The Peer Tutor Experience: Tutor Perceptions of Academic Performance and Skillset Gains

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Abstract

Although the research on the effects of peer tutoring is not in short supply, there is limited research on the effects of this experience for the peer tutor. Using a researcher-created survey based on themes in the literature, this study explored the perceived gains of peer tutors through their tutoring experience. Participants were recruited from tutors who worked for the past seven years at a small state college in Georgia. All subcategories showed a significant difference in the perceived skillset gains. Overall, these findings support the thesis that peer tutoring is an impactful experience not only for the tutee but also for the tutor.

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Higher education institutions are increasingly data-driven, as initiatives like Complete College America (CCA) and Gateway to Completion (G2C) are directly connected to campus funding. Additionally, higher education institutions are expected to supply the future workforce of America as global competition pushes for more employees who are better prepared. When discussing persistence in higher education, retention remains a focus of the discussion. Roberts and Styron (2010) discussed four main types of retention and the factors that contribute to the persistence of college students. One common factor consistently studied concerning retention is student engagement. Roberts and Styron also outlined seven factors that contribute to student engagement, two of those being social connectedness and involvement (2010). Nunez and Sansone (2016) learned in their collective case study that campus employment allowed the students to build a sense of community at

their institution. Pike, Kuh, and Massa-McKinley (2008) found that working part-time on campus had a positive relationship with grades. A later study related that student employment to resiliency and engagement in low-income, first-generation students and reported a significant relationship regarding student resiliency and the type of employment they had (Martinez, Bilges, Shabazz, Miller, & Morote, 2012). A later study found that student employment was related to resiliency and engagement among low-income, first generations students, and there was a relationship between resiliency and type of employment.

Peer tutoring in higher education is known by different nomenclatures. Institutions have reciprocal peer tutoring, peer tutoring programs, and peer-assisted learning. Regardless of their names, these tutoring programs provide benefits to the peer tutors, which until recently, has been overlooked in the literature. Gardner (2010) briefly discussed peer teaching/tutoring as one of the meaningful experiences for students, and peer tutoring has always been viewed as a high impact practice for campuses. As noted by Astin's analysis of factors (as cited in Nunez & Sansone, 2016), on-campus employment experiences, like that of peer tutoring, can provide student employees with increased time spent on campus, which could enhance their social connectedness and involvement in campus life. Although tutoring certainly provides academic support to aid in the persistence of the student being tutored (tutee), there is a gap in the literature on the way tutoring may influence peer tutor academic performance and skillset gains.

The purpose of this study was to investigate peer tutor perceptions of the tutoring experience as it related to academic performance and skillset gains. The research questions for this study were:

1) What are the perceptions of peer tutors regarding the influence of the tutoring experience on their academic performance, and their skillset gains (i.e., self-confidence and fulfillment and social and professional skills)?

2) Is there a statistically significant difference in these constructs with more experienced tutors?

Literature Review

Peer tutoring serves as one method used in higher education to assist students in the successful completion of course work through to graduation. However, tutoring can be viewed from multiple perspectives, such as being a student engagement tool, on-campus employment, and an impactful experience for the peer tutor. A review of the literature on peer tutoring and its impact on college campuses allows one to understand how to utilize this practice beyond that of its benefits for the tutee.

Academic Performance and Learning of Peer Tutors

In a review of research on the academic performance and learning of the peer tutor, there is a focus on the academic gains for tutors within the STEM and health sciences fields. Dioso-Henson (2012) looked at three relationships, one of which was between academic performance of tutors and non-tutors. The study was applied only to a Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) program in a college physics course (Dioso-Henson, 2012). As is the case in many of the previous studies, there was clear proof that tutoring required skills in simplification of content, communication, and organization. The aspect that makes this study unique is that academic performance was measured beyond those of skills gained through tutoring. The students tutoring in the RPT had marginally greater academic improvements in the course than those who did not use the program (Dioso-Henson, 2012). Brannagan et al., (2013) continued this trend with their study of the benefits of tutoring for the nursing peer tutor. There was a heavy focus on the skills gained through tutoring, but this mixed-methods study also discovered that tutors perceived an increase in their content knowledge.

