable data convention in an effort to place the features of the labor I will discuss outside of the framework imposed on us by the neoliberal university's drive to use such data to prove our economic value and feasibility. As an implicit dimension of the argument that tutoring labor exists both "within and against" the corporate university, to use Mario Tronti's famous framing, my refusal to attempt to quantify what I believe is impossible to measure in the first place coheres with that larger line of reasoning against "reason."

This past fall semester at the writing center, two moments from our weekly staff development meetings stood out. The first occurred when Amber³, a longtime professional tutor, brought up her relationship with a student who was becoming quite reliant on her for assistance with academic writing. Passionately narrating the twists and turns of the session's conversations—which centered on the student's use (or misuse) of time outside of school to work on assignments—Amber came to the realization that many of the students she sees in our center come to us because they do not have anyone else like a writing tutor in their lives. That is, many of the students who seek our services live in environments in which the type of academic support that we provide simply does not exist, often because those who would or could offer such support are themselves busy working low wage jobs.

The second moment came only a few weeks later, from a tutor, Tracy, whose walk-in student sought help with a response paper for a first-year English composition course. The student initially felt that he had very little to say about the issue about which the assignment asked him to write. After both tutor and student became increasingly comfortable with one another, Tracy asked about what emotions the paper's topic elicited for him. Talking through these emotions, she encouraged her student to write down these responses. After doing so, the student quipped, "Wow, you're like a therapist," an interesting metaphor that has often pervaded attempts to define the variety of roles a tutor occupies in writing center work.

Any writing center worker will have likely heard similar comments from tutors, scholars and colleagues. But these incidents stood out to me because of the dynamics that must have been present in each circumstance. In Amber's scenario, the overarching sentiment that prevailed during the session and that must have caused the student to rely on the tutor was one of trust, of safety and of an emerging sense of comfort in the midst of what is often an exceptionally uncomfortable process for

³ All names have been changed.



students: writing. Similar feelings were likely present in the session that Tracy related, although with her we must note that those feelings also produced in the student a tacit recognition of his own vulnerability before the tutor, a vulnerability that emerged from what is sometimes understood as a cold, dispassionate intellectual exercise – academic inquiry. In both scenarios the tutor must keep track of a multiplicity of affects and intellectual lines of inquiry, as well as actively attend to the many dimensions of the human with which they are physically present. This has historically been a task specific to women in the domestic sphere. It is in this confluence of intellect, emotion and embodied presence that we can note another unexamined aspect of writing center work, that connects it to labor performed in other sectors; namely, its similarity to what many scholars have termed “affective labor.”

Recently, an entire issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* was devoted to the affective dimensions of tutoring work, but neither the editors nor the authors of the articles in that issue mentioned the lively scholarly conversations occurring in disciplines outside of education, composition and rhetoric and writing center studies (Evertz and Fitzpatrick, 2018). This issue solicited submissions in response to an article by Daniel Lawson (2015: 26) in the same journal, in which he called for “the need for...more nuanced examinations of affect and emotion in the writing center.” There is, therefore, demonstrated interest in the affective dimensions of writing center work, but as I hope to show, the fields of political and social theory and writing center studies can be mutually enriched through a discussion of their congruities and points of departure. In addition, such a discussion is continuous with, and grows out of, the parallel character and development of service sector work and writing center work discussed above.

McDowell (2009) notes that as service sector labor has expanded, expectations about the character of the labor performed in the workplace have changed as well. It has become common for workers to be flexible in the face of rising precariousness, but also to exhibit deferential, empathic and caring traits in the interaction with customers and clients (McDowell, 2009: 39). As with dominant expectations for tutors, the worker’s self and personality are mobilized within the workplace, but as the author writes, it is not just any self that comes to characterize workers: it is a specifically “feminized” worker that has come to prominence within the context of the rise of neoliberal governance and service sector work (McDowell, 2009: 37). Here again, the specific attributes and characteristics workers are required to exhibit – empathy, compassion, care – could well describe the ideal tutor. Indeed, relatability, emotional intelligence, awareness of word choice, and a caring disposition are exactly the individualized skills that Morini (2007: 42) claims are exploited in the new precarious employment landscape. Thus, the feminization of labor can be understood as the incorporation into the marketplace of a paradigmatic worker whose characteristics and attributes are borrowed from the historical “baggage of female experience,” which has clearly benefitted the students in the sessions narrated above (Morini, 2007: 43). Morini and Fumagalli (2010: 243) call this worker paradigmatic in the sense that she embodies female characteristics “developed since her childhood” and combines these with her



