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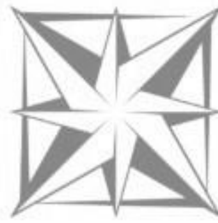


SOUTHERN DISCOURSE *in the* CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

2019 SWCA Conference Addresses

- Keynote: Ongoing Conversations in Writing Center Research: Empirical Research
  --Isabelle Thompson

- Plenary: Producing Better Writing
  --Jo Mackiewicz

Article

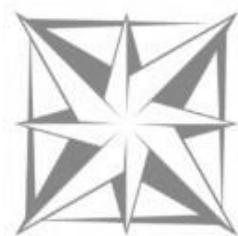
- A "Quick-Fire" Study on Effective Frequency Thresholds for Mandatory Writing Center Visits
  --Eliot Rendleman, Judith Livingston, and Sundi Rose

Back to the Center

- Profile: The Center for Writing Excellence at Palm Beach Atlantic University
  --Lisa Marzano

Book Review

- *Radical Writing Center Praxis: A Paradigm for Ethical Engagement*, reviewed by Graham Stowe



SOUTHERN DISCOURSE *in the* CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

Volume 23 | Number 2 | Fall 2019

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Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation (SDC) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published twice per year by the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA). As a forum for practitioners in writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers, SDC publishes articles from administrators, consultants, and other scholars concerned with issues related to training, consulting, labor, administration, theory, and innovative practices.

Our editorial board welcomes scholarly essays on consulting, research, administration, training, technology, and theory relevant to writing centers, speaking centers, and digital/multiliteracy centers. Article submissions may be based in theoretical and critical approaches, applied practices, or empirical research (qualitative or quantitative). Submissions are evaluated by the editors, and promising articles are sent to our national editorial board for doubleblind review. To honor the journal’s historical context, future issues will include special sections that profile the work of regional associations, emerging undergraduate research, and centers across the country, providing a sustained look at regional and national concerns that centers face in the 21st century.

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Our Mission

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing, speaking, and digital centers and others interested in center work from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region.

The Journal

Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation is the journal of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. Published twice annually, this peer-reviewed journal promotes a community of writing center scholarship within the southeast and nationally while serving as a forum for innovative work across the field. Subscribe to SDC by becoming a member of SWCA at http://www.iwca-swca.org

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Southern Discourse in the Center invites articles that engage in scholarship about writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers. The journal welcomes a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to theoretical perspectives in the center, administration, center training, consulting and initiatives. An essay prepared for publication in SDC will address a noteworthy issue related to work in the center and will join an important dialogue that focuses on improving or celebrating center work. Please submit manuscripts to SDC@iwca-swca.org.

Article Submission Guidelines

Most articles in SDC will be between 3,000 and 5,000 words. We ask that all articles be documented in accordance with the *MLA Style Manual*, 8th Edition. Consistent with traditional writing center practice, SDC promotes a feedback model. Articles will be sent out to our national board for blind review and reviewed by our editorial team. SDC is excited to work with you. For longer articles, please send an email inquiry.

"Back to the Center" Submission Guidelines

Alongside scholarly articles, each issue of SDC will include an article of roughly 1,500 words that focuses on a specific writing center, speaking center, digital center or multiliteracy center. "Back to the Center" will share a center's successes, goals, and hopes for improvement. By incorporating visual images, each "Back to the Center" piece should give readers an authentic sense of the ethos of the center and of the work done there. Each "Back to the Center" submission should also include a section titled "Center Insight." In this section, we'd like to know the numbers: How many sessions are held in the center per semester? How many consultants are working in the center?

How many hours a week is the center open? How does consultant recruitment occur? How long is the training process for consultants before they work in the center?

"Consultant Insight" Submission Guidelines

Consistent with the consultant-writer model of the mutual exchange of ideas, we invite consultants to provide insight into center experiences. This article of roughly 2,000 words can be research driven or can take a more narrative and personal approach that illuminates consultant experiences. SDC is interested in both struggles and achievements. The article may focus specifically on one aspect of consulting or it may provide a broader sense of center work.

Book Review Guidelines

Each issue will usually include at least one review of a book relevant to the focus of SDC. Book reviews should be approximately 750-1,500 words in length. Please contact the editors if you are interested in submitting a book review.

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From the Editors

Scott Pleasant

Devon Ralston

In this issue, our second one as co-editors of *SDC*, we offer a retrospective on the most recent SWCA Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC, held in February of 2019. The theme of that meeting was "The Ongoing Conversation," a phrase which of course refers to threads in discussions—both formal and informal—about writing centers and writing center work that began decades ago and will likely continue for years to come.

This issue features two addresses from the conference and one article that grew from a presentation at the conference. There were numerous excellent presentations in Myrtle Beach, many of which could have been worked into excellent contributions to this issue. We would like to have presented even more of that fine work here, but the gears of the scholarly writing, review, and publication process do seem to turn rather slowly sometimes. We hope to be able to publish additional articles from 2019 SWCA attendees in a future issue, but we are extremely pleased to be able to feature here several pieces that capture much of the spirit of a vibrant and productive conference.

The two addresses presented here offer an excellent overview of several "ongoing conversations" that are central to the work we do as writing center practictioners and scholars.

Isabelle Thompson's keynote address traces trends in writing center research over several decades and demonstrates both the value and the difficulty of conducting true RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-supported) or empirical research. This address also focuses on the quantiative/qualitative continuum and argues that "we need to get beyond the local level in our empirical investigations."

Jo Mackiewicz's plenary address provides a clear blueprint for conducting the kind of quantitative research that Thompson advocates for. Her call for better research on revision processes and on the effect of writing centers on students' revision skills shows how something that seems inherently qualitative in nature can be approached in an empirical way. Mackiewicz admits that such research is difficult, but concludes that the "return on investment is worthwhile—both in terms about what we learn about the writing center's contribution to writers' gains and in terms of the writing center's ability to provide evidence of those contributions."

The article by Eliot Rendleman, Judith Livingston, and Sundi Rose contributes to an ongoing debate that may be one of the most contentious issues in writing center practice: the advisability and value of mandatory appointments for students. Required appointments are often thought to be counterproductive. This study, however, explains why Rendleman abandoned his "long-held resistance to mandatory visits" and provides empirical data supporting "a system of mandatory visits that ensures students visit the writing center at least three times." With any luck, this recommendation will provoke responses from fellow writing center practitioners on this crucial and much-debated question.

Lisa Marzano's profile of the Center for Writing Excellence at Palm Beach Atlantic University introduces readers to a writing center where students receive assistance from tutors who have been through a rigorous and well-coordinated multi-part training program that requires tutors to attend multiple training "classes" every semester. Marzano paints a picture of a center in which everyone on the staff is committed to serving the needs of both faculty and students.

Graham Stowe's review of Rebecca Greenfield's *Radical Writing Center Praxis: A Paradigm for Ethical Engagement* describes the book as a thoughtful attempt to focus on big-picture questions of ethics, politics, and justice as those issues connect to the work we do in writing centers. Stowe says Greenfield rejects both the "conservative" and the "liberal" approach to the ethics of writing center practice and instead "asks for nothing less than to redefine the field of writing center studies altogether."

While this issue contains only five total pieces, we are pleased first of all with the overall quality of all of those pieces and, perhaps more importantly, with the way they work together to present a picture of writing center scholarship and practice as an evolving response to some of the most important ongoing conversations and debates in our field: qualitative vs. quantitative, stories vs. numbers, conservative vs. liberal vs. radical, HOCs vs. LOCs, mandatory vs. self-directed. If this issue helps readers engage with and enter into these important continuing discussions, we feel that all of the collective effort that goes into producing this publication will be worthwhile indeed.

As always, we want to encourage readers to become involved in the journal by joining the list of reviewers or submitting a manuscript for publication. On the final page of this issue, you will find a call for submissions, but if you have any questions about the journal, please feel free to contact either of us at any time. We may not always have and immediate or definitive answer to your question, but we're always eager to hear from readers who have thoughts or questions about the journal.

Thank you for supporting the work of the SWCA organization in general and this journal specifically.

--Scott and Devon

2019 SWCA Keynote Address

Ongoing Conversations in Writing Center Research: Empirical Research

Isabelle Thompson

My purpose is to discuss empirical studies in writing center research. Currently, writing center tutors and administrators are publishing three types of studies: practical studies, which discuss and give advice about new or sometimes not-so-new developments in writing centers; conceptual studies, which present mostly top-down theoretical analyses of writing center occurrences; and empirical studies, which, although beginning with a review of research, develop knowledge mostly bottom up based on observations and experiences (Liggett, Jordan, and Price 2011). I am going to talk about empirical studies, rather than the other two, because I believe their methods and results can make significant contributions to understanding important issues in writing centers and because, more than other studies, they can increase our understanding of learning.

Empirical research attempts to observe and explain our experiences and our students' experiences in writing centers. The resulting information is empirical data. These data are examined and analyzed systematically according to generally accepted methods that other researchers can replicate. The possibility of replication usually includes the procedures for the selection of participants, for data collection methods, and for analysis. Currently, in writing studies, empirical research is often referred to as RAD (Driscoll and Perdue 2012; Haswell 2005)—R is for "replicable," and A is for "aggregable." If a study is replicated, the results of the first study and the replicating study are comparable in some way, and if the results agree, we are closer to developing confidence in both sets of findings. Finally, D is for "data supported." Instead of *RAD*,

I prefer the term *empirical* because it is more commonly used in social science research and thus enables cross-disciplinary understanding. In fact, in the database searches I conducted for this presentation, RAD appeared to be relegated to writing studies research only. Furthermore, in this presentation, I will not incorporate the detailed coding often associated with identifying RAD articles. Instead, I will identify empirical research according to (1) research purposes that can be achieved only through data collection and (2) possibilities for replication. The task of classifying articles as empirical or not proved difficult and reminded me of the importance of systematic coding and of working with a partner (See Driscoll and Perdue 2012).

