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**Centered on writing : the relationship among writing centers,
writing programs, and training methodology**

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ABSTRACT

CENTERED ON WRITING: THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG WRITING CENTERS, WRITING PROGRAMS, AND TRAINING METHODOLOGY

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This thesis is focused writing center training methods and the ideologies transmitted through training to new writing tutors. It examines the effect of the working relationship among writing centers and the other writing programs on their campuses on training. This examination found that while the closeness of these working relationships did not affect training methodology, it was related to the ideologies emphasized during training. Specifically, writing centers with close working relationships with other campus writing programs emphasized non-directive tutoring in training less than writing centers with distant or no working relationships. Furthermore, the importance of tutor's interpersonal skills were emphasized across the writing centers surveyed, suggesting that these skills are universally valued by writing center. Ultimately, the results of this research suggest that writing centers value flexibility in their tutors, in their training methods, and in their positions within their home institutions.

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CENTERED ON WRITING: THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG WRITING CENTERS,
WRITING PROGRAMS, AND TRAINING METHODOLOGY

BY

ANNE KATHLEEN MARQUETTE
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A recurring theme in writing center literature is misunderstandings over the role and function of writing centers within their home institutions. Although Stephen North's hallmark piece, "The Idea of a Writing Center," has been highly influential since its publication in 1984, his frustration at being misunderstood by administration, faculty, and students is still felt by writing center staff thirty years later. Part of this misunderstanding stems from the heterogeneity of writing centers in higher education. Writing center staff share the same main goal and methodology (as well as universal challenges and frustrations), but each center is molded by, and molds itself to, the academic needs and administrative realities of its home institution. This individuality contributes to the persistent confusion on the part of outside observers regarding who writing centers should help, what centers should help them with, and how centers should go about the act of helping.

Writing centers, however, are not the only entities on campuses whose goal is to facilitate improvement in student writers. First-year writing programs introduce students to the higher standards of writing for higher education and are meant to provide writers with the skills they need to succeed in their other courses. Additionally, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) brings faculty from diverse departments together to integrate writing into every course of study, and there are writing programs targeted toward specific majors, English Language Learners

(ELLs), graduate students, and other subgroups within student populations. A college or university may have any or all of these programs operating jointly or independently.

Although all of these varied programs will share the same goals—helping student writers and increasing the standing of writing on their respective campuses—different programs will have different ideas regarding the best way to go about their missions and different methods to carry them out. Writing centers, with their focus on one-on-one, student- and process-centered dialogue, may see themselves as not only wholly separate from other writing programs, but even in opposition to them. This is particularly true of the historical perspective writing centers have held toward the composition classroom; starting as early as the 1950s, writing centers as a field have indulged in self-favoring comparisons to traditional composition teaching (Carino; Lerner; Nicolas; North, “Idea”).

Furthermore, the literature reveals no consensus regarding the relationship between writing centers and other campus writing programs. Although North and his followers maintain that writing centers “are not here to serve, supplement, back up, complement, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any external curriculum” (North, “Idea” 72), the International Writing Center Association lists “supplement[ing] instruction in writing courses” (“Writing Center Concept”) as a “typical” goal. There have been as many calls for collaboration with other campus writing programs as there have been warnings to keep writing centers independent so as not to become redundant. This lack of consensus allows, or perhaps forces, individual writing centers to negotiate those relationships at their home institutions.

Once writing center staff situate themselves into the writing-related context of their home institutions, they must establish and maintain an effective and consistent writing center culture. New staff often have as little information, or as much misinformation, as administration or

faculty in terms of what goes on within a writing center. Furthermore, writing centers often see high turnover in staff as student tutors are hired, finish their degrees, and move on. In order to both correct lingering misunderstandings and provide the best help possible to writers, every member of a writing center's staff must understand and represent that writing center's philosophical and pedagogical mission.

The academic and administrative situation of each writing center will affect the amount and type of training provided to incoming staff. This situation requires writing center training staff to a) include as much information and experience as possible in a relatively short amount of time and b) narrow the training's focus to highlight what they feel are the most important components of their individual writing center. As such, a writing center's training regimen becomes a window into the values and culture of that particular writing center.

While writing center directors occasionally publish the details of their centers' training (Gaskins and Roeger; Marcus; North, "Training Tutors"), there has been little research done regarding what combination of training methodology is most effective or which writing center ideologies should be prioritized. Even less research has been done examining what factors influence the training that occurs within writing centers. In response, this study examines the relationship between writing centers and other writing programs on their campuses and determines whether that relationship is related to their writing center training practices.

Research Questions

The following questions will inform my study:

1. How do writing center staff situate themselves in relation to their home institution's other writing programs?
2. How do these relationships affect the training regimen for new writing center staff?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Brief History of the Field

Writing centers are relatively simple to spot but difficult to define. There is no field-wide agreement on the precise role or function of a writing center within an institution. As William Macauley and Nicholas Mauriello write,

Compared with other academic fields, writing centers have relatively few field-wide statements of minimal standards for our work. This is not because we lack standards but because we are so diverse, so contextualized, so responsive to the needs of individual institutions, campuses, departments, and students that we haven't found standards that work well enough for enough of us. (xv)

However, at their most basic, writing centers are places where writers can talk one-on-one with a trained writing consultant about whatever writing they want to accomplish. Although writing center sessions start with a writer's specific document or writing goal, this is simply a starting point to create an interaction that encourages a writer to articulate and understand his or her writing process and learn and develop writing strategies. North's declaration that writing centers "produce better writers, not better writing" ("Idea" 69) has served as a common touchstone for a field that is marked by individual centers with individual needs and goals.

North's foundational 1984 piece, "The Idea of a Writing Center," points to an ongoing shift in the nature of writing centers as writing center staff try to distance themselves from the original idea of writing labs. First appearing in the early 20th century (Carino, "Early Writing Centers"), writing labs were created to assist remedial students with writing mechanics through

skill drills and worksheets. These labs were seen as places where “lacking students” could learn the grammar and punctuation rules necessary for “correct” English usage. Nancy Maloney Grimm points to the troubling ideological basis for writing labs: “This institutional history is rooted in a time when ‘underprepared’ students began coming to college and writing centers were created to offer these unfamiliar students one last chance to remove traces of their educational and cultural backgrounds” (530). The original writing labs can be seen more as centers of indoctrination than centers of student improvement.

Fortunately, with changes in understanding about the purpose of higher education and new insights into the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of teaching writing, both writing center staff and school administrators recognized the potential of what writing labs could become. Previous writing labs and new programs embraced the title “Writing Center,” marking a change in both mission and attitude (Boquet). Instead of drilling mechanics skills in remedial students as punishment for incorrect usage, writing centers became determined to work with any level of writer on any stage in the writing process (Ryan and Zimmerelli).

Past Perceptions Lead to Current Problems

Despite these positive changes, writing centers, as a field, still struggle against their problematic beginnings. First, as much as writing centers have changed, they are still associated with remedial help and quick grammar fixes by administrators and faculty (Harris). When administrators and faculty do not have a clear understanding of what work is done in a writing center, writing center staff feel marginalized, both in individual centers and as an entire field (Macauley and Mauriello). North’s “The Idea of a Writing Center” was written more out of frustration than with the intent to galvanize writing center directors and staff (North

“Revisiting”). Thirty years later, writing centers are still plagued by a fundamental misunderstanding of what they do to help students.

Second, many of the main questions debated within and among writing centers stem from their original function. As Grimm summarizes, “Even though many writing centers seek to put their remedial history behind them, the writing center questions that won't go away...are all questions rooted in the fact that writing centers were expected to solve the problems students weren't supposed to have when they came to college” (531). Debates about collaboration and plagiarism; about the relationship among students, writing center staff, and instructors; even about what to call writing center staff—all take place against this historical backdrop.

