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Am I in the right place?: writing center consultations as socioacademic integrative experiences for community college transfer students

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"AM I IN THE RIGHT PLACE?":

WRITING CENTER CONSULTATIONS AS SOCIOACADEMIC INTEGRATIVE

EXPERIENCES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS

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by

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ABSTRACT

Community college transfer students experience unique pressures and challenges, and studies have revealed the need to critically investigate the transfer receptivity of resources and services available at four year receiving institutions. Studies have also shown that blending social and academic integrative techniques in programs and services targeting transfers students are more effective for increasing retention and persistence than exclusively social or academic efforts. The overall purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine writing center consultations at two regional campuses serving community college transfer at a large university in relationship to socioacademic integration. The results of this study revealed further evidence of the phenomena of transfer shock and transfer stigma among the participants and the facilitation of socioacademic integrative experiences for peer mentors and students through writing center consultations. Limitations of the study and recommendations for improved practice and research are also discussed.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Lt. Col. Jon E. Johnson and Dr. Terrie S. Johnson.

Thank you for teaching me what it means to dedicate your life and work to helping, protecting,

and serving alongside others. Everything I am, I owe to your love, support, and guidance.

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Finally, my three sisters have always been my first and best support system. Laura, Sarah, and Julie, you were the first to really know me and the only people to have always accepted me, no matter what. My wolf pack – thank you for our shared history and your unwavering love.

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INTRODUCTION

From my adjacent faculty office, I observed a familiar interaction: a student timidly

peeked her head through the opening to the writing center and asked, "Am I in the right place?"

She continued, "I am lookin' to meet with someone about my writing," her voice rising at the

end of the sentence as if it were a question. "You are definitely in the right place!" answered a

friendly and enthusiastic voice from one of the peer consultants within. Smiling to myself, I

watched the student drop her arms from their protective position around her chest, let out an

exaggerated sigh, and exclaim "Thank goodness!" as she ambled into the center.

As the director of a supplemental learning service and teacher, I have met and worked

with hundreds of students from many diverse backgrounds over the years. I have seen

interactions like the one described above play out innumerable times in my professional practice.

In fact so much so, I have considered posting an anticipatory sign with the words, "Yes! You are

in the right place!" written in big, bold letters outside of the writing center I administer. My peer

tutoring staff and I have also had lengthy conversations in staff meetings about how to ensure

students understand that they are welcome and we are happy to help.

At some point, I began to wonder if there might be more to what I was seeing with my

students' lack of confidence and diminished sense of belonging than a sort of garden variety

sheepishness about asking for help. Since I work with a specialized population of almost

exclusively community college transfer students at a regional campus of a four year university, I wondered if what I was seeing at the center was also connected to the way students seemed to loathe asking questions in class or the all too common experience I'd had of running into a former student in town and finding out that they'd never quite finished their degree. Could the assumption on the part of students that they weren't in the right place or that they didn't belong in institutional spaces be a symptom of something larger and more systemic? Was there something about the way I and other higher education professionals were going about our work that wasn't communicating our attitudes and mission to our students? If so, was this ultimately impacting our students' long term success?

These questions and observations prompted further study, on my part, of community college transfer students and the practices of receiving four year institutions. Eventually, my inquiry led me to the problem of practice considered in this study: the well documented disparity in retention and baccalaureate attainment rates between community college transfer (CC-transfer) students and other student populations at four year institutions. It also prompted me to research ways that my own professional practice related to academic support services and other institutional practices in my local context could be improved.

Problem of Practice

CC-transfer students have unique socioacademic characteristics and differ significantly from both native freshman (students who begin their studies at four year institutions) and other types of transfer students (Lanaan, 2007; D'Amico, Dika, Elling, Algozzine, & Ginn, 2014). While previous research has focused on the role of the community college in promoting successful transfer, there is a lack of definitive research about the role of the four year institution

in retaining these students and promoting their success post transfer. The extent to which a receiving institution creates processes and resources that are friendly or tailored to the needs of transfer students has been termed *transfer receptivity* (Bahr, Toth, Thirolf, & Masse, 2013). Much of the existing culture (and related processes) of four year programs ignores the presence of CC-transfer students within the student body -- what Tobolowsky and Cox (2012) term *institutional neglect*. This dissertation in practice takes as its starting point the challenge from previous researchers to identify student resources and services at four year institutions that are transfer receptive and that facilitate integration specifically for CC-transfer students (Bahr et al., 2013). Integration efforts which successfully blend the social and academic experiences of CC-transfer student have been shown to have the most impact of retention and persistence for CC-transfer students (Deil-Amen, 2011). However, there is a gap in the literature as to which specific activities and resources are able to successfully create these socioacademic integrative experiences. This study seeks to identify what one established institutional resource in my local and professional context (peer-based writing center consultation) is explicitly or implicitly doing (if anything) to facilitate socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students. The results of this study could be used to better understand and improve institutional resources and practices for CC-transfer students.

Supplemental academic instruction is a common student resource at four year institutions to help fill gaps in student skills and preparation for upper level study. Writing centers (sometimes referred to as "labs") offer access to peer-based writing tutoring at all stages of the writing process. Since writing is one of the most common forms of assessment in higher education, this student service is used widely across various programs and majors by many

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different types of students. The National Census of Writing (2013), a survey completed by over 900 U.S. higher education institutions, found that 99% of four year program respondents had some kind writing center (or learning center where writing consultations took place). Further, 91% of those centers were staffed by peer mentors. Given the prevalence of writing center consultations on four year college and university campuses, it is important to study this service in light of CC-transfer students.

CC-transfer students are more likely than nontransfer students to be classified as *at risk* (e.g. minorities, first generation, place bound, and low SES) (Kolodner, 2016). Transfer students are also more likely to be underprepared for upper level coursework and to need remediation or supplemental instruction, while also being less able to access available resources due to personal and economic factors (Xu, 2016; Bahr et al., 2013). This study will employ Deil-Amen's (2011) framework of *socioacademic integrative moments* to examine writing center consultations with CC-transfer students. Writing centers employ a peer learning and mentoring model to provide supplemental academic services, where specially trained peer consultants work with other students to establish and improve individual writing processes.

Research on integration has shown that while CC-transfer students do not respond as readily as other student populations to traditional social integration methods on campus they do "perceive their peers to be among their most useful sources of academic information" (Barh et al., 2013, p. 473). Peer-based writing center consultations are both social and academic in nature -- blending meaningful interaction between peers with collaboration on and discussion of academic concepts and tasks and, therefore, should be examined for their socioacademic integrative properties. This dissertation in practice aims to provide concrete documentation and

qualitative analysis of peer-based, one-on-one writing center consultations and their relationship to socioacademic integration. Such research is instrumental towards developing frameworks for assessing learning services and resources, training institutional agents, and creating effective programmatic efforts to enhance transfer receptivity.

The disparity in educational attainment for CC-transfer students documented on a large scale for nearly thirty years (Dougherty, 1992; Alfonso, 2006; Wang, 2009; Burrus et al., 2013) is also present in my current professional context on two regional campuses of a large university in Mississippi. The enrollment on these campuses is made up almost exclusively of CC-transfer students and our retention rates lag significantly behind the main campus (69.8% retention rate at regionals versus 85.3% at the main campus). The regional campuses also serve a higher population of minority, adult, place bound, and parenting students than the main campus revealing issues of equity and lack of access to higher education.

Professional positionality and assumptions. I am an instructor of writing and rhetoric as well as the writing center director on a regional campus of a large public university in Mississippi. My role as a faculty member is to teach a variety of composition courses to students at a variety of levels. In my capacity as the director of the WC, I perform a wide variety of tasks including: (a) hiring, supervising and providing administrative support for undergraduate and graduate writing consultants; (b) developing online writing center functionality; (c) designing and implementing consultant training programs; and (d) coordinating services with other departments and campuses.

I have served in my current position for five years. The student body on the campus on which I serve is made up mainly of community college transfer students from rural and suburban

areas of Mississippi. Prior to my current position, I worked as a graduate student administrator and consultant at a large university WC. I also taught composition courses as a graduate teaching assistant. The school I attended as a graduate student featured a more traditional student body, with the exception of a large international and multilingual student population. Prior to my work in higher education, I taught high school English at a Title I school in Shreveport, Louisiana. My academic background and training is interdisciplinary. I hold a master's degree in English with a concentration in cultural studies and a graduate certificate in women and gender studies. As an undergraduate, I majored in history with a minor in gender studies.

I became interested in researching CC-transfer students because my professional and educational experiences taught me that transitions in education, whether they are from grade level to grade level or institution to institution, inevitably leave gaps for students that can be the difference between success and failure, graduation or dropout. Often, the barriers that cause and/or recreate these gaps are due to historical, institutional, and social biases towards certain kinds of student and learners. I began my career as an educator in the high school classroom with students from an economically depressed, inner city neighborhood. As a young, rather naive, educator, I learned a great deal about classism, racial discrimination, and the influence of student preparedness on academic success. A majority of my students showed up to my senior-level literature class with reading and writing skills far below grade level. Some of them showed up dirty and hungry. I remember feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of teaching Shakespeare's *Othello* alongside basic reading and writing strategies, while also trying to ensure my students' physical and emotional well-being.

I struggled day in and day out in my own classroom, but it became clear to me through departmental meetings and casual conversations in the teachers' lounge that my colleagues were also experiencing similar pressures. A sense of frustration, loneliness, and futility permeated these conversations. I came to understand that providing students with the tools and opportunity to succeed could not be accomplished completely at the individual teacher, classroom, or even departmental level. To do right by my students, I believed I needed to be engaged in an institutional, communal system-wide approach to solving problems.

While attending graduate school, I often found myself drawing on my experiences as a high school teacher. My graduate teaching assistantship meant teaching first-year composition courses while simultaneously tutoring in the university writing center. I found that the same obstacles I had encountered before with student readiness were present in the transition from high school to college. I also found that low socioeconomic, first generation, and nontraditional students were disproportionately plagued by a lack of institutional knowledge to help overcome these barriers. Students came to my classroom with varying levels of experience and knowledge of the course content, and I still had to devise a way to close those gaps. I thought, again very naively, that the college admissions process would remove these gaps.

What set my experience in higher education apart from high school teaching was that I was teaching in the classroom, but I was also a member of an established institutional community of educators at the WC. The center was a vibrant atmosphere of pedagogical conversation, idea exchange, and problem solving. Our staff collaborated extensively on a variety of supplemental resources for students from scheduled writing workshops, to electronic lessons and handouts, to individualized tutoring plans for students. I felt like the work I was

doing in the WC was integral to my teaching *and* positively influenced my students' outcomes.

I could not have provided the type of services to students that the WC could in my classroom as an individual faculty member. My students expressed appreciation at having access to a resource that could work with them no matter what they brought to the table -- whether they were looking for remediation or enrichment. It seemed to me that the presence of a dedicated academic support service was part of the communal problem-solving approach I had been looking for as a high school teacher. In my current role, I see these same benefits. On my campus, diverse identities and experiences; contrasting coursework and disciplinary requirements; and classification distinctions, such as traditional and nontraditional, are a fact of life that present important challenges to student success and retention. The WC is an example of a place on campus where those differences are not only understood but expected. In contrast, the classroom is an environment where these differences are often viewed as a complication and frustration by some faculty.

My work in WCs has caused me to consider more deeply intersections between classroom pedagogies, student resources, and institutional structures. My goal as a professional and a researcher is to play a role in minimizing barriers to student success. Institutions cannot always prevent disparities in student preparedness, but I believe that careful research and increased understanding of the complexities of how students experience an institution and its services could yield more understanding of the ways in which our practices may exacerbate or recreate such disparities.

Like any researcher, I have personal and professional assumptions that I must take into account in order to ethically conduct my study. Namely, since I administer a writing center and

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teach writing, I am clearly invested in the value of writing as a skill. I believe that proficiency in writing is an important aspect of personal, academic, and professional success. I am invested in writing centers as a student resource for helping to address gaps in knowledge as well as provide opportunities for enrichment for advanced students. I believe in the value of supplemental academic resources for students that are separate from classroom spaces. My assumptions about this study are that a need for social and academic integration exists for CC-transfer students. I am also assuming that higher education institutions are invested in the academic success and achievement of CC-transfer students and will value the results of a study like this. I believe in fact-based inquiry and the research process as a basis for knowledge production that can influence educational practice. I acknowledge the above assumptions and will work to eliminate any resulting biases from influencing the present research.

Local context: Mississippi. Since the geographical context of this study is Mississippi, it is important to consider factors unique to the state, especially related to low educational attainment and corresponding low socioeconomic status. The state of Mississippi is regularly ranked among the lowest of states in the U.S. in factors related to economic development, health, education, employment, and social equity (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2016; Social Science Research Council [SSRC], 2017). For instance, in 2017, Mississippi was ranked 49th in the U.S. for opportunity and education indexes, where the median household income in Mississippi is $15,000 less than the national average, a fifth of the population lives below the poverty line, and only about 30% of adults 25 and older have any postsecondary credential (SSRC, 2017, "Mississippi").

Mississippi also has significant disparities in the amount of education spending between rich and poor regions, compounding inequalities in access to educational opportunities (Associated Press [AP], 2016). A study by the Center for Social Inclusion (2012) found that factors in elementary and secondary education in the state tied to student achievement (i.e. teacher quality, curriculum offerings, school climate, and financing) reflect significant disparities for students along racial and economic lines. More than half of Mississippi's schools are classified as rural (Showalter, Klein, Johnson, & Hartman, 2017). Additionally, Mississippi's rural schools have comparatively very high populations of minority (44.5%) and underprivileged (70.9%) students (Showalter et al., 2017, p. 128). The Mississippi Department of Education [MDE] (2017) reported that in 2016-2017 only 32.4% of high school students met college and career readiness standards.

Rural Mississippians especially face unique barriers to postsecondary educational attainment. Students report struggling with a lack of access to transportation, child care, technology, and internet access, as well as a general lack of preparedness for upper level coursework (Scott, Miller, & Morris, 2015). In the mid-1990s, the Ford Foundation named Mississippi as one of only five priority regions for funding postsecondary rural education (Kennamer & Katsinas, 2011). McGrath, Swisher, Elder, and Conger (2001) found that students from rural areas draw on their community ties more readily than other student groups to navigate routes to successful degree attainment, and sustained attachment to community groups and local schools creates social support that results in better enrollment outcomes (p. 260). According to Crookston and Hooks (2012), there is clear evidence that consistent, sustained investment in

postsecondary rural educational opportunities can lead to employment gains and economic development in these same areas.

Four-year universities in Mississippi receive an increasing number of transfer students who are underprepared for the rigorous academic and social challenges of four-year institutions (AACC, 2015). Mississippi has 20 community colleges with nearly 120,000 students enrolled ("Colleges & Universities", 2017). Many of these students transfer to four-year programs in the state. According Jenkins and Fink (2016), 60% of community college students in the state of Mississippi who transferred out to a four year institution did not complete a bachelor's degree within six years of entering their programs (p. 19). Assisting more of these students, who are likely to be first-generation college students from rural areas attending regional programs (Jenkins & Fink, 2016), to persist in college and pursue degrees is crucial to economic, social, civic, and educational success for communities in Mississippi.

Professional setting. Satellite, regional, or branch campuses of universities generally exist to bolster enrollment of existing institutions while extending access to higher education to place bound and adult (sometimes referred to as non traditional) students. While higher education research concerning transfer students overall has grown, surprisingly, there is little research that examines these issues in transfer specific baccalaureate programs, such as two-year branch, regional, or satellite campuses/centers (Bahr et al, 2013). These campuses are often in the same area (sometimes even on the same campus) as community colleges and draw heavily for their enrollment on transfer students from such programs. They also operate without the large network of student support mechanisms and resources of a main campus. According to Charles Bird (2014), a researcher and branch campus administrator, "While there are large numbers of

students attending branch campuses and centers, and the number of such locations is expanding, it seems no one knows how they fit into broader higher education policy" (p. 26). Branch campuses, like community colleges, tend to serve non traditional students whose personal, financial, and familial exigencies heavily influence their choice of where and how to complete a degree (Cosman-Ross & Hiatt-Michael, 2005). This study can provide more research regarding attendance at branch and regional campuses and the degree attainment of CC-transfer students.

In general, regional and branch campus students have less access to student services, academic support units, and full time faculty mentors (Hoyt & Howell, 2012). A study by Bebko and Huffman (2011) through the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) found that regional and branch campuses are often heavily dependent on part time faculty to teach on-site courses. The survey found that less than 20% of courses on the branch campuses sampled were taught by full time faculty and even less by resident faculty assigned specifically to the branch campus (Bebko & Huffman, 2011, p. 52). This can significantly limit students' access to as well as interaction with faculty. For students transferring from community colleges who are often underprepared for the rigor of upper level coursework, a lack of ready access to faculty makes supplemental academic support units and services a necessity in these settings. However, Bebko and Huffman (2011) also found that branch campuses had a wide variance of academic and student support personnel present on campus (p. 53).

Overall, there is very little definitive data on branch campuses in the U.S. in higher education research literature. Although there has been some recent work focused on international branch campuses, regional or satellite campuses in the U.S. have not been widely studied, especially in relation to the availability of supplemental learning support services (Krueger,

Bebko, & Bird, 2011). The studies that are available tend to discuss specific campuses or initiatives with very little context as to the exact definition of a branch or regional campus or shared characteristics (Hoyt & Howell, 2012, p. 114).

The professional setting of the current problem of practice is two regional campuses of a major public university in Mississippi. These facilities provide access to four year degree programs in largely rural and some suburban areas by admitting students entering at sophomore or junior level classification who are transferring from their local community colleges. The student body of these campuses is made up of a mixture of place bound, first generation, working, and/or parenting students. The average age of students on these regional campuses is 28 compared to the main campus average of 22 with individual regional campus averages ranging from 26 to 31. Students at these campuses are overwhelmingly Mississippi residents (97%) and represent a higher population of minority students on average (30%) compared to the main campus (22.9%). The average first year retention rate across the regionals is 69.8%, which lags significantly behind the main campus at 85.3%. The average graduation rate within two years for full time transfer students across the four regional campuses is 56.15%, and the average graduation rate within four years is 63.65%. While graduation rates for the campuses being examined are higher than the state average for CC-transfer students (Jenkins & Fink, 2016), these could and should be improved. Essentially, a student at these regional transfer campuses is almost as likely to stopout or dropout as they are to persist to on time graduation. Since the regional campuses serve a larger minority population than the main campus, the lack of retention and degree completion also translates to an issue of equity and access to higher education.

At the two facilities for this study, the student population is almost exclusively undergraduate CC-transfers. These students have access to a limited number of student services compared to their main campus peers. The two regional campuses have on-campus full time advising staff, a financial aid representative, testing coordinator, and student services liaison. The only supplemental instruction or academic support on these campuses is provided through an on-site writing center directed by a full time faculty-administrator. The writing centers are focused on providing access to one-on-one academic tutoring in writing as well as some supplemental instruction. Both of the regional campuses are at least a one hour commute to main university campus.

CPED Principles

This dissertation in practice is written, in part, to satisfy degree requirements for a doctorate of education for a university participating in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). The CPED takes as its guiding principles the promotion of equity, ethics, and social justice in higher education. Since academically underprepared, underrepresented, and disadvantaged students are more likely than other populations to begin their postsecondary studies at community colleges (Hagedorn, 2010), a better understanding of the model of available supplemental learning resources for these students can help to promote access, equity, and social justice in higher education. The below conceptual framework and literature review portions of this dissertation expand on the connections between the socioacademic integration of CC-transfer students and the CPED principles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student success is an important goal of higher education. The successful completion of a postsecondary degree can be a great economic and social benefit to an individual resulting in improved socioeconomic status and life outcomes (Ellwood & Kane, 2005; Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Haskins, Holzer, & Lerman, 2009; Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). To promote the public and private good of a community, education should serve the dual function of contributing to economic development as well as providing individuals with equal access to the necessities of public life and citizenship (Larabee, 1997). However, rates of successful degree attainment differ significantly among student populations (Roksa, 2011; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2016). One such population is CC-transfer students, who begin their studies at a two year program and later enroll at four year institutions. Unfortunately, it is more common for CC-transfer students not to complete a four-year degree than to persist to graduation (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). Research has consistently confirmed a baccalaureate gap between CC-transfer students and their peers who start at four year institutions (Dougherty, 1992; Alfonso, 2006; Wang, 2009; Burrus et al., 2013).

Additionally, overall transfer student baccalaureate attainment rates are lowest for minority students (NCES, 2016). Transfer students are less likely to be retained than native freshman and are more likely than other student populations to depart in their first and third semesters at university (Ishtani, 2008; Bowen et al., 2009). Researchers agree that most transfer students experience simultaneous, negative phenomena termed *transfer shock* and *transfer stigma* after leaving community college and entering a four-year institution. Transfer shock is generally marked by a significant drop in GPA and social, emotional, and community adjustment

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barriers (Rhine, Milligan, & Nelson, 2000; Ishitani, 2008; Townsend, 2008), while transfer stigma is characterized by negative assumptions on the part of faculty and other students as well as self-doubt from transfer students about their own aptitude for higher level study (Shaw, Spink, & Chin-Newman, 2018; D'Amico et al., 2014).

Disproportionate Impact for Marginalized Students

Ensuring that CC-transfer students successfully earn their four-year degree is not only an obligation of educators across the secondary and postsecondary system but can also function as an economic stimulus for impoverished and working class communities (Baum et al., 2013). Community colleges serve a diverse student population with diverse needs, while offering affordability and flexibility to help many types of learners reach their goals. More than one third of public four-year college students have prior community college experience. There are 1,108 community colleges in the U.S. with approximately 12.3 million students enrolled (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2015). Community colleges were responsible (through transfer to a four-year institution or through awarding degrees) for over one million students earning their first postsecondary credential in the 2013-2014 academic year (AACC, 2015). Since low SES students attend community college at higher rates compared to middle and upper class students, increasing successful transfer and four to six year graduation rates can specifically benefit low-income students, allowing more to join the middle class and foster economic growth in these communities (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2011; Roksa, 2011; Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016).

Research by Haskins et al. (2009) indicates that students who complete any postsecondary program – from a community college certification or associate's degree to a four-

year credential – are more employable than high school graduates (p. 7-10). However, according to projections from Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010), by 2018, only 12% of jobs in the U.S. will require just an associate's degree, while 33% will require at least a bachelor's degree or higher (p. 4). Additionally, jobs requiring only a high school diploma are "largely limited to three occupational clusters [food/personal services, sales/office support, and blue collar] that are either declining or pay low wages" (Carnevale et al, 2010, p. 1). In light of these figures, not only is it necessary to promote success in community college, but the issue of successful transfer and graduation from a baccalaureate program is equally important for students to be competitive on the job market. Focusing on promoting the success of transfer students, who are more likely to be classified as at-risk students (e.g. minorities, first generation, place bound, and low SES), can result in increased access to the economic and social benefits of higher education (Kolodner, 2016).

Difficulties with Institutional Transitions

Low SES students especially take varied paths to degree attainment that involve more institutional transitions. Students are more vulnerable to attrition and dropout during transitional periods. Lower income students (regardless of factors such as race or ethnicity) are more likely to begin their postsecondary studies at a two year program than high income students (Dougherty, 1992; Cox, 2016; Jenkins & Fink, 2016). In addition to starting at two-year colleges, minority and low SES students are more likely to have larger gaps in college readiness, less knowledge of admission practices, work either part-time or full-time jobs, and take breaks from enrollment due to cost and performance (Ishtani, 2008; Giani, 2015; Cox, 2016). These unique factors for minority and low SES students make transitions to college/university a crucial time

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for intervention and support on the part of institutions. Given the financial burden students take on to obtain a college degree, higher education professionals should work to address and support successful student transitions and persistence thereafter.

There are numerous reasons why students experience difficulty during transitional periods in their education and why low SES students are more susceptible to such difficulty. Cox (2016) identifies three "complicating conditions" experienced by low SES students which influence their educational success and choices: residential mobility, complicated family considerations, and financial exigencies (p. 16). These three factors are obviously interdependent and closely tied to economic issues. Both Dougherty (1992) and Cox (2016) point to the institutional structure of higher education programs as an important condition affecting the outcomes of low SES students. Such factors have been termed by educational researchers as *transfer receptivity*. Transfer receptivity generally refers to the extent to which a receiving institution creates processes and resources that are friendly or tailored to the needs of transfer students (Bahr et al., 2013).

Other research by Giani (2015) relates student difficulties with institutional transition to challenges of identification with the college experience, arguing that high SES students may see their experience of postsecondary education as a "family tradition" where "those who are the first in their family to attend college may feel greater conflict between their upbringing and identification as a college student" (p. 109). This lack of identification can put low SES students at risk for early dropout and has been identified by researchers as a major factor in addressing attrition and retention through social and academic integration and involvement (Tinto, 1993;

Astin, 1984). Wang (2009) also identifies environmental factors such as outside working hours and having dependents as key predictors of persistence.

In addition to problems related to identity and financial situation, transitions to and within postsecondary programs can occur as a function of a student's lack of preparedness or readiness. Research shows that a student's K-12 educational experience is heavily influential in college success (Cox, 2016; Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014). According to Roksa and Calcagno (2010), a significant concern for transitions to postsecondary programs is "whether students who are academically underprepared at one level of education can succeed at the next level" (p. 261). In the case of low SES students, the choice of a two-year rather than four-year institution may be directly linked to gaps in preparation. Since community colleges generally have open enrollment, students in need of remediation may start there in order to eventually progress to baccalaureate programs. Some research shows that "even when academically unprepared students complete the most demanding intermediate outcome (the associate of arts [AA] degree), they continue to lag behind their academically prepared peers in transfer to four-year institutions" (Roksa & Calcagno, 2010, p. 262). Research also indicates that the most pressing problems in student preparation (especially in math and writing) precede postsecondary study (Dougherty, 1992; Wang, 2009). Roksa and Calcagno (2010) advocate for an approach to improving outcomes as a "joint endeavor of education leaders across the system" in which no one relegates the responsibility of preparation and remediation exclusively to any one educational level (p. 282).

Addressing Community College Transfer Student Needs

There has been an expansion in research as transfer students are increasing in number across the country, and scholars vary in their support of particular programs or interventions to

increase transfer student degree attainment. However, the underlying urgency to ensure that the specific characteristics and needs of CC-transfer students are treated as distinct from those of traditional transfer or native freshman students is clear in the literature (Bahr et al., 2013; D'Amico et al., 2014; Kruse, Starobin, Chen, Baul, & Laana, 2015). There are several possible avenues for addressing the problems students experience in transitions to college and persistence at various levels. Those that higher education professionals and administrators are likely to have to most control over are: college readiness initiatives; articulation and transfer arrangements within and between institutions; programs designed to fill gaps in student knowledge and build peer/institutional connections; and support services to address academic, financial, and social needs.

College readiness strategies implemented at the secondary level, like dual enrollment and advanced placement coursework, have been shown to have positive effects on postsecondary outcomes (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014). An (2011), who studied the effect of dual enrollment programs on college readiness for low SES students, found that, while low SES students who completed dual enrollment benefit in terms of college readiness as much as students of other backgrounds, low SES students are underrepresented in such programs. To address such disparities, An (2011) advocates more research into the selection process of dual enrollment course opportunities and the accessibility of such programs in areas with larger populations of low SES students. Dual credit programs are a significant cost-saving and preparatory opportunity that should be extended to students equally. Students who enter college with course credit and/or experience in college-level skills are more prepared to handle the transition to and within postsecondary institutions (Allen, Robbins, Casillas & Oh, 2008; Wang,

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2012; D'Amico et al., 2014; Pichon, 2016). However, higher education administrators and practitioners at receiving institutions have less control over whether or not such programs are offered consistently to their students and may have to act in advisory or advocacy roles over the long term to realize such initiatives.

Programs implemented by postsecondary institutions aimed at easing student difficulties with and adjustment to college skills and social life are an important investment. Habley, Bloom, and Robbins (2012) identify summer orientations, bridge programs, first year or transfer experience courses, and learning communities as the top three proven successful interventions in this category (p. 313). Integrating advising services into such programs has also been shown to increase their effectiveness. For instance, Habley et al. (2012) found that, when orientation programs were segmented and specialized by program and/or school, colleges were "better able to help students understand their responsibilities… and [provide] structured opportunities for students to interact with faculty, staff, and current students" (p. 318).

A related intervention, learning communities, is popular with both students and researchers. Learning communities are intentional groupings of students through shared, simultaneous curriculum, faculty, and institutional settings (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005). Learning communities are sometimes referred to in the literature as cohorts. Rocconi (2011) found that his and more than forty other studies confirmed "learning community participation is strongly related to student engagement… and educational gains" (p. 188). Other research suggests similar results for transfer and CC-transfer students (Tinto, 1997; Townley et al., 2013). CC-transfer students especially respond to the blend of social and academic interaction (Deil-Amen, 2011), a result encouraged in cohort models and similar programs, such as collaborative research groups

(Townsend & Wilson, 2009). Akin and Park (2016) found that community college and transfer students place the most value on institutional programs and services related to academics, career planning, and networking. Since programs like these are administered by individual institutions and departments, postsecondary professionals would have more control over their design and implementation.

Providing adequate support services and learning resources has proved crucial to improving outcomes for students in transitional educational periods. Research has consistently found that academic preparation is a predictor of degree attainment for transfer students (Wang, 2009). Gaps in skills and knowledge are likely to be present at various levels due to the varied backgrounds and experiences of such students. Providing instructional support in the form of free mentoring, tutoring, and advising can be the difference between success and failure for many students (Rosenberg, 2016). For instance, quality advising practices are linked to more successful outcomes for students with disabilities in that they are more likely to disclose a need and be connected to services and accommodations (Newman & Madaus, 2015, p. 216). Braxton, Doyle, and Jones (2014) and Bird (2014) argue that commuter schools in particular should offer students opportunities to interact with their peers and to provide support for learning centers and supplemental instruction. Given the previously stated likelihood of CC-transfer students to be underprepared for postsecondary study, colleges/universities should work to connect students with resources early on that will improve their chances for persistence and success.

Remediation and Academic Support

An important distinction in the literature of institutional learning support efforts relates to the differences between remediation and other supplemental learning/instruction. Less selective

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and open enrollment institutions are tasked with addressing the needs of underprepared students. At such institutions, a student may be required to perform at a certain level on a placement test or to take remedial courses before proceeding to a degree program. Remedial classes (sometimes referred to as developmental) often constitute a barrier for student success in that they inhibit what researchers have termed *academic momentum* (Adelman, 2006; Attewell, Heil & Reisel, 2012). Remedial coursework may or may not be credit-bearing although it is usually still on par in terms of cost with credit-bearing courses. Lack of success in a remedial course can act as a barrier to further study and keep students from moving on to courses within their program/major (Rhine, Milligan & Nelson, 2000; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bahr, 2012). Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002) also highlight the extent to which remedial education carries a stigma that may alienate students from their peers (especially transfer students). Several studies and reports have emphasized the need for learning support and resources which help students fill gaps in their academic knowledge and preparation without impeding their progress toward degree completion (Douglas & Attewell, 2014; Complete College America [CCA], 2012; Braxton, 2000).

Educational researchers have identified a lack of preparation in academic skills in general for CC-transfer students, but especially in writing (Xu, 2016; Bahr et al., 2013). Dougherty (1992) pointed out that the effect of problems in writing experience and skill had far reaching academic consequences for CC-transfer students not limited to poor performance in writing intensive courses but also including lower grades in upper division courses and lower persistence rates overall (p. 204). Carter (2007) points out that writing is treated by instructors across the curriculum as a "way of knowing" -- in other words, that instructors may treat writing as a way

for students to demonstrate and showcase knowledge without necessarily teaching the intricacies of effective writing alongside course content.

The generic institutional answer to these difficulties -- remedial writing coursework -- shows, at best, very uneven results for CC-transfer students (Xu, 2016; Boatman & Long, 2010). A report by Complete College America (2012) found that 4 in 10 students who end up in remedial classes do not complete them, and, consequently, such courses act as a "bridge to nowhere" especially for low income and minority students (p. 2). Remedial education efforts related to writing are significantly less successful when disconnected from a larger academic or social context (Grubb & Cox, 2005). A study by Grubb (2010) found that the pedagogy of remedial skills courses generally consisted of the "presentation of a series of small sub-skills, presented without any justification for why such skills might be useful in other contexts" (p. 26). Additionally, Bahr's (2012) research into the effect of remedial writing sequence courses found, "low-skill students suffer greater total losses from the remedial sequence… [and] are 'whittled-away' increasingly with each step" (p. 687). While acknowledging the continued need for academic support to close gaps in student preparation, many researchers and practitioners advocate for academic support at postsecondary institutions that is co-requisite rather than prerequisite (CCA, 2012, p. 14).

Reimagining Academic Support and Learning Resources

Some recent research focuses on effective ways to rethink traditional approaches to learning support -- to move away from an emphasis on deficiency toward a model of self-efficacy and community. Accessible academic tutoring and course embedded skills acquisitions programs are examples of such support. Spending time with other students collaborating,

researching, writing, and working on projects develops a sense of belonging without the stigma of remediation (Townley et al., 2013; Lanaan, 2007). MacArthur, Philipakos, and Ianetta (2015) emphasize teaching self-regulation and modeling coping with difficulty for developing writers, while Callahan and Chumney (2009) champion the value of peer learning and review for the advancement of general academic and writing skills. Additionally, Relles and Duncheon (2018) propose a shift toward a new literacies approach to learning resources emphasizing that "college-level writing is not just a skill one acquires in isolation; it is an identity one performs as a member of a community" (p. 220). According to Nunez and Yoshimi (2017), the academic achievement of transfer students especially benefits from interactions with supportive institutional agents who can provide "encouragement, access to resources, mentorship, and critical institutional information" (p. 185).

Implicit in these calls for reform is the need to offer learning support for CC-transfers that facilitates students' access to social and academic *capital* (privileged institutional knowledge and abilities, as well as networks of people) and to encourage institutional adjustment towards more transfer receptive programs (Bahr et al., 2013). At senior receiving institutions, supplemental instruction/support which can operate concurrently with degree progress and enact innovative approaches to learning is key to removing barriers to academic momentum and degree attainment for CC-transfer students. To answer this call for examining and reimagining student learning support, this study will provide insight about writing center consultations, which, by virtue of their design as a peer-based learning resource, have the potential to combine characteristics of both social and academic advancement and integration for CC-transfer students.

Some Background on Writing Centers

According to Neal Lerner (2010), versions of university writing centers (WC) were established as early as the 1890s. The earliest WCs were often referred to as "laboratories or clinics," with a focus on supplementing instruction in writing and composition alongside a professor (Lerner, 2010, p. 1). Early versions of WCs were akin to the pedagogical model of a modern science course, employing lecture with an accompanying laboratory component. Students would attend a composition lecture then practice writing concepts under the supervision of a lab instructor where they received immediate feedback (Boquet, 1999, p. 466). Boquet (1999) notes that, beginning in the 1970s, WCs as more permanent spaces were created to help address gaps in learning and other issues "that university officials had difficulty even naming, things like increasing enrollment, larger minority populations, and declining (according to the public) literacy skills" (p. 472). Modern writing centers are largely independent of a specific curriculum and associated with physical institutional spaces; however, the core purpose of providing feedback on student writing is still the primary focus.

Associations between WCs and remediation and/or learning deficits have been a point of contention in WC scholarship as many have argued that such a connection marginalizes the work of WC professionals within the academy (who are often composition scholars in their own right). Others have argued that operating on the margins of academe has given WC professionals and scholars space to innovate and develop distinctive methods and modes for teaching and learning (Grutsch-McKinney, 2013, p. 40-42). One such method is peer-to-peer tutoring. Tasked by university administrators with helping students close gaps in academic preparation and adjust to the norms of the college classroom, WCs began employing peer tutors out of a combination of

budgetary necessity and what Kenneth Bruffee (1984) called the "radical" notion that students preferred help that was "not an extension of, but an alternative to the traditional classroom" (p. 87). In addition to hiring peer mentors, WCs moved steadily away from their origins as extensions of the classroom, "fix-it shops," and editorial services toward developing more non-directive, dialogic approaches to working with student writers (Ede, 1989). Bruffee (1984) -- along with many others since -- argued that the collaborative, social nature of peer tutoring "made learning a two-way street…[and] harnessed the powerful educative force of peer influence that had been to that point largely ignored" (p. 87-88).

Stephen North's (1984) landmark essay "The Idea of a Writing Center," attempted to carve out a distinct identity for WCs in higher education and proposed the following axiom as the mission of WCs: "our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (p. 438). In this same essay, he emphasized the need for the independence of WCs from the classroom and instructors, arguing, "we are not here to serve, supplement, backup, complement, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any external curriculum" (p. 440). North's work responded directly to a misperception among university faculty at the time that WCs engaged in a kind of "dishonest academic exercise wherein an accomplished writer (the tutor) transformed the inferior work of a less accomplished writer (the tutee) to achieve better grades" (Babcock, Manning, Rogers, Goff, & McCain, 2012, p. 4). Consequently, WC pedagogy developed in ways that encouraged the autonomy of the student writer and emphasized non-directive or minimalist approaches on the part of tutors. Lunsford (1991) called this "the idea of a center informed by a theory of knowledge as socially constructed, of power and control as constantly negotiated and shared, and of collaboration as its first principle" (p. 114). North's axiom was largely adopted throughout the

1980s and 1990s as a kind of rallying cry for the legitimacy and independence of WCs in universities.

While the idea of student-writer centrality is very influential in WCs, perhaps even dogmatic (Babcock et al., 2012), North himself as well as others have returned to his foundational essay with proposals for revising his axiom while reorienting the field toward a stronger research base. Ten years after the original essay, North (1994) called his earlier axiom "our mythology, a public idealization," and argued that the project of WC work is more local than global, where each WC and institution is different and therefore requires customized approaches to learning and instruction (p. 9). Boquet and Lerner's (2008) study of the reception of North's 1984 "Idea…" essay pointed out that it has been cited almost innumerably in WC articles, yet few in the field seem interested in his other work, "Writing Center Research: Testing our Assumptions," published in the same year. In this piece, North pointed to a lack of research on the characteristics and effects of writing center consultations.

Boquet and Lerner (2008) have renewed North's call for more scholarly, rigorous inquiry into the broad questions of "What happens in writing tutorials? What are writing tutorials exactly? What are proven best practices?" (p. 183) According to Bouquet and Lerner (2008), North's original axiom became "lore-ified" through an increased emphasis on identity-focused anecdotal descriptions of WC work. They argue that an "adequate research base for tutorial interaction" has yet to be established (p. 184). Haswell (2005) and several other contemporaneous articles have made similar calls for more evidence to validate WC practice in the form of replicable, aggregable, and data-supported (RAD) WC research (Driscoll & Perdue, 2012, p. 11). Through examining WC consultations in the context of socioacademic integration

for CC-transfer students, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing project of building a larger research base for WC practice, while also working to understand the role of WCs in specific institutional contexts.

Conceptual Framework

I will employ the conceptual frame of socioacademic integrative experiences as an analytical tool for the data used in this study (Deil-Amen, 2011). In the following section, I trace the origins of this framework through the work of several different scholars related to student departure and retention methods. Measuring and promoting student success in higher education has become increasingly important to researchers and practitioners alike. However, not surprisingly, there are many differing definitions of student success and frameworks for measuring related outcomes which warrant discussion (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

Student success. Baccalaureate attainment is considered one of the main engines for promoting improved life outcomes and economic mobility and in the U.S. (Eckel & King, 2004) and often considered the definitive measure of student success (Kuh et al., 2006). Recent attention to reports of limited student learning, decreased labor market