Empirical research can be qualitative or quantitative, and in some studies, both types of data are collected and analyzed (Driscoll and Perdue 2012). The difference is that quantitative data are numerical, while qualitative data are verbal, usually discussed as themes or patterns. For example, to identify and describe strategies tutors used in a carefully selected collection of transcribed writing center conferences, a researcher may search for themes. A qualitative researcher might stop there and write an article analyzing and interpreting the themes he or she found. However, the researcher might also proceed to develop and test a coding scheme based on those themes and then apply that scheme to another corpus of transcribed conferences to see how often tutors use the strategies identified and described in the themes. The number of occurrences for each tutoring strategy is divided into the total number of minutes in the conferences. Then, we can compare how often tutors use each strategy in this collection of conferences. These regularized frequency counts provide quantitative data. I will discuss some other qualitative and quantitative studies later in this presentation.

What are the benefits of empirical research? Why should we do empirical research rather than rely entirely on our own experiences as tutors and administrators? Empirical research is the most reliable way we can determine our effectiveness and improve our services and learn about other issues important for writing centers. It brings together more data than our personal experiences can accommodate; provides ways of systematically examining numbers, occurrences, and experiences; and leads us to viewpoints possibly different from our original thinking. In fact, because many universities require supposedly disinterested

accountability to continue funding, most of us are familiar with empirical research in the form of program assessment.

Now that I have defined my stance and key terms, let's examine some writing center research. I decided to focus on the *Writing Center Journal* (*WCJ*) as a source of empirical research worth examining because it is the second oldest journal publication in our field and arguably our flagship research journal. As I am sure most of you know, the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, now called *WLN :A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, is the oldest. However, *WLN* is more likely to publish practical studies than the empirical studies we are seeking.

The rest of this discussion has three parts. First, I will compare the articles published in the first issue of *WCJ* with those published in the last issue I had access to when I began developing this article—volume 36, issue 1, 2017. Next, I will examine the percentage of empirical studies published per volume from the first online volume, 25, 2005 to volume 36, 2017. Finally, I will discuss some categories of topics that spurred the articles.

In the analyses, I have included only peer-reviewed articles, eliminating keynote addresses, editors' introductions, and book reviews.

1.0 The Growth of Empirical Research about Writing Centers—*WCJ*, 1.1 1980 and 36.1 2017

The first issue of *WCJ* appeared in 1980. It was edited by Stephen M. North and Lil Brannon and had four articles covering 45 pages. Here is a list of titles, authors, and brief article summaries. None of these report empirical studies.

> "One on One, Iowa City Style: Fifty Years of Individualized Instruction in Writing"—Lou Kelly

This article begins with the history of the Writing Lab at University of Iowa and its connection to the exit requirement in freshman composition that students write an acceptable 500-word theme. Failing students had to go to the Writing Lab until they could pass the requirement. The Writing Lab typically provided instruction focused on the syntax and grammar of the model 500-word theme until Lou Kelly began to ask

students to write essays about their writing experiences, allowing them to vent. The students knew the essays would not be graded. She found that when writing and tutoring became less pressured and more personal, students' grammar and syntax improved. In accordance, she suggested that conferences should become more conversational, with tutors providing a caring and safe place for students, where they could build confidence. Hence, Kelly saw the importance of the tutors' role in helping students become better writers.

"The Hartford Sentence-Combining Laboratory: From Theory to Program"—William Stull

This article discusses required weekly two-hour sentence combining sessions for basic writing students. The sentence-combining practice replaced the required grammar instruction, which had been previously provided by the writing lab. The goal of sentence-combining exercises is to help students increase the syntactic maturity—sophistication, complexity—of their sentences.

"Hamlet, Polonius, and the Writing Center"—Thomas Nash from Auburn University

This article has a long preamble comparing professors assigning essays, students coming to the writing center, and the writing center director to characters in *Hamlet*. It advocates that writing centers focus on all stages of the composing process—not only on proofreading. Tutors should assist students with prewriting and invention, and the focus of tutoring should be on writing as a process.

"Beyond Freshman Comp: Expanded Uses of the Writing Lab"—Muriel Harris and Kathleen Blake Yancey

The article has two parts. The first part discusses offering writing center tutoring to students enrolled in courses across the curriculum and to local businesses. The second part discusses the Purdue Writing Lab's expansion into offering courses to prepare students for the verbal section of the LSAT (Law School Aptitude Test) and the GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test).

Even though none of these articles can be added to our empirical tally, they are interesting because they allude to topics that have become important in empirical research about writing centers. Here are some topics:

- From the early to mid- 1980s—think, for example of Stephen North's very famous, "The Idea of a Writing Center" (1984)—tutors have been admonished to help students develop skilled writing processes rather than focus on improving a single product. Unfortunately, little data-supported research about development of writing processes has been conducted in writing centers. Process-focused research would be complex in its methodology, longitudinal, and yield large amounts of data. But process-focused research—even with its difficulties—could be very valuable in connecting tutoring strategies to learning outcomes.
- We should further investigate tutors' roles as conversationalists and providers of safe places. Research about motivation is readily available in educational psychology and social-cognitive psychology (for example, see Bandura 1997) and is becoming more common in writing center publications.
- That tutors should put less focus on grammar instruction and more focus on invention and other higher order concerns is now firmly established as practice in writing centers.
- The use of sentence combining to improve writing abilities has also been thoroughly considered in writing studies research. Findings indicate that although sentence combining exercises may increase students' syntactic maturity, they do not necessarily improve the quality of students' final products (Phillips 1996).

Overall, I believe it is obvious that from its earliest issue, even in its practical studies, *WCJ* has reflected and reinforced ongoing research concerns in our writing centers.

These are the article titles from a recent issue of *WCJ*. As mentioned previously, it is volume 36, issue 1, 2017. The editors were Michele Eodice, Kerri Jordan, and Steve Price. The issue has six articles (two more than in 1980), that cover 178 pages (133 more pages devoted to peer-reviewed articles than in the 1980 first issue). Three of the six articles report empirical studies.

These are the article titles, authors, and brief summaries:

> "Unmaking Gringo-Centers"—Romeo García.

This conceptual study focuses on topics of race and power and how they have been addressed in writing center scholarship. Garcia points to the emergence of a white/black race paradigm and argues that it limits the efficacy of anti-racist argumentation, particularly in its lack of attention to Mexican-American student writers. Garcia used text-mining software to find the most influential keywords and the most influential contexts in 30 years of articles from the Writing Center Research Project database. This part of the study is replicable. However, the review of the articles, which forms the heart of the study, is not replicable.

> Closing the Grammarly® Gaps: A Study of Claims and Feedback from an Online Grammar Program—J. M. Dembsey.

This study compares the comments generated by Grammarly, an online grammar program claiming to complement writing center tutoring, to the feedback from 10 asynchronous online tutors on three course-placement essays from first-year writing. With this methodology, the researcher likely intended for the study to be empirical, and I accept that designation with some reservations about the development of the coding scheme. However, probably the best take away from this article is practical—the attention the researcher brings to Grammarly as a probably flawed online option for students who cannot get to the writing center.

> "Looking Up: Mapping Writing Center Work through Institutional Ethnography"—Michelle Miley.

This empirical study discusses the benefits of institutional ethnography and provides an example study the researcher conducted at her own institution to uncover the lay of the land shortly after she was hired. The goal of institutional ethnography is to "map" how writing center work coordinates with and affects and is affected by other work being done within an institution. The researcher begins with her position and zooms upward and outward to show how the writing center administrator's role and responsibilities are shaped by the larger institutional context. The qualitative methodology used in this research incorporates interviews, surveys, observations, focus groups, and textual analyses.

> "Tell Me What You Really Think: Lessons from Negative Student Feedback"—Mary Hedengren and Martin Lockerd.

This practical study investigates negative feedback received on students' exit surveys from 11,000 writing center conferences. Searching for patterns, the researchers examined the few negative comments in the corpus. A key finding in the study is the prevalence of negative comments regarding what the researchers term "non-directive non-productivity" (131): students' perceptions that some conferences guided by principles of non-directiveness improve neither their product nor their process. I classify this study as practical rather than empirical because the method does not appear to be very systematic. The researchers treat the negative responses they collected as examples rather than data.

> "Consulting with Collaborative Writing Teams"—Kathleen M. Coffey, Bridget Gelms, Cynthia C. Johnson, and Heidi A. McKee.

This practical study includes a limited survey of a marketing class in the College of Business at Miami University to determine the characteristics and importance of team projects. The discussion is primarily concerned with how to work effectively with these teams. Hence, it seems more practical than empirical.

> "Context Matters: Centering Writing Center Administrators' Institutional Status and Scholarly Identity"—Sherry Wynn Perdue and Dana Lynn Driscoll.

The article based on this empirical study is a follow up on an across-writing centers survey Driscoll and Perdue published in 2015. In this second article, the purpose is to determine writing center administrators' institutional status and how that status affects their research productivity. The survey had 133 administrators from a variety of writing centers as respondents, and 15 volunteered to be interviewed. Both survey and interview data were coded to identify themes, and those themes were discussed by focus groups. The researchers concluded that tenure-track status had an important effect on administrators' scholarly productivity.