These debates are crucial, not just for writing centers, but for all institutions of higher learning. As North points out, “Writing centers are simply one manifestation—polished and highly visible—of a dialogue about writing that is central to higher education” (North, “Idea” 71). North does not clarify what he means when he says “a dialogue about writing,” as there are multiple dialogues that must be engaged with.

First is the most theoretical dialogue, which explores the relationship between writing and knowledge. Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch suggests that there is a natural alignment between writing center work and post-process theory. This theory claims that writing is public, interpretive, and situated. In other words, writers work toward communicating their ideas with an audience, shape meaning through the act of writing, and respond to specific situations instead of relying on any set of fundamental rules. Writing is not a subject that can be mastered, but is instead an activity that can be practiced and improved. Post-process theory “emphasizes dialogue in writing instruction, as well as the importance of mentoring” (121), both of which characterize work in writing centers. Furthermore, the idea that there is no objective knowledge that is

unaffected by our interpretations challenges traditional understandings of institutions of higher learning as repositories or dispensaries of knowledge.

Second is the dialogue regarding academic discourse and literacy. As a part of moving past the ideologies of the first writing labs, writing centers generally recognize the distinction between “correct” writing and “academic” writing. The first suggests that there is one particular way to use the English language that can and should be applied across all situations and in all communities. The second acknowledges that language is comprised of context-specific dialects, and that academic writing, while more highly valued in the arenas of higher learning and professional fields, is simply another dialect to add to one’s repertoire. Grimm argues that writing centers should be a place where writers not only develop academic writing skills, but talk through the benefits and disadvantages involved in developing them.

Third, there is the most practical dialogue, which is whether or not student writers perform the writing they are expected to and whether this writing is beneficial. Writing centers operate on the borderlands of their institutions (North “Idea”; Macauley and Mauriello), and while this is not without its issues, it provides valuable insight into the complex interaction among writer, assignment, pedagogy, and an institution’s mission. Student writers are often more candid in their one-on-one conversations with writing center staff than they are in conversations with faculty members (Marcus): “I don’t understand this prompt;” “I haven’t started this paper yet, and it’s due tomorrow;” “I want to write about x , but I don’t think my instructor will agree with me, so I’m going to write about y .” Grimm criticizes the tendency of writing centers to act as complacent mediators between students and faculty, but the positioning of writing centers between these two groups can yield important feedback to both without the complication of evaluation or hierarchy in the way.

The Perceived Relationship between Writing Centers and Writing Instruction

While writing center staff are concerned with all three of these dialogues, their opinions are sought overwhelmingly in regard to the most practical. As a result, writing center staff tend to perceive their centers in terms of contrast or opposition to traditional instruction and to perceive themselves and their work as marginalized within both their home institution and academia (Macauley and Mauriello). Writing center literature is characterized by self-favoring comparisons between the role of writing centers and the role of traditional instruction. Neal Lerner quotes a 1950 Conference on College and Communication workshop, which claims that “the writing laboratory should be what the classroom often is not—natural, realistic, and friendly” (58). North suggests that “Whereas going to keep a conference with a teacher is, almost by definition, a kind of goal or deadline—a stopping place—going to talk in the writing center is a means of getting started, or a way to keep going” (“Idea” 74). Melissa Nicolas points to two popular metaphors for writing centers, “havens” and “parlors” (5), suggesting that these spaces are necessary for students to escape from the implied harsher and less forgiving areas of traditional learning. Peter Carino summarizes writing center literature by stating that such comparisons “[reify] administration as a Dickensian chancery, [vilify] classroom teachers as current-traditionalist Gradgrinds, but [sanctify] writing center folk as kind, liberal, nurturing, and theoretically hip advocates of the poor, oppressed student” (“What Do We” 39).

Oppositional us-vs-them rhetoric helps define and bind together a heterogeneous field and can create a unifying sense of commiseration among writing center staff (Macauley and Mauriello). This rhetoric is also appealing in the face of budget cuts, unstable administrative support, and continued perceptions of being undervalued by faculty and home institutions. These

self-perceptions of writing centers can heavily influence the attitudes of writing center staff by encouraging them to carve out, and protect, a separate ideological space in their home institution for themselves (Macauley and Mauriello).

As contrary to their home institutions as they choose to present themselves, writing center staff perceive themselves as unambiguously on the side of the student writer. As Muriel Harris claims, “tutors perform a valuable service for their students. Since tutors speak with words students recognize and understand, they act as interpreters for those bewildered by the critical vocabulary of teachers” (380). In fact, the goal of any true writing center is to make themselves obsolete: “we offer help and assistance to blocked or struggling or novice writers, but our goal is to foster ‘independency,’ to empower writers with the tools they need to work through texts themselves, not to rely on others inordinately for help with their writing” (Pemberton 64).

Writing Centers and Other Campus Writing Programs

Ostensibly, all higher education writing programs, including writing centers, have the same goal: to improve the standard, quality, and value of writing within a college or university. Writing centers are shaped by the academic and administrative realities of their institutions (Decker), and this includes the working relationships they have with other writing programs on their respective campuses. However, different writing programs are implemented in response to different perceived writing needs and will, therefore, not always be completely aligned with one another. First-year writing programs are geared toward incoming students, while Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs are geared toward faculty and their course design (Barnett). Writing centers, as locations in which all aspects of writing are discussed, have much to offer, and much to learn from, both types of writing programs.

Historically, writing centers and other writing programs have relationships that are, at best, neutral. According to Carino, “Composition and writing-center scholars are both guilty of oppressing the other, the former by marginalizing center work, the latter by vilifying composition” (“Writing Centers and Writing Programs” 7). While the benefits of collaboration among various campus writing programs would be significant, both in terms of student learning and faculty development, “building and maintaining such complex partnerships in higher education is a challenge” (Guenzel, Murphree, and Brennan 70). Writing programs may remain separate due to inadequate funding or time, internal disputes, or simply lack of interest. When collaboration is attempted, writing centers often find themselves providing support to faculty and administrators who still do not have a clear idea of the work that is done in a writing center.

This supportive role is most visible in course-embedded tutoring, where tutors from a writing center are integrated into a section of a first-year writing program or a course within a discipline outside of English (WAC). These tutors may have different names, such as “Writing Fellows” or “Disciplinary Writing Consultants” (Guenzel, Murphree, and Brennan 70), but their background and training are from their institution’s writing center. This practice can be traced back to Brown University: “Established in 1982, the Brown University’s Writing Fellows Program was the first to formally pair small cohorts of students with a writing tutor to receive individual assistance for the duration of a course” (Guenzel, Murphree, and Brennan 70). The success of Brown’s program has led to universities and colleges across the country adopting similar programs.

Kim Moreland, a previous writing tutor at Brown University during the implementation of the Writing Fellows Program, discusses its benefits.

First, students in a variety of disciplines are exposed to basic information about writing...Second, instructors who feel that they have neither the time nor the expertise to deal with writing problems, yet who feel a sincere concern about the decline of the quality of student writing, now have the opportunity to act constructively. (2)

Despite these benefits, Richard Leahy found that guidelines were necessary to ensure the most productive use of writing tutors within classrooms. When Leahy implemented his own Writing Fellows program at Boise State University, he found that “at one extreme, a professor ended up not using his [writing tutor] at all” (11); the professor was so unused to integrating writing into his course that he was not sure how to incorporate the writing tutor into his plans. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Leahy found that

A professor placed far too many demands on his [writing tutor]. He had her working with three different classes, all of whom were required to write journals as well as a number of formal projects. She was expected to read almost everything the students wrote. The instructor once even sent her to the library to track down a case of suspected plagiarism. (11)

These two examples are illustrative of two prevailing attitudes regarding writing center work. Some faculty and administrators ignore the writing center, while others expect writing centers to work miracles (North “Idea”). In either case, it points to a general misunderstanding of writing centers that becomes even more problematic when it is time to collaborate across different writing programs.

Potential Solutions

One solution that has been proposed is to have new instructors—mainly graduate TAs who will teach first-year composition—trained in the writing center before they begin their teaching duties. Irene Clark proposes that future composition teachers have much to gain by working in a writing center.

