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LAUGHTER IN INTERACTION: THE DISCOURSE FUNCTION OF LAUGHTER IN

WRITING TUTORIALS

By

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ABSTRACT

LAUGHTER IN INTERACTION: THE DISCOURSE FUNCTION

OF LAUGHTER IN WRITING TUTORIALS

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Laughter is a multi-faceted paralinguistic cue speakers use to signal alignment or misalignment, or to reveal underlying emotional states. This dissertation broadens existing knowledge about how interlocutors use laughter in institutional settings by focusing on the types of laughter used and their relation to power differentials in interaction that takes place in university writing center tutorials.

Drawing upon research from sociolinguistics, writing center theory and practice, institutional discourse, and humor studies; and using the lenses of politeness theory and the concept of facework, this study looks at the dynamics of laughter in interactions between tutors and students. This dissertation employs a hybrid methodology using (1) Conversation Analysis techniques of audio-and video recordings which are then transcribed and examined for patterns of interaction, (2) Enthnomethodological techniques of participant interviews and triangulation through trained data coders, and (3) quantification and analyses of laughter types as well as discourse features indicative of claims to power.

The data for this study consists of ten audio and video taped writing tutorials that took place in a university writing center. Trained coders rated initiations of laughter according to whether (1) the laughter initiation was designed to show affiliation, to mitigate a comment so as to relieve tension for the speaker or the hearer, or to show

disaffiliation; or whether (2) the hearer's response to laughter was one of four affiliative types, was neutral, or was one of three disaffiliative types.

Major findings were that laughter did much to accomplish mutual facework, that participant roles were somewhat more egalitarian than in other institutional dyads, and that the tutor both initiated more and responded to more laughter by the student than did professionals in other contexts. Also, students in this study employed a greater number of responses to tutor laughter than did laypersons in other contexts. Both participants used laughter primarily to preserve their own positive face and mitigate tension for themselves.

Findings of this study have implications for methodologies used in the study of laughter, for further investigation of the relationship between power differentials and the use of laughter, and for writing center praxis.

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Charles Thompson,

and to the loving memory of my mother, Wilma Maxine Thompson.

Thanks Mom and Dad.

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My communities of support are many, and without them this dissertation would not have come to be. Three in particular stand out.

My academic community includes scholars on my Guidance Committee chaired by Kathleen Geissler, an inexhaustible advocate who kept a ready supply of light bulbs at the end of the tunnel, and Marilyn Wilson, Mary Bresnahan, and Ellen Cushman who were friends as well as advisors. My academic community also includes colleagues at Eastern Michigan University, and fortunately for me several brilliant linguists who kindly responded to the most humble of questions: Helen Aristar-Dry, Daniel Seely, and Salvatore Attardo have been especially helpful. Crucial to this dissertation are the tutors and students who allowed themselves to be taped and scrutinized yet who must remain anonymous. I owe a special debt to Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn whose love of and curiosity about verbal interaction inspired me. I would also like to mention Megan and Kenne, my coders, for your patience and your keen insights. To all of you, I give thanks.

My family community, who stood beside me always, includes my husband Wayne, our daughters Kate and Megan, and our son Jerzy. Mark, I include you in this circle as well and will always appreciate your vote of confidence when you gave me such a comfortable desk chair. Julie, John, Helen, and Randy—thanks for having big shoulders and an even bigger sense of devotion to family. To all of you, my thanks and love.

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ceaseless acts of friendship helped me go the distance. Veronica, you are a wonderful

dissertation doula. To my community of friends, my eternal thanks.

PROLOGUE: THE EVOLUTION OF THIS STUDY

When I began this project, I did not set out to study laughter, although that is what emerged as the focus. At the time I began to collect data, I had directed a writing center at a four-year regional university in the Midwest for two years, and set out to help fill a gap in writing center research on tutor-student talk in writing tutorials. There had been much scholarship on what *should* be discussed in a tutorial, how the agenda *should* be set, and whether the tutor or the student *should* be more authoritative. However, while much discussion focused on what *should* be done, little was known about what *actually* went on in the verbal interaction between participants in writing tutorials.

I wanted to collect data which would allow me to see first-hand the discourse strategies tutors and students used as they proceeded to discuss a piece of student writing. I chose discourse analysis, specifically Conversation Analysis (CA), as the methodology through which I could study how tutors and students went about doing such things as deciding what to talk about, asking for or offering suggestions, and how authority/power was negotiated and realized through verbal interaction. CA methodology uses tape recordings of actual speech events, transcribes those recordings, and then looks for patterns of interaction over a range of data. This methodology would allow me to have on tape the actual conversation that occurred between participants, and I would not have to rely on hastily written and woefully inadequate observation notes to see how the moment-to-moment business of verbal interaction was carried out.

After I had concurrently video and audio-taped 36 writing tutorials, I watched the videos looking for significant patterns in how the participants discussed the student's writing keeping in mind such questions as "Who decides what topics to talk about?"

"How are weaknesses in student writing approached?" "Who decides when to change topics?" Does the tutor seem more a representative of the academy or an ally of the student?" I noticed that for the most part, the model of conferencing that was used in our tutor training sessions (that ideally the student sets the agenda and that the tutorial should be student-centered), was *not* generally what was actually used: students didn't seem to articulate their concerns, and tutors, assuming an authoritarian persona, generally decided what should be discussed and for how long. As the course of interaction proceeded, I also noticed that while at times the interaction seemed to be somewhat tense—particularly when tutors' suggestions were either not understood or not accepted by the student— there were also times when the interaction seemed more like casual, care-free conversation between friends.

As I then began making transcripts from the audiotapes, I paid close attention to the sections in which the interaction seemed unusually tense or casual. In the course of listening closely to the audiotapes, I noticed several instances of laughter, sometimes unilateral and subtle—not much more than fleeting exhalations of air, and other times long voiced laughter that the participants shared. Many of these instances had no apparent humorous stimulus, and yet did not occur to be randomly interjected. Further, many instances of laughter, though clearly audible, did not elicit from the other participant additional laughter or even an acknowledgement that laughter had occurred at all. I became intrigued as to what role this discourse feature played in the coordination of speech between tutors and students, and as I listened to more audiotapes, I consistently found laughter occurring when student and tutor seemed most or least aligned. To me, these opposite degrees of alignment could also be framed as opposite degrees of sharing

authority: when the tutor/student roles are seen dichotomously as expert/novice, professional/lay person, or teacher/student, power in discourse—power to talk the most, ask the questions, decide what or what not to talk about—is more easily claimed by the person with more status and more easily relinquished by the person with less status.

Finding out concurrently that (1) I had quite a few instances of laughter in my data, (2) there was quite a bit written about the role of laughter in institutional settings, and (3) there existed virtually nothing written about laughter and writing tutorials, I decided to focus this study on the function of laughter and its relation to authority in writing tutorials. I situated this study in the discipline of Interactional Sociolinguistics, which looks at the ways language is used in interaction, and for the purposes of this study, the ways language and laughter are used in institutional discourse. Further, this study draws heavily on the literature in the interdisciplinary field of Humor Studies, in particular the subfield of Laughter Studies which includes perspectives from psychology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and communication studies.

What follows in this project consists of Chapter 1: Literature Review, in which I highlight existing knowledge about the functions of laughter; Chapter 2: Methodology, in which I discuss how the data were collected and analyzed; Chapter 3: Results, in which I present primarily quantitative data; Chapter 4: Initiations, in which I focus on the types of laughter speakers use, Chapter 5: Responses, in which I focus on the types of responses by hearers to speakers' uses of laughter; Chapter 6: Discussion, in which I summarize the ways laughter is used in tutorials and its relation to authority; and finally Chapter 7: Conclusion, in which I summarize the major findings of this study, the applications of

those findings to writing center praxis, and the ways in which this study might lead to

further research.

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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

T: (Tutor is speaking)
S: (Student is speaking)
CAPS: loud voice
( ): transcriptionist's comment
[ ]: overlapping speech
=: latched speech
...: brief pause. One . equals one second
..(7): a pause of 7 seconds
?: rising intonation
<QxxxxxxxQ> words within arrows indicate speaker is quoting someone
<xxxxxx> words within arrows are spoken in a hushed or quite voice
:::::lengthening or stretching out of a word
um-hum: agreement
unh-unh: disagreement
<U..4U> unclear passage for 4 seconds
@: pulse of laughter
hahaha: laughter with "ah" vowel
hehehe: laughter with "ee" vowel
hhhh: laughter with is exhaled through nose, mouth closed
hnnn: laughter with a voiced nasal sound, mouth closed
V. LAUGH: voiced laughter with mixture of vowel sounds
☺xxxxxx☺: utterance said in smiley or playful voice

T: I'll go=   =through this revision and see what you've done
S: =ok=   [what's wrong]
T: and then we'll talk..(reads silently 2 minutes)..oh this is an interesting beginning
   and I WANT to read on. when you say here <Q I was all alone in my car except
   for my fear Q>=   ok, I'll read through the rest of the draft
S: =yeah I was SO scared...
T: as quickly as I can and <U...3U> and then we'll go from there. would you like
   something to drink while you're waiting=   = ☺may@be a beer?☺
S: =no I'm fine=   hhhh
   this is a re:::ally different hh writing center
T: ...☺ we@@@ll we try to be helpful☺

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a general discussion of the need for more research focused on the verbal discourse that occurs between tutors and students in writing centers, and moves to the specific lack of research focused on the function of laughter in writing tutorial interaction. Next, factors which characterize writing centers as institutional spaces are discussed. Following this, an overview of laughter research particularly pertaining to institutional contexts is presented, and finally this study's theoretical orientation in discussed.

1.1. WRITING CENTER TALK AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

Research into the dynamics of verbal institutional discourse has, over the past twenty years, become a rich source of understanding and improving institutional effectiveness. In academic writing centers—institutions within institutions—talk is the lingua-franca between students and tutors, and understanding *what* gets communicated and *how* it gets communicated is paramount to making each writing tutorial as successful as possible. As Stephen North observed, talk is the essence of the writing center:

> Talk is everything. If the writing center is ever to prove its worth in other than quantitative terms—numbers of students seen, for example, or hours of tutorials provided—it will have to do so by describing this talk: what characterizes it what effects it has, how it can be enhanced (82).

Indeed, many university writing centers post mission statements of the centrality of talk to writing center praxis: "The writing advisors here at Salt Lake Community College

Writing Center, like to talk. We talk about what you think about your writing, what you expect from it, and most importantly, how you write" (*Student Writing Center*). "Our Writing Center offers to Denison students a place to study and talk about writing" (*Writing Center*) or "Even good writers come to the Consulting Center for Research and English Writing (CREW) because they know it's useful to talk about what they're writing and to get some feedback" (*CREW*).

In 1984, those who work in writing centers were given a wake-up call about the lack of research on tutorial talk when North said, "We don't know very much, in other than a practitioner's anecdotal way, about the dynamics of the tutorial," (82) and reminded again in 2002 when Joan Hawthorne noted that "there may be a mismatch between our theories and our practices, a mismatch that can be addressed only through a more thorough analysis of writing center sessions as they occur in practice," and that "discourse analysis is a rich and relatively untapped source of important insight into writing center practice" (2). It is not surprising, then, that researchers have begun to focus not only on the content and effectiveness of tutorials, but also the dynamics of the interactional nature of the speech event itself.

While many of the 127 results of a keyword search for "writing center" in *Dissertation Abstracts* focus on administrative, technological, and WAC issues surrounding writing centers, a handful do look at the tutorial itself, and two studies are mircoanalyses of tutor-student talk that include attention to laughter. Terese Thonus examined such features of writing center verbal interaction as discourse phases, volubility, overlaps, type and frequency of directives and their mitigation, backchannels, and laughter; and Marjory Ann Boudreaux looked at non-verbal behavior including

laughter in the first five minutes of a writing conference (accessed 3 May 2007). Further,

writing center talk research had been published in other academic venues. Kevin Davis *et*

al. identified and coded conversational moves; Susan R. Blau, John Hall, and Tracy

Strauss examined questions, echoing, and the use of qualifiers; and David C. Fletcher

examined how authority is granted or claimed by tutors and students, but none of these

studies looked at laughter. However, one area—an area that has amassed a significant

body of literature in other institutional contexts—has received scant attention in writing

center literature: the conversational uses of laughter. With the exception of Thonus's and

Boudreaux's studies, both of which looked laughter as but one of many analytical

categories, virtually nothing exists in the literature on tutorial interaction that focuses on

laughter beyond its indication of participant solidarity. Laughter is a highly sophisticated,

multi-functional communication device that people use to create and interpret social

interaction not only in casual speech events, but also in formal, institutional interactions.

Since laughter has been shown to be an important discourse feature in other institutional

contexts, not to examine how laughter influences writing center tutorials is to miss an

opportunity to improve writing center praxis.

1.2. THE INSTITUTIONAL NATURE OF WRITING CENTERS

A writing center is an institution-within-an institution, and its purpose is to

verbally interact with students to help them become better writers. In comparing the

verbal interaction of institutional speech to what is considered casual speech, the context

within which the interaction takes place is influential. Though there is no "hard and fast

distinction to be made between the two in all instances of interactional events, nor even at all points in a single interactional event" (Drew and Heritage 21), there are some widely used criteria that differentiate institutional discourse from everyday conversation:

> 1) Institutional interaction involves an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task, or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question.
>
> 2) Institutional interaction may often involve *special and particular constraints* on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand.
>
> 3) Institutional talk may be associated with *inferential frameworks* and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts (22).

Writing tutorials, like teacher-student writing conferences, take place in academic institutions; however, writing tutorials are not synonymous with writing conferences, and in this study, the distinction will be made. As Thonus points out, "In the writing *conference*, the student's instructor acts as a consultant whereas in the writing *tutorial*, the tutor is on the staff of a writing center that is neither linked to nor answerable to the student's classroom instructor" [italics original] (32). She further notes that teachers evaluate students' writing while tutors do not, tutorials are much longer than typical writing conferences, and many tutorials are voluntary whereas teacher-student conferences are not. In the present study, the speech event that takes place between tutors and students in a writing center shall be referred to as a *tutorial*.

1.3. AN OVERVIEW OF LAUGHTER STUDIES PRE-1970'S

1.3.1. DECIDING WHAT TO STUDY

Everyone knows what laughter is, yet studying laughter is a complex, difficult undertaking. Laughter has been variously defined as an emotion, an instinct, or a behavior, and has been classified as solely a response to humor. Traditionally, laughter has been marginalized by mainstream linguistics, but has been widely investigated by researchers in sociolinguistics, and contemporary research shows laughter to be a highly sophisticated device that people use to create and interpret social interaction in both formal and informal settings. This present day view of laughter evolved over many centuries, and for the most part involved disentangling laughter from being either synonymous with or in response to humor. A synopsis of this evolution follows.

Selecting what scholarship to use when studying laughter is problematic since the body of literature on laughter is immense: philosophers from Plato to the present have attempted to answer why we laugh, and scholars in both the arts and sciences have through the years addressed the physiological mechanisms that produce laughter, the evolutionary advantages of laughter, the psychology of laughter, the health and medical values of laughter, the universality of laughter, the descriptions of the sounds of laughter, and have more recently focused on the social functions of laughter. Laughter scholarship has also been intricately entwined with humor scholarship, and to discuss the history of laughter scholarship is to discuss the history of humor scholarship. Several scholars have made this task easier by compiling overviews of the history of humor and laughter research, and as humor scholar Salvatore Attardo writes, since the "body of literature

concerning humor is so large...it is not pragmatically possible for any single scholar to cover it in its entirety...reviews and syntheses of the literature on humor are readily available" (15). Attardo mentions several reviews—"Piddington 1993; Bergler 1956; Keith-Spiegel 1972; McGhee 1979; Raskin 1985; Morreal 1987; Holland, 1982"—and even though many are quite extensive, they only begin to cover the range of disciplines and cultures concerned with studies of humor and laughter (14-15). For example, Attardo points out that Goldstein and McGhee "quote about 400 works concerning humor published between 1000 and 1971, but remarkably, the bibliography covers only the Anglo-Saxon world" (15). Therefore, in light of the breadth of the field of humor and laughter studies, and of the numerous literature reviews readily available, this discussion will focus only on the major trends in scholarship until the 1970's when laughter began to be more closely studied in its own right.

1.3.2. HUMOR AND LAUGHTER STUDIES PRE-1970'S

Early research in laughter emphasized the philosophical, and physical/ biological, dimensions of laughter. These early studies of laughter, though not particularly useful in explaining laughter in institutional interaction, are worth noting since they are illustrative of the many lenses through which laughter has been viewed.

1.3.2.1. Philosophical Theories

What, exactly, laughter is or why humans laugh has been the object of much

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philosophical debate. Some philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, reason that it is an emotion, and as such should be kept under control (Morreall, *Philosophy* 10,14). Henri Bergson argues the opposite: humor and laughter can only exist in the absence of emotion. These two extremes, and the many gradations between them, comprise what Elizabeth Graham, Michael Papa, and Gordon Brooks cite as over 100 theories of humor (161). In philosophy, three major theoretical strains have emerged to explain why we laugh or find something funny. Patricia Keith-Spiegel has categorized these theories into Superiority theories, Incongruity theories, and Relief theories.

1.3.2.2. Superiority Theories

Superiority theories, first proposed by Plato and Aristotle (see Keith-Spiegel for a discussion of how these were expanded in 1651 by Hobbes, 1988 by Bain, 1911 by Bergson, and by many others), argue that what makes us laugh or what we find funny is when we find ourselves in a superior position to someone else. "Elation is engendered when we compare ourselves favorably to others as being less stupid, less ugly, less fortunate, or less weak" (Keith-Spiegel 6). We laugh when the bank discovers the mistake was theirs, when the driver speeding past us gets pulled over by the police, or when a lover who jilts us gets jilted.

1.3.2.3. Incongruity Theories

Incongruity theories attempt to explain the object of amusement, and generally attribute the association of disjointed ideas or situations as the basis for humor and/or laughter. The dog dressed in pajamas makes us laugh since we usually don't associate

dogs with human clothing. In jokes, the listener is led to one set of expectations, and then is surprised when another set is revealed to apply as well. Keith-Spiegel discusses over twenty theorists whose notions of humor include the clash of "uncommon mixtures of relations and the contrariety of things," "inconsistent or unsuitable circumstances united into one complex assemblage," or who view "the cause of laughter to be the perception of contrast" (7-9). She writes the most often noted proponents of Incongruity Theory are Immanuel Kant (1790), Arthur Schopenhauer (1819), Henri Bergson (1911), and Arthur Koestler (1964).

1.3.2.4. Relief Theories

Relief theories view the function of humor and laughter to be a release of stress or tension, and joke cycles following tragic events or laughter at funerals would be explained by such reasoning. Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud are perhaps the most noted proponents of Relief Theory, according to Keith-Spiegel, and she mentions another twelve theorists who have incorporated notions of Relief or Release into their theories (10-11). The venting of pent-up anxiety or nervous energy takes place through laughter.

1.3.3. PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Research into the physical processes of laughter has focused mainly on *how* we laugh, and has also lead to theories about *why* we laugh or *what* evolutionary function laughter has served. Scholars as early as Francis Bacon (in Glenn, *Laughter* 9) have supplied detailed descriptions of the facial, vocal and bodily manifestations of laughter,

but it was perhaps Charles Darwin's 1872 highly detailed description of the mechanics of laughter and his theory of evolution that gave most impetus to a scientific approach to the study of laughter (200). John Morreall points out that many early scholars focusing on the evolutionary aspects of laughter believe laughter to have no survival value, and in fact could "only be disadvantageous" (*Taking* 3). "Laughter often involves major physiological disturbances. There is an interruption of breathing and the loss of muscle tone; in heavy laughter there may be a loss of muscle control—the person's legs may buckle, he may involuntarily urinate, etc." (3). However, many scholars thought the opposite, and much writing produced in the late 1800's through the 1940's focused on what adaptive advantages humor and laughter might serve. Research took a turn towards investigating the similarities between human laughter and apparent laughter in other species. Some theories held that laughter and humor are but "vestiges of archaic adaptive behaviors" and that the similarity between laughter and an assault stance--"exposed teeth, contorted face, sprawling movements of the limbs"—suggests that laughter serves an aggressive function; indeed, Albert Rapp shows how "present day ridicule can be traced to the primitive thrashing of enemies" (qtd. in Keith-Spiegel 6). Aggression theories postulate that laughter is a hostile action, its auditory presentation evolved to scare off attackers or to signal victory, and laughter's visual manifestation—the smile with its accompanying teeth-barring—serves as a way to ward off enemies. On the other hand, many theorists postulated that laughter and smiling were an alternative to combat and that in pre-lingual times, these communicative acts signaled "appeasement to potential adversaries," group safety, or "good fortune" (Glenn *Laughter* 14). Since laughter

appears early in life and is a universal phenomenon, many theorists used these observations to argue that laughter is instinctual.

1.3.4. SHIFT TO A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Some scholarship dealing with theories about laughter was produced in the period between 1900 and 1950 and is reviewed in detail in Keith-Spiegel (16-19), but as anthropologist Mahadev L. Apte notes, "theorizing [about humor and wit] reached its peak in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth" (267). Further, psychologist and humor scholar Robert Provine observes that while there is a long history of philosophical analysis, the "history of empirically based laughter and humor science is little more than 100 years old" (18). Scholars began to envision laughter as more than merely an "overt expression of humor—an indicator that the person is in an 'amused frame of mind' or experiencing something as 'funny'"(16). In the early part of the twentieth century, while laughter was not yet viewed as an interactional strategy, laughter began to be conceptualized not only as a response to humor, but also to other stimuli as well as well as being related to, though not the same as, smiling. Looking at laughter from a psychological point of view, Freud, in 1905, developed his tension-release theory of humor during this time, and postulated that in order for humans to keep their inhibitions in check, considerable psychic energy must be spent. Building on relief theory, Freud argued that humor and laughter can serve as a release valve by tricking the superego into liberating psychic energy. Humor can allow us to give in to aggressive, hostile, or obscene desires by disarming the superego, and thereby saving energy. An

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insult can be veiled as a compliment through the use of laughter. Later, in 1951, philosopher David H. Monro further shifted the focus of laughter from a response to humor to 10 "non-humorous" causes of laughter: "(1) tickling, (2) laughing gas (nitrous oxide), (3) nervousness, (4) relief after a strain, (5) the defense mechanism of 'laughing it off,' (6) joy or the expression of high spirits, (7) play, (8) release from restraint, (9) make-believe, and (10) the victory expression of 'ha-ha' after winning a game or contest" (17).

1.3.5. SHIFT TO A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

In the 1960's, two developments occurred concurrently which would drastically alter the nature of investigations into laughter: (1) the development of the portable cassette tape recorder (and other technologies), which would allow language in use to be captured and repeatedly reviewed, and (2) the theories, methodologies, and assumptions from many disciplines coalesced into what would become known as the field of sociolinguistics. This latter development was the result of the heightened milieu of social unrest in which institutionalized social inequality—along with the language that perpetuated it—was put under the microscope. These two developments chartered the course of language study that would become multi-disciplinary and continue to the present. First, this discussion will focus on the development of technologies that enabled the study of laughter, and then refocus on how those studies were carried out in the humanities and sciences.

1.3.5.1. The Impact of Technology

The impact of technology greatly affected the nature of laughter studies. In 1963, Phillips introduced the compact audio cassette, and as its use as a data gathering device became widespread, researchers were able to more closely study language in interaction. This technology allowed researchers to hear and analyze the many subtle and fleeting bits of laughter that are present in conversation—bits that would eventually prove significant in studies of conversational interaction. Previously, language researchers had to rely on field notes of language in interaction, and in attending to topics of conversation, discourse strategies and conversational devices went unnoticed. Other advances in technology—heart monitors, respiration monitors, video recording devices, chemical tests to measure various chemicals in the blood, sensors to record eye movement, and others—allowed sophisticated testing for physical and metabolic evidence of what, exactly, goes on during laughter. Inquiry into laughter further shifted from the philosophical nature of laughter to those concerning what happens physiologically to induce laughter.

1.3.5.2. The Field of Sociolinguistics

The field of sociolinguistics was also developing in the latter half of the twentieth century. Prior to the 1970's, the field of linguistics had largely ignored laughter as part of language. Apte states:

> The reason for such neglect is that linguists do not consider laughter an integral part of any linguistic system. Although individuals in all cultures intuitively perceive that a variety of meaningful messages are

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communicated by different kinds of laughter, these meanings are neither as precise nor as amenable to rigorous analysis as the rest of the language system (250).

Laughter was relegated to the classification of paralanguage along with such other phenomena as "the grunt, cough, belch, weeping, and moaning" (Apte 250). These sounds can have interactional meaning, but the meaning is not as identifiable as with linguistic units such as words. While clearing one's throat or voluntarily producing a cough can discreetly signal a speaker to watch what he or she is saying, and while a laugh can convey much to interlocutors, traditional linguistics had been more concerned with language as an autonomous system independent of a social context. Further problems with studying laughter from a linguistics point-of-view are that laughter is not clearly articulated, sometimes voiced and sometimes not, and as Markku Haakana points out, has "often been seen as an uncontrollable index of emotion" (*Laughing Matters* 9). How then did the present interest by linguists in laughter develop?

At the beginning of the 1960's, the Chomskyan approach to the study of linguistics abstracted language from the social and contextual influences surrounding its use. Linguistics at that time focused mainly on the sounds, words, and sentences—*the grammar*—of languages, and sought to explain what language is and what it means to know a language. However, as the 1960's progressed, wide-spread social reform and unrest were taking place: post World War II saw countries with emerging independence trying to decide on "official" languages, movements for minority rights in the United Sta tes were occurring, and issues such as gender equality, social injustice, and unequal distribution of power in relationships were studied with increasing intensity. Chomskyan

linguistics failed to explain the ways in which people actually *use* language to communicate. Disciplinary fields such as education, social science, anthropology, psychology, and communication began to examine the *social* functions of language in human interaction. Factors such as formal vs. informal settings, the social identities of speakers, variations and dialects, language attitudes, ethnicity of speakers, and so forth were examined, and as studies proliferated and the interdisciplinary nature of the field became more complex, subfields developed and research methodologies from these other disciplines intertwined and changed the way language was investigated. The analysis of spoken discourse—aided by the technology of tape recorders—began to show the many ways in laughter were used by speakers and hearers to accomplish conversational goals.

1.4. 1970'S AND BEYOND: LAUGHTER AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

The 1970's through the present have witnessed a number of disciplines beginning to look empirically at laughter, and as research progressed, previous theories of superiority, incongruity, or relief were not enough to explain the many circumstances in which laughter takes place. While laughter is certainly often a response to something funny, to one-upsmanship, to something ridiculous, or to the release of psychological tension, it is also a response to tickling, an attempt to break down or put up barriers with another person, and much more. Though scholars have continued to develop theories of humor or laughter that would be comprehensive, most theories remain applicable to only the discipline in which they originate.

A number of disciplines evolved theories that eventually lead to a social view of

laughter. In psychology, for example, Freudian theories of humor, which were closely aligned with relief theories in that they were based on an arousal-relief model, gradually lost dominance as empirical studies began to emerge. Researchers such as Howard Pollio, Rodney Mers, and William Lucchesi challenged prior scholarship on laughter that was based on either common sense scales of laughter and smiling or "humor diaries." They stated that empirical studies to date had focused on variations of a scale with "low-level bodily expression of cheerfulness at one end and paroxysms of violent laughter at the other" and which typically used common-sense terms arranged as:

(1) No response noted

(2) Smile—varying in magnitude from a gentle smile with small cheek furrows to a broad smile producing a total pattern

(3) Laugh—ranging from a laugh with normal voice sounds to a deep-throated one involving moderately active head and shoulder movements

(4) Explosive laugh—profound body movements, changes in respiration, tears, etc." (213)

Pollio, Mers & Lucchesi also noted that other prior research involved participants keeping "humor diaries" in which they would record all of the things they laughed at each day. In order to gather more naturalistic data, Pollio, Mers & Lucchesi's study employed a Bruel and Kjaer sound-level recorder and the placement of a microphone in the center of audiences at an amateur musical production, a movie, and near a television speaker in a quiet room when a sitcom with canned laughter was airing. The researchers th en analyzed the data by transposing auditory laughs to visual representations. While their immediate analysis focused on the contribution of cognitive and motivational

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factors in humor appreciation, they began to see social value of laughter. Laughter was no longer seen as just an expression of humor. In fact, Glenn reported that laughter "is so inconsistently associated with humor that experimental psychologists have abandoned using it as a reliable indicator that the subject perceives something as funny" (*Laughter* 24). Studies in psychology, in addition to measuring reactions to humorous stimuli such as eyebrow raising, respiration rates, etc., also note that laughter is influenced by the presence of other people: people laugh more when others around them are also laughing (see Glenn *Laughter* for a review).

Several general reviews of contemporary scholarship on laughter exist (see Ruch and Ekman, Glenn, Apte, Provine, and Morreall).While debates continue about constructing a general model of humor and laughter that would account for the varied circumstances in which laughter occurs and which would explain the nature of laughter (see Ramachandran and the "False Alarm" theory, Attardo and Raskin and the "General Theory of Verbal Humor," and Moreall (*Taking*) and his theory that laughter results from a "Pleasant Psychological Shift"), the present discussion is not concerned with theories of the nature of laughter, but rather with the function of laughter in interaction, and in particular institutional interaction. Investigations germane to laughter in interaction have yielded results and observations that are consistent across studies, and these will be noted by topic below.

Gail Jefferson, Harvey Sacks, and Emanuel Schegloff note that "people orient not simply to the presence or absence of laughter in conversation, but to its length, placement, acoustic shape, and coordination with other bits of talk," (cited in Glenn *Laughter* 128) and these orientations have directed the course of investigations into

laughter. Research endeavors tend to fall into three groups: those concerned with the psychological functions of laughter, those that look at the social function of laughter, and those that look at the verbal interactional features of laughter. The present discussion in concerned with the latter group of studies; however, since any particular study of laughter often builds upon knowledge constructed in other disciplines, a brief mention of psychological and sociological studies will be helpful.

1.4.1. PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES OF LAUGHTER

Laughter studies in psychology often occur in labs, tend to use the terms humor and laughter interchangeably, and focus "on a variety of corollary issues about humor, personality, social dynamics, and cognition" (Provine 19). Paul Devereux, in a review of studies of the psychology of laughter, shows that laughter has been examined in its relation to sense of humor, attitudes revealed, and in the relationship of its production to stimuli such as alcohol or laugh tracks. The focus of most psychologically oriented studies is "What do people do when they laugh?" Many of these studies are done in laboratory conditions: students are recruited from psychology courses, and either are asked to rate the funniness of a selection of jokes, or have some metabolic or respiratory function, or a facial action measured as they watch a funny video or listen to a laugh track (see Ruch & Ekman). Examples of other investigations include measuring the effects of exposure to humor before and after an unpleasant stimulus (see Cann, Calhoun, and Nance) or measuring the effects of voicing, an acoustic feature of laughter (see Bachorowski and Owren). There is considerably more research on the functions of humor

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than there is on the functions of laughter, due in great part to the problem that laughter is more difficult to study than humor: unlike humor—which can be introduced as a variable in clinical experiments in the form of funny videos, questionnaires with jokes, etc.—the phenomenon of laughter is very difficult to elicit in a lab, so it must be studied in the field.

1.4.2. STUDIES OF THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF LAUGHTER

The social and communications sciences' studies of laughter look at how laughter functions in society as a communication device, and how it reveals, establishes, or complicates people's roles in interaction. Research in social approaches to studying laughter tends to address such questions as "When does laughter occur?" "What are people doing socially when they laugh?" "Who has the right to laugh and at whom" and "Does laughter function differently in everyday conversations than it does in institutional discourse?" Researchers operate under the assumption that verbal interaction is sequentially organized, and that laughter influences the course of this interaction. While many studies have focused on the talk-in-interaction of everyday, casual conversation, the studies below are selected for their focus on institutional discourse. There is no "hard and fast distinction to be made between the two in all instances of interactional events, nor even at all points in a single interactional event" (Drew and Heritage 21). However, there are some widely used criteria that differentiate institutional discourse from everyday conversation. Institutional discourse occurs in settings that are "task-related, involve at least one person who represents a formal organization of some kind," and the

task is "primarily accomplished through the exchange of talk between professionals and lay persons (1). Janet Holmes notes that the nature of discourse in professional situations is "fundamentally dynamic' and that as the interaction proceeds, "the constant realignment of participants" shifts from "doing power" to "doing collegiality" to even "doing friendship" (379). Participants can become more or less at ease with each other as topics shift and social identities can become less clearly defined.

Studies of laughter in institutional interactions have taken place in medical settings (see Coser, West, Haakana, Saunders, and Åstedt-Kurki), group therapy sessions (see Schenkein), job interviews (see Adelswärd), welfare offices (see Rostilla), international business negotiations (see Adelswärd and Öberg), youth detention homes (see Osvaldsson), New Zealand government departments (see Holmes), New Zealand businesses (see Holmes and Marra), service encounters in bookshops in England and Italy (see Gavoli), career counseling (see Nevo), mentoring (see Johnson and Ridley), manufacturing and retail in the UK (see Mullany), and women colleagues in Information Technology positions discussing workplace barriers (see Allen, Reid, and Riemenschneider).

Some of these studies examining the uses of laughter, though, are problematic in the same sense that Holmes (4) faults much humor research. The data reflect indirect methods of how people actually use humor: field notes from conversations rather than video/audio recordings, self-report data, interview responses, and questionnaires designed to capture people's reflections on how they actually use humor. As concerns laughter, without audio recordings, fleeting, often ephemeral particles of laughter in conversation cannot possibly be noted and analyzed. For example, Paivi Åstedt-Kurki , in her study of

humor between nurse and patients and among staff, recruited 17 nurses and asked them to keep diaries and record for one week all instances of humor. While laughter was mentioned in Åstedt-Kurki's introduction as having "many positive effects on both a person's physiology and the psyche" the data collected mentioned laughter in such ways as a nurse's retelling of an instance of forgetfulness in class in which she begins to deliver a lecture that she has forgotten she delivered the week before: "I slap my forehead with my hand and burst into laughter and the class joins me" (454). The laughter is noted as the nurse recalls it, but perhaps not as it may actually have happened. The class may have laughed because they thought it was appropriate, but not because they thought her forgetfulness was funny. Indeed, the class may have been troubled by this lapse.

Most studies of laughter are qualitative. Haakana discusses the problems with quantitative studies of laughter: while in the future quantitative studies may become more prevalent, they need to become "nuanced and contextualized enough to meet the complexity of interactional practices" (*Laughter in Medical Interaction* 229). For example, mere counts of instances of not accepting invitations to laugh does not fully shed light on the different reasons why an interlocutor may decline to share the laughter. Listeners sometimes don't accept an invitation to laugh because they *are* aligned with the speaker rather than *not* aligned. For example, if a speaker begins to relate a problem and laughs while explaining it, the listener may interpret the laughter as a way to hide embarrassment over the problem: for the listener *not* to laugh may be an indication that the listener chooses to focus on the seriousness of the problem.

1.5. ISSUES IN STUDYING LAUGHTER-IN-INTERACTION

This section shall be concerned with studies that incorporate the techniques of discourse analysis in investigating laughter as talk-in-interaction—laughter as it actually occurs and is recorded and transcribed. Of primary importance to consider when analyzing laughter in a particular context are the types of laughter and their transcription, their placement in the interaction, whether the laugh occurs in a conversational slot in which it is expected or if it occurs spontaneously, whether the laughter is shared by the participants or is unilateral, and the ways in which power differentials such as age, rank, or gender are configured among the participants.

1.5.1. TRANSCRIBING THE FINE NUANCES OF LAUGHTER

Discourse analyses of spoken texts rely on recordings—audio as well as video—of speech events and careful, accurate transcription of those recordings. Jane Edwards notes that the transcript "plays a central role in research on spoken discourse," and "enables the researcher to focus efficiently on the fleeting events of an interaction" (Edwards and Lampert 3). The researchers must make choices about what types of information "to preserve (or to neglect), what categories to use, and how to organize and display the information in a written and spatial medium" (3). Felicia Roberts and Jeffrey Robinson also emphasized the importance of accurate transcriptions: "Conversation analysists understand that transcripts are at least third-generation versions of data (the

first being in vivo interaction and the second being audio or videotapes of interaction)"

(1).

Tape recorders allow the many different sounds of laughter to be captured, and video recorders allow facial expressions to be viewed in slow motion and close up. While early researchers of conversation indicated laughter in a transcript (if at all) with a simple insertion of the word "laugh," or maybe added the word "smile" in the margin, soon it became evident that a more complex system would be needed. Systems were developed to account for various phonemic and prosodic details, as well as paralinguistic features, suprasegmental properties, utterance alignment, and others. "Because the placement of laughter can be of great consequence for a conversational interaction…it is important to note it carefully" (Edwards and Lampert 67). Laughter can occur within a word, by itself, or between words, can extend over a number of syllables, and can make up an entire conversational turn (Glenn *Laughter* 43). In addition to the placement of laughter, the type of laughter is important as well. Not all laughs are alike, and one simply has to think of the lexical manifestations of laughter that are present in English—guffaw, titter, sneer, giggle, snigger, cackle, chortle, howl, chuckle, snicker—to see the variation. The same holds true for smiles: they can be a grimace, a smirk, a grin, and can be a half-smile or an ear-to-ear smile. To further complicate matters, people often talk while they are smiling—a phenomena Schegloff termed the "smile voice" and which also has been referred to in the literature as "smily" or "smiling" voice (qtd. in Haakana *Laughing Matters* 79).

Both smiling and laughter are expressive behaviors and can be indicative as well as communicative and therefore of interest to those studying interaction. However,

scholars disagree about the relationship between laughter and smiling and how that

relationship should be transcribed, and this disagreement warrants discussion. Since the

same face muscles are involved in both laughing and smiling, some scholars have chosen

to interpret a smile as a voiceless laugh on a continuum from "no response" to "explosive

laugh. Laughter and smiling can be thought of as a continuum with smiling occurring

first—a silent laugh—and then the vocalization of laughter occurring. Pollio, Mers, and

Lucchesi rank reactions to humorous stimuli: no response, smile, laugh, and explosive

laugh, and Jan Van Hooff (1972) uses a two-dimensional continuum that shows on one

dimension that "increased barring of the teeth reflects increasingly non-hostile or friendly

attitude" while "increased mouth opening and vocalization accompany increased

playfulness" (qtd in Glenn *Laughter* 14-15). Developmentally, researchers such as Apte

and Glenn (*Laughter*) generally agree that initial smiling can begin as early as five weeks

with social smiling occurring between the second to fourth month. Smiling and laughter

are present in all cultures although the reasons for and stimuli of these behaviors vary

from culture to culture (Stewart 2)

Additionally, since smiling and laughter tend to occur together, and both can be a

response to a common stimuli as well as can show pleasure or amusement, many

researchers see them as differing only in intensity (Glenn *Laughter* 15). Julia Vettin and

Dietmar Todt found both smiling and laughter to contribute to a common communicative

role:

> Laughter is a prominent nonverbal human behavior. It is ubiquitous and
>
> typically consists of a vocal and a visual signal complex: the laughter
>
> vocalization and the associated facial expression (Darwin, 1982; Ruch &

Ekman, 2001). Both signal complexes contribute to the communicative role of laughter (Ekman, Friesen, OSullivan, & Scherer, 1980; Grammer & Eibl-Eibesfeld, 1990), although there is evidence that the laughter vocalization is sufficient to elicit laugh-related responses (Lawson, Downing & Cetola, 1998; Martin & Gray, 1996) (93).

However, others, "see [laughter and smiling] as distinct, although related, phenomena" (Glenn *Laughter 15*). "Laughter is associated more with aggression, dominance, or hostility; smiling is associated more with submissive friendliness" (16). Further, Antony Chapman notes that while laughter and smiling "converge functionally as non-verbal expressions of humor appreciation" they "probably have different phylogenetic origins" (157). "No doubt mirthful smiles are attenuated laughs on occasion, but this is not always the case. Laughter and smiling are indubitably alternative responses under other circumstances and therefore these expressive responses cannot be conceptualized along a single continuum" (158).

Technology has unveiled fine nuances in the production of laughter and smiling, and has forced researchers to examine how these nuances might affect interaction. Willibald Ruch and Paul Ekman present a detailed review of laughter and smiling in terms of respiration, vocalization, facial action, and body movement, and observe that laughter is a human phenomenon that emerges later than smiling and happens in about the fourth month. It is innate and estimated to be about 7 million years old, and "it is safe to assume that laughter—like other utterances such as moan, sigh, cry, groan, etc.—was there before man developed speech and served as an expressive-communicative social signal" (1). Laughter can be spontaneous or emotional, which cannot be controlled, or it

can also be done voluntarily such as when someone does a fake laugh or smiles in silent response to an insult. Jonathan Miller, writing from a cognitive neuropsychological stance, makes a distinction between voluntary and involuntary smiling as well. He mentions victims of strokes that affect the motor neurons in the cerebral cortex often are paralyzed on one side of the face. When asked to smile, these patients can only smile on one side of their face. However, when amused, there is "bilateral symmetry in their performance" (8). Coughing and belching are similar, too, in that they can be done involuntarily or voluntarily—reasons why traditional linguistics has ignored these phenomena and banished them to the realm of paralinguistic aspects. It is interesting to note, though, that a contrived cough serves an interesting communicative function when Person A wants to get Person B's attention.

Ruch and Ekman point out that while much of the research is inconclusive, it does show, on an anatomical level that many of the same muscles that are involved in laughter—but not all—are involved in smiling. They find this distinction to be of importance in "how to detect whether laughter is faked or felt, how to distinguish among different types of emotional laughter on a morphological basis, and what is the relationship between smiling and laughter" (424). This relationship is important to the researcher of laughter in interaction to help interpret the function of laughter if it is accompanied by smiling, or if smiling is indeed a silent form of laughter. Glenn writes that "smiling and establishing mutual eye gaze can work to create an environment ripe for beginning shared laughter," though smiling is not a necessary cue to shared laughter (*Laughter* 4).

In addition to transcription decisions that must be made regarding smiling and

laughter, the conventional transcription markings developed by Jefferson for such features as overlapping speech, interruptions, rising or falling intonation, pauses and the like, have to be augmented if the researcher's focus necessitates indicators for quality of laughter, duration, volume, phonology, visual cues, and coordination with other laughter. Many researchers indicate how many exhalations or pulses of laughter occur with the @ symbol, and other researchers assign such syllables as 'huh' 'heh' or 'hah' to approximate the "prototypical laugh particle [that] is a syllable consisting of aspirated "h" sound plus a vowel" (Glenn *Laughter* 46). The letter h (or several) may indicate an exhalation while a .h may indicate an inhalation (which often represents an ending of laughter or the possibility of speaker change). Shifts in pitch or other acoustic variability may be important to note. For example, Jo Anne Bachorowski and Michael Owren investigated whether listeners responded differently to the absence or presence of voicing, a "salient, distinguishing acoustic feature" of laughter, and found that "voiced, songlike laughs were significantly more likely to elicit positive responses than were variants such as unvoiced grunts, pants, and snortlike sounds" (252). Thus, whether or not a laugh is voiced may be important to indicate on a transcript. Additionally, open mouthed laugh particles are less nasal than closed-mouth particles, and sometimes a transcript may indicate this difference through the use of "hih" for open mouthed laughter and "hnn" or @N for closed-mouth laughter. Some sociologists use a much simpler version which describes laughter in parenthesis "(laughs shortly) or (laughing in-breath)" and "mark words uttered through laughter with (H) for louder sounds and (h) for more silent sounds...and a smiling voice with £ (e.g. £can you explain£)" (Grönneröd 33).

Transcription decisions depend foremost on the purpose of the study undertaken. As Jefferson notes:

> I take it that when we talk about transcription we are talking about one way to pay attention to recordings of actually occurring events. While those of us who spend a lot of time making transcripts may be doing our best to get it right, what that might mean is utterly obscure and unstable. It depends a great deal on what we are paying attention to. It seems to me, then, that the issue in not transcription per se, but what it is we might want to transcribe, that is, attend to ("Exercise" 25).

1.5.2. THE PLACEMENT OF LAUGHTER

Laughter is not a random contribution to interaction, but rather occurs at strategic points. A laugh at the end of an utterance, or a laugh that occurs during the utterance in progress in known as a first laugh and can serve as an invitation to laugh (see Jefferson "Technique"): speakers may use this slot in the flow of conversation to elicit affiliative laughter from the hearer. Hearers may signal affiliation by accepting the invitation to laugh, or may decline, which may signal disaffiliation *or* affiliation under certain circumstances. Neal Norrick shows laughter to be part of an adjacency pair in which laughter is the expected response to a humorous utterance, and "a failure to laugh at the correct juncture suggests a lack of understanding—or, under the right circumstances, a lack of amusement" (23). Silence as a response when laughter is expected is, to use Rose Coser's widely cited metaphor, like initiating a handshake only to have one's out-

stretched hand ignored ("Laughter"). Not laughing when expected can be a sign of misalignment, or in the case of professionals in institutional settings, can be a sign of "professional cautiousness" or "neutrality": "Laughter is an affective action that is often a deviation from these attributes; we would not even expect the doctor to be very affective, in fact, we might find this to be a sign of unprofessionality" (Haakana *Laughter in Medical Interaction* 228). By not sharing laughter, persons of higher status can maintain a distance between themselves and the lay person and an objective role or stance.

However, a speaker's first laugh is not always an invitation for a laugh response from the hearer. A first laugh by a speaker that accompanies the announcement of a trouble or complaint is a signal that something serious is going on. Jefferson states:

"A laughing troubles –teller is doing a recognizable sort of job. He is exhibiting that, although there is this trouble, it is not getting the better of him; he is managing; he is in good spirits and in a position to take the trouble lightly. He is exhibiting what we might call 'troubles-resistance'. But this does not mean that…a recipient is invited to join in the merriment, to also find the thing laughable…In troubles-talk, it appears to be a recipient's job to be taking the trouble seriously; to exhibit what we might call "troubles-receptiveness"' ("Organization"16).

First laughs can also be uttered by the hearer at the end of the speaker's turn, and can also "routinely appear at an earlier *recognition point* at which the laughable nature of the utterance-in-progress becomes evident" (Glenn "Initiating" 128). This latter placement of laughter by the hearer during the speaker's turn shows a quick understanding—at least from the hearer's point-of-view—of the speaker's developing

topic. If the speaker was not intending his or her utterance as humorous, the laugh serves as a cue that a repair or that an elaboration of the topic will be necessary.

Adelswärd and Öberg found in a study of international negotiations that the placement of laughter can serve as discourse boundary device, can signal what topics are more or less important, and that unilateral laughter occurs more often with participants who are at a disadvantage (411). In an earlier study, Britt-Marie Öberg found that negotiations—even informal ones—proceed through phases: there is a greeting phase, followed by information exchange, discussion, decision, and finally a leavetaking phase (in Adelswärd and Öberg 418). Adelswärd and Öberg found approximately the same phases to occur in the negotiations they studied, and about 60% of all laughter occurred in the transitions between phases and topic boundaries. Adelswärd and Öberg made use of Goffman's term "footing" to explain that in these phase and topic shifts, there is a slight change of footing, a "change that often simultaneously releases, and is marked by, laughter" (420).

Nick O'Donnell-Trujillo and Katherine Adams observe that laughter can signal a turn-taking cue: "In its most robust sense, to laugh is to momentarily lose control of speaking" (177). If a speaker begins to laugh while speaking, and the speaking dissolves into laughter, this offers the hearer an opportunity to initiate a speaking turn. An outburst of laughter such as this (what Goffman calls *flooding out*) breaks the ordinary interactive frame (cited in Osvaldsson 518).

Laughter also occurs when awkward or socially inappropriate moments enter the conversation, and in institutional encounters awkward moments are frequent and can result in embarrassment: a teacher may have to discuss poor academic performance with

a student, a patient may need to disagree with a doctor's suggestion, or an employer may need to suggest a performance improvement plan to an employee. Ilmari Rostila found that in encounters between social workers and clients, "laughter is often used when and where the client is either reproached or the discussion otherwise touches upon client responsibility" (202). Clients respond by laughing rather than accepting responsibility for shortcomings. As mentioned above, Hakaana's study revealed that patients often laugh at the beginning of the medical interview when they are presenting symptoms that they feel are unusual or "atypical" and "may need extra legitimizing as a reason for the visit" ("Laughter as a Patient's Resource" 1). Laura Gavioli, in a cross-cultural study of the remedial function of laughter in service encounters in bookshops (such as the socially awkward moment when an employee must tell a customer that a book is not available or that the customer is at the wrong desk), analyzed where laughter occurs in relation to turns. "In the English corpus, laughter is recurrently turn-initial, anticipating an account by the assistant in the same turn, whereas in the Italian corpus, it is recurrently turn-final, leaving to the customer the possibility of eliciting an account and/or an alternative solution" (369). Finally, Osvaldsson studied discursive practices in Swedish youth detention homes, and found that laughter established "participants' orientation toward a situation as sensitive or tense" and that laughter was an "efficient tool" for allowing both professional and lay persons to participate in the flow of talk" (517).

1.5.3. THE SOCIAL NATURE OF LAUGHTER

In an early study of the social functions of laughter in a hospital setting, Coser remarked:

> Laughter, like all other expressions of emotions, as well as most
>
> physiological reactions, is regulated by society. It is expected to remain
>
> under control: 'mad laughter', 'hysterical laughter', are disapproved. This
>
> is to say that laughter is socially patterned....[it] is expected to occur only
>
> within patterns of interaction....The man who laughs or chuckles to
>
> himself is looked at as 'probably crazy'....Laughter, like language, is
>
> supposed to function within a communicative relationship and the man
>
> who laughs to himself, like the man who talks to himself...is considered
>
> an asocial man (171).

It has been well documented that people laugh more when others are present than when alone. Provine , in his ten-year study of laughter, discussed the sociality of laughter and stated that people were about 30 times more likely to laugh when other people were present than when they were alone. "Laughter almost disappeared among solitary subjects not exposed to media stimulation" (45). Provine argued that laughter is a vocal signal that "we seldom send unless there is an audience" (43). An audience can not only respond with laughter, but can also initiate laughter in others as well. For example, the sound of laughter in movie theaters and in sound tracks can cause people to laugh.

1.5.4. VOLUNTARY VS. SPONTANEOUS LAUGHTER

Laughter served in pre-speech times as an expressive-communicative social signal (Ruch & Ekman 410). There are different types of laughter for these functions—spontaneous and voluntary—and the difference lies not only with intent, but also with how the sound is produced. Spontaneous laughter is emotional in nature and follows an impulse. In this type of laughter, there is no attempt to suppress or control the laugh: this laughter is enjoyable. On the other hand, voluntary laughter—also called fake laughter—is intentionally produced and can be used to signal someone not only that we appreciated a humorous utterance even if we did not enjoy it, but also that we did *not* appreciate something intended to be funny. In the first case, particularly in multi-party conversations, a hearer may "get" a joke, but not find it particularly amusing. Out of politeness, or to join others who may be laughing, the listener may make an attempt to produce what sounds like a spontaneous or genuine laugh. In the latter case, a listener may actually be offended by an utterance and signal this dissatisfaction with a contrived, sarcastic laugh.