formal education to exhibit characteristics that have become “explicitly required feature[s] of contemporary labour.”

Much of the female experience referred to here has historically been involved in domestic labor that is geared towards social reproduction, a term that refers to the labor that contributes to and supports the capacities of others to continue laboring. In short, this work underlies and supports all the other labor of a society.⁴ In a certain sense, the writing center’s capacity to support struggling learners and contribute to the production of future knowledge-workers makes the labor that occurs there essential in the reproduction of society. Here we can note another relevant overlap with scholarship on feminization, affective work and the deindustrialized economy: the most essential labor in society is often the least valued in economic terms. The devaluation of this labor imposes a situation on tutors in which they must fend for themselves in the absence of stable work and fair compensation, an individualization of public sector workers’ struggle to survive that is consonant with neoliberal ideology and rhetoric.

Skills such as active listening, performed in a way that is emotionally present and compassionate, and that, through a “propensity for care” puts the student at ease enough to share vulnerabilities with tutors like Amber and Tracy, are all indications of the extent to which theories of affect, emotional labor, and the feminization of labor can help us recast and reimagine the work of writing center tutors alongside the increasingly important role of affect in service sector labor. Add to this the positive attitude towards problem solving many writing center theorists and practitioners encourage, and we have a clear correlation between the everyday practice of the writing tutor and descriptions of labor that emerge from political and social theorists in the wake of deindustrialization. This fundamentally social labor involves the emotional capacities of tutors in the production of what Harney and Moten (1999: 162) call “the student-product.” The value of the student’s knowledge is obviously not immediately realizable. Morini and Fumagalli (2010: 236) stress that in cognitive-affective schemes of production, “what is exchanged is the ‘*potentiality*’ of the subject,” not her immediate knowledge but its potential to create value. In this sense, the production of writing skills rather than writing “products” in the tutoring center represents an emblematic instance of the production of a potentiality. Furthermore, the affective dimensions of our work are mobilized in the production of the types of standardized and commodified skills and knowledges students will need to exchange for wages, and the work of the writing center tutor is essential in this production, especially when meeting with students whose success in this regard is most “at risk.”

In the limits of this comparison, however, we can notice the formation of a subjectivity whose daily practice and guiding values are antithetical to the acquisitive

⁴ Feminist theorists such as Federici have long pointed out that much of this work remains unpaid, but the conceptual framework Morini develops helps us see its gradual devaluation in economic terms even as it has become formally incorporated into the marketplace.



individualist disposition imagined by neoliberal ideology and policy, which have fundamentally altered the position of the university in society. Indeed, in seeking to recast and reimagine the role of the tutor, we can also begin to imagine new possibilities for what capacities and abilities we value in the society we seek to shape. This will in turn allow us to construct a new, counter-imaginary figure whose work, as McDowell reminds us, is fundamentally collaborative in the face of the individualizing neoliberal assault. In the interest of furthering a new figure of the writing center tutor antagonistic to neoliberalism's idealized figures, I will highlight two aspects of the subjective orientation of the writing center tutor: the care ethic and the understanding of knowledge as a social and metastatic process, rather than as an individual product.