Experience in the Writing Center has an important influence on the way in which new instructors approach student papers, helping them to avoid placing undue emphasis on error, a tendency which still exists, despite recent research, and which may have been part of their own backgrounds. In almost everyone's experience with writing, there seems to lurk the spectre of a red-pen-brandishing English teacher, and it is not uncommon for new instructors to emulate the teaching approaches by which they themselves were taught, even if they abhorred those approaches when they were students. (348)

Clark points out that even with the knowledge and understanding that writing is a process, composition faculty may still “focus on narrowing the gap between the actual text and what Ann Matsuhashi calls some ‘unreachable ideal’” (348). This focus may improve individual texts, but does not provide writers with the skills they need to revise future work. Bonnie Zelenak, Irv Cockriel, Eric Crump, and Elaine Hocks put Clark’s theory into practice, and the results demonstrated faster diagnosis of essays, improved ability to explain assignments, and increased empathy toward student writers. Understanding what kind of learning goes on within a writing center not only dispels faculty misunderstandings, but can also allow faculty to reexamine their own teaching methods.

However, the relationship between writing centers and other writing programs should not be a one-way street with the writing center providing support and resources for first-year writing programs or WAC. As Teagan Decker claims, “Of the many things that define a writing center, one of the most crucial is the relationship it has with those who assign the writing in the first place” (17). Collaboration and feedback from other writing programs allows writing centers to more fully understand the position its institution has on writing. Through involvement with other writing programs on campus, writing center staff may work to support this position or challenge it, depending on their own views on the role of writing in higher education.

The Importance of Training

More practically, collaboration among writing centers and other campus writing programs offers opportunities for writing tutors to grow as students and as professionals. According to Scott DeLoach, Ebony Breaux, Elyse Angel, Kevin Keebler, and Kathleen Klompfen, embedding tutors in classrooms provides them with “new challenges, the opportunity to see what classroom teaching is really like, and a chance to forge deeper bonds with faculty” (14). Saginaw Valley State University’s writing center partners sections of a developmental writing course with writing tutors who were developmental writers themselves; as a result, Helen Raica-Klotz and her colleagues noted that “our embedded tutors are positioned with a unique world view: through their past experiences in the developmental writing classroom, they understand the students, the course expectations, and the demands of being a first-year developmental writer at the university” (21). Writing tutors who are given the opportunity to work with classes must learn to negotiate “the identities of student, tutor, and instructor” (21), which “results in tremendous change and growth” (21).

Of course, as Raica-Klotz and colleagues acknowledge, this change and growth is on top of the personal and professional development writing tutors go through in the course of working in a writing center—development that begins with training. Writing center training programs are as varied as writing centers themselves; depending on the needs of the writing center and its home institution, training could take anywhere from a day-long orientation to a mandatory semester-long class. Furthermore, different training programs require different amounts of reading writing center theory, direct or indirect observation (North, “Training Tutors” 436),

practice tutoring (North, “Training Tutors” 436, 438), and personal reflection (Gaskins and Roeger 58, 60).

The importance of training cannot be understated; inadequate training of new staff can actively work against a writing center. If tutors are not sufficiently trained, they are more likely to address sentence-level issues rather than global-level issues, become preoccupied with identifying every error rather than identifying patterns of error, and talk at writers rather than with them (Dossin 11). All of these tendencies work against the goal of writing centers, which is to empower writers to improve their own writing (North, “Idea”).

Because writing center practices are so different from other writing programs on a campus, new staff must undergo training to both understand and implement these practices. The role of a writing center tutor is unlike the roles of teachers and students that new staff are used to. As Harris explains, a writing tutor is a

hybrid, somewhere between a peer and a teacher, who cannot lean too much one way or the other. Suspended with a foot in each discourse community, tutors perform a valuable service for their students. Since tutors speak with words students recognize and understand, they act as interpreters for those bewildered by the critical vocabulary of teachers. (380)

This hybrid role can be difficult to step into, particularly when new staff are only familiar with the teacher-student hierarchy. Writing center tutors must “make sure not to cast themselves as arbiters or final authorities” (Pemberton 68); instead they must play a supporting role, engaging the writer with his or her own writing through conversation and example.

To be an effective writing tutor, a new hire needs to know more than the ins and outs of academic discourse. Successful tutoring, according to North, means “knowing how to talk about writing. It means knowing how to take writers seriously, how to establish rapport. It means treating tutees as writers at work; finding out, one way or another, what they are trying to do. It

means letting the writers do the work” (“Training Tutors” 439). However, letting writers do the work is easier said than done. As Harris points out, “tutors are supposed to be trained to be better acquainted with the conventions of academic discourse than students...but the more skilled tutors are, the further they are from being peers in a collaborative relationship” (379). When writers rely too heavily on writing tutors’ suggestions, they relinquish control over their own writing. Pemberton offers a solution: “When tutors are asked what they would do about a given passage or essay, they should immediately turn this to a discussion of the student's own goals and the expectations of the paper's intended audience” (68). Writing center tutors must be trained to not just have the answers, but to purposely not provide them to writers so they can find these answers on their own.

The question then becomes how to train new hires so they understand both the writing process and their relationship with the writers they help. North describes his writing center’s training regimen:

demonstration role playing (where I play the tutee and the tutors play themselves); tutor role playing (where the tutors take turns playing the tutee, usually with preparations made before class); videotapes of other people in tutorial situations (and, later in the course, tapes of the tutors themselves); observation of live tutorials; and my anecdotal accounts of tutoring experiences. (“Training Tutors” 436-437)

Of these techniques, he claims that demonstration role playing is the most helpful for new writing center staff. Other authors identify role playing and discussion (Marcus) and process recording (Gaskins and Roeger) as useful techniques. However, there is a dearth of research outlining and comparing different writing centers’ training programs, and there is no consensus on the most effective training regimen.

Non-Directive vs. Directive Tutoring

In terms of training philosophy, writing centers have long considered the non-directive approach as the golden standard of successfully implementing their mission. Non-directive tutoring is characterized by open-ended questions and Socratic conversation and is associated with the ideal dialogues writing centers wish to create (Corbett). In contrast, directive tutoring is characterized by tutors modeling or instructing writers on writing techniques and is associated with traditional institutional instruction (Corbett). If a writer were to ask, “Do I need a transition here?”, a directive approach would be to suggest an appropriate transition between the ideas; a non-directive approach would be to ask “Why do you think that?” or “What makes a good transition?”

An allegiance to a non-directive tutoring approach has been instrumental in defining, and defending, the role of writing center staff in relation to the institution’s faculty (Grimm; Corbett). North’s standards for his writing tutors are grounded in the non-directive approach: “they can tolerate useful silences up to three minutes; they reduce their share of the conference talk close to the 50% ideal I set for them” (North, “Training Tutors” 438). Steven Corbett identifies the extremes of non-directive theory, stating that Jeff Brooks “goes so far as to advise that if a tutee seems unwilling to take an active role in the tutorial, that tutors simply mimic the tutee’s unengaged attitude and action” (84-85) and that Thomas Thompson “urged tutors to avoid having a pen in hand during tutorials” (85).

Corbett argues that writing center staff should be flexible in moving between directive and non-directive tutoring. Corbett sees North’s prescriptions for his tutors as “defense mechanisms resulting from the marginalized history within the university and their subsequent

paranoia over plagiarism” (86). Corbett argues that students can see the non-directive approach of a tutor as simply withholding useful information from them and quotes Grimm, who states that non-directive tutoring approaches “protect the status quo and withhold insider knowledge, inadvertently keeping students from nonmainstream cultures on the sidelines, making them guess about what the mainstream culture expects or frustrating them into less productive attitudes” (Corbett 90). He cites Carino’s “simple equation for when to be direct and when to be nondirect: The more knowledge the student holds, the more nondirective we should be; the less knowledge the student holds, the more directive we should be” (Corbett 86). According to Corbett, writing center staff should feel comfortable and confident in practicing “along a continuum of instructional choices both collaborative and empowering” (95) instead of applying a non-directive approach across every situation.