1.5.5. SHARED LAUGHTER VS. UNILATERAL LAUGHTER

People can laugh in unison (shared laughter) or they can laugh alone (unilateral laughter). What is unique as a conversational feature of either of these instances, is that laughter can occur without following the basic rule of turn-taking as established by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson in 1974: one party at a time speaks (see "Simplest"). If

the speaker laughs, the listener can laugh simultaneously, and the listener can laugh alone before the speaker completes his or her turn. As Sacks et al. note, laughter seems to be a parallel activity to the norms of turn-taking.

Researchers have demonstrated certain generalizations about when shared laughter or unilateral laughter is likely to occur. Jefferson found that when shared laughter occurs in two-party conversations, the speaker usually laughs first and the listener laughs second ("Technique"). Glenn (1989) found that in multi-party conversations, more than 70% of the time, a listener laughs first and initiates shared laughter (145). In institutional interaction between lay people and professionals, lay people frequently laugh at their own utterances as a strategy to present or discuss a problem, laugh more than professionals, and respond more often to professional's invitations to laugh than the reverse. Jarna Grønnerød, in her study of research interviews of non-professional rock musicians, found that interviewees "often laughed alone when presenting a contradiction between ideal images and the realities of band life" or in moments when they seemed troubled (35). Haakana shows that patients routinely use laughter at the beginning of the medical interview if they believe their problem to be "untypical"or "strange" ("Patient's" 187). Additionally, West found that patients' invitations to laugh were accepted by physicians less than were physicians' invitations for patients to laugh: "Physicians invited laughter much less readily than their patients, but their laughter invitations had a better likelihood of eliciting acceptances from their recipients" (127). Explanations for why these patterns tend to occur, and the effects on subsequent interaction lie in an examination of the conversational purposes of laughter.

1.5.6. FUNCTIONS OF LAUGHTER-IN-INTERACTION

As an expressive-communicative device, laughter serves many functions both positive and negative, Perhaps the most positive function of laughter is its power to align participants: speakers can laugh to cue listeners how to take an utterance, and listeners can laugh to cue how the utterance was taken. Coser remarked that "To laugh, or to occasion laughter through humor and wit, is to invite those present to come close. Laughter and humor are indeed like an invitation, be it an invitation for dinner, or an invitation to start a conversation: *it aims at decreasing social distance*" (emphasis added 172). Laughter can promote social bonding and encourage affiliation, and building on Coser, Jefferson refers to this action by a speaker as an "invitation to laugh": speakers *invite* laughter by laughing first themselves, and listeners can signal alignment by also laughing or as Jefferson terms it, *accepting* the invitation (see "Technique"). Listeners can also laugh first and indicate alignment with the speaker. Conversely, laughter can signal disaffiliation, can distance participants, and can promote feelings of superiority or disparagement. This negative type of laughter can occur when a listener laughs at an inappropriate place, i.e., when the speaker is intending to be taken seriously. Also, by not accepting an invitation to laugh (what Jefferson terms a *declination* of laughter invitation), listeners can signal disaffiliation.

Jefferson, in 1979, used a simplistic, yet highly effective way to account for the other functions of laughter: "laughing with" and "laughing at." This dichotomy has served to classify subsequent research into the many diverse conversational uses for laughter. "Laughing with" laughter can be used as a backchanneling device to support the

current speaker, to signal a play frame (see Glenn and Knapp); to "regulate the flow in interaction and mitigate the meaning of the preceding utterance" (Vettin and Todt 93); to "solidify members of a group against outsiders," to boost morale (Glenn *Laughter* 30); to allow the speaker to bring up discussion of delicate, uncomfortable, or socially inappropriate topics (see Jefferson "Organization," Haakana "Patient's,"Grønnerød), to allow people to participate in conversation without using words (see Osvaldsson); and to serve as a signal to the speaker to elaborate further (see O'Donnell-Trijullio and Adams). On the other hand, "laughing at" laughter can be used to ridicule, to make uneasy, to judge, to display nervousness (see Schenkein 345); to allow speakers to "boast, to challenge or to make emotionally-laden statements" (Stewart 5); and to interrupt or contradict the current speaker.

Recognizing the differences between "laughing with" and "laughing at" is often difficult for participants in the midst of interacting. People continuously shift alliances with each other: at one moment they may be in complete agreement and at the next moment in utter opposition, and most often are somewhere in-between these two extremes. Further, "Because laughter can invoke such a wide variety of cues (humor, sarcasm, irony, facetiousness, evasion, etc.) its occurrence in conversation can make the recognition of specific accomplishments problematic" (O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams, 184). For researchers studying interaction, differentiating "laughing with" from "laughing at" requires careful analysis. Glenn states, "Four keys, which may be present in any laugh-relevant sequential context, help distinguish laughing at from laughing with: laughable, first laugh, (possible) second laugh, and subsequent activities" ("Laughing *at*" 43.) In likely cases of laughing at, the laughable is some co-present as a butt; first laugh

is by someone other than the butt; the (possible) second laugh occurs in multi-party

conversations and is not done by the same person doing the first laugh, or in two-party

conversations, laughter is not shared; and the subsequent activities might include such

strategies as extending the topic through word or phrase repetitions.

1.5.7. GENDER AND LAUGHTER

Most studies show that women laugh more than men, and that if a man laughs, the

woman usually joins in, but when a woman laughs, the man frequently remains silent.

Provine in his study of 1,200 bouts of laughter in public places, found that male speakers

laugh only slightly more than male listeners; female speakers laugh considerably more

than female listeners; male speakers laugh 7% less than female listeners; and female

speakers laugh 126% more than male listeners (27-28). Laughter can serve a supportive

function in conversation, and since women are generally believed to play a more

supportive role in conversation than are men, it follows that women would laugh more to

support men. Pamela Fishman writes:

> As with work in the usual sense, there appears to be a division of labor in
>
> conversation. The people who do the routine maintainance work, the
>
> women, are not the same people who either control or benefit from the
>
> process. Women are the "shitworkers" of routine interaction, and the
>
> "goods" being made are not only interactions, but, through them, realities
>
> (99).

Further, Hay summarizes gender and laughter studies in conversation: "Much

research has found that women are generally more conversationally supportive of humor than men...even when they do not find the humor funny. Several researchers have found that women respond to humor with laughter more than men do..." (58). Women's gendered role, it is widely believed, influences them not only to laugh in support of men's conversation, but also to smile in support.

The visual manifestation of laughter—smiling—is also noted to occur more often in women than in men. Francine Deutsch researched the consequences of the observed behavior that women smile more than men. Male and female college students rated the characteristics of men and women after receiving a verbal description and photographs of both women and men. The findings showed that "the absence of smiles has a greater impact on perceptions of women than of men. When not smiling, women were perceived as less happy, less carefree, less relaxed than men...if women fail to perform expressive and warm nonverbal behavior, they will be evaluated more harshly than men" (341).

However, more recent studies have begun to question these long held beliefs that women use laughter and smiling much more frequently than men. Jefferson argues in her recent investigations using both quantitative and case-by-case data, that while this stereotype is inviting to use, it does not occur in the magnitude prior studies claim. Rather, stereotypes are "crude expressions"--a constitute "gloss" for a whole complex of regularities ("Note" 131) Further, Martin Lampert and Susan Ervin-Tripp, say that the long held assumption that women are more likely than men to laugh at nonsensical, non-aggressive humor and that men are allowed more leeway in public humor, find that this portrayal is inaccurate (52). While earlier studies were done in laboratory settings and on analyses of joking performances, conversations collected in "more naturalistic and

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intimate settings suggest that the humor of men and women is more variable than earlier reports have claimed" (3). Louise Mullany refuted earlier scholarship that women lack a sense of humor in workplace interactions, and argued instead that female chairs use repressive humor as a mitigation strategy—a "linguistic politeness device when attempting to gain control" (14).

1.6. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study is concerned with the ways in which participants use laughter in interaction and how the use of laughter is related to power as realized in discourse. In order to interpret the ways in which the participants in this study use laughter, I draw upon theories from two disciplines: facework theory from the discipline of interpersonal communication, and since individuals frequently use humor to elicit laughter, the construct of dimensions of humor styles as theorized in the discipline of psychology. In gathering data and defining power, I draw upon discourse theory and in particular the work of the late Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn.

1.6.1. FACEWORK THEORY

Through both initiating and responding to laughter, non-verbal communication takes place which allows participants to convey emotions, negotiate power, and to signal their willingness to become more or less aligned. These uses of laughter not only allow interaction to proceed, but also allow participants to project an image of themselves, to support or challenge the image the other person projects, and to allow participants to see

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beneath the projected images each presents. Theories of how the self is projected and interpreted fall under the name of "facework" and are based largely on the initial writing of Erving Goffman who, in his 1959 publication *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, argues that individuals essentially perform identities much in the same way actors perform characters. Individuals try and control the impression others receive of them through their words, gestures, and actions. A particular performance according to Goffman, "may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants (15). Goffman posits that "When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed" (1). Clues about a person ('sign-vehicles') are emitted through two different kinds of sign activity: "the expression that he *gives* and the expression that he *gives off*" (italics original 2). Expressions a person *gives* are conscious, and through "verbal symbols or their substitutes" convey what a person wishes others to know or think about him or her. On the other hand, expressions *given off* are "performed for reasons other than what the information" was given for. Expressions *given off* can be done consciously or unconsciously. In applying Goffman's theory to laughter, we can see not only that individuals can *give* impressions through laughter, but also that individuals can *give off* impressions both intentionally and unintentionally. For example, in the case of Jefferson's observations of "troubles telling," a person who intentionally laughs *gives* the impression that the troubles are not getting the best of him or her when indeed the troubles may be difficult to handle. On the other hand, by laughing often and for no apparent reason, a person may *give off* the impression of being nervous or anxious.

In 1978, building upon Goffman, Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson introduced politeness theory incorporating the notion of "face" or "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (61). Face consists of two aspects: negative face, which is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction—i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition," and positive face, which is "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (61). Individuals want to maintain positive face, and it is of mutual interest for speakers and hearers to maintain each other's face. According to Brown and Levinson, some actions intrinsically threaten face (face-threatening acts of FTAs) such criticisms, requests, apologies, embarrassing statements that cause an interlocutor to "lose face" or an imposition which restricts the freedom of the hearer. An example of the latter, in tutorial terms, would be a bald request such as "This is the wrong word so change it" or "This paragraph doesn't fit here. Move it." However, interlocutors most often try and maintain each other's positive face, and so FTAs can be minimized through such strategies as indirect requests ("I wonder if this paragraph would make more sense over here") or mitigated language ("Perhaps you just might give a little bit of thought to using a different word".)

In the context of tutorials, deciding on a face—the projected public image one wishes to convey—can be problematic particularly for tutors. On the one hand, they are representatives of an academic institution, and so they may wish to maintain an authoritative face and distance themselves from a closer, more personal relationship with students. On the other hand, since tutors are students themselves, they may wish to

project an image of confidant or peer. Through laughter, both these images can be constructed: the limited use of laughter can maintain distance, and the intentional initiation of laughter can close the distance. In addition to deciding on a public face, tutors as well as students find themselves in a specialized situation in that tutors need to deliver face-threatening comments while students must accept them. Students come to the writing center either voluntarily or by the mandate of a teacher, and in so doing ask for advice, which normally is "intrinsically threatening to negative face wants (i.e.the desire to be unimpeded)" and because advice messages are directives, "impose symbolic constraints on a support seeker's autonomy" (Burleson and MacGeorge 397). Tutors give advice that students may or may not welcome, and in order to negotiate maintaining the student's positive face, tutors may use laughter as a mitigating strategy, or at the risk of the laughter being received as ridicule, tutors may avoid its use. Students also negotiate a public face as they shift between presenting themselves as competent writers whose only problem is making careless mistakes or as incompetent writers who are ignorant of writing conventions. The use of laughter is a strategy by which students can maintain face in such potentially embarrassing activities as troubles telling, and laughter can also, when used supportively, help students to maintain the positive face of tutors.

Expanding on the work of Goffman and Brown and Levinson, Stella Ting-Toomey and her colleagues developed face-negotiation theory to more fully explain what happens in conflict situations, and how cross-cultural aspects of facework come into play. Face-negotiation theory argues that "face is an explanatory mechanism for different conflict management styles in different cultural groups" (Oetzel and Ting-Toomey 600). Cultural groups may consist of such units as family groups, co-workers, nations, or in the

case of writing centers, academic communities. "Conflict" is defined as "the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties over substantive and/or relational issues," and indeed much of the interaction that takes place in tutorials involves discussion of the incompatibility of a student's writing with the expected values of content and form that the academic community requires (Ting-Toomey, 599-600). "Conflict management style" refers to "general tendencies of patterned responses to conflict in a variety of interactive situations" and as Putnam and Wilson note, can be reduced to three primary types: "(a) control, forcing, or dominating; (b) solution-oriented, issue-oriented, or integrating; and (c) nonconfrontational, smoothing, or avoiding" (qtd in Oetzel and Ting-Toomey 601). These types, according to Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, can be associated with whose face an individual is more interested in saving: "Self-face is associated positively with dominating conflict styles…other-face is associated positively with avoiding conflict style…and integrating [nonconfrontational style] [is] associated positively with both self- and other-face (603).

Depending on an individual's cultural upbringing and his or her orientation to the culture of a writing center, the ways in which self is presented and maintained as well as the ways the face of the other is regarded will vary with the individual. The use of laughter is a strategy that can be used to talk about delicate matters by lightening a potentially unpleasant discussion, and can be used by both tutors and students to maintain self-face as well as other-face. For example, tutors can use laughter to poke fun at the student's teacher for making so many corrections on the student's paper. The cause for tension is then deflected from the student's shortcomings as a writer to the teacher's

focus on problems. Also, students can use laughter as a response to a tutor's critical comment and thereby indicate that he or she is accepting of the comment.

Facework then allows individuals to work their way through conflict and uncomfortable situations without damaging the self-esteem of themselves or the other. I shall invoke the concept of facework in Chapter 6 as I discuss the results of this study.

1.6.2. DIMENSIONS OF HUMOR STYLES

Helga Kotthoff, in a review of literature on humor and gender, notes that humor can be an indicator of status, and "Anyone who makes other people laugh has, as Coser (1960) states, momentary control of the situation. Using humorous remarks, an actor can redefine a situation and redirect peoples' attention. To this extent, humor in formal contexts is linked to a high situational status can affirm one's dominance in the hierarchal social structure"(8). In investigating laughter, how a participant uses humor to invite laughter warrants attention.

Laughter is one strategy participants use in doing facework, and though laughter has often been used interchangeably with humor (as discussed earlier in this chapter), it is not the same. However, as Provine observes, humor is a precursor in roughly 20% of laughter initiations in casual conversation, and though one would expect a lower percentage in institutional discourse, humor nonetheless is worth considering since it can be used to induce as well as to respond to laughter.

An individual's use of humor can be related to notions of performance and facework. Goffman notes, "It is sometimes convenient to divide the stimuli which make

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up a personal front into 'appearance' and 'manner' according to the function performed by the information that these stimuli convey" (24). Appearance, for Goffman, "refers to those stimuli which function at the time to tell us of the performer's social status," and manner "may be taken to refer to those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (24). He gives two examples:

> Thus a haughty, aggressive manner may give the impression that the
>
> performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and
>
> direct its course. A meek, apologetic manner may give the impression that
>
> the performer expects to follow the lead of others, or at least that he can be
>
> lead to do so (24).

A person's sense of humor and the extent of its expression can affect that person's manner and the consequent image the other forms of that person. For example, a person who makes frequent use of acceptable humor will probably project an image of a person who is fun to be around, doesn't take life's problems too seriously, and who makes others laugh. Conversely, a person whom others deem as having no sense of humor will probably not be viewed favorably. However, in the context of tutorials, the use of humor can be a two-edged sword: humor used to induce laughter, when successful, can bring participants closer together; when humor is used too often, the user may appear to not take his or her work seriously, or when a failed humor attempt occurs, the result may be a further distancing of participants.

An individual's sense of humor, and his or her inclination to project or not project a humorous manner is a function of personality. Just as the construct of personality has

been studied and various measurement scales devised to place on a continuum such dichotomous features as introversion/extroversion, optimism/pessimism, or intuition/thinking, humor researchers have devised models to describe the construct of sense of humor. Psychologist Rod Martin, who has done much research on humor styles, posits four dimensions which differentiate individuals' use of humor, and which may be used to understand how participants in this study use humor to elicit laughter. (1) *Affiliative humor* is humor used to "engage in witty banter to amuse others, to facilitate relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tension" (Sec. 1.1) Individuals whose humor style is affiliative, use humor "to put others at ease…[and] are also likely to engage in self-deprecating humor, say funny things about themselves…[and this] enhances interpersonal cohesiveness." (2) *Self-enhancing humor* "involves a generally humorous outlook on life, a tendency to be frequently amused by the incongruities of life." People who use self-enhancing humor use it to create a humorous perspective that allows them cope with stress and to regulate emotion. (3) *Aggressive humor* is humor in the form of "sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, 'put down,' or disparagement humor…It also includes the use of humor to manipulate others by means of an implied threat of ridicule…In general, people with an aggressive humor style have a tendency to express humor without regard for its potential impact on others." (4) *Self-defeating humor* involves "excessively self-disparaging humor, attempts to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one's own expense as a means of ingratiating oneself or gaining approval…or the tendency to engage in humorous behavior as a means of hiding one's underlying negative feelings." Individuals who use self-defeating humor "may be seen as

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witty…[but] there is an element of emotional neediness, avoidance, and low self-esteem underlying their sense of humor."

These dimensions of humor, according to Martin, are not distinct and often overlap. Any individual may, at different times, use humor that exhibits some of these dimensions; however, in the present study, where participant roles are more defined than in casual conversation, roles may influence the predominance of one dimension of humor within each individual, and may affect subsequent initiations and/or expectations of laughter. For example, one of the tutor's roles, in theory, is to make students comfortable in discussing weaknesses in their writing, or in revealing their ignorance of writing conventions. Tutors who have an affiliative humor style may quite comfortably use humor to, as Martin posits, "facilitate relationships" or to "put others at ease," (or in facework theory to maintain the positive face of the other) and while that same tutor may also in everyday conversations among friends use aggressive humor in teasing and joking, he or she would most likely not use aggressive humor directed at the student in a writing tutorial.

However, occasionally tutors do use humor affiliatively, but in a way that has aggressive overtones for some target other than the student. As Martin notes, "relatively benign forms of affliative humor may often involve some degree of disparagement, such as when groups of friends or colleagues enhance their feelings of group identity, cohesiveness, and well-being by making fun of other groups or individuals outside the group who are disliked or pose some threat to them," (Sec. 1.1). Tutors and students using humor to disparage some "other," and who seek a laughter response as verification that the underlying message was received, is evident in the present study.

A person's humor style or humorous manner can be related to that person's communication orientation toward conflict in the sense of whether he or she is more concerned with self-face, other-face, or mutual-face. A person concerned primarily with maintaining his or her own positive face might be prone to using self-enhancing humor whereas a person concerned with maintaining positive mutual-face may employ an affiliative humor style. Self-defeating humor is indicative of someone who has trouble maintaining his or her own positive face and may in fact be a plea for the hearer to do some face-giving or other-concerned facework.

1.6.3. POWER IN DISCOURSE

Much of the research into the uses of laughter in institutional discourse has been done in the context of doctor-patient interviews. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, West and Haakana looked at laughter in doctor-patient discourse, and found that who initiated laughter and who supported laughter was heavily dependant on who had the most power. In both these studies, doctors were assumed to have more inherent power than patients; however, neither researcher attempted to examine the relative degree of power individual doctors held as compared to individual patients.

In *Claiming Power in Doctor-Patient Talk*, anthropological linguist Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn contrasts the recurrent theme in philosophical and social-theory analyses that sees power as "implementing one's agenda" with that of educational theorist Nicholas Burbules' view that power is synonymous with domination, and finds both views inadequate to describe claims for power that occur in interaction. In the first

view, the outcome of having one's agenda implemented assumes an either-or outcome. Ainsworth-Vaughn argues that "It is often difficult to say whose agenda prevail[s] in the end because participants modif[y] their proposals on the basis of what they hea[r] during the negotiation" (43). A major problem with Burbules' view, according to Ainsworth-Vaughn, is that assuming power is always domination also assumes that there must be a conflict of interest in order for one person to dominate or have power over another. She explains, "If there is no conflict of interest, power is not realized. Thus, Burbules does not see parents as exercising power when they protect young children from danger against the child's will. It is in the interest of the child to be protected" (41). Ainsworth-Vaughn points out that Burbules is looking solely at the outcome and not the process involved, and she argues that in the *process* of protecting the child, the parent exercises power. Thus, Ainsworth-Vaughn sees that power can be exercised through a process of action.

Ainsworth-Vaughn distinguishes between "agency" and "structure" as bases for claiming power, and this distinction is applicable to tutorial discourse. "Discourse moves are part of agency. *Structural power* in medical encounters is that arising from the speaker's affiliation with the social institution... ." (italics original 42). Tutors have structural power in that they are representatives of an academic institution, and they may claim or relinquish power, as may students, through discourse moves. Ainsworth-Vaughn asserts, using the term "identity" in much to same way Brown and Levinson use "face," that "Identity is constructed in part by successful claims to speaker rights—the right to take a turn, to hold the floor an appropriate length of time, to initiate and pursue a topic, to finish a point" (43). In her study, Ainsworth-Vaughn examines how power is

negotiated through the discourse moves of questions, interruptions, overlaps, topic control, and turn-taking, and building upon her work, I also include these features in the present study.

1.7. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In this study, I assume that participants wish to present themselves in a positive light and use linguistic and paralinguistic strategies to maintain their positive face as well as the positive face of the other. I also assume that laughter is used both intentionally and unintentionally to supplement messages communicated by participants during talk-in-interaction. Further, I assume that participants negotiate and claim power through discourse moves, and that by quantifying these moves, individual differences in the degree to which power is claimed by participants can be seen.

1.8. NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Laughter is an important multi-faceted discourse device that participants use to communicate a variety of messages in both everyday and institutional interactions. While laughter in interaction has been researched in a variety of other institutional settings, there is a virtual void of scholarship concerning the use of laughter by participants in writing tutorials. Further, while prior research has demonstrated consistently that laughter in institutional discourse is related to the unequal distribution of power between participants in dyads or among participants in multi-party interactions, no studies have

examined writing tutorials to bring to the surface the relationship between laughter and power as measured by discourse features.

The present study, by looking beneath the surface of both initiated and responsive laughter, can contribute to the general body of knowledge concerning laughter and the specific body of knowledge of tutor-student interaction. My hope is that my research will also benefit applied linguistics and writing center praxis by making tutors more aware of what students might be saying beneath the guise of laughter.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the impetus for the study; the corpus of data including the setting in which the data were collected, the participant selection procedure, and the data collection process; the research questions that were grounded in and emerged from the data; the rationale for a hybrid approach to the analysis of the linguistic and interactional features of laughter in writing center tutorials; and the coding process.

2.1. IMPETUS FOR THE STUDY

Research interest in academic spoken discourse has a long tradition involving corpus linguistics—collections of texts "collected according to some set of principled criteria" (Simpson and Swales 227). From the early pioneers of studies of specific corpora of written or recorded and transcribed texts such as Charles Carpenter Fries' *The Structure of English* (1952), which emphasized a "descriptive approach grounded in empirical data" (Simpson and Swales 8), to contemporary researchers relying on such massive computerized corpora as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), descriptive or applied linguists have had two main research agendas: "(1) to look at the linguistic elements *emerging* from the data, that is, investigate language as a resource [emphasis added]; and (2) to investigate the kinds of discourse practices that are characteristic or less characteristic of university settings" (167).

The academic talk-in-interaction that occurs between tutors and students in writing centers—the talk that is the impetus for this study—is institutional discourse, and exhibits the characteristics which distinguish institutional discourse from everyday

conversation (Drew and Heritage 22). Tutors represent a formal organization, and their "professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged" (4); the interaction is goal oriented; there are "*special and particular constraints* on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand [italics original]" (22); and the interaction occurs in a designated setting. Much research has been done on the teacher-student talk-in-interaction that occurs in traditional classrooms (see Cazden), yet little has been done to investigate the verbal discourse in writing centers. Writing center tutors share with classroom composition instructors the goal of helping students to become better writers; however, unlike classrooms in which one instructor deals with several students concurrently, the working environment of writing centers is based primarily on one-on-one conferencing. Also, while classroom instructors have highly visible or inherent status signs—the authority/responsibility to assign grades to papers, the power to pass or fail students, a personal office, a privileged seat in the classroom—the identity of writing center tutors is not based on such powers. While tutors do serve as institutional representatives, and do make evaluations about student papers, tutors do not assign grades, do not pass or fail students: their space is usually not private but rather but one of several public conference tables, and their role is not as gatekeeper, but rather as consultant. Additionally, tutors, unlike credentialed and/or tenured classroom instructors, are often graduate students or part-time lecturers who may be fairly close in age to the students with whom they work. Granted, many entry level writing courses may be taught by graduate assistants, but as mentioned above, traditional classroom settings lend an inherent power to the classroom instructor that writing center tutors do not command.

How then might this unique status of tutors affect talk-in-interaction? Since the status of participants in writing center tutorials is more equal than that of teachers and students in classrooms, how might the discourse strategies differ? Might writing center discourse be more conversational in nature than that which occurs in classrooms?

With these questions in mind, I turned to applied linguistics, and in particular Conversational Analysis (CA), as a methodology to study the institutional processes that go on in writing tutorials. Research endeavors in academic spoken discourse have long relied on CA, with its focus on the analysis of audio and video recordings of interaction, and which offers the "advantage that it cuts across basic problems associated with the gap between beliefs and action and between what people say and what they do" (Drew and Heritage 5). Since I was keeping in mind power differentials, I decided to supplement the CA analysis of the data with quantitative analyses of discourse features that were indicative of claims to power in discourse. I began this research project to explore the linguistic strategies participants use in writing center tutorials, and collected data as described in the following section.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION

2.2.1. SETTING

Eastern Michigan University's Writing Development Center (WDC), or The Writing Center as it is known today, has operated as some variant of an institution-within-an-institution since the early 1970s. Originally, a rather creative interpretation of the Michigan laws governing the distribution of funds earmarked for instructional support

for adult education enabled certified secondary school teachers to be hired by the Ypsilanti Public School Adult Education Program. These teachers were then sent to EMU, and EMU students below the age of twenty were offered this tutorial service. As a result of this collaborative effort, by 1982 the program employed a half-dozen full-time teachers who were paid by the hour and who operated under an Adult-Ed remedial philosophy. The WDC was not viewed campus-wide writing center where "good" writers went in search of a responding audience, but rather as a fix-it shop where students under-prepared to write at the college were sent to master basic English.

As the 1990s began and the laws governing the distribution of Adult Ed funds were changed, writing support at EMU nearly vanished as funding and personnel to support a writing center dwindled along with the center's visibility. The WDC relocated from a ground-floor room in the biggest classroom building on campus to a difficult-to-find corner room on the sixth floor in an interior faculty-office hallway. Soon, outside pressure from external review boards as well as internal pressure for writing support resulted in the Provost's office developing a Developmental English Fund to be administered through the English Department and to help support writing and reading. The WDC was at first directed by a faculty member with one course release time, and then by a part-time lecturer who, together with five FTE in the form of five graduate students who were majoring in English, comprised the staff.

It was at this point that I was hired as the director, and I soon discovered that though the WDC was no longer programmatically or financially tied to Adult Ed, its persona in the university community was. Students who used the WDC were primarily at-risk students enrolled in ENG 120: Basic English Composition (a course which

counted towards graduation but not for fulfilling the General Education requirement of a introductory composition course) or those in ENG 121: Freshmen Composition. In both these courses, students were required by their instructors to make at least one appointment during the semester. Additionally, about a third of the total number of student appointments were made by non-native English speakers. Many faculty across campus who knew of the center's existence believed it continued to operate under the old remedial education philosophy, and referred students who, in the words of one department head, "needed their writing hygiene cleaned up." Expectations about the WDC from both faculty and students were that tutors in the WDC were there to help "fix" papers in terms of sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics.

Tutor training in 1997, when the data for this study was collected, consisted of a three-hour workshop before the WDC opened in the fall semester, and weekly hour-long staff meetings throughout the fall. In establishing an institutional identity—an identity that would ultimately guide the tutorials, primary emphasis was first placed on tutoring for higher-order concerns such as content, organization, and argument, and secondarily addressing grammar and mechanics. Tutors were traditionally graduate students majoring in English who worked part-time in the WDC and taught either a section of ENG 120 or assisted in a large lecture section of a literature class. The year this data was collected, I had also hired linguistics majors, TESOL majors, and two undergraduate tutors who were funded through a program which was designed to academically support minority students. The actual taping began at the tail end of the fall semester, and was completed during the winter semester.

Tutors were used to being observed: the WDC served as a research site for classes

in English Education as well as Introduction to Composition courses. Students from these courses observed the goings-on in the WDC and occasionally sat in on a tutorial and took notes. Some English Education students' presence became routine as they followed a particular student's progress over the course of several visits to the WDC. Additionally, for purposes of tutor evaluation, I had sat in on tutorials and had given feedback to each tutor on his or her performance. This acquaintance with being observed was perhaps beneficial when I eventually sought out participants for this study.

The room in which the WDC was located was L-shaped, consisting of a 13' x 9' reception/filing and supplies area adjoined to a 6' x 23' wing in which were arranged in close proximity six conference tables: an acoustic nightmare. Due to scheduling logistics dependent on both tutor and my own availability, I was faced with the prospect of having to record when there might be three or four simultaneous tutorials occurring with barely more than four feet separating the tables and participants. Fortunately, only seven of the 36 taped tutorials occurred concurrently with more than two additional T/S dyads, so background noise was not a constant interference.

In order to minimize the effect of concurrent tutorials, the taping area was set up against the back wall around the corner from the main desk. The participants sat at a small rectangular table which was placed perpendicular to the back wall. Behind the back of the person seated on the right was another wall, and behind the person seated on the left was a large window. Suspended from a bookshelf on the back wall was a small microphone which was hooked to a Marantz 201 audio recorder, which then fed into a Symphonic VCR which I kept in a six-feet tall supply cabinet with double doors located approximately six feet away against the right wall. For video input, I had a Plexiglas

panel made to replace a suspended ceiling tile, and mounted a multi-purpose JVC video camera above the panel. The video input went to the VCR. I hooked a small, 5-inch tv monitor to the VCR, and was able to ascertain when video was being input to the system. When the left-hand door to the supply cabinet was opened, my presence was partially obscured from the participants. This allowed me occasionally to unobtrusively check the recording equipment.

2.2.2. PARTICIPANTS

Table 2.1: Corpus Overview on the following page shows the pseudonymous four-letter code given to each tutorial (the first two letters stand for the tutor, the second for the student), the gender composition of the dyad, the date and time of the tutorial, whether the visit was the student's first or second, whether or not the visit was required, the course number, the length of the visit, the number of other dyads in the room, each student's class level, the ages of participants, and the difference in ages in each dyad.

2.2.2.1. Tutors

In accordance with the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) procedures at Michigan State University, I applied for and was granted approval to collect data. I also applied for and was granted approval through the Human Subjects Review Committee at my home institution, Eastern Michigan University, to collect data. In recruiting tutors to participate, during a

Table 2.1 Corpus Overview

Tape	T/S	Date	Time	#v	Req	CRN #	Lgth	# T/S	Level	S Age	T Age	ADiff.
ALBC	M/F	3/31/1997	12:00	2	N	P. Essay	53:47	3	SR	27.8	33.7	5.11
ALCK	M/F	3/13/1997	12:30	1	TS	ENG 121	36:48	3	S	20.1	33.7	13.6
ALMS	M/M	4/9/1997	2:00	1	TS	ENG 121	33:23	1	SR	25	33.8	8.8
ALMT	M/M	4/14/1997	12:30	1	N	ENG 417	28:48	3	SR	26.9	33.8	6.11
ALTK	M/M	4/10/1997	12:30	1	N	PHIL 225	25:37	2	S	20.9	33.8	12.11
ALWL	M/F	4/10/1997	2:00	1	Y	ENG 121	28:42	1	SR	21.1	33.8	12.7
CRAM	M/M	3/27/1997	9:30	1	N	ENG 120	29:59	1	F	22.2	34.7	12.5
CRCC	M/F	3/27/1997	10:00	1	N	ENG 121	36:01	1	F	18.7	34.7	16
CRHC	M/F	4/3/1997	11:30	1	N	LIT 101	31:27	2	S	19.8	34.7	14.11
CRLK	M/F	3/13/1997	10:00	2	N	OT 420	55:39	2	SR	24.1	34.7	10.6
CRMR	M/F	12/3/1996	?	1	N	LIT 106	31:41		F	19.2	34.3	15.1
CRSB	M/M	4/3/1997	2:00	1	Y	ENG 121	47:14	?	F	19.4	34.7	15.3
FSEL	M/F	4/7/1997	2:00	1	Y	ENG 121	33:26	1	F	19.2	26.10	6.9
FSKP	M/M	4/7/1997	2:30	1	Y	ENG 121	32:06	0	F	19.3	26.10	6.8
FSSS	M/M	3/18/1997		1	Y	ENG 120	13:58	?	F	18.8	26.9	8.1
FSTM	M/M	4/1/1997	1:30	1	N	ENG 121	44:27	2	JR	21	26.10	**5.10**
FSTS	M/F	4/2/1997	1:30	1	N	PHED 591	29:11	2	GR	25.3	26.10	0.8
FSWK	M/F	4/10/1997	12:00	1	Y	ENG 121	25:56	3	F	18.4	26.10	7.7
GJKB	F/F	4/7/1997	1:00	1	TS	WMST200	31:57	3	F	32.11	24.3	8.8
GJKJ	F/F	3/26/1997	1:00	1	Y	ENG 121	36:01	2	F	18.3	24.2	5.11
GJMJ	F/M	3/31/1997	2:00	1	N	INDT 320	36:42	2	S	20.7	24.2	3.7
GJPC	F/M	4/1/1997	3:30	2	Y	ENG 121	51:09	0	F	18.1	24.2	6.1
GJWB	F/M	3/24/1997	3:00	1	Y	ENG 121	22:50	0	F	19.2	24.2	5
GJWS	F/F	3/26/1997	12:30	1	N	ENG 121	29:36	2	S	47.1	24.2	22.11
HCBJ	F/*	4/9/1997	?	1	Y	ENG 121	35:28	?	F	19.1	22.4	3.3
HCCA	F/F	4/3/1997	10:00	1	TS	ENG 121	27:39	1	F	18.11	22.3	3.4
HCFJ	F/M	3/18/1997	1:00	1	N	ENG 121	19:40	1	F	19	22.3	3.3
HCKB	F/F	4/3/1997	9:30	1	Y	ENG 121	19:17	1	F	19.3	22.3	3
HCPR	F/M	3/27/1997	1:30	1	Y	ENG 121	37:21	2	F	18.5	22.3	3.10
HCTD	F/M	4/10/1997	10:00	2	Y	ENG 121	34:06	1	F	19.6	22.4	2.10
OMCK	F/F	12/4/1996	11:30	2	TS	HIST 315	20:45	2	JR	26.2	25.2	1
OMHJ	F/M	3/25/1997	2:00	1	N	ENG 326	29:04	3	SR	21.8	25.2	3.6
OMHM	F/M	4/1/1997	1:00	1	N	P. Essay	37:06	2	JR	24.5	25.2	0.9
OMMM	F/F	4/8/1997	2:00	1	Y	ENG 121	18:32	3	F	18.7	25.3	4.10
OMRN	F/F	4/8/1997	11:30	1	N	ENG 121	44:27	1	F	19.1	25.3	6.8
OMZM	F/M	12/4/1996	?	1	TS	ENG 121	19:28	?	F	18.6	24.1	5.7

T/S = Tutor-Student dyad; #v = number of visit to the WDC; #T/S=other dyads in room

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regular staff meeting I discussed the need in writing center literature for studies which focus on the spoken discourse of tutorials. I explained that I was collecting data to study instructor-student communication, and while the data would likely serve as the basis for my dissertation, it would serve a wider function as a catalyst to further studies as well as to improve future tutor training. I explained I would simultaneously video and audio tape tutorials. Confidentiality was promised, consent to view or listen to the tapes at any time was given, and I made explicit that volunteers had the right to withdraw completely at any time. Tutors were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary, and would have no effect on continued or future employment. The tutors were either graduating at the end of the semester, or were going to be assigned to teaching full-time in their second year, so the possibility of working in the WDC was not dependent on either the tutors' participation or performance.

I explained that I hoped to acquire a corpus comprised of interaction between equal numbers of male and female tutors as well as equal numbers of male and female students and that the gender dyads would be equally distributed among the six tutors. The tutors were informed that I would try to select student volunteers so that each tutor would work with three male and three female students for a total of six taped tutorials each. Fortunately three male tutors and three female tutors volunteered; two female tutors and two male tutors were graduate assistants, and one female and one male tutor were undergraduates.

Tutors' majors were primarily within the English department and included linguistics, professional writing, and literature. One tutor was majoring in a foreign language. The tutors ranged in age from 22 years 3 months to 34 years 8 months. All

tutors signed consent forms. (See Appendix A.1.).

2.2.2.2 Students

Since this study was not designed to look at cultural differences or English as a second-language as variables in the discourse functions of laughter, I excluded students who were non-native speakers. During the time slots I would be available to tape tutorials, I left instructions at the reception desk to schedule only native speakers, or speakers without obvious accents to the participating tutors. As students came for their appointments, I met them at the desk and explained that I was doing a study of tutor-student communication, discussed confidentiality, and asked if they would be willing to be video and audio-taped. Only a few students declined to be included in the study. Two walk-in students—students without appointments—also agreed to be in the study.

The students were also told orally that they could withdraw their consent at any time, and that if they wished, they could view the video tape and/or listen to the audio tape. Further, they were asked to agree to a post-tutorial telephone interview with me that would occur within 24 hours of the tutorial. All students signed the consent form (see Appendix A.2.).

Background data on the student participants are presented in Table 2.1. Students ranged in age from 18 years 3 months to 47 years 1 month, and represented levels from freshman to graduate. Equal numbers of male and female participants were recruited. Of the 36 students who participated, there were 21 freshmen, four sophomores, three juniors, six seniors, and one graduate student. The majority (21 of 36) were working on papers from ENG 121, three were from Basic Writing, two were from introductory literature

classes, and the remainder of the students were from 200-400 level courses. One graduate assistant from an occupational therapy course participated. Students came to the WDC for various reasons: 14 were required as part of their course work to attend at least one tutorial, six noted that their teacher "suggested" they come, and 16 came of their own volition. Most students (31) were working with their particular tutor for the first time; however, five students (one with each of five tutors) had met their tutor on a previous occasion. Six students (3 male and 3 female) were African Americans; one was a non-traditional student, a middle-aged Caucasian female, and the rest were Caucasians who ranged in age from18 years 1 month to 27 years, 8 months.

2.2.3. PROCEDURE

Once a student agreed to participate, I introduced the tutor, directed the dyad to the taping area, let them decide who was to sit in each chair, and further explained the process and what I would be collecting: the WDC information sheet, the working draft to be photocopied before the tutorial began and upon its completion, the assignment sheet, any notes made on additional paper, and later a final draft. The information sheet (see Appendix A.3.). is used in the WDC to gather information about the course in which the student is working, what the student would like help with, whether or not the student is required by the instructor to come to the WDC—information that is entered into the WDC database. I wanted a copy of the draft before and after the tutorial to see (1) what comments either the tutor or the student might have written and which would not be visible on the videotape, (2) to aid in transcription when either the tutor or student were

reading aloud—possibly in a low voice, and (3) to see what changes had been made in the draft that may be attributable to the tutor's suggestions.

I thought perhaps notes might help clarify interaction, and a few students did take additional notes or the tutor sketched a brief outline. If a student did not have a copy of the assignment sheet, I asked that he or she send me one, and I was able to obtain copies of all assignments. Two students were working on essays for reasons other than coursework, and so did not have a specific set of guidelines. I gave each student a campus mail envelope and $1.00 to cover the costs of photocopying his or her final draft that would be submitted to his or her instructor.

An additional collected item was the routinely collected post-tutorial evaluation sheet completed anonymously by the student and placed in a box as the student exited the WDC (See Appendix A.4.).

As the tutor and student filled out the paperwork, I photocopied the necessary materials. As the tutorial began, I made sure the recording devices were working, and then went around the corner so as not to be a visible influence. Occasionally, I checked the equipment, but as stated earlier, the open storage cabinet door made my presence less intrusive.

Once the tutorial was underway, I took field notes about how many other tutorials were going on in the room at the time, what interruptions may have occurred, and how the tutorial seemed to be progressing. After each tutorial had concluded, I again requested that the student send me a photocopy of the final draft that was to be submitted to the course instructor, and asked each participant when a convenient time would be to call and do a brief post-tutorial interview.

So that confidentiality would be maintained, I assigned all tutors, students, recordings, and collected materials a two-letter code and did not reveal this code to participants, coders, or other people.

2.3. INITIAL REVIEW OF DATA

After each day of taping, I made a copy of the audio tape(s) on a Telex Copyette high-speed cassette tape duplicator, and a VHS recorder-to-VHS recorder copy of the video(s). Since the VHS tape was copied in real time, I was able to view each tape and get an overall impression of the interactional dynamics of the conference. I took notes on the subject of the draft, the student's main concerns, and whether or not the discussion followed the draft line by line or proceeded more globally. By reviewing the tapes, I was also able to discover that certain tutors in the background had voices that carried, and that the audio portion of some tapes had much interference from this background noise. During subsequent tapings in those time slots, I tried to place other tutors in the room as far from the taping area as possible. However, since the space in the room was very limited, and often all scheduled tutors had appointments, portions of some tapes are difficult to hear.

Once the data collection was completed, I began to review the tapes to get a sense of the nature of the talk-in-interaction in the WDC, and to see whether or not it was more conversational in nature than classroom discourse. Initially, I began to look at the tapes focusing on questions since studies of classroom discourse had shown that teachers asked the most questions, and the nature of the questions generally followed an Initiation-

Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequence. Additionally, question asking is associated with power differentials, and in asymmetrical relationships, the person with the most power tends to ask the most questions. In the post-tutorial interviews I had taped with the tutors and students, one of the questions I asked was "Who seemed to ask the most questions?" and I was curious as to whether the participants' intuition was in line with what had actually occurred.

As time went on, and I reviewed more tapes, I began to notice that some tutorials seemed almost conversational in nature while others were more typical of institutional interaction. Tutorials which seemed the most conversational in nature included such linguistic features as overlapping speech, an informal lexical choice, the inclusion of topics not directly germane to the tutorial agenda, and those features noted in Drew and Heritage: "expressions of surprise, sympathy, agreement, or affiliation in response to lay participants describings, claims" (24). What seemed the most surprising feature of the tutorials, though, was the use of laughter, and in particular the use of laughter to suggest feelings other than amusement. For example, the following excerpt is from a tutorial involving a 24 year old female tutor and a 47 year old female student. The discussion is about whether or not to indent the first paragraph in a report:

Excerpt 2.1 GJWS (turns 103-111)
(1) T: um just to caution you too..make sure you just indent that there..
(2) S: .   Now is that..is that
(3)   are you sure about that?   [is..is essay form…is]
(4) T: …Well if she wants it in essay form= everything should be
(5) S: that the first one
(6) T: should be indented five spaces..yup
(7) S: ok because I don't think >I
(8) really
(9) don't think< I did my other papers..I think I did them all THAT way   But

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(10)T: oh really?
(11)S: you know what?   um my my department head. >I worked in teacher ed<
(12)and..um..I
(13)T: Hum?
(14)S: know HE does his..stuff and then he has me format it for him   and fix it and
(15)T: umhum
(16)S: THAT'S where I got it and so I would I started indenting them you know and I
(17)T: [and that's how it is?] hmmm
(18)S: and so I would I started indenting them you know and I thought well maybe he
(19) does it everytime..maybe he's correct..he's got his PhD I don't (smiles and laughs)
(20) T: (smiles and laughs)
(21) S: ☺ so maybe he does know a little bit more than I do ☺ (☺=smiley voice)

The tutor (T) has noticed that the first paragraph of the essay is not indented five spaces while the remainder of the paragraphs are. The student (S) questions the tutor in lines 2-3, and in line 9 states that she's done other papers the same way. T in line 10 expresses surprise that the other papers were acceptable with the first paragraph not indented, and so in line 11, S begins to bring in the authority of her boss—the department head—who has her format his papers with the first paragraph not indented. She mitigates this disagreement with T in line 19 by attributing her ideas to a higher authority and then laughs and smiles. T joins in the laughter as well. What S has apparently accomplished through the use of laughter is a refutation of T's advice in such a way that T is neither threatened nor offended. Indeed, T smiles and laughs as well.

I became increasingly intrigued by participants' use of laughter to accomplish interactional goals, and so decided to do a close analysis of laughter in my corpus. However, I soon discovered that episodes of laughter were often fleeting; might occur in single, difficult-to-discern pulses; sometimes occurred in seemingly inappropriate places; and that speakers often began laughing virtually simultaneously making it difficult to distinguish who laughed first. I realized that in order to make any detailed observations of

laughter, I would have to play sections of each recording repeatedly. Since VHS tape is prone to stretching and breakage, I eventually copied the recordings to DVD format. I first captured each video using Storm Video software, and then striped each tape with a time code. Striping the time code directly onto the tape eliminated the possible future problem of relying on the individual tape counters of whichever VCRs might be used to view the tapes in subsequent coding sessions. After the videos were captured and striped, each one was burned to a DVD.

As the earlier transcribed example of laughter suggests, participants use laughter as more than a response to a humorous stimulus: laughter is also used as a linguistic strategy to accomplish interactional goals. In Chapter 1, the review of the literature on laughter suggests several linguistic functions of laughter that may be useful in an analysis of how participants use laughter in negotiating their way through writing center tutorials. As discussed in Chapter 1, Jefferson and later Haakana both show that in interactions between patients and physicians, patients often laugh to ease embarrassment during "troubles telling" or presentation of what they feel are unusual symptoms or when talking about very personal matters. In writing tutorials, students must often lay bare their lack of knowledge and misconceptions about the writing process and academic writing conventions, and in this data, I noticed that many times laughter accompanied these instances. Glenn notes the long recognized distinction between *laughing at* and *laughing with*, and since either can be used by participants in writing tutorials—speech events in which mistakes are often discussed—how participants perceive each others' laughter that may occur during these discussions determines the course of the interaction ("Laughing at" 43). Adelswärd and Öberg studied the function of laughter in international

negotiations and focused on when laughter occurred, what the object of laughter was, and whether the participants laughed jointly or unilaterally. They found that laughter serves as a discourse boundary device, signals the importance or unimportance of topics, as well as signals the degree of sensitivity of topics, and that unilateral laughter is more frequent in those with less power Tutorials are also negotiation activities in which the participants need to decide which topics are of most importance, when to shift the focus of these topics, and when to conclude.

Chafe observed various emotional states that laughter characterized such as "nonseriousness," unpleasantness, and ridicule (39.) Writing tutorials can be tense and anxiety producing, and shared laughter, as in conversational laughter, can be seen as a way to reduce the seriousness/tension of the encounter. When used inappropriately, a tutor's laughter can be seen by a student as a type of ridicule. More recently, in a study of laughter in the British National Corpus (BNC) Ulrike Günther categorized laughter according to its function in discourse: affiliative laughter supports humor; contextualizing laughter cues "an utterance as non-serious, emphasize[s] its laughability or mitigate[s] some implicit criticism"; disaffiliative laughter is placed in an inappropriate slot and expresses disapproval or criticism; reflexive laughter is sequence final and "applauds one's own humorous contribution and is preceded by some other speaker's laugh; heterogeneous laughter is laughter that does not permit an unequivocal interpretation and is functionally ambivalent—its meaning is unclear from the transcripts (153-160). In writing tutorials, tutors' roles shift from coach, to fellow student, to the institutional authority, and I was interested in discovering how participants align themselves through laughter. Additionally, tutors must critically read students' work, and how negative

comments are mitigated or not and whether or not the receiver is offended or not might

be better understood through an examination of the uses of laughter.

2.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY
GUIDING THE STUDY

2.4.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For the purposes of this study, and on the basis of the above discussion of laughter

research traditions, I decided to use as a research guide the following questions:

(1) How do participants use laughter in writing tutorials?

(2) Who laughs first and why?

(3) What is the hearer's response to laughter?

(4) Are there gender differences in how participants use laughter?

(5) What are the relationships between claims to power and initiations of

laughter?

2.4.2. METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate these questions, I chose a methodology that would allow

me to investigate laughter as it actually occurred in interaction. As discussed in Chapter

1, laughter has been studied from such disciplinary perspectives as biology, philosophy,

psychology, and anthropology, and while such perspectives certainly yield insight into

the evolutionary and social advantages of laughter, they do little to advance knowledge of how laughter functions in the moment-to-moment communicative activities of conversational interaction. Glenn points out that the research methods used in these disciplines tend to:

> ...treat people not as rule-engaging social actors, but as animals whose actions may be described in neutral, objective language. Laughs get described in isolation from their naturally occurring contexts. Descriptions tend to favor dramatic, extended, hearty laughs, at the expense of the (probably more common) small, subtle, conversational laughs that pepper people's talk so pervasively that it is difficult to even notice them. (Laughter 32)

Further, Mulkay stresses the need for a research perspective to investigate how laughter functions in interaction:

> If laughter *is* more than a mere reflex response to environmental cues, if it *does* contribute systematically to the sign language of the humorous mode and is employed in subtle ways to communicate about the meaning of the ongoing interaction, techniques must be found to investigate the fine detail of laughter in natural settings. We must find a research perspective that not only allows for the possibility that social actors methodically employ laughter as an interactional resource, but also treats such laughter as a topic for careful investigation. (qtd. in Glenn *Laughter* 110)

While traditional linguistics has largely ignored laughter and banished it to the realm of the paralinguistic along with gestures, smiles, gaze, silence and the like, Conversation Analysis (CA) has from its earliest beginnings paid attention to laughter

naturally occurring in both conversational and institutional settings. This phenomenological, descriptive tradition has its roots in sociology, and is based upon the ethnomethodological orientation to the analysis of social action as attributed to Garfinkle and more specifically shaped by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson. CA assumes that interactions between people are organized in systematic, describable ways. As Glenn notes, "The overarching purpose of research is to describe peoples' methods (thus the label ethnomethodology) for 'doing' everyday life" (35). CA analysts study recordings and transcripts of naturally occurring interactions in both everyday conversation as well as in institutional settings, and in so doing, look at such phenomena as questions and answers, topic changes, interruptions, and other features (such as laughter) noticeable in audio and more recently video recordings. CA studies are referred to as "talk-in-interaction" studies since they focus on the text itself and the participants' inherent understanding of the speech event itself.