Here are some comparisons between *WCJ*'s 1980 first issue and the first issue published in 2017 and suggestions for research based on the articles summarized:

- Although it is not new in other fields, the institutional ethnography reported in this issue is an expansion of our methodological tool kit. Ethnography, with its thick description of people and events, allows us to "go deep" into particular places and situations and the accompanying power structures.
- A number of articles published since 2005 in *WCJ* report empirical research about directive/non-directive tutoring and share similar conclusions (for examples, see Corbett 2011; Dinitz and Herrington 2014). My suggestion is to settle this discussion now. If non-directiveness (scaffolding) leads to vague advice and students become frustrated and confused, then directiveness (telling or suggesting) is preferable. If directiveness encourages tutors to take over control of students' drafts or shuts down students' learning, then it is inappropriate. At the least, this is a good guideline.
- As Muriel Harris and Kathleen BlakeYancey suggest in their 1980 article, writing center tutoring has indeed been extended to departments across campuses and beyond.
- We are finally beginning to conduct empirical investigations of the responsibilities, salaries, and professional opportunities for writing center administrators.

2.0 Frequency of Empirical Research in *WCJ*

Having examined the first issue of *WCJ* and volume 36, issue 1 2017, let's now look at the frequency of empirical research published in *WCJ*. What percentage of peer-reviewed articles reporting empirical research did *WCJ* publish from 2005 until 2017—a period of 12 years?

Here is a line graph showing the percentage of articles reporting quantitative or qualitative research *WCJ* published from 2005 until 2017. I excluded special issues, so the numbers represent only one issue in some cases. Another anomaly, volume 35 has three issues, and the empirical studies from all three are included in the tally. Most issues published four to six peer-reviewed articles. Because the number of

articles varied from volume to volume, I used percentages to allow comparisons.

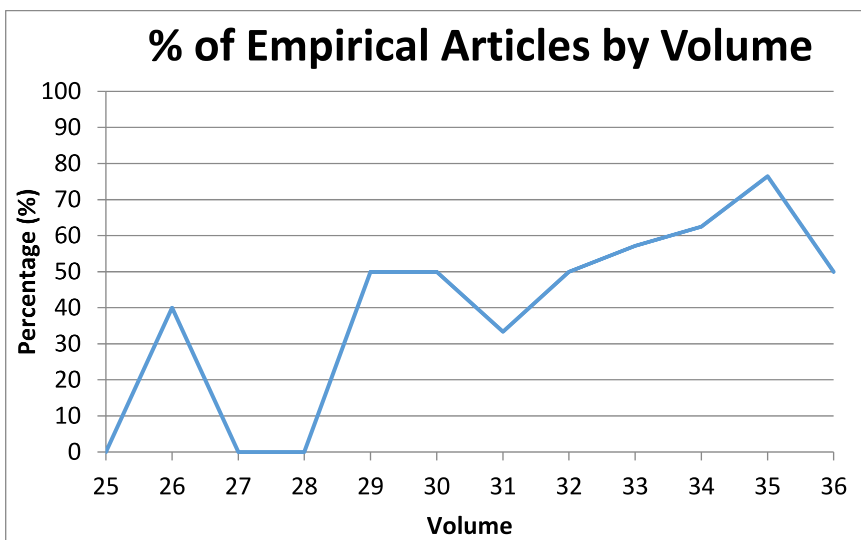

Figure 1. Empirical Articles in *WCJ,* Volumes 25-26

As you can see, a sustained increase in empirical research published in *WCJ* began with volume 29 and, after that, publication of empirical research articles went below 50% percent only in volume 31. The two issues that compose volume 31 contain only six articles, of which only two reported empirical research. On the other hand, a tidbit not visible on this graph is volume 35, issue 3 where all six articles report empirical research. It seems clear that publication of empirical research in *WCJ* has generally increased over the last eight years.

3.0 Topic Categories of Empirical Research Published in *WCJ*

So publication of empirical research has increased in *WCJ*. But, what has the empirical research been about? Reviewing the empirical articles published from 2005-2017, I identified 11 topic categories, with some articles classifiable in more than one category. To keep the length of this article reasonable, I will review only four of those topic categories. I am sure that anyone trying to replicate my topic categories not only would have difficulty not only identifying those I found but also would uncover some I did not see. Again, I am reminded of the importance of systematic coding and of working with a partner.

3.1 Assessment as research

This could be an opportunity to fulfill two responsibilities at the same time for some writing center administrators. In reality, however, I suspect that research publication requires more time and energy than assessment alone. A particularly useful article for those struggling with assessment and those interested in quantitative research is "'By Turns Pleased and Confounded': A Report on One Writing Center's RAD Assessments," by Scott Pleasant, Luke Niiler, and Keshav Jagannathan, *WCJ* 35.3, 2016.

The research reported in this article is entirely quantitative and demonstrates clearly the problems with obtaining statistical significance—differences between groups of scores that do not occur simply by chance. Even when one group of raw data is to the eyes obviously larger than another group, the differences between the two groups may not be statistically significant at an acceptable level.

3.2 Added benefits of writing center work for tutors

This research points to the added value writing center tutoring and administrative work can provide for graduate and undergraduate students. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews are primary means of gathering this information. Some researchers have developed "thick descriptions" of beyond-writing-center benefits for peer tutors (Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail 2010), while others have surveyed graduate student administrators about the mentoring they received from directors and directors about graduate students' performance as administrators (Rowan 2009). In addition, one researcher used quantitative and qualitative data to determine possible future benefits of her tutor training course (Driscoll 2015).

3.3 Tutoring international students

The articles in this topic category are mostly case studies, sometimes comparing writing or requests for feedback (Severino, Swenson, and Zhu 2009) from second-language English speakers with that from first-language English speakers. Others looked at vocabulary acquisition and word choice errors by L2 speakers (Severino and

Deifill 2011; Severino and Prim 2015). One particularly interesting case study compared drafts and final versions of 10 documents submitted by a second-language English writer to an online writing center over a two-year period (Severino and Prim 2016). This was the only longitudinal study of writing development I found in the *WCJ* database. Anyone interested in conducting empirical research using L2 writers should consult Carol Severino's excellent articles.

3.4 Tutors' roles

Research about tutors' roles comprised the most frequently investigated topic category I found. Some of the research in this category is entirely qualitative, for example, the qualitative discourse analysis of tutors' "footing"—that is their stance—in conferences (Brown 2010). Some is entirely quantitative—for example, a survey that allowed correlations of students' and tutors' perceptions of their behaviors with satisfaction. The behaviors studied have been commonly discussed in writing publications, for example, who talked the most, how directive were the tutors, were the students' questions answered (Thompson, et al. 2009). And some researchers incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data analyses. The tutors' role category includes a range of different studies important for determining the most effective tutoring strategies. Other topic categories include the following:

- Across-site studies of writing centers
- Analysis of articles in *WCJ* as a corpus
- Exit surveys and tutors' notes after conferencing
- On-line tutoring and grammar programs
- Writing centers for special populations
- Status and satisfaction of writing center administrators
- Students' reasons for using writing center services

Do these topics leave room for future research? The answer is "yes." We could be much closer to developing best practices if we could aggregate data on tutoring strategies, and we would be able to make more convincing arguments to administrators if we had more studies about the effectiveness of our tutoring services and about the additional benefits undergraduate- and graduate-students gain from their work in writing

centers. We also need to know more about the responsibilities, educational level, pay, and research interests of writing center administrators. In other words, we need to understand what is going on in our own writing centers, and then as a few researchers are doing, we need to get beyond the local level in our empirical investigations. Here the importance of replicable and aggregable research—which we currently do not have—becomes clear.

4.0 Conclusion

By conducting research, we become better writing center administrators and tutors. By getting in close to students and thinking about their thinking and recording and analyzing tutor and student talk and by analyzing our surroundings and the records and documents we produce, we develop as professionals. By publishing our findings, we enhance not only our individual status but also the prestige of our profession. Besides possibly bringing respect for our work, empirical studies and increased research productivity in general may bring more funding. Along with composition and writing-across-the-curriculum programs, we want to find a place at the writing studies table. I suggest at the head.

In addition, conducting research may feed our curiosity and enhance enjoyment of our important work. It can breathe new life into old ways of thinking, help us reconsider current practices, and relieve the boredom of doing the same things in the same way time after time. Empirical research is a good way to strengthen our minds and brighten our days as well as meet the practical demands of our jobs.

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2019 SWCA Plenary Address
Producing Better Writing

Jo Mackiewicz

I started thinking about this presentation months ago when Scott[1] first asked me to appear as a speaker at this conference. At that time, I thought I had something to say about what I thought was a conspicuous lack of research on writers' revisions after writing center conferences. I thought I wanted to say that it is high time we acknowledge that our aim should be to improve writing as well as writers. I wanted to wield a metaphorical sword and confront Steven North's proclamation. That was at the beginning. And so the blurb for the talk, sent to Scott months ago, went as follows:

> In this plenary session, I discuss a topic I think receives little attention in writing center conversations: our role in helping student writers to improve their writing. I argue that improving writing is a worthwhile and measurable endeavor and that doing so offers opportunities for meaningful and valued assessment.

In the months that followed, I dug into the extant research on writing centers and revision and, indeed, revision after instruction in general. In the process, I changed my mind about the importance of focusing on writing over and over again. In this talk, I'd like to map out that cognitive journey for you. Perhaps you'll find that I ended up where you already are—and maybe you didn't need to run a cognitive marathon to get there. I think I have ended up in a better place than where I started. I have a

[1] Scott Pleasant, chair of the 2019 Southeast Writing Centers Association conference.

better understanding of the return on investment of investigating revision.

But first, let me backtrack a bit. I need to describe what I saw (and still see) as a big problem in writing center research: hardly any research examines the differences in pre-conference and post-conference papers. I think this situation is a problem because it means we have little evidence that the writing center work we do manifests in writers' deliverables. What, after all, does it mean to be a "good writer" if you can't demonstrate "good writing"? A pragmatic problem arises from this lack of research too: writing centers cannot show administrators that their work positively affects writing in the short term, let alone in the long term. Writing centers miss opportunities, then, to underscore the important work they do, the one-to-one conversations aimed at helping writers meet their goals.