5. Dependency, Identity, Sociality: The New Figure of the Writing Center Tutor

The practice of care work and the theorization of a caring labor ethic have been studied most famously by feminist scholar Eva Feder-Kittay (2005). Below we will examine what defines this ethic and how it is exhibited by the writing tutor in a direction of altruistic energies and intellectual abilities towards an other. The correlations traced thus far between service sector work and writing center labor are not to be understood as an argument that sees these domains as identical. Indeed, though these correlations may exist, and may help us situate more concretely the place of writing center work in the postindustrial economic landscape, these connections begin to break down once we begin to examine the particular nature of writing center work. The primary concern in this work is driven by student interest, by all the experiential and academic knowledge the student brings to bear on a variety of interrelated concepts and topics, which the tutor caringly participates in shaping in a collaborative relationship. Whereas in care work and often in service sector work the *telos* of the work—and, as McDowell notes, what leaves the client with a good impression—is the wellbeing of the recipient of the care/service, in the case of the writing center tutor, the worker is concerned not only with the paper or assignment itself, but also with the transformation, no matter how small, of the student's inquisitive and critical faculties through the experience of being tutored. In advocating new frameworks for writing center work, Grimm states (2009: 24) that tutors "learn to denaturalize conditions they may have previously taken for granted." The student is necessarily transformed by interactions with such tutors. As we will see throughout this section, transformations like these occur in a fundamentally social way that makes clear an unspoken truth in many other spaces of academic activity: that knowledge occurs through interdependent relations among people, always social and always interactive, yet held within a socio-historical matrix that defines its bounds. As noted above, during the process of tutoring we can see how the subjectivities formed entail a



caring and social ethos that subverts the driving ideologies and rhetoric of the neoliberal individualist imaginary discussed throughout this paper.

In their chapter on academic labor, Harney and Moten (1999: 157) deconstruct the individualized self-image academics often bring to bear on their work, which “interferes with effective political agency predicated on collective self-recognition and representation.” Critics of a similar political persuasion, Morini and Fumagalli (2010: 238) write that in contemporary theoretical paradigms, individuals accumulate knowledge through a process that is “individual by definition.” Writing center theorist Christina Murphy (1994) has previously traced the history of the tension between individual and collective understandings of knowledge production in the field of composition and rhetoric, grounding this inquiry in its implications for writing center practitioners. Two theoretical traditions were prevalent at the time Murphy’s chapter was published: social constructionist theorists, who understand knowledge as a social product and emphasize collaboration in this production; and cognitive and psychoanalytic theorists, who find in social constructionism a significant lack of an emphasis on individual representations (Murphy, 1994: 28). In many ways writing center scholars and the field of composition and rhetoric are still grappling with this debate. Exploring this tension further, Murphy (1994: 30) points out that social constructionists never explicitly state how their theories and the practices thereby encouraged – which seek to undermine an individualist ideology – can ensure against the replacement of “hegemony of individuals” with the hegemony of the collective.

However, the understanding of this tension as a problem to be overcome is an illusion that can easily be explained if we as theorists and practitioners become comfortable with tension and struggle as such, with critique as an ongoing process and with the unresolved nature of any identity. We must remember that a multiplicity of differentiated identities are constitutive of the social and the collective; there is no collective without such a heterogeneous multiplicity. Speaking to this possibility, Stavrides (2019: 44) has written that emancipation, which incidentally is often an implicit or explicit goal of the social constructionist theorists to which Murphy refers, “may thus be conceived not as the establishing of a new collective identity, but rather as the establishing of the means to negotiate between emergent identities.” Writing centers suspend the expectations of the rest of academic space on university campuses, especially the classroom, and here the tutor occupies “a kind of liminal state between the institution and the student.” (Camarillo, 2019: par. 25). According to Stavrides (2019: 45), it is precisely in such liminal spaces that suspend the regular order of things that the creation of “emergent identities” is possible. Crossing the distances that separate identities, or, “visiting otherness” as Stavrides (2019: 120) phrases it, otherness must be accepted as such because the new identity – that of “academically proficient student” on the one hand or the shapeshifting roles a tutor must negotiate between on the other – has not yet been formed, and may never be fully completed. This radical analysis of identity formation in writing centers as threshold spaces may offer us a new imaginative framework with which to understand the tension in the individual-