CA researchers sometimes, though not often, provide descriptive statistics across a collection of data, and look at such phenomena as who is most likely to initiate laughter, whether students laugh more than instructors, or if doctors share laughter more than patients. While quantification of data has been useful in studying the frequency of various discourse features such as interruptions, overlaps, number of speaker turns, etc., it is not be the most useful way to study laughter in interaction, but when coupled with CA, I felt it would help to give a fuller picture of what went on in tutorials. In CA, analysis proceeds inductively, and claims are based on particular instances of a phenomena recurring in patterns. Some CA researchers use descriptive statistics, but laughter is *not*, as Schegloff points out something that can be counted: "People do not laugh per minute"

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(103-104). Further, as Glenn notes, "Claims of a recurrent pattern do not rest on frequency or statistical probability but on demonstration in examples and explication of the practices, orientations, rules, competencies, expectations, etc., which participants display in their conduct" *Laughter* 38). The goal of CA is not to find a statistical trend, but rather to explain conversational practices as they appear in time-bound situations, and to "go beyond characterizing a single instance or a collection of instances of some phenomenon to connect analysis to wider theoretical, conceptual, or methodological issues" (40).

There is a vast amount of literature on CA methodology, and I will not go into detail here (see for instance Glenn, *Laughter*), but will mention that in CA, researchers often code data for analysis. To answer Questions 2 and 3 about how participants initiate and respond to laughter, I devised coding categories and employed co-raters to code selected data, and this process is discussed in the next section. To answer Question 4 about gender and Question 5 about power, I began with frequency measures based upon the coding results, and looked for trends such as who is more likely to initiate laughter, whether women laugh more than men, etc. However, frequency counts in CA are used only as a starting point, and arriving at a numerical distribution is not the goal of the research, but rather as Glenn points out a "cause for examination of details of particular instances" (*Laughter* 39). Answers to Questions 2-5 will serve as the basis for an analysis of the Question 1, the primary research question: How do participants use laughter in writing tutorials?

2.5. CODING DATA

2.5.1. CODING CATEGORIES

Underpinned by the studies of laughter mentioned in the preceding discussion,

and driven by the data I had reviewed, I constructed the following coding categories:

I. Who Laughs First and Why

    A. Participants
        1. T=Tutor (T initiates laughter)
        2. S=Student (S initiates laughter)
        3. T/S=Simultaneous Initiation (In some instances, even after repeatedly
            listening to the instance of laughter, we could not distinguish the
            initiator's laugh).
    B. Reason for Initiation
        1. Affiliative: (A) =laughter supports prior speaker's utterance or action
        2. Mitigation:
            a. (M^1) = laughter used to relieve tension for self or to cue hearer
            b. (M^2) = laughter used to relieve tension for other
        3. Disaffiliative:
            a. (D^1) = miscommunication
            b. (D^2) =disapproval of prior utterance or action

II. Response to Laughter

    A. Participants
        1. T=Tutor (T responds)
        2. S=Student (S responds)
        3. T/S=Simultaneous laughter
    B. Type of Response
        (1) Affiliative:
            a. (A/S) =   Affiliative/Shared: hearer immediately joins in laughter
            b. (A/V) =   Affiliative/Verbal: speaker's utterance shows support
                for laughter
            c. (A/NV) = Affiliative/Non-Verbal: smile, head nodding, clapping
                or other body gesture or movement to indicate
                alignment
            d. (A/D) = Affiliative/Delayed: verbal or non-verbal support
                occurring later than 3 seconds after initiation
        (2) Neutral: (N) =response appears neither affiliative nor disaffiliative

(3) Disaffiliative:
- a. (D/NL) = Disaffiliative/No Laugh: no laugh occurs where one is expected
- b. (D/V) = Disaffiliative/Verbal: utterance showing either miscommunication or disapproval
- c. (D/NV) = Disaffiliative/Non-verbal: facial expression or body movement showing either miscommunication or disapproval of laughter
- d. (D/D) = Disaffiliative/Delayed: negative response occurring later than 3 seconds after laughter

2.5.2. SELECTION AND TRAINING OF CO-RATERS

I recruited graduate students in linguistics to be co-raters. I wanted students who had taken core courses in discourse analysis, phonology, and semantics, and who were native speakers of American English raised in the United States. Two female graduate students who fit these requirements agreed to go through two norming sessions and to code all data I selected from my data set. They were paid $15.00/hr.

Over the course of two two-hour sessions, co-raters were familiarized with the terminology of the coding categories. Modifications in the terminology were made as data emerged which did not fit the categories, and we added a category of "Unclear" under "Reason for Laughter" since in some instances, the purpose for the laughter was not clear. Additionally, since data do not always fit into neat categories, and new situations may emerge once the actual coding has begun, we included an option to use an asterisk indicating that the coding doesn't fit the situation. In these cases, we each had a notebook in which we recorded why the coding categories did not fit this particular situation.

When we had reached agreement over several examples from the data set—examples which were not intended for the subset of data that would actually be used in the study—final versions of the coding sheet were made. Each sheet was designed for recording information about eight examples, and the sheets were numbered sequentially. Below in Table 2.2 is the coding sheet we used in the actual coding sessions.

Table 2.2: Data Coding Sheet

RATER:_____   TAPE:_____

(A) WHO LAUGHS FIRST AND WHY:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Time								
AFF								
MITIG								
DISAFF								
UNCL								

AFF=Affiliative	MITIG=Mitigation	DISAFF=Disaffiliative
	[1]= relieve tension for self	[1]=miscommunication
UNCL=Unclear	or cue hearer	[2]=disapproval of prior utterance
reason for laughter	[2]= relieve tension for other	

(B) RESPONSE TO LAUGHTER:

(1) AFFILIATION:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Shared								
Verbal								
Non-verbal								
Delayed								

(2) NEUTRAL

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Neutral								

(3) DISAFFILIATION:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No Laugh								
Verbal								
Non-verbal								
Delayed								

REASON FOR DISAFFILIATION:
[1] miscommunication   [2] disapproval of prior utterance

T=Tutor   S=Student   *=coding doesn't fit situation. See notes for explanation.

2.5.3. CODING SESSIONS

Laughter is context dependent and is a response that is frequently delayed. Additionally, a comment one speaker makes that is either made with a smiley voice or that induces laughter in the hearer may refer back to another comment which occurred several conversational turns earlier. Presenting co-raters with isolated instances of laughter, or even laughter that is shown with only brief contextualization risks missing subtle or finely nuanced meaning. Therefore, I decided to show my co-raters tutorials in their entirety. Additionally, since I wanted to see if laughter occurs during discourse boundaries as Adelsward found (419), seeing and hearing complete stretches of data was warranted.

In each session, the DVD was played on a laptop connected to a television monitor. The two co-raters were seated so that they could not view one another's coding sheet. I sat at a table apart from the television monitor, and ran Windows Media Player so that I could pause the DVD or click and drag the cursor to a particular point in the DVD. The control bar was not visible on the television monitor; only the tape with the time code striped on it could be seen so as not to distract the co-raters. The co-raters were instructed to say "Stop" each time they heard laughter, and I paused the tape at that point. Only instances in which we all heard a sound and agreed it was laughter were coded. Smiling, while often accompanying laughter, was not counted as silent laughter as many researchers have done, because the participants' faces were usually not fully visible. The recording camera was stationary, and due to shifting body positioning while discussing the draft, faces were usually partially turned away from the camera.

Upon pausing the tape, I would back up approximately 30 seconds and replay the section. Paralleling protocol in standard transcription procedure, I played the section in question no more than three times before noting "unclear" in the transcript..

Occasionally, either one of the co-raters or myself would indicate on the coding sheet that a particular judgment of the coder needed further explanation. Sometimes, especially in the course of deciding if a hearer's response was a result of the speaker's laughter or the content of the speaker's comment, the response was marked as unclear and an explanation added in the coder's notebook.

After each tape was finished, we individually wrote holistic impressions of the tutorial, and recorded what we noticed about the interaction in the dyad and what general impression a participant's laughter made on the other participant and on us.

2.6. DATA SUBSET SELECTION

I had several hours worth of data, and decided to do a stratified sample since I wanted to see how laughter was distributed over the range of data. From the initial review of all 36 tapes in the data set, I saw that tape length ranged from 13 to 55 minutes. Tutorial appointments in the WDC typically last about 30 minutes, and 23 of the 36 ranged from 25 to 37 minutes. As the data in Table 2.1 show, three tapes were over 51 minutes, and six were under 20 minutes. The three longer tapes were of tutorials in which the tutor and student had previously worked together, and the shorter tapes were of tutorials in which the student had only a few very specific questions. My first criterion for

sample selection was that the tape fall in the average of 25-37 minute range, a range which most likely would reflect a typical tutorial.

In reviewing the data on the students who participated, I saw that they ranged in age from 18 years 3 months to 47 years 10 months, and that while their status ranged from freshmen to graduate students, most (21 of 36) were freshmen. I next looked at the course for which they were drafting essays, and 23 of the 36 came to the WDC for a first-year writing course. Two students came to review personal essays, and the remainder came for courses in philosophy, literature, occupational therapy, history, women's studies, and physical education.

The tutors' ages ranged from 22 years 3 months to 34 years 7 months. The youngest tutor, a female undergraduate, coincidently was scheduled only with freshmen, all of whom were between 18 and 19 years old. This made for a consistent age variation between tutor and student. The second oldest tutor—a 33-year-old male—was scheduled with sophomores and seniors who ranged in age from 20-27 years of age, and thus tutored over a wider range of ages.

There were similarities across many of the tutorials which would help in a representative, stratified sample: each tutor had at least one female and one male student from a first-year writing course, and all but one tutor, OM, had first-year writing tutorials which fell in the desired length of time range. The tapes from this latter tutor were problematic in other ways: the tutor's working schedule was such that there were usually other tutorials occurring in the room at the same time, and the background noise made discerning laughter difficult; the tutor silently read the student's draft for many minutes at a time—up to 15 minutes in one tape—and so interaction was minimal. I decided not to

include the data from this tutor, and focus the study on two tapes from each of the other three male and two female tutors. I then selected students who fit the profile of coming to the WDC for the first-year writing course, whose tutorial length was in the 25-37 minute range, and who had not had a previous meeting with the tutor. The final data set consisted of the male tutor/male student dyads of ALMS, CRAM, and FSKP; the female tutor/female student dyads of GJWS and HCCA; the male tutor/female student dyads of ALCK, FSEL, and CRCC; and the female tutor/male student dyads of GJWB and HCPR.

I now turn to the analyses of each tutorial followed be a more generalized analysis across all tutorials.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, data from this study are quantitatively analyzed. This chapter will provide a description of the coding categories and will present quantitative data from the ten tutorials in tables so that global comparisons can be made across all tutorials for the following categories: (1) initiations of laughter, (2) responses to laughter, (3) occurrences of laughter and tutorial duration, (4) discourse phases and laughter, (5) participant age and number of initiations of laughter, and (6) speech activities indicative of power including volubility, directives, questions, backchannels, overlaps, interruptions, and topic changes. Additionally, data regarding the relationship between participant gender and initiations of and responses to laughter will be presented.

Subsequent chapters will explore the importance of these results. In Chapters 4 and 5, initiations and responses respectively will be more closely examined, and the discussions will draw upon not only the data presented in this chapter, but also will incorporate participant and coder observations as well as excerpts from the transcripts to illustrate the interactional features of the laughter data. In Chapter 6, the discussion will return to the research questions asked in Chapter 2 through a distillation of the major findings from the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

3.2. CODING LAUGHTER

One way of understanding how laughter functions in interaction is to tabulate how often it occurs. Quantifying laughter may, on the surface, seem counterintuitive since, as Schegloff points out, "People do not laugh per minute" (103-104). However, in examining how laughter functions in tutorials, quantitative analyses are nonetheless useful in describing patterns across data. In parallel research concerning doctor-patient interviews, West and Haakana (*Laughing Matters*) counted laughter initiations as did Thonus in her study of writing tutorials, and these studies yielded data from which conclusions could be drawn about which participant laughed more and under what circumstances. To see whether or not laughter in writing tutorials follows similar patterns, quantifying such happenings as to where in the interaction laughter takes place, who laughs first and how often, and what types of initiations and responses are most frequent is useful. In order to assess frequencies of different types of laughter, descriptive categories can be developed and each laughter instance coded to establish into which category it best fits, and to establish that individual instances of laughter are coded consistently from co-rater to co-rater, measures of inter-rater reliability can be used.

As described in Chapter 2, the coding categories in this study were derived from norming sessions, and were based on tutorials which were not subsequently used in the final data sample. The categories into which the data were coded were grouped according to the reason for initiation of laughter and the type of response to laughter. Reasons for laughter initiation were divided into six types: (1) affiliative, (2) mitigation to relieve tension for self or to cue hearer, (3) mitigation to relieve tension for other, (4)

disaffiliative due to miscommunication, (5) disaffiliative due to disapproval of prior utterance, and (6) unclear. Responses to laughter were divided into nine types: (1) affiliative/shared laughter, (2) affliliative verbal, (3) affiliative non-verbal, (4) affiliative/delayed laughter, (5) neutral, (6) disaffiliative/no laugh, (7) disaffiliative verbal, (8) disaffiliative non-verbal, and (9) disaffiliative delayed. While developed to account for cases in the norming session, two of the coding categories—disaffiliative verbal and disaffiliative delayed—turned out not to be applicable in the final data sample. Descriptions of the coding categories are listed below.

3.2.1. TYPES OF INITIATION LAUGHTER (T=Tutor, S= Student)

3.2.1.1 Affiliative (A): laughter which supports the prior speaker's utterance

(Tape ALCK: T=Male, S=Female. S is reading aloud from WDC form as she fills it out

　　See Line 15.)

```
12  S : "I came to the Writing Development Center because my teacher suggested I
13      come"..(5s) She REQUIRED me to, she said (sarcastic tone) "It might be a GOOD
14      idea"=
15  T:      =(V. LAUGH)
```

3.2.1.2. Mitigation (M¹): laughter which is produced to relieve tension for self

or which cues hearer as to speaker's emotional state.

(Tape CRAM: T=Male, S=Male. T has asked what S's concerns are about essay. See

　　Line 173.)

```
172  S: Um.well.I was about to write.um should I be more descriptive in it? I
173      mean, um..I know I need to be more descriptive in my papers but.(V. LAUGH)
174  T:                                                                    Well you
175      do uh (student's name) you do a very nice job of cutting to the chase
```

82

3.2.1.3. Mitigation (M^2): laughter which is produced to relieve tension for

other speaker

(Tape ALCK: T=Male, S=Female. T has been explaining parallel structure, and S is

not understanding. See Line 332.)

```
328 T:                                              so when you have
329   these all strung together noun, noun, noun, noun, noun adjective, and noun, it kind
330   of..you try and read it, trembling, shaking, weakness, heavy-breathing, headache
331   light-headed.does that? does that come out to you at all?..Just throwing in light-
332   headed?=        =no?=                           =ah-hahaha.um, well
333 S:         =☺No☺=   =☺but you know what you're talkin'about☺=
334 T: like I said
```

3.2.1.4. Disaffiliative (D^1): laughter which reveals speaker's prior utterance

was not understood, or misunderstood

(Tape FSEL: T=Female, S=Female. T is reading S's essay aloud. T stops, picks up essay

from table, leans back in chair, sighs, and makes a comment. S's response in Line

171 is a contrived laugh.)

```
170 T: hm::m..o:::h you weave a TANGLED web=        =if a person decided to stand up
171 S:                                    =uh↓↓=
```

3.2.1.5. Disaffiliation ($D^{2)}$: laughter which indicates prior speaker's utterance

was offensive

(Tape HCCA: T=Female, S=Female. T is commenting on information provided in an

essay about Australia. See Line 298.)

```
297 T: I'm surprised, like, you don't mention more about the aborigines actually. I
298   thought it would be in there more, but I guess not (h↓unh)?
```

3.2.1.6. Unclear (U): reason for laughter is unclear

(Tape FSKP: T=Male, S=Male. T is reading aloud essay on what constitutes poetry and

art. It is unclear why T begins to laugh in Line 235.)

```
233 T: "Rowe goes on to state that such a work that does not accomplish this goal
234     is not art. Because art is something that one can intend to make and if one has an
235     intention, they must have a goa@@@l"=              =That's a little circular
236 S:                                          =(V. LAUGH:::=, smiles, crosses arms)
```

3.2.2. *TYPES OF RESPONSE LAUGHTER* (T=Tutor, S=Student)

3.2.2.1. Affiliative/Shared (A/S): laughter which supports prior speaker's

laughter

(Tape GJWS: T=Female, S=Female. T suggests that on a return visit, it's often better to

make an appointment with the same tutor—one who is already familiar with the

essay. See Line 392.)

```
389 T: ...someone familiar with what you're doing
390 S:                 [right]              [I don't wanna have to tell a new
391    person everything I@@@just told you about my movie
392 T:                          [exactly..sur@@@e]
```

3.2.2.2. Affiliative/Verbal (A/V): an utterance which supports prior speaker's

laughter

(Tape ALCK: T=Male, S=Female. T makes a comment questioning the tone of one

of S's sentences. See comment said in smiley voice in Lines 400-401.)

```
397 T: (pauses after reading paper silently, quotes text) "to.be.of.a.great
398     .understanding?"
399 S:  Tried getting', you know, aHA@@@ but=
400 T:                                  =☺but (↓hunh↓) tried to get
401     scholarly or something☺?
```

3.2.2.3. Affiliative/Non-Verbal (A/NV): paralinguistic features such as smile, wink, nod, or other unvoiced actions which indicate alignment with speaker

(Tape ALMS: T=Male, S=Male. T advises putting a definite article before a plural noun. See Line 228.)

```
222 T: what you probably need to do is put another article in before traffic lights. You
223   say, "McDonald's and" you know "one or two traffic lights also remind you that
224   you're not far from the city=
225 S: =how about "several traffic lights"=
226 T:  =Sure. I suppose the closer you get to the truth, the better off it is
227 S:                                                        Yeahahaha
228 T:                                                        (smiles)
```

3.2.2.4. Affiliative/Delayed (A/D: a response which indicates alignment, does not occur immediately adjacent to speaker's laughter

(Tape ALMS: T=Male, S=Male. T discussing a paper mill in S's essay that discharged various colored inks on different days into an adjacent river. A well-known story was that the day of the week was evident by the color of the river. See Line 135.)

```
127 T:                            the colored papers, like for the Sunday sections, and
128   they used to color just for Sunday papers I guess, so they would do it throughout
129   the week, like the advertising=
130 S:  =yeah=
131 T:      =and so one week they would put the green through,and one week the red OR
132 S:                                                        [V. LAUGH]
133 T: one day the red and one day the yellow=
134 S: =yeah, I've heard some…it's pretty..well, I like to fish, and a couple of people
135 T:                      [hunh↓] (delayed laugh)
```

3.2.2.5. Neutral (N): lack of an acknowledgment that laughter occurred

(Tape CRCC: T=Male, S=Female. T and S are discussing where to put a narrative in essay. See Lines 94-95 in which no acknowledgement of S's overlapping

laughter can be seen.)

87 S: to have it in my paper because it's like a story that I made up myself to go along
88   with the rest of my paper=   =I don't know, I asked my
89 T: =why wouldn't you put it at the beginning?=
90 S: roommate and she's majoring in writing and she told me to put my intro FIRST
91   with my thesis statement and then somehow get to this story...
92 T: let me [ask you this.
93 S: [but I don't know hahaha]
94 T: .say you're] approaching this for the first time, you're the
95   reader..Um..what would be the most e:ye catching piece of vignette or piece of

3.2.2.6. Disaffiliation/No Laugh (D/NL): hearer does not laugh in slot in

which shared laughter would be expected.

(See Line 392 and 394.)

(Tape FSEL T=Male, S=Female. T and S are discussing S's course teacher.)

389 T: I heard he's really rough. Is he?=
390 S: =Yeah I don't know, I didn't think I was, well
391   he grades like on a portfolio=   =so he gives you really low gra@ @des.and he's
392 T: =um-hum=   (leans back in chair and cracks knuckles)
393 S: like" Don't worry about it" ☺Am I gonna fail this cla@ @ @ss or wha@ @t☺?
394 T: (sighs.2s) well (7s pass as T puts hands behind head and stretches, faces away
         from S to gaze out window, sighs again.)
395 S: I don't know if he's staying here though..I think he's going somewhere else
396 T: oh

3.2.2.7. Disaffiliation/Verbal (D/V): an utterance which indicates hearer's

misalignment with speaker

(No responses were coded as D/V in the final data sample, although in the norming

session, one instance occurred. A tutor was silently reading a student's paper and

laughed. The student responded with, "Why you people always laughin' at my writing?")

3.2.2.8. Disaffliative/Non-Verbal (D/NV): paralinguistic feature such as a

scowl, frown, single exhalation through nose as in a snort expressive

of scorn

(Tape FSEL T=Male, S=Female. T and S are discussing S's course teacher. See Lines

392 and 394.)

389 T: I heard he's really rough. Is he?=
390 S: =Yeah I don't know, I didn't think I was, well
391   he grades like on a portfolio=   =so he gives you really low gra@ @des.and he's
392 T: =um-hum=   (leans back in chair and cracks knuckles)
393 S: like" Don't worry about it" ☺Am I gonna fail this cla@ @ @ss or wha@ @t☺?
394 T: (sighs.2s) well (7s pass as T puts hands behind head and stretches, faces away
         from S to gaze out window, sighs again.)
395 S: I don't know if he's staying here though..I think he's going somewhere else
396 T: oh

3.2.2.9. Disaffiliative/Delayed (D/D): a response which indicates

misalignment, but which does not occur immediately adjacent to

speaker's laughter

(Tape HCTD T=Female, S=Male. T is silently reading S's paper. Tape was not
transcribed in its entirety. This portion begins at 7:00 into the tutorial, but line numbering
begins at 1. See Lines 2-4.)

1 S: (tapping fingers on binder)
2 T: (voiced @)
3 S: (looks at paper) (4) There you go cuttin' up my papers
4   What is the matter with you people?
5 T: say what? (smiles and looks up)
6 S: (@ I said there you go cutting up my
7   papers
8 T: No I wasn't..it's good.. it's funny
9 S: (@)

(No responses were coded as D/D in the final data sample.)

3.3. MEASURES OF AGREEMENT

3.3.1. RELIABILITY

In order to establish the degree to which the three raters agreed, or the degree to which the coding was consistent, the intra-class correlation coefficient Cronbach's Alpha was applied to the coding results for each tutor and is summarized below (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). This measure also assesses for the influence of which tutor was being analyzed. The average level of agreement was 0.863, and a value of 0.70 or higher is considered an acceptable measure of agreement. Levels of agreement between coders regarding individual tutors ranged from 0.71 for Tutor 1 to 0.92 for Tutor 3. Some instances of responses to laughter were coded as exhibiting more than one feature i.e. a participant may respond by smiling—a non-verbal feature—as well as saying something—a verbal feature—in response to a laugh. For ease of data tabulation, multi-coded responses were tabulated according to the primary feature—the feature that was at the top of the coding box (See Table 2.2).

Table 3.1 Reliability Statistics of Raters Across Individual Tutors

Tutor	# of cases	Cronbach's Alpha
FS (male)	65	0.880
AL (male)	30	0.864
CR (male)	27	0.924
GJ (female)	31	0.716
HC (female)	41	0.860

Table 3.2 Reliability Statistics of Raters Across All Tutors

# of cases	Cronbach's Alpha
194	0.863

3.3.2. SIMPLE AGREEMENT

Additionally, measures of simple agreement were calculated to describe the

agreement levels between individual raters and is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Simple Agreement Between Raters

# of cases	Coders 1⇔2	Coders 1⇔3	Coders 2⇔3	Average
194	0.83	0.82	0.86	0.84

3.3.3. DISAGREEMENT AMONG CODERS

Although the derived Cronbach's Alpha level was acceptable in all tutorials, there

were instances of disagreement among raters in each tutorial. In this study, for the

purposes of analysis, if two out of three coders agreed on a particular coding instance,

that instance was tabulated according to the majority code. For example, if Coders 1 and

3 agreed that T's response was N and Coder 2 thought that same response was D/NL, the

response was counted as N. If at least two coders did not agree on a case, the particular

case was put into a separate category listed in the "Notes" column in Tables 3.8-3.11. Of

the ten tutorials, five had no cases in which none of the coders agreed. Of the remaining

five, there were 10 cases in which at least two coders could not agree: four were initiation

occurrences and six were response occurrences. Table 3.4 shows the tutorials, the number

of occurrences out of the tutorial total that could not be agreed upon, whether the

occurrence was an initiation or a response, and the participant involved. Table 3.4 shows

that all of the cases involved tutors, and that over half (6 of 10) of the cases involved

tutor HC, who will be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters.

Table 3.4 Number of cases in which coder agreement could not be reached

Tutorial	# of total	Initiation	Response	Tutor	Student
FSEL	1 / 31	1		✓	
CRCC	2 / 7		2	✓	
GJWB	1 / 7		1	✓	
HCPR	3 / 14	3		✓	
HCCA	3 / 27		3	✓	

3.4. RESULTS OF QUANTIFICATION OF LAUGHTER

As described in Chapter 2: Methodology, each instance of laughter that was not

preceded by laughter was counted as an Initiation (I), and what immediately followed

was counted as a Response (R). The frequency of laughter in each tutorial was calculated

as the number of (I).

3.4.1. FREQUENCY OF LAUGHTER PER TUTORIAL

The total number of Initiations in the data was 194, or an average of 19.4 cases

per tutorial. Table 3.5 shows the number of occurrences of laughter initiation per tutorial.

All of the ten tutorials contain laughter, and while three reveal fewer than 10 occurrences,

over half show 20+ occurrences. The number per tutorial range from a low of 4 to a high

of 34.

Table 3.5 Laughter Initiation (I) Occurrences per Tutorial

Dyad (# of I)	0-10	11-20	21-30	30-35
FSKP (34)				✓
FSEL (30)				✓
HCCA (27)			✓	
ALCK (26)			✓	
GJWS (24)			✓	
CRAM (20)		✓		
HCPR (14)		✓		
CRCC (7)	✓			
GJWB (7)	✓			
ALMS (4)	✓			

Several factors might account for the variation in number of laughter occurrences among the ten tutorials. These factors will be mentioned briefly here, and then discussed in detail in subsequent sections. (1) The duration of individual tutorials might be directly proportional to the number of occurrences of laughter: a lengthier tutorial might afford more opportunity for laughter to occur than might a shorter one. (2) Particular phases in speech events or phase boundaries are more apt to include laughter than other phases. In Adelswärd and Öberg's study of international negotiations, humor and laughter frequently occur in the opening phase and tended to serve as ice-breakers (419-20). Humor and laughter also occur near the end of the negotiations phase as a signal to wrap things up. Further, Jefferson found laughter in medical exams to occur during certain phases in which patients are "troubles telling" ("Organization"). (3) Participants' ages relative to one another in the dyads as well as relative to the other tutors and students might also be a factor. (4) As several studies have revealed, in institutional contexts the person with more authority laughs less and does not tend to support the laughter of persons with less authority. In this study, power as evidenced through measures of speech

activities will be explored in its relation to occurrences of laughter. (5) As the literature review in Chapter 1 indicates, gender influences laughter: women tend to support men's talk more than men support women's talk, especially through backchanneling, and since laughter serves as a clear backchannel, finding more backchannel laughter initiated by female tutors and students than by male tutors and students would not be surprising. Further, women more than men tend to lessen discourse tension by mitigating critical comments directed toward others, tend to internalize critical comments, and try to reduce social distance through affiliative moves. Tutorials involve tutors delivering critical comments, students hearing about and revealing weaknesses in their writing, and since both of these discourse activities can be tension-producing and require much facework, it is not surprising that laughter that serves to mitigate or relieve tension would be present. (6) Dimensions of a participant's humor style or personality influence how laughter is used to both express emotion or state of mind as well as to respond to other interlocutors.

3.4.2. LAUGHTER AND TUTORIAL DURATION

The relationship between number of laughter initiations and length of tutorial was examined. Table 3.6 shows that the tutorials range in length from 22:50 minutes to 37:21 or a difference of approximately 15 minutes. The average length of a tutorial was 32:40, and the average number of laughter initiations was 19.4. Table 3.7 contains the same data as Table 3.6, but rather than the tutorials being ranked based on duration, they are ranked according to the number of laughter initiations.

These tables show that tutorial length and the number of laughter initiations are neither directly nor inversely proportional. The tutorial with the fewest occurrences of laughter (ALMS=4) falls slightly above the average tutorial duration of 32:40.

Table 3.6 Initiations and Duration Ranked by Time

Duration	# of (I)
HCPR(37:21)	14
ALCK(36:48)	26
CRCC(36:17)	7
CRAM(34:39)	20
ALMS(34:04)	4
FSEL (33:26)	30
FSKP (32:15)	34
GJWS(28:46)	24
HCCA(27:39)	27
GJWB(22:50)	7
$\overline{X}$=32:40	$\overline{X}$=19.4

Table 3.7 Initiations and Duration Ranked by (I)

# of (I)	Duration
34	FSKP (32:15)
30	FSEL (33:26)
27	HCCA(27:39)
26	ALCK(36:48)
24	GJWS(28:46)
20	CRAM(34:39)
14	HCPR(37:21)
7	CRCC(36:17)
7	GJWB(22:50)
4	ALMS(34:04)
$\overline{X}$=19.4	$\overline{X}$=32:40

Of the next two fewest number of occurrence (n=7), GJWB is the shortest tutorial (22:50) yet CRCC is the third longest (36:17). The two tutorials with the highest number of laughter initiations (FSKP=34; FSEL=30) fall near the average duration of 32:40 (FSKP=32:15; FSEL=33:26). That these two tutorials are the closest to the average duration of all tutorials could suggest a relationship between a particular duration and the amount of laughter, but the data from the other tutorials does not show a pattern that longer or shorter tutorials have more or less laughter. A more likely explanation could be that while the gender of the students in these two tutorials is not the same, the same tutor is present in both tutorials suggesting that the number of laughter initiations is a function of this particular tutor being present. However, since the data at this point does not reveal

whether FS or his students initiated more laughter, why the laughter was initiated, or what the responses were, a general overview of the types and frequencies of laughter in the data is in order.

The next tables presented show frequencies of occurrence of initiation and response types, as well as how the occurrences are distributed across not only all tutorials but also across individual participants as well.

3.4.3 LAUGHTER TYPES AND FREQUENCIES

3.4.3.1. Initiation (I) Types

In Table 3.8, the data is arranged to show how the laughter initiation in the data set is distributed, and within each tutorial, how much laughter is initiated by each participant. The initiation types are shown as percentages of the total initiations in each tutorial (Initiation Type $n \div$ Tutorial total n), as well as the average percentage each type is of the whole data set. Although the total number of laughter initiations in the entire data set is 194, in one case in FSEL, all coders agreed that both the tutor and student began laughing simultaneously, and since it was unclear who initiated the laughter, this particular occurrence was not included. The total n for these analyses was 193.

Table 3.8   Frequency of Initiation types as percentages of Tutorial n (Initiation Type $n \div$ Tutorial total n).

Total n	Tutorial	% by participant	%(A)	% (M¹)	%(M²)	% (D¹)	%(D²)	%(U)	Notes[1]
30*	FSEL--T	1= 3%	0	0	1=3%	0	0	0	0
	S	29=97%	20=67%	8=27%	0	0	0	0	1=3%
34	FSKP-- T	11=32%	2=6%	7=21%	0	0	0	2=6%	
	S	23=68%	11=32%	12=35%	0	0	0	0	
26	ALCK--T	10=39%	4=15%	1=4%	5=19%	0	0	0	
	S	16=61%	3=11%	12=52%	0	0	0	1=4%	
4	ALMS--T	1=25%	1=25%	0	0	0	0	0	
	S	3=75%	2=50%	1=25%	0	0	0	0	
20	CRAM--T	2=10%	1=5%	1=5%	0	0	0	0	
	S	18=90%	6=30%	12=60%	0	0	0	0	
7	CRCC--T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	S	7=100%	1=14%	6=86%	0	0	0	0	
7	GJWB--T	1=14%	0	1=14%	0	0	0	0	
	S	6=86%	2=29%	4=57%	0	0	0	0	
24	GJWS--T	11=46%	6=25%	0	5=21%	0	0	0	
	S	13=54%	2=8%	11=46%	0	0	0	0	
27	HCCA--T	5=19%	1=4%	2=7%	1=4%	0	1=4%	0	
	S	22=81%	6=22%	16=59%	0	0	0	0	
14	HCPR--T	13=93%	0	6=43%	0	1=7%	1=7%	2=14%	3=21%
	S	1=7%	0	1=7%	0	0	0	0	
	Tutor % average	**28%**	**7%**	**9%**	**6%**	**1%**	**1%**	**2%**	**2%**
	Student % average	**72%**	**27%**	**43%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**1%**	**1%**

* in one case, T&S began laughing simultaneously.
  Not calculated in Total (I) n.
[1] Number of cases in which no two coders agreed
  upon reason for (I)

Key: (A) = Affiliation   (U)=Unclear
     (M¹)= Mitigation for self
     (M²)= Mitigation for other
     (D¹)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
     (D²)= Disaffiliation/Offensive

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Table 3.8 shows that on the average, students initiate most of the laughter in tutorials (72%). HCRP is an outlier at the low end with the student initiating only 7% of the laughter. In all other tutorials, the student initiates laughter at least 54% of the time, and if the average for student laughter initiation is recalculated without the outlier, the average becomes 78%. At the high end, in CRCC, the student initiates 100% of the laughter. Of note for its relatively equal number of initiations is GJWS in which the student initiates laughter 54% of the time while the tutor is responsible for the remaining 46%.

The last two rows in Table 3.8 show the total number of laughter initiations in the data set broken down by percentages. The category with the highest number of occurrences—nearly half (43%)—is mitigation for self (M^1) by students, followed by affiliative (A) laughter by students (27%). Together these two types account for fully 70% of laughter initiations in the entire data set. What this suggests is that in these tutorials, student laughter is foremost an expression of their own tension, and secondly a means to support tutors' discourse.

Tutors also initiate laughter to mitigate for self (9%) more often than to affiliate (7%) but to a far lesser extent overall than do students. Additionally, tutors initiate laughter to mitigate for other (6%) and in three instances (all by HC) as a disaffiliative move either through miscommunication (1 occurrence) or offensiveness (2 occurrences). However, overall in this data laughter is rarely used by either tutors or students in a hostile or disaffiliative manner.

Table 3.9 displays the data on reasons for initiation so that the ways in which individual participants use laughter are expressed. These aggregate percentages show that

on the average, tutors' use of laughter to mitigate for self (33%) or to show affiliation (27%) are nearly equal, and almost as frequently tutors use laughter to mitigate students' tension (22%). Students, however, are 1.5 times more likely than tutors to initiate laughter to mitigate for self (60%), and 1.4 times more likely than tutors to initiate laughter to show affiliation (38%). Students do not use laughter to relieve tension that tutors might be experiencing.

In Table 3.9, tutorials HCAA and HCRP are noteworthy for the number of occurrences of laughter initiation that fall outside of the A, M^1, and M^2 types. While the number of these anomalies is small (8), they account for over half of the number (13) of such cases in the total data set. Additionally noticeable is that in HCPR, the tutor initiates 93% of the laughter whereas in all other tutorials, the student initiates the most of the laughter. As will be discussed in the following two chapters, tutor HC is somewhat atypical.

Table 3.9 Percentage by type of each participant's total Initiations   (Initiation Type n ÷ participant total n).

Total n	Tutorial	Participant n	(I) Type as % of Participant n						Notes¹
			(A)	(M¹)	(M²)	(D¹)	(D²)	(U)	
31 *	FSEL–T	1=3%	0	0	1=100%	0	0	0	0
	S	29=94%	20=69%	8=28%	0	0	0	0	1=3%
34	FSKP–T	11=32%	2=18%	7=64%	0	0	0	2=18%	0
	S	23=68%	11=48%	12=52%	0	0	0	0	0
26	ALCK–T	10=38%	4=40%	1=10%	5=50%	0	0	0	0
	S	16=62%	3=19%	12=75%	0	0	0	1=6%	0
4	ALMS–T	1=25%	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0	0
	S	3=75%	2=67%	1=33%	0	0	0	0	0
20	CRAM–T	2=10%	1=50%	1=50%	0	0	0	0	0
	S	18=90%	6=33%	12=67%	0	0	0	0	0
7	CRCC–T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	S	7=100%	1=14%	6=86%	0	0	0	0	0
7	GJWB–T	1=14%	0	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0
	S	6=86%	2=33%	4=67%	0	0	0	0	0
24	GJWS–T	11=46%	6=55%	0	5=45%	0	0	0	0
	S	13=54%	2=15%	11=85%	0	0	0	0	0
27	HCCA–T	5=19%	1=20%	2=40%	1=20%	0	1=20%	0	0
	S	22=81%	6=27%	16=73%	0	0	0	0	0
14	HCPR–T	13=93%	0	6=46%	0	1=8%	1=8%	2=16%	3=22%
	S	1=7%	0	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0
	Tutor % average	28%	27%	33%	22%	2%	4%	7%	5%
	Student % average	72%	38%	60%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%

* in one case, T&S began laughing simultaneously.
Not calculated in (I) n.
¹ number of cases in which no two coders agreed
upon reason for (I)

Key: (A) = Affiliation   (U)=Unclear
(M¹)= Mitigation for self
(M²)= Mitigation for other
(D¹)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
(D²)= Disaffiliation/Offensive

3.4.3.2. Response (R) Types

Response types of participant laughter were analyzed, as were initiations, from two perspectives: as percentages of the total responses in each tutorial (Table 3.10) as well as percentages of individual participants' responses (Table 3.11). Since, as shown previously, students initiate 72% and tutors 28% of the laughter in the data set, correspondingly 72% of the responses in the data set come from tutors, and 28% of the responses come from students.

The response type comprising the largest percentage in the data set—3.5 times as large as the next most frequent response—is a neutral response by tutors (42%) and is shown in Table 3.10. This is not surprising when compared to other research on institutional discourse that shows institutional representatives don't support the lay person's laughter. However, when the other affiliative tutor responses are combined (A/S, A/V, A/NV, A/D), tutors do support student laughter 25% of the time. The next largest number of responses is shared equally between tutor affiliative/shared laughter (12%) and student neutral responses (12%). Student affiliative/shared laughter comprises 10% of the total responses. The remaining affiliative response types—verbal, non-verbal, and delayed—range from 1-7% of the total data set, and only one disaffiliative occurrence is present. Tutors (5%) and students (4%) are about equal in their affiliative non-verbal responses, and in their affiliative/delayed responses (1% each). Coders did not agree on the remaining six occurrences, and again, half of these were responses by tutor HC.

Table 3.10 Distribution of Primary Response (R) by Type and as % of Tutorial Total (R)   T=Tutor   S=Student

Total(n)	Tutorial	Total R (n)	(A/S)	(A/V)	(A/NV)	(A/D)	(N)	(D/NL)	Notes[1]
30*	FSEL--T	29=94%	3=10%	4=13%	0	0	21=68%	1=03%	
	S	1=03%	1=03%	0	0	0	0	0	
34	FSKP--T	23=68%	6=18%	2=06%	0	0	15=44%	0	
	S	11=32%	5=15%	0	4=12%	0	2=05%	0	
26	ALCK--T	16=62%	4=15%	3=12%	1=04%	0	8=31%	0	
	S	10=38%	1=04%	2=08%	1=04%	0	6=23%	0	
4	ALMS--T	3=75%	0	0	1=25%	1=25%	1=25%	0	
	S	1=25%	1=25%	0	0	0	0	0	
20	CRAM--T	18=90%	2=10%	1=05%	1=05%	1=05%	13=65%	0	
	S	2=10%	2=10%	0	0	0	0	0	
7	CRCC--T	7=10%	0	0	1=14%	0	4=57%	0	2=29%
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
7	GJWB--T	6=86%	0	0	0	0	5=71%	0	1=14%
	S	1=14%	0	0	0	0	1=14%	0	
24	GJWS--T	13=54%	5=21%	2=08%	3=13%	0	3=13%	0	
	S	11=46%	5=21%	2=08%	3=13%	0	1=04%	0	
27	HCCA--T	22=81%	4=15%	2=07%	3=11%	0	10=37%	0	3=11%
	S	5=08%	3=11%	0	0	0	2=07%	0	
14	HCPR--T	1=07%	0	0	0	0	1=07%	0	
	S	13=93%	1=07%	0	0	0	12=86%	0	
Tutor % average		**72%**	**12%**	**7%**	**5%**	**2%**	**42%**	**1%**	**3%**
Student % average		**28%**	**9%**	**2%**	**4%**	**1%**	**12%**	**0%**	**0%**

KEY: (A/S)= Affiliative/Shared
(A/V)= Affiliative/Verbal
(A/NV)= Affiliative/Non-Verbal
(A/D)= Affiliative/Delayed
(N)= Neutral

(D/NL)=Disaffiliative/No Laugh
(D/V)= Disaffiliative/Verbal
(D/NV)= Disaffiliative/Non-Verbal
(D/D)= Disaffiliative/Delayed

* in one case, T&S began laughing simultaneously
Not calculated in (R) n
[1]cases in which at least 2 of 3 raters did not agree on (R)

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Table 3.11 shows how each participant's responses to laughter were proportioned. On the average, tutors gave neutral responses over half the time (59%) while surprisingly students' neutral responses accounted for 44% of their total responses. This goes against the trend found in Haakana ("Laughing") and West that shows that the lay person supports the institutional representative's laughter. Students do respond with affiliative/shared laughter 35% of the time while tutors respond in a similar fashion only 17% of the time: students produce affiliative laughter by a ratio of 2:1 as compared to tutors.

Table 3.11 also shows that tutors use affiliative/verbal responses nearly twice as often as do students, but students use affiliative/non-verbal responses twice as often as do tutors.

Table 3.11 Distribution of Primary Response (R) by Type and as % of Participant Total (R)   T=Tutor S=Student

TOTAL (n)	TUTORIAL	R (n)	(A/S)	(A/V)	(A/NV)	(A/D)	(N)	(D/NL)	Notes[1]
30*	FSBL–T	29=94%	3=10%	4=14%	0	0	21=72%	1=03%	
	S	1=3%	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0	
34	FSKP–T	23=68%	6=26%	2=09%	0	0	15=65%	0	
	S	11=32%	5=46%	0	4=36%	0	2=18%	0	
26	ALCK–T	16=62%	4=25%	3=19%	1=6%	0	8=50%	0	
	S	10=38%	1=10%	2=20%	1=10%	0	6=60%	0	
4	ALMS–T	3=75%	0	0	1=33%	1=33%	1=33%	0	
	S	1=25%	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0	
20	CRAM–T	18=90%	2=10%	1=6%	0	1=6%	13=72%	0	
	S	2=10%	2=100%	0	0	0	0	0	
7	CRCC–T	7=100%	0	0	0	0	4=57%	0	2=29%
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
7	GJWB–T	6=86%	0	0	0	0	5=83%	0	1=17%
	S	1=14%	0	0	0	0	1=100%	0	
24	GJWS–T	13=54%	5=38%	2=15%	3=23%	0	3=23%	0	
	S	11=46%	5=45%	2=18%	3=27%	0	1=9%	0	
27	HCCA–T	22=81%	4=18%	2=9%	3=14%	0	10=45%	0	3=14%
	S	5=19%	3=60%	0	0	0	2=40%	0	
14	HCPR–T	1=7%	0	0	0	0	1=100%	0	
	S	13=93%	1=7%	0	0	0	12=93%	0	
	Tutor % average	**72%**	**17%**	**11%**	**7%**	**1%**	**59%**	**1%**	**4%**
	Student % average	**28%**	**35%**	**7%**	**14%**	**0%**	**44%**	**0%**	**0%**

KEY: (A/S)= Affiliative/Shared
(A/V)= Affiliative/Verbal
(A/NV)= Affiliative/Non-Verbal
(A/D)= Affiliative/Delayed
(N)= Neutral

(D/NL)=Disaffiliative/No Laugh
(D/V)= Disaffiliative/Verbal
(D/NV)= Disaffiliative/Non-Verbal
(D/D)= Disaffiliative/Delayed

* in one case, T&S began laughing simultaneously
° Not calculated in (R)
[1] cases in which at least 2 of 3 raters did not agree on (R)

3.5. DISCOURSE PHASES AND LAUGHTER

3.5.1. DISCOURSE PHASES IDENTIFIED

Jefferson ("Organization") found that laughter is likely to occur during "troubles telling" in medical encounters, and Adelsward and Öberg identified phases in international negotiation activities in which laughter most often occurs such as during initial greetings or openings and at phase boundaries. In order to more fully understand how laughter functions in writing tutorials, discourse phases were identified to facilitate locating places within tutorials in which laughter is more or less likely to occur. Each of the ten tutorials was examined to see if it fit the framework for institutional discourse as identified by Michael Agar—*diagnosis, directives*, and *reports*--and Beverly S. Hartford and Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig—*openings*, and *closings. Openings* do not always occur, but generally are present and constitute 1-2 turns. This is when the professional and layperson initially meet, greet each other, and may exchange conversational pleasantries about the weather, the traffic, or ask how the other is doing. The *diagnosis* phase is short and occurs early in the event. Both participants come to these speech events with certain frames. Agar terms these Institutional Frames and Client Frames. According to Agar, visitors to the institution bring Client Frames, which are specific ways they think about themselves, their problems, and what the institution can do for them. On the other hand, the professional operates from Institutional Frames, which are ways to "describe people, their problems, and the possible solutions". Agar explains that "Diagnosis is that part of the discourse where the institutional representative fits the client's ways of talking about the encounter to ways that fit the institution" (149). For example, a student may come to

the WDC seeking help for some broad term such as "grammar." Since tutors are trained to discuss grammar not in a general sense, but rather in the context of the student's own writing, the tutor may begin the tutorial by asking the student to focus on a specific area in the paper that he or she is concerned with. The *Directive* phase comprises the greatest number of turns, and is where the business or main purpose of the speech event takes place. Agar then identifies a *Report* phase in which the institutional representative summarizes what took place in the encounter and produces either orally or in written form a text which can be archived. The layperson may or may not be present. In doctor-patient encounters, the doctor records notes after the patient has left. In academic advising sessions, Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig show that the *Report* phase consists mainly of advisors recording the "agreed-upon schedule in the student's file" or "signing a registration ticket" (95). Finally, the *Closing* is almost always present and can vary greatly in length. In this phase, points of the discussion may be recapped, or the participants may return to a more conversational discourse mode in which they wish each other well, make plans for future visits, and perhaps thank each other. Typically, however, the institutional frame of the encounter imposes a time constraint that neither allows for an extended *Closing* nor for a segue into more conversational mode of interaction.

In this data, some adjustments to phase analysis were necessary: due to the small confines of the Writing Development Center, by the time the student had entered the room, was invited to participate in the study, and had signed the Informed Consent form, the tutor and student had already made their initial contact before the recording equipment was turned on. Consequently, only very short segments of the *Opening* phase

were available for analysis. Also, the *Report* phase and the *Closing* phase were not distinct and were therefore combined. Typically in the WDC, *Closing* behaviors (either linguistically marked such as a tutor's asking "Ok, are there any other questions?" or signaled paralinguistically such as reaching for forms to complete or reaching for a backpack) begin before the *Report* phase, and continue simultaneously. As participants utter closing comments, they both fill out forms: the tutor completes the WDC Information sheet (see Appendix A.3.), and the student fills out the Evaluation form (see Appendix A.4.).

Though eight of the ten tutorials ended with the *Closing,* in two of the tutorials either the tutor left to photocopy the student's paper and discourse began upon the tutor's return, or I entered and took the paper to be photocopied and the participants remained seated at the table talking about matters other than the student's paper. These portions were included in the data and labeled as the *Post-Closing* phase.

3.5.2. DISCOURSE PHASE DURATION

The following table (Table 3.12) shows the total length of each tutorial, the average length, the duration of each phase of the ten tutorials, and the average length of each phase. The phase durations are typical of other institutional discourse with the directive phase lasting the longest, approximately 68% of the total time. Not all tutorials exhibit all phases; for example the opening phase is not present in two of the tutorials and the post-closing phase is present in only two tutorials. When only the tutorials exhibiting these phases are averaged, the length of the phase increases.

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Table 3.12 DISCOURSE PHASE DURATION (↑=highest ↓lowest)

	TOTAL	OPENING	DIAGNOSIS	DIRECTIVE	CLOSING	P.CLOSING
FSEL	33:26	0:51	2:22	21:17	1:57	6:59 ↑
FSKP	32:15	0:47	1:53	26:11	3:24	n/a
ALCK	36:48	0:18	8:05	27:19	1:06	n/a
ALMS	34:04	4:25	6:10	18:16	4:57 ↑	0:15 ↓
CRAM	34:39	0:15	6:44	25:28	2:12	n/a
CRCC	36:17	0:04 ↓	4:10	31:24 ↑	0:39 ↓	n/a
GJWB	22:50 ↓	n/a	5:49	16:17	0:44	n/a
GJWS	28:46	5:50 ↑	1:06 ↓	20:24	1:26	n/a
HCCA	27:39	n/a	12:14 ↑	14:55 ↓	0:30	n/a
HCPR	37:21 ↑	1:43	5:45	27:33	2:20	n/a
x̄ length	32:40	1:25 (n=10) 1:46 (n=8)	5:26	22:49	1:56	0:43 (n=10) 3:37 (n=2)

3.5.3. DISCOURSE PHASE AND LAUGHTER INITIATION

While the types of initiations of and responses to laughter present in the discourse phases will be examined in more detail in the following chapters, the interactional dynamics of the phases will be discussed in this section. Tables showing what percentage of the total tutorial laughter is present in each phase are shown below. Not unexpectedly, in all but one tutorial (FSEL) most of the laughter initiations occur in the directive phase since it is the longest phase. However, in each of the opening, diagnostic, and post-closing phases, at least one tutorial in the data set includes laughter initiation occurrences in the range from 13-39% of the tutorial total, and so those tutorials will be shown in the tables for those phases.

3.5.3.1. Opening Phase

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there were some logistical problems in the process of recruiting student participants that could have interfered with the normal course of

interaction in the opening phase. The usual procedure when a student came for an appointment was for either the receptionist to greet the student and show him or her to the tutor's table, or if a receptionist wasn't scheduled to work and a tutor was at the front desk, the tutor would escort the student. Either way, since the WDC was quite small, the student and the tutor were in each other's line of vision almost immediately, and initial greetings took place as the interaction began. However, in this study, I was also involved in the initial few minutes of the participants' meeting since I needed to explain the purpose of the recording to the student, and obtain informed consent. Usually, by the time this was done and before the recording equipment was turned on, the tutor and student had already begun to interact. Consequently, some data was not captured that might have given further enlightenment as to the how the course of interaction was set in motion.