Before I describe the some of the few studies on revision that exist, it's a good idea, I think, to acknowledge two main reasons that writing center scholars have not studied revision very often:

1. Practicality: It is difficult to operationalize types of revision. It can be time-consuming to code and compare changes from draft to revision. It is difficult to code conference talk and map that conference talk to revisions, particularly over time.
2. Philosophy: (i.e., "We make better writers"). In other words, because writers are our concern, our research need not focus on their writing.

When I began developing this talk months ago, I underestimated the practical challenges of conducting research on revision. I had done a fair amount of research involving coding, and I'm generally of the mindset that it is possible to operationalize most any discourse-related construct, revise the coding scheme for inter-rater reliability, and thus determine the frequency and location of various linguistic items. But tracking revision, even from one draft to another, is challenging.

In addition, when I started this journey, I think I failed to recognize fully that, for writing centers at least, improving writing is important to the extent that the improvement demonstrates improvements in writers. That is, I was before more of the mind that writing improvement in and of

itself has value. I think for the most part I'm of the mind that studying revision is important because it is a *direct* gauge of whether people have improved as writers. And, it also provides opportunities to show the value of the support that writing centers provide.

In this talk, I overview some critical studies—ones that have attempted to do the hard work of operationalizing writing revision. Some of these studies have tried to tie writing center discourse to revisions in order to show that writing center conferences had an effect on writers' work, as opposed to other potential inputs such as instructors' feedback. As I move through these studies that have shaped my current thinking, I also discuss some limitations of those studies. Then, I posit one potential method of studying changes from draft to revision.

Critical Studies on Revision

This is the point where we start to get in the weeds.

Faigley and Witte, "Analyzing Revision"

Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte's (1981) study of revision in 6 inexperienced student writers, 6 advanced student writers, and 6 expert adult writers was groundbreaking. The study took place over three days. On the first day, writers were given the topic; on the second day, they wrote their essays; on the third day, they revised. (Sounds a little biblical, doesn't it?)

Faigley and Witte found this:

- Not surprisingly, inexperienced writers made the most surface changes.
- 24% of advanced students' changes were meaning changes (what Faigley and Witte call "macrostructure" and "microstructure").
- 34% of expert adults' changes were meaning changes (i.e., macrostructure or microstructure).

In the second part of their study, they asked expert adults to revise three inexperienced students' essays as if they were their own. They compared the changes the experts made to the changes that the students had made.

They found that 65% of the changes that the expert writers made were macrostructure changes.

The findings of their first study are particularly helpful to the study of revision because they indicate the depth of revision that writers of different experience will carry out given the same (albeit unnatural) writing condition. However, the main contribution of this study is its coding scheme for revision. Other researchers who have attempted to code and quantify revision have used it. However, as I'll discuss more, using this coding scheme isn't as simple as some researchers have made out.

Stay, "When Re-Writing Succeeds: An Analysis of Student Revisions"

Using Faigley and Witte's scheme, Byron Stay studied 20 students' writing. These students had to visit the writing center after earning a D or D+ in freshman comp. The students had to write two papers for evaluation by writing center instructors. They had to write in the writing center and save all the drafts for their papers.

Stay's big contribution to revision research was that he evaluated each revision (at the sentence level it seems) as positive, negative, or neutral. (Note, however, that he gave no measure of inter-rater reliability for this evaluation.) He reported findings in terms of words changed per 100 words.

Here's what Stay found:

His findings differed from those of Faigley and Witte. Stay found that students made a *large* number of macrostructure changes (when compared to Faigley and Witte's study). He writes, "One reason for the high number of macrostructure changes is that many students voluntarily revised their first draft extensively after consulting with *an instructor*… [italics added]. The relatively low number of surface changes may be partially attributed to the instructor who helped keep the students' attention fixed on larger questions of organization, especially in early drafts" (p. 23). However, of all revisions, just 57% of the changes were evaluated as positive: 10.5% were negative and 32.5% were neutral.

Stay's study is one that gets cited quite a bit, along with Faigley and Witte's study. However, the participants' situation (writing to pass a course, writing in the writing center, receiving feedback from FYC instructors that was not accounted for in the study) puts into question the results for typical writing center conferences—along with other methodological problems.

Bell, "Better Writers: Writing Center Tutoring and the Revision of Rough Drafts"

Bell used Faigley and Witte's scheme also. James H. Bell's big contribution was that he classified each conference according to Thomas Reigstad's typology: tutor-centered, structured participation, collaborative, and student-centered. Doing this, he could match conference type to extent and quality of revision. He performed two studies.

Study 1: The first employed four experienced tutors working with four student writers. The students' draft and final papers were compared and evaluated in terms of Faigley and Witte's scheme. The quality of each change was evaluated as positive, negative, or neutral. Note that Bell used percentage of agreement for inter-rater reliability (not Cohen's kappa); the inter-rater percentage was 88% for both the textual changes and the quality assessments.

In study 1, Bell found:

Of the changes students made, 69% were in line with students' objectives, and 79% were improvements, but he says, "there is no clear indication whether students became better writers, for nearly all changes to texts were made during sessions" (12). In other words, the changes were those directed or suggested with real-time guidance. He also found that the conferences were tutor-centered and focused primarily on surface changes.

In study 2, Bell studied a professional tutor working with 11 undergraduate writers. Tutoring sessions were classified as assignment-assistance (i.e., focused on completing the assignment) or instructional (i.e., focused on teaching something to make the student a better writer). The professional tutor conducted instructional conferences.

In study 2, Bell found:

1. 32% of in-line changes (i.e., surface changes) were made during the sessions; 68% were made after by the students.
2. 86% of the changes made during the sessions were in line with the stated objectives of the conference (although it's not exactly clear how Bell determined what the objective was).
3. 65% of the changes were in line with what the tutor had tried to teach in the session.
4. 98% of the changes made during the conference were positive, and 82% of the changes made after the conference were positive.

The conclusion: a trained, experienced tutor is better able to provide feedback so that students can implement it after the conference; they can negotiate and maintain an agenda; they better help writers make positive changes. In relation to Faigley and Witte's scheme, Bell found this: The professional tutor's suggestions were mainly macrostructure additions. The peer tutors initiated almost no macrostructure changes.

Williams, "Tutoring and Revision: Second Language Writers in the Writing Center"

Jessica Williams studied 4 L1 English tutors and 5 L2 writers. One of Williams's big contributions was that she linked "episode problematicity" (i.e., tutor suggestions, directives, notations of a problem/error, writer requests for assistance or notations of problems) to draft-to-draft changes. Another contribution was that she measured revision in a more straightforward way: (1) T-unit (i.e., minimal terminable unit) and (2) greater than T-unit. As a reminder, a T-unit is a main clause plus its dependent clauses (Hunt 20). For example,

- There was a man next door, and he was a police officer. = 2 T-units
- There was a man next door who was a police officer. = 1 T-unit

She found that writers made many changes that were "not attributable to anything that went on during the session" (181). The changes might have stemmed from other input: feedback from teachers, peers, or from the writers themselves as they generated more ideas.

Williams lists six main findings:

1. The focus of the discussion is usually the focus of the revision.
2. Surface-level features discussed during the session are more likely to get revised than text-based (i.e., meaning) problems.
3. Issues explicitly addressed by the tutor are more likely to be revised than those that receive more implicit treatment.
4. Writer response to tutor suggestions and explanations is predictive of the impact of that advice on revision. That is, if the writer noted the suggestion or explanation, the related change was likely to appear in the revision; if the writer resisted the suggestion/explanaItion, the related change was not likely to appear in the revision. If the writer offered a minimal response (e.g., "mmhm") or nonverbal backchannel, the related change was unlikely to appear in the revision (186).
5. Text-based (i.e., meaning) revisions that can be traced to writing center discussion are associated with some interactional features of writing center conference talk—features that tutors have some control over:
    a. Negotiation episodes (especially extended)
    b. Active writer participation in negotiation episodes
    c. Tutor's clarification of critical features (e.g., tutor helps writer clarify what he or she is trying to say)
    d. Tutor's sustained emphasis on goals
    e. Tutor's organization of the task
    f. Tutor's modeling of writing and revision strategies (e.g., outlining).
6. Revision does not always lead to higher-rated essays. (Raters used A–F holistic scale.)

Williams concludes: "It is likely that whatever their approach, tutors cannot really foster better writers directly. Rather, writers become better writers by working on their texts" (196). It's a subtle point that Williams is making here, I think. I believe what she is pointing out is this: Tutors' engagement gets writers to engage, and through that engagement, writers improve in their writing ability.

Van Horne, "An Activity-Theory Analysis of How College Students Revise after Writing Center Conferences"

Samuel Van Horne's dissertation study uses activity theory and Faigley and Witte's scheme to examine 11 students' revisions after 10 conferences. The big contribution from Van Horne's study was his method of analysis. He made some improvements on earlier studies:

1. Gave student a voice-recorder with instructions to record any follow-up conferences about the paper.
2. Gave student a structured journal and asked that he/she fill it out after each session of revision.
3. Used Word's versions and tracked changes to keep track of revisions.
4. Observed the student revise in order to learn about the decision-making process.
5. Interviewed the tutor and the student's instructor (about the writing center).
6. Differentiated between direct and indirect suggestions.

Two groups of students used the writing center: those who had specific goals for their conferences (i.e., those who had specific assignments) and those who did not.

Van Horne's findings included these:

1. Students without a specific agenda did not act on suggestions about how to expand on their ideas.
2. Like Williams and contrary to Stay, Van Horne found students were more likely to address surface errors than macrostructure or microstructure changes. Sometimes they fixed these surface errors but did not address meaning-related problems.
3. But Van Horne notes that tutors rarely made macrostructure-related suggestions.
4. Also, like Williams, Van Horne found that students revised the aspects of writing that they discussed with their tutors.
5. Finally, students incorporated indirect suggestions *only* when those changes were in line with what they believed their instructors wanted.