collective binary that scholars like Murphy have noticed in the pedagogical literature. In addition, imagining the fluctuating and never-fully-settled identities of writing center tutors may provide us with an identity-imaginary that is especially resistant to neoliberalism's reliance on efficiency and standardization. It may also help shed new light on James Berlin's (1988: 489) contention that in the ideal writing pedagogy the "subject is itself a social construct that *emerges through* linguistically circumscribed interaction of the individual, the community and the material world." This emergence does not settle in the identity of the student as merely a worker, nor does it allow for the possibility that the writing center tutor is only ever a value-producer in a neoliberalized world. Equally significant is the experience of this type of metastatic exchange and its potential to give students a concrete experience of the sociality of production in general and the potential of this social nature to create subjectivities that see beyond the individualistic rhetoric of neoliberal ideology.

In practice, such theories can guide an approach to tutoring that calls into question the minimalist approaches Brooks (1991) and North (1984), among others, have encouraged, approaches that have become writing center orthodoxy. Clark and Healy (2001: 251-253) rightly call out the western individualist assumptions that underlie minimalist approaches to tutoring, a positioning that they claim relegates the tutor to a role that unquestioningly supports the aims and dominant assumptions of the professor's writing assignment, thus encouraging writing centers to "abandon the ground from which they are in a position to contest the larger political reality of which all of us—teachers, students and tutors—are a part." There are echoes here of Marilyn Cooper's (1994) view that tutors should understand their work as actively and collaboratively producing not only written assignments but also knowledge about writing that contests how ownership over ideas operates within colleges and universities. To the contestations of power and ownership encouraged by cultural studies scholars like Cooper we can add Stavrides's theories of emergent identities, as they further ground our objections to conceptions of knowledge production that imagine the fully autonomous individual as its necessary precondition. Significantly, the metastatic process of identity formation—a continuous, never completed process—can also guard against the hegemony of groups about which Murphy warns us.

As Murphy (1994: 31-32) notes, collaboration and sociality are not immune to cooptation by economic forces—witness the rise of corporate teamwork and horizontal relations of production in firms that remain essentially hierarchal and capitalist.⁵ But if tutors can encourage in students a meta-awareness of how tasks of a writing center session are performed, they can preclude cooptation by referring to the active, continuous experience of social production-as-process, as well as by developing what Cooper (1994: 58-62), invoking Gramsci's organic intellectual, has called an ongoing critique of static individualist conceptions of knowledge production. Tutors intervene

⁵ This tendency has been documented extensively by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2007).



in what otherwise appears to be an individual academic enterprise, adding to this a dialogic approach to the thinking process that allows students to develop potentially critical perspectives on the tasks of a given assignment, and to see possibilities within this process that move beyond the constraints of mere knowledge production. This sociality will also bring to the fore the centrality of dependency and interdependency to our shared human existence, positioning these concepts not as negative traits or personal failings but as foundational for collaboration. Indeed, the stigma around dependency is likely one that, deriving from the rhetorical and ideological forces that have restructured western economies over the last forty years, has prevented many students from coming into the writing center for fear of seeming “deficient.” The openness to vulnerability and dependency can allow for a full activation of the care ethic that I believe should inform compassionate writing center practice given the material and ideological forces positioned against them in society.