Table 3.13 Distribution in Opening Phase of Primary (I) Type and as % of Total n
Regular = Tutorial Total; **Bold = % of Phase Total;** T=Tutor S=Student

% of total n in tutorial	Tutorial	(A)	(M¹)	(M²)	(D¹)	(D²)	(U)	% by T , S
2 / 31=	FSEL– T	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 0%**
6%	S	1=50%	1=50%	0	0	0	0	S=100%
3 / 24=	GJWS--T	**1=33%**	**0**	**1=33%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 66%**
13%	S	0	1=33%	0	0	0	0	S= 33%

Key: (A) = Affiliation   (D¹)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
      (M¹)= Mitigation for self   (D²)= Disaffiliation/Offensive
      (M²)= Mitigation for other   (U)= Unclear

Additionally, some instances of laughter *were* recorded, but were not coded. For example, initiations which do not show up in Table 3.13 include seven in the opening of CRAM. Due to technical difficulties, the video recording began 4:40 after the audio recording, and since facial expressions and other paralinguistic cues could not be seen, this data was not coded. However, the audio recording clearly reveals laughter, and of

these seven occurrences, two were student initiated, three were tutor initiated, and two began simultaneously. Also missing from the coded data are occasional occurrences of laughter that were difficult to discern while watching video, but became apparent when transcribing from audio tapes. Laughter is fleeting, may consist of a single unvoiced exhalation, and may be embedded in the middle of words: laughter can be an almost imperceptible cue.

From the data that was captured, though, patterns of interaction emerge across the phases and show that much mutual facework goes on. First, it is the student's perceived lack of writing skills, (usually validated by the classroom instructor) that brings the student to the tutorial, and which sets the stage for the opening phase. Much goes on psychologically for both tutors and students at this point: students may come to the meeting with feelings of anxiety about their writing, feelings of resentment towards the classroom instructor's requirement for attendance, or for some, a wish for validation that their writing is good. Tutors also can bring feelings of anxiety stemming from self-doubt about their own mastery of writing, and in a situation where their tutoring skills are being recorded, may be even more anxious. On the other hand, some tutors have a high degree of confidence and particularly if their chosen field of study is composition, are excited about helping students to improve their writing. Finally, in this study the semester was nearing the end, and the WDC was experiencing high traffic so that tutors were booked with back-to-back appointments. Many from time-to-time expressed feeling pressured to get through as much of the student's paper as possible before time ran out.

So openings are interactionally complex as participants simultaneously break the ice, communicate feelings, and set the agenda for the tutorial. Table 3.13 shows that in

the opening phase, laughter occurs in only two tutorials, FSEL (Male/Female) and GJWS (F/F). In FSEL, the two initiations account for 6% of the total laughter in the tutorial, and the student initiates both of them. The three initiations in GJWS account for 13% of the tutorial total, and the tutor initiates two of the three occurrences. That these two dyads contain laughter is not surprising: as additional data will show later, female student EL is a frequent supporter of male tutor FS's humor, and she also uses much (M^1) laughter— laughter that relieves one's own tension. In GJWS, the two women are very connected in their discourse throughout the tutorial—frequent overlaps, much shared laughter, and frequent use of backchannels.

3.5.3.2. Diagnostic Phase

In the diagnostic phase, four dyads stand out for the relatively high percentages of their total number of laughter instances that occur in this phase: HCCA (F/F)=15%; ALCK (M/F)=19%; CRAM (M/M)=30%; and CRCC (M/F)=43%. In this phase, the agenda is set: tutors ask students about the assignment and their reasons for coming to the WDC, and students bring up problems that they are having. On the following page, Table 3.14 shows that for all tutorials, with the exception of CRAM, one participant in the dyad does all the initiating of laughter. This is perhaps not surprising since this is a time when students are tense at having to reveal their weaknesses, and tutors are trying to put students at ease. As Table 3.14 shows, the type of laughter initiations consist, for the most part, of tutors using affiliative laughter, and students using some affiliative laughter, but more frequently, tension-relieving laughter for themselves. One exception is tutor FS

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who in FSKP (M/M), uses laughter that relieves his own tension, and as will be shown

later in this study, FS was quite intimidated by the topic of student KP's paper.

Table 3.14 Distribution in Diagnostic Phase of Primary (I) Type and as % of Total n
Regular = Tutorial Total; **Bold = % of Phase Total;** T=Tutor S=Student

% of Dyad n	Tutorial	(A)	(M¹)	(M²)	(D¹)	(D²)	(U)	% by T , S
4 / 31=	**FSEL--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 0%**
0.13%	FSEL--S	3=75%	1= 25%	0	0	0	0	S=100%
2 / 34=	**FSKP--T**	**0**	**2=100%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T=100%**
0.06%	FSKP--S	0	0	0	0	0	0	S= 0%
5 / 26=	**ALCK--T**	**4=80%**	**0**	**1=20%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T=100%**
19%	ALCK--S	0	0	0	0	0	0	S= 0%
0 / 4=	**ALMS--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**n/a**
0%	ALMS--S	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
6 / 20=	**CRAM--T**	**1=17%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 17%**
30%	CRAM--S	2=33%	3=50%	0	0	0	0	S= 83%
3 / 7=	**CRCC--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
43%	CRCC--S	0	3=100%	0	0	0	0	S=100%
0 / 7=	**GJWB--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**n/a**
0%	GJWB--S	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
1 / 24=	**GJWS--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 0%**
0.04%	GJWS--S	0	1=100%	0	0	0	0	S=100%
4 / 27=	**HCCA--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 0%**
15%	HCCA--S	0	4=100%	0	0	0	0	S=100%
1 / 14=	**HCPR--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1=100%**	**T=100%**
0.07%	HCPR--S	0	0	0	0	0	0	S= 0%

Key: (A) = Affiliation   (D¹)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
  (M¹)= Mitigation for self   (D²)= Disaffiliation/Offensive
  (M²)= Mitigation for other   (U)= Unclear

3.5.3.3. Directive Phase

Table 3.15 shows that the directive phase is where most of the laughter occurred

in all tutorials with the exceptions of FSEL (M/F) in which only 35% occurred (see

"Post-Closing Phase" below for an explanation of the distribution in FSEL). This is the

phase in which the business of tutorials—making suggestions, asking questions,

accepting or rejecting advice—takes place. This is a time when participants begin to feel

more or less comfortable with each other, and the amount and types of laughter reflect

this interaction. However, this is also the phase in which tension may surface as problems

are brought to the surface and discussed. In this data, the three instances of disaffiliative

laughter occurred during the directive phase, and while they constitute such a small

percentage of the laughter in the data set (1%), that they were all uttered by the same

participant—female tutor HC—is worth noting here and discussing further in subsequent

chapters.

Table 3.15 Distribution in Directive Phase of Primary (I) Type and as % of Total *n*
Regular = Tutorial Total; **Bold = % of Phase Total;** T=Tutor S=Student

% of dyad *n*	Tutorial	(A)	(M^1)	(M^2)	(D^1)	(D^2)	(U)	% by T , S
11 / 31=	**FSEL--T**	**1= 9%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 9%**
35%	FSEL--S	6=55%	4=36%	0	0	0	0	S= 91%
32 / 34=	**FSKP--T**	**1= 3%**	**3=9%**	**3=9%**	**0**	**0**	**2= 6%**	**T= 27%**
94%	FSKP--S	13=42%	10=31%	0	0	0	0	S= 73%
20 / 26=	**ALCK--T**	**0**	**1= 5%**	**4=20%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 25%**
77%	ALCK--S	3=15%	11=55%	0	0	0	1= 5%	S= 75%
4 / 4=	**ALMS--T**	**1=25%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 25%**
100%	ALMS--S	2=50%	1=25%	0	0	0	0	S= 75%
14 / 20=	**CRAM--T**	**0**	**0**	**1=7%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 7%**
70%	CRAM--S	4=29%	9=64%	0	0	0	0	S= 93%
4 / 7=	**CRCC--T**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 0%**
57%	CRCC--S	1=25%	3=75%	0	0	0	0	S=100%
7 / 7=	**GJWB--T**	**0**	**1=14%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 14%**
100%	GJWB--S	2=28%	4=58%	0	0	0	0	S= 86%
19 / 24=	**GJWS--T**	**4=21%**	**0**	**4=21%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**T= 42%**
79%	GJWS--S	2=11%	9=47%	0	0	0	0	S= 58%
21 / 27=	**HCCA--T**	**1= 5%**	**2= 9%**	**1= 5%**	**0**	**1=5%**	**0**	**T= 24%**
78%	HCCA--S	6=28%	10=48%	0	0	0	0	S= 76%
13 / 14=	**HCPR--T**	**0**	**6=46%**	**0**	**1=8%**	**1=8%**	**4=30%**	**T= 92%**
93%	HCPR--S	0	1= 8%	0	0	0	0	S= 8%

Key: (A) = Affiliation   (D^1)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
      (M^1)= Mitigation for self   (D^2)= Disaffiliation/Offensive
      (M^2)= Mitigation for other   (U)= Unclear

3.5.3.4. Closing Phase

The closing phase is brief, and as Table 3.16 shows, three tutorials—FSEL (M/F), ALCK (M/F), and GJWS (F/F)—contain one instance of affiliative laughter each, and HCCA (F/F) contain one instance of (M^1) laughter. That more laughter is not present at the beginning of this phase may be surprising in light of Adelswärd and Öberg's study of international negotiations which, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this study, found that about 60% of all laughter occurred in the transitions between phases and topic boundaries, points at which there is a slight change of footing, a "change that often simultaneously releases, and is marked by, laughter" (420). In tutorials, as the discussions in the directive phase wind down, one might expect either tension-relieving laughter or perhaps affiliative laughter as participants begin to change their projected face from that of the institutionally-constructed role of tutor or student. However, since the closing phase in tutorials usually consists of filling out paperwork that may not have been done at the beginning, institutional roles may continue to be, according to Goffman "performed," and participants may not use this time to move closer.

Table 3.16 Distribution in Closing Phase of Primary (I) Type and as % of Total n
Regular = Tutorial Total; **Bold = % of Phase Total;**   T=Tutor S=Student

% of total n in tutorial	Tutorial	(A)	(M^1)	(M^2)	(D^1)	(D^2)	(U)	% by T , S
1 / 31=	FSEL--T	0	0	0	0	0	0	T= 0%
3%	FSEL--S	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0	S=100%
1 / 26=	ALCK--T	0	0	0	0	0	0	T= 0%
4%	ALCK--S	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0	S= 100%
1 / 24=	GJWS--T	1=100%	0	0	0	0	0	T=100%
4%	GJWS--S	0	0	0	0	0	0	S= 0%
2 / 27=	HCCA--T	0	0	0	0	0	0	T= 0%
7%	HCCA--S	0	2=100%	0	0	0	0	S=100%

Key: (A) = Affiliation $\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad$ (D^1)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
$\quad\quad$ (M^1)= Mitigation for self $\quad\quad\quad$ (D^2)= Disaffiliation/Offensive
$\quad\quad$ (M^2)= Mitigation for other $\quad\quad$ (U)= Unclear

3.5.3.5. Post-Closing Phase

The post-closing phase was present in only FSEL (M/F), and contained 39% of the laughter initiated by either FS or EL. The tutorial was finished, and the participants were making small talk as they waited for me to photocopy EL's essay. The 11 instances of laughter were all initiated by EL, and were in response to a story that FS was telling about his own writing projects. This particular segment of interaction is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6: Discussion and appears as Excerpt 6.6.

Table 3.17 Distribution in Post-Closing Phase of Primary (I) Type and as % of Total n
Regular = Tutorial Total; **Bold = % of Phase Total;**   T=Tutor S=Student

% of total n in tutorial	Tutorial	(A)	(M^1)	(M^2)	(D^1)	(D^2)	(U)	% by T , S
12 / 31=	FSEL--T	0	0	0	0	0	0	T= 0%
39%	FSEL--S	9=74%	2=17%	0	0	0	1=8%	S=100%

Key: (A) = Affiliation   (D^1)= Disaffiliation/Miscommunication
      (M^1)= Mitigation for self   (D^2)= Disaffiliation/Offensive
      (M^2)= Mitigation for other   (U)= Unclear

3.6 AGE AS A FACTOR IN LAUGHTER PRODUCTION

Table 3.18 shows that 7 out of 10 students in this study were freshmen, 2 were sophomores, and one was a senior. Students' ages ranged from an 18 year 5 month old male to a 47 year 1 month old female non-traditional student. The tutors consisted of both undergraduates and graduates and ranged in age from a 22 year 3 month old female undergraduate to a 33 year 7 month old male graduate. The average age of the students was 22 years 8 months, but without the outlier of the non-traditional student, the average

age fell to 20 years 1 month. This is 9 years 8 months younger than the average tutor age

of 28 years 3 months.

Table 3.18 Age, Class Standing, Gender, and Laughter

Dyad	T/S Gender	T/S Level	Lgth	S Age yr.mth	T Age yr.mth	Age Diff.	Laughter Initiations
ALCK	M/F	G/ S	36:48	20.1	33.7	13.6	26
ALMS	M/M	G/ SR	34:04	25	33.8	8.8	4
CRAM	M/M	G/ F	34:39	22.2	34.7	12.5	20
CRCC	M/F	G/ F	36:17	18.7	34.7	16	7
FSEL	M/F	U/ F	33:26	19.2	26.10	6.9	31
FSKP	M/M	U/ F	32:15	19.3	26.10	6.8	34
GJWB	F/M	G/ F	22:50	19.2	24.2	5	7
GJWS	F/F	G/ S	28:46	47.1	24.2	22.11	24
HCCA	F/F	U/ F	27:39	18.11	22.3	3.4	27
HCPR	F/M	U/ F	37:21	18.5	22.3	3.10	14
$\bar{X}$ =			32:40	22.8	28.3	9.8	19

T/S = Tutor/Student dyad: Male=M; Female=F;
T/S Level: T=Graduate (G) Undergraduate (U)   S=Freshman (F), Sophomore (S),
Senior (SR)

In Table 3.18 there is no consistent relationship between the differences in age

between tutors and students and the number of occurrences of laughter present in the

tutorial, nor is there consistency between a student's or tutor's age and the number of

laughter occurrences. However, some observations can be made based on Table 3.18 that

could explain the high rates of laughter in tutorial GJWS (F/F) and the tutorials in which

tutors HC (F) and FS (M) are involved. Age data that is the most inconsistent with other

age data in the table involves the dyad of GJWS (F/F) in which the student is older than

the tutor by 22 years. This difference in age may be relevant as far as the dynamics of the

tutorial go and may account in part for the relatively equal numbers of other speech

activities that have been presented in Chapter 3.

Other inconsistent data involve tutors HC (female) and FS (male) both of whom

are undergraduates. In the tutorials in which they are involved, the laughter occurrences

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are both in the double digits and three of these four account for the three highest number of occurrences in the set. For each graduate tutor, 50% of his or her tutorials consist of 7 or fewer laughter occurrences. How far apart in age participants are does not seem to play a role; however, class standing does seem to play a role. The proximity in class standing of the undergraduate tutors to their students may effect either an increase or decrease in the rate of laughter per minute. Unlike other institutional contexts such as a doctor-patient interview, or a lawyer-client meeting in which the professional has been credentialed, undergraduate tutors, like the students with whom they work, have not yet earned a degree. This may affect laughter in quite different ways: on the one hand, while the students are not aware of the difference in class standing, the tutors are, and that may affect the degree to which tutors are comfortable in their role as authority and the degree to which laughter associated with tension might be produced; on the other hand, because tutors are in the same place as students in "the system" this may foster a more affiliative dynamic and hence more shared laughter. Without considering the types of laughter most prevalent in these dyads, the effect of proximity in class standing on laughter production cannot be determined.

Table 3.18 also shows that while the participants in ALMS (M/M) and GJWB (F/M) are closer in age than the participants in either FSEL or FSKP, in both cases the number of laughter occurrences is very low, 4 and 7 respectively. However, both tutors are graduate students while their students are undergraduates. The relationship between tutors FS and HC to their students and the resulting high numbers of laughter occurrences are most likely due to the participants being peers rather than being close in age.

3.7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAUGHTER AND SPEECH ACTIVITIES INDICATIVE OF POWER

To determine if laughter initiation is related to authority or power, quantifying speech activities indicative of claims to power can be enlightening. This section explores the relationship between occurrences of laughter and speech activities indicative of power: volubility, directives, questions, topic initiations, interruptions, backchannels, and overlaps. While these speech activities do not inherently affect laughter, they are included as additional data to be used to examine whether or not participants' use of laughter is related to their relative status in the dyad. Further, these quantitative analyses will be used in the next section to examine tutors' consistencies in their interactions with same and opposite gender students. While these features have been widely researched and frequently used as indicators of power differentials, they do have interactional uses other than claiming power. A few factors which may affect the numbers of occurrences of these speech activities include the nature of the assignment, the participants' familiarity with the topic, the student's writing ability and familiarity with writing terms, the participants' conversational styles, whether or not the tutor has had a course with the student's instructor, and participant humor style. For example, an essay plagued with ambiguities or full of technical terms may result in more frequent questions by the tutor than would a tutorial involving a clearly written essay on a topic with which the tutor was familiar. Nonetheless, since these speech activities do in general indicate who makes claims to more speaking rights, they will be included as a means to evaluate the nature of

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tutorials in terms of power and its relation to the occurrences and types of laughter present.

3.7.1. VOLUBILITY

Verbal interaction takes place through participants taking turns speaking and listening. A speaking turn can be loosely defined as speech uttered by a speaker followed by silence from that speaker. A turn can be as short as a syllable, or can consist of longer utterances such as phrases or sentences, or even several sentences. Some utterances by a participant who does not have the floor do not count as turns. For example, backchannels such as "uh-huh," "okay," or "yeah" are used as feedback by the listener for the current speaker. Additionally, overlaps and failed interruptions—utterances which occur simultaneously before current speaker has finished her or his turn but do not result in current speaker giving up the floor—are also not counted as turns.

Volubility is a measure of fluency and is calculated as words/turn or words/minute. It might seem reasonable to assume that the more participants talk, the more laughter might occur, but it was found to be the case earlier in this chapter regarding duration and number, that more opportunity to talk is neither inversely nor directly proportional to the amount of laughter produced. The same could also be the case with volubility, so word counts might be insightful as they relate to laughter. However, in the context of tutorials, sheer numbers of words spoken by one participant or the other in and of itself is not a particularly illuminating piece of information: either tutors or students may read an essay aloud thereby occupying a good deal of the floor without

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making claims to power. Also, institutional encounters inherently have a layperson

asking a professional for advice, and as noted by Deborah James and Janice Drakich,

"Previous research has indicated that those who have high status with regard to a status

characteristic such as race, organizational rank, or occupation participate more in task-

oriented dyads or groups than do those who have low status with regard to that

characteristic" (289). Based on prior research, we would expect tutors to talk more than

students: "For example, Craig and Pitts (1990), in study of university tutorials, found that

male and female tutors did not differ in average number of verbal acts initiated, but that

male tutors nevertheless took up more overall talking time; the same was true of male and

female students in male-led tutorials. Presumably this was because males were producing

longer utterances (although this was not explicitly measured)" (James and Drakich 291).

Perhaps then a better measure of volubility would be to use number of words/turn as the

basis on which to compare tutorials.

3.7.1.1. Total Words and Turns

Each tutorial was analyzed for the number of turns each participant took as well

as the total number of turns per tutorial. Additionally the number of words each

participant spoke as well as the total number of words in each tutorial were calculated.

Table 3.19 shows the results of this analysis. The high figure(s) for each category is/are

indicated by (↑) and the low figure(s) is/are indicated by (↓). The averages appear in

boldface in the bottom row.

As Table 3.19 shows, the number of tutor and student turns is approximately

equal: no tutorial includes a percentage difference greater than 6% between the number

of turns for tutors and students. However, the number of words spoken is quite

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disproportionate: tutors speak on the average 74% of the time while students speak 26% of the time. While several studies show that those with the most power speak the most, the high number of tutor words in writing center discourse can also sometimes be accounted for by the practice in which the tutor reads the student's paper aloud thus occupying the floor for long periods of time. While some tutors have the student read his/her paper aloud, in this data sample, only the tutors read papers aloud.

Table 3.19 Volubility (% of total turns and total words) (↑=highest ↓=lowest)

# of Laughter Initiations	Total Turns	Tutor Turns		Student Turns		Total Words	Tutor Words		Student Words	
		% of total	#	% of total	#		% of total	#	% of total	#
FSEL 34	115	51%	59	49%	56	4205	92%↑	3885	8%↓	320↓
FSKP 31	120	53%↑	63	47%↓	57	4601	85%	3937	15%	664
HCCA 27	119	49%↓	59	51%↑	60	2633↓	78%	2066↓	22%	567
ALCK 26	223↑	49%↓	110↑	51%↑	113↑	4828	65%	3139	35%	1681
GJWS 24	142	49%↓	70	51%↑	72	5361↑	51%↓	2748	49%↑	2613↑
CRAM 20	165	52%	85	48%	80	4359	70%	3037	30%	1322
HCPR 14	138	49%↓	68	51%↑	70	4881	76%	3733	24%	1148
CRCC 7	114	52%	60	48%	55	5127	80%	4121↑	20%	1006
GJWB 7	53↓	53%↑	28↓	47%↓	25↓	3692	81%	2999	19%	693
ALMS 4	114	52%	59	48%	55	2835	73%	2068	27%	767
X̄ = 19	130.3	51%	66	49%	64	4280	74%	3153	26%	1126

Table 3.19 shows that the amount of laughter in tutorials in this data is not a function of the number of turns a participant takes. The tutorials with the most laughter and the least laughter—FSEL and ALMS respectively—differ by 30 occurrences of laughter, but by only one turn. Worth noting here and discussing later in this chapter, though, is that male tutor FS speaks the highest percentage of words in the data (92%) and is tied for the highest percentage of turns (53%). FS is also the tutor in the dyads with the most occurrences of laughter—FSEL and FSKP—yet in FSEL he initiates only one occurrence of laughter.

3.7.1.2. Ratio of Tutor: Student Words Per Turn and Words per Minute

To compare volubility of these tutorials, which have a 15 minute difference between the longest and the shortest, words per turn and words per minute are useful measures. Table 3.20 and Table 3.21 below show the results of these analyses.

Table 3.20 Words/Turn T:S Ratio

Tutorial (T:S)	T words/turn	S words/turn
FSEL 11.5: 1	65.8	5.7
FSKP 5.3: 1	62.4	11.6
GJWB 3.9: 1	107.1	27.7
CRCC 3.8: 1	68.7	18.3
HCCA 3.7 1	35	9.5
HCPR 3.3: 1	54.9	16.4
ALMS 2.5: 1	35	13.9
CRAM 2.2: 1	35.7	16.5
ALCK 1.9: 1	28.5	14.9
GJWS 1.1: 1	39.2	36.3
$\overline{X}$ = 3.1	**53.2**	**17.1**

Table 3.21 Words/Minute T:S Ratio

Tutorial (min)	Ratio T:S	Tutor words/min	Student words/min
FSEL (33:26)	12.1:1	117.7	9.7
FSKP (32:15)	5.9: 1	123.0	20.8
GJWB(22:50)	4.3:1	130.4	30.0
CRCC(36:17)	4.1:1	114.5	27.9
HCCA(27:39)	3.6:1	73.8	20.2
HCPR(37:21)	3.2:1	100.9	31
ALMS(34:04)	2.7:1	61.9	22.6
CRAM(34:39)	2.3:1	86.8	37.8
ALCK(36:48)	1.9:1	84.8	45.4
GJWS(28:46)	1.1:1	94.8	90.1
$\overline{X}$ (32.40)	**2.9**	**98.9**	**33.6**

* duration rounded to nearest minute for computation

In Table 3.20, in line with discourse research of dyads with unequal power, this data shows that tutors take longer turns than students, and average slightly over three times the number of words per turn as do students. However, there is a great range within this data indicating that while some tutorials are drastically one-sided in terms of tutor dominance, the words per turn in others are distributed nearly equally. For example, GJWS (F/F) shows a T to S words/turn ratio of 1.1: 1 and ALCK (M/F) shows a ratio of 1.9:1—indications that tutor and student speak in nearly equal measure. The high range is comprised of the two tutorials of male tutor FS: FSKP (M/M) at 5.3: 1 and FSEL (M/F) at 11.5: 1, indicating that in this data, tutor FS is consistent from tutorial to tutorial in terms of his volubility dominance. There are tutors who have higher numbers of words

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per turn than FS—GJ in GJWB (F/M) and CR in CRCC (M/F)—but students in those two dyads also have much higher numbers of words per turn than do FS's students, and therefore the tutor to student ratio is less than in tutorials involving FS.

In relation to laughter, the four dyads just mentioned—FSEL, FSKP, GJWB and CRCC—present some unusual dynamics: FSEL (34) and FSKP (31) have the most laughter in the data set, while in GJWB and CRCC each has only 7 instances of laughter and only ALMS has fewer (4) instances of laughter.

Calculating words per turn is useful to see who takes longer turns, but it still does not put tutorials on an equal basis to account for differences in duration, nor does it seem to account for differences in laughter occurrences. Words per minute is a measure often used to compare volubility across interactions, and Table 3.21displays the data resulting from those calculations. The progression from the highest ratio of tutor to student words per minute to the lowest is the same as in the ratio of words per turn, but the data in Table 3.21 do show that more of FSKP is filled with tutor's words than is FSEL even though FSEL has a higher tutor to student word/turn ratio. What this demonstrates is that even though there are more total words in FSKP than in FSEL, FS dominates more in FSEL by taking longer turns.

3.7.1.3. Laughter, Duration, and Words/Turn

To see what ratios of words per turn and words per minute might suggest about the dynamics of interaction and thereby the participant use of laughter, Table 3.22 is presented to compare the measures side-by-side. Four tutorials are selected to discuss for their rank in occurrences of laughter: FSEL and FSKP for their high rank and CRCC and

GJWB for their likeness in low rank. In Table 3.22, FSEL and FSKP are made more visually explicit through shading, and CRCC and GJWB by the symbol ☯.

Table 3.22 Laughter, T:S word/turn ratio, and Duration

Dyad	Laughter Initiations		Duration	T:S words/turn	T:S words/turn rank
FSEL	34	HCPR	(37:21)	3.3	FSEL 11.5: 1
FSKP	31	ALCK	(36:48)	1.9	FSKP 5.3: 1
HCCA	27	CRCC	(36:17)	3.8 ☯	GJWB 3.9: 1 ☯
ALCK	26	CRAM	(34:39)	2.2	CRCC 3.8: 1 ☯
GJWS	24	ALMS	(34:04)	2.5	HCCA 3.7 1
CRAM	20	FSEL	(33:26)	11.5	HCPR 3.3: 1
HCPR	14	FSKP	(32:15)	5.3	ALMS 2.5: 1
CRCC	7 ☯	GJWS	(28:46)	1.1	CRAM 2.2: 1
GJWB	7 ☯	HCCA	(27:39)	3.7	ALCK 1.9: 1
ALMS	4	GJWB	(22:50)	3.9 ☯	GJWS 1.1: 1
$\bar{x}=$ 19		$\bar{x}=$ (32.40)		3.1	$\bar{x}=$ 3.1: 1

While there seems to be no apparent relation between how long a tutorial lasts and the number of laughter occurrences, there does seem to be a relation between the high and low ends of numbers of laughter occurrences and the high ratio of tutor to student words per turn. The four tutorials selected show the tutor does the most talking, and why this might result in high or low numbers of laughter cannot be understood apart from considering how other speech activities might come into play, and this will take place later in this section.

3.7.2. DIRECTIVES

Directives are those speech acts issued by the speaker with the intent to get the listener to perform an act or to change his or her behavior. They can be issued by any participant, but in the case of writing tutorials, are most often issued by tutors since tutors are in the position to suggest what students might do to improve their papers. However, students also issue directives; for example, students may state what they want the tutor to focus on in the essay rather than waiting for the tutor to decide what needs to be addressed. Directives may be literal such as in (1) below, or they may be implied as in (2).

(1) CRAM: Line 317-8 (discussion about how to end paper)

T: Do the same thing in your conclusion. Tie it all back together with life, liberty, and happiness.

(2) ALCK: Lines 247-9 (discussion of what to say in a critique of an article)

T: It sounds like they could use some more statistics of how many people have this..um do they tell at what ages people get this? Or why..why this happens? That would be a problem with me.

3.7.2.1. Distribution of Directives

Table 3.23 shows the data on directives including the total n for each tutorial, tutor-to-student and student-to-tutor ratios, the distribution of directives issued, and where the directives occur in the tutorial phases. The averages are in boldface in the bottom row.

Table 3.23 Directives: Total *n*, Ratios, Distribution, and Occurrence by Phase
(ratio # = x : 1)

n	T:S ratio #	S:T ratio #	Distribution	Opening (*n* / 8)	Diagnosis	Directive	Closing	Post-. Closing (*n* / 2)
105	25.2		CRCC(T)=101	0	0	99	2	n/a
		0.04	(S)= 4	0	0	4	0	n/a
97	11.13		ALCK(T)= 89	0	3	82	4	n/a
		0.09	(S)= 8	1	2	1	4	n/a
94	17.8		CRAM(T)= 89	1	11	75	2	n/a
		0.06	(S)= 5	0	2	3	0	n/a
65	64.00		HCPR(T)= 64	2	2	57	3	n/a
		0.01	(S)= 1	0	1	0	0	n/a
63	62.00		HCCA(T)= 62	n/a	6	52	4	n/a
		0.02	(S)= 1	n/a	0	0	1	n/a
57	57.00		GJWB(T)= 57	n/a	1	52	4	n/a
		0.00	(S)= 0	n/a	0	0	0	n/a
55	12.75		ALMS(T)= 51	1	1	46	2	1
		0.08	(S)= 4	1	3	0	0	0
44	44.00		FSEL (T)= 44	3	1	29	10	1
		0.00	(S)= 0	0	0	0	0	0
43	7.60		GJWS (T)= 38	0	2	33	3	n/a
		0.13	(S)= 5	0	0	5	0	n/a
40	39.00		FSKP (T)= 39	2	1	34	2	n/a
		0.02	(S)= 1	0	0	1	0	n/a
$\bar{X}$ = 66.3	33.79		$\bar{X}$=(T)= 63.4	$\bar{X}$ = 11.25	$\bar{X}$= 2.8	$\bar{X}$= 54.6	$\bar{X}$=3.6	$\bar{X}$=1.0
		0.05	$\bar{X}$=(S)= 2.9	$\bar{X}$= 0.25	$\bar{X}$= 0.8	$\bar{X}$= 1.4	$\bar{X}$=0.5	$\bar{X}$=0.0

Table 3.23 shows that on the average, 66.3 directives occur in a tutorial, and the total number of occurrences ranges from 40-105. Not surprisingly, tutors give more directives than do students (a ratio of 33.79 to 1), and most directives occur during the directive phase. After calculating what percentage of directives occurs in each phase, the result is that 86% of tutor directives and 48% of student directives occur during the directive phase. This difference in averages is not surprising since students, on the infrequent occasions when they do issue directives, most likely use them to express their agendas during the diagnostic phase, and tutors give suggestions during the directive phase.

Some idea of the differences in tutorial dynamics in terms of the distribution of power can be inferred from the rank of tutor to student ratios, which differs significantly from the rank of the number of directives. Table 3.23 shows that in the first column, which shows the rank of number of directives, CRCC is the tutorial with the highest number of directives (105), and contains 150% more directives than the tutorial with the lowest number of directives, FSKP (40). However, in the second column, which shows tutor-to student rank, tutor HC (female undergraduate) emerges as the participant with the highest tutor to student directive ratio. Additionally, dyads involving male undergraduate tutor FS, though exhibiting relatively low numbers of directives, show high ratios of tutor to student directives. What this shows is that the high numbers of directives don't necessarily correspond to high tutor-to student ratios.

3.7.2.2. Directives, Duration, and Laughter

To see if the number of directives is a function of duration, and to see what directives can imply about laughter, Table 3.24 follows. The number of directives appears to be related to the duration at least in the upper ranges. The four longest tutorials do show the four highest numbers of directives, though not in order. In other words, the longest tutorial does not have the most directives. The next two tutorials with the most laughter occurrences occur during the two shortest tutorials. The middle duration range shows no particular relation to the numbers of directives in the remaining tutorials, so this data suggests that longer and shorter tutorials have more directives than do those of average length.

Table 3.24 Directives: Duration, T : S Ratio, and Laughter Initiations

Tutorial Duration	# of Directives		Tutor: Student Directives Rank	Laughter Initiations
HCPR (37:21)	65		HCPR 64:1	14
ALCK (36:48)	97		HCCA 62:1	27
CRCC (36:17)	105		GJWB 57:1	7
CRAM (34:39)	94		FSEL 44:1	31
ALMS (34:04)	55		FSKP 39:1	34
FSEL (33:26)	44		CRCC 25:1	7
FSKP (32:15)	40		CRAM 17:1	20
GJWS (28:46)	43		ALMS 12:1	4
HCCA (27:39)	63		ALCK 11:1	26
GJWB (22:50)	57		GJWS 7.6:1	24
$\overline{X}=$ 32:40	$\overline{X}$ =66.3		$\overline{X}=$ 33.8: 1	$\overline{X}=$ 19

Possible explanations for shorter tutorials having many directives might be time constraints (perhaps the student arrived late or was a walk-in and an appointment was scheduled for the next time slot) or the type of help the student wanted (editing or proofreading comments by the tutor would be more unilateral than would be asking for elaboration or clarification of an argument).

In Table 3.24, in the columns on the right, laughter initiations show the highest numbers near the middle of the directives rank, and high numbers at the low and high ends. Again the proximity of HC's tutorials to each other, and the proximity of FS's tutorials to each other--both with high numbers of laughter, suggests a particular dynamic perhaps of the type of laughter involved. ALCK and GJWS—with relatively low tutor to student directives ratios may suggest another type of laughter.

3.7.2.3. Mitigated Directives

One other interesting aspect of directives is whether or not the speaker attempts to mitigate or soften the imperative nature of directives. Directives can be mitigated through the use of syntactic downgraders, and in this study, determination of whether or not a

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directive was mitigated was based on the presence of one or more of the features of downgraders as specified in Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper's "Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project" (CCSARP).

Interrogatives: CRCC Line 116-7:

T: *So could you use the story as sort of an opening tease for the entire piece?*

Subjunctive: GJWB Line 61

T: *You might want to reword it.*

Conditional: CRAM Line 113

S: *Actually, I would just like you to read it over and maybe suggest something.*

Aspect: FSKP Line 92

T: *I'm thinking that's a little off.*

Tense: ALMS Line 52 (if a past tense form is used with a present time reference)

T: *I was wondering if we might do something with this.*

Politeness Marker: GJWB Line 394

T: *All right well, if you wouldn't mind..uh filling out, uh just filling this out*

Understater: HCPR Line 148

T: *I mean it's kind of vague is what I'm saying.*

Hedge: HCPR Line 10

T: *Yeah, just if you could describe just in a sentence*

In order to analyze participants and how their use of directives affects tutorial dynamics and therefore laughter, Table 3:25 was constructed. This table shows that tutors mitigate directives much more often than students, and that the two female tutors—GJ

and HC—mitigate at rates higher than the male tutors. Male tutors FS and CR are consistent in their rates of mitigation, and male tutor AL is within 15% of the same rate for both his tutorials. This consistency perhaps suggests politeness strategies are not related to the student, but rather are a function of the tutor's gender.

Table 3.25 Percent of Mitigated Directives T=Tutor, S=Student

Tutorial (n)	% mitigation of participant n		% mitigation by rank	
	TUTOR	STUDENT	TUTOR	STUDENT
CRCC 105	39/101=39%	1 / 4=25%	GJWS 97%	GJWS 100%
ALCK 97	58 / 89=65%	4 / 8=50%	GJWB 86%	HCCA 100%
CRAM 81	32 / 76=42%	4 / 5=80%	HCPR 86%	ALMS 100%
HCPR 65	55 / 64=86%	0 / 0=0%	HCCA 82%	CRAM 80%
HCCA 63	51 / 62=82%	1 / 1=100%	ALMS 80%	ALCK 50%
GJWB 57	49 / 57=86%	0 / 0=0%	FSEL 73%	CRCC 25%
ALMS 55	41 / 51=80%	4 / 4=100%	FSKP 69%	HCPR 0%
FSEL 44	32 / 44=73%	0 / 0= 0%	ALCK 65%	GJWB 0%
GJWS 43	37 / 38=97%	5 / 5=100%	CRAM 42%	FSEL 0%
FSKP 40	27 / 39=69%	0 / 1= 0%	CRCC 39%	FSKP 0%
$\overline{X}$=66.3	$\overline{X}$= 71.9%	$\overline{X}$=45.5%	$\overline{X}$= 71.9%	$\overline{X}$=45.5%

3.7.3. QUESTIONS

One type of institutional speech event is the "interview": the person in power (doctor, lawyer, social worker) asks questions and the other person answers. Writing tutorials, in theory, are not structured in this fashion, but rather are ideally framed as a discussion in which the reader/tutor and writer/student converse on a more egalitarian level. Tutors do ask questions, but students are encouraged to ask questions about their writing. Much research in discourse has focused on the relationship between questions

and power and has yielded the widely accepted idea that the person who holds the most power asks the most questions.

Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn, in her discussion of questions and power in doctor-patient interaction, argues that questions, since they are directives, claim power in at least four ways: (1) "First, a question chooses the next speaker," (2) "A question calls for a particular type of response," (3) "Some questions entail the expectation that the floor will be returned to the questioner," and (4) "Questions aim to elicit information, and information empowers its possessor" (76). She further points out that questions have been linked to power in various studies focusing on such disciplines as politics, education, and law, and in studies of asymmetrical dyads, "typically the speaker who has the power to reward [teacher, physician, attorney] asked the most questions" (76). In order to ascertain if the data in this study, like the studies Ainsworth-Vaughn mentions, support the findings that link questions to power, the number of questions asked by each participant was counted.

One widely inclusive definition of questions that West uses involves the speech activity of an adjacency pair, or a sequence of utterances in which one utterance calls for a certain response: a question asks for an answer (qtd. in Ainsworth-Vaughn 78). However, Ainsworth-Vaughn, in developing her own operational definition of a question, discusses weaknesses with relying solely on the adjacency pair to determine whether or not an utterance is a true question: answers cannot always be differentiated from responses. and answers may not be adjacent to questions. She identifies several characteristics which help to identify a question: the utterance expresses 'the speaker's wish for an informative answer of some type"; it is linguistically marked by a subject-

verb inversion, the use of a WH word (who, what, when, where, why) at the beginning of the utterance, rising intonation at the completion; or the utterance implies uncertainty such as "'I was wondering whether' or 'I didn't know if'" (83).

In identifying questions in this data, the above criteria were used as a guide in determining whether or not an utterance was a true question. Rhetorical or tag questions were not counted as true questions, and questions that were merely rephrasings of a question within the same turn were counted as one question. Additionally, repairs or questions asking the speaker to say an utterance again because the listener had not heard it were not counted nor were markers of surprise such as "Oh really?" or "You don't say?"

For example, a rhetorical question is found in CRAM:

Excerpt 3.1 (CRAM Lines 348-354) (Tutor clarifying his comments about how student could conclude)

```
T: so know that as I'm talking about things you can do with it, it's all in the spirit of
    support as in hey, you've done a lot already=    =now these are some possibilities or
S:                                               =ok=
T: some ways you might think about it=     =and not along the lines of hey, where's your
S:                                  =ok=
T: conclusion?=
S:               Yeah, I know what you're saying, I mean I appreciate that
```

The tutor says "hey, where's your conclusion?" and even though there was a rising intonation after the word "conclusion" and the word "where" was used, the tutor was using a question construction to illustrate a point. Further, the student did not supply an answer, but rather a response to indicate that the phrase was not part of a question/answer adjacency pair.

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3.7.3.1. Frequency of Questions

Tables 3.26 and 3.27 below present the results of the question analysis.

Table 3.26 Total # of Questions by Rank

Dyad	Duration	n
ALCK	(36:48)	75
HCPR	(37:21)	74
CRAM	(34:39)	64
CRCC	(36:17)	60
FSKP	(32:15)	47
HCCA	(27:39)	41
FSEL	(33:26)	35
GJWS	(28:46)	34
ALMS	(34:04)	30
GJWB	(22:50)	20
$\bar{X}$ =32.40		48

Table 3.27 Questions by Rank of T:S Ratio and Gender Dyad

Total n of Questions		Tutor Questions		Student Questions		T:S Ratio	Gender Dyad T / S
CRCC	60	93%	(56)	7%	(4)	16.2	M / F
HCCA	41	88%	(36)	12%	(5)	7.2	F / F
CRAM	64	83%	(53)	17%	(11)	4.8	M / M
HCPR	74	77%	(57)	23%	(17)	3.4	F / M
GJWB	20	75%	(15)	25%	(5)	3.0	F / M
FSEL	35	63%	(22)	37%	(13)	1.7	M / F
FSKP	47	60%	(28)	40%	(19)	1.5	M / M
ALMS	30	57%	(17)	43%	(13)	1.3	M / M
ALCK	75	40%	(30)	60%	(45)	0.7	M / F
GJWS	34	32%	(11)	68%	(23)	0.5	F / F
$\bar{X}$	48	69%	(33)	31%	(15)	4.0	

Table 3.26 shows the total number of questions for each tutorial which range from a low of 20 to a high of 75. Generally, more questions are asked in longer tutorials although in ALMS (M/M), there are fewer than half as many questions compared to CRAM (M/M), which has approximately the same duration. When questions are analyzed for frequency counts of tutors and students, as Table 3.27 indicates, on the average tutors ask twice the number of questions as do students. ALMS once again becomes notable for the nearly equal numbers of questions asked by both AL and MS.

Table 3.27 also shows a high degree of consistency among the tutors as to the percentage of questions they ask in their tutorials. The most variation occurs in ALCK (M/F) and GJWS (F/F) in which female students ask a lot of questions. There appears to be no correlation between questions and gender.

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3.7.3.2. Numbers of Questions and Laughter Initiations

The relationships between questions and laughter can be explored through Table 3.28 which compares the raw counts of each.

Table 3.28 Comparison of Number of Laughter Initiations to Number of Questions

Tutorial	# OF INITIATIONS			Tutorial	# OF QUESTIONS		
	Total	Tutor	Student		Total	Tutor	Student
FSKP	34	11	23	ALCK	75	30	45
FSEL	30	1	29	HCPR	74	57	17
HCCA	27	5	22	CRAM	64	53	11
ALCK	26	10	16	CRCC	60	56	4
GJWS	24	11	13	FSKP	47	28	19
CRAM	20	2	18	HCCA	41	36	5
HCPR	14	13	1	FSEL	35	22	13
CRCC	7	0	7	GJWS	34	11	23
GJWB	7	1	6	ALMS	30	17	13
ALMS	4	1	3	GJWB	20	15	5
	$\overline{X} = 19$	$\overline{X} = 5.5$	$\overline{X} = 13.8$		$\overline{X} = 48$	$\overline{X} = 33$	$\overline{X} = 15$

There appears to be little relation between laughter and number of questions asked other than GJWB (F/M) and ALMS (M/M) which are consistently low in each.

3.7.4. BACKCHANNELS

When a listener wishes to affirm what a speaker is saying, but does not wish to take over the floor, a backchannel may be used. Markers such as "okay," "um-hm," "yeah," "no way" may be inserted in between a speaker's words, or may overlap. Laughter can also be used as a backchannel, and how frequently this is done in this study will be shown after Table 3.29, which presents overall counts of backchannels, tutor-to-student and student-to-tutor ratios, counts by tutorial phase.

3.7.4.1 Frequency of Backchannels

Table 3.29 Backchannels (←) by Total *n*, Tutor:Student and Student:Tutor Ratios, and Distribution by Phase

n	T:S ←	S:T ←	Tutorial	Opening	Diagnosis	Directive	Closing	P.Closing
209	1.34		GJWS (T)=120	18	7	94	1	n/a
		0.74	(S)= 89	0	4	79	6	n/a
198	0.21		GJWB (T)= 35	n/a	10	24	1	n/a
		4.65	(S)=163	n/a	8	145	10	n/a
161	0.13		HCCA (T)= 19	n/a	11	7	1	n/a
		7.47	(S)=142	n/a	13	126	3	n/a
134	0.22		CRAM (T)= 25	0	11	12	2	n/a
		4.36	(S)=109	1	13	94	1	n/a
104	0.44		CRCC (T)= 32	0	17	14	1	n/a
		2.25	(S)= 72	1	7	60	4	n/a
88	0.25		FSKP (T)= 18	0	2	16	0	n/a
		3.89	(S)= 70	1	2	55	12	n/a
82	0.03		FSEL (T)= 3	1	0	1	0	1
		26.33	(S = 79	4	5	44	9	17
80	0.60		HCPR (T)= 30	0	11	15	4	n/a
		1.67	(S)= 50	2	1	46	1	n/a
63	0.36		ALMS (T)= 17	1	1	12	3	0
		2.70	(S)= 46	0	1	42	2	1
61	0.79		ALCK (T)= 27	2	8	17	0	n/a
		1.25	(S)= 34	0	3	30	1	n/a
$\overline{X}$= 118	0.43		$\overline{X}$ = (T)=32.6	*n* (8)=2.9	*n*= 7.8	*n*= 21.2	*n*=1.3	*n* (2)=0.5
		5.53	$\overline{X}$ = (S)=85.4	*n* (8)=1.1	*n*= 5.7	*n*= 72	*n*= 4.9	*n* (2)=9

Table 3.29 shows the number of backchannels per tutorial ranged from a low of 60 to a high of 198. Students overwhelmingly produced the greatest number of backchannels by a ratio of 5.53 to every 1 tutor backchannel. Not surprisingly, most of the backchannels occurred during the longest phase, the directive. GJWS, a female tutor paired with an older, female student was unusual for two reasons: the tutor produced more backchannels than the student by a ratio of 1.34 to 1, and 18 (15%) of the tutor's backchannels occurred during the opening phase. FSEL (M/F) is also worthy of note for the unusually high student to tutor ratio of 26.33.

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3.7.4.2. Backchannels and Duration

Tables 3.30 and 3.31 below reveal that the number of backchannels is not necessarily related to the length of the tutorial, and as far as the three shortest tutorials are concerned, is actually *inversely* proportional. These three tutorials all involve a female tutor. As numbers in Table 3.30 show, in the case of GJWS (F/F), the tutor does most of the backchanneling while in GJWB (F/M) and HCCA (F/F) the students do most of the backchanneling.

Table 3.30 Duration
and backchannel *n*
(arranged by *n* rank)

Duration	*n*
GJWB (22:50)	198
GJWS (28:46)	188
HCCA (27:39)	161
CRAM (34:39)	134
CRCC (36:17)	104
FSKP (32:15)	88
FSEL (33:26)	82
HCPR (37:21)	80
ALCK (36:48)	61
ALMS (34:04)	60
X̄ =32:40	**116**

Table 3.31 Duration
and backchannel *n*
(arranged by duration rank)

Duration	*n*
HCPR(37:21)	80
ALCK(36:48)	61
CRCC(36:17)	104
CRAM(34:39)	134
ALMS(34:04)	60
FSEL (33:26)	82
FSKP (32:15)	88
GJWS(28:46)	188
HCCA(27:39)	161
GJWB(22:50)	198
X̄ =32:40	**116**

3.7.4.3. Laughter Initiations and Backchannels

Laughter is frequently used as a backchannel, and as a response can indicate appreciation of a laughable, feelings of tension, embarrassment, or amusement. Speakers can use laughter to cue the intent of their utterance, but this type of laughter is not a backchannel: only hearers backchannel. Some interlocutors frequently use laughter as a backchannel, and this is evident in Table 3.32 which shows the percent of participant laughter that is composed of backchannels.

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Table 3.32 Laughter, Backchannels, and Percent of Laughter as Backchannel
(arranged in descending order by % of laughter as backchannels)

Dyad	Laughter (# per participant)		←Channel (# per participant)		% of Participant Laughter as Backchannel	
	Tutor	Student	Tutor	Student	Tutor	Student
FSEL	1	29	3	79	0= 0%	24= 30%
FSKP	11	23	18	70	1= 5%	20= 29%
ALCK	10	16	27	34	5= 19%	7= 21%
HCCA	5	22	19	142	0= 0%	18= 13%
CRAM	2	18	25	109	2= 8%	8= 7%
ALMS	1	3	17	46	0= 0%	3= 7%
GJWS	11	13	120	89	11= 9%	3= 3%
GJWB	1	6	35	163	0= 0%	3= 2%
CRCC	0	7	32	72	0= 0%	1= 1%
HCPR	13	1	30	50	1= 3%	1= 2%
	$\bar{X}=5.5$	$\bar{X}=13.8$	$\bar{X}=32.6$	$\bar{X}=85.4$	$\bar{X}=6\%$	$\bar{X}=10\%$

Table 3.32 shows that the students in tutorials FSKP (M/M), FSEL (M/F), ALCK (M/F), and HCCA (F/M) have the greatest percentage of laughter used as a backchannel. Tutors FS and HC—undergraduates—show no instances of laughter as backchannel with students EL and CA (both female) and only one instance with KP (male). This shows students supporting tutor laughables, but not the reverse. In ALCK (M/F), student CK shows 21% of laughter as backchannels, but tutor AL shows almost as much: 19%. When the averages in the bottom row of Table 3.32 are calculated as student-to-tutor ratios, the data show an overall pattern of students laughing more than tutors (S:T ratio of 2.5), using more backchannels than tutors (S:T ratio of 2.6), and of those backchannels, exhibiting higher numbers as laughter than do tutors (S:T ratio of 1.6). An interesting exception is HCPR (F/M) in which the *tutor* initiates more laughter, and shows a higher percentage of laughter as backchannels.

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3.7.5. OVERLAPS

For the purpose of this study, overlaps were defined as simultaneous speech that Speaker B initiates but that does not cause Speaker A to lose the floor. Overlaps can show a degree of connectedness such as when Speaker A begins to ask a question, and Speaker B begins to answer before Speaker A has completed asking the question. However, overlaps can also signal an attempt to take over the floor, and if the attempt is successful, then an interruption has occurred. Laughter is not considered an overlap, but is rather, as Sacks points out, the one speech activity that can be done simultaneously when another person is speaking, and is often welcomed by the current speaker as evidence of alignment. Compare these two examples of simultaneous speech:

(1) GJWS Lines 180-185. GJ=Female tutor (T), WS=Female student (S) discussing an instructor student had the previous year.

```
180 S: Well I took um, the 120 class=        =um last winter=      =with Jane Reed?=
181 T:                            =um-hm=              =um=hm=
182   =hm=
183 S:      =I don't [know if you know who she is she's] a lecturer, excellent teacher=
184 T:              [I don't  know who  that  is,  no]
185 T: =um-hm=
186 S:          =she got me off to a good start I think
```

(2) GJWS Lines 29-   Student is talking about a movie the previous night about women's
    prisons—the topic of her paper.

```
29 S: I started working on this last ni@@ght and I thought no, I can't [do this I have to]
30 T:                                                                  [voiced laugh:::::]
31 S: sit down and take [notes on this] movie, so I'm gonna see if she'll let me do a paper
32 T:                   [voiced laugh]
```

In Example 1, T overlaps S in line 184 and S, while continuing to have control of the floor responds to T's acknowledgement that she does not know who Jane Reed is. In line 183, S asks an indirect question by using rising intonation after the instructor's name

as well as saying in line 183 "I don't know if you know who she is." T is able to overlap and answer the question and S is able to maintain the floor.