The Role of Interpersonal Skills

The role of writing center staff is also debatable in terms of the relationship between individual writers and individual staff members. Nicolas claims that building rapport with writers is essential, and Paula Gillespie, Brad Hughes, and Harvey Kail argue that “the writing center is one of the very few places in the academy where students take each other seriously as writers and thinkers” (37). Harris speaks to the difficulty of managing both the student writer’s and his or her teacher’s goals for the session while remaining true to the mission of writing centers. Yielding to student demands is, to an extent, necessary to move forward in some sessions, but Michael Pemberton cautions against enabling students who exhibit dependent behavior from relying too heavily on the writing center and its staff. Still, empathy with student writers is a unique benefit to working in a writing center (Clark). Lerner cites James Paul Gee’s concept of

“affinity space” (57), where both writer and staff member possess individual knowledge and share that knowledge with each other. Collaborative learning requires collaboration.

This collaboration requires an understanding of writers as individuals. As Harris points out, a writing tutor’s attention needs to be on more than just the written document. On top of whatever issues the piece of writing brings up, “the tutor may hear in the initial conversation with the student so much hostility, indifference, or anxiety that the tutor needs to backtrack and deal with that” (374). Even in more typical, less dramatic sessions, the building of rapport is an important component in ensuring that student writers get the most out of their time in the writing center. As Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli advise, “As you work with individuals, your words and actions should convey sensitivity and understanding; each writer deserves to be treated fairly and with respect” (59). Ideally, new tutors are hired because they already hold this attitude; however, no research has been conducted on how writing centers reinforce this idea in training.

The Present Research

Although much has been written about the relationship between writing centers and other campus writing programs, both in theory and in practice, less has been written about the training regimens of different writing centers. While the field is in agreement that writing centers are shaped by institutional factors, such as other writing programs on campus, even less research has been conducted on the measurable effects of these factors. The purpose of this study is to explore how writing center staff perceive their relationship to their home institutions’ other writing programs and how this perception affects the training of new writing center staff.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this research was to examine the current state of writing centers in regard to their working relationships with other campus writing programs and their training processes. This research was a mixed-methods study. The quantitative portion, a short online survey, directly measured the variables of interest—perceived relationship with other campus writing programs, extent of training programs, training methodology, and ideology—while the qualitative portion, interviews with writing center directors, put these data into context and provided a clearer picture of the state of the field.

Participants

Recruitment

I compiled a contact list of 133 writing center directors by accessing college and university websites from six Midwestern states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin). The first round of surveys was sent to this contact list. Following a poor turn-out rate (7 completed surveys out of 133 directors contacted), I made the survey available on the WCenter Listserv, a nationwide messageboard for writing center staff. Thirty-one additional participants were recruited from this messageboard post.

I selected interview participants from those writing center directors who responded to the first round of survey collection and indicated that they were available for interviews. Of these participants, I contacted five to set up interviews.

Demographics

The 38 writing center directors who completed surveys represent a combination of private and public colleges and universities from 17 states. The five interviewed writing center directors were all from the Midwest. Dr. K's writing center is located in a public state university. Dr. H and Dr. W work for private universities, and Dr. C and Ms. P work for private colleges.

Setting and Measures

Setting

All surveys were conducted online using Qualtrics survey hosting software. Of the five interviews, I conducted three in person on each writing center director's respective campus, one using Skype, and one over the phone.

Measures

Both the survey and interview questions were designed to gather demographic data as well as data relevant to the research questions. I generated the questions after reading through the field's literature to understand the factors and potential indicators of a writing center's different working relationships as well as to list common training methodologies. See Appendix A and B for complete survey and interview questions, respectively.

Procedure

Survey

Participants were given access to a link that sent them to the survey on the Qualtrics website. Before proceeding with the survey, each participant was provided with a consent form and asked to indicate that they had read the form, agreed to its terms, and had any of their questions answered. Participants were also asked to supply their electronic signature and the current date. The final question of the survey asked whether the participant was interested in being interviewed about the issues studied in the survey. If “yes” was selected, participants were prompted to provide their contact information. Although personal data were collected, they were and are kept secure through my password-protected Qualtrics account; furthermore, these data were not used at any point in the analyses of the overall survey data.

Interviews

The interviews started with requests for the writing center directors to provide brief overviews of the history of their writing centers. This history included when and how the writing centers were established and changes in directorship, location, and size of staff. This introduction was followed by 11 interview questions (see Appendix B). At the close of the interviews, I asked the writing center directors if they had any final comments and if they wanted to elaborate or expand on a previous point. I took detailed notes during each of the interviews, and two of the interviews were recorded with consent using the Voice Record iOS app. The transcripts of these two interviews, and the notes taken during the remaining three, comprised the raw interview data. None of the writing center directors offered corrections to their transcripts or notes.

Conceptual Memos

After organizing the five sets of interview notes and transcribing the two interview recordings, I sent these materials to three outside readers with instructions for them to create brief conceptual memos based on their close readings (see Appendix C). These three outside readers, referred to in this document as Reader 1, Reader 2, and Reader 3, have all completed post-secondary degrees and are/were writing tutors at the NIU Writing Center with a minimum of two years of experience tutoring in the writing center. Their familiarity with writing center methods and insight into working in a writing center made them well-suited to reading through the interview data and noting patterns in the responses within these data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results of this research are comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative survey findings stem from statistical analyses conducted in SPSS. Qualitative data findings came from the observations and interview excerpts identified through agreement among the three outside readers referred to in this document as Reader 1, Reader 2, and Reader 3. Based on the outside readers' agreement on different topics, examples and excerpts have been taken from the raw interview data.

This section is organized around the two main research questions: “How are writing centers situated in relation to their home institution’s other writing programs?” and “How do these relationships affect the training regimen for new writing center staff?” Statistical data are presented first, followed by data from the outside readers and the raw interview data as applicable.

Research Question 1

How are writing centers situated in relation to their home institution’s other writing programs?

Descriptive Statistics

Out of the 38 writing centers represented in the surveys, 34 (89.5%) had at least one working relationship with another campus writing program. When writing centers directors listed

the campus writing programs they worked with (23 respondents), the majority noted that they worked with only one other campus writing program (42.1%). Only two writing center directors (10.5%) indicated that they worked with four other campus writing programs, the highest number recorded.

The most common campus writing programs that writing centers worked with were WAC (11 of 23) and First Year Writing Programs (10 of 23). Other campus writing programs listed included Writing Intensive Courses (7 of 23), Humanities Department Specific (3 of 23), Developmental Writing (2 of 23), ELL Writing (2 of 23), Gateway (2 of 23), Sciences Department Specific (1 of 23), Honors Program (1 of 23), and Graduate Writing (1 of 23). (See Figure 1)

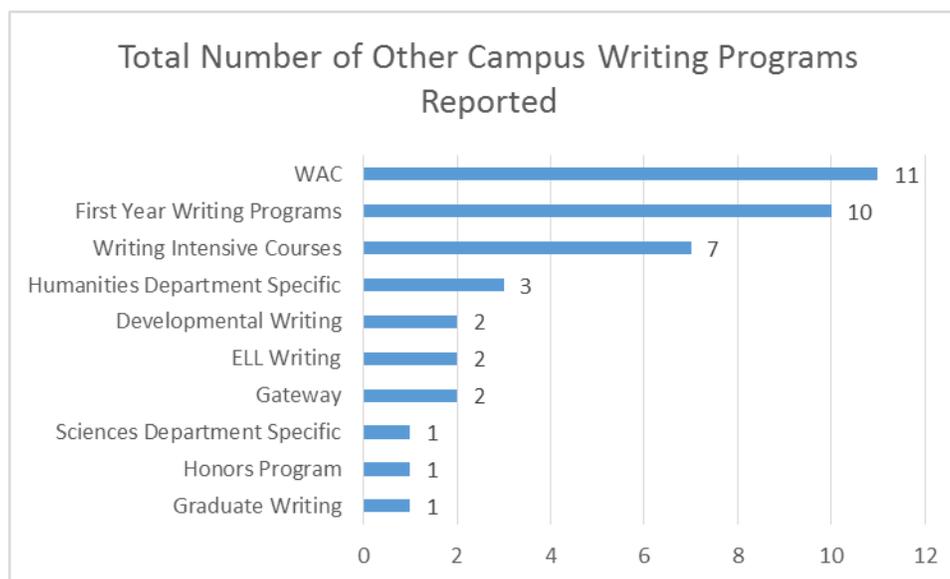


Figure 1. Total number of other campus writing programs reported.