Problems with Faigley and Witte's Scheme and Subsequent Studies

Any careful analysis of the Faigley and Witte scheme reveals the problems that would come from trying to code revisions with it. Williams is the only writing center researcher who explicitly points to the elephant in the room: "Although authors report success with this system, few researchers in L2 writing have adopted the full array of categories. This may in part be because of the difficulty in reaching acceptable interrater reliability" (175). Williams goes on to ask, "What is the best way to express how and how much a text has been revised? How do we differentiate among the effects of revision? How can we measure the extent to which revision has resulted in improvement in the quality of the text?" (175). These questions are just as relevant today as they were in 2004, when Williams published her study.

Trying to answer these questions depends in part on trying to determine the shortcomings of earlier studies:

1. Faigley and Witte distinguish between surface changes and meaning changes (i.e., macrostructure and microstructure) changes. But it's not easy to say what's altered meaning and what isn't. Even small changes can alter meaning (e.g., changing "I have few friends" to "I have a few friends").
2. Although they don't state it explicitly and often use the term "unit," Faigley and Witte and other subsequent studies have analyzed changes at the sentence level. For example, in describing their method of counting revisions, Faigley and Witte say that one macrostructure change, an addition of seven sentences, would be counted seven times (405). One problem with this method, of course, is that sentences can vary greatly in length. One added sentence does not necessarily equal another.
3. Even though Faigley and Witte and other researchers who use their scheme seem to analyze revision in terms of sentences, they report results in terms of words changed per 100 or 1000 words. But it's not clear how the number of words changed were counted. For example, if a sentence is revised (say, through some permutation) and then moved to a different place in a paragraph, how are the words changed counted? Are words changed calculated from the place the words used to be and again in the spot they are placed? What about the words that have undergone

permutation? Are words changed measured per sentence (or another unit) or overall?

A Potential Method

There has to be a better way to study revision. The studies that I've reviewed have manifested characteristics of what I have in mind for a revision study.

1. Ask writers' instructors to provide feedback in written comments (Word's comments, for example). Ask students to use that version of the paper to work on their revision. Doing so tracks non-tutor advice.
2. Ask the tutor and writer to work on a computer during a face-to-face (in person or synchronous online) conference. Capture the audio and screen with software such as Camtasia.
3. Code tutoring strategies (Mackiewicz and Thompson) or other items of interest in the conference talk. Carol Severino and Shih-Ni Prim, in a longitudinal case study of one L2 writer's development, coded online tutor comments as (1) direct corrections; (2) noting an error exists; (3) explanations; (4) questions; (5) suggestions; (6) providing options.
4. Code tutoring strategies (or other item of interest) in the instructor's written feedback. It's important to differentiate between instructor and writing center input.
5. Ask writers to use screen-capture software to collect the changes they make from original to revision. Don't ask them to think aloud as they revise.
6. Ask writers to audio record any other discussions that they have about their paperss (instructor, peer).
7. Ask writer to review the screen-capture files immediately after revising and record a think-aloud as they watch themselves revise. Ask them to articulate why they made the changes they made. Writers can overlay their audio commentary on the screen-capture by screen-capturing the original screen-capture.[2]
8. Interview each writer and review the screen-capture + audio commentary. Ask further questions to elucidate their revision choices and motivations.

[2] At the conference, I played an example screen-capture video that I recorded as I drafted and revised this talk.

9. Use a data-analysis method like Williams's to gauge extent of revision: Williams describes her inter-rater tested method (91% agreement), which involved coding T-units into three types:
   (i) T-units that remained unchanged from the first to second draft, that is, the same text in the same sequence (i.e, no change)
   (ii) Those in which the elements of text were rearranged or slightly changed (i.e., slight change or small-scale change)
   (iii) Those in which larger chunks of text, at the level of the clause or larger, were added or changed" (i.e., substantial changes) (178).

   Or, use a data-analysis method like Severino and Prim's to measure complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF):

   (i) Fluency = total words per T-unit
   (ii) Accuracy = Errors per T-unit and error-free T-units
   (iii) Complexity = words per T-unit, words per clause, clauses per T-unit

10. Tie the writer's revisions to the conference's tutoring strategies and the instructor's feedback.
11. Rate each change in quality from original to revision, for example, successful, unsuccessful, deletion.

As I mentioned earlier, it would certainly be possible to code conferences for items other than tutoring strategies and then try to tie those items to subsequent revisions. For example, Williams tied students' requests to revisions as well. Bell analyzed direct versus indirect suggestions (i.e., telling and suggesting strategies versus hinting strategies). And as I mentioned, Severino and Prim used yet another scheme to code tutor feedback.

It would be possible to operationalize the domain of each directive or suggestion as well: surface-level, microstructure, etc. Actually, I think that Faigley and Witte's scheme might actually work better in terms of classifying the domain of tutors' feedback than it does for classifying writers' revisions.

It's Worth It

In addition to subjective and indirect measures such as conference-satisfaction ratings and writers' assessments of their progress, data from a study like the one I've sketched would show the support for writers that writing centers provide.

The quantitative data arising from such a study—even a study of one or two writers—would provide direct evidence of the kinds of short-term gains that writing centers enable. And, as Williams noted, "although one cannot directly extrapolate from short-term draft-to-draft change to long-term development, in the absence of demonstrated short-term revision, long-term improvement seems unlikely" (174). Once the researcher has developed the coding schemes and achieved viable inter-rater reliability, the coding could move along fairly quickly. The time invested would come from meetings with students about their screen-captures.

In addition, developments in writing research using keystroke logging and eye-tracking may facilitate revision research. My colleagues at Iowa State have used these technologies to study the extent to which students' assessment of their own writing processes positively impacts learning how to write in an L2 (Ranalli, Feng, and Chukharev-Hudilainen).

They found that using these technologies and talking about the data those technologies facilitated (1) positioning the two L1-Chinese students in their L2-writing development; (2) identifying and addressing problems related to writing process: planning, formulation, and revision; and (3) revealing motivational issues that hampered students' development.

Such technologies would be particularly useful, I think, for people who are interested in the cognitive process of revising, the moment-to-moment decision making and error correcting that go on as people write. These technologies are not necessary to study revision—they're just worth exploring. Perhaps they could ease the burden of data collection and analysis in longitudinal studies.

So there it is. I've ended up in a different place in my thinking than when I began. I started with the mindset that for whatever reason, writing center scholarship had eschewed empirical research on revision. Now, I have a better understanding. I know that such research is scarce, but that

it is becoming less so. As evidence, I point to Severino and Prim's longitudinal study again.

But I've also come away feeling like such research is quite feasible. More than that, I am more confident that the return on investment is worthwhile—both in terms about what we learn about the writing center's contribution to writers' gains and in terms of the writing center's ability to provide evidence of those contributions.

Thank you.

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A "Quick-Fire" Study on Effective Frequency Thresholds for Mandatory Writing Center Visits

Eliot Rendleman, Judith Livingston, and Sundi Rose

Introduction

The topic of mandatory writing center visits is a popular concern among writing center professionals. A search of the WCENTER listserv, using such key terms as "mandatory visits" and "required visits," revealed regular conversations or threads from 2012 to 2018 about mandatory or required appointments. The conversation has also persisted as a central topic in more than 20 articles and dissertations since Gary Olson's 1981 "Attitudinal Problems and the Writing Center."[1]

Writing center administrators (WCAs) therefore have many resources from which to draw advice and determine their own policies on mandatory visits to achieve a variety of different goals (i.e., advertising, positive perspectives, increased drafts, improved writing, higher course grades). This article contributes to these resources by presenting a "quick-fire," *ad hoc* study of mandatory writing center (WC) visits at our institution, a public, regional university in the Southeast with a student population of approximately 8,000. The following sections explain the impetus for the study, the methodology, and unexpected discoveries about the number of mandatory visits that correlate to positive outcomes, identified here as "effective frequency thresholds." Small, local studies like the one described here should enable busy WCAs to test the

[1] Readers can find many of the articles mentioned in this study listed in Babcock and Thonus's *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice* (86-109).

generalizability of the results of contemporary RAD research within their own local context.

Background and Methodology

Our research question emerged from a change in the institutional culture and teaching loads for full-time lecturers at our university. Prior to this change, FYC lecturers had either a 4/4 or a 5/4 teaching load, depending on their service responsibilities, but a restructuring of upper administration and budgets resulted in a mandate that all FYC lecturers shift to a 5/5 teaching load. In response to this change, two of the authors of this study, Sundi and Eliot, met to determine the best strategies for ensuring students continued to receive sufficient feedback on their writing processes despite the increased time constraints on faculty. Sundi, as a first-year composition lecturer, asked Eliot, director of the university writing center, if he would support required writing center visits that she wanted to embed in her first-year composition writing assignments. She felt that the practical demands of her new schedule limited her time for instructor feedback and that peer feedback from experienced writing tutors could offer her students additional support to supplement her instruction.

Despite his long-held resistance to mandatory visits, Eliot agreed to Sundi's request. The WC staffed about 20 undergraduate writing tutors, most of whom were 2-3 year seasoned tutors, and all of whom had completed a semester-long, 3-credit-hour tutor training course. Eliot felt that the WC schedule and tutors would be able to handle an influx of Sundi's students. In addition to providing important support to a colleague, he recognized that his tutors' collaboration with Sundi and her students might provide an important test case for his reevaluating the efficacy of mandatory visits and possibly determining a future policy for the WC as a whole. Before departing their initial meeting, Sundi asked how many visits she should require for each assignment or for the semester. Since Eliot had traditionally discouraged, if not prohibited, mandatory visits, he didn't know what number to suggest. His subsequent literature review of scholarship on mandatory visits and voluntary visits for a range of writing courses (e.g., basic writing, FYC, writing and literature) of different levels (first-year, sophomore, and so forth) lay the

foundations for the control and experimental groups of the study that emerged.