In Example 2, S uses M^1 laughter in "ni@@ght" to mitigate the fact that she began this paper only the night before. T uses voiced laughter simultaneously with S's talk in both Lines 30 and 32, and shows affiliation towards S. Like overlaps, laughter *does* have semantic value and can cue the current speaker how to proceed, but since laughter is considered by traditional linguistics as a *paralinguistic* device, it is classified as a backchannel in much the same way "um-hm" and "hm::m" are.

Table 3.33 Overlaps Ranked by Total *n*, Tutor"Student and Student" Tutor Ratios, and Discourse Phase Distribution

n	T:S ratio	S:T ratio	Tutorial	Opening (n=8)	Diagnosis	Directive	Closing	Post Closing (n=2)
27	0.80		GJWS (T)=12	1	0	9	2	n/a
		1.25	(S)=15	1	0	13	1	n/a
9	0.50		CRAM (T)=3	0	0	3	0	n/a
		2.00	(S)=6	1	1	4	0	n/a
8	3.00		ALCK (T)=6	0	0	5	1	n/a
		0.33	(S)=2	0	0	2	0	n/a
5	1.50		CRCC (T)=3	0	3	0	0	n/a
		0.67	(S)=2	0	1	1	0	n/a
5	0.25		FSKP (T)=1	0	0	1	0	n/a
		4.00	(S)=4	0	0	3	1	n/a
4	1.00		HCPR (T)=2	0	0	2	0	n/a
		1.00	(S)=2	0	0	2	0	n/a
4	1.00		ALMS (T)=2	0	0	0	2	0
		1.00	(S)=2	0	0	2	0	0
4	0.33		GJWB (T)=1	n/a	0	1	0	n/a
		3.00	(S)=3	n/a	3	0	0	n/a
2	1.00		HCCA (T)=1	n/a	0	1	0	n/a
		1.00	(S)=1	n/a	1	0	0	n/a
0	0.00		FSEL (T)=0	0	0	0	0	0
		0.00	(S)=0	0	0	0	0	0
$\bar{X}=$ 6.8	0.94		$\bar{X}=$(T)=3.1	$\bar{X}=0.13$	$\bar{X}=0.3$	$\bar{X}=2.2$	$\bar{X}=0.5$	$\bar{X}=0.0$
		1.43	$\bar{X}=$(S)=3.7	$\bar{X}=0.25$	$\bar{X}=0.6$	$\bar{X}=2.7$	$\bar{X}=0.2$	$\bar{X}=0.0$

Table 3.33 shows the total number of overlaps for each tutorial as well as how they are distributed throughout the phases. This data shows that one speaker at a time generally holds the floor. Of the ten tutorials, nine have fewer than 10 overlaps occurring over the average duration of 32:40. Students tended to overlap tutors at a ratio of 1.4 to 1, and did so in all phases except the closing. No overlaps occurred during the post-closing phase.

What is unusual in this data are the 27 overlaps that occur in GJWS, a dyad in which a female tutor works with a female student who is older by 22 years. This age difference is the greatest in the data set, nearly twice that of the next closest dyad. Women dyads tend to have more overlaps than do dyads of mixed genders, and in this data, it appears that male dyads also have more overlaps than do mixed dyads. Perhaps men and women both feel more comfortable overlapping a speaker's speech if the speaker is of the same gender. Without the outlier of GJWS's 27 overlaps, the average number per tutorial drops from 6.8 to 3.1.

3.7.6. INTERRUPTIONS

Interruptions occur when Speaker B starts to speak before Speaker A has finished, and Speaker B takes over the floor. More interruptions occurred than did overlaps and may suggest that in this data, having one's speech interrupted is preferable to talking at the same time. Table 3.34 shows the distribution of interruptions across the ten tutorials. The average number of interruptions per tutorial is 13.2 which is nearly twice the average number of overlaps per tutorial (6.7). What is perhaps most striking is the high number of student interruptions in GJWS (F/F, 24), ALCK (M/F, 16), and HCCA (F/F,13). As Table

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3.34 shows, in the top five tutorials in terms of total interruptions, the student almost always interrupts the tutor more than the tutor interrupts the student.

Table 3.34 Interruptions Ranked by Total n

n	T:S ratio	S:T ratio	Tutorial	Opening ($n=8$)	Diagnosis	Directive	Closing	Post Closing ($n=2$)
31	0.29		GJWS (T)= 7	1	0	4	2	n/a
		3.43	(S)=24	2	1	17	4	n/a
22	0.38		ALCK (T)= 6	0	1	4	1	n/a
		2.67	(S)=16	0	0	15	1	n/a
15	0.67		ALMS (T)= 6	0	0	5	1	0
		1.50	(S)= 9	0	1	8	0	0
14	0.56		HCPR (T)= 5	0	2	3	0	n/a
		1.80	(S)= 9	0	1	8	0	n/a
14	0.08		HCCA (T)= 1	n/a	0	1	0	n/a
		13.00	(S)=13	n/a	1	11	1	n/a
12	1.40		CRAM (T)= 7	0	0	7	0	n/a
		0.71	(S)= 5	0	2	3	0	n/a
7	0.75		GJWB (T)= 3	n/a	1	2	0	n/a
		1.34	(S)= 4	n/a	0	4	0	n/a
6	1.00		CRCC (T)= 3	0	2	1	0	n/a
		1.00	(S)= 3	0	0	3	0	n/a
6	1.00		FSKP (T)=3	0	0	3	0	n/a
		1.00	(S)=3	0	0	2	1	n/a
5	0.67		FSEL (T)=2	0	1	0	1	0
		1.50	(S)=3	1	0	1	0	1
$\overline{X}=$ 13.2	0.68		$\overline{X}=$ (T)= 4.3	$\overline{X}=$0.13	$\overline{X}=$0.7	$\overline{X}=$ 3.0	$\overline{X}=$2.5	$\overline{X}=$0.0
		2.80	$\overline{X}=$ (S)= 8.9	$\overline{X}=$0.38	$\overline{X}=$0.6	$\overline{X}=$7.2	$\overline{X}=$0.7	$\overline{X}=$0.5

3.7.7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAUGHTER, OVERLAPS, AND INTERRUPTIONS

The relationship between laughter, overlaps, and interruptions can be seen in Table 3.35. Tutors initiate laughter and interrupt about twice as often as students, and tutors and students overlap each other with about the same frequency. Unusual numbers

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occur in tutorial GJWS (F/F), which has significant laughter, overlaps, and interruptions

and in both ALCK (M/F) and HCCA (F/F), which have quite a few interruptions. On the

other hand, students in tutorials FSEL (M/F) and CRCC (M/F) do very little interrupting

or overlapping.

Table 3.35 Laughter, Overlaps, and Interruptions

Dyad	Laughter (# per participant)		Overlaps (# per participant)		Interruptions (# per participant)	
	Tutor	Student	Tutor	Student	Tutor	Student
FSEL	1	29	0	0	2	3
FSKP	11	23	1	4	3	3
ALCK	10	16	6	2	6	16
HCCA	5	22	1	1	1	13
CRAM	2	18	3	6	7	5
ALMS	1	3	2	2	6	9
GJWS	11	13	12	15	7	24
GJWB	1	6	1	3	3	4
CRCC	0	7	3	2	3	3
HCPR	13	1	2	2	5	9
	$\overline{X} = 5.5$	$\overline{X} = 13.8$	$\overline{X} = 3.10$	$\overline{X} = 3.70$	$\overline{X} = 4.3$	$\overline{X} = 8.9$

3.7.8 TOPIC CHANGE

According to Kathy Davis in *Power under the Microscope*, "control over

topicality is one of the primary ways that power is exercised by professionals in

institutional encounters" (304). In writing tutorials, students bring their writing to be

discussed, and who sets the agenda is the subject of much writing center scholarship.

Some students, such as female students CK in ALCK (M/F) and WS in GJWS (F/F),

direct what gets talked about more than the tutor does, while other students such as male

student KP in FSKP (M/M) or female students CA in HCCA (F/F) or EL in FSEL (M/F) minimally initiate topics.

Table 3.36 shows that these tutorials range in numbers of topic initiations from a high of 32 to a low of 20 with an average number of topic initiations of 25. Tutors who stand out in the data for their particularly high tutor-to-student ratio of topic changes are FS (M) in both his tutorials and HC in HCCA (F/F). Table 3.37 shows that duration is not particularly related to the number of topic initiations.

Table 3.36 Total Topic Initiation Distribution by Rank

Total n	% by Participant	T:S ratio	S:T ratio
FSKP 32	(T)=29	9.67	
	(S)= 3		0.10
CRAM 28	(T)=24	6.00	
	(S)= 4		0.17
HCPR 28	(T)=20	2.50	
	(S)= 8		0.40
ALMS 26	(T)=22	5.50	
	(S)= 4		0.18
HCCA 26	(T)=25	25.00	
	(S)= 1		0.04
ALCK 25	(T)=11	0.79	
	(S)=14		1.27
FSEL 24	(T)=21	7.00	
	(S)= 3		0.14
GJWS 23	(T)=10	0.77	
	(S)=13		1.30
CRCC 20	(T)=13	1.86	
	(S)= 7		0.54
GJWB 20	(T)=15	3.00	
	(S)= 5		0.34
$\overline{X}$ = 25.2	$\overline{X}$ = (T)=19.0 $\overline{X}$ = (S)= 6.2	3.06	0.33

Table 3.37 Duration and Topic Initiation

Tutorial Duration	# Topic Initiations
HCPR (37:21)	28
ALCK (36:48)	25
CRCC (36:17)	20
CRAM (34:39)	28
ALMS (34:04)	26
FSEL (33:26)	24
FSKP (32:15)	32
GJWS (28:46)	23
HCCA (27:39)	26
GJWB (22:50)	20
$\overline{X}$ = 32:40	$\overline{X}$ = 25.2

In relation to laughter, Table 3.38 shows that for T:S ratios of 7 or above, there is a correlation between raw high numbers of laughter and the T:S ratio of topic initiations.

A further examination of Table 3.38 shows that high numbers of student laughter are

directly proportional to high numbers of tutor topic initiation, at least in the upper ranges.

Table 3.38 Laughter and Topic Initiation

Dyad and Laughter Rank	Laughter (# per participant)		# of Topic Initiations	Topic Initiation (# per participant)		T:S Ratio of Topic Initiation.
	Tutor	Student		Tutor	Student	
FSKP 34	11	23	32	29	3	9.67
FSEL 31	1	29	24	21	3	7
HCCA 27	5	22	26	25	1	25
ALCK 26	10	16	25	11	14	0.79
GJWS 24	11	13	23	10	13	0.77
CRAM 20	2	18	28	24	4	6
HCPR 14	13	1	28	20	8	2.50
CRCC 7	0	7	20	13	7	1.86
GJWB 7	1	6	20	15	5	3
ALMS 4	1	3	26	22	4	5.50
$\bar{x} = 19$	$\bar{x} = 5.5$	$\bar{x} = 13.8$	$\bar{x} = 25.2$	$\bar{x} = 19$	$\bar{x} = 6.2$	$\bar{x} = 3.06$

3.7.9. SUMMARY OF SPEECH ACTIVITY DATA

What the quantitative analyses of speech activities have yielded so far are raw

counts and their relation to tutorial duration and number of laughter initiations. The

purpose of this section is to assemble those counts into a format in which general

observations can be made here about the relations between speech activities indicative of

power and laughter initiation occurrences, and discussed in later chapters in relation to

the types of laughter used in tutorials.

3.7.9.1. Raw Counts of Speech Activities

Table 3.39 was prepared to summarize the raw counts of each speech activity in the quantitative analyses presented so far. The table displays the number of occurrences of the following speech activities: laughter, directives, questions, backchannels, overlaps, interruptions, and topic changes. The numbers of instances for each feature are highlighted and ranked in descending order under each feature's heading. The average ($\bar{x}$) numbers of occurrences for each feature are in boldface and are indicated in the bottom row.

Table 3.39 Raw Totals for Each Speech Activity

Laughter (Total #)		Directives (Total #)		Questions (Total #)		←Channels (Total #)		Interruption (Total#)		Topics (Total #)		Overlaps (Total #)	
FSKP	34	CRCC	105	ALCK	75	GJWS	209	GJWS	31	FSKP	32	GJWS	27
FSEL	31	ALCK	97	HCPR	74	GJWB	198	ALCK	22	CRAM	28	CRAM	9
HCCA	27	CRAM	94	CRAM	64	HCCA	161	ALMS	15	HCPR	28	ALCK	8
ALCK	26	HCPR	65	CRCC	60	CRAM	134	HCPR	14	ALMS	26	CRCC	5
GJWS	24	HCCA	63	FSKP	47	CRCC	104	HCCA	14	HCCA	26	FSKP	5
CRAM	20	GJWB	57	HCCA	41	FSKP	88	CRAM	12	ALCK	25	HCPR	4
HCPR	14	ALMS	55	FSEL	35	FSEL	82	GJWB	7	FSEL	24	ALMS	4
CRCC	7	FSEL	44	GJWS	34	HCPR	80	CRCC	6	GJWS	23	GJWB	4
GJWB	7	GJWS	43	ALMS	30	ALCK	61	FSKP	6	CRCC	20	HCCA	2
ALMS	4	FSKP	40	GJWB	20	ALMS	60	FSEL	5	GJWB	20	FSEL	0
$\bar{x}$ =	19	$\bar{x}$ =	66	$\bar{x}$ =	48	$\bar{x}$ =	118	$\bar{x}$ =	13	$\bar{x}$ =	25	$\bar{x}$ =	7

The numbers in the bottom row reveal that for the average tutorial, most speech activities number in the double digits somewhere between 13 and 66 occurrences. The exceptions—backchannels and overlaps—are present in triple and single digit averages of 118 and 7 respectively. While this in and of itself merely demonstrates that speech activities are present in this data in varying numbers, what is worth noting is that highest number of occurrences for both backchannels and overlaps, as well as for interruptions, are present in the same dyad: GJWS (F/F). As will be discussed in excerpts 3.3 and 3.4

later in this chapter, GJWS is a dyad of two women who, as will be seen in Chapter 4, use laughter affiliatively, and as research has shown, women tend to show connectedness in interaction through the use of backchannels, overlaps, and interruptions. Conversely, Table 3.39 shows that speech activities which tend to show an unequal distribution of power—directives, questions, and topic changes—occur in relatively low numbers for GJWS, which falls within the lower three slots for each feature. However, the dyad of CRAM, which consists of two males, while occupying the top three slots in terms of directives, questions, and topics, *also* shows a relatively high number of backchannels and overlaps, and so perhaps factors other than gender are at play in the dynamics of these tutorials. Before drawing any conclusions at this point, though, the point should be made that Table 3.39 does not reveal *which* participant in the dyad accounts for what portion of occurrences—only the total number is shown. Without a closer look at distributions of occurrences within each tutorial, few explanations for variations among tutorials can be offered.

3.7.9.2. Percentages by Tutorial of Each Speech Activity

Table 3.40 presents an alternate way of looking at quantitative data by showing the number of occurrences for each speech activity as a percentage of the *total* data set, or what percent of each feature occurred in which tutorial.

In Table 3.40, under each speech activity's heading, the percentages are ranked in descending order. For laughter, Table 3.40 shows a nine-fold difference between the highest and lowest percentages. Table 3.40 also shows a fairly consistent range among activities other than laughter in terms of high to low percentages. All but overlaps exhibit

a range from a two to five-fold difference between the lowest percentage of occurrences

and the highest, and while this indicates some degree of variation among dyads in the use

of any particular speech activity, it also shows that there are general boundaries and a

degree of uniformity as to how these speech activities are used. For example, most

Table 3.40 Percentages by Tutorial of Each Speech Activity

Laughter (% of Data Set)		Directives (% of Data Set)		Questions (% of Data Set)		Topics (% of Data Set)		Interruptions (% of Data Set)		←Channels (% of Data Set)		Overlaps (% of Data Set)	
FSKP	18	CRCC	16	ALCK	16	FSKP	13	GJWS	24	GJWS	17	GJWS	40
FSEL	16	ALCK	15	HCPR	15	CRAM	11	ALCK	17	GJWB	16	CRAM	13
HCCA	14	CRAM	14	CRAM	13	HCPR	11	ALMS	11	HCCA	14	ALCK	12
ALCK	13	HCPR	10	CRCC	13	ALMS	10	HCPR	10	CRAM	12	CRCC	7
GJWS	12	HCCA	10	FSKP	10	HCCA	10	HCCA	10	CRCC	9	FSKP	7
CRAM	10	GJWB	8	HCCA	9	ALCK	10	CRAM	9	FSKP	8	ALMS	6
HCPR	7	ALMS	8	FSEL	7	FSEL	10	GJWB	5	FSEL	7	HCPR	6
CRCC	4	FSEL	7	GJWS	7	GJWS	9	FSKP	5	HCPR	7	GJWB	6
GJWB	4	GJWS	6	ALMS	6	CRCC	8	CRCC	5	ALCK	5	HCCA	3
ALMS	2	FSKP	6	GJWB	4	GJWB	8	FSEL	4	ALMS	5	FSEL	0

features have between 13 and 24% as the high end with the exception of overlaps,

in which, as noted earlier, 40% occur in GJWS (F/F). At the other end of the range,

almost all features have lows in the single-digits with the exception again of overlaps

none of which occurred in FSEL, a dyad of a 26-year-old male tutor who is an

undergraduate, and a 19-year-old female student who, like FS, is an undergraduate. This

unusually wide range in overlaps is interesting since both GJWS (40 overlaps) and FSEL

(0 overlaps) have similar amounts of laughter (12% and 16% of the total data set

respectively). To see if this difference may be more of a function of the particular dyads,

or of the tutors involved, or if this percentage difference is merely an outlier, we can look

at Table 3.41 below and see if there is a pattern across speech activities for FSEL.

Table 3.41 Speech activities by Percent of Total Data Set FSEL and GJWS

Laughter (%of Data Set)		Directives (%of Data Set)		Questions (%of Data Set)		Topics (%of Data Set)		Interruptions (%of Data Set)		←Channels (%of Data Set)		Overlaps (%of Data Set)	
FSKP	18	CRCC	16	ALCK	16	FSKP	13	GJWS	24	GJWS	17	GJWS	40
FSEL	16	ALCK	15	HCPR	15	CRAM	11	ALCK	17	GJWB	16	CRAM	13
HCCA	14	CRAM	14	CRAM	13	HCPR	11	ALMS	11	HCCA	14	ALCK	12
ALCK	13	HCPR	10	CRCC	13	ALMS	10	HCPR	10	CRAM	12	CRCC	7
GJWS	12	HCCA	10	FSKP	10	HCCA	10	HCCA	10	CRCC	9	FSKP	7
CRAM	10	GJWB	8	HCCA	9	ALCK	10	CRAM	9	FSKP	8	ALMS	6
HCPR	7	ALMS	8	FSEL	7	FSEL	10	GJWB	5	FSEL	7	HCPR	6
CRCC	4	FSEL	7	GJWS	7	GJWS	9	FSKP	5	HCPR	7	GJWB	6
GJWB	4	GJWS	6	ALMS	6	CRCC	8	CRCC	5	ALCK	5	HCCA	3
ALMS	2	FSKP	6	GJWB	4	GJWB	8	FSEL	4	ALMS	5	FSEL	0

FSEL consistently ranks among the four lowest percentages of all speech activities, yet has the second *highest* number of laughter initiations, and while GJWS is also among the four *lowest* percentages in three speech activities other than laughter, GJWS is either the first or second *highest* in backchannels, interruptions, and overlaps. These differences may be influenced by gender (FSEL = male tutor/female student, GJWS = female tutor/female student) since much research shows women interacting with other women are more connected in their speech in terms of backchannels, interruptions, and overlaps than are women interacting with men. However, Tannen cautions against generalizing too much about gender differences: "Attempts to understand what goes on between women and men in conversation are muddled by the ambiguity and polysemy of power and solidarity. The same linguistic means can accomplish either, and every utterance combines elements of both" (*Gender* 46).

3.7.9.3. Percent of Speech Activities Initiated by Tutor in Each Tutorial

What may prove more insightful than gender in explaining the differences in the amounts of laughter among tutorials is the degree of tutor dominance exhibited through speech activities. Up to this point, the data has not shown which participant initiated what percentage of the occurrences. Table 3.42 below shows what percentage of each speech activity in a particular tutorial was initiated by the tutor.

Table 3.42 Percent of Speech activities Initiated by Tutor in Each Tutorial

Laughter (% of dyad)		Directives (% of dyad)		Question (% of dyad)		Topics (% of dyad)		Interruptions (% of dyad)		←Channels (% of dyad)		Overlaps (% of dyad)	
HCPR	93	FSEL	100	CRCC	93	HCCA	96	CRAM	58	GJWS	57	ALCK	75
GJWS	46	GJWB	100	HCCA	88	FSKP	91	CRCC	50	ALCK	44	CRCC	60
ALCK	39	HCPR	99	CRAM	83	FSEL	88	FSKP	50	HCPR	38	HCPR	50
FSKP	32	HCCA	98	HCPR	77	CRAM	86	GJWB	43	CRCC	31	ALMS	50
ALMS	25	FSKP	98	GJWB	75	ALMS	85	ALMS	40	ALMS	27	HCCA	50
HCCA	19	CRCC	96	FSEL	63	GJWB	75	FSEL	40	FSKP	20	GJWS	44
GJWB	14	CRAM	95	FSKP	60	HCPR	71	HCPR	36	CRAM	19	CRAM	33
CRAM	10	ALMS	93	ALMS	57	CRCC	65	ALCK	27	GJWB	18	GJWB	25
FSEL	3	ALCK	92	ALCK	40	ALCK	44	GJWS	23	HCCA	12	FSKP	20
CRCC	0	GJWS	88	GJWS	32	GJWS	43	HCCA	7	FSEL	4	FSEL	0
X̄ =	28	X̄ =	96	X̄ =	69	X̄ =	75	X̄ =	33	X̄ =	28	X̄ =	46

The averages in the bottom row show that for directives, questions, and topic initiations, tutors initiate between 69%-96% of the occurrences. The highest percentage

of these are directives, and would be expected in a situation in which one participant came asking for advice and another were there to give it. There is not much difference between the highest (100) and lowest (88) percentages of directives/dyad given by tutors, and this feature does not appear to be related to the amount of laughter a tutor initiates. However, even though the averages for questions, and topics are 69% and 75% respectively, Table 3.42 shows that students do ask a good number of questions and do get to direct the topic; in fact, students in GJWS (F/F) and ALCK (M/F) ask questions

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and change topics over half the time. Tutors in GJWS and ALCK also have the second and third highest rates of laughter initiated by tutors.

Other salient features of Table 3.42 involve tutor HC, who in HCPR (F/M) initiates 93% of the laughter—more than twice the amount of the next highest number (46% in GJWS)—and tutor CR, who in CRCC (M/F) initiates no laughter. HC and CR also both rank high in numbers of questions asked: their combined four tutorials have the highest numbers of questions in the data set. Since questions are a specific type of directive, and issuing directives claims power, both HC and CR can be seen as quite dominant in these tutorials. In contrast to the dominant styles of HC and CR, the tutoring styles of female tutor GJ in GJWS (F/F) and male tutor AL in ALCK (M/F) result in these two tutorials having the lowest numbers of directives (although their percentage is still high), fewer than 41% of the questions, and fewer than 45% of the topic initiations. Both tutors use high numbers of backchannels, another sign of connectedness.

A pattern emerges that tutors who are the most and least dominant as measured by speech activities tend to be involved in tutorials that have either very high or very low numbers of laughter initiations. Male tutor FS issues a high percentage of directives in FSEL (M/F) and initiates high numbers of topics in both FSEL and FSKP (M/M). These two tutorials also have the highest percentages of laughter in the data set. Female tutor HC in HCCA issues a high number of directives, questions and topics, and HCCA ranks third highest in laughter initiation. At the other end of degree of tutor dominance, female tutor GJ in GKWS (F/F) and male tutor AL in ALCK (M/F), are relatively low in dominance as measured by directives, questions, and topic initiations, and rank high in backchannels as well as laughter initiation.

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3.8. GENDER

3.8.1 GENDER AND FREQUENCIES OF INITIATION AND RESPONSE TYPES

In Tables 3.43 through 3.45 located below, the data is arranged to show the effects of dyad participants' gender on the amount and type of laughter used in initiations and responses to laughter. These are summative tables based on individual analyses.

3.8.1.2. Dyads, Gender, and Laughter Initiations

Table 3.43 Percent Tutorial Initiation Type by Gender Dyads

TUTORIAL	n	% (A)	% (M^1)	%(M^2)	%(D^1)	%(D^2)	(U)
$\bar{x}$ MALE/ T	3.7	13.3%	3%	50%	0	0	0
$\bar{x}$ FEMALE/ S	17. 3	34%	63%	0	0	0	3%
$\bar{x}$ FEMALE/T	7	0%	73 %	0%	4%	4%	19%
$\bar{x}$ MALE/ S	3. 5	16. 5%	83. 5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
$\bar{x}$ MALE / T	4. 7	56 %	38%	25. 7%	0%	0%	6%
$\bar{x}$ MALE /S	14. 7	49 %	51%	0%	0%	0%	0%
$\bar{x}$ FEMALE/T	8	37. 5 %	20%	32.5%	0%	10%	0%
$\bar{x}$ FEMALE/ S	17. 5	21 %	79%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 3.43 shows how gender is related to laughter initiations. As the total number of initiations for each category shows, the combination of F/M dyads (female tutor, male student) shows a substantial difference in the amount of laughter present for both tutors and students. In each of the other dyad combinations, students initiate much more laughter than do tutors: in M/F dyads, students initiate 4.7 times as much laughter

as do tutors; in M/M dyads, students initiate 3.1 times as much; and in F/F dyads, students initiate 2.2 times as much. In F/M dyads, it is the tutor who initiates the most laughter, and does so by twice as much. When viewed from a power-based perspective, a patriarchal society traditionally assumes the male is the one with the most power, and in-line with prior research in the dynamics of laughter in institutional interaction, the person with the most power laughs the least. In the same gender dyads—M/M and F/F—the ratios of student-to-tutor laughter are lesser since the power-differential of gender is not present, but comparing the two dyads to each other, male tutors still laugh less than female tutors, and male students laugh less than female students.

However, the *types* of laughter present need to be analyzed before differences in numbers of initiations can be attributed to solely to claims to power. The two most prevalent types of initiations in this data (as presented in Table 3.9) are Affiliative (A) and laughter that mitigates for self (M1). In Tables 3.44 and 3.45 below, the average percentages of participants' use of (A) and (M^1) laughter are presented and ranked by

Table 3.44: Affiliative (A) Laughter by Dyad Gender (Tutor/Student)	
Tutors	Students
M/M 56%	M/M 49%
F/F 37.5%	M/F 34%
M/F 13.3%	F/F 21%
F/M 0%	F/M 16.5%

Table 3.45: Self-Mitigating (M^1) Laughter by Gender Dyad (Tutor/Student)	
Tutors	Students
F/M 73%	F/M 83.5%
M/M 38%	F/F 79%
F/F 20%	M/F 63%
M/F 3%	M/M 51%

tutors and students. Table 3.44 shows that male tutors use (A) laughter—laughter designed to bring participants closer together—more frequently than any other participants, and that male students use (A) laughter almost as much as male tutors and

more than other participants. What is surprising in this data is that female tutors do not use (A) laughter at all with male students, and that female students use more (A) laughter with male tutors than with female tutors.

Table 3.45, which looks at (M^1) laughter—laughter that is used to relieve one's own tension—shows that both female tutors working with male students, and male students working with female tutors, use the highest percentage of (M^1) laughter. Female students working with either male or female tutors also show high frequencies of (M^1) laughter use. Male tutors working with female students rarely use laughter to mitigate their own tension; in fact, only 3% of all initiations fall into this category.

Gender appears to affect participant roles, or in Goffman's terms "performance," especially those of tutors. While widely held assumptions that women are more nurturing than men, more egalitarian than men, and prefer more closely aligned interaction than do men would lead to the expectation that women would be more likely than men to use (A) laughter to draw the student closer, some scholarship suggests otherwise. Shari Stenberg, writing on the difficulties women often have in both believing in credibility of their own authority and in sharing that authority, writes, "Acting as a liberatory authority often involves a knowledge of when to "fade" from the foreground to the background, when to, as Ira Shor names it, "wither away. But female subjects have already learned to render themselves invisible; how does one give up authority she has never felt in the first place?" (141). Stenberg explains differences male and female teachers have in power differentials with students:

> As Lil Brannon argues, the male critical teacher maintains his privilege
> through a "double move": he resists the image of the all knowing, distant,

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authoritative figure but paradoxically gains power by becoming the "star"—the heroic, emancipatory teacher (1993, 460). Even when he "withers away," his authority is taken for granted. Female teachers, in contrast are often read first and foremost as caretakers, nurturers—not intellectuals or authorities. "Withering away" may be read as "natural" behavior; the female teacher is not "able" to take center stage. (141)

Another way to perhaps explain the more frequent use of (A) laughter by male tutors than by female tutors, according to sociologists Aysan Sev'er and Sheldon Ungar, is that humor, and I expand this to include humorous playframes invoked through laughter, may "serve as a functional tool for educators who want to give an 'affable' impression of themselves, lighten up a topic, or prolong the attention span of their students' interest and participation" (89-90). Further, invoking playframes or being "unserious" can "lubricate social interaction" between teachers and students (88). However, Sev'er and Ungar argue from a power-based approach that men and women have unequal status when it comes to being "unserious." Based on feminist assertions that "men define reality for both men and women in work and leisure," male instructors feel freer to "entertain and enliven" their classes while female instructors generally avoid being unserious, or use humor "reactively to regain control of classroom disruptions" (88-90). In tutorials, these same dynamics may apply, and in this data, the humor styles of male tutors as compared to female tutors would support Sev'er and Ungar's argument.

Female tutors when working with male students, in this data, use no (A) laughter to better align themselves, and use the highest percentage of self-mitigating (M^1)

laughter. On the other hand, male tutors working with female students do use (A) laughter somewhat (13.3%), but appear to be confident enough that they use very little (M[1]) laughter (3%).

On a cautionary note, though, this study represents only a small number of tutorials, and no broad generalizations can be extended from this data. For example, in ALMS, one of the dyads in the (M/M) data, there are only four instances of laughter initiation in the entire tutorial, and AL's single initiation, an instance of (A) laughter, therefore counts as 100% of his total. This outlier may skew the results. Additionally, 38% of female tutor HC's initiations were coded as "Unclear": the coders could not decide why she was laughing, and it is difficult to conclude much as a result.

3.8.1.2. Dyads, Gender, and Responses

Table 3.46 Percent Tutorial Response Type by Gender Dyads								
TUTORIAL	n	% (A/S)	% (A/V)	% (A/NV)	% (A/D)	% (N)	% (D/NL)	% (U)
x̄ MALE/T	17.3%	11.7%	11%	6.7%	0%	59.7%	1%	9.6%
x̄ FEMALE/S	3.7%	37.7 %	6.7%	3.3%	0%	20 %	0%	0%
x̄ FEMALE/T	3.5%	0%	8.5%	0%	0%	91.5%	0%	5.7%
x̄ MALE/ S	7 %	3.5%	0%	0%	0%	96.5%	0%	0%
x̄ MALE/ T	14.7%	12.3%	5%	12%	11%	56.7%	0%	0%
x̄ MALE/ S	4.7%	82%	0 %	13 %	0%	6 %	0%	0%
x̄ FEMALE/T	17.5	28 %	12 %	18.5%	0%	34 %	0%	7%
x̄ FEMALE/S	8	53 %	9 %	13.5%	0%	24.5%	0%	0%

The relationships between gender and responses to laughter in this data support the observations in the preceding section about the differences between male and female tutors' approach to fostering alignment. Table 3.46 shows that the combination of F/M dyads results in far fewer affiliated/shared and affiliative/non-verbal responses and far

more neutral responses by *both* tutor and student than in other dyads. Participants in F/M dyads do not try to distance themselves through disaffiliative laughter, but they are seemingly either content in adhering to institutional roles or are not willing to take risks associated with closer alignment.

F/F dyads show students and tutors use a high and nearly equal percentage of affiliative laughter, whereas in M/F and M/M dyads, the students produce far more affiliative laughter than do the tutors. Additionally, the averages in this study show a number of differences in how males and females respond to laughter initiations in interactions in same and mixed gender dyads. Both male and female students in same sex dyads, (M/M) and (F/F), accept tutor invitations to laugh by using affiliative/shared (A/S) laughter at least 50% of the time. In other dyad combinations, (A/S) laughter is used between 7% (F/M) and 18% (M/F). The tutors in same sex dyads are also more likely to join in (A/S) laughter than are tutors in mixed-sex dyads. Perhaps individuals are more confident in reading the signals of when to join in laughter when the signal is given by someone of their own gender. Students in same sex dyads are also the most likely to use non-verbal signals to indicate that they support the laughter of the tutor: 29% of students' responses in (M/M) dyads and 19% of student's responses in (F/F) dyads are affiliative/non-verbal whereas only 8% of students' responses are (A/NV) in (M/F) dyads and 0% in (F/M) dyads.

Neutral responses account for about half of both tutor and student responses in (M/F) dyads, yet the percentages for both participants are much higher in (F/M) dyads: 72% for female tutors and 93% for male students. In these mixed-gender dyads, one explanation might be that participants are less skilled at picking up on subtle laughter

cues when the speaker is of a different gender, and in F/M dyads in particular, the tutor may be reluctant to show a face other than that of an authority. In same sex dyads, tutors gave neutral responses--(M/M)=68% and (F/F)=38%--far more often than did students—(M/M)=14% and (F/F)=19%. Students in these dyads were more likely to give affiliative responses than neutral ones perhaps because they were surer of the intent of the tutor's invitation to laugh.

3.8.2 GENDER AND SPEECH ACTIVITIES

The quantitative analyses of the relationships between gender and speech activities are summarized in Table 3.47 below.

Table 3.47   Gender and Speech activities: Average Number of
Occurrences per Participant Gender and Role

Discourse Feature	Male Tutors	Female Tutors	Male Students	Female Students
Laughter (I)	4.2	7.5	10.2	17.4
Directives	66.7	55.3	2.2	3.6
Mitigated Directives	38.1	48	1.6	2.2
Questions	34.3	29.8	13	18
Topics	20	17.5	4.8	7.6
Interruptions	4.5	4.0	6.0	11.8
←Channels	20.3	51	87.6	83.2
←Channels as Laughter	6.4	3	9.4	13.6
Overlaps	2.62	4.0	3.4	4.0

While the data sample is too small to generate conclusions to apply to data outside of this study, certain widely accepted observations about gender can be applied *to* this data: women mitigate directives more than men, women use laughter as a backchannel more than men, and women overlap speech more than men. Also, when tutors are compared to tutors, the data is consistent with other studies about gender: men tutors issue more directives, ask more questions, and initiate more topics than women. Further, when tutors are compared to students, the institutionalized dichotomy of power is obvious: tutors issue more directives, ask more questions, and initiate more topics than students; students laugh more, use more backchannels, and use more laughter as backchannels than tutors.

However, some data seems inconsistent with norms. Female students issue more directives, ask more questions, and initiate more topics than do male students, but that may be a function of the nature of tutorials and the underlying assumptions that the purpose of the tutorial is to talk, and women, who are typically more uncomfortable with silence than are men, work harder to keep the conversation going. Surprising, too, is that male students utter more backchannels than do female students, but this most likely occurs due to the high number of backchannels by the male student in GJWB (F/M), who utters 163 backchannels far surpassing the student average of 85.4.

The impact of gender on laughter in tutorials will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 4: INITIATIONS

In Chapter 3, the global data on laughter Initiation Types (I Types) revealed that for the six I Types coded, three accounted for 92% of participant initiation laughter in the total data set: Mitigation for self (M^1)=52%, Affiliative (A)=34%, and Mitigation for the other person (M^2)=6%. In this chapter, the discussion will first focus on representative examples of each major I Type, and then examples from the 8% of anomalous cases. Next, factors that might affect I Type initiation between participants will be examined.

4.1. MITIGATION FOR SELF (M^1)

In the norming sessions for this study, we observed participants frequently initiating laughter when they seemed nervous, insecure, or unsure about something they had said or were about to say. This anxiety-related communicative use of laughter allows both tutors and students to express, and in the process, relieve feelings of embarrassment related primarily to the loss of positive face that comes through having to reveal ignorance, an especially anxiety-producing situation in the atmosphere of academia. In coding data, we defined (M^1) laughter as laughter which is produced to relieve tension for self or that cues hearer to speaker's emotional state. (M^1) laughter may or may not be produced intentionally.

On the average, of initiations of all types in the data set, 43% were (M^1)s by students, and 9% were (M^1)s by tutors. Since the next most prevalent I Type is Affiliative laughter by students (27%), it is clear the majority of laughter in this data set is due to

student tension or anxiety. The data in Table 3.8 in Chapter 3 also show that the highest percentage of tutor-initiated laughter is also (M^1) Type (9%) followed by (A) Type (7%), but the occurrences of (M^1) for tutors are far fewer than for students relative to the total data set and to the other I types. For all participants, laughter functions more to communicate and release anxiety than it does to promote affiliation.

Table 4.1 shows the percentage of (M^1) initiations in each tutorial that are tutor initiated, student-initiated, and the difference in percentage points between them. The average tutorial contains 36% more M^1 laughter by students than tutors. However, in HCPR, unlike any of the other tutorials, the tutor uses six times more (M^1) laughter than does the student (a pattern that will be addressed in Chapter 6: Discussion). Without averaging in this outlier, the average rises to 44% more M^1 laughter by students than tutors.

Table 4.1   Participant (M^1) laughter as percentage of all I Types in tutorial

TUTORIAL (total of all I types)	% by Tutor	% by Student	% more by student
CRCC (7)	0%	86%	86%
CRAM (20)	5%	60%	55%
HCCA (27)	7%	59%	52%
ALCK (26)	4%	52%	48%
GJWS (24)	0%	46%	46%
GJWB (7)	14%	57%	43%
FSEL (30)	0%	27%	27%
ALMS (4)	0%	25%	25%
FSKP (34)	21%	35%	14%
HCPR (14)	43%	7%	-36%
Average % more M^1 laughter by student than tutor = 36%			

The data about M^1 laughter in Table 4.1 shows that tutor CR's tutorials contain the two

highest percentages of students initiating laughter that somehow mitigates something

about themselves or their discourse. There are several reasons why this might be so, but

in light of the limited number of any occurrences of initiation in CRCC (7), there is not

much textual evidence on which to base a solid argument. However, GJWB (7) and

ALMS (4) also contain only a few occurrences, yet the student-initiated (M^1) laughter is

considerably less than in CR's tutorials. What then might account for the relatively high

number of student-initiated M^1 laughter occurrences in CR's tutorials?

One factor that could affect the dynamics of the verbal interaction between male

tutor CR and these two students is in how authority is negotiated. First, as evidenced in

the speech activities analyses (see Table 3.42 in Chapter 3), CR asks most of the

questions (93% in CRCC and 83% in CRAM), interrupts in both tutorials at a higher

percentage than other tutors, and issues between 95-96% of the directives: he is quite

authoritarian and directive. In CRCC, in which the tutor is male and the student female

(M/F), CC comes to the tutorial already having had her confidence badly shaken by

submitting an assignment in which she had misunderstood the directions and

subsequently received a poor grade. Having had to explain this to CR, and in the process

losing positive face, CC continues to lose face as CR asks several questions to which CC

has no answer. Accompanying CC's several of answers of "I don't know" is (M^1)

laughter.

In the case of CRAM (M/M), AM is another student who does not have much

confidence, and is embarrassed by his ignorance at many points in the tutorial. In Excerpt

4.1 below, CR uses a word with which AM is not familiar, and while it is debatable as to

whether or not CR was asserting his authority by using a word that he suspected AM didn't know, in the course of tutorials, tutors often use writing terms with which students are not familiar. Students, like AM demonstrates below, can intentionally or unintentionally make use of the dual function of (M^1) laughter to not only cue their emotional state, but also to serve as a means to relieve tension.

In the course of Excerpt 4.1, male tutor CR is simultaneously speaking as he writes on male student AM's essay about exploitation of workers by employers:

Excerpt 4.1 (CRAM turns 93-97)

T: that's that's a powerful idea if you could develop that (4 s)   a:nd... let's see.. just
S: ok..
T: a spelling deal there, and then you MIGHT (writing).. a .. conclusion.. that..provides...
closure..   =to the letter.and do you know the word recapitulates?=   =it's one
S: wrap-up,yeah=   =no=
T: of those long words and (writing)   re...capitulates ...
⇨S: [(V.LAUGH)it] sounds like it (uhunh LAUGH)) I never ever I never
    heard that word before=
T: =It recapitulates, it restates..you ever heard like in a sports commentary, a RECAP?=
S: =yeah
   ok, yeah=   [oh, that's what that is, ok]   =ok=
T: =RECAPitulates,   ok?=   = so you're recapping, what are the
    main points?   It's a cool word, isn't it?=   =your
⇨S: [Oh, wow, I have a new word] =yeah, recap, recap,(V.LAUGH) ok=

In the turns marked with (⇨) S's voiced laughter (V.LAUGH) can be seen. In the first case, S's laugh precedes his admission that he does not know the meaning of "recapitulates." To admit not knowing, especially in the culture of academia, is often self-pejorative, and with good reason: in written assignments, course content tests, and class discussions about assigned readings, to show ignorance is not only to lose what politeness theory deems "positive face" but also to lower a test or essay grade. For S to have to

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answer "no" when T asks if S knows the meaning of "recapitulates" causes embarrassment for S, and T's next comment, "it's one of those long words" might seem condescending, implying that S probably doesn't know long words. S begins to laugh before T has completed this comment and again as S comments "I never ever I never heard that word before." Both of these (M^1) initiations occur during S's admission of his unfamiliarity of the word, and allow S to both reveal his embarrassment and to cover it up or mitigate his feeling of embarrassment by appearing to not take things too seriously.

In the second case, after T has shown that the sports term "recap" is based on "recapitulation," and S is able to show that he does indeed have at least some knowledge of the word ("yeah, recap, recap") and thereby restoring some degree of positive face, S's laughter allows some of his tension to be relieved.

Another example of laughter related to student tension is in Excerpt 4.2 from GJWS. WS is a non-traditional, 47-year-old female student who has just related a long narrative in which she describes how she became interested in the topic of her paper, mothers in prison, and how she happened upon a film the previous night about incarcerated women. Female tutor GJ, 24 years old, directs the discussion to the course instructor's explicit directions to include a thesis statement.

Excerpt 4.2 (GJWS turns 14-17)

S: Ok, what do I need to do?=
T: =Ok, well FIRST I was wondering maybe we could kind of work on
   this together=   =and wh:at I would like you to do for me um, is just point out to me
S: =yep=
T: wh:at your thesis is? Because, just from reading what your teacher had, you know, she
   obviously wants a thesis statement and the:n=   = wants your support throughout
S: =um-hm=
T: your paper.=   =So, I thought maybe we can look at THAT,=   = and see where

```
S:              =right=                                    =ok=
T: to go from there=
S:                    =Sure. Ok, um, I want to point out my thesis would be the importance
   of children visiting their mothers in prison.=           =so I pretty much need to say
T:                                           =Ok, ok u:m=
⇨S: that=        =How? (uhhuhhuh)(smiles)
T:      =YES=                        I think she: is looking for . a de:finite . you know,
   STATEMENT=
```

GJ answers WS's question using a politeness strategy of heavily mitigating

suggestions. For example, in T's first turn from this excerpt, she says, "I was **wondering**

maybe we **could kind of** work on this together." The bolded words are GJ's way to

lessen, or mitigate the subsequent face-threatening speech act of having to point out that

WS's thesis is not clear. GJ continues with, "what I **would** like for you to do for me um,

is **just** point out to me what your thesis is?" WS then clearly articulates her thesis, but at

⇨, reveals that she doesn't know how to write it, and laughs and smiles. Her laughter at

this point allows her to lessen the embarrassment of needing help with a thesis.

Tutors also use (M^1) laughter though to a far lesser extent than do students. Tutors

represent the university and knowledge about writing, and to not be able to formulate

advice can cause anxiety and self-doubt for tutors. In Excerpt 4.3 below, female tutor HC

focuses on sentence clarity. In the first line, HC has ready suggestions for alternative

wording. She then explains that she underlined things in the draft that "sounded a little bit

awkward" and could be said in a "different way." When HC finds an introductory clause

that she underlined, she does not have a ready alternative, and falls back on repeating her

previous instruction to say it in a different way.

<u>Excerpt 4.3 (HCCA turns 42-47)</u>

T: but=   = I didn't think he was. Um, I would say either say, "Still to this day it's
S: =m-hm=
T: decorated in his . own elegant . ah preference," you know=   =or Japanese
S: =um-hm=
T: style or whatever=   = or [some]thing like that=   =ok, now things I
S: =ok=   [ok]   =that's good=
T: under[lined]   =ok= Yeah, things I underlined are things that
S: [I'll just write it down (?)]=
T: sounded a little bit awkward [that] maybe you could say in a different way=
S: [ok]   =uh-huh=
T: =like, "With its difficult and looked down upon beginnings," um . sounds like a lot of
⇨   words anyway . Maybe you could say it diff@ @ @erently

At ⇨ "diff@ @ @erently," HC laughs within the word perhaps out of frustration.

She draws attention to the introductory clause "With its difficult and looked down upon

beginnings," hesitates, and not being able to articulate why the clause sounds awkward,

says, "sounds like a lot of words anyway." Using the hedge "maybe," she then releases

the frustration of not having a ready alternative by laughing as she says, "Maybe you

could say it "diff@ @ @erently."

Another case of a tutor using (M[1]) laughter involves male tutor FS reading male

student KP's essay on discerning the semantics of poetry. Prior to FS working in the

WDC, he had worked in a different campus office which dealt primarily with students on

academic probation whose writing skills were very low. FS admits later in the post-

tutorial interview that he was a bit intimated by the depth of KP's topic and KP's

command of vocabulary and rhetorical style. Ironically, in the post-tutorial interview, KP

admits that *he* was a bit nervous because he hadn't "really put a whole lot of thought in

beforehand" and that he knew "some of my sentence structure was pretty odd."

In Excerpt 4.4 below, FS is reading aloud from the essay, and isn't sure what KP is saying and repeats a phrase three times:

Excerpt 4.4 (FSKP) (Words spoken in a quiet voice are enclosed by <Q...Q>

T: <QThe English language is, is living, is a livingQ> .. ok, <Qliving and flourishing throughout the world>Q. Many different cultures, dialects, and fields of study influence the use of language..this causes defining words within the language to be a complex and perhaps impossible task..the nature of language is the communication of one's perception to another. Insofar as perceptions of any one thing can be. understood to .. vary considerably.. insofar as perceptions of any one thing can be understood ... insofar as perceptions of any one thing can be understood to vary considerably, the choice of
S: (↓nh.V.LAUGH)
T: language style by the speaker and writer can also be predictably different. In the
 ⇨   English language, euphemisms and cinnamons are (↓nha@@ cinnamons)
S: (V.LAUGH)
T: synonyms are abundant, and add to this discourse complexity, add to this discourse complexity by offering many words...

In ⇨, FS, who is reading quickly aloud, stumbles over the word "synonym" and pronounces it as "cinnamons." His (M^1) laughter is functional on two levels. First, it allows him to laugh at his own mistake, and to show KP that mistakes are acceptable. This serves as an invitation to laugh, and KP's response of a voiced laugh shows that he is aligned with FS. On a deeper level, this laughter allows FS to ease some of the tension that had been building during the first part of the excerpt—tension on the part of both participants. FS repeats a phrase three times, and as indicated in the post-tutorial interview, he was a bit insecure in evaluating KP's writing. FS was not sure of KP's meaning, and attributed it more to his own inability to follow KP's thoughts than KP's inability to write clearly. At the same time, KP was realizing that his sentence structure sounded odd. While the coders assigned KP's first laugh as (M^1)—a revelation of his

own discomfort—FS may well have interpreted KP's speech action as laughing *at* him, and thus raising FS's own level of discomfort.

4.2. MITIGATION FOR THE OTHER PERSON (M^2)

Rather than mitigating feelings for oneself, (M^2) laughter is used to help ease tension or embarrassment for the other person. In this data, as Tables 3.8 and 3.9 show, (M^2) laughter accounts for only 6% of all laughter initiations in the data set, but accounts for an average of 22% of tutors' initiations. No student initiations were coded as (M^2) though this is not surprising since it is inherent in tutorials that tutors would try to make students feel at ease rather than the reverse.

In the first example of (M^2) laughter, from the opening of GJWS, female tutor GJ, 24 years old, is silently reading 47-year-old non-traditional female student WS's essay while WS fills out paperwork. Two minutes and 50 seconds into the tape, GJ shifts in her chair slightly, puts her elbow on the chair arm, brings her hand to her chin, and rests her chin on her hand. WS looks up, follows GJ's gaze to the essay, and moves her pencil over the area on the page at which GJ is looking. WS then mentions her citations as shown in Excerpt 4.5 below.

Excerpt 4.5 (GJWS turns 1-2)

```
S: I know my [um.. cite, ]uh um, the cites, they're not right=    =I know they're
T:              [nodding]                                  =ok=
S: not right. . I just hurried up and um, [you know], did 'em= [wringing hands]
⇨T:                              (smiles)    [uhhahaha]        = Did what you could,
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  right?=
S:      =yeah (smiles ↓↓)
```

This excerpt demonstrates the powerful communicative effect even small

paralinguistic cues can have on interaction. The action of GJ's resting her chin on her

hand communicates, however misguided, to WS that GJ is concerned with a place in the

essay in which a citation occurs. WS responds with a semantically complicated turn that

communicates on several different levels. First, she shows her expertise about writing:

she does know that the citations are not right, and says so twice. The reason she gives for

them not being right is that she was short on time so she "just hurried up and um, you

know, did them." This implies on the surface that if she had had enough time, the

citations would have been done correctly. This turn could also serve as an indirect request

for help with citations: WS draws attention to something being wrong, and does not

request that GJ just ignore the citations. Since the purpose of a tutorial is to improve

writers and writing, drawing attention to the citations could be a request for help. This

turn could also serve as a directive in setting the agenda since WS brings up the first

topic. However, in the subsequent discourse throughout the tutorial, citations are not

mentioned again even when GJ asks if there is anything else WS would like to discuss. A

reasonable interpretation of WS's statements are that she is confident of doing the

citations on her own, but is offering an excuse as to why there may be mistakes in them.