Caring labor is some of our society’s most essential work as it is the basis for the reproduction of all other laboring capacities. Neir-Weber (2017) shows how for both contingent faculty and writing center tutors, an overall desire to care underlies their labor. The labor of the latter is reflected in the title of her article: “The Other Invisible Hand,” a title which is meant to reflect that, just as caring is essential for society writ large, for colleges and universities writing center work, though often invisibilized, is “some of our most crucial work.” (Nier-Weber, 2017: 111). Noting that the driving desire for many underpaid writing center workers is “a compelling desire to help others,” Nier-Weber (2017:112) states that this desire can be understood in terms of feminist care ethics that see intrinsic merit and value in the act of caring for another. Philosopher Eva Feder Kittay (2005: 452) outlines the principles of this ethic, emphasizing the guiding assumptions that underlie such work. She states that an ethic of care sees values such as “the significance of connection, attentiveness, responsiveness to the needs of another, and...empathetic concern for the wellbeing of particular or concrete others” as embedded in the labor of care workers. An ethic of care regards “dependence as a central feature of human life and human relationships and interdependency rather than independence” as defining aims of a society. Our societal and cultural denial of this dependency in narratives about individual achievement and independence obscure this fact. Because our views of dependency are conditioned by “cultural and ethical understandings and by economic and political circumstances,” we often reject dependency in others and deny it in ourselves (Kittay, 2005: 452-453). Insofar as it foregrounds and attends to dependency, the work of the writing center tutor, though in some ways connected to service sector work, retains a subversive power not necessarily present in other sites of value production. It should be the work of writing center scholars and others to help articulate this subversive potential in the interest of bringing into focus an image of the writing center tutor that can counter and resist the ideal subject posited by the neoliberal imaginary. Although it has been formed by the same economic forces that have predominated in the rest of the neoliberal landscape, here we can note that the writing center has also become a



site in which the epistemological foundations of the individualist imaginary are contested daily, an unintended consequence of the marginality of our spaces within the corporatized university.

To reiterate a point made above, it is likely no exaggeration to speculate that many of those who decide against seeking help via a writing tutor have adopted the dominant understanding of the subject that Kittay discusses here. Thus, the confluence and intermingling of intellectual, emotional and embodied presences that are necessary for effective and compassionate tutoring provide for students a space and time in which they can explore their vulnerabilities, discuss what they know and what they have yet to learn, and develop new and often critical perspectives that can help inform their world view. This is especially true when reflection on the process of writing and the experience of tutoring as a fundamentally social site of the co-creation of meaning are encouraged by the tutor. The tutor in such a vision takes dependency as a clear fact, mobilizing a “compelling desire to care for others” during sessions in which conversations frequently seem to erase the boundaries between personal and academic, emotional and intellectual, with both tutor and student asserting and relinquishing agency in varying degrees. It is important to clarify that this focus on admitting and attending to dependency does not amount to a deficit conception of tutoring that disempowers students by positioning the tutor as one who holds access, power and knowledge and the student as one who receives these. Since dependency is not specific to any one group, but a *fundamental human condition*, everyone involved in the writing center interaction is marked by it. Indeed, the deficit model of tutoring itself may stem from an understanding of students as essentially lacking, and may resonate instead with the individualist values that position achievement, independence and individual acquisition as a norm, while placing those who depend on others as deficient and in need of repair.

Seen this way, tutoring labor distills the features of work service sector labor has taken on over the last forty years, foregrounding some of its most social and caring aspects, and adding to them new insights about dependency and interdependency. These are notions that the everyday rhetorical and material effects of neoliberalism discourage for students, hiding them behind concepts of individualism and competition and notions of success that say nothing about the structures that produce these values. While the production of marketable skills is likely an unavoidable feature of the tutoring process within the neoliberal university, I insist that something exceeds this productive mandate. It is in this excess that we can notice the liberatory potential of tutoring labor in particular, a potential that comes from its implicit and explicit orientations towards others and towards the production of knowledge in the context of the neoliberal university. The character of this labor has the potential to disrupt and counter the dominant conceptions of life encouraged by the neoliberal imaginary.



Bibliography

Boltanski, L & Chiapello, E. (2007), *The new spirit of capitalism* (Gregory Eliot, trans.), New York, Verso Books.

Bosquet, E. & Lerner, N. (2008), After "The idea of a writing center", *College English*, 71(2): 170-189.

Brooks, J. (1991), Minimalist tutoring: Making the student do all the work, *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 15(6):1-4.