The WC scholarship Eliot discovered presented a range of recommended frequencies for mandatory and voluntary visits: from one visit per semester (Bishop; Clark; Gordon; Pleasant) to three visits per semester (Irvin; Robinson; Schmidt and Alexander; Van Dam; Williams and Takaku) to thirteen visits per semester (Smith). On the low end, Irene Clark's "Leading the Horse" recommends at least one required visit per semester for the general population of FYC students because students reported visits helped their skills and their assignment grades, while Wendy Bishop's "Bringing Writers to the Center" recommends "a single required visit" per semester to positively shape students' attitudes about writing, in general, and WCs in particular (39). On the upper end, Allison Smith's dissertation, *Writing in/on the Borderlands*, suggests one required visit per week, during 13 weeks of a semester, for basic writers to improve motivation, attendance, and pass rates. While the literature presented this range, three visits emerged as a common recommendation and a working number that the authors' WC could support for Sundi's courses. Heather Robinson's "Writing Center Philosophy and the End of Basic Writing" suggests three mandatory visits for basic writers to move students' concerns about writing from extrinsic (grades) to the intrinsic (writing well for its own sake). And in "What a Difference Three Tutoring Sessions Make," Lennie Irvin writes about required visits, "Three tutoring sessions represents a threshold where the efficacy of tutoring moves from being satisfactory to being more significant — particularly for students in introductory classes" (5).

Though Eliot and Sundi had three mandatory visits as a working number and the human and financial resources to support it, they couldn't help wondering along with Irvin, when he asks, "Can we identify more closely what happens for writers as the frequency of tutoring increases?" (5). In other words, if there were no limitations on resources—space, human, financial—would an increased number of visits always have positive effects on student performance?

To explore Irvin's question in their institutional context, Eliot and Sundi opted for a quantitative analysis that would align with their university's

emphasis on data-driven decision making. In doing so, they implemented a methodology that heeds Pleasant's call for more "empirical research studies based on the intervention vs. nonintervention model" and add "to the relatively small amount of literature on this important topic" (25). To implement this model, Eliot gained IRB approval to allow Sundi to assign mandatory visits to three of her four second-semester English composition classes and to allow him to work with Judi Livingston, the first-year composition director, to collect and analyze the data. With the exception of the nonintervention section, which served as the control group for the study, Sundi's students in the intervention sections were required to visit the writing center for each major writing assignment, during any point in their writing process.[2] One section was required to visit once per assignment, for a total of three visits per semester. A second section was required to visit twice per assignment, for a total of six visits per semester. A third section was required to visit three times per assignment, for a total of nine visits per semester (see Table 1). The mandated visits were a part of students' peer review activities, and all sections had an additional in-class peer review session for each assignment. Finally, for those students in the experimental sections, they had to forward to Sundi their appointment reports to confirm their writing center attendance.

Table 1. Classes, Visit Requirements, and Enrollments

Classes	Visit Requirements	Enrollments
ENGL 1102 82169	0	22
ENGL 1102 83889	3	22
ENGL 1102 82164	6	24
ENGL 1102 82168	9	24

[2] Students in all four sections were given the opportunity to opt out of the study, but none did. Therefore, the number of students consenting to participate in the study equaled the number of students enrolled for each section.

At the conclusion of the semester, Eliot and Judi collected demographic and quantitative data from each student in the study, which included age, gender, ethnicity, high school GPA, SAT verbal score, SAT writing score, course GPA, institutional GPA, and number of visits to the writing center. While Eliot and Judi were interested in discovering relationships and correlations among the demographic information and grades, the sample sizes were relatively small, which made it difficult to split their data into subgroups and retain statistically-significant results. Ultimately they focused on the bottom line: What are the effects of varying mandatory writing center visits on students' course productivity, measured by their course grade?[3]

This focus on students' course grades was both strategic and practical. In the local context of this study, and likely in today's larger educational landscape, course productivity— and its causal relationship to student retention and progression— is of central importance for administrators who make difficult resource allocation decisions for support services like university writing centers. Specifically, this study's institution is part of a state-wide system that has devoted significant resources to participating in the Gardner Institute's Gateways to Completion (or G2C) Program. G2C is presented as "an evidence-based process to create an institutional plan for improving student learning and success in high-enrollment courses that have historically resulted in high rates of Ds, Fs, Withdrawals, and Incompletes especially for low-income, first-generation and historically underrepresented students" (*Gateways to Completion Guidebook* 5). With this institutional and system-wide focus, Eliot and Judi recognized that interventions and support programs that could demonstrate statistically-significant improvements in students' grades were more likely to receive support and funding from upper administration decision-makers.

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[3] Students received participation points that were included in their final grade to hold them accountable and to motivate or encourage them to attend the required WC visits. For the purposes of this study, however, students' final grades were recalculated with these participation points removed in order to ensure that any identified correlations stemmed from the benefits of tutoring rather than from students' compliance with the requirement to visit the WC.

In addition, focusing on students' course grades would provide very timely feedback, allowing Eliot to develop new program policies for mandatory visits and Sundi to settle on a specific mandate level, beginning as early as the following semester. Admittedly, the investigators did not examine drafts and development (e.g., Pleasant), assess multiple factors of writing (e.g., Irvin), or include students' self-reporting qualitative experience with the requirement. But as a "quick-fire" study, it provided the authors with important information about mandatory visits, without overwhelming Sundi's, Judi's, and Eliot's already hectic schedules, and they were able to use this information to develop specific curricular policies that benefit their student population. In addition, their focus on course productivity can be supplemented with future analyses of student work, as all students' written submissions are retained in the online learning management system class sites for Sundi's courses.

Results and Analysis

After gathering the data on the students who visited the writing center from the intervention and nonintervention classes, Judi and Eliot began with a simple comparison between the number of visits students were required to make and the number of visits they actually made in order to reveal the following: (1) how students behave with respect to the mandate (i.e., how fully do they comply with it); and (2) the relationship between their course grade and their actual number of visits. They compared frequency counts of actual visits for students in each mandated level, i.e., 0-visits, 3-visits, 6-visits, and 9-visits. The frequencies suggest that mandating visits has a positive effect on most students' use of the writing center. Among students who were "encouraged but not required" to visit the writing center, 27.3% actually went to the writing center (see Table 2). Among those students who were required to visit the writing center, 86.4% of the three-visit group attended; 75.0% of the six-visit group attended; and 91.7% of the nine-visit group attended. Across the three "intervention" groups, 84.3% of the students visited. The majority of students in the intervention sections also showed themselves willing to visit the writing center multiple times, with 60% of these students making three or more visits to the center. This is a notable finding

because three visits corresponds to the visit threshold that Irvin and others argue positively affects student writing and performance.

Table 2. Frequencies of Student Visits for each Requirement Level

Actual Visits	**0 Visits Required**	**3 Visits Required**	**6 Visits Required**	**9 Visits Required**
0	**16**	3	6	2
1	**3**	2	3	3
2	2	**8**	1	0
3	0	**8**	**4**	2
4	1	0	**3**	0
5	0	1	**5**	**6**
6	0	0	1	**7**
7	0	0	0	**3**
8	0	0	0	1
9	0	0	0	0
10+	0	0	1	0
Total	22	22	24	24
% who attended	27.3%	86.4%	75.0%	91.7%

The frequency analysis reveals that, as expected, the average number of Actual Visits by students increases as the number of required visits increases, ranging from a mean value of 0.50 visits for students who were encouraged but not required to visit the writing center to 4.58 visits for students who were required to visit nine times. Although these findings are positive overall, they do reveal that the average number of student visits for each intervention group fell short of the mandated number of visits. Counter to initial expectations, the majority of students in each mandate level did not meet their minimum required visits. Of the students who were required to visit the writing center three times, 40.9% met the requirement with only one student visiting

the WC more times than was mandated. Of the students required to visit six times, only 8.3% did so, and again only one student exceeded the mandated number of visits. No students required to visit nine times met or exceeded the requirement. These findings therefore raise important questions for how WCAs and faculty in the first-year composition program might implement and incentivize mandatory visits more effectively into a course curriculum.

After the frequency analysis, the authors performed a correlation analysis between students' actual number of visits and their course grades within the nonintervention group and the intervention groups (see Table 3). This correlation analysis effectively quantified the relationship between students' actual visits and course grades and provided an explanation of how "confident" the authors should be in that estimation.

Table 3. Correlations between Number of Visits and Students' Final Course Grades by Mandate Level

N	Visits Mandated	Avg. Actual Visits	Pearson Correlation	Significance (2-tailed)
22	0	0.5	0.197	0.380
22	3	2.14	0.343	0.118
24	6	2.61	0.322	0.125
24	9	4.58	0.430	0.036*

*Correlation is considered significant at or below the 0.05 level

The results of this analysis suggest that a loose positive correlation exists between actual student visits and students' final course grades across the three intervention groups, but the correlation is not statistically significant for the group of students who were required to visit the writing center three times, nor was it statistically significant for the group of students who were required to visit six times. At first glance, these results seem to counter Robinson's, Irvin's, and others' claims that three visits constitute an effective threshold frequency for producing demonstrable benefits to student writing. The frequency analysis described above, however, illustrates that, despite the 3-visit and 6-visit mandate levels, the average number of actual visits by students in these groups remained below three (2.14 and 2.61, respectively). As a result, our findings that an average of two+ visits seems to approach, but not attain, statistical significance lends support to the idea of three visits as an important threshold for writing center visits. Visits below this threshold may provide benefits, but it takes multiple visits to ensure confidence that these benefits will include improvements in their course productivity.