Mistakes, for whatever reason, do cause loss of face and subsequent tension.

Judging from the discourse that follows WS's statements, GJ intuits that WS is

not asking for help, but rather is explaining the reasons for any citation errors. By using

the paralinguistic cue of (M^2) laughter at ⇨, GJ is able to show that she understands the

constraints that limited time puts on writing, and at the same time let WS know that writing in a hurry is not always a serious offense. This laughter serves as what Coser calls an "invitation to come close" (172). GJ, to further show that she understands WS's hurried and incomplete citations, supplements the (M^2) paralinguistic cue by saying, "Did what you could, right?" The overture for closeness is successful as WS responds with a "yeah" a smile, and two exhalations of unvoiced laughter.

GJ's laugh could lead to affiliation, and WS's response shows that it does, but in this study we defined (M^2) laughter specifically as laughter initiated to ease the other's tension whereas Affiliative laughter initiation was defined as laughter that occurred after the other person had made an attempt to be humorous. In Excerpt 4.5 above, WS's statement "I just hurried up and um, you know, did 'em" was offered as an explanation rather than as an attempt to be humorous, and so GJ's laughter was coded as (M^2).

The next excerpt illustrates first an A initiation, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section, and then an (M^2) initiation. Male tutor AL and female student CK are just over a minute into the tutorial. CK explains that while she has always gotten A's and B's in high school AP English, now she is getting C minuses. She has asked AL to look at her essay and to "tear it apart so I can at least get a B." CK is filling out the WDC information sheet as AL looks over the draft, and CK interrupts AL's reading several times.

Excerpt 4.6 (ALCK turns 3-10)

S: I've never done a paper like that..sophomore in college. When I was in high school, I was always in AP English, college essay research, so like I got As and Bs and now I'm like first English class I'm gettin' C minuses, I was like (tilts head, smiles, and uses [1]➔ sarcastic tone)   "O:OOOH, a lot that,=   =uh, high school helped me."=

T:(unwrapping gum and putting in mouth) =uh-huh=   =golly
S: (4 s) That's what we're s'posed to do=   =And this is what I came up with . just
T: =okay=
[2]→S: TEAR it apart (palms pounding on table) so I can at least get a B on this PLEASE=
T: =All
   right (2 s) You just need to fill out here like down here for now and (unclear) just the
   first page.=
S: =Is today the 11th? Or what is today? The 13th?=
T: =That's what I'm thinkin'(asks
   another instructor) Is this the 13th? (hears reply in background.) Yeah. (7 s)
S: (reading information sheet aloud as she fills it out) I came to the Writing
   Development Center because .=
[3]→T: =to be harrassed by my teachers=
S: =I came to the Writing
   Development Center because my teacher suggested I come.(5s) She REQUIRED me to
[4]→she said. (Sarcastic tone, looks at T and smiles)"It might be a good idea"=
T: =huh@ @ @ @
   (smiles but does not look up and continues to read)
S: (4 s) I know it's shit. You can just laugh. I, I tried on this, I don't, I've never [really]
T: [I was]
   JUST reading this (shakes head, shrug)=   =(smiles and V. LAUGH)
S: =Oh=

In this tutorial, the participants are of two very different personality types. Tutor

AL is quiet, reserved, understated in both demeanor and humor, and reads CK's essay

silently without looking up. Student CK is effervescent; animated in voice, facial

expression, and hand movement; impatient, and uses almost steady eye contact. There are

several times during the course of the tutorial that these personality types conflict,

notably when one or the other participant makes an attempt at humor—an attempt to

induce a laughter initiation—and it fails. Such situations occur three times in the above

brief excerpt from ALCK, and while the humor is an *attempt* to initiate laughter, it is not

a laughter initiation since CK does not laugh first.

Student CK begins the tutorial with a narrative about how her high school English

preparation did little to prepare her for college level work. She makes an attempt at

humor in the third line by tilting her head, smiling, and saying in a sarcastic tone, "O:OOOH, a lot that, uh, high school helped me," but AL does not laugh in the expected slot perhaps because he is busy unwrapping a stick of gum, putting it in his mouth, and looking for a place to discard the wrapper. He does acknowledge her statement with a "Golly" but by then is looking at the draft she is handing him and not making eye contact with her.

Again, at [2]→, CK tries an attempt at humor by using a self-effacing tone, "Just TEAR it apart" which implies the essay is filled with problems, but that CK can withstand the criticisms because she wants a better grade. However, once again AL does not support the attempt at humor with laughter, but rather acknowledges her request with an "All right" and then proceeds to point out what CK needs to fill out on the WDC Information Form.

AL also makes an attempt at humor, and CK does not laugh in the expected slot. In line 16, Al's interjection of "to be harassed by my teachers" is obviously intended as humorous since students do not come to the WDC to be harassed, yet CK ignores the comment. It is possible that she didn't hear AL's comment, but that is unlikely since she stopped speaking when he began, and started again when he had finished.

Finally, CK makes one more attempt at humor when she says in a sarcastic tone, "It might be a good idea," and this time AL does laugh affliatively, yet he continues to read. After a pause of four seconds, CK becomes uncomfortable with the silence, and begins again to make self-disparaging comments: "I know it's shit. You can just laugh." AL keeps reading, and CK continues, "I tried on this, I don't, I've never really." Exasperated that he has once again been interrupted while trying to read, AL replies with

an edge in his voice, "I was JUST reading this," and then shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders as if laughing, but no laughter is audible on the tape.. After CK replies, "Oh," AL mitigates his earlier comment with a smile and M^2 laughter to soften the impact of his comment.

Distinguishing between (M^1) and (M^2) laughter is not always clear cut. For example, at ⇨ in Excerpt 4.6 above, AL's smile and laughter could be interpreted as much as an attempt to relieve his own tension as to relieve CK's. His exasperation at her discomfort with silence and ensuing need to interrupt his reading, is revealed by his brusque comment of "I was JUST reading this," and his shaking his head and shrugging. When CK replies with an embarrassed "Oh," AL might have laughed to express his own embarrassment at having revealed his frustration. However, in this case, all coders marked the laugh as (M^2) because they felt that even though AL may have been clarifying his own communication, he was doing so to relieve CK's tension.

4.3. AFFILIATIVE (A)

Table 3.8 in Chapter 3 shows that of all the laughter initiations in the data, (A) laughter accounts for 34%. Students produced the most—27%—while tutors produced 7%. As shown in Chapter 1, the participant with the least power, the layperson, typically supports the professional person's humor through laughter, but the reverse usually does not happen, so that it is not surprising in this data that students do four times as much (A) laughter as do tutors. However, in Table 3.9 in Chapter 3, which shows how the average

student and the average tutor use initiations, the differences are less dramatic. Of all

student initiations, 38% are (A) laughter, and of all tutor initiations, 27% are (A).

(A) laughter is used for different purposes by tutors and students. Tutors do use

(A) to support students' attempts at humor, but more frequently use it to show empathy,

understanding, or alignment with a student's predicament. Students, on the other hand,

generally use (A) laughter to show *support* for something the tutor has said. In Excerpt

4.6 (ALCK, reprinted below), male tutor AL uses (A) laughter at ⇨ to support female

student CK's humor.

Excerpt 4.7 (ALCK turns 9-11)

```
S:                                                      =I came to the Writing
   Development Center because my teacher suggested I come.(5s) She REQUIRED me to
   she said. (Sarcastic tone, looks at T and smiles)"It might be a good idea"=
T:                                                      =huh@@@@
¹⮞ (smiles but does not look up and continues to read)
S:    (4 s) I know it's shit. You can just laugh. I, I tried on this, I don't, I've never [really]
T:                                                                              [ I was]
   JUST reading this (shakes head, shrug)=    =(smiles and V. LAUGH)
²⮞S:                                  =Oh=
```

CK has used an exaggerated and animated tone, and mocks her instructor: "It

might be a good idea." AL smiles and laughs to support CK's attempt at humor.

However, while an (A) initiation is intended to show support, it does not always result in

aligning the participants. As noted earlier, AL laughs affiliatively, but CK misinterprets

his laugh, and instead becomes defensive. AL must then initiate a repair by using (M^2)

laughter.

In the next example, male tutor FS is working with male student KP—a highly

skilled writer who enjoys playing with language. At first the tutorial doesn't go smoothly.

FS was used to working with students who lacked developed writing skills, and KP's

level of expertise was a bit surprising to FS. In the post-tutorial interview, FS mentioned

that

> this guy had English down pat, in fact, if he wasn't able to explain some of the
>
> points in the paper so well, I would have sworn he plagiarized it cause it's all on
>
> semantics and whatnot of poetry of the English language and how it—it's just an
>
> amazing paper and the vocabulary is beyond my level.

Both coders commented that at first, the tutorial didn't seem to be going well: "FS made

several attempts at humor and KP didn't respond" and "T and S started out looking

somewhat ill at ease with each other." The misalignment was also felt by KP. From KP's

perspective, as he mentions in the post-tutorial interview, he was a bit nervous: "I didn't

know what to expect from someone critiquing my paper...I usually don't get much of

that." KP also explained that "some of my sentence structures were odd" and that he felt

he was an unsuccessful writer because the students in his first-year writing class didn't

understand the humor in his writing.

As the tutorial progressed, though, FS was able to see that KP was really playing

with the words and audience, and FS began to show through laughter his appreciation of

KP's subtlety. In the excerpt below, after an instance of (M^1) laughter by each FS and

KP, the two participants begin to align and eventually join in shared laughter. In an essay

about the complexity of the English language and its often ambivalent constructions, KP

writes:

In the sentence, "Garlic offends me," how is it to be known if the offense is intended to be directed at the olfactorance of garlic, the sight or taste of garlic, the associations one has with the use of garlic (a strictly carnivorous human could be offended by the mention of any vegetation; a vampire could be offended by garlic because of its physical deterrence from his or her prey), or even the spelling of the word?

In Excerpt 4.8 below, tutor FS reads the sentence aloud. FS has just been discussing with KP how to revise a sentence fragment, and FS decides to circle it and have KP revise it later. FS continues reading aloud, and speaks in a smiley voice (text between ☺s) when he comes to "Garlic offends me." FS's use of a smiley voice and an exaggerated tilting of his head initiate what Bateson characterizes as a play frame or a "state created by metacommunicative signals which frame or bracket messages as nonserious" (qtd. in Glenn *Laughter* 137). Play frames can be potentially risky to use since hearers may not interpret the metacommunicative signals such as voice change, facial expression, or gestures, and misalignment may occur. In the excerpt below, we can trace how the participants negotiate their way through the potential ambiguity that is inherent in play frames, and arrive at affiliative laughter and alignment.

Excerpt 4.8 (FSKP turns 43-45)

T: circle it for now and you can figure that one out later. In the sentence ☺Garlic Offends
  [me☺ how] is it to be known if the offense is inten intended to be directed at the
S: [smiles]
T: olfactorance of gar@ @lic..OLFACTORANCE of garlic. do you actually use this
  [word? Or] did= =did you, did you look it up?=
S: [smiles]   =I=   =No, I se, I ser, I seriously do use that
  word= = I love it= [uhhaha@@@@ continues to smile]   [uhhah@@]
T: =ok=   =[ok allright . I know what it is, it's the] smell, but [still…]

the sight or ta@ @ste of garlic (turns, shrugs)= ↑↑ =C'mon If you're gonna use it there
S: =(smiles)=
T: why don't you use it here? It's the VISUAL aspect of [garlic (shrugs) or,]um..what's
S: [(smiles) uha@ @ @]
T: taste? Well, umm.. I don't know off the top [of my head] <U..2U> you should do it for
S: [right, yeah]
T: all of 'em though, c'mon, you know, go for it=
S: =uhah@ @ @=(continues to smile)
T: =the associations one
ha@ @s with the use of garlic .. a strictly carnivorous human cou↓↓ld be offended by
the mention of any vegetation; a vampire could be offended by garlic because of its
physical deterrence from his <u>or he@ @ @r prey, or even the spe@ @lling of the</u>
<u>wo@ @rdQ Ok, well you're bein' an asshole there aren't you=</u>   = ok
S: =(uhaha@ @ @)=

KP smiles in response to FS's obvious amusement at "Garlic offends me," a smile

that FS does not see since he continues reading while looking down at the page. Some

laughter researchers consider a smile as a form of unvoiced laughter—the far end of a

spectrum that, on the opposite end has laughter so intense that speaking becomes

impossible—and KP's smile, if considered a type of laughter, could be evidence of his

alignment with FS. However, since FS did not see KP's smile, FS does not, at this point,

know if KP is willing to engage in non-serious talk about the essay. (We did not include

smiles in our coding, since the nature of writing tutorials involves much time with one or

both participants' gaze directed at an essay page and therefore prevents perception of this

interactional cue).

Signaling his amusement and appreciation of KP's choice of the word

"olfactorance", and possibly relieving tension if perhaps KP did not pick up on the play

frame, FS uses (M[1]) laughter when saying "gar@ @lic." As FS repeats "olfactorance"

and asks KP if he actually uses this word, FS looks up at KP and sees that KP is smiling.

FS may at this point realize KP's acknowledgment of a play frame, but smiling can be

misleading: people can use a smile to mask embarrassment, hostility, or other emotions.

FS, who speaks quickly and has a much lower tolerance for silence than KP, does not wait for a more elaborate response from KP than a smile, and immediately bridges the silence by beginning another question. KP, who usually pauses a bit before answering, does begin to answer with an utterance of "I," but does not attempt to take the floor and instead defers to FS's finishing the question. After KP answers "No, I seriously do use that word...I love it" he uses a long voiced (M^1) laugh and smile to show FS that while he does have "olfactorance" in his everyday vocabulary, he also does not take himself too seriously.

During the ensuing discussion in which FS teasingly suggests KP use words for "sight" and "taste" which would be as elevated in style as "olfactorance" is to smell, KP initiates three (A) instances of laughter (indicated by gray shading) to which FS responds to with Affiliative Shared laughter. Finally, FS initiates some (A) laughter in his last turn in this excerpt (indicated by underlining). The two speakers are at last aligned as evidenced in the text, and continue the tutorial through more relaxed and connected discourse.

4.4. PROBLEMS IN CODING LAUGHTER INITIATIONS

As with all paralinguistic communicative devices used by humans such as tone, prosody, facial expression, sighing, or body language, a person's laughter is unique and subject to different interpretations by different receivers. Additionally, when identifying types in something as ephemeral and unique as a person's laughter, any classification system can serve only as a guide, and not an exact description of types that will fit every

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situation or context. In this study, while all three coders agreed on the type of laughter

initiation in 147 out of 194 cases (75%), there were 47 cases in which only two coders

agreed, and four cases in which none of the coders agreed. In analyzing the distribution

of these disagreements, what emerges is that for any given tutorial, one coder does most

of the disagreeing, and it is not always the same coder who differs from the others. Table

4.2 below, for each tutorial, the number of times only two coders agree are presented

along with which coder—A, B, or C—disagreed the most and the number of

disagreements that coder had.

Table 4.2 Coder Disagreements as % of Total Initiations (I)

Tutorial / (I) total	# of disagreements = % of (I) Total	Coder = major % of disagreements
FSKP / 34	9 = 26%	A = 6 / 9 (67%)
HCCA / 27	8 = 30%	C = 6 / 8 (75%)
GJWS / 24	7 = 29%	B = 4 / 7 (57%)
ALCK / 26	6 = 23%	C = 5 / 6 (83%)
CRAM / 20	4 = 20%	C = 3 / 4 (75%)
HCPR / 14	4 = 29%	C = 3 / 4 (75%)
FSEL / 31	4 = 13%	A = 2 / 4 (50%)
ALMS / 4	3 = 75%	C = 2 / 3 (67%)
GJWB / 7	2 = 29%	B/C = 1 / 2 (50%)
CRCC / 7	0	

4.4.1 CODERS' DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF PARTICIPANTS' INITIATIONS

As Table 4.2 shows, Coder C had the highest number of disagreements in five

tutorials, Coder A in two, and Coder B in one. One likely explanation for this variation is

that I was Coder C, and in my capacity as Director of the WDC, I was familiar with the

tutors and how they interacted with students. Additionally, the student in ALCK (M/F)

was a student of mine, and had come to the WDC for an assignment in my course. My familiarity with these participants gave me an alternate perspective on their discourse, sense of humor, and style of communication, particularly in tutorials in which tutor HC was present. As Table 4.2 shows, in tutorials HCCA and HCPR, in 75% of the cases in which one coder disagreed, I was the dissenting vote. However, my familiarity with the participants only partly explains the congregations of disagreements, since much of my unconformity in coding had to do with student initiations rather than tutor initiations. For example, In HCCA, in 6 out of the 8 cases that all three coders did not agree, I was the dissenter, yet 4 of my 6 disagreements involved the students' initiation type and not the tutor's. Further evidence that my familiarity with the tutors cannot fully explain the differences in coding, is that in tutorials involving FS as a tutor, Coder A disagreed with the other two coders the most often, and in tutorials involving GJ as a tutor, Coder B disagreed 57% of the time in GJWS and 50% of the time in GJWB.

Perhaps it is safe to say that personality types—both the participants' and the coders'—are a factor. There could be differences between coders and participants in, for example, degrees of introversion and extroversion, or passivity and aggression, and whereas one coder might see a tutor with a good sense of humor, another coder might see this same tutor as sarcastic. Also, interpersonal communication is problematic, and when viewed vicariously becomes even more so. Coders experience tutorial interactions via tape recordings, and cannot always see clearly such message enhancers as eye contact or facial expression, nor can they always hear subtle auditory cues such as sighing and laughter. Further, one coder may be more perceptive than another in observing these message enhancers. As a result, much subjective interpretation of participants'

communication takes place when coding, and there are bound to be differences in the impressions coders have of participants. That the inter-rater reliability in this study was so high overall, seems surprising in light of the many factors which might cause differences in coding.

To see how differing coders' perspectives of participants' use of laughter initiations as well as problems inherent in the classification system itself, a look at the tutorials involving HC will be useful. Tutorials HCCA and HCPR involved a 22-year-old female undergraduate tutor who, in interactions with other tutors and me, showed a highly developed sense of humor. HC laughed a lot in casual conversation, and readily joked with her peers and me displaying fluency in using not only the traditional female venue of self-deprecating humor, but also in using sarcasm and irony. HC, even though still an undergraduate, had had experience tutoring writing: she had worked for several months with at-risk students in a student support services program which focused primarily on clarity of expression, and while this experience had given her a great deal of practice in identifying an essay's problems, it had offered little training in ways to mitigate critical comments. By the time the data for this study was collected, I had observed a great deal of growth in HC's tutoring skills. However, at the time the coding sessions took place, while I tended to focus on how far she had come, and how she used her sense of humor to put students at ease, Coders A and B saw quite a different picture.

Tutorial HCPR (F/M) contains one of only two examples in the data set (the other is in HCCA) of laughter initiations which any coder labeled as D^2 or Disaffliliative/Offensive laughter, and contains the most problematic discourse in the data set. There were four cases in the total data set of 194 in which none of the coders agreed,

and three of the four cases occurred in HCPR. In HCPR, HC is working with an 18-year-old male freshman on an assignment about when an individual's freedom comes in conflict with community standards, and much of the discussion focuses on the clarity of PR's arguments, and some inconsistencies in the examples he uses. The interaction is tense at times perhaps because the participants had different expectations of what the tutorial would entail. In the post-tutorial interview, when asked about whether or not his visit to the WDC was what he expected, PR replied "I thought they were just gonna be like reading my paper and saying whether it was good or not or whatever." He didn't expect to have to be much of an active participant. In HC's post-tutorial interview, she comments on PR's lack of involvement with the tutorial: "[At first] he looked like he wasn't sure what we would do..he just looked like he had kind of a blank stare when I came over to him and asked him to show me what the assignment was." HC further explained that in order to draw PR into participating, she asked a lot of questions, and eventually, "with each thing I questioned him about that he got more into it."

Occasionally HC laughed when asking questions, and this was cause for confusion among the coders. Excerpt 4.8 below is rather lengthy, but is included in its entirety to demonstrate how some initiations are ambiguous. This excerpt occurs at 16:32 minutes, nearly half way through the tutorial, and just after a lengthy discussion about including early in the essay clarification about written and unwritten laws as they affect an individual's behavior. Also, HC has commented that PR's examples sometimes don't connect to the topic sentences of his paragraphs, and some paragraphs need more examples to illustrate the topic sentence. This is a second draft for PR, and he is unenthusiastic about making additional revisions.

Excerpt 4.9 (HCPR turns 51-67)

T: Like, maybe you need to say that early on that there are basically two kinds of laws, you know? Um there are written laws and there are unwritten laws that if you stray from those unwritten laws, um, you know, you're considered not exactly in the mainstream, you know, you're like an outcast, or you're not generally accepted, or you're--you have a lot of problems, you know, don't have an easy way, you know [inaudible]. That might be something that you need to address earlier on, you know? (3 s) Don't be afraid to make changes, too. I mean, it's only gonna help your paper

[1]➔ y@ @ @ou know.=   = Um, does that make sense, though?=   =yeah.

S: =Yeah.=   =um-hm=

T: All right.=

S: ='Cause I'm planning on putting more examples in there, so [inaudible] I didn't have that in the end there=

T: =You need the foundation, you know, earlier. Yeah. OK . So we understand what's going on=   =Now (2 s) ok, "every citi[zen's free]

S: =um-hm=   [↑↓ sigh, yawn]

T: and should be able to do whatever they want as long as they obey the laws that have been set upon them." Ah↑↓(audible sigh) , all right. (2 s) See these are kind of general statements. That's the problem I have with it .. like "every citizen's free" .. well, as in

[2]➔ no slavery?...(hunh-ha)=   =That's what you, that's

S: =I gue::ss?(shrugs and smiles a bit)=

T: what needs to be clarified a little bit . every citizen's free in the sense that, you know, there's no written law that makes slavery, you know, a legal operation, right?=

S: =uh-huh=

T: =Um (2 s) "and should be able to do whatever they want as long as they obey the laws that have been set upon them." Well can they really though? without being stigmatized you know?=   =So these are things that you need to think about, ok? A little bit

S: =um-hm=

[3]➔T:more. All right, so we'll move on (hunh)"There are many individuals who can't find happiness without taking advantage of their individual rights, which in their eyes is perfectly fine, but in mine and many others it is not." Ok. "For example, individuals who sell drugs know that they are disobeying the law, but they don't care because they're only looking to benefit themselves." (4 s) ok, I don't know if he wants you to say your opinion here . like "but in mine", or I think, or whatever . um, you're giving your argument and you're giving an example for it, but I don't know if you need to say I or my or=   =ok? "individuals who sell drugs know

S: =(unclear, but smiles and nods)=

T: that they're disobeying the law, but they don't care because they are only looking to benefit themselves. Individuals also find happiness by doing things that they think are right even if others around them are strongly against them." Ok. So "can't find happiness without taking advantage of their individual rights, which in their eyes is perfectly fine." NOW think about this . Your example is selling drugs.=   =Is

S: =uh-huh=

T: that legal by the written laws?=   =No?=   =ok= =ok. So, but you said

S: =uh-uh=   =no, no= =no=

T: there are many individuals who can't find happiness without taking advantage
  [of their individual rights]

S: [of their individual rights], which, so I should, without taking advantage of, of the
  law?=

T: =but the, but it's illegal though. [Selling]

S: [Yeah but] they're taking advantage of the law if
  they're breaking it.

[4]➡T: (3 s) well, I don't know how you mean (hunh-hunh). They ARE
  breaking the law.=

S: =uh-huh. Ok, then "there are many individuals who can't find
  happiness without breaking the law."=

T: =Ok. Maybe you want to say it like that then.
  Doesn't that sound more clear?=   =ok. I don't know, maybe you want to make a

S: =uh-huh=

[5]➡T: note? (hunh) (10 s as S writes) All right. Does that make sense?

At [1]➡, all coders agreed that the tutor uses an (M^1) initiation to soften her criticism that PR needs to address written versus unwritten laws earlier in the essay. HC then asks for verification that her suggestion makes sense ("Um, does that make sense though?"), and PR responds that it does and that he plans to put in more examples. HC intensifies her suggestion through an unmitigated directive, "You need the foundation, you know, earlier. Yeah. OK. So we know what's going on." PR gives a minimal response of "um-hum" and then HC moves on to the next sentence. Frustration appears to be building in both PR and HC as PR does an audible sigh and yawns when HC continues reading, and HC does an audible sigh at the completion of PR's next sentence. HC pauses briefly, and then makes four comments pausing between each one with no backchannels from PR. When she finally asks for clarification at [2]➡,"well, as in no slavery?...(hunh-ha)," she laughs. All coders marked this as a (D^2) initiation since it followed HC's exasperated sigh and appeared to be ridiculing PR for his lack of clarity and absence of a response to her comments.

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In HC's next turn, she points out phrases that are confusing, and tells PR, "So these are things you need to think about, ok? A little bit more. All right, so we'll move on, (hunh) (^{3}➜)." Coder A commented in her notes that she couldn't tell why HC laughed, and so Coder A marked the initiation as Unclear (U). Coder B felt that HC was ridiculing both PR's ambiguity and lack of response to her comments, as well as his neutral response to her laughter, and so marked this laugh as D^2 or disaffiliative laughter that is offensive to the hearer. I interpreted it as M^1 laughter expressed to relieve the uncertainty, and thus tension HC felt about whether or not PR understood or accepted her comments since he offered no feedback.

HC then moves through more of PR's essay, and comes to another sentence that is unclear to her. She asks PR, "NOW think about this . Your example is selling drugs." She then tries to get PR to see where the confusion lies, and he twice interrupts her. Finally, in ^{4}➜, HC says, "well, I don't know what you mean (hunh-hunh)." All coders were in agreement that this was a (D^1) initiation, or disaffiliative laughter due to not understanding the speaker's comment. However, within the next four turns, once again HC laughs and none of the coders can agree why. PR comes up with a statement that is acceptable to HC, but he doesn't make an effort to write it down perhaps because he thinks he'll remember it. HC asks PR if the sentence is "more clear" and he agrees. HC then says, "ok. I don't know . maybe you want to make a note? (hunh)." Coder A again felt that this laugh was placed oddly and was unsure of the purpose and marked it (U). Coder B found it to be offensive, (D^2), and was an attempt to prod PR into making note of the statement. I thought it was (M^1) and designed to augment her use of the word

"maybe" as part of a politeness strategy to mitigate her directive that he make a note of the sentence.

In the post-tutorial interviews, summative comments about HCPR were revealing about the impressions the participants made on the coders. Coder A commented that "This conference seems very awkward and uncomfortable. The tutor laughs first nearly all the time, but I can't figure out why. It seems unpleasant, but I can't pinpoint why. The student rarely responds to the tutor's laughter, perhaps because he doesn't know how to read what she means." Coder B makes a similar observation: "The tutor is not graceful in her criticisms of the student's paper and laughs at odd times and in what seems to me to be a somewhat derisive manner. At least, that's the cumulative impression…[the student] seems ill at ease for most of the discussion. I'm not sure he knows what to make of the tutor either. He's not very responsive." My own impression was quite different, and was heavily influenced by my prior knowledge of HC. In casual conversation with HC, I noticed that she is very connected verbally to whomever she talks: she uses lots of backchannels and tag questions, and I think reads people quite well. In HCPR, PR often gives no response, and at times is obviously bored. I thought the awkwardness of periods of no verbal reciprocity from PR made HC anxious, and her laughter was a way to relieve her own tension.

My familiarity with HC could account for my 75% of the number of initiation coding disagreements in HCPR, but it would not account for my 75% (6 of 8) of the initiation coding disagreements in HCCA (F/F): 4 of my 6 disagreements involved the students' initiation type and not the tutor's. In all of these four cases, both Coders A and B thought that the student's initiations were (M[1]), and I thought that three were (A) and

one was (M^2). In HCCA, CA, a female student just shy of her 19th birthday, brings a draft of an assignment which was to write a research paper on a topic of the student's choice. CA chose to write about Sydney, Australia, because she wanted to go there someday. What all three coders observed about CA was that though she smiled a lot and talked readily about her paper, she seemed to have a case of the nervous giggles. There were 27 instances of laughter initiation in HCCA, for all of which at least two coders agreed. There were 19 instances that all three coders agreed on, and of these, 11 were initiated by the student and were coded as (M^1) laughter—laughter to relieve the student's tension. However, as the tutorial progressed, 4 were also marked as (A), as tutor and student became more affliated.

Excerpt 4.10, which occurs about 23 minutes into a 27:39 minute tutorial, contains four laughter initiations, on the latter two of which I did not agree with Coders A and B. As part of her research, CA has interviewed a travel agent, and much of the essay involves descriptions of restaurants, museums, and beaches at the expense of the history of Sydney. So far, most of the tutorial has focused on word choice and sentence structure problems, and as HC has started referring to those as "How could you say it differently?" type of problem.

Excerpt 4.10 (HCCA turns 72-75)

```
T:                              =um::m ok, aboriginal prob'ly is big A=        [yeah]
S:                                                    =big A, [yeah]
T: I'm surprised like you don't mention more about the aborigines actually=    =I thought
S:                                                    =um-hm=
1➔T: they would be in there more, but uh::h, I guess not (hunh-ha.)          [all right]
S:                                                    (unclear).(haha[:::::ha])
T: That would be a really cool paper to=            =Um, bring it back if you write it=
S:                                    =uh-huh, right=
T: it=                =ok, "and a glass roof to cover it off," um, cover it off is a little bit
2➔S: =ok (hahaha::h)=
```

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T: like .(gestures) how could you say it differently? kind of thing=
[3]→S: =um-hm yea@ @ @h ok=
T: =uh "exotic plants throughout.. located throughout and a glass roof =   =to cover .
S: =um-hm=
T: even"(eye contact) = or "and a glass roof" period ↓nha=   =ok, uh "to relax, sit back,
[4]→S: =↓nhaha=   =Yeah, ok=
T: and enjoy the scenery Manly and Bondi are the most famous beaches of the city." ok

At [1]→, HC does one of two (D^2) initiations in the data set (the other is discussed

above in HCPR) after commenting on CA's failure to include more about the aborigines.

All coders agreed that this laughter was disaffiliative and caused the student

embarrassment, although we were not sure what CA said immediately afterward and

before she joined in the laughter. One of us thought CA said, "Sorry," and another

thought she said, "Next time," and the third was unsure. However, we did agree CA's

tone was apologetic in nature and her response laugh indicated embarrassment. HC

appears to be affected by CA's embarrassment, and makes a repair by acknowledging

CA's writing ability in giving advance approval of a paper should CA decide to write it.

At [2]→, CA does what all coders agreed is an (A) laugh and shows that she is aligned with

HC.

HC then jumps to the next place in the essay that she had underlined during her

initial read-through. As she searches for the words to describe what the problem is with

"and a glass roof to cover it off," she makes a face by puffing out her cheeks, and

gestures with a side-to-side body motion before calling up the phrase "how could you say

it differently? kind of thing." At [3]→, CA initiates what Coders A and B labeled an (M^1)

laugh because they felt CA was anxious about her word choice. I labeled this instance an

(A) laugh, because I thought CA was laughing in support of HC's predicament of being

at a loss for words and using humorous body language to express herself.

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HC then offers an alternative phrasing, "exotic plants throughout..located throughout and a glass roof" at which point CA indicated alignment by saying, "um-hm." HC finishes with, "to cover" then begins to offer yet another suggestion, "even" and looks up to make eye-contact with CA who at this point laughs. Coders A and B interpreted this as an (M[1]) initiation, while I thought CA was supporting HC's suggestion and thus labeled it an (A) interpretation.

Even after allowing that the majority of my disagreements in HCCA were with the coding of the student's initiations rather than the tutor's, and thus perhaps bringing less credence to the argument that my familiarity with the participant affected my perception, the argument could still be made that my familiarity with the *tutor* colored my perceptions of the student's initiations. For example, at [3]➔ in Excerpt 4.10 above, after HC describes CA's wordiness as a "how could you say it differently? kind of thing," perhaps my appreciation of HC's paralinguistic delivery cues of humorous comments in casual conversation made me place more emphasis on her use of body gesture as she made her remark. Since I believed the remark to be intended as humorous, I may have interpreted CA's laughter as (A) and thus supportive of HC's humor, while Coders A and B, who, like CA had only this one tutorial in which to formulate an opinion of HC's personality, saw CA's laughter as indicative of nervousness. Indeed, in their coding session notes, both coders commented that CA seemed nervous. Coder A commented that "The student laughed nervously throughout...The tutor didn't seem to respond to many instances of the student's nervous laughter" Coder B said, "The student seems to laugh nervously most of the way through and seems very uncomfortable...The tutor is not very smooth and doesn't seem very comfortable giving criticism." Indeed, the student did

seem nervous: 11 of the 19 initiations we agreed upon were coded as (M^1) laughter in which the student reveals her nervousness.

4.4.2. PROBLEMS IN DEFINING CODING CATEGORIES

However, even though my familiarity with the tutor may have affected my perception in some of the instances of disagreement, not all instances of disagreement were a result of my coding. Of the 47 cases in which two, but not all three coders agreed, the dissenting vote was by Coder C in 25 cases, by Coder A in 14 cases, and by Coder B in 8 cases. The disagreements involved students in 22 cases and tutors in 25 cases, and there were some patterns in distinguishing which types of initiations tended to be problematic. In Table 4.3, these patterns are shown.

Table 4.3 Student Initiation Disagreement Types

2 Coders Agree	3rd Coder	Coder/ # of disagreements
M^1	A	A/5, B/1, C/4 =10
A	M^1	A/1, B/1, C/5 =7
M^1	M^2	A/1, B/1, C/2 =4
A	D	A/0, B/0, C/1 =1

In student initiations, there were two types of situations that accounted for 17 of the 22 disagreements. In the more prevalent situation, 10 instances occurred in which two coders assigned an (M^1), and one coder assigned an (A). Coder A dissented in 5 of the 10 cases, Coder C in 4, and Coder B in one. In the other situation, 7 instances occurred in which two coders assigned an (A), and the third coder assigned an (M^1). Coder C accounted for 5 of these dissentions, and Coders A and B each accounted for one. In

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HCCA, there were two instances in which Coder A disagreed with Coder B and me, and rather than demonstrating a pattern of a particular coder's perception of a participant, these examples are more demonstrative of problems in which examples don't fit neatly into one category or another.

Excerpt 4.11 below, also from HCCA (F/F), demonstrates one such problem with initiations that may fit into one or more categories. HC and CA are a little over a minute into the tutorial, and after HC has asked CA about the essay topic—Sydney, Australia— HC then gives CA the pink WDC Information sheet to fill out while HC reads the essay. There is some (M^1) laughter on CA's part as HC gives her the form to fill out, and then there is a several minutes' pause as HC silently reads CA's paper and makes marks on it.

Excerpt 4.11 (HCCA turns 13-16)

```
T: right All right, Sydney, Australia. Did you, did they give you . the pink sheet?= =Here
S:                                                                      =no=
T: you can fill this out [while] I'm doing this so you don't feel=       =left out=   =haha=
S:                       [Ok]                              =ok hunh=        =hunh=
T: (5 s) Is this a first draft . too?=      = Can I write?=
S:                              =yeah=              =yeah, go right ahead. (7m 35s reads)
T: Scenerenery      (smiles)  scen ::ery @ @..@ @...        [ ahahahah]
¹➔S:        Yeah (V. LAUGH)        ☺it was getting' late [last night]☺ [haha]haha
T: (56 s reads) Oh yeah=(marks on paper)=I thought so..(raises eyebrows and tilts head)
²➔S:                    =hunha=
T: they had to be there in Aus[tralia]
³➔S:                           [yeah]ahaha=
```

Students usually exhibit either nervousness or boredom by fidgeting or yawning as tutor's make silent judgments about the essay, and CA was no exception as she followed HC's gaze down the essay. When HC comes to the misspelling of scenery— "scenerenery"—and says it aloud, CA laughs a bit anxiously at ¹➔. We all coded this as (M^1) since CA was relieving her anxiety as well as the tension the silence had produced. HC responds to the initiation by smiling affiliatively and accepting the invitation to

laugh. CA then offers in a smiley voice, "it was getting late last night," and HC's

laughter continues.

After another silence of 56 seconds, HC says, "Oh yeah," and scratches out a

word that she had just written. CA does what we all agreed was an (M^1) initiation

because HC decides CA's original text was fine. HC does not share vocally or verbally in

CA's laughter, but does tilt her head and raise her eyebrow in a playful manner as she

says, "I thought so..they had to be there in Australia." In later examining the photocopy

of the essay, what HC had written and then crossed out was the word "shark" after the

sentence "Here, visitors can get a true hands-on experience of sea urchins, shore crabs,

and many other living creatures." When, in the next sentence HC discovers CA mentions

sharks, HC goes back and crosses out "sharks."

At [3]➡, CA does what Coder B and I thought to be an (M^1) initiation, but Coder A

thought to be an (A) initiation, and in this case a rationale could be made for either

decision. Although CA's gaze is directed toward the essay on the table, she is reading it

upside down, and viewers of the videotape can't be sure she can read what HC has

written in cursive and then crossed out. CA's laugh could be tension relieving for herself

because even though she may not know what HC thought the problem was, HC decided it

wasn't a problem. On the other hand, CA's laugh could be seen as (A) and supportive of

HC's humorous gestures to mitigate her error in thinking CA doesn't mention sharks, a

widely-known inhabitant of Australian seas.

In coding tutor's initiations, similar disagreements arose although rather than

problems with differentiating between (M^1) and (A) laughter, there were more problems

differentiating between (M^1) and (M^2) or between (A) and (M^2) laughter. Students rarely

used (M^2) laughter since their roles were not to make tutors comfortable. Tutors, on the other hand, were more concerned with making students feel at ease and both (A) and (M^2) could achieve this purpose. There were differences in our definitions of the purpose of (A) and (M^2) laughter. The first, (A), is laughter that supports prior speaker's utterance or action, and the second, (M^2), is laughter used to relieve the tension of the other person, but both types could help in aligning participants.

4.5. CONCLUSION

The data in this study revealed that students initiate the most laughter (72%) and that their primary purpose in doing so is to relieve tension that arises from face-threatening situations such as having to reveal a lack of knowledge or discussing a draft which the classroom instructor had heavily criticized. Tutors, though initiating far fewer instances of laughter, also used primarily (M^1) laughter as they also had moments of anxiety in the course of having to formulate helpful suggestions while delivering critical comments. Though to a lesser degree, both students and tutors used (A) laughter to show support for the other person; however, students used (A) laughter four times as often as tutors. Tutors were the only ones to use laughter that relieved tension for the other person, (M^2), and while they did not use it often, it did constitute 22% of tutor initiations.

This data supports other research in institutional interaction that shows the participant with the most power initiates less laughter than does the other person.

CHAPTER 5: RESPONSES

In this chapter, the ways in which tutors and students respond to laughter are examined. Exemplars of these responses are drawn from transcripts of tutorials, and discussion is triangulated through participants' post-tutorial interviews as well as through observations taken from the coders' notes.

5.1. WHAT COUNTS AS A RESPONSE?

In Chapter 4, the question of "Who initiated the laughter?" was shown to be complex and dependent on whether "initiation" was defined as "introducing a laughable" such as when a current speaker uses laughter to cue as a laughable what he or she is saying, or as "volunteering laughter upon recognition of a laughable" such as when the hearer laughs before current speaker laughs. As a consequence of how researchers define initiations, definitions of what counts as responses vary. Jefferson ("Technique"), and then later West use an operational either/or approach to defining a response to an invitation to laugh based on whether or not a hearer accepts or declines the invitation. In accepting an invitation, according to Jefferson, the hearer laughs, and in declining an invitation, the hearer does not laugh but rather "talks over the ongoing production of laughter" by the speaker (qtd. in West 123). Jefferson does allow that not all laughter invites more laughter, and as discussed in Section 5.2.2 below (Neutral Responses: What do They Indicate?), there are some situations in which simplistic definitions as to what constitutes an appropriate response are problematic.

Adelswärd in studies of Swedish institutional interactions, Haakana in studies of doctor-patient interaction, and Glenn (*Laughter*) in studies of the sequential organization of laughter in interaction demonstrate that responses to laughter include much more than the presence or absence of shared laughter, and increasingly, expanded definitions of responses take into account not only the semantics of initiations, but also the complexity of communicative tools interlocutors have at their disposal to indicate their reaction. Incorporating these expanded definitions into the present study, responses to laughter (R Types) were defined as verbal and non-verbal utterances, or gestures such as smiles or body movements which occurred immediately after or in close proximity to laughter initiation, and which indicated that laughter had somehow affected the hearer. We looked and listened for affiliative response indicators in the hearer such as reciprocal laughter or laughter particles, partial or full smiles, winking, nodding of the head, verbal indicators of alignment in the subsequent discourse, shoulder shaking, tilting the head either forward or backward, or other signs that the laugh somehow resulted in a positive emotional state and had bridged the distance between participants. We also looked and listened for disaffiliative response indicators in the hearer such as no laugh in a conversational slot where laughter would be expected, facial expressions such as sneers or looks of embarrassment, verbal indicators of misalignment in the subsequent discourse, body language such as crossing the arms and moving away from the laugher, or other signs that the laugh somehow had resulted in a negative emotional state and had created distance between the participants.

5.2. DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TYPES

In Chapter 3, the global data on laughter Response Types (R Types) revealed that among the nine R Types along the continuum from affiliative to disaffliative responses derived from the norming sessions, only six types appeared in the final data set, and with the exception of one instance of a Disaffiliative/No Laugh response, all responses were either Affiliative or Neutral. No examples were coded as Disaffliative/Verbal, Disaffliative/Non-Verbal, or Disaffiliative/Delayed laughter.

Also shown in Chapter 3, students initiate 72% of the laughter, and therefore tutor responses account for 72 % of the total number of responses. As with initiations, only a few (R) Types account for the majority of responses. Both tutors and students use Neutral (N) as the most frequent R Type (T=59%, S=44%), and Affiliative/Shared (A/S)—laughter in response to laughter—as the second most frequent R Type (T=17%, S=35%). Interestingly, looked at another way, student (A/S) responses outnumber tutor (A/S) responses 2:1.

For tutors, responses that do not include laughter, but which indicate alignment through words or gestures, are the third and fourth most common responses: in third place, Affiliative/Verbal (A/V) responses account for 11% of all tutor responses, and in fourth place, Affiliative Non-Verbal (A/NV) responses account for 7% of all tutor responses. For students, these latter responses are reversed in frequency: (A/NV) responses are the third most frequent, accounting for 14% of responses, and (A/V) responses are the fourth most frequent, accounting for 7% of the total student responses. Of the remaining R types—Affliative/Delayed (A/D) and Disaffliative/No Laugh

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(D/NL)—only tutors use these types and no more than 1% of the responses are of either type. This chapter will focus on the major (R) types encountered.

Although (N) responses are the most prevalent, they are also the most complicated to interpret. Since affiliative (R) Types—(A/S), (A/V), (A/D)and (A/NV)—are more straightforward, they will be discussed first, and then two types of (N) responses—those that show alignment and those that show disaffiliation—will be discussed.

5.2.1. AFFLIATIVE RESPONSES: RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO LAUGHTER

In this study, affiliative responses to laughter initiations—responses that bring participants closer together—were classified as follows: shared laughter (A/S), verbal indicators of alignment (A/V), or non-verbal alignment gestures (A/NV). Any of these can occur simultaneously with the initiation, immediately following the initiation, or delayed somewhat after the initiation (A/D). These ware not mutually exclusive categories: a responder might laugh, smile, and say something all in one response. When more than one response indicator occurred simultaneously, we coded each indicator, but for simplicity in calculating the number of responses, the indicators were assigned value hierarchically with shared laughter in the primary slot, and then verbal and non-verbal responses in the secondary and tertiary slots respectively. For example, if a response was coded as (A/S) as well as (A/NV), in the final calculations, it was counted as (A/S) laughter.

Totals of all affiliative (R) Types for tutors and students show that tutors respond

affiliatively 36% of the time, and students respond affiliatively 56% of the time. While these numbers reflect relatively the same inherent power relationship between participants as in other institutional discourse (lay participants support the professional participants' laughter more than the reverse), these numbers show less of a difference between the two. In this data sample, tutors respond affiliatively at a higher rate than in other institutional situations, and students respond affiliatively at a lower rate than in other institutional situations.

What then, as compared to other types of institutional interaction, might be different about writing tutorials that would result in more affiliative responses by tutors and fewer by students? One possible explanation might be that while as Haakana (*Laughing*) observed, doctors tend to desire, maintain, and even *increase* professional distance by *not* initiating or responding to laughter, tutors use laughter to *decrease* professional distance, to put students at ease, and to create a more collaborative atmosphere. Tutorial GJWS demonstrates such interactional dynamics.

Of all tutorials in the data set, GJWS contains by far the highest percentage of affliative laughter responses: tutor GJ has a 76% affiliative response rate, and WS has a 91% affiliative response rate. Further, GJ and WS are the most connected participants in terms of eye contact, physical proximity, and discourse. Finally, they often construct shared laughter sequences to negotiate their way through what could be problematic discourse. The participants are both female, but in a reversal of traditional roles, the student is older, by 23 years, than the tutor. This situation could present interactional problems: if an older student needs to ask a younger tutor for advice, or if a younger tutor needs to be critical of an older student's work, awkwardness could result from these non-

traditional perspectives. However, GJ and WS manage these problematic areas using

sequentially constructed shared laughter. Two such possibly awkward moments are

discussed below.

In the following excerpt from the opening of GJWS, WS, a 47-year-old female

student is telling GJ, a 24-year-old female tutor, about her proposal for an essay on

incarcerated mothers who have small children on the outside. WS is explaining that her

essay would have been more developed, but that the previous night a germane TV

documentary, *Prison with Secrets*, was broadcast. Not having a fully articulated draft is

embarrassing to WS, and she offers the rationale that she felt it would be better to watch

the show and take notes than it would be to work on the proposal.

Excerpt 5.1 (GJWS turns 9-12)

```
S                                                            and then last night
   on tv, and I wanted to ask um, our teacher this, we have a la:st paper,=        =it has
T:                                                            =um-hm=
S:  to be um, she's having us turn in a proposal on what we'd like to do for our last paper
    and I wanted to go into the Internet and find information on this=       =topic, but last
T:                                                            =um-hm=
S:  night on tv there was a movie called um.. prison with secrets=       [excellent movie]
T:                                                            =hmm [no, I never heard]
    of it. RE::ALLY?=
¹➜S:                    =excellent, and I'm going, ☺I started working on this last ni@ @ght
    and I thought no, I can't [do this,]  I have to sit down and take [notes on this]
²➜T:                    [V.LAUGH]                    [V.LAUGH]
S:  movie, so I'm gonna see if she'll let me do a paper☺.=       =on like a movie review
T:                                                            =YEAH=
T:  that could be interesting=                    =YEAH especially too, you could
S:                    =yeah, it was a good movie=
T:  probably compare like, maybe how realistic . the movie was compared to [what the U]
S:                                                            [you know, it
    rea:lly, it really was,=       =
T:                    =um=
```

As student WS narrates the events of the previous night, GJ is an attentive listener who frequently uses backchannels, maintains eye contact, and leans toward WS thereby achieving a closer personal space.. At [1]➜, WS invites laughter by using a smiley voice and M[1] laughter within her turn: ☺"I started working on this last ni@@ght."☺ GJ mirrors WS's smile, nods affirmatively, and at [2]➜, responds twice with shared laughter signifying alignment with WS's dilemma. GJ further demonstrates her alignment with a backchannel of "YEAH." WS's admission that she not only was beginning the assignment the night before her WDC appointment, but that she opted to watch a tv show instead risks admonishment in some form from GJ; however, GJ is accepting and understanding of WS's choice and uses laughter to communicate these feelings. As noted in Chapter 1, for the recipient of troubles-telling to accept the speaker's invitation to laugh can be counterproductive, but in this case, GJ's response in interpreted by GW as affiliative, and encourages WS to elaborate on her idea for a paper.

GJWS continues with WS including several narratives about her visits to women's prisons and her professor's PhD work on incarcerated mothers, and GJ offers advice about how to organize the experiences to expand WS's early proposal draft. About five minutes before GJWS concludes, a situation arises which could result in misalignment: WS questions GJ's advice. The situation involves potential awkwardness on both GJ's and WS's part: student WS must reject the advice of the tutor, and tutor GJ must defer to WS's invocation of a higher source of authority, a many-times published department head for whom she had previously worked:

Excerpt 5.2 (GJWS turns 112-118)

T: YEAH, so far I think you
     have a good start on it=   =U:m just to caution you to make
S: =ok good. good good good=
T: sure you just indent that there .=
S: =Now, is that, is that . are you sure?.about that?=
T: =well
     if she wants an essay form everything [should be]   [Indented five
S: [It's essay essay] form? is it [the first one?]
T: spaces [yup]
¹➔S: [ok] because I don't think I I really don't think I did my other papers, I think I
     did them all THAT way=   But you know what?=   =um, my my department
²➔T: =Oh realLY?=   =Hm=
³➔S: head, I worked in teacher ED and um, I know HE does his stuff and then he
     has me format it for him=   =and fix it, [and THAT's where I GOT it.]=   =And so
T: =um-hm=   [and that's how it is?]   =hm=
S: I would I started indenting them, you know=   =you know and I thought well
T: =yeah=
⁴➔S: maybe, he does it every time, maybe he's correct. ☺He's got his PhD, I don't☺=
⁵➔T: =[uh-haha]   =yeah=[Well
⁶➔S: [hahaha] so maybe he does know a little bit more tha@ @ I do=.   =[I, I,I'll
T: [sometimes to like . yeah,] ask her because I know like in business letters and things,
S: [ask her. That's a good point.]
T: you don't indent, um=   =because it's just the different format for doing like
S: =oh, ok=
T: business letters or business proposals or something.=   =Um, they don't indent and
S: =um-hm=
T: they'll double space in between, so there's a extra space [in] between to signify a new
S: [oh]
T: paragraph.=   =So, maybe[just check with her,] yeah, [usually in business letters],
⁷➔S: =yeah=   [in business letters?] .   [and that's because they're]
T: =proposals and things like that. [Right] But they're they're never
S: single spaced?=   [Right]
T: indented, I know.=   =But, um I don't know and maybe if your professor says well, it
S: =oh=
⁸➔T: doesn't matter . it [doesn't matter either] [uh-hahaha]   =so=
⁹➔S: [☺OH it matters to her☺] [yes it] matters to he@ @r.=   =Ok so
     you think I'm off to an ok start?=   [Ok great.]That's what I needed to know.
T: =yeah [I think so]

     This segment demonstrates the cooperative and cordial nature with which both GJ

and WS construct their interaction and shows both participants are sensitive to the face

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needs of the other. GJ initiates the topic of indenting, and twice mitigates her concern with the downgrader "just": U:m *just* to caution you to make sure you *just* indent that there" (italics added for emphasis). At [1]➜, student WS carefully mitigates syntactically and lexically her challenge to GJ's advice to indent: "Now, is that, is that . are you sure?.about that?... because I don't think I I really don't think I did my other papers, I think I did them all THAT way." GJ expresses surprise, ([2]➜ "oh realLY?") and uses rising intonation to signal a genuine question rather than a disagreement disguised as a question. GJ listens, maintains eye contact, and nods in understanding as WS explains. Again avoiding a direct challenge to GJ's authority, WS brings in the authority of her former boss ([3]➜) and explains he is the reason she has this idea: "and THAT's where I GOT it." Then at [4]➜, in a smiley voice that signals a play frame and invites laughter, WS further relates that "☺He's got his PhD, I don't☺." GJ accepts the invitation to laugh at [5]➜, and WS responds at [6]➜ with shared, affiliative laughter that signals both participants are in alignment.