In regard to the writing centers that were the subject of the interviews, Reader 2 stated that “each writing center is connected to at least one writing program.” Reader 3 observed that “the more demanding the writing in the curriculum, the more assistance was available to students.”

Some writing center directors were more involved than others. Dr. K, for example, is also the director of her campus's WAC program. Ms. P and Dr. H both run workshops and lead presentations for campus faculty to prepare them for working within other campus writing programs, such as Writing Intensive courses and Gateway. Dr. H stated that "I know a lot of the faculty, a lot of them take a one day workshop that I conduct for new Gateway instructors and so they know me through that, and they know about the writing center, they visit the writing center during that workshop, and that sort of thing."

Relationship with Other Writing Programs

Participants were asked to rank two items on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Strongly Disagree" and 5 meaning "Strongly Agree": "There is frequent and productive dialogue between your writing center and other writing programs on campus" and "Writing center staff are invited by other writing programs to give presentations or lead workshops on campus." The first statement measured an implicit indicator of the strength of a writing center's working relationships; the second statement measured a more explicit indicator. After determining the strong positive correlation between these two variables ($r = .601$, $p < 0.01$), the scores for each respondent were averaged to create a single Relationship score. A writing center with a Relationship score of 1, 2, or 3 suggests a relationship separate from other campus writing programs, while a writing center with a Relationship score of 4 or 5 reveals a close relationship. Writing centers whose directors responded that they did not work with other writing programs were given a Relationship score of 0. These categorizations were used throughout the analyses to compare these different groups.

The majority of respondents claimed to have a close relationship with other campus writing programs (58%), followed by those writing centers with a separate relationship (32%) and no relationship (10%). (See Figure 2)

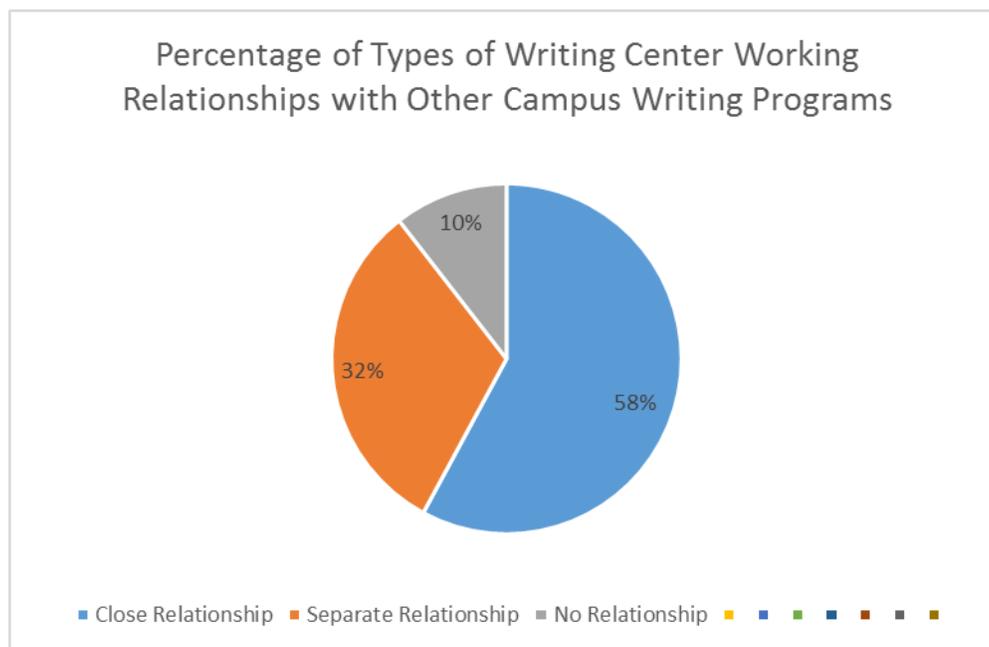


Figure 2. Percentage of types of writing center working relationships with other campus writing programs.

WAC and First-Year Writing Programs

In addition to being the most common campus writing programs, WAC and first-year writing programs were both often present together on the same campus. Of the 11 campuses where writing centers worked with WAC, they also worked with first-year writing programs at 7 of them. There was a significant difference in the Relationship score between writing centers that worked with WAC (Mean = 2.82, SD = 0.41) and those that did not (Mean = 2.00, SD = .853); writing centers that worked with WAC were more likely to have a close relationship with other campus writing programs, $t(21) = -2.89$, $p = 0.037$. Interestingly, this finding did not hold for

writing centers that worked with first-year writing programs, $t(17) = 0.15, ns$. Low frequency among the other campus writing programs precluded analyses.

Research Question 2

How do these relationships affect the training regimen for new writing center staff?

Descriptive Statistics

Three questions on the survey measured the extent of training: “What is the time frame of your training program?”, “How many hours does your training program take?”, and “Do coaches receive academic credit for going through your training program?” Most training programs lasted a semester, as 34 out of the 36 writing center directors who answered the question marked that their training lasts between 13 and 16 weeks (61.1%). The remaining writing centers were evenly spread among training programs that lasted 9 to 12 weeks (5.6%), 5 to 8 weeks (8.3%), 2 to 4 weeks (11.1%), and 1 week or fewer (13.9%). (See Figure 3)

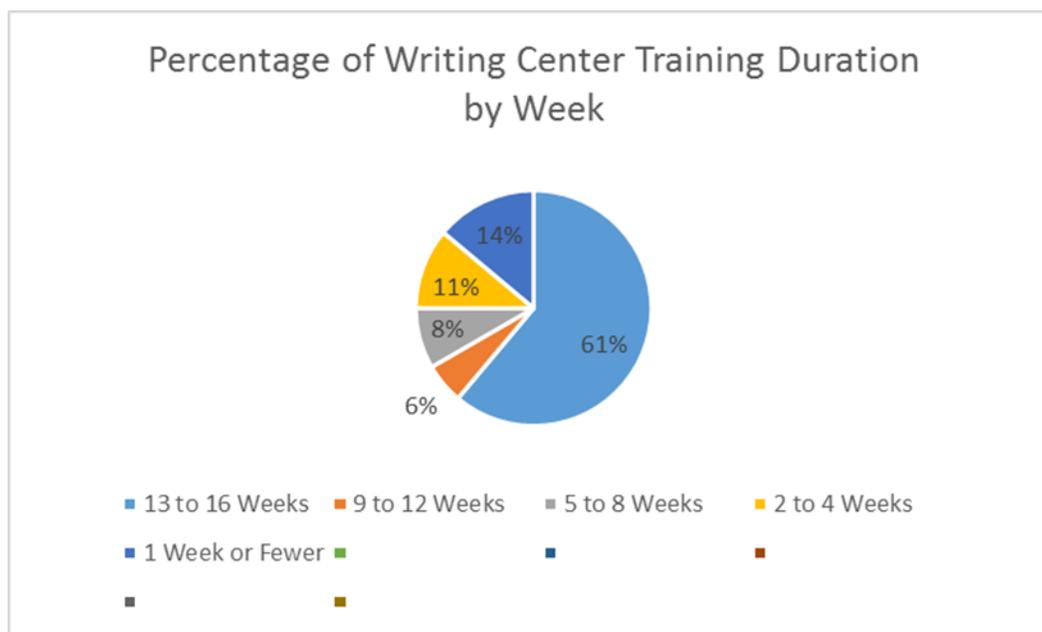


Figure 3. Percentage of writing center training duration by week.