Further support for three visits as a minimum threshold can be seen in the correlation results for the group of students who were required to visit the writing center nine times during the semester. For these students, the 2-tailed significance value is 0.036, which translates to a 95% confidence that their visits to the writing center positively correlate with their course grades. It is important to note here that this group of students visited the writing center, on average, 4.58 (or between four and five) times during the semester. These results therefore add important nuance to our understanding of visit thresholds and provide greater specificity for Irvin's contention that "three or more visits" to the writing center will improve student success. Put simply, the findings from this quick-fire study indicate that the improvement in first-year composition students' grades is solidified when students' actual visits to the writing center increase to at least four or five times during the semester. According to these results, the fact that these visits were "mandated" by their teacher does not negate the positive benefits of the visits, as critics of mandatory visits sometimes fear.

Readers may object at this point that there are many factors that go into how many times students visit the writing center and how effective these writing center visits prove to be. Such objections are undoubtedly valid, especially in determining why students did or did not meet the mandated-level of writing center visits. At the same time, one of the principal benefits of a Pearson correlation analysis is that it takes these other influences into account and controls for their presence, as it computes the numeric relationship between actual visits and course grades. Put simply, qualitative analysis is useful for understanding more fully why students visited the writing center, and the number of times that they did visit, but it is not necessary to compute the numeric relationship between those visits and their course productivity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on these results and analysis, the investigators have arrived at two conclusions. First, they can provide an initial, localized answer to Irvin's question, “Can we identify more closely what happens for writers as the frequency of tutoring increases?” This study has shown for its particular participants and locale that more than two visits are needed to positively and significantly contribute to students’ course grades. Additionally, the study has taken the relative element of Irvin's “three or more visits” and added specificity with the approximation of four-to-five visits' positive effect on students' course productivity. Because of this specificity, Eliot, the WCA of this study, can confidently recommend to writing lecturers that they create a system of mandatory visits that ensures students visit the writing center at least three times, but preferably four or five times. It also provides important quantitative evidence for Eliot to present to the Provost’s office and other decision makers in the upper administration as he advocates for additional resources to meet increased demand for mandatory visits. At this point, readers might wonder, “Why should we think that shifting the burden to writing centers will be a sustainable move when universities are cutting budgets and resources?” Practically speaking, WCAs armed with extensive qualitative and quantitative scholarship are in a position to advocate for additional resources because, frankly, peer tutoring is an entry level, part-time

position without benefits, and, thus, relatively affordable in the eyes of upper administration.

Second, the authors conclude that the gap between actual visits and required visits needs further investigation. Their findings illustrate how quantitative analyses can be used in conjunction with, and as a means for targeting, qualitative analyses. On average, students' actual visits ranged from 44% to 71% of the mandated number of visits for the intervention groups. Going forward, the authors plan to develop qualitative survey and self-reflection activities to investigate what factors most influence the gap between writing center mandates and the number of actual visits. Questions to consider include the following: Might there have been conflicts between students' schedules and tutor availability? Did the way the instructor presented or monitored the requirement affect their participation? What effect might tutor training have had on student compliance with the requirement? Might students have needed more incentive, such as a raffle or another marketing and prize-oriented program to ensure their participation?

Finally, the authors strongly encourage WCAs at other institutions to conduct their own "quick-fire" quantitative studies, like the one described here, that will provide important insight into their unique circumstances or recurring questions and will also provide them with data to support their requests for writing center resources at their institution. For the particular context of the study discussed here—including resources, timeline, and accessible data—the authors wanted to know how many visits Sundi should require to supplement her instruction, potentially improve her students' writing, and in turn improve their course productivity, all within the limitations of the writing center's resources. And, of course, they wanted to know if there was a ceiling or upper threshold, leading to new discoveries of efficacy. Though the answer to the "upper threshold" question is inconclusive and invites further research, the WCA and lecturers at this particular institution have a clear starting point for their new policy on mandating visits to the writing center, as well as more focused quantitative and qualitative questions to investigate as they hone their analysis of mandatory visits to the writing center.

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Back to the Center

The Center for Writing Excellence at Palm Beach Atlantic University

Lisa Marzano

Center Profile:

- Palm Beach Atlantic University enrolls over 3,600 students, including undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students.
- Director: Lisa Marzano, Ph.D. Director since Fall 2011.
- Undergraduate peer tutors (writing coaches): Typically between 20-25, not including those in training
- Hours: Sun. 3pm-9pm; M-Th 9am-9pm; F 9am-4pm
- Number of writing coaches available per session: 2-3
- Appointments per month: On average 300-400 appointments of 30-minute sessions per month, not including custom workshops or embedded coaches
- Organization: Located in the School of Arts and Sciences; independent of the English or any other academic school
- Other Services: Embedded writing coaches in classes; customized workshops; assistance for faculty (syllabus, assignment, or rubric clarification; professional writing feedback) provided by the director; presentations on CWE services

Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBA) sits on the intra-coastal waterway in South Florida, 1.1 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. In many respects, PBA is a destination school for undergraduate and graduate students due to its desirable location. PBA provides an excellent Christian, liberal arts education. Part of that education includes access to the Center for Writing Excellence (CWE).

The CWE is located on the lower level—we resist the term "basement"—of the campus's Warren Library, located in the center of campus. The library houses a print collection, small art gallery area, archives, and computer work areas. The library was opened in two phases, with the final phase in 2009.

The CWE is a room that opens into an area of books. It is a small space of only 270 square feet. It has three tables, each with a computer and resource materials. There is a small alcove that has houses a love seat and a chair. The room also has a small refrigerator. There are no windows other than the vinyl picture of a window posted on the wall. The room was initially built as a computer workroom with high bar shelves and chairs. In the summer of 2012, the space was converted and the high shelves were removed, outlets were moved down on the walls, and the current furniture was purchased. Over time, we tried to add some color and interest to the space. Four large paper lanterns were hung to add more light. We placed colorful carpet squares to the floor. Finally, we painted the walls a soft blue/gray, and also added a chalkboard wall. While not a perfect space, it has become an interesting space in which to work.

The university chose the combined topic of writing/critical thinking in 2006 as the topic for the SACSCOC QEP; it was implemented in Fall 2008. From almost the very beginning of the discussions in 2006, a writing center was envisioned as a featured part of the initiative. Before that, only the adult evening school was running a writing center for its own students.

The CWE has gone through many changes since 2008, well beyond the few physical space improvements. In 2011, there were approximately six tutors, and the hours of the center were extremely limited. Most notably, the room's solid wood door was kept closed, making the entry for clients awkward, at best. Writers often felt that they were interrupting ongoing conversations and were reluctant to enter.

One of the initial changes in 2011 was to engage with the library dean to discuss making the space in the lower level of the library collaborative workspace, so that the CWE could keep the door to the center open. Keeping the door open happened immediately. Later, as part of the major renovation in 2012, the doors were changed to ones with a large section of glass so that, even if the door had to be closed for some reason, students could still see inside. We believe that small change in practice accounts for a portion of our appointment numbers jumping nearly 200% in the academic year 2011/2012.

Those interested in working in the CWE are recruited by faculty, current writing coaches, and through emails to all PBA students. Typically, there is a basic informational meeting at the beginning of the semester where students are supplied with a list of expectations for training and the job description of the writing coach. Those who are still interested begin the process by completing an application and gathering faculty references.

Using JotForm as a form builder and collection tool works well. We create forms and distribute the URL. Potential trainees can click on the link, complete the form, and the results are sent to the director. One component of the application includes submitting sample work, which applicants can upload to JotForm. From within the application form, there is a URL applicants can use to solicit faculty recommendations. Those results also come to the director only. All responses from JotForm can be converted to an Excel file or CSV.

Once there is a complete application and positive faculty references, applicants begin an orientation period of about two weeks. During orientation, trainees are given detailed information regarding the training process, which occurs over the course of the semester. If they remain interested, paperwork required for hiring is completed. The CWE is fortunate that trainees are paid minimum wage during the training semester.

Training plays a key role in the Center for Writing Excellence. Our training program consists of a two-hour "class" that meets about ten times during the semester. During that time, we discuss articles on writing center theory and pedagogy. We review CWE specific policies, of which hospitality plays an important part. Of course we talk about

HOCs and LOCs! Perhaps most importantly, we practice reviewing papers.

We have a collection of different types of papers and different levels of writing. During the training class, we spend time reviewing those papers and discussing how to approach them. Trainees learn skills such as how to consider the paper as a whole and then how to break it down into various sections. We also discuss differences between papers from less proficient writers and those who are more experienced. We consider this among the most important work in training.

Along with the class meetings, trainees have other assignments. On the LOC side, they complete a series of grammar exercises to brush up on those skills. They also convert papers from one formatting style to another. One of our most important formatting practices is to not rely on our memory for formatting. As part of the collaborative process, writing coaches pull out manuals to look up formatting information and work through it with students.

Another training focus is hospitality. While the CWE is not a business, we do provide a service to and for writers; we want our writers to feel comfortable and welcome. Some of those hospitality practices have to do with how we greet writers who enter the CWE space. Because of our space issue, primarily, we do not have a receptionist to assist those coming into the room. Therefore, it's important for writing coaches to manage what they are doing, neither abandoning their current client nor ignoring someone who has just entered the center.

In order to facilitate that process, we use a white board in the CWE room. As writing coaches comes on duty, they check their appointments and write them on the white board. They list times and then put in the first name for those appointments, leaving the open times blank. That practice assists in several ways. First, a client coming into the center sees that we are expecting them. Second, if there is a walk-in anyone of the writing coaches can look at the board and see if there is an immediate time available. If the director sees a walk-in approaching, she can quickly assess whether or not there is availability.