The discussion continues with GJ explaining that indeed business letters use a format of not indenting, and at [7]➜, the interaction digresses from the "one speaker at a time" rule as WS tries to interrupt GJ twice, but GJ retains the floor. At [8]➜, GJ offers a way to end the debate about which format to follow by suggesting WS ask her teacher if it matters one way or the other. Overlapping GJ's statement at [9]➜, WS says in a smiley voice, "OH it matters to her" once again inviting GJ to laugh. GJ accepts, alignment is restored, and a topic boundary created so that the interaction can move on.

WS's last invitation to laugh (☺"OH it matters to her"☺), GJ's acceptance of the invitation, and WS's subsequent (A/S) response show the sequential, cooperative effort

that is required for participants to arrive at shared laughter. In and of itself, the comment "OH, it matters to her," is not funny: what matters to a professor is serious business since the professor has the power to issue a grade. However, through communicative devices such as intonation and prosody, interlocutors are able to shift the frame of comments and take them from a serious frame to a playful or ironic frame, and invite others to do the same. In responding through shared laughter, participants are able to smooth over difficulties.

Shared laughter has other functions as well, as Excerpt 5.3 shows. In the following exchange from CRAM, 34-year-old male tutor CR and 22-year-old male student AM have been exchanging laughter throughout a relatively long diagnostic phase (6 min 44 sec). As Adelswärd notes, laughter often occurs during the transitions between phases, and she describes, "laughter has a discourse-structural function, and establishes joint meanings such as 'let's take a break' and 'we are now starting to round off an old topic'" (Adelswärd and Öberg 427). As CR and AM move from the diagnosis phase to the directive phase, much affiliative laughter takes place. The tutorial thus far had focused on AM's concern about the organization of his paper, and AM has been discussing his professor's use of "the outline technique" for composing.

Excerpt 5.3 (CRAM turns 39-53)

```
T: =I ask that because outlines work really well for some people and not at all for other
      people. Different people set up papers or ideas=          =in their mind in different
S:                                                    =um-hum=
1➔T: ways=    = so if that's a technique that works well for you..GREAT=    [terriffic]
S:          =yeah=                                                  =oh yeah [yes] I
      like it I mean you know I can I can keep things organized group you know like as far as
2➔in groups in this one go there an (unclear) won't go where two's are or thi@ @ngs like
      that=          = I know what you're saying though=
3➔T:=um-hum=                                    =um-hum..Uh, where are you from?=
S: =From Detroit Michigan=                                      =oh, I been
```

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T: =ok, you got a cool accent, an interesting accent=
S: all over (uh ha[hah])=   =yeah..down south all over=
[4]➜T: [have] you really?= (starts to reach for essay)   =I'm I'm happen to be
   from Austin Texas=   =and I [I use] to have a=
S: =Austin Texas=   [aw, I]   =I know you hate the weather
S: here now=
T: =(e[hahahaha]) It's taken a long it's taken some getting used to, I do like that sun=
[5]➜S: [uh he he he he he huh]   [uh:::::h ha ha]
     =yeah=   =January, I know you hate it=
T: =but a   =aww man, it gets so grey up here=
S: =yeah
   uh=huh=
[6]➜T: =<oh god>..so I've lost my accent but I [do I do miss] Texas and the South .Ok
S: [uh hahaha]
T: so is this a final draft to be turned in?   =are you gonna revise this
S: um:m actually um:m..
T: more?=
S: =that's yeah, uh I want to revise it I'm trying to, you know=.. [Iwrote]
T: =ok [you're]
[7]➜S: that paper for you to see.(uh ha ha ha)=   =yeah I had an
T: = I feel privileged..huh↓↓=
S: appointment so and then I mean then then I can turn it in to her=
T: =Well, let's look at it
   together….

CR tries to close the topic at [1]➜, with a summative "so if that's a technique that

works well for you..GREAT." AM backchannels with "oh yeah," and CR does not begin

a new topic, but rather utters another turn-completion unit: "terrific." However, AM is

not quite ready to close the topic, and overlaps CR's "terrific" with "yes I like it… ." At

[2]➜, laughter embedded in "thi@@ngs" was coded by all three coders as M[1] laughter,

and while this could be interpreted as laughter which relieves AM's struggle to articulate

the usefulness of outlines to him, a more likely explanation based on subsequent

discourse ("I know what you're saying though"). At [3]➜, CR does not respond with

affiliative laughter, but rather gives a neutral response in the form of an "um-hm"

backchannel. After AM's final turn, CR changes the topic.

Between [3]→ and [4]→, CR engages AM in some transitional small talk about where AM is from, and at [4]→, CR begins to reach for the essay which is on the table, but stops this physical gesture of initiating shutting down the topic when AM says, "yeah..down south all over." CR realizes he shares in common with AM the south and begins a small narrative about his own origins in Texas. At [5]→, AM joins CR in robust shared laughter, and they are able in Coser's words, to "come close" for a few exchanges.

At [6]→, CR begins to summarize and close the topic by beginning his turn with "so." He shows that it has been some time since he left the south ("so I've lost my accent"), and AM shows alignment with an (A) initiation. However, rather than closing the topic by responding with shared laughter, CR closes the topic with a final comment that he does miss the south—a comment that shows he values the part of the country that AM has visited.

At [7]→, AM provides a candidate for a laughable, "I wrote that paper for you to see.(uh ha ha ha), and CR reacts with a complex verbal, prosodic, and delayed affiliative response: "I feel privileged..huh↓↓." Both participants then transition from the diagnostic to the directive phase of the tutorial. By careful co-construction of laughter sequences, participants are able to smoothly move from one topic to another.

5.2.2. NEUTRAL RESPONSES: WHAT DO THEY INDICATE?

Rather than a great number of any one distinct response indicator, or combination of response indicators whether linguistic or paralinguistic, by far the most common participant behavior observed in this data in response to laughter was a Neutral (N)

response or actually a lack of *any* response indicator. On the surface, this frequent lack of response may seem to indicate that participants at times interact through parallel rather than connected discourse with the hearer seemingly oblivious to the laugher's communication whereas both Affiliative (A) and Disaffiliative (D) R Types indicate connectedness: through (A), hearers indicate by joining in the laughter that they share the laugher's philosophical or emotional state of mind, and through (D), hearers show that offense has been taken as a result of the laughter. However, with an (N) response, the hearer's state of mind is not clearly communicated, and the speaker/laugher doesn't know whether or not the laughter was heard, whether or not the responder is offended by the laugh but is too polite to indicate such an emotion, or whether or not the responder wishes to share the laugh, but feels to do so would be inappropriate in an institutional setting. Indeed, many scenarios are possible in which the hearer does not react; however, while the hearer may not respond with affiliative laughter, some of these (N) responses are made for affiliative reasons, and while the hearer does not respond with *dis*affiliative laughter, some (N) responses can be made for or result in disaffiliation.

That the majority (59%) of tutor responses are (N) is not surprising in light of other studies of institutional discourse which show that the professional participant is less likely to respond to the lay person's laughter while the layperson frequently responds affiliatively to both the professional's laughter invitations as well as to physician's volunteered laughter. West, in her study of laughter in medical encounters, finds that "The 'success rate' for doctor's invitations…is better than that of patients': Physicians' invitations were accepted in two of the nine instances in which they were initiated, whereas patient's invitations to laugh 'succeeded' on only four of the 66 total occasions

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they were issued" (127). However, how the figure of 59% in my data compares to other types of institutional discourse is debatable. On the one hand, an (N) response rate of 59% for tutors in writing tutorials can seem low when compared to other types of discourse in institutional settings. For example, when compared to doctor-patient interaction in which the doctor is allowed close physical proximity to patients, tutors maintain a wider personal space between themselves and students and therefore may not be as perceptive to laughter invitations. A doctor, while examining a patient, would be attentive to a patient's visual or auditory cues or body language that might indicate laughter since the focus of the visit is on the patient's physical and often emotional well-being. Granted doctors do not always maintain eye contact with patients while doing such routine professional activities as examining ears, listening to heartbeats, or recording notes, but for the most part, the doctor's focus is on the patient and not on an object between them. However, tutoring by nature requires tutors to frequently and for long stretches of time direct their gaze downward to a text which they must comprehend, and this focus-on-object lessens their attentiveness to laughter cues from students, and would seem to create situations in which tutors are less apt to give either affiliative or disaffiliative responses.

On the other hand, the number of (N) responses by tutors may seem on the surface high since in writing center theory, due to the collaborative nature of the discourse, the power differential between the tutor and student should be less than between a doctor and patient. That sharing of power is central to writing center theory and praxis is evident in the Call for Papers from the 23rd National Conference on Peer Tutoring: Negotiating Authority in the Writing Center (2006):

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As trainees in the writing center, peer tutors are initiated into a specialized practice designed to identify and, in some cases, resist exercises of power and authority in the academy. Many have been selected to become tutors because of excellent writing skills, and have long played the role of editor and expert in their classrooms and with their friends. But in the course of training, these same students are advised to subordinate such skills to the authority of the writer and learn to think of themselves as collaborator, facilitator, guide, or to balance "minimalist" with more "directive" techniques. ("Call for Papers")

However, overall in this study, tutors give responses other than (N) in 41% of the cases: tutors *are* responsive to student laughter only 9% less than half the time. Clearly, tutorials show somewhat more of a collaborative effort on the part of the tutor in the sequential structuring of laughter than do the higher status participants in other types of institutional discourse.

Similar to the ways in which tutor responses differ from professionals' responses in other institutional interactions, student (N) responses also differ slightly from what the literature shows about lay persons supporting the laughter of professionals: student (N) responses outnumber affiliative responses. While student (N) responses *do* account for a lesser percentage (44%) of their total responses than do tutor (N) responses (59%), students and tutors differ only by 15%. In line with other research on laughter in institutional discourse, the participants with lesser power—students—*initiate* the most laughter (72%), but when they *respond* to the initiations of tutors, they are not as supportive of tutors' laughter as might be expected. Of the total 194 laughter responses in

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the data set, students made 54, and while this small number precludes making any substantial generalizations about student responses, some patterns did emerge.

In this data set, (N) responses tend to occur following some Initiation types more than others. Table 5.1 shows how tutors' (N) responses, in the shaded columns, occur in relation to the three most frequent student Initiation Types: (A), (M^1), and (U). Table 5.2 shows how students' (N) responses, in the shaded columns, occur in relation to the three most frequent tutors Initiation Types: (A), (M^1), and (M^2). Following a general discussion of Tables 5.1 and 5.2, exemplars of flavors of (N) responses will be presented.

Table 5.1: Distribution of Tutor (N) Responses in Relation to Number of Student (S) (I) Type

Tutorial	Total Tutor (N) Responses/ Total (R)	S=(I) Type A T=(R) Type N		S=(I) Type M^1 T=(R) Type N		S=(I) Type U T=(R) Type N	
		# S/A	# T/N	#S /M^1	# T/N	# S/U	#T/N
FSEL	21 / 29	20	16	8	5	0	0
FSKP	15 / 23	11	6	12	9	0	0
CRAM	13 / 18	6	4	12	9	0	0
HCCA	10 / 22	6	1	16	9	0	0
ALCK	8 / 16	3	1	12	6	1	1
GJWB	5 / 6	2	2	4	3	0	0
CRCC	4 / 7	1	1	6	3	0	0
GJWS	3 / 13	2	0	4	3	0	0
ALMS	1 / 3	0	0	1	1	0	0
HCPR	1 / 1	0	0	1	1	0	0

In Table 5.1, with the exception of FSEL, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, the data show that of tutors' (N) responses, most occur after student M^1 laughter—laughter that either mitigates the students' own tension, or cues hearers as to students' frame of mind. While M^1 initiations may be used to signal negative feelings such as embarrassment or those that underlie troubles-telling, M^1 initiations may also be

used to signal positive feelings such as mirth or cue the hearer that a laughable is being introduced, is in progress, or has just been completed—the laughter *invites* more laughter. In the case of troubles-telling, an (N) response would be acceptable, but in the case of an invitation to laugh, an (N) response could be problematic feedback for the speaker.

As is shown in Table 5.1, FS is the tutor in two tutorials: FSEL (M/F) and FSKP (M/M). Students EL and KP initiate the highest numbers of (A) laughter, 20 and 11 initiations respectively. Female student EL's (A) initiations are met by FS's (N) response 75% of the time while male student KP's (A) initiations are met with FS's (N) laughter about 50% of the time. FS's tutoring style includes frequent attempts at humor, and both EL and KP support FS's humor. However, EL, according to Coder A, laughs a lot, but "never seems like she finds anything truly funny" and "her laughter is frequently very short," and perhaps this is why FS does not share or extend EL's laughter as much as he does KP's. In FSKP, conversely, according to Coder A, "T and S are sort of teasing each other. They seem to grow a lot more comfortable as time goes on, and the amount of laughter seems to reflect this." FS shares more of KP's laughter than in FSEL. (Tutorials involving FS will be elaborated upon later in this chapter.)

For the remainder of the tutorials in Table 5.1, the results are fairly consistent and show that students initiate more (M^1) laughter than they do (A), and that tutors give (N) responses more often in relation to (M^1) initiations than they do to (A) initiations. Further, the proportions, though not the numbers of (N) responses in relation to (A) and (M^1) initiations are fairly consistent from tutorial to tutorial.

Table 5.2 shows student (N) responses in relation to tutor (I) Types, and perhaps most visually stunning in the table is the numbers of zeros—the result of the high

percentage of student *initiations* and therefore the low numbers of student responses. Of

the total 54 student responses in the data set, 24 are (N), with the following distribution:

there are a total of 14 tutor (A) initiations with a total of 6 student (N) responses, and a

total of 15 tutor (M^1) responses with a total of 9 student (N) responses, and most of this

data comes from 5 tutorials. The remaining 9 responses are spread throughout M^2, D^1, D^2,

U, and (I) Types in which coders could not agree.

Table 5.2 Distribution of Student (N) Responses in Relation to Number of Tutor (T)
(I) Type

Tutorial	Total Student (N) Responses/ Total (R)	T= (I) Type A S= (R) Type N		T= (I) Type M^1 S= (R) Type N		T= (I) Type M^2 S= (R) Type N	
		# T/A	# S/N	#T/M^1	# S/N	# T/M^2	#S/N
HCPR*	12 / 13	0	0	6	5	0	0
ALCK	6 / 10	4	3	1	1	5	2
HCCA	2 / 5	2	2	0	0	0	0
FSKP	2 / 11	2	0	7	2	0	0
GJWB	1 / 1	0	0	1	1	0	0
GJWS	1 / 11	6	1	0	0	0	0
CRAM	0 / 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
ALMS	0 / 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
FSEL	0 / 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRCC	0 / 0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*HCPR also included the following (I) Types and N responses: 1 T/D^1 with 1 S/N;
1 T/ D^2 with 1 S/N; 2 T/U with 2 S/N, and 3 cases in which two coders did not agree on
the (I) Type with 3 S/N.

5.2.2.1 Neutral Responses that Show Alignment

When a speaker invites laughter, the desired response is usually for the hearer to

join in and share the laughter. However, there are circumstances in which reciprocal

laughter is not desired, and to laugh would even be cause for misalignment. For example,

if a student makes a self-deprecating comment and initiates laughter, for the tutor to laugh could imply that s/he agrees with the student's negative self-assessment. In this case, for the tutor to *not* respond is *more* affiliative than sharing the laughter. Jefferson notes that in "troubles-telling," a "recurrent phenomenon was found: A troubles-teller produces an utterance and then laughs, and the troubles-recipient does not laugh, but produces a recognizably serious response" ("Organization" 346), and that this "seems to run directly counter to a procedure whereby a recipient displays affiliation with a prior speaker" (348). Jefferson argues that by laughing, the troubles-teller is showing that things are not so bad:

> He is exhibiting that, although there is this trouble, it is not getting the better of him; he is managing; he is in good spirits and in a position to take the trouble lightly. He is exhibiting what we might call troubles-resistance. But this does not mean that…a recipient is invited to join in the merriment, to also find the thing laughable, to affiliate with a prior speaker's exhibited position on it. In troubles-talk, it appears to be a recipient's job to be taking the trouble seriously; to exhibit what we might call 'troubles-receptiveness.' (351)

Like other institutional interactions such as doctor-patient or social worker-client interviews, students who come to the WDC often discuss embarrassing topics such as their lack of writing skills, poor study habits, or lack of general knowledge about the assignment topic that brought them to the WDC. Whereas in casual conversation between friends, the troubles-recipient has discourse strategies for responding such as cajoling or light-hearted teasing to commiserate with the troubles-teller, in institutional encounters

these options are limited and risky: the hearer doesn't know the speaker well enough to predict what effect shared laughter might have. The responder, should he or she laugh, risks seeming to not take the troubles seriously or seeming not to care.

In this study, students often engage in troubles-telling, as illustrated in Excerpt 5.4 below in which a female tutor is working with a male student. Female tutor GJ, a graduate student, has been working with male student WB, a freshman, on an essay about censorship in which WB has had to argue for the opposite of what he argued for in an earlier paper. The excerpt occurs about one minute from the end of the tutorial:

Excerpt 5.4 (GJWB turns 44-46)

```
S:                                                    ..Well, see I actually I had . I had
    to write a paper FIRST on=        =my like original belief you know?=      =When
T:                          =um-hm=                                =um-hm=
S: actually I just took the same structure as the first paper and I just.. like rearranged
    every sentence.you know I got a D on that first paper=        =and I, I just
T:                                                    =um-hm=
S: rearranged everything and um changed it to the opposite view=    =you know sort of
T:                                                            =ok=
S: So, um.. but um. you know I my reasons for my OTHER point of view was to um, um
    I thought that there there SHOULD be you know LIMITED censorship on
    things like=        =you know EVERYTHING can't GO you know or uh, ah I don't
T:          =um-hm=
1➡S: know, it was huhhuh.. it was just um . I don't know (huhhuhhuh) [It's]
T:                                                              [Well] sometimes
S: THIS paper was just I I didn't really even.. uh, do a a nice job at all . on it=
T:                                                                        =Well, I
    DON'T KNOW, [I .. I ]think that you have a lot of good IDEAS in here.=          =I
2➡S:          [huhuhhuhhuh]                                    =yeah there is=
T: REALLY do.um, I don't think it's something you know to just say oh=    = this is
S:                                                                =yeah=
T. horrible=          ='cause I think you DO, you have a lot of good ideas in here
3➡S:      =huhhuh=
T: um=        =and, I me, I mean, this is really probably a VERY difficult assignment to
S:    =um-hm=
T: write=
```

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In Excerpt 5.4 above, WB admits that he has not worked very hard on this draft. This admission is doubly embarrassing for WB to bring up in front of a writing tutor, an authority on writing: not only did he receive a "D" on his first paper, but he also based a second paper on the flawed structure of the prior one. When he tries to explain his rationale for limited censorship, he gets confused and laughs at [1]➡: "you know EVERYTHING can't GO you know or uh, ah I don't know, it was (huhhuh)..it was just um . I don't know (huhhuhhuh)." Both these M[1] initiations occur while WB has the floor, and according to Glenn, "Laugh invitations tend to occur either following a turn at talk ("post-utterance completion") or while the turn is still in progress ("within-speech")" (*Laughter* 54). WB's laughter shows up both in the middle and at the end of his utterance. Hearers can either accept or decline invitations to laugh, and in the case of "troubles telling," the recipient should not laugh. GJ does not join in or share WB's laughter, and thus an (N) response occurs.

At [2]➡ and [3]➡, WB again initiates M[1] laughter, but this time the initiations are at points of possible turn completions for GJ. GJ says, "Well, I DON'T KNOW" with louder than usual volume, and though she does succeed in taking the floor to offer complimentary comments, WB interjects more laughter thereby cueing GJ as to his continued tension. GJ continues to offer encouragement ("I don't think it's something you know to just say oh, this is horrible") and WB again laughs perhaps relieved to hear that his paper does have some redeeming qualities. Again, in both cases GJ does an (N) response and reaffirms her positive opinion of WB's ideas: "I think that you have a lot of good IDEAS in here" and "'cause I think you DO, you have a lot of good ideas in here."

In the next example, a 34-year-old male tutor, CR, is working with a 22-year-old

male student, AM, on a letter to the editor assignment. Excerpt 5.5 occurs early in the

diagnosis phase.

Excerpt 5.5 (CRAM turns 28-35)

T: =sure=   =(8 s) ok (13 s) "powerful phrasing" all right . so we'll consider the
   organization and consider the connections betwe::en . your . the reason your various
   reasons in that thesis statement and justification of your opinion (5 s) ok so yo:u
   actually wrote the paper in class.=   =ok it says "you will
S: =Um::m, no no no no=
T: write this paper in class and we will discuss revision ideas. Then you will have the
   chance to revise it outside of class" Is that, that's not exactly how it happened?=
S: =no it's
   not exa@@ctly how it happened . [the] problem was um.. she got me some outline
[1]➔T: [ok]
S: to write in class so we did the outline.=
T: =Ok, was that helpful by the way?=   =Does
S: =yeah=
T: that does that [help] you?=
S: [yeah]   =I love outlines I mean I, I at first when I'm when I first
   came into her class I was having problems because I had forgot about the outline
   techniques that=   =I was taught .and um and she put it right up on the board and I
T: =um-hum=
S: remembered so I hadn't really been havin problems you know organizing not THAT
   bad [V.LAUGH] you know what I'm sayin=   =like I did before by using the
[2]➔ T: [um-hum]   =um-hum=
S: outline technique=
T: =I ask that because outlines work really well for some people and not
   at all for other people.

At both [1]➔ and [2]➔, tutor CR does not share in AM's self-mitigating laughter.

AM is somewhat embarrassed that he had forgotten how to use an outline, and his

laughter, rather than serving as an invitation to laugh, serves to let CR know that AM

realizes outlines are important and that for him to forget to use one is a failure. Self-

mitigating laughter during "troubles telling," according to Jefferson as quoted earlier in

this study, allows that speaker to show that "He is exhibiting that, although there is this

trouble, it is not getting the better of him; he is managing; he is in good spirits and in a position to take the trouble lightly. He is exhibiting what we might call 'troubles resistance'" (351). By showing his "troubles resistance," through (M[1]) laughter, AM is also helping to restore his positive face.

5.2.2.2. Neutral Responses that Are Disaffiliative

In contrast to (N) responses that result in closer alignment, (N) responses can also foster misalignment. In Chapter 4, Excerpt 4.6 from tutorial ALCK (M/F) was included to demonstrate an interactional sequence the end result of which is tutor AL's M[2] laughter—laughter designed to ease tension for the other person, and in this case, laughter which is aimed at face-restoration for CK. This sequence also demonstrates how a hearer's unresponsiveness can lead to further tension in the speaker and can result in misalignment. Excerpt 4.6 is reprinted here and relabeled here as Excerpt 5.6.

Excerpt 5.6 (ALCK turns 7-11):

S: I've never done a paper like that..sophomore in college. When I was in high school, I
    was always in AP English, college essay research, so like I got As and Bs and now I'm
    like first English class I'm gettin' C minuses, I was like (tilts head, smiles, and uses
   [1]➔sarcastic tone)   "O:OOOH, a lot that,=   =uh, high school helped me."=
T:(unwrapping gum and putting in mouth) =uh-huh=   =golly
S: (4 s) That's what we're s'posed to do=   =And this is what I came up with . just
T: =okay=
[2]➔S: TEAR it apart (palms pounding on table) so I can at least get a B on this PLEASE=
T: =All
    right (2 s) You just need to fill out here like down here for now and (unclear) just the
    first page.=
S: =Is today the 11th? Or what is today? The 13th?=
T: =That's what I'm thinkin'(asks
    another instructor) Is this the 13th? (hears reply in background.) Yeah. (7 s)
S: (reading information sheet aloud as she fills it out) I came to the Writing
    Development Center because .=

[3]➔T: =to be harrassed by my teachers=
S: =I came to the Writing
   Development Center because my teacher suggested I come.(5s) She REQUIRED me to
   she said. (Sarcastic tone, looks at T and smiles) "It might be a good idea"=
[4]➔ T: =huh@@@@
(smiles but does not look up and continues to read)
S: (4 s) I know it's shit. You can just laugh. I, I tried on this, I don't, I've never [really]
[5]➔T: [I was]
   JUST reading this (shakes head, shrug)=   =(smiles and V. LAUGH)
S: =Oh=

At [1]➔, student CK extends an invitation to laugh, but tutor AL declines to accept.

CK's comments about high school are troubles telling, but she signals through voice

contours of a sarcastic tone, a smile, and a tilting of her head that she wants AL to join

her in laughter. He does not join in, but rather unwraps a stick of gum, and says, "uh-

huh." He indicates through this backchannel that he has heard her, but she is not satisified

that he has heard in the way she wants to be heard. CK then at [2]➔ adds the gesture of

pounding on the table to get AL to laugh, but again, he does not join in but instead tends

to the business of paperwork.

At this point, CK resigns herself to filling out paperwork for a few seconds, but

soon initiates more talk. At [3]➔, AL interjects an attempt at humor, "to be harrassed by

my teachers," but CK does not pick up on it. CK tries a sarcastic tone and a smile again

while quoting her instructor, "It might be a good idea," and this time, at [4]➔, AL does

laugh. However, based on his earlier Neutral responses that did not foster alignment but

which actually fostered *mis*alignment, CK does not know how to interpret AL's laughter.

At [5]➔, AL then must do restorative facework ("I was JUST reading this") and add (M2)

laughter to realign the interaction.

In troubles telling, self-defeating humor by a student can put the tutor in an

awkward position, particularly early in a writing tutorial: the tutor has not yet read the student's essay, and is not in a position to honestly disagree with negative self-assessment. In the case of ALCK, coders noted in their observation logs that "This student makes a lot of self-deprecating jokes, which the tutor largely seems to ignore," and "He usually did not respond to S's humor." The literature on humor and laughter shows that the professional usually does not support the layperson's humor, and instead maintains a distance to preserve professional status. This may account for AL's lack of response to CK's attempts at humor, but in the remainder of this tutorial, CK makes four attempts at affiliation through laughter, and three (75%) of them result in an affiliative response from AL. A more likely explanation for AL's failure to join in CK's self-defeating humor and laughter is that rather than wishing to maintain his professional distance, he was unsure of how to respond: to join in the laughter might have suggested he agreed with her negative self-assessment. Although his intent may have been to foster alignment by not laughing, the result was actually misalignment. AL mentions CK's repeated self-defeating humor. In the post-tutorial interview, when asked what was memorable about this tutorial, AL said CK commented, " 'I'm a terrible writer' 'I'm a really bad writer' She kept saying that over and over. I usually don't get that when I do a tutoring session...usually it's not that blatantly negative."

5.3 CONCLUSION

While much of the data in this study support the findings of other investigations into laughter responses in institutional discourse, two important differences emerge. First,

while students do, as other research shows, support the laughter of the professional more often than the reverse, tutors in this data respond affiliatively at a higher rate than do professionals in other institutional contexts. Second, students in this data use a higher frequency of neutral responses than do laypersons in other institutional contexts. These two findings suggest perhaps that tutors in this study foster alignment more than other professionals, but that students are not necessarily made more comfortable in situations involving less than traditional power dichotomies. Further discussion of the effects of interactional dynamics that take place in writing centers will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I bring together the quantitative and qualitative results from Chapters 3-5, and return to the research questions posed in Chapter 2. I discuss the role of facework as it operates in the interplay among the nature of tutorials, types of laughter, discourse features indicative of authority, and individual participant characteristics which affect the amount and type of laughter used by participants in this study. First, the nature of negotiation for power and its association with laughter in writing tutorials is discussed. Second, the laughter in this study is compared quantitatively to laughter in other institutional contexts to see if perhaps writing tutorial interaction elicits more or less laughter than other institutional interactions. Third, I discuss what role laughter initiations play and what these laughter initiations can indicate about the dynamics of tutorial interaction. Fourth, I discuss what responses to laughter can indicate about the dynamics of tutorial interaction. Fifth, I discuss what this study reveals about the influence of gender, and conclude with a discussion about humor and humor styles and how they operate in mutual facework.

6.1. THE NATURE OF POWER NEGOTIATION
IN WRITING TUTORIALS

Two questions asked at the beginning of this study—"How do participants use laughter in writing tutorials?" and "What are the relationships between claims to power and initiations of laughter?"—first necessitate describing the nature of writing tutorials and inherent factors which might affect the use of participant laughter. As noted in

Chapter 1, writing tutorials *are* institutional encounters as defined by Drew and Heritage: they involve a professional and lay person, operate within a frame of expectations as to how the speech event is to proceed, and are oriented to some core institutional goal or task (22). Indeed, writing centers are institutions-within-institutions, and are framed not only by school, college or university generic roles of teacher and student and the accompanying inherent imbalance of power, but also by more specific philosophies of the ways in which tutors can help students to become better writers. Like other institutional frameworks in which the interactional characteristics and functions of laughter have been studied—doctor/patient appointments, group therapy sessions, and job interviews— writing tutorials involve interaction between persons of unequal power, and the data in this study tend to support the unequal power differentials and patterns of laughter found in other institutional discourse. Unlike casual, everyday speech events between friends or acquaintances of relatively equal status in which laughter is associated with having fun or occurring in humorous contexts such as telling jokes or teasing, laughter in formal, structured institutional events, while it can indicate alignment, is often associated with tension, embarrassment, and even ridicule though this last function rarely occurs. Much facework—both preventative and restorative—is required of students and tutors as they attempt to maintain the positive face of themselves and the other. Potential face-threatening acts (FTAs) occur with great frequency as tutors critique students' essays and students perhaps question tutors' authority. Laughter is a preventative and restorative facework strategy used by participants to save positive face, mitigate negative face, and lessen the impact of FTAs. The function of laughter in institutional discourse is indeed multi-facteted, and as Adelswärd notes, "[L]aughter accomplishes complex interactional

goals...it occurs non-randomly, is socially constructed and has a number of cognitive and emotive functions...it has a modifying function and it cues the interlocutors as to how to interpret an utterance...It is used as a strategy to create and sustain status and to handle face threats" (*Humor* 412).

Differences in relative power between participants in typical institutional encounters are the result of such factors as the professional having more education, specialized credentials, an authoritative position granted by the institution, and the power to make decisions or grant permissions which affect the layperson. However, power and authority in writing centers are, at least in theory, more negotiable than in other institutional frameworks, and therefore less unilateral laughter and more shared laughter would be expected to be seen in this data as compared to data in other institutional contexts. Tutors—unlike institutional representatives such as doctors or lawyers, or, in the academic world, academic advisors or classroom teachers—do not have the same degree of power as professionals who write prescriptions, represent clients in court, grant admission to courses, or issue grades. Further unlike the professional representatives in often-studied institutions, some tutors are nearly the same age as the students who come to them for help, and tutors—at least in this study—are also students. This close proximity in age and sameness in occupation of tutors and students theoretically lessen the power differential between discourse participants as do other variables such as a collaborative environment or even the tutors' choice of casual shirts and jeans in lieu of the more typical institutional uniform of dress clothes. These subtle differences may make the interaction more conversational in nature as compared to other institutional speech events, and may affect the types of laughter present.

Writing Centers, in theory, are spaces in which tutors nurture camaraderie among themselves and students, and as Farrell-Childers notes, "Laughter is not foreign to writing centers; in fact, some of the best learning occurs once anxieties are lessened in a comfortable atmosphere conducive to learning...peers encourage risk taking, *play* with language, question the validity of ideas, *laugh* at their own mistakes, and empathize with each other's frustrations" (112 italics added). Further articulating this negotiability, in its Call for Papers, The 23rd National Conference on Peer Tutoring: Negotiating Authority in the Writing Conference asked for proposals that explored this philosophy:

> As trainees in the writing center, peer tutors are initiated into a specialized practice designed to identify and, in some cases, resist exercises of power and authority in the academy....But in the course of training, these same [tutors] are advised to subordinate such skills to the authority of the writer and learn to think of themselves as collaborator, facilitator, guide, or to balance "minimalist" with more "directive" techniques. In turn, writers come to the writing center seeking the authority that the title and training of tutor implies, but often meet with tutors learning to share their authority with the writers.
>
> Questions of power and authority are further complicated by the role of the writing center within the university at large. Harvey Kail and John Trimbur identify writing centers as "semiautonomous" institutional spaces located "outside the normal channels of teaching and learning"... [where] tutors and writers negotiate a subtle and flexible line between submission and authority, collaboration and control. ("Call for Papers)

Tutors and students may come to a tutorial unsure of how to operate in a less dichotomous assignment of roles than tutor-as-authority and student-as-novice, and negotiating power—or more specifically control of the tutorial—can create confusion and tension for both parties as positive face is threatened. In this study, on several occasions tutors attempted to lessen the distance between themselves and their students by introducing laughables, or in 49% of tutor-initiated laughter, either used laughter that was affiliative or that was meant to ease the student's tension: laughter serves to maintain the other's positive face. This is quite different from patterns in other institutional contexts. For example, Haakana, in his research into doctor-patient discourse, found that "doctors do not often laugh with the patients" and "doctors do not often introduce laughables" (280). However, as the analyses in Chapter 3 of speech activities indicative of power revealed, tutors in this study generally present themselves as authorities and are directive rather than collaborative in their suggestions. While students do also occasionally assert control over the direction of the tutorial, more frequently they show anxiety and confusion as evidenced by the use of preventative facework through laughter (and in some cases excessive laughter) that mitigates their own tension. In this study, none of the participants had met before, and so they began as strangers to each other, but not as strangers to the speech event of discussing a piece of writing. The participants' knowledge of institutional roles varied from individual to individual, but since all had been through at least twelve years of educational institutionalization, all were familiar with the assumption that when discussing students' writing, students were there to get advice and tutors were there to give it.

The dynamics of this process were not the same across the ten tutorials, though, since students varied in the degree to which they needed or were willing to accept advice, and tutors varied in the degree to which they assumed a directive stance. Tutors, in fact, had had explicit training in structuring a tutorial so that it was student-directed with a student-set agenda, yet when the transcripts in this study were analyzed for accepted measures of discourse power—number of questions asked, number of directives issued, measures of volubility in turn length and percentage of words spoken—the results show that in these tutorials, nearly all tutors claimed the power that their institutional role gave them, and nearly all students readily deferred that power. However, this is not to say that participants' individual personalities, or as Goffman would say their individual performances, did not affect the degree to which they adhered to their institutional roles; in fact, the ways tutors interacted with students were quite different from tutor to tutor, and even the same tutor could interact differently with one student than another. Students also varied in their manner of interaction in such ways as making or not making suggestions, engagement with the assignment, being open to tutor suggestions, and apologizing for their perceived lack of writing skills.

One additional factor that cannot be discounted is that the participants were being taped, and this likely influenced tutors' desire to appear knowing and competent by assuming an authoritarian persona, and students were likely anxious that their writing struggles were being recorded for viewing by others. Perhaps the participants in this study were more concerned than usual with the face they projected since they were being recorded. They may have done more mutual facework—preserving their own positive face as well as that of the other—because there was an audience.

To see if the nature of writing tutorials affects the production of laughter as compared to laughter in other institutional contexts, rates of laughter can be compared.

6.2. RATES OF LAUGHTER IN INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE

Haakana, in his study of laughter in doctor-patient talk, was interested in finding out if laughter has institutional features, that is, whether or not the "laughing sequences in the doctor-patient talk have some kind of institutional fingerprint" ("Laughing" 34). He found, as in other types of institutional discourse, that laughter production was asymmetrical in terms of power relations with doctors laughing less than patients—fewer initiations and fewer instances of sharing patient's laughter than the reverse. The data in the present study presents a somewhat similar overall picture, but with significant variations particularly in the lower percentage to which the participants with a *lesser* degree of power—students—support the laughter of the participant with a *higher* degree of power. To determine why these differences might arise, a starting point could be to compare differences in the rate of laughing events per minute, a statistic that in and of itself is not particularly revealing since as Schegloff points out, laughter is not something that is measured in "laughs per minute" (103-4). Nonetheless, comparing the amount of laughter across institutional speech events can be illuminating as to whether or not there are fundamental differences in the dynamics involved. To that end, it is interesting to note that Adelswärd and Öberg's study of international negotiations showed a laughing events per minute rate of 0.3, West's study of doctor-patient interaction showed a rate of 0.1, and Adelswärd's study of job interviews showed a rate of 0.8.

The present study shows a relatively high rate of 1.67 laughter episodes per minute, and suggests again that perhaps the nature of writing tutorials in this study is somehow different from other institutional speech events. International negotiations and the treatment of illness—the purpose of the above mentioned studies—are more high stakes in terms of outcomes than are tutorials. Discussing political or economic alliances affecting millions of citizens, or discussing diagnoses and treatments for physical illness would naturally lend themselves to more serious interaction than what goes on between a tutor and a student, and so it might be expected that due to the less serious nature of writing tutorials, less tension-induced laughter might occur than in other institutional contexts. However, tutors have less authority than do heads of state or medical doctors, and while tension-relieving or "troubles-telling" laughter does constitute slightly over half of all laughter in this study, there is much laughter of an affiliative nature, and so a higher rate of laughter in tutorials might be expected. The limited number of studies done in all these contexts, though, makes comparisons tentative as best.

What can give a small degree of grounding to the present study is to compare this study to other research on laughter in writing tutorials, and this involves looking at the work of Terese Thonus, the one researcher, at least to my knowledge, who does look at laughter in writing tutorials. In "What Makes a Writing Tutorial Successful: An Analysis of Linguistic Variables and Social Context," Thonus examines variables in what tutor and student participants rate as "successful tutorials." Laughter, particularly shared laughter, is one such variable that Thonus found, and she compares the laughter among the tutorials in her data set by calculating the rate per turn of laughter instances, a different measure than the rate of laughter per minute that other laughter researchers used. Table

6.1 below presents the data in the present study as raw counts of laughter and rate per turn and compares this data Thonus's. There were only very slight differences between both the tutor and student means in the studies: Thonus's tutors' mean was 0.14 as compared to 0.09 in the present study, and Thonus's students' mean was 0.25 as compared to 0.21 in the present study. The higher rates in Thonus's dissertation study most likely are due to the differing population she studied: in 7 of the 12 dyads studied, the participants had worked together in prior tutorials. Additional support for this explanation was found in the present study. In the process of coding data, tutorial HCTD was coded, but not selected for inclusion in the final data set. This dyad consisted of female tutor HC and male student TD, and the two had worked together on a regular basis. The coding revealed 47 instances of laughter: the highest number in the final data set was 34, a difference most likely due to the degree of familiarity between the participants.

Table 6.1 Raw counts of laughter and rate per turn

Thonus's Study			Present Study	
Participants	Laughter		Participants	Laughter
Tutor A	18 = .17		FSEL / Tutor	1 = .02
Student A	19 = .18		FSEL / Student	29 = .52
Tutor B	38 = .32		FSKP / T	11 = .17
Student B	6 = .05		FSKP / S	23 = .40
Tutor C	26 = .24		ALCK / T	10 = .09
Student C	49 = .45		ALCK / S	16 = .14
Tutor D	25 = .22		ALMS / T	1 = .01
Student D	7 = .06		ALMS / S	3 = .05
Tutor E	20 = .17		CRAM / T	2 = .02
Student E	9 = .08		CRAM / S	18 = .23
Tutor F	2 = .01		CRCC / T	---
Student F	41 = .18		CRCC / S	7 = .13
Tutor G	61 = .36		GJWB / T	1 = .03
Student G	100= .59		GJWB / S	6 = .24
Tutor H	5 = .06		GJWS / T	11 = .16
Student H	43 = .49		GJWS / S	13 = .18
Tutor I	---		HCCA / T	5 = .08
Student I	7 = .06		HCCA / S	22 = .37
Tutor J	12 = .10		HCPR /T	13 = .19
Student J	47 = .41		HCPR / S	1 = .01
Tutor K	---		-------	-------
Student K	13 = .12		-------	-------
Tutor L	6 = .04		-------	-------
Student L	45 = .27		-------	-------
Tutor Mean	**213 = .14**		**Tutor Mean**	**55 = .09**
Student Mean	**386 = .25**		**Student Mean**	**138 = .21**

The similarities between the results of Thonus's study and this study give further support to the claim that the nature of writing tutorials is somewhat different from the nature of other types of institutional discourse insofar as writing tutorials contain higher rates of laughter. The occurrence of even higher rates of laughter in tutorials with participants who are familiar with each other suggests also that the dichotomous nature of tutor/authority-student/subordinate may lessen somewhat over time. However, the final data set in this study was composed of dyads who did not have prior acquaintanceship,

and discussion of the effects of familiarity on shared laughter are beyond the scope of this study.

Research question 2 in Chapter 2 asked, "Who laughs first and why?" The discussion will next bring together the quantitative and qualitative analyses of initiations, and will focus on the salient features to show why participants introduce laughter into interaction.

6.3. WHAT LAUGHTER INITIATIONS SAY
ABOUT TUTORIAL DYNAMICS

In Chapter 3, the data show that the types of laughter initiated in writing tutorials, all of which are facework strategies, are comprised mainly of laughter that mitigates for self (M^1), that is affiliative (A), or that mitigates/relieves tension for the other person (M^2). Laughter that is disaffiliative occurred only rarely, and the occurrences involved only one tutor. A review of the three types of laughter that did occur shows that of the 193 instances of laughter initiation, students initiated laughter 72% of the time, and students' use of laughter that mitigated tension for themselves constituted 43% of all laughter in the data set. Tutors' use of laughter to mitigate for self was much lower—9% of the total data set. Together, students' and tutors' tension-relieving laughter accounted for over half (52%) of all the laughter initiations in the data set. The next most prevalent type was affiliative/shared laughter, which accounted for 34% of all laughter (Students 27%, Tutors=7%). The third type—laughter that mitigated for the other person—was used solely by tutors and accounted for only 6% of all laughter in the data set. These

percentages show that in this study, students use laughter primarily to preserve their own positive face by relieving their own tension, and secondarily to show affiliation with the tutor. Tutors' laughter initiation types are about evenly divided among affiliative (27% of tutor total), tension relieving for self (33%), and tension relieving for other (22%), and show that while tutors' primary use of laughter, like students', is to relieve their own tension, almost as often they use laughter to foster alignment with students or to help maintain students' positive face.

6.3.1. TENSION-RELIEVING LAUGHTER

The fact that laughter does not occur particularly frequently, and that when it does, it primarily serves to relieve tension is not surprising. The participants in this study had not previously met, and yet as is inherent in tutorials, were expected to interact over a text—an activity that forces the student to make him or herself vulnerable to criticism, a face threatening act (FTA), and forces the tutor to make potentially angst-producing comments to the student. Further, because discussing an essay necessitates close physical proximity, some participants may feel uncomfortable being so physically close to a stranger. In these circumstances, for a speaker to laugh, even if the intent is to bridge the gap between strangers, can risk offending the hearer if the laughter is misunderstood. However, while both students and tutors are guarded in their use of laughter, that is not to say laughter serves little purpose in communication; in fact, laughter allows the expression of emotions and reactions to comments that participants choose not to reveal in words. To admit to being nervous, embarrassed, uncertain, or unknowing is to lose

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face, yet to do nothing to change the circumstances causing the negative emotions is to allow tension to continue to build. Laughter can allow interlocutors to communicate these feelings, and makes the job of facework easier. Conversely, using words to ease someone else's tension might risk calling attention to the other person's insecurity, and thus cause the other person to lose positive face.. Laughter can be used as a subtle cue that the situation is not so serious, and can allow tensions to diffuse.

6.3.1.1. Tension for Students

Participants in tutorials differ in the types of tension they might experience. For students, tension and the resulting loss of face can be caused by several factors. First, 70% of the students in this study came to the WDC because their instructor required them to come, and many brought drafts of essays that had already been heavily marked up by the instructor. An essay complete with visual indicators of errors and shortcomings can serve as a sort of calling card announcing that the student has trouble writing, and presents the student in a negative light even before he or she can make a good impression on the tutor. The student is deprived of the opportunity to give, using Goffman's term, a good performance or to present a positive face. For three of the five female students, these many markings were cause for embarrassment and high numbers of laughter initiations that all coders observed were "nervous giggles." One of these students made several self-deprecating comments either preceded or followed by laughter. Laughter in these cases functions as a communication device that allows emotions to be expressed in a context that would normally prevent such expression. Innermost feelings are intensely personal, and revealing them in public situations such as writing tutorials, especially with

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persons unacquainted with each other, can be awkward if not culturally prohibited. Tension-relieving laughter frequently comes after a sequentially troublesome bit of interaction, troublesome because perhaps the tutor has been explaining a concept new to the student, or the tutor has asked to student to restate an unclear phrase or passage, and the students is unable to think of an alternative.

In addition to having to present oneself through a poorly written essay (at least in the classroom instructor's eyes), students can also feel tension when tutors use unfamiliar terms to explain writing conventions. For example, in Excerpt 6.1 below, male tutor AL is explaining parallel structure to female student CK, and even though he doesn't use the term "parallel structure" the parts of speech he does use are unfamiliar to CK, and so the meaning is lost.

Excerpt 6.1 (ALCK turns 128-135)

T: one problem is that all these things are nouns, like weakness, trembling, shaking, heavy-breathing, I mean they look like verbs, but the "ing" changes the whole thing into nouns, heavy-breathing is a thing, you know, trembling is a thing, it's a symptom . weakness. But then you get to light-headed, and that's an adjective, so when you have these all strung together, noun, noun, noun, noun, noun, adjective, and noun, it kind of ..you try and read it, trembling, shaking, weakness, heavy-breathing, headache, light-headed..does that..does that come out to you at all?.. Just throwing in light-headed?= =No?=   =(Uhahaha)Um, well
S:➔[1]   =No=   =☺but you know what you're talkin' about☺=
T: like I said=
S: ➔[2]   =what if I put it first and then said all my adjectives can I do tha@ @ @t or just NOT have it?=
T: =you'd have to change it into noun like light-headedness which might sound a little funny . if you're gonna have all these nouns together, it's a little awkward to throw in the adjective..because it just changes the whole like direction of the sentence (10 s as S writes) When you do it here (unclear) of jittery, being frustrated, angry, stubborn, and nervous, tense um..being frustrated seems a bit wordy . uh you could of just said frustration, and a few, like this is a, you could change these into nouns: angriness, stubborness, and nervousness . the thing is when you have um, a bunch of things joined together, you want to keep them at the same parts of speech, um...you wouldn't like group together a dog, a cat, and being nervous=
S:➔[3]   =(ahHAHA)=

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T: =you know=(smiles) = um, even if they all were related, you wouldn't say 'em like
S:→⁴   =yea@ @ha=
T: that, they're different parts of speech (unclear)...

At →¹, CK says "no" to show she doesn't follow what AL is saying, and when

AL then asks "No?" CK reveals a submissive attitude by saying in a smiley voice, "But

you know what you're talkin' about." Through this comment, she lets AL know that

while she doesn't understand what he's saying, she believes that what he says is right

since he is the expert. At →², CK attempts to solve the problem, but realizes she doesn't

quite yet understand, and so laughs again this time relieving some of her anxiety. At both

→³, and →⁴, CK uses laughter to show both affiliation for AL's laughable of assigning

parallel value to "a dog, a cat, and being nervous," as well as to release pent-up anxiety

from trying to understand AL's explanation.

Students can also experience tension when they do not agree with the advice the

tutor gives. Much like patients who don't feel they have the qualifications to disagree

with a doctor's diagnosis, students, too, can feel that even though they believe their

sentences to be clear, or their organizational structure to be logical, they don't have the

same degree of expertise as does the tutor who suggests revisions. Finally, tensions can

arise for a student when a tutor gives advice that contradicts what the student's classroom

instructor has said. In Chapter 5, Excerpt 5.2 from GJWS (F/F) shows tutor GJ cautioning

student WS to indent a paragraph, but WS is using a different format that her boss—a

Ph.D—uses. WS circumvents a direct confrontation of GJ's assertion, and ends the

exchange and thereby her tension by using laughter in the comment "☺He's got his Ph.D,

I don't ☺."

6.3.1.2. Tension for Tutors

Tutors also experience tension in tutorials, though not to the same extent as students at least as measured by (M^1) laughter. In the 28% of laughter occurrences that tutors do initiate, tutors use this type only half as often as students do. Causes of tension for tutors can stem, as with students, from the desire to project a good image. However, whereas a student's image is projected via the written document he or she brings to the tutorial, a tutor tries to project a good image through being able to help students improve their writing and being able to answer students' questions. Tutors can feel insecure in dealing with students' writing. In this data, the tutorial FSKP (M/M) that occurred between undergraduate tutor FS and the very competent writer KP showed FS's insecurity through his frequent use of (M^1) laughter: 64% of his laughter was used to ease his own tension. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the post-tutorial interview with FS revealed that he felt a bit intimidated by the depth of KP's topic and KP's command of vocabulary and rhetorical style. FS's authoritative status was less secure in this tutorial than it was in FSEL (M/F), and this contributed to the frequent use of (M^1) laughter.

Additionally, tutors' tasks include making students feel welcome at the writing center, and tutors vary in the degree of their development of the interpersonal skills required to connect with strangers. The average length of the opening phase of tutorials—the phase in which participants engage in the small talk of greetings—was 1 minute 45 seconds, not much time to get to know each other. This abbreviated acquaintance time is inherent in tutorials, though, since appointments are constrained by time and some of that

time is taken up by paperwork that must be filled out. In only two of the tutorials in this study—FSEL (M/F) and GJWS (F/F) did any laughter occur in the opening phase, and while this study does not make claims that the presence or absence of laughter makes for a good or poor tutorial, that this laughter occurred was indicative of how the participants' interacted throughout the remainder of the tutorial. Both these tutorials throughout their duration showed much laughter, although the dynamics between the dyads were quite different. In FSEL, 94% of the laughter was initiated by EL, and of that, 69% was affliative. FS shared in EL's laughter only 10% of the time, and this perhaps reflects Haakana's findings that the professional often chooses to maintain a distance between him or herself and the lay person. Further complicating interaction between peer tutors and their students when they are of different genders is the risk that by laughing too readily or appearing too friendly could be misconstrued as a sexual advance, and this would be inappropriate in an institutional setting. In contrast, in the remainder of GJWS (F/F), tutor GJ initiated 46% of the laughter, and of that, 55% was affiliative, and another 45% was (M^1) laughter used to lessen the tension of student WS. As could be seen in Chapter 3, GJ's age was nearly 23 years younger than WS's, and perhaps this difference created the dynamic that GJ strove to make WS feel comfortable.