As late as 2014, studies of peer tutoring began to center on the academic performance of the tutor. Iwata, Furmedge, Sturrock, and Gill (2014) studied students who served as Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) tutors and non-PAL tutors. While the study noted that part of the statistical significance could be due to the high achieving background of the PAL tutors, the researchers also learned that those who served as peer tutors performed better on final examinations in medical school than those who did not (Iwata et al., 2014). The study

recognized that PAL tutors may not be the experts in the subject area, but the social congruence required of the work is what connects to the tutees. In a similar study, Unger, Keiller, Inglis-Jassiem, and Hanekom (2014) focused on tutor gains for physiotherapy peer tutors. Utilizing both pre- and post-tests and focus groups, the study discovered that the peer tutoring experience had a positive influence on the tutors' perceptions of their learning. In conclusion, research in the area of tutor gains is focusing more on tutor persistence, but this research is currently only in the STEM fields of tutoring.

The literature of tutoring uses various lenses to examine the relationship of tutoring with persistence in higher education. Peer tutoring has been viewed for its use with tutee academic support, for its involvement in the campus employment arena, and finally in its relationship with tutor academic performance and skillset gains. These gains include academic performance in a course, communication skills, time management skills, and listening skills, to name a few. Much of the literature examines the soft skills associated with being a tutor, but more recent literature is hypothesizing about the peer tutor experience as it relates to STEM tutors' persistence and graduation. Studies in the field have divided the tutor group into subsets according to specific demographics like socio-economic status and student major. The literature, though, lacks a more thorough investigation of how the peer tutor experience relates to the skillset and learning gains.

Method

The current study used a quantitative methodology to understand the experience of peer tutoring, as perceived by the tutors at one college in Georgia. This survey sought participants who were employed as tutors since 2012, which included those that had since graduated and those currently employed in the center. Since the fall semester of 2012, the approximate tutor population for the center was about 150 peer tutors, all of whom were trained and certified through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). This study used the implementation of certification as the time frame for the study's participant pool. Each tutor served as such for at least one semester, but more often were peer tutors for multiple consecutive

years.

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's (ABAC) tutoring center, known as the Academic Achievement Center (AAC), serves the entire student population, which in the Fall of 2018 was 57% female and 43% male. The majority of students enrolled are White (79%) with Black or African American being the next largest group at 11% of the population. Students are typically traditionally aged, 89% of the enrolled students were 24 years old and under in the Fall of 2018 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Tutors provide services for all students throughout their academic career, starting with remedial courses up through upper-level in-major courses. However, the courses tutored vary by the semester due to tutors' classifications and academic background. Although students are encouraged to log in for all tutoring through Tutor Trac, some tutees prefer to not log in, so the enrollment statistics here are the best indicator of tutees served.

Regarding the support provided for the peer tutors at the AAC, the center is certified through the CRLA Tutor Training Program and training agenda reflects this certification. Tutors are evaluated once every semester, get trained in a large group setting before the semesters begin and then continue training elements throughout the year. Additionally, each larger content area (Math, English, Science, Agriculture, etc.) work closely with faculty in their respective area to receive biweekly content training on relevant topics and upcoming assignments. When students are not busy working with tutees, they are expected to review content for their areas or work on certification elements. If tutees are caught up in both areas, they are permitted to work on their homework, thus providing a job that supports their priorities as students.

Participants

When selecting a sampling approach for the study, the researcher considered the availability of potential participants and communication methods used for former tutors. In the end, the study utilized a convenience sample, with participants being those who were or are enrolled at ABAC from 2012 until the present. Tutoring is optional for all enrolled students, as the Center's staff

believes that voluntary participation in the tutoring center is the best approach for student success. Around 800 are students served annually by the AAC, varying by year and semester. In the Fall of 2018 through Spring 2019, 628 students logged in for tutoring, as opposed to the 796 students who logged in for the 2015-2016 academic year (Trac Systems, 2020).

Participants of this study were both current and former tutors who have been employed by the AAC as a peer tutor. ABAC is a state college in Georgia, with a strong agriculture history. To remain consistent with the sample groups selected, tutors in the sample groups were those who had been employed since certification requirements were implemented in the AAC at ABAC. The AAC, ABAC's peer tutoring center, began using certification requirements in 2012, so tutors invited to participate in the study were those employed since 2012. To provide as large a sample as possible, former tutors were recruited for the study as well. The potential participant pool was around 100 current and former tutors.

Instrument

Using a researcher-created survey (see Appendix A), this study assessed the opinions and attitudes of current and former tutors regarding academic and skillset gains while serving as a peer tutor. After exploring the literature about tutoring benefits, a survey was created to assess the key gains of those tutors. Basing the survey items on the literature review enhanced the content validity of the instrument. To enhance the validity, the researcher sought feedback about survey content items from experts in the tutoring field, such as elected officers in the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) and the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA). Any revisions noted by the experts were made before administering the survey. The Survey Item Grid (see Appendix B) was included to show the source of each item of the instrument.

The first part of the survey allowed participants to respond to statements regarding their work as a tutor and how that relates to skills gained. The skills gained included three main areas of focus: 1) academic performance and learning (item numbers 2, 8, 9); 2) self-confidence and fulfillment (item numbers 1, 5, 11); and 3) social

and professional skills (item numbers 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12). The third subcategory had double the number of items than the previous two subcategories. Having reviewed themes of gains in the literature, this skillset area had more research devoted to it, which is reflected in the number of items on the instrument. Part I of the instrument had a total of 12 items to which the tutors responded. For each statement, the participant assessed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed using a 5-point Likert scale. In this scale, 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly Agree. Part II of the instrument was the collected demographic information of the tutors including gender, race, academic level, primary tutoring area, and length of experience as a tutor.

The instrument was tested through a pilot group of tutoring center staff members, 10 participants in total. Any areas of feedback from the pilot group were noted and changes made to the survey if multiple pilot participants noted the same feedback. As is discussed in the limitations section of this study, there is potential bias in the use of this instrument because respondents may have enjoyed their tutoring experience more than others and many of the respondents happened to be former tutors, so recall bias may exist in that capacity.

Procedures

This study utilized a quantitative research approach intending to explore peer tutors' perceptions of their skillset gains through the experience of tutoring. Recruitment of participants occurred through a group email sent to all current and former peer tutors, but the survey utilized the "anonymous link" tool from Qualtrics (XM, 2019) to ensure anonymity among participants. Contact information for former tutors had been collected over the years, so the researcher was able to send the survey link to approximately 90% of the former tutors hired since 2012. As the researcher is the supervisor of any current tutors that may participate, permission to distribute the survey was sought through the Director of Academic Support at the institution, who oversees the coordinator of the tutoring center. Before recruiting tutors for the study, the researcher submitted appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) paperwork to the Institutional Research department contact at ABAC and to Georgia

Southern University, where the researcher is a doctoral student. The researcher created and distributed via email a passive consent letter to all tutors. At the bottom of this letter was a link to the survey. A link to the survey was provided at the bottom of this email letter. The survey was open for two weeks, with a follow-up reminder email sent midway through this period of availability.

Results

This study sought to understand the way peer tutors view their academic performance and skillset gains through the tutoring experience, so descriptive statistics were calculated to better understand the sample and responses. Data analyses were completed using a combination of SPSS (IBM Corp., 2016) and Microsoft Excel software. Percentages for each variable in the demographic section of the instrument were included for both the sample as a whole and as they related to the category of lower and senior tutors, according to experience level tutoring. Those labeled "less experienced tutors" self-reported one year or below of tutoring experience, while the "more experiences tutors" reported two or more years' experience. Table 1 offers a demographic view of the respondents in the study using percentages, broken down by such variables as gender, academic level, and race.

Percentages of demographic information

Characteristic	Percentage
Gender	
Male	32.0
Female	66.6
Prefer not to answer	1.3
Academic Level	
Sophomore	10.6
Junior	10.6
Senior	12.0
Former Tutor	66.6
Primary Tutoring Area	
Writing/Humanities	29.3
Social Sciences	1.3
Math	40.0
Science	17.3
Business	9.3
Ag/Natural Resource Management	2.6
Race	
White/Caucasian	84.0
Black/African American	5.3
Hispanic/Latino	9.3
Multiracial	1.3
Years as a Tutor	
1 Year and Less	46.6
2+ Years	53.3

n = 75

Over half of the respondents were female and the largest percentage of respondents were former tutors. Additionally, well over half of the respondents identified as White or Caucasian (84%), which is in agreement with the majority of the students at the college not only being White but also the largest percentage of tutors identifying as White. The next two largest groups in race were Hispanic/Latino (9.33%) and then Black/African American (5.33%). Tutors can assist in multiple classes, as their grades allow, but almost half of the tutors identified Math as their primary tutoring area. Writing/Humanities was the next largest group and Social Science tutors were the smallest group. The percentages of years of experience had less range between them. Outside of the class rank demographic, all areas in the demographic chart are indicative of the center's employees at large.

Table 2 shows the percentages for items one to twelve on the survey; these percentages are based on the total number of completed responses for that item, which is seen in the far-right column labeled n.

Table 2

Percentage of Responses for Peer Tutor Experience Survey

Survey Item	D	N	A	SA	*n*
Q1 Serving as a peer tutor increased my self-confidence.	2.7%	5.5%	36.1%	55.5%	75
Q2 Serving as a peer tutor improved my academic performance.	2.6	24.0	34.6	38.6	75
Q3 Serving as a peer tutor improved my communication and listening skills.	-	4.1	34.2	61.6	75
Q4 Serving as a peer tutor improved my time management skills.	3.2	29.5	44.2	22.9	75
Q5 Peer tutoring gave me feelings of fulfillment and accomplishment.	1.7	8.9	23.2	66.0	75
Q6 I developed a better sense of responsibility through my peer tutoring position.	4.0	14.0	30.0	52.0	75
Q7 Being a peer tutor allowed me to develop more patience.	1.3	20.0	40.0	38.6	75
Q8 Being a peer tutor helped me be more aware of my learning process.	2.6	16.0	45.3	36.0	75
Q9 Being a peer tutor helped me be more aware of the tutees' learning process.	1.3	14.6	45.3	38.6	75
Q10 My experience as a tutor helped me develop social skills, such as working with diverse groups and empathy skills.	0	12.1	43.2	44.5	75
Q11 Being a peer tutor made me feel more connected to the college.	4.0	8.0	36.0	52.0	75
Q12 I believe that the skills I gained from being a peer tutor will benefit my future professional life.	2.6	2.6	29.3	65.3	75

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither Agree nor Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

As Table 2 illustrates, none of the survey items elicited a response of below a Disagree on the scale. Most of the item responses fell in the Agree or Strongly Agree level of the scale. Questions 2 and 4 elicited large numbers of the neutral Neither Agree nor Disagree to these items. Questions that had larger percentages of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with their accompanying statements were 1, 4, 10, 11. One final item of note is that Question 3 and 10 had no Disagree responses.

For missing data, mean imputation was utilized and is also reflected in this table. Each item was not required for participants to submit their survey, so some items had fewer responses than others. For example, Questions 4, 5, and 6 had fewer responses than the total 75. The remainder of the questions had very few unanswered responses and nine of them had at least 70 participants respond.

Table 3 provides results from statistical analyses of the three subcategories of skillset gains, Self-Confidence and Fulfillment, Academic Performance and Learning, and Social and Professional Skills. Within each sub-category of skillset gains, the table is broken down by lower and senior tutors and data is provided for each (number of tutors, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean). The subcategory and total scores were calculated by summing up responses to items from each category (as noted in Appendix B's grid). For example, in the Academic Performance and Learning subcategory, scores from Questions 2, 8, and 9 were added for each respondent. The higher the score for each response, the greater agreement with the statement for that item, the lowest score being 1 and the highest 5. For the first 2 subcategories, the maximum score was 15 and for the Social and Professional Skills subcategory, the maximum score was 30. The maximum total score was 60.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Subcategories by Experience Level of Tutors

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Self-Confidence & Fulfilment	Lower Tutors	35	12.40	1.71
	Senior Tutors	40	13.40	1.39
Academic Performance & Learning	Lower Tutors	35	11.69	1.47
	Senior Tutors	40	13.13	1.71
Social & Professional Skills	Lower Tutors	35	24.51	2.66
	Senior Tutors	40	25.78	2.38
Total	Lower Tutors	35	48.60	4.54
	Senior Tutors	40	52.30	4.68

Note: Sample size was 75.

This table addressed the second research question for this study, showing that a relationship existed between the number of semesters or years of tutoring experience and tutors' perceived academic performance and skillset gains. The mean score in each sub-category was consistently higher for the senior tutors. For example, the mean score for the lower tutors in Self-Confidence and Fulfillment was 12.40 (SD= 1.72) and 13.40 (SD = 1.39) for the senior tutors in this same sub-category. The highest score means were in Social and Professional Skills. It should be noted, however, that the number of tutors in the lower and senior groups was not the same, as the senior tutors had five more participants.

Independent t-tests were conducted to determine if a significant difference existed in tutors' self-reported Self-Confidence and Fulfillment, Academic Performance and Learning, Social and Professional Skills, and total attitude score based on the number of years of tutoring experience. Table 4 presents the results of these independent t-tests.

Table 4

Results of Independent t-Tests

	t	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self Confidence & Fulfilment	-2.783	73	.007
Academic Performance & Learning	-3.876	73	.000
Social & Professional Skills	-2.166	73	.034
Total	-3.462	73	.001

Independent t-test results (t = -2.783, df = 73, p = .007) revealed a significant difference in the Self Confidence & Fulfillment at the .01 level. In the Academic Performance & Learning subcategory, the results (t= -3.876, df = 73, p □ .001) also indicated a significant difference in Academic Performance and Learning at the .01 level of significance with the senior tutors reporting higher scores in this area. The total attitude score (t = -3.462, df = 73, p = .001) was also significant at the .01 level; all three p values in these areas were less than .01. By comparison, there is a significant difference at the .05 level for the Social and Professional Skills area (t =-2.166, df = 73, p =.034). The Academic Performance & Learning

category, as was the case with the otter categories, reports perceived gains. Measuring true academic performance in terms of grade point averages proves challenging as there is no traditional cohort for tutors in a tutoring center.

Discussion

In this study, Academic Performance and Learning addressed one of the common areas in the literature. Unger et. al (2014) found that physiotherapy tutors have the benefit of their learning because of the required practice of the techniques. The findings of this current study supported this idea in the tutors' perceived Academic Performance and Learning, as tutors scored this item on the higher end of the Likert scale utilized (sub-category mean of 3.9). However, 24% of the respondents selected the neither agree nor disagree choice when responding to the prompt regarding improvement in academic performance, bringing forth questions of true perceived academic performance gains by the tutors. Al Kharusi (2016) and Clarke, Burgess, Menezes, and Mellis (2015) caution when accepting such neutral scores on this scale as tutors are normally the high performing students, to begin with, and high performers tend to under-estimate their performance. It is still noteworthy that between the lower and senior tutors in the current study, there was a 1.44-point increase in the longer serving tutors in terms of their perceived Academic Performance and Learning. Lower tutors reported a mean score of 11.69, compared to the mean score of 13.13 for the senior tutors. Both the lower and senior tutors come from the sample of those currently serving as a tutor and those that have graduated, as peer tutors are hired at all stages of the academic career. Although a large percentage of all respondents ranked this area gain in the higher end of the scale, the tutors that served a longer tenure perceived greater gains in this and all subcategories.

This study had similar findings to Al Kharusi (2016) in the academic benefits as tutors reported deeper learning and even an increase in academic mastery. De Backer et al. (2012 & 2015) found in both of their studies that the collaborative learning accomplished in peer tutoring was connected to increased amounts of metacognitive strategies for the peer tutors. Although their

2012 study recognized the possible external factors that could have contributed to these metacognitive gains, it is still noteworthy that these skillset gains were evident. Not only did tutors in this current study think their experience contributed to their academic performance, but the experience also allowed the tutors to think in deeper ways, something reflected in items 8 and 9 of the Peer Tutor Experience Survey (PTES).

Social and Professional Skills had the highest mean score for both lower and senior tutors, but this sub-category also had more items from the survey in it. As was the case in the PTES, multiple researchers had previously discussed the impact of tutoring on the peer tutors' soft skills, like that of communication, listening, and cultural awareness. For instance, Al Kharusi (2016) found that tutors were more aware of such values like responsibility, patience and punctuality, and appreciation of diversity. Tutors in one study identified the development of professionalism attributes as one of three main benefits of their experience (Clarke et al., 2015). Of the survey items with the largest percent of agreement were those in Social and Professional Skills, for such characteristics as patience, time management, responsibility, empathy, and professionalism.

The final sub-category of the PTES addressed the Self-confidence and Fulfillment gains perceived by peer tutors. The results reflected similar findings in the literature, like that of Galbraith and Winterbottom (2011). This earlier study found tutors tended to exhibit anxiety going into the tutoring role, but after just three sessions, there was a change in their expectations of the tutees, which may be indicative of an increase in self-esteem. Senior tutors in the current study had mean scores in Self-confidence and Fulfillment a point above those self-identified as lower tutors. In addition to this increase in self-confidence, tutors in previous studies felt more fulfilled in their tutoring role, noting that they enjoyed the role because it allowed them to help others, which made them feel like they have succeeded (Al Kharusi, 2016). Eighty-eight percent of the total responses to item 11 on the PTES were Agree or Strongly Agree, noting a high connection to campus. This connection to the college was also a common theme in previous research related to student employment benefits as well (Fede, Gorman, & Cimini, 2018; Nunez & Sansone, 2016).

Limitations

This study had several limitations that should be recognized, including the sample used. Using a convenience sampling model, the study only sought participants from a state college located in rural South Georgia. The findings from the study, in this case, are not generalizable to other tutoring centers in higher education. Additionally, tutors at this college created an extra limitation because of the lack of relative diversity in terms of age range and race. Most peer tutors at ABAC were traditionally aged students, ranging from 18 to 22 years old, which could impact the perceptions studied due to the life experiences of this age group. The largest percentage of respondents were former tutors, and this could also impact the results, as students that have completed college have more time to reflect on their work experience. A current tutor may not have had the time or life experiences to fully appreciate the gains that their tutoring experience provided. In future studies, the researcher could work more diligently to recruit a greater number of more experienced tutors, which would provide more balance to the sample. Including a larger sample with more current tutors could change the results. Because former tutors may have already graduated successfully, their perceptions of their tutoring experience would be more positive, which would give the results a bias.

It should also be noted that the sample group being studied was or had been employees of the researcher. Although the researcher used anonymous links and procedures to collect the data, there is a concern when researching one's environment. Once again, including more tutoring centers in future studies can help remedy this limitation. Finally, this study sought former peer tutors from ABAC as potential participants but recognizes that recruiting a large enough group of these individuals can be challenging due to out of date contact information and schedules of the former tutors.

Another limitation of this study lies in the instrument (PTES) used to measure the perceived tutor experience. Although the instrument, PTES, was based on a review of the literature (see Appendix B), the survey was researcher-created and was tested for validity. An SPSS report was also run for Cronbach's Alpha, to test the reliability coefficients. For the total instrument's 12 items,

Cronbach's Alpha was .769. The test was also run for each sub-category and was found to have a Cronbach Alpha of .571 for Academic Performance and Learning, a .497 for Self-confidence and Fulfillment, and a .577 for the final sub-category of Social and Professional Skills. The overall Cronbach's Alpha of .769 indicates that the items on the survey have high internal consistency and the scores for the survey as a whole were reliable.

Limitations existed in the use of the survey as well since the survey items note known benefits of tutoring, it is not surprising that the tutors would respond positively and in agreement. Since the questions are phrased in this way, there is some response bias as there is an appropriate response, and tutors may feel obligated to respond a certain way. Another limitation of the study is that the survey questions are not balanced. The survey questions ask about the commonly known benefits of tutoring, and tutors already know what the responses should be or feel obligated to respond positively. Instead of using a survey with this scale, the researcher could ask participants to write about their tutoring experiences, including what they felt were positive and negative about their experience as a tutor. Finally, the researcher recognizes the issues surrounding the classification of the tutors as "lower" and senior" and the perceptions that may accompany such linguistic choices. In future work, the phrasing will be reconsidered to reflect a more neutral manner of referring to the experience level of the peer tutors.

When discussing the results of the gains in the Academic Performance & Learning category, one should be wary of the perceived gains for the more experienced tutors as this may be expected since tutors who do not perform well academically would have to quit their jobs so they can spend more time on their studies. However, with the majority of ABAC students on some type of financial aid, one cannot readily say that all tutors would quit needed jobs when struggling to meet other life and school demands. Finally, the researcher recognizes the issues surrounding the classification of the tutors as "lower" and senior" and the perceptions that may accompany such linguistic choices. In future work, the phrasing will be reconsidered to reflect a more neutral manner of referring to the experience level of the peer tutors.

Implications for Practice

Whether one views peer tutoring from the lens of on-campus work experience or the lens of collaborative learning, the value of tutoring in higher education must be considered beyond how this service helps those being tutored. In a very general sense, on-campus employment allows student employees to build campus relationships and develop a sense of community at their institution. Institutions need to examine how they can duplicate the environment many tutoring centers have created so that more on-campus employees can experience similar benefits as the peer tutors did in this study.

Today's students are often viewed as lacking many of the soft skills required to be successful in life following college. However, participation in meaningful campus employment results in an improvement in such skills as empathy and problem-solving. Tutoring centers serve as spaces of content learning for tutees but should also be valued for the life skills they provide peer tutors. It should be noted that some skill development may be partly due to the intentional training that accompanies working in tutoring centers. Other departments on campus can model this to create meaningful employment positions for all student employees beyond those only housed in the campus tutoring center.

Regardless of whether this learning occurs inside the walls of a tutoring center or not, it is possible to mirror the collaborative environment created in a classroom setting. One of the more popular English professors at the home institution of this study is such because, as he explains, his classroom is modeled after a writing center, with a heavy emphasis on reflection and peer workshops. College classrooms can model tutoring centers' collaborative learning through peer and group work. Colleges may increase retention through such engagement practices in their classrooms.

Recommendations for Future Research

As this study examined only one tutoring center in Georgia and a very specific population of tutors at that center, it is recommended that future research should broaden the sample groups and provide a larger number of tutors for the study. Utilizing other tutoring centers would also allow for a more diverse sample, in terms of race

and age. Since this study was concerned with one drop-in tutoring center, a larger sample from various other types of tutoring centers would also be a direction for future research. Taking in to account the demographics that accompany the various tutoring center formats is something that could bring new perspectives to the perceived gains.

Additionally, the peer tutor experience could vary by specific demographics of the tutor. For instance, the way that a science-focused tutor views their academic gains can be unique compared to the way a writing tutor views these same gains. More studies surrounding the tutor experience could also explore how the traditionally aged tutor versus the nontraditionally aged tutor perceives the experience of being a peer tutor. More research in these areas within the peer tutor sample would allow for a new perspective on the experience as it relates to demographic variables. Long-term, the researcher wants to present data about the tutor experience beyond that of one cohort of tutors, which would give a more complete picture of tutor perceptions.

Finally, future research could be focused on the impact tutor training has on these perceived gains. Each center handles its tutor training differently, which could change the perceived gains of the tutors. Tutor training may include soft skill development like communication skills and time management skills. Many tutoring centers create their training based on specific certifying body requirements, which have their own set of topics to cover. Later studies in this field could investigate the relationship between training for tutors and their perceived skillset gains.

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Appendix A
Survey on Peer Tutor Experiences*

The purpose of this survey is to study the attitudes and experiences of being a peer tutor at a small state college in Georgia. There are two parts to this survey, the demographics section, and the tutoring experience section.

Part I: Survey Items

Please respond to the below statements by circling the number that reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. For current tutors, think about your experiences so far. For former tutors, think back on your experience while in the tutoring role. Below is the 5-point Likert scale that should be used when rating the statements.

1= Strongly Disagree
2= Disagree
3= Neither Agree nor Disagree
4= Agree
5= Strongly Agree

1. Serving as a peer tutor increased my self-confidence.
   1 2 3 4 5
2. Serving as a peer tutor improved my academic performance.
   1 2 3 4 5
3. Serving as a peer tutor improved my communication and listening skills.
   1 2 3 4 5
4. Serving as a peer tutor improved my time management skills.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. Peer tutoring gave me feelings of fulfillment and accomplishment.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. I developed a better sense of responsibility through my peer tutoring position.
   1 2 3 4 5
7. Being a peer tutor allowed me to develop more patience.
   1 2 3 4 5
8. Being a peer tutor helped me be more aware of the learning process for myself.
   1 2 3 4 5
9. Being a peer tutor helped me be more aware of the learning process for my tutees.
   1 2 3 4 5
10. My experience as a tutor helped me develop social skills, such as working with diverse groups and empathy skills.
    1 2 3 4 5
11. Being a peer tutor made me feel more connected to the college.
    1 2 3 4 5
12. I believe that the skills I gained from being a peer tutor will benefit my future professional life.
    1 2 3 4 5

Part II: Demographic Information

Gender: Male___ Female___Nonbinary/Third Gender_____
Prefer to Self-describe _____ Prefer not to respond _____

Academic Level: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Primary Tutoring Area:

Writing/Humanities _____
Social Sciences _____
Math _____
Science _____
Business _____
Agriculture/Natural Resource Management _____

Race: White/Caucasian Black/African American Hispanic/Latino
Asian/Pacific Islander Other Multiracial Prefer not to respond

Years Served as a Tutor at ABAC:
Less than 1 year 1 2 3 4+

*Note: The survey was created in the online Qualtrics software tool. The questions and answers have been replicated here, but the formatting and presentation are different.

Appendix B
Survey Item Grid

Research Questions:

1) What are the perceptions of peer tutors regarding the influence of the tutoring experience on their academic performance, and their skillset gains (i.e., self-confidence and fulfillment and social and professional skills)?

2) Is there a statistically significant difference in these constructs with more experienced tutors?

Survey Item	Item Topic	Research Literature
2, 8, 9	Academic performance and learning	Al Kharusi (2016); Galbraith & Winterbottom (2011); De Backer, Van Keer & Valcke (2012); Fiorella & Mayer (2013); Dioso-Henson (2012)
1, 5, 11	Self-confidence and fulfillment	Al Kharusi (2016); Iwata, Furmedge, Sturrock & Gill (2014); DeFeo & Caparas (2014)
3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12	Social and professional skills	Al Kharusi (2016); Arco-Tirado, Fernandez-Martin & Fernandez-Balboa (2011); Dioso-Henson (2012); Brannagan, Dellinger, Thomas, Mitchell, Lewis-Trabeaux & Dupre (2013); DeFeo & Caparas (2014)