During the weeks of training, most writing centers either trained between 10 and 25 hours (36.8%) or between 26 and 40 hours (28.9%). (See Figure 4) Writing centers were split between training programs that offered academic credit (42.1%) and those that did not (57.9%).

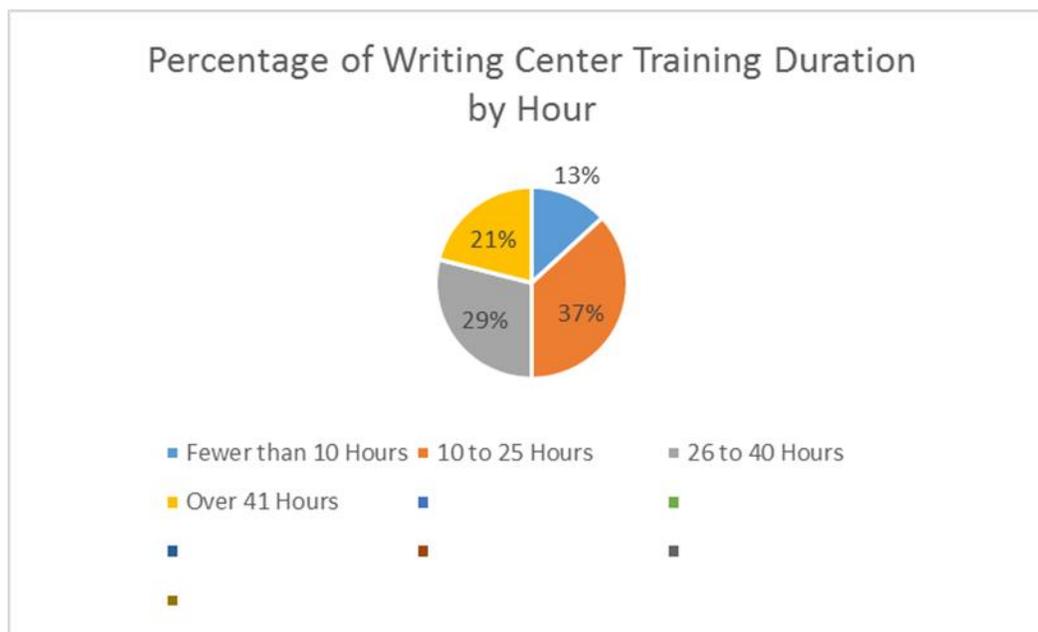


Figure 4. Percentage of writing center training duration by hour.

Writing center directors were asked to rank six training methodologies on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning the method was “Barely Integrated” and 5 meaning the method was “Highly Integrated.” In order from the most integrated across the writing centers surveyed to the least integrated, the training methodologies were: Group Discussion (Mean = 4.68), In-Person or Video Observations (Mean = 3.92), Practice/Mock Sessions (Mean = 3.65), Readings of Writing Center Theory (Mean = 3.61), Written Self-Reflection (Mean = 3.53), and Grammar/Mechanics Drills (Mean = 2.03). (See Figure 5)

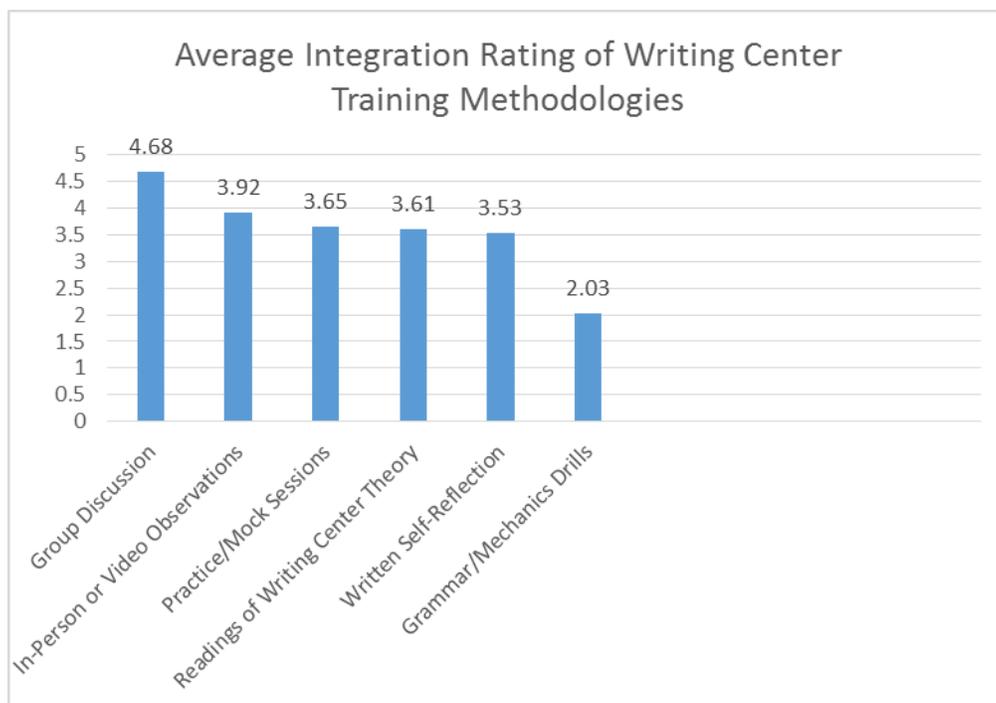


Figure 5. Average integration rating of writing center training methodologies.

Extent of Training Programs and Training Methodology

To determine if the Relationship score was associated with the duration or intensity of training programs, I conducted chi-square tests, which are statistical analyses that determine if the number of people or objects sorted into categories—in this case, the number of writing centers whose training lasts a certain amount of time and over a certain number of hours—is distributed in a way that suggests the influence of an independent variable—in this case, the Relationship Score. These results were not significant. Additionally, *t* tests were conducted to determine if any training methodologies were more integrated depending on the Relationship score, I conducted *t* tests, which are statistical analyses that determine if two groups have significantly different means. These results were not significant.

All of the outside readers commented on the different training programs of the five writing centers. Reader 1 noted that “each [writing center] provides some level of tutor training instruction....[Dr. W’s] training is less intensive than Dr. K’s...professional development is comprised of a Saturday morning orientation, a review of the 104 lab, and 2 mock tutorials...Dr. H brings in profs to discuss what they want from their student writers.” Reader 2 pointed out that “the most used training methodology requires that new hires work with experienced tutors, either through conferences or workshops.” Reader 3 noted that “As one center stated, they preferred more practice than theory, and that approach seemed to be fairly common. Many centers talked about observations and learning through doing.”

All of the writing center training programs, whether a one-day orientation or a semester-long course, involved new tutors conferencing with experienced tutors. Dr. W’s training involves new tutors leading two mock sessions with an experienced tutor playing the role of the writer—once as a “compliant” writer, and again as a “non-compliant” writer. Ms. P, in addition to having new and experienced tutors hold mock sessions, tries to schedule new tutors with experienced tutors during the semester.

Writing center directors also described how they train their tutors to work with writing from across campus. Dr. K, whose staff are comprised solely of English majors, works to include other forms of writing in training: “We don’t get the disciplinary mix. That’s something we work into our training; people do genre presentations.” Dr. H said that “we do have training sessions where we do bring in faculty members to talk to the writing center tutors about what constitutes good writing in their class, what their expectations are, what some of their assignments look like.”

Interpersonal Skills

I conducted *t* tests to determine if interpersonal skills were more strongly emphasized depending on the Relationship score. These results were not significant.