We stress that greeting someone by their name—"Hi. Are you Jane?"—is much more welcoming than greeting them with "Hi. Do you have an

appointment?" This might be a small detail, but we find this greeting helps to immediately establish rapport, and adds a level of professionalism to the center.

Training also focuses on our response to and relationship with faculty. Our guidelines are clear that no writing coach should contact faculty directly. If a faculty member happens to come to the CWE, coaches refer that faculty member to the director. Writing coaches are also trained that they should support faculty prompts and feedback, and not offer any "grade related" opinions regarding student work.

Trainees complete four observations and they complete a reflection assignment for each. Trainees also complete three to four mock sessions. For these sessions, trainees schedule an appointment with a current writing coach; that current coach brings one of their papers to the session. The trainee conducts the appointment as a writing coach, allowing the trainee to get a "feel" for sessions. These appointments also give an opportunity for the current coaches to get to know the trainees, offer suggestions to the trainee, and give feedback to the director about the trainee's session.

Finally, trainees complete four hours of supervised sessions. They are paired with an experienced writing coach and attend that coach's sessions. During that appointment, trainees are introduced to clients and the training context is explained. The trainee conducts the appointment while the experienced coach observes and offers further information or direction as needed. After appointments, the trainee writes a reflection; the writing coach completes a form giving the director specific feedback about the trainee's session. At the CWE, the current coaches have substantial input into the hiring of new trainees.

Palm Beach Atlantic University is quite supportive of the Center for Writing Excellence. The director provides feedback to the university, receives regular feedback from the university, and is recognized as having a positive effect on retention. All involved with the CWE believe that training is the key for our current and future success.

Book Review

Greenfield, Laura. *Radical Writing Center Praxis: A Paradigm for Ethical Engagement*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2019.

ISBN: 978-1607328438
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Price: $25.95

Graham Stowe

At the core of all writing center work is the tutoring, the day-to-day work of engaging with students, faculty, and their work. Laura Greenfield's *Radical Writing Center Praxis: A Paradigm for Ethical Political Engagement* addresses this question through a political lens. Taking part of her inspiration from Jackie Grutsch McKinney's *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers,* Greenfield considers, reconsiders, and ultimately dismisses out of hand both the grand narratives we tell ourselves about what we do in writing centers as well as the actual things we do. In short, she calls for a paradigm shift, away from the grand narratives and the current practices within those narratives. She does not suggest we change our narratives to match our practice; indeed, she asks for nothing less than to redefine the field of writing center studies altogether (4-5).

Greenfield's argument rests on two important suppositions, that there are, in general, two categories of writing centers currently. First, the conservative writing center assumes that the hegemonic power structures within higher education are right and good. A conservative writing center encourages students to submit to the standards of a given writing assignment, for instance, and to do so using standard written English (38-42). Secondly, a liberal writing center looks better according to Greenfield, but is in fact caught up in the same political forces as the

conservative system. It fails to actually address the injustices within hegemonic power structures because its core value is a form of relativism. The liberal writing center narrative is committed to the notion that all ideas are equal, even if it tends to promote an ideology that some are more equal than others. The liberal center does not give tutors space to take their own ethical stands (44-49). Rather than either of these two paradigms, Greenfield suggests a radical one.

Greenfield's radical paradigm is one that relies on an "ethics of love, hope, resistance, justice, liberation, and peace" (59). Like a liberal or conservative writing center, a radical one engages with and responds to power. The radical center, however, negotiates with power structures, that they "should be considered dialectically" (64). A radical writing center sees power "as something to be exercised rather than possessed" (65). Such a center employs a model that recognizes the individuality of both a tutor and a student, and the work of the center is to create dialogue. Dialogue is, in fact, the "crux of pedagogy" in a radical writing center (71). She offers a "radical praxis," that truly engages with the systemic sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, classism, among other injustices, that affect our centers (116-121).

Greenfield is the Director of the Transformative Speaking Program at Hampshire College, and is also the co-author of the award-winning Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change. Her work has long focused on the kinds of issues addressed in Radical Writing Center Praxis. It is, in many ways, an extension of Writing Centers and the New Racism, taking up its titular call and expanding it. Her writing is consistently couched in this ethic of social justice, as is her work as an administrator (which she happens to address in the text, too).

Generally, the book's chapters address each of the dominant narratives, conservative and liberal, and then explain how and why the field should follow a radical model. The first chapter defines the liberal and conservative narratives and demonstrates their flaws. The second defines a radical politics as the alternative to the others. The third, fourth, and fifth each show specific failings in the liberal and conservative models. The chapters then move to an outline of the ways a radical approach would change writing centers. Chapter three, "Making a Better World: Rearticulating a Raison d'Être for Writing Centers," especially,

discusses an entirely new vision for writing centers through the lens of justice and peace (87). Greenfield relies on an example from one of her own tutors to explain one way this might work. The details of the example are less important here than the ultimate point: a writing center director must rely on the same radical dialogue they ask their tutors to trust in. Doing so forces a writing center administrator to see the ways in which power structures affect tutors and, in turn, student writers. Chapters four and five continue in a similar vein, while adding more examples to demonstrate the practice of a radical writing center.

The book's strengths are too numerous to list here, but one of them is Greenfield's discussion of what she calls "resonance." Resonance for a writing center comes from sharing space with others in a community, and offering to listen to others. Stories are shared between those "in" the writing center and those "outside" it, partly to show that this is a false binary in the first place. But more than that, it gives writing centers an opportunity to hear from their own communities and grow and change in the most beneficial ways. She calls these kinds of meetings "culture-building," wherein two groups of people come together with the aim of learning from one another.

Readers who are sympathetic to Greenfield's arguments may find that their approach to writing center work will be fundamentally altered for the better by Radical Writing Center Praxis. However, because she assumes her readers will agree with her, some may dismiss her thesis as quickly as she dismisses liberal and conservative models. She does not consider a middle path, either, between a radical center and a liberal one, which may be as far as some writing center directors are able to go, given certain institutional and personal constraints. A middle path could be forged, though Greenfield may call such a path a half-measure. That said, the book's title is *Radical Writing Center Praxis*, so its likely audience is coming from relatively far left. For Greenfield, a radical writing center aims to do more than help writers (rather than writing, as the community often says). The goal is to create a more just, equitable world.

Contributors

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Jo Mackiewicz is a professor of Rhetoric and Professional Communication at Iowa State University. In 2017, she published *The Aboutness of Writing Center Talk: A Corpus-Driven and Discourse Analysis*. In 2018, she published *Writing Center Talk over Time: A Mixed-Method Study*, which won the IWCA Outstanding Book Award for 2018. With Isabelle Thompson, she has published a number of articles about writing center discourse, as well as the book *Talk about Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experienced Writing Center Tutors*.

Eliot Rendleman, Ph.D., is Professor of English and Associate Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences at Columbus State University. He was Director of the Writing Center and the Academic Center for Tutoring for 10 years at Columbus State University. Prior to that, he was the Coordinator of the Writing Center at Truckee Meadows Community College, a graduate writing tutor at the University of Nevada, Reno, and an undergraduate writing tutoring at the University of Michigan-Flint. In addition to his administrative duties, Eliot has taught courses in writing center theory and practice, professional writing, and composition. His publications can be found in the online journal *Composition Forum*, in *Writing Lab Newsletter*, in the WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, and in the collection *Writing Program and Writing Center Collaborations: Transcending Boundaries*.

Sundi Rose has a Bachelor's in Professional Writing and a Master's in English Education. Her scholarship focuses on popular culture as an entry point to composition and rhetorical study. She has been teaching classes themed in mass media, popular culture, and shared identity for almost ten years, and prioritizes transfer among her students. Sundi is also a freelance entertainment writer, contributing to several online publications such as Comic Book Resource, The Heavy, Entertainment Weekly, Pop Sugar, Hello Giggles, IndieWire, Daily Dot, and Culturess, She has taught classes such as "Breaking Bad and American Issues," "The Politics and Power of Game of Thrones," "Writing about Mass Media," and "Southern Settings."

Graham Stowe served as President of SWCA (2018-2020), Vice President (2016-2018), and South Carolina State Representative 2013-2015. He directed the Writing Center at the University of South Carolina from 2011 to 2018. He

is the founding director of the Writing Center at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY. He holds a PhD from the University of South Carolina. He has been working in writing centers since 2001.

Isabelle Thompson is emerita professor of Technical and Professional Communication and former director of the English Center at Auburn University. She has published articles about technical communication and, more recently with Jo Mackiewicz, articles and a book (*Talk about Writing*) researching writing center tutoring.

Call for Submissions

SDC Spring 2020

To encourage a wide variety of scholarly activity, the Spring 2020 issue will not have a specific thematic focus. Please consider submitting your work on the tutoring or teaching of academic writing, WC administration, WC assessment, tutor training, or any other topic related to the focus of the journal that you feel would be of interest to readers.

Deadline for submissions: 15 March 2020.

Articles can be theoretical or practical in focus (or a combination thereof) and should incorporate outside sources in MLA format according to the guidelines available on the *SDC* website at the link below:

https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/SDC-Submission-Guidelines

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the editors at southerndiscoursejournal@gmail.com

SDC Fall 2020—SWCA Conference Retrospective

We are pleased to invite submissions from attendees to the 2020 SWCA Conference in Birmingham, AL. In addition to transcripts of conference addresses, this issue will feature scholarly articles that grow from sessions at the conference. If you give a presentation or sit on a panel—or even if you are just inspired by a session you attended at the conference—you are strongly encouraged to "write up" your work and send it in for editorial and peer review.

Please note: The Fall 2019 will also include book reviews, a Back to the Center piece, and a Consultant Insight article. Submission for these types of manuscripts do not have to be connected to the 2020 SWCA Conference.

Deadline for submissions: 15 September 2020.

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