Finally, tutors may be uncomfortable in giving criticism because they are not sure themselves how to offer a better alternative. For example, in Excerpt 6.2 from HCCA (F/F) below, HC is reading CA's essay aloud and recognizes in a description of an enclosed mall in Sydney, Australia, a redundancy in word choice, but isn't quite sure how to explain what the problem is. When she calls attention to the problem area, and asks CA

for different way to phrase it, CA is not forthcoming with an alternative. HC then offers

two alternative choices, and reveals a bit of tension when she uses (M[1]) laughter at ➔[1].

Excerpt 6.2 (HCCA turns 76-77)

T: ok, "and a glass roof to cover it off"..um, cover it off is a little bit like (shakes head) .
   how could you say it differently? kind of thing=   =uh "exotic plants
S: =um-hm yea@ @ @h
T: throughout, located throughout and a glass roof" (shrugs)=   =to cover .even=
S: =um-hm=   =↓nhaha
T: ➔[1]or "and a glad roof" period ↓nha=   =ok
S: =yeah, ok=

Tutors can feel pressured and rushed to begin critiquing an essay before they have had

time to become familiar with the student's writing style or particular needs. Some tutors

quickly read through the essay and give it a cursory evaluation, or they have either

themselves or the student read it aloud and evaluate the essay in the process. If the

student is reluctant or unwilling to set the agenda, tutors must decide what to talk about,

and this invariably focuses to a great extent on the essay's weaknesses. Delivering

criticism to a stranger requires tact and diplomacy, and formulating what to say and how

to say it can create tension especially when tutors feel pressured to get through as much

of the essay as possible.

6.3.2. AFFILIATIVE LAUGHTER

While the laughter initiations in this study serve primarily to communicate

feelings or tension or insecurity, laughter also allows interlocutors to indicate positive

emotions and the desire to, as Coser says, "come close" (172). Affiliative laughter (A)

was an important component of the laughter in the data set, accounting for 34% of all

laughter initiations. Overall, students used (A) laughter more than tutors (27% of all laughter in the data set was (A) laughter by students as compared to 7% for tutors), but if looked at as a percentage of participant laughter, the results were not as far apart: 38% of student laughter was (A) laughter, and 27% of tutor laughter was (A) laughter.

The results in Chapter 4 indicate that students and tutors use (A) laughter for different purposes. Students generally use (A) laughter to show support for something the tutor has said or done—a humorous comment or a paralinguistic cue such as a tilting of the head or a raising of the eyebrow. Through the use of (A) laughter, a student can signal the tutor that the invitation to laugh has been accepted, and that the student appreciates the tutor's attempt at changing the dynamic of the tutorial from one of formality to one of a more casual nature. Through laughter, the student can show that he or she is also willing to enter into a playframe. Occasionally, students are the ones to issue invitations to come closer, and are willing to risk being misinterpreted, but the main function of (A) laughter for students is to serve as a backchannel for the tutor.

For tutors, (A) laughter is used not only to support students' attempts at humor, but also to show their alignment with students, and thereby put students at ease. In Excerpt 4.5 (FSKP) in Chapter 4, male tutor FS was appreciative of the skill with which male student KP integrated subtle humor into his writing, and would laugh while reading KP's essay aloud. In Excerpt 6.3 below, male tutor CR has commented on male student AM's accent:

Excerpt 6.3 (CRAM turns 41-46)

```
T: ok, you got a cool, an interesting accent=              [have] you really?=
S:                             =oh, I been all over (ha[haha]ha)        =yeah
   ..down south all over=                                  =Austin Texas=
T:                        =I'm, I'm happen to be from Austin Texas=         =and
```

→ I [I used] to have a=   =ehaha[hahaha] It's taken a
S: [aw, I]   =I know you hate the weather here now=   [hehehe]
T: long, it's taken some getting used to, I do like the sun

       This excerpt occurred after the diagnostic phase had begun, and student

AM had been lamenting the fact that he had forgotten about outlining, and that maybe if

he had first outlined his essay as his instructor had suggested, that maybe it would have

helped his organization. Male tutor CR had explained that outlines work well for some

people, but not so well for others, and then switched the topic to AM's accent. CR

commented that it was a "cool" accent, a positive comment that successfully changed the

focus of the discussion from a shortcoming of AM's to an interesting facet of his speech.

After AM establishes his geographic knowledge gained through extensive travel, he

offers a comment, "I know you hate the weather here now" (it was cold and rainy). At →,

CR is able, through his affiliative laughter to show an appreciation for AM's empathy as

to what CR must be feeling. AM shares in the laughter indicating the two are aligned.

       Tutors also use laughter that serves a slightly different function than to initiate

alignment, and that is (M^2) laughter which mitigates or eases tension for the other person.

While both types of laughter result in participants coming closer, (A) laughter does not

presuppose the hearer is feeling tense, whereas (M^2) laughter does. There were no

instances of students using (M^2) laughter, and only 12 cases in which tutors did. In

Excerpt 6.4 below, from the opening of GJWS (F/F), student WS reveals her insecurity,

and tutor GJ promptly makes a comment that shows she understands, but does not judge

negatively WS's excuse for not having correct citations.

Excerpt 6.4 (GJWS turns 1-2)

S: I know my um.. cite, uh um, the cites they're not right=   =I know they're not right..
T: =ok=

S: I just hurried up and um, you know, did them=
T: ➔   (smiling)=(ahahaha) Did what you could, right?
S: (smiling) yeah

At ➔, tutor GJ realizes WS's tension, and prefaces her laughter by smiling. This laughter cues WS that what GJ is about to say is not intended maliciously. After GJ's question ("Did what you could, right?") WS shares in the laughter and the two are more aligned.

Initiations, then, allow participants to smoothly interact through expressions of emotions and cueing of intent of comments that might otherwise be misconstrued.

6.4. WHAT RESPONSES TO LAUGHTER SAY
ABOUT TUTORIAL DYNAMICS

Because students were responsible for 72% of the initiations, most of the data in this study concerns tutor responses. How tutors respond to laughter in this study mirrors how the professional person responds in other studies of institutional discourse. Tutors, like doctors, tend not to support the laughter of the person with lesser status, a seeming contradiction on the surface since tutors theoretically wish to put students at ease, and laughing together indicates alignment. However, as the discussion in Chapter 5 on neutral responses concludes, to join in laughter during troubles-telling is not warranted: to share laughter in this circumstance is to validate a student's sense of insecurity. Much student laughter in this study was coded as self-mitigating, and tutor responses to laughter are most often neutral and comprise 59% of tutor responses.

However, the data in this study show that students—unlike patients in medical encounters—give neutral rather than affiliative responses the majority of the time (44%). As discussed in Chapter 5, neutral responses, in addition to avoiding validating self-deprecation, are also ambiguous and can indicate, at least to the participant who initiated the laugh, that the invitation to laugh might not have been understood, or that the hearer doesn't find the situation funny.

6.4.1 NEUTRAL RESPONSES

Neutral responses are safe responses. For tutors, if a student is making self-deprecating comments, to laugh might risk offending by affirming the student's insecurity. Tutors also might appear less than professional if the "seriousness" of their discourse is interrupted by laughter. As the measures of power as indicated by the quantitative analyses in Chapter 3, tutors generally claim and maintain the authority throughout tutorials, and to initiate as well as to respond to laughter might undermine that authority.

Students, too, can find neutral responses to be safe, especially if they're not certain of the tutor's intent. For example, in Excerpt 6.5 below, male student WB does not join in female tutor GJ's laughter at ➡. GJ has just finished glancing through WB's essay on censorship, an essay which his instructor had commented heavily upon. In her typical tutoring style, GJ begins the directive phase of the tutorial with a series of positive comments ("I think you have a lot of good ideas in here" "I thought this was a GREAT example you had in here"), and then moves into a heavily mitigated directive frame.

<u>Excerpt 6.5 (GJWB turn 12)</u>

T: I thought this was a GOOD example that you had here, so what I THOUGHT maybe is
    we could TRY and do something like this=   =with, with maybe the rest of these
S: =um-hum=
T: paragraphs.. [um], and your teacher has a LOT of questions in here=   .... um and I
S: [ok]   =yeah=
T: think a lot of them are valid questions=   =...um and maybe we can look at
S: =um-hum=
T: those too= =to help YOU maybe um, judge as to what your instructor's looking for=
S: =ok=   =ok
T: looking for also. Um… ok, uh, let's see…. First things, ok well first thing is with your
    thesis=   =um, you might. want to reword it= =….um and not saying like you
S: =um-hum=   =ok=
T: know I do not believe in censorship, but maybe say that um... you can reword it
➔ without SAYIN you know, I'm against it and this is wh(hahaha)y= =you might=
S: =ok=   =yeah=
T: =be able to say, you know maybe you wanna say like um.. that um.. censorship um is
    not needed or you know, censorship should not be.. uh, WIDELY exercised or
    something to that effect= =…. um, and THEN you could say BECAU::SE and then
S: =ok=

From student WB's point of view, GJ's laughter could be confusing: Was she

laughing because of the way he had constructed his thesis? Was she laughing because his

reasons for being against censorship were laughable? Or perhaps, as this particular

episode of laughter was evaluated by all coders, was she laughing because she was

nervous and frustrated that the interaction was not going smoothly? WB gives a neutral

response, which is safe at this point. For WB not to share the laughter allows him not to

risk interpreting the intent in the wrong way. He neither aligns himself with GJ by

sharing in her laughter, nor does he disaffiliate himself by showing offense. Instead he

gives a simple acknowledgment, "ok," to GJ's directive.

However, from GJ's point-of-view, a neutral response at this point could be

frustrating. The interaction is not going smoothly for tutor GJ. She pauses frequently (as

indicated by ∴.) to turn the direction of the interaction over to WB, but he does not

respond. GJ becomes progressively more frustrated with WB's uninvolvement, and at ➔

reveals some frustration by initiating a bit of tension-relieving laughter for herself

embedded in the word "why." While neutral responses can be safe for the hearer, for the

person whose laughter is not shared, they can be frustrating. If affiliative initiations are

not shared, the speaker's attempt to come closer is thwarted, and in the case above, if the

hearer of tension-relieving laughter by the speaker does not attempt to rectify the tension-

inducing situation, the interaction will not continue smoothly. In the post-tutorial

interview, GJ commented that early in the tutorial,

> I felt like it started turning into me suggesting to him what he should do
>
> more than like an interaction between the two of us...I felt like I was kind
>
> of taking over the paper...I think he wanted more of an authority simply
>
> because he's kind of set back and didn't say anything...It was kind of
>
> difficult to work with him in a collaborative way.

That this tutorial was problematic was echoed in the observations of both coders.

Coder A said, "The student mostly spoke in a monotone voice which indicated he didn't

particularly want to be at the conference." Coder B said, "The two didn't seem very

comfortable with each other, although the student didn't seem to be particularly engaged

in the discussion." GJWB is the tutorial with the highest number of backchannels, and of

the 198 in the tutorial, WB does 163 of them with only 3 as laughter. His abundant use of

backchannels such as "yeah" "um-hm" and "ok" allowed him to seemingly participate in

the interaction, but unlike the use of laughter, these utterances were little more than place

markers and by themselves did little to show more than a superficial connection between the speakers.

Neutral responses, as discussed in Chapter 5, are most frequently used by tutors when students initiate laughter—laughter that mitigates tension for oneself, although neutral responses which follow student's attempts at affiliation are nearly as frequent. To validate students' insecurities as revealed through (M^1) laughter goes against the theoretical purpose of tutorials, which is to build students' confidence in their writing. However, to not join in students' overtures to come closer may not necessarily be undesirable in all cases. If a student is making sarcastic remarks about a classroom instructor, and invites the tutor to share the laughter, for the tutor to do so risks the tutor's authority as a representative of the institution. On the other hand, to share the laughter would, particularly if the instructor were more concerned with adherence to rules than expression of ideas, as noted earlier in this chapter, help students to "resist exercises of power and authority in the academy" (National Conference on Peer Tutoring).

6.4.2. AFFILIATIVE RESPONSES

Affiliative responses in this study roughly parallel the affiliative responses in other institutional contexts in that participants with lesser status (in this case students) use this type of response more than do participants with more status (in this case tutors). However, an important difference is evident: in this study, tutors responded affiliatively at a higher rate than would be expected (35% of their responses were affiliative) while students responded affiliatively at a lower rate than would be expected (56% of their

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responses were affliative). These percentages reflect a total of all types of affiliative responses: affiliative/shared (A/S), affiliative/verbal (A/V), affiliative/non-verbal (A/NV), and affiliative/delayed (A/D).

The higher percentages of affilitive laughter in this study may be reflective of a difference in analytical procedures between those in this study and those in other research. For example, West in examining medical encounters, counted a response as affiliative only if it involved reciprocal laughter. Haakana ("Laughing") added responses said in a "smiling/smiley voice" since, as he argues, laughter and smiling are closely connected. This study also included smiley voice as a response to laughter, and went further by including comments that indicated an acknowledgment and appreciation of the laughter. For example, in Excerpt 6.6 from FSEL (M/F) below, tutor FS does not laugh or smile, but his response at ➜[1] shows that he picks up on EL's laughter as indicating an assessment of her instructor which differs from the words she uses:

Excerpt 6.6 (FSEL turns 83-85)

```
T: ..so how are you liking the class so far?=                    ➜[1] =It's all right? I've
S:                                =Um, it's all right (uhaha)=
T: heard complaints about it=     I heard that he's really rough, is he?=
S:                    =yeah=                    =Yeah..I don't
   know..I didn't think, well like he grades on a portfolio=      =so he gives you like
T:                                        =um-hm=
S: ➜[2]really low gra@@@des...and he's like "oh don't worry about it don't worry"..Am I
   ➜[3]gonna fail this cla@@@s or wha@@t?=
T:                                =(6 seconds pass as T stares out the window)
S: I don't know if he's staying here though . I think he's going somewhere else=
T:                                                        =oh
➜[4]"☺ What a shame ☺"=        =Well I know how it is writin' a paper. I've been
S:                    =(uhahaha)=
T: workin' on mine. I've only got about four pages written of a THIRTY-TWO one I
   gotta have done by the end of the semester=
S:                                        =(makes an "oh" with her mouth and smiles)
```

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T: a thirty-two page history paper=

S: ➜[5]   =(hahaha) who is that with?

At ➜[1], FS questions the surface meaning of EL's answer, and all coders counted

"It's all right" as an affiliative/verbal response. We did have some discussion as to

whether or not FS might have asked the question even if EL had not cued her feelings

with laughter since FS may have been curious about the instructor anyway. However, we

agreed that our criteria for counting responses included comments that showed sequential

cohesion with the initiated laughter, so we coded this as (A/V) laughter.

The excerpt above illustrates the difficulty of determining whether a discourse

move is aimed at fostering connectedness or maintaining control. FS initiates this topic

by asking how EL likes the class so far. FS then asks EL to elaborate on whether or not

the instructor is "rough," and EL does. However, at ➜[2], EL reveals that she is a bit

nervous talking about the subject as she uses laughter that was coded as tension-relieving

for herself. She pauses after "gra@@@des," and again after "oh don't worry about it

don't worry" and not getting a backchannel from FS, initiates two more instances of (M[1])

laughter embedded in the words "cla@@s" and "wha@@t." By this time, FS, who had

asked for elaboration by EL and who had not uttered any backchannels to show he was

listening, had shifted his body so that he could stare out the window. EL waits for a

response for six seconds, and then makes another comment about her instructor. At

➜[4],FS initiates affiliative laughter through the smiley voiced comment of "☺ What a

shame ☺," and ELresponds with affiliative laughter. All coders found problematic FS's

action of staring out the window and remaining silent. EL's body language at this point

indicated she was uncomfortable with the silence, and since FS was not forthcoming with

a response, EL continued with the same topic. FS's sarcastic comment of "☺ What a shame ☺" seemed designed as much to close the topic as to show alignment. The remainder of the interaction focused on FS and his task of composing a thirty-two page paper, and in fact, during the remaining four minutes of the tutorial, the topic focused only on FS, his paper, and his instructor.

Whether FS was fostering alignment with EL by responding affiliatively to EL's assertion that the class was "all right," or whether he was merely satisfying his own curiosity is debatable. However, in looking at the analysis of discourse features in Chapter 3, FS clearly does not share much authority with EL: FS issues 100% of the directives, asks 63% of the questions, initiates 88% of the topics, and is responsible for only 4% of the backchannels and 0% of the overlaps. Many of the questions EL does ask either concern what FS thinks she should do, or in the latter part of the tutorial, ask FS about himself. Further, the tutor-student word/turn ratio is 11.5:1 showing FS does virtually all the talking. In this tutorial, of the 31 initiations, FS does only one and 72% of his responses are neutral. EL's initiations are divided between affiliative aimed at supporting FS's comments (69%) or mitigating her own tension (28%). So by these measures of power, and types of laughter used, FS's desire to share control of the tutorial with seems dubious.

Initiating and responding to laughter shows some relation to gender and to humor styles, and these will be discussed below.

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6.5. GENDER

Claims to gender differences in this study are limited by the small number of participants: 6 tutors (3 male, 2 female) and 10 students (5 male, 5 female). While generalizing beyond this study would not be valid, comparing the results of this study to theories about gender is useful. Most studies show that women laugh more than men, and in this study, that is supported. Female tutors laugh twice as often as male tutors, and female students laugh nearly twice as often as male students. Female tutors show through both the high numbers of tension-relieving laughter instances and the lack of affiliative laughter when working with male students that they are perhaps uncomfortable with the role of authority. Male tutors, on the other hand, use little self-mitigating laughter but do use frequent affiliative laughter or laughter that mitigates for the other person when they work with either male or female students. Further evidence that traditional gendered roles are often enacted in this data—roles that allow males inherent power—is that speech activities show that male tutors use more directives, ask more questions, initiate more topics, and give fewer backchannels than do female tutors. On the other hand, female tutors mitigate directives more often, and show a higher degree of connectedness through the use of overlaps than do male tutors.

However, as Jefferson cautions, stereotypes of gendered behavior are "crude expressions" for a whole range of complex behaviors ("Note" 131), and analyses of student interactional behavior in this data show that the stereotypes don't always apply. While female students do laugh more, mitigate more directives, use more laughter as backchannels, and overlap more than their male counterparts, all other speech activities

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analyzed in this study indicate that female students claim more power than do male students: female students issue more directives, ask more questions, initiate more topics, and interrupt more. Given the nature of tutorials though—verbal interaction which includes asking for and taking criticism—females may feel more comfortable in keeping the conversation going by asking questions and initiating topics, activities which females typically do to a greater extent than males. Female students, may also be less concerned with maintaining positive face than male students, and may be more willing to risk losing face by seeking advice in the form of asking questions or in bringing up topics they don't understand.

One other surprising result revealed in this study is that female tutors working with male students use no affiliative laughter and 73% of all their laughter is self-mitigating. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, the stereotypical expectation that female instructors, by virtue of being female, would naturally be nurturing, affiliative, and would try to make the institutionalized roles less dichotomous may be offset by female tutors not being sure enough of their authority to relinquish any of it. Other explanations are worth noting as well. Dyads of female tutors and male students have much lower averages of laughter initiations than do all other gender combinations: 3.5 for (F/M) as compared to 14.7-17.5 for others, though this most likely is a result of the particular participant combination than the influence of gender. In Excerpt 6.5 above, GJWB (F/M), GJ finds trying to engage WB in the tutorial to be problematic, and all coders agreed that WB didn't appear to be interested in investing much of himself in the discussion. The lack of affiliative laughter on GJ's part may not be so much a function of her gender as frustration in dealing with a resistant student. In a similar fashion, in HCPR , the other

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(F/M) dyad, the lack of affiliative laughter by HC may be problematic not so much because of her gender, but because of her personality, particularly her style of humor. HCPR is anomalous: HC does 13 of the 14 initiations (93%), and the average for all tutors is 28%. Further, half of her initiations are self-mitigating (M^1) laughter, and the other half are coded as problematic for being either disaffiliative or unclear, and no other tutors, male or female, exhibited such laughter. HC may fit the gender profile of a female educator who is unsure of her authority since she does frequently use (M^1) laughter, and because she is an undergraduate and therefore has less inherent power than a tutor who is a graduate student. However, HC also has a rather aggressive style of humor, which typically, as Sev'er and Ungar note, is not used by female educators (90). HC may be using her humor style to maintain her own *negative* face—that face which wishes control, or that wishes to be unimpeded by others. Kotthoff notes that "Anyone who makes other people laugh has, as Coser (1960) states, momentary control of the situation" (8). Both GJ and HC may be heavily influenced by gendered role expectations and less secure in their authority than their male counterparts and less willing to relinquish their authority by using affiliative laughter with male students. However, other factors may account for the lack of affiliative laughter by the female tutors in this study.

6.6. HUMOR STYLES

Wallace Chafe suggests that laughter expresses an emotion, and while "this emotion is not usually included in a class with anger, fear, sadness, or joy," he suggests that "it does belong in such a list" (39). The nervous laugh reveals tension, a sneer with

laughter communicates anger or offense taken, and uncontrollable laughter can indicate

hysterical fear. However, Chafe observes that we don't have a label for the more playful

emotion that laughter expresses, and that while "humor" comes to mind, it "applies to

some of the stimuli that produce this emotion, not the emotion itself." Chafe suggests the

emotion that some laughter expresses could be called "the feeling of non-seriousness."

In tutorials, the "feeling of non-seriousness" frequently occurs, and may be the

result of the deliberate use of humor, or of an accidental type of humor such as when

tutor FS reads aloud student KP's essay and twice mispronounces "synonym" as

"cinnamon" (FSKP turn 23). As discussed in Chapter 1, individuals vary in the way they

deliberately use humor, and Rod Martin identifies four styles of humor: affiliative, self-

enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. Humor, though not synonymous with laughter,

has long been recognized as a complex discourse strategy that can be used to bond as

well as to distance interlocutors. Humor is often a precursor to laughter, and its intention

can be cued through a speaker's laughter, and its reception cued through a hearer's

laughter. Humor, among its many functions in this data, is used to introduce delicate

topics, to gain distance from a sensitive situation, to relieve tension for either speaker or

hearer or both, to gain a different perspective, and to bring interlocutors closer together.

An individual's sense of humor or humor style underlies his or her initiation of and

response to laughter. Though an in-depth analysis of each participant's humor style in

this study would be insightful, it is beyond the scope of this study. However, the impact

of humor style is important to at least consider.

Humor can be risky to use, and in institutional contexts in which people are

strangers, and in which there is an understood agenda dictating more or less acceptable

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discussion topics and/or level of formality in conversation, the use of humor might be expected to be rare. However, humor is quite prevalent in the present set of data as evidenced both linguistically through comments and paralinguistically through the use of voice contours or other sounds, gestures, and facial movements. While we did not devise criteria to describe what did and what did not constitute humorous intent, we did code as affiliative any laughter that we perceived as intended by the speaker to initiate what Gregory Bateson and Erving Goffman characterize as "play": "an interactional state created by metacommunicative signals which frame or bracket messages as *nonserious*" (italics added, in Glenn *Laughter* 137). We also coded as affiliative any responsive laughter that supported what we perceived as intentional humor of the speaker. Indeed, 34% of Initiations (7% Tutor, 27% Student), and 42% (26% Tutor, 16% Student) of responses were affiliative. Sometimes the speaker's humor is obvious and the hearer responds affiliatively with laughter and the speaker then joins in the laughter as in Excerpt 6.7 when student WS describes the highly energetic social worker at the women's prison featured in WS's essay (humor underlined):

Excerpt 6.7 (GJWS turn 55)

```
S: Yeah she's wonderful. just wonderful, she's Hispanic=        =and and she talks a
T:                                                   =uh-huh=
S: mile a minute=        [heha]ha and she'd just go, and I'd say "Carolina where do you
T:                 =(haha[haha]
S: get all your energy from?=       =She's she's wonderful, wonderful to work with.
T:                               =yeah=
```

Other times the speaker's humor is cued with laughter and the hearer responds affiliatively through words as in Excerpt 6.8 when student WS explains the many search terms she used, and that since she had such a difficult time finding research on

incarcerated mothers, she was going to use every little thing she found (humor cue

underlined):

Excerpt 6.8 (GJWS turn 48)

```
S: I was having a hard time finding any research on [THAT]. And I told her I was and
T:                                                [yea::h]
S:she was just like 'Well, just keep looking'=            =[and I and I even went in
T:                              =um-hum, um-hum=[yeah]
S: you know the library and went into the computer and went into the internet,=      =I
T:                                                            =um-hm=
S: put incarcerated mothers visitations um with incarcerated mothers and children, I mean
   I went every way um [I could] through child welfare,=       = and I tried all kind of
T:                     [yeah]                        =um-hm=
S: little blurbs and I had a hard time. I found [a few] things. And b@@elieve me
T:                                              [yea:h]
S: I'm gonna u@@se em some but I had a hard time finding infor[mation] uh, because
T:                                                            [yeah]
S: as I said, there's not a lot of research=        =on this topic.=        =Not yet.=
T:                                      =um-hm=                  =um-hm=          =yeah
```

Speakers can also cue humor through laughter and hearers can accept the

invitation to laugh as in Excerpt 6.9 when at the end of CRAM, male student AM once

again calls male tutor CR "sir" even after CR has repeatedly asked AM to use CR's first

name (laughter episode underlined):

Excerpt 6.9 (CRAM turns 145-149)

```
S:                                                        =ok, thank you
   umm and I need to... when can I um bring it back to you?=
T:                                                        =You wanna come back next
   week?=          ..don't call me sir=     =call me Tim.=
S:         =yes sir.              =Tim=              = You ain't gonna let me come
   back are you? [hahaha]    (uhhaha)..(hunh) (uhunha=
T:               [hahaha] ..(6 s) ..                =If you want to come back next
   Thursday, we can take a look at it
```

Tutors can use humor aggressively when the target of the humor is something or someone other than the student. For example, tutors can disparage the sometimes inane conventions of academic writing or the student's classroom teacher in an attempt to show empathy, and thus foster alignment with the student. For example, in Excerpt 6.10, tutor FS is reading a list of several assignment requirements that student KP's instructor has given him, and interjects humorous comments cued through laughter at ➔, increased stress at ↑, and a smiley voice at ☺ :

Excerpt 6.10 (FSKP turns 9-12)

T: Do you have a copy of the assignment
  itself?
S:...A copy of the assignment itself?=
T: =yeah <teaching poetry and the English language>
  (..5) This gives me an idea of what they're looking for=
S: = All right.
T: All right..English 121.informative research paper .. " this is your chance to put
  everything we've learned together. In addition, you will learn to research in the library,
  gather information to help you think about your topic and document outside sources
  Your purpose is to inform a lay reader about your topic in an interesting way" <U..9U>
  ↑ "ONE book, ONE scholarly journal, ONE newspaper, ONE government document,
  one ➔reference wor:hahhk...find someone to interview if you can" ☺Ok, they did n
  ask for much
➔☺(↓nh shrug)... "To be decided. You may give some ideas, but we will avoid the old
  worn out ones, for sure" A:nd your topic was Teaching Poetry and the English
  language?.... Ok <U.2> "organization..=   =rhetorical strategies, or combination,
  compare/contrast, process analysis,
S: =Yeah=
T: cause effect, divide classify" Basically it's wide open... "I must have all of these steps
  or I cannot accept your paper"=   =.. well... ☺isn't that pleasant?☺=
S: =Alright=   =We don't have
  much of a choice, that's for sure=

Tutor FS begins to express his negative assessment of the instructor's assignment requirements with his repetition of the heavily stressed adjective "ONE" at ↑. He then

signals his frame of mind through the embedded laughter particles in the word "work" (wor:hahhk) in the next line and, in that same line, adds a sarcastic comment ("Ok, they did not ask for much") cued as humorous through a smiley voice and laughter. In his last turn, he adds ("isn't that pleasant?") in a tone and use of body gestures imitative of "Isn't that special," a catchphrase made popular by the Church Lady, a humorous character figure created and played by Dana Carvey on *Saturday Night Live*, a contemporary comedy show. Through the use of humorous comments and laughter, FS tries to get KP to laugh, but KP does not respond—not even to the serious question, "A:nd your topic was Teaching Poetry and the English language?"

KP's declination to accept FS's invitations to laugh in the opening and diagnostic phases was noted as problematic by all coders. Coder 1 noted, "At first, this conference didn't seem to be going well, because the student didn't respond to the tutor's attempts at humor. Eventually the conference smooths out and the T and S are sort of teasing each other. They seem to grow more comfortable as time goes on, and the amount of laughter seems to reflect this." Coder 2 observed much the same dynamic and wrote, "T and S start out looking somewhat ill at ease with each other particularly on S's part...although as the session progressed they seemed more comfortable." The lack of alignment between FS and KP in the initial phases is striking considering that FSKP contains the highest number of laughter initiations in the data set, and one explanation can be the differing role expectations each participant brought to the tutorial.

As discussed earlier in Chapter 4: Initiations, KP revealed in his post-tutorial interview that he came to his appointment expecting the tutor to be the authority ("I figured they would just read through the paper and mark what they thought I needed help

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with") and left the appointment with quite a different impression of his tutor ("Um,

FS...was easy to get along with, really, really quick...[he] made everything more

comfortable because I really didn't know what to expect from someone reading my

paper.") FS's affiliative humor attempts, which included disparagement of the assignment

and therefore the classroom instructor, must have been out of sync with KP's

expectations of FS as tutor-as-institutional-representative. KP's lack of acceptance of

FS's invitations to laugh was most likely due to his unfamiliarity with tutor-as-

collaborator role.

In contrast to FS's affiliative use of humor—which is also evident in FSEL, the

tutorial with the second highest number of laughter initiations—is student CK's

consistent use of self-defeating humor in tutorial ALCK. The opening phase was

discussed at some length in Chapter 4: Initiations to demonstrate tutor AL's use of M^2

laughter to mitigate CK's tension, and in Chapter 5: Responses to illustrate how an N

(Neutral) response to a speaker's bid for reassurance can be disaffiliative, and so will not

be reprinted here. However, CK's assessment of her writing shows up in other places in

the transcript in addition to her statement in the opening phase, "I know it's shit. You can

just laugh. I, I tried on this, I don't, I've never.." In the excerpts below, each time CK

introduces a laughable, she also uses laughter or a smiley voice to cue AL. (Self-

defeating comments are underlined, and laughter cues are indicated by [1]➜

Excerpt 6.11 (ALCK turns 69-70)

T: Organizationally I think that's for the better=
S: =Ok I didn't know if I should go point by
    point=   =or, and, you know what I'm ..☺ I just can't write ☺=
T: =yeah=   =you can but

sometimes it breaks down the flow of the uh summary and plus it seems like the
evaluations you're giving are kind of . they're quite similar..and so it sounded better to
say "I like this part"=

S: =Ri@@@ght, that's what I was say, "I know I like this, they
explained this well"

Excerpt 6.12 (ALCK turns 135-139)

T: then I was confused here "The problems when a person feels hypoglycemic can result
from inappropriate self treatment SUCH DOING"? Can keep the bg in the lower
range." I don't, I'm not sure what this means, "Such doing"?=   =Oh,

S: =By doing so like=

T: um=

S: =by doing the self-treatment, by not doin' it regularly? .=   =should [I have

T: =ok=   [maybe

S: [said that] I'm not sur@@e?   =(gesturing with hands)

T   >by not doing such that<=

S: ☺I'm not good with words and transitions and stuff like that☺

T: (continues reading
paper aloud) "The problems when a person fears hypoglycemia..."

Excerpt 6.13 (ALCK turns 163-167)

T: (reading from essay) "to be of a great
understanding"? .=   =☺but(↓hunh↓) tried to get

S: =I tried gettin, you know, aHA@@ but=

T: get scholarly or something?☺=

S: =Yeah, I don't know, I tried writing so I don't sound, like
retarded, and like I tried (HAHAHAHA)=

T: =You (smile) probably don't sound as retarded
as you think you do, but=

As Martin notes, one of the purposes of self-defeating humor is that it "attempts

to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one's own expense as a means of

ingratiating oneself or gaining approval," and in Excerpts 6.11 and 6.13 above CK does

get AL to respond to her self-defeating comment with one of approval and support,

although in Excerpt 6.12 AL does not respond.

While FS is a tutor who uses affiliative humor to put students at ease, and while CK is a student who uses self-defeating humor to gain approval, not all tutors use affiliative humor and not all students use self-defeating humor. Tutor HC, a female undergraduate, has a style of humor that coders 1 and 2 found difficult to interpret (See Ch. 4: Initiations for a discussion of HC's use of Disaffiliative humor) but which both Coders 1 and 2 agreed was not affiliative. While some students were observed by the Coders to be "nervous gigglers" (i.e. EL and CA), the students did not use self-defeating humor. Finally, some participants—notably male tutor CR, male student PR, and the male dyad of ALMS used little humor. This latter dyad—ALMS—was commented upon by Coders 1 and 2 for its lack of laughter though this did not affect the quality of the conference. Coder 1 noted "This conference went very well despite the fact that there were very few instances of laughter. The tutor and student seemed comfortable together, and out of the four instances of laughter, three of them were affliative." Coder 2 noted, "Almost no laughter and very little interaction beyond just what was needed for discussion. Each had his own copy of the paper and didn't need to sit closely, but they each seemed comfortable enough with each other. Very business like." The participants, in post-tutorial interviews, commented that the tutorial was successful: AL said, "I think it went pretty well. It was pretty much, 'Here's my paper. How's it goin'?' He was doin' a descriptive paper on a place…and I think the two biggest problems he had were he repeated information I already knew, and there were comma splices." MS echoed AL's recollection of the business rather than interpersonal impression of the tutorial: "I think it went pretty good. I think it was pretty much what I expected. I just kind of wanted a general overview of the paper, and that's what I got. [He] was pretty helpful."

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As this discussion has shown, the use of humor has several functions in tutorial interaction, and participants' individual humor styles can both positively and negatively affect what is communicated. Linda Francis, Kathleen Monahan, and Candyce Berger, in their study of the uses of humor in medical interactions, find humor to be a means of managing the emotions of others in situations of "inherent fragility and emotional intensity" (155). While tutorials do not involve life and death situations as do some medical interactions, tutorials can be filled with emotional intensity particularly if the student is working on a high-stakes paper which represents a large percentage of the student's course grade, or if discussing writing flaws is embarrassing for the student. Francis, Monahan, and Berger found that the professional uses humor to "build rapport, to calm and reassure, or to reduce embarrassment or other distancing emotions" while the layperson uses humor "…either to deny or distance the problem or to express anger at professionals" (171-2). In the present study, participants use humor to draw out laughter in ways similar to participants in Francis, Monahan, and Berger's study: to accomplish facework. Tutors use humor to elicit laughter and thereby enhance their own positive face by showing that they are good-natured people who are not overly serious. Tutors also use humor to protect the positive face of students by building rapport that puts students at ease and shows that tutors do not equate writing flaws with intellectual shortcomings. Tutors will often, in a humorous fashion, admit to students that they also make writing errors, and through the shared laughter that results, students become more relaxed. Students also use humor, particulary self-deprecating humor, to accomplish mutual facework. They laugh while using self-deprecating humor and thus show they are coping

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with their troubles, and they laugh at tutors' humor to show support and thereby enhance

tutors' positive face.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In efforts to expand what is known about the multi-faceted paralinguistic device of laughter, to improve what is known about the dynamics of interaction that occur in institutional contexts, and to improve institutional effectiveness—particularly that of writing centers—the verbal interactions that take place between professionals and lay persons warrant close study. It is within this talk-in-interaction that the business of the institution takes place: lay persons communicate their needs and abilities, and professionals communicate strategies to help build on those abilities and work toward goal fulfillment. However, while this communication is often straightforward and clear, it is frequently confounded by participants using various interactional strategies to mask embarrassment, confusion, feelings of inferiority, disagreement, offense, and other emotions that are difficult to express or are of a delicate nature. Laughter is one such strategy participants employ, and while the past three decades have seen progress in defining and describing the functions of laughter, we have far to go in understanding this complex form of communication.

With the need to further this understanding, this study was designed to build upon the work of laughter researchers in institutional contexts, and to investigate how laughter functions in one particular speech event: the writing tutorial. Virtually nothing has been done in this area with the exception of Terese Thonus's dissertation on attributes of successful tutorials, and she looked only at whether or not the laughter was single, sequenced, and simultaneous. Further, while laughter has been researched in other institutional contexts such as doctor-patient interviews, international negotiations, and educational settings, little has been done to distinguish the fine nuances that exist

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between the uses of laughter in these contexts. Finally, researchers have used the methodology of Conversational Analysis, and have used some quantitative methods to uncover the power differentials affecting laughter-in-interaction, but the present study is the first to use a hybrid methodology of the two as well as to triangulate the data through participant and coder observations in order to construct a more thorough understanding of the relation between power and the various types of laughter used to negotiate claims to power.

Laughter is difficult to study since it occurs not only in isolation, but frequently at the same time someone else is talking, and even in the middle of a word a speaker may be uttering. Because of its fleeting nature, laughter must be studied through video and audio recordings which can be transcribed and reviewed repeatedly. Conversation Analysis, which looks at talk-in-interaction, is an ideal methodology for this undertaking, but its shortcoming is that it looks only at what can be seen in the transcript: inclusions of participant observations or of raw counts of features across a data set are not included. The methodology of the present study, by contrast, allows for a richer understanding of tutorial interaction than Conversation Analysis alone would by showing not only how amounts and types of laughter used in one tutorial compare to that in another, but also allows for some comparison with other types in institutional interaction.

Further, the coding system which emerged from the data in this study allowed laughter to be classified according to more than simple dichotomous "Who laughed first?" and "Was there a corresponding response?" criteria. By delving into the reasons for initiations and describing the response types, the use of laughter by participants in tutorials can be more clearly understood.

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The major findings in this study show both similarities to and differences from what have become reified beliefs about the ways participants use laughter in institutional discourse. Similar to professionals' responses to laypersons in other institutional contexts, tutors tended not to respond to students' initiations of laughter, nor did they initiate much laughter on their own. Also similar to typical professionals' interactional behavior, tutors overwhelmingly gave neutral responses to student initiations. However, in this study, through more closely defining initiation and response types, and through the use of discourse features other than laughter, a more three-dimensional understanding of tutor and student behavior emerged than what is often portrayed as little more than a stereotype of professionals and laypersons.

In comparison to other institutional contexts, tutors show a wider range in the degree to which they attempt to claim power through discourse. Unlike other professionals such as doctors who maintain a degree of interpersonal distance, some tutors use much affiliative laughter to draw students closer, and approach a fairly equitable distribution of authority as evidenced through such discourse moves as speaking only slightly more than half as much as students, frequently using backchannels, yielding the floor when interrupted, or often responding affiliatively either through laughter or through verbal means.

Students, too, in this study defied the layperson stereotype of placidly supporting the professionals' laughter by using a neutral response 44% of the time. This suggests the nature of tutorials is such that students, while they may not feel empowered enough to overtly avoid invitations to laugh, may at least not feel as obligated to support tutors' laughter which is either unclear or disagreeable in its intention. The higher use of neutral

responses may also suggest that while tutors attempt to make less formal the distinction between tutor and student roles, students may not know how to interpret these attempts to bring participants closer together.

Due to the lack of clear patterns in gender differences in the use of laughter by participants in this study, the results are important because they shed new light on stereotypes of gender. The data do, to some degree, support results from many studies of gender in interaction: women initiate more laughter than men, women use laughter as a backchannel more than men, and male tutors make more claims to power than do female tutors by issuing more directives, asking more questions, and controlling the topic with greater frequency. However, this study shows that male tutors and students use a higher percentage of their laughter initiations to show affiliation or to invite the other person to come closer than do female tutors and students. Also, male students respond affiliatively almost as often as female students. Finally, female students respond neutrally almost as often as they do affiliatively. These results suggest that perhaps laughter that draws people closer and laughter that supports the other person is used by men more often than has been evidenced in other studies. Whether or not these differences are due to the nature of tutorial discourse or to the idiosyncrasies of these particular participants is not clear. Further, the number of participants in this study is too small to warrant conclusions about gender based on the present data.

However, some conclusions can be drawn about the functions of laughter in this study of writing tutorials. In writing tutorials, students make themselves vulnerable to criticism and tutors are expected to assume—often unwillingly—an identity of institutional authority. These roles have the potential to produce anxiety, and laughter is a

conversational strategy that participants use to encourage solidarity, mitigate critical comments, change topics or discourse boundaries, or to introduce embarrassing topics. Laughter can be used by participants either intentionally or unintentionally to reveal emotions. Both tutors and students at times feel inadequate due to a lack of knowledge. Students' writing and participation in the tutorial can reveal ignorance of writing conventions, strategies, and styles, and tutors' knowledge of these writing concerns may not be enough to answer student questions or to explain a particular problem. Through the use of laughter, these feelings can be intimated. Also, laugher can be used to communicate a willingness to break down role barriers inherent in institutional encounters. Participants can sense tension in one another and can use laughter as a way to ease that tension. Also, laughter can invite the other person to come closer, and can indicate a willingness to share authority. Finally, laughter can be used to support the other person's attempts at humor, and can signal alignment.

The results of this study have implications for theory in the fields of institutional discourse, humor studies, and writing center theory. First, this study has shown that even though participant roles in tutorials are not as clearly defined as in other institutional encounters, some participants have trouble interacting in a less dichotomous manner. Contrary to current theories in the field of writing center studies that position tutors less as authority figures and more as consultants or guides, in actual practice, at least in this study, tutors do assume the role of authority and students do assume the role of layperson. Since the goal a tutorial is different from other institutional contexts in terms of how power differentials are realized, more research should be aimed at uncovering how participant resistance to more egalitarian roles might be lessened. For example, a

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patient's goal in seeking medical advice is in part to get permission granted from the doctor/authority to procure medicine or treatments. The patient has no goal of being granted the authority to prescribe medicine for him or herself, and is quite content to let the doctor do so. In the case of tutorials, the tutor/authority has no such permission granting responsibilities and instead, in theory, is focused on helping the student to become his or her own authority. A student's goal is to become an efficient writer and not need the assistance of a tutor, and based on what laughter responses in this study show, particularly in terms of students' neutral responses to tutor laughter initiations, more research needs to be done to understand why students might resist sharing power.

Humor studies could benefit from the coding scheme devised for this study. Most studies of laugher have simply counted whether or not the laughter initiation was responded to, and have not attempted to further define what constitutes a response. Haakana (1999) has made progress is defining responses, but more needs to be done.

Finally writing center theory would benefit from incorporating research on laughter such as was done in this study. The results from this project indicate that tutorials are not necessarily of the collaborative nature that is theoretically desirable. Students, through laughter, indicate frequent moments of tension, and tutorials as learning experiences would benefit if the ways in which they are conducted might be rethought.

This study also has implications for practical applications in institutional settings particularly regarding training of professionals. Of particular use to professionals would be an awareness of the potential for laughter to signal when a layperson is talking about troubles. Whether in situations involving patients reporting symptoms, advisees seeking

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information, or international negations, laughter can reveal a speaker trying to make light of something that is painful or embarrassing to communicate. Sensitive, aware professionals can then respond in a manner that would alleviate the lay person's anxiety and allow more open interaction to occur. Professionals should be aware, too, of the potential of their own laughter to alienate other participants if the laughter is at the expense of the other person.

This study was not designed to see if the presence or absence of laughter is desirable; instead the goal was to see how laughter functions in interaction. While the results are indicative of the function of laughter in these ten tutorials, and cannot be portrayed with any validity to represent tutorials in general, what this study can represent is a need for further research into what roles age, gender, and claims to power play in the use of laughter.

APPENDIX A.1.

INSTRUCTOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY OF INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

TITLE: Instructor-student Communication in a Writing Center Setting
INVESTIGATOR: Mary Zdrojkowski
                      Director, Writing Development Center
                      Department of English
                      Eastern Michigan University
                      (313-487-0135)

      PURPOSE: To study instructor-student communication in a writing center setting; to gather information for articles on more effective instructor-student communication.

      DESCRIPTION: I understand that my Writing Development Center student conference will be recorded on videotape and later played back by the researcher to study the instructor-student communication. I also understand that the researcher will tape-record a follow-up telephone interview. If I wish, I may then contact the researcher and view and/or listen to the recording(s).

      CONFIDENTIALITY: I understand that any information about me obtained from this research will be kept strictly confidential. I consent to the publication of study results so long as the information is anonymous and/or disguised so that identification cannot be made.

      RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: I understand that I am free to refuse to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time; I understand that my decision will not adversely affect my assignment to the Writing Development Center in any way. I further understand that the videotape will NOT be used by the Writing Development Center Director or by Eastern Michigan University faculty or staff to evaluate my effectiveness as an instructor or to determine my continued assignment to the Writing Development Center.

      VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I certify that I have read the preceding or it has been read to me and that I understand its contents. Any questions I have pertaining to the research have been or will be answered by Mary Zdrojkowski. My signature below means that I have freely agreed to participate in this study.

_____   _____

Date   Participant's signature   Phone Number

                         _____

                         Participant's local address

                         _____

                         Participant's permanent address   Phone #

_____   _____

Date   Witness's signature   Phone Number

APPENDIX A.2.

STUDENT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY OF
INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

TITLE: Instructor-student Communication in a Writing Center Setting
INVESTIGATOR: Mary Zdrojkowski
                  Director, Writing Development Center
                  Department of English
                  Eastern Michigan University
                  (313-487-0135)

PURPOSE: To study instructor-student communication in a writing center setting; to gather information for articles on more effective instructor-student communication.

DESCRIPTION: I understand that my visit to the Writing Development Center will be recorded on videotape and later played back by the researcher to study the instructor-student communication. I also understand that photocopies will be made of my working draft and final draft of my assignment, and that a follow up telephone interview will be tape-recorded. If I wish, I may then contact the researcher and view and/or listen to the recording(s).

CONFIDENTIALITY: I understand that any information about me obtained from this research will be kept strictly confidential. I consent to the publication of study results so long as the information is anonymous and/or disguised so that identification cannot be made.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: I understand that I am free to refuse to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time; I understand that my decision will not adversely affect my visit to the Writing Development Center in any way.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I certify that I have read the preceding or it has been read to me and that I understand its contents. Any questions I have pertaining to the research have been or will be answered by Mary Zdrojkowski. My signature below means that I have freely agreed to participate in this study.

Date	Participant's signature	Phone Number
	Participant's local address	
	Participant's permanent address	Phone #
Date	Witness's signature	Phone Number

APPENDIX A.3.

DATE: _____

WRITING DEVELOPMENT CENTER
INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND HAND IT TO THE
PERSON YOU WILL BE MEETING WITH

Name: _____ ID# _____
        Last   First   M

What is your College? _____ Class Standing: Fr__ So__ Jr__ Se__

Have you declared a Major? _____ If so, what is it? _____

What is your native language? _____

I came to the Writing Development Center because:

_____ I referred myself

_____ My teacher suggested that I come

_____ My teacher required that I come

_____ Other, explain

I am seeking help with:

_____ An assignment for a course:
      Dept. _____ Course#_____ Instructor: _____

_____ A Non-academic writing project
_____ A personal statement for graduate or professional school

_____ Reviewing a completed piece of writing

_____ Other: _____

Please describe the help you would like to have. The workshop instructor will take
seriously any request you make below:

_____

_____

_____

NOTE: Your writing instructor will fill in the other side of this form.

Name of Instructor: _____ Code: _____

Time in Conference: _____ Time of Appt: _____

****

Workshop instructor's comments and recommendations (e.g. further Writing Development Center appointments):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We worked on (check all that apply):

1. _____ writer's block
2. _____ understanding the assignment
3. _____ defining & discovering a topic
4. _____ developing an approach
5. _____ researching a topic
6. _____ awareness of audience
7. _____ developing ideas
8. _____ using thesis statements
9. _____ supporting points with examples
10. _____ moving from summary to analysis
11. _____ reorganizing the draft
12. _____ citing sources
13. _____ consistency of point of view
14. _____ paragraphing
15. _____ transitions

16. _____ omitting sexist language
17. _____ style
18. _____ voice
19. _____ clarity of expression
20. _____ sentence structure
21. _____ sentence boundaries
22. _____ word choice
23. _____ verb usage
24. _____ pronoun usage
25. _____ punctuation
26. _____ spelling
27. _____ grammar
28. _____ Other _____

Signed:

_____

APPENDIX A.4.

WRITING DEVELOPMENT CENTER
EVALUATION FORM

TO THE STUDENT: Please complete the rest of this form, and return it to the receptionist. If you are being seen at one of our walk-in locations, please fold the form in half before giving it to the instructor

Date: _____   Class Standing

                                    FR__

College: _____   SO__

                                    JR __

Major: _____   SR__

                                    Other__

1. I came to the Center because: 2. I came to the Center to receive assistance with:
____ I referred myself   ____ a paper for a course
____ my teacher suggested that I come   ____ a personal statement for a job or graduate ____ my teacher required that I come
school

                                    ____ a non-academic writing project
                                    ____ reviewing a completed piece of writing
                                    ___ Other: _____

3. I received the following assistance   4. I received the following assistance
    in developing my project.   in the mechanics of writing.
                        (More than one can be checked)

____   understanding the assignment   ____   consistency of point of view
____   defining & discovering a topic   ____   transitions between paragraphs & sentences
____   rhetorical strategy   ____   sentence structure
____   awareness of the audience   ____   clarity of expression
____   developing my ideas   ____   omitting sexist language
____   researching my topic   ____   word choice
____   using thesis statement or topic sentences   ____   verb usage
____   supporting my points w/ detail or examples   ____   pronoun usage
____   moving from summary to analysis   ____   punctuation
____   reorganizing my draft   ____   spelling
____   revising my draft

Please respond to the following by circling the letters:
    SA=Strongly agree A=Agree N=Neither agree nor disagree D=Disagree SD=Strongly disagree

5. I feel better about my writing than I did before this appointment   SA   A   N   D   SD
6. I left the meeting with a better sense of how to
    (a) revise my paper: SA   A   N   D   SD
    (b) improve a particular aspect of the way I write: SA   A   N   D   SD
7. The workshop instructor
    (a) was knowledgeable about writing   SA   A   N   D   SD
8. I would probably come again for help with writing: SA   A   N   D   SD

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