Caffentzsis, G. & Federici, S. (2007), Notes on the edu-factory and cognitive capitalism, Retrieved from <https://eipcp.net/transversal/0809/caffentzsisfederici/en.html>

Caramillo, E. C. (2019), Burn the house down: Deconstructing the writing center as cozy home, *The Peer Review*, 3.1, Retrieved from: <http://thepeerreview-iwca.org/issues/redefining-welcome/burn-the-house-down-deconstructing-the-writing-center-as-cozy-home/>

Cooper, M. (1994). Really useful knowledge: a cultural studies agenda for writing centers. *The Writing Center Journal*, 14(2), pp. 97-111.

Denny, H. C. (2010), *Facing the center: Towards an identity politics of one-to-one mentoring*, Logan, Utah, Utah State University Press.

Evertz, K. & Fitzpatrick, R. (Eds.). (2018), *Writing Lab Newsletter*, 42(9-10), Retrieved from: <https://wlnjournal.org/archives/v42/42.9-10.pdf>

Federici, S. & Caffentzsis, G. (2007), Notes on the edu-factory and cognitive capitalism, *Transversal: European Institute for Progressive Cultural Practices*, Retrieved from: <https://transversal.at/transversal/0809/caffentzsisfederici/en>

Greenfield, L. (2019), *Radical writing center praxis: A paradigm for ethical political engagement*, Louisville, Colorado, University Press of Colorado.

Grimm, N. M. (2009), New conceptual frameworks for writing center work, *Writing Center Journal*, 29(2):11-27.



Grutsch-McKinney, J. (2013), *Peripheral visions for writing centers*, Louisville, Colorado, University Press of Colorado.

Harney, S. & Moten, F. (1999). Doing academic work, in Randy Martin (Ed.), *Chalk lines: The politics of work in the managed university*, 154-180, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press.

Harris, Muriel. (1995), Talking in the middle: Why writers need writing tutors, *College English*, 57(1): 27-42.

Harvey, D. (2005), *A brief history of neoliberalism*, Oxford, U.K., Oxford University Press.

Kittay, E. F., Jennings, B. & Wassuna, A. A. (2005), Dependency, difference and the global ethic of long term care, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 13(4): 443-469.

Mackiewicz, J & Thompson, I. (2013), Motivational scaffolding, politeness, and writing center tutoring, *The Writing Center Journal*, 33(1): 38-73.

McDowell, L. (2009), *Working Bodies: Interactive service employment and workplace identities*, Chichester, West Sussex, U.K., Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

Monty, R. (2019), Undergirding writing centers' responses to the neoliberal academy, *Praxis: a Writing Center Journal*, 16(3), Retrieved from: <http://www.praxisuwc.com/163-monty-et al>

Morini, C. (2007), The feminization of labor in cognitive capitalism, *Feminist Review*, 87:40-59.

Morini, C. & Fumagalli. (2010), Life put to work: Towards a life theory of value, *Ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 10(3/4). Retrieved from: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/life-put-work-towards-life-theory-value>

Murphy, Christina. (1994). The writing center and social constructionist theory, in Joan A.

Mullin et. al. (Ed.), *Intersections: Theory-practice in the writing center*, 25-38, Urbana, Illinois, National Council of Teachers of English.

Nier-Weber, D. (2017). The other invisible hand: adjunct labor and economies of the writing center, in Seth Kahn et. al. (Eds.), *Contingency, exploitation, and solidarity: Labor*



and action in English composition, 103-118, Boulder, Colorado, Colorado State Open University Press.

North, S. (1984), *The idea of a writing center*, *College English*, 46(5): 433-446.

Risager, B.S. & Thorup, M. (2016), *Protesting the neoliberal university: The Danish student movement 'a different university,'* *Interface: a Journal for and about Social Movements*, 8(1): 7-33.

Spence, L. (2015), *Knocking the hustle: Against the neoliberal turn in black politics*, Brooklyn, New York, Punctum Books.

Stavrvides, S. (2019), *Towards the city of thresholds*, Brooklyn, New York, Common Notions.