Reader 2 noted that “the centers all recognize interpersonal skills as important, even if they do not state the importance outright. For example, when describing their ideal tutors and current staff, most directors used words like ‘empathetic,’ ‘helpful,’ and ‘open.’” Reader 3 agreed, stating that “another commonality seemed to be a culture of helpfulness.”

Dr. W, Dr. C, and Dr. H all stated that tutors’ interpersonal skills were not only important, but were more important than their writing skills. As Dr. H explained,

It's kind of interesting because no names, of course, but one of my recent hires, somebody, I looked at her writing, and "Oh gosh, there are some errors here, and I would have said this differently" and I felt uncomfortable about her writing, but she's really good at editing and helping people see. She can look at a paper and see the weaknesses and what needs to be done right away, and she's not real pushy about it, she'll ask questions, she's very very good at that end of it, connecting with the people and really seeing what kinds of changes need to be done in the document. So what I'm saying is, you can have someone who's a pretty good writer, but is really good at that, and you can have somebody who is a very good writer but isn't as good, and they may not be as successful as a tutor because they don't really connect.

Non-Directive Tutoring

t tests were conducted to determine if non-directive tutoring was more strongly emphasized depending on Relationship score. Writing centers with close relationships with other campus writing programs placed less emphasis on non-directive tutoring than writing centers with separate relationships, $t(32) = -2.603$, $p = 0.014$, and writing centers with no working relationships, $t(24) = -2.129$, $p = 0.044$).

A common observation of the outside readers was that while the interviewed writing center directors acknowledged the importance of non-directive tutoring, they also agreed that non-directive tutoring is not always possible, or even always preferable, based on the situation: “Across the board, pretty much everyone said that non-directive tutoring was ideal but sometimes not possible...Most centers think that a mix of both directive and non-directive [tutoring] is a realistic expectation for tutors” (Reader 3); “while all of the directors would agree that non-directive tutoring is ideal, it is not always likely” (Reader 2).

Dr. H explains the difference between ideal tutoring and realistic tutoring:

The optimal thing is, to have the time to always provide three or four options for major global changes in the paper. "Well, you could structure it this way, or make it this argument, or maybe this claim could be included, but it's entirely up to you" Yeah, that's optimal. There are time restraints on that sort of thing. Also you know, as an instructor myself, it's hard to get into those non-directive modes because you're so used to evaluating and hence being directive. It's a tough thing to do. When I make comments myself on student papers or when I'm tutoring students I say "Well, here's some things you could do," and give them a list, which is kind of directive, but on the other hand, you know, that's up to them. So philosophically, non-directive sounds really good, and progressive, but realistically, it's got to be mixed with some real directive because that's what they expect and that's part of the point of the training is that you're better trained to push—coax in certain directions.

Dr. K saw tutoring style as an extension of the interpersonal relationship between the tutor and the writer. A tutor must be attuned to the needs and abilities of the writer to determine if a more directive or non-directive approach would be most useful:

Dr. K: ...a lot of it [tutoring] is the ability to listen to people and to coach and to not do things for them, all of those sorts of things, it really is one-on-one—it is interpersonal. I mean, that's what it is. So the directive/non-directive thing fits into that—it's both process, when it's appropriate to be directive, and it's interpersonal. Do they [writers] not know? Then you're going to have to tell them. Or you can give them a darn good example. You're directive when--

Researcher: When the situation requires it.

Dr. K: That's gonna really help someone. I mean, sometimes you say, like, "What if you just said it this way" and they can own it, they can still own it even though you made it sometimes, but other times, when someone's like, "Can you say that again?" you can tell when it's not working.

Overview

Overall, the results indicated that most writing center directors not only work with other campus writing programs, but also have close relationships with them. The nature of the working relationship writing centers have with other campus writing programs does not affect training methodology; instead these working relationships seem to relate to the ideologies that are emphasized during training, specifically when stressing non-directive vs. directive tutoring.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Close Relationships

In contrast to what the literature in the field suggests, the majority of writing center directors who participated in the study reported that they have close working relationships with their other campus writing programs. This finding goes against field literature, which holds that these working relationships can be difficult and fraught with misunderstandings (Carino; Leahy). If these data are representative, this discrepancy may be the result of confirmation bias. While there are issues and obstacles in developing and maintaining working relationships, these may not be as great or as systemic as in the past. However, partly because writing center staff and scholars are primed by older works—particularly North’s—that focus on these difficulties, they may be more likely to remember, and publish, writing center accounts of unsuccessful partnerships.

Not Methodology, But Ideology

In the earliest formulation of this study, the main question of interest was regarding different types and combinations of training methodology—the “how” of training. As the results reveal, the relationship writing centers have with other campus writing programs seems to have no overt connection to how new writing center staff are trained. Although some training methods, such as group discussion, were more highly integrated and others, such as

grammar/mechanics drills, were less integrated, nothing in the data indicated that this was tied to anything outside of the writing center.

The most notable findings were not in how training was conducted, but in what values training was meant to convey. The questions that dealt with ideology, particularly non-directive vs. directive tutoring styles, were more revealing in regard to how writing centers orient themselves on their respective campuses.

Non-Directive vs. Directive Tutoring

The most significant result of this study was that writing centers with close relationships with other campus writing programs place less emphasis on non-directive tutoring than writing centers with separate or absent relationships. This finding points to the shifting position of writing centers, both within individual academic institutions and as a field. As Grimm and Corbett have each claimed, the philosophical alignment of writing centers with non-directive tutoring was as much a defensive move as an ideological one. Early writing centers had to stave off accusations of plagiarism, and non-directive tutoring was a visible means to argue for intellectual honesty in the writing center. Simultaneously, placing non-directive tutoring in opposition to traditional instruction gave writing centers both a rallying point and a moral high ground.

However, as Corbett argues, non-directive tutoring is only one of many tutoring strategies that can, and should, be part of a writing center tutor's repertoire. The interview data revealed that although writing center directors still value non-directive tutoring, directive tutoring can be effective if used with the right writer at the right time. There is increasing acknowledgment

within the field that every writer needs a different tutoring approach, and the approach they need may change during a single session depending on his or her writing process and state of mind.

Interpersonal Skills

Although the analyses conducted to determine the effect of working relationships with other campus writing programs on the emphasis placed on interpersonal skills were not significant, the interview data suggest an intriguing potential reason for this finding. The writing center directors who were interviewed were unanimous in the importance they placed on the interpersonal skills of their tutors. Three of the five writing center directors claimed that interpersonal skills were even more important for a tutor than writing expertise.

These findings fit with the agreed upon goal of writing centers: to not just help writers with the assignment in front of them, but to help them become better writers. If writing centers operated as strictly editing services, then linguistic precision and grammatical correctness would be the most important job requirements for tutors. However, the philosophy of writing centers holds that the personal development of the writer requires positive interpersonal engagement with a writing center tutor. The ability of a peer to make writing tasks seem less daunting can motivate and empower writers to put more time, thought, and effort into their writing than they would have otherwise. Therefore, the lack of significant difference across the categories of writing centers does not suggest that interpersonal skills are irrelevant; instead an emphasis on interpersonal skills may be universal across all writing centers, regardless of relationships with other campus writing programs.

Flexibility

The findings that a) writing centers that have close relationships with other campus writing programs put less emphasis on non-directive tutoring and b) the universality of the emphasis on interpersonal skills may point to a subtler, overarching value held by writing centers: flexibility. Writing centers pride themselves on working with any level of writer on any type of writing at any stage in the writing process. Therefore, writing centers expect their tutors to be able to work with a wide variety of people on a wide variety of writing tasks, and tutors need to be able to change tactics or switch tutoring styles within sessions as well as between writers. This environment requires both flexible approaches and flexible people. By treating non-directive tutoring as another tutoring style instead of the only acceptable tutoring style, writing center directors encourage tutors to find approaches that work for each situation. Therefore, writing center directors will look for and cultivate tutors who are able to work effectively with the greatest number of people.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. A low sample size for both the survey and the interviews prohibits generalization of these findings to the overall population of writing centers. This is noticeable in the uneven group sizes of writing centers with close working relationships, distant working relationships, and no working relationships with other campus writing programs. While it may be true that the majority of writing centers have developed close relationships with other campus writing programs, it is not within the scope of this study to draw this conclusion.

Additionally, due to logistical circumstances, not all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Although diligent notes were taken, valuable data may have been lost from those three interviews.

Recommendations and Future Research

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study point to possible best practices and potential areas of inquiry. First, the data suggest that, contrary to common perception, writing centers typically have close relationships with other campus writing programs. However, the majority of the writing center participants worked with either WAC or first-year writing programs or in both. It was beyond the scope of this study to look for trends among the working relationships writing centers have with different types of campus writing programs. Future research could determine whether different campus writing programs result in different working relationship dynamics.

Second, while this research was able to identify the relative integration of various training methodology, there are still no field-wide guidelines regarding best training practices. While the transmission of writing center ideology is clearly important, it remains to be seen which training methodology is most effective in this transmission.

Third, these data indicate a relationship between how secure a writing center is in its relative institutional position and its emphasis on non-directive tutoring. This finding suggests that non-directive tutoring need not be the definitional standard of writing centers as it once was. Writing center directors should feel comfortable in both removing non-directive tutoring from its pedestal and in incorporating directive tutoring when the proper situation arises. How to

recognize when to use which tutoring style is a necessary and potentially fruitful direction of research that could further help tutors work with writers.

Finally, the reported importance of interpersonal skills can help steer writing center directors in the hiring process—writing samples may be of less importance than an interview activity that puts an applicant’s interpersonal skills on display. Interestingly, while all of the interviewees emphasized interpersonal skills, there was little talk of how to specifically target developing these skills during training. Research into how best to develop these skills may also further help writing center training efforts.

Conclusion

Writing centers are important locations of intellectual development and writing practice in part because they offer a different kind of experience than other places on campus. However, these differences do not mean that writing centers should not reach out to or collaborate with other campus writing programs. By working with others, writing centers can better understand themselves and their relationships within their communities. This better understanding will assist writing centers in their training practices, ensuring that another group of tutors will work to represent the best of what writing centers have to offer.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of your institution?

2. From how many sites does your writing center operate?

3. How many coaches are on your staff?

4. What is the reporting line of your writing center?

5. Does your writing center have a working relationship with any of the writing programs on your campus (e.g. First Year Composition, Writing Across the Curriculum, any discipline specific programs)?

a. Yes

b. No

6. If “yes,” please list the writing programs you work with.

For the following questions, please evaluate each statement and select your answer accordingly.

7. Your writing center and its location are well-known to faculty and students on campus.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. Faculty recommend writers of all skill levels to work with your coaches.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. Your institution’s administration is supportive of your writing center.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. There is frequent and productive dialogue between your writing center and other writing programs on campus.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. Writing center staff are invited by other writing programs to give presentations or lead workshops on campus.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. How do you recruit new coaches for your writing center? (select all that apply)

- a. Students are recommended by their course faculty
- b. Students are placed in the center through TAs or work-study
- c. Open applications for any interested student or faculty member
- d. Other

13. What are the percentages of undergraduate, graduate, faculty, and extra help coaches in your writing center?

- a. Undergraduate: ___%
- b. Graduate: ___%
- c. Faculty: ___%
- d. Extra help: ___%

14. Of the writers your center works with, what are the percentages of writers who are required to visit and writers who visit the writing center voluntarily?

- a. Required: ___%
- b. Voluntary: ___%

15. Who performs the training at your writing center? (select all that apply)

- a. Director
- b. Assistant Director
- c. A graduate coach
- d. An undergraduate coach

16. How many hours does your training program take?

- a. Fewer than 10 hours
- b. 10 to 25 hours
- c. 25 to 40 hours
- d. Over 41 hours

17. What is the time frame of your training program?

- a. One week or fewer
- b. Two to four weeks
- c. Five to eight weeks
- d. Nine to twelve weeks
- e. Thirteen to sixteen weeks

18. Do coaches receive academic credit for going through your training program?

- a. Yes
- b. No

19. To what extent are the following training methods incorporated into your training program?

| Method | Barely Integrated | | Moderately Integrated | | Highly Integrated |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| Readings of Writing Center Theory | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Observations (in-person or video) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Grammar/Mechanics Drills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Practice/Mock Sessions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Written Self-Reflection | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Group Discussion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

20. To what extent are the development of interpersonal skills emphasized in your training program?

| Barely Emphasized | | Moderately Emphasized | | Highly Emphasized |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

21. To what extent are non-directive tutoring techniques emphasized in your training program?

| Barely Emphasized | | Moderately Emphasized | | Highly Emphasized |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

22. Would you be willing to meet for a 30-45 minute interview to discuss these issues in more detail? Information gathered in these interviews will be incorporated anonymously into the thesis.

- a. Yes
- b. No

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the “official” mission of your writing center? Do you have an unofficial mission or goal?
2. How would you describe the culture of your writing center? How do you see your culture in relation to your institution’s culture?
3. Could you explain your relationship to the faculty at your university?
4. Please describe the other writing programs at your institution. What form do they take? What are their roles on campus?
5. Could you explain the relationship between your writing center and these other programs?
6. If you were invited to speak to those in charge of the other writing programs at your institution, what would you say?
7. What are the qualities that you think are necessary for a good coach? An outstanding one?
8. Please describe your hiring process. What qualities need to be there during the interview? What are qualities that you see as trainable?
9. Please describe your training process for me. What methodology do you use? In what ratio?
10. What is your opinion on the conversation regarding “non-directive” vs. “directive” tutoring styles?
11. How important are interpersonal skills to coaching? Do you incorporate developing these skills in training? If so, how?

APPENDIX C

OUTSIDE READER MEMO

TO: Readers

FROM: Anne Marquette

DATE: Thursday, April 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Analysis of Interviews with Writing Center Directors

Thank you for agreeing to help me analyze the transcripts and notes from my interviews with writing center directors. These interviews were intended to illuminate trends in my survey data regarding the relationship among writing centers and the other writing programs on their campuses, writing center training practices, and the culture of individual writing centers. Two of the interviews have complete transcripts. Three of the interviews do not have transcripts; instead notes taken during the interview were compiled and organized into the following categories:

- General Information: the writing center's history, the size and academic status of its staff, its administrative standing
- Mission and Culture: the writing center's official and unofficial missions, its work environment, how its culture compares to the overall culture of its campus
- Relationship with Writing Programs: the different writing programs on the writing center's campus, the working relationships between the writing center and these programs
- Ideal Tutor: the qualities and characteristics that the writing center director sees as most important for a successful tutor
- Hiring and Training: the writing center's hiring process, its training structure and methodology
- Non-Directive Tutoring: the writing center director's opinion about directive vs. non-directive tutoring styles
- Interpersonal Skills: the writing center's opinion about the relative importance of a tutor's interpersonal skills, the extent to which he/she tries to develop these skills during training

Although the two interview transcripts are not organized to the same extent, the writing center directors' responses should still fall into these categories.

I am interested in the similarities and differences among these writing centers—what is thought or done by all, most, some, or none of the writing center directors. Please write your observations in the form of a 1-2 page conceptual memo

After you have read all of the transcripts and notes, please indicate, in regard to these seven categories, the similarities and differences you see among the five writing centers that are the subject of these interviews in response to the following questions:

- What are the other writing programs on writing centers' campuses? How many other writing programs are there on each campus?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these writing centers and their respective campuses' writing programs? Which writing programs do writing centers have strong relationships with, and which are more separate?

- Which writing centers have what training structures? What are the most used and least used training methodologies?
- What importance do writing center directors place on non-directive tutoring? What importance do they place on interpersonal skills?
- How do writing center directors characterize their staff and their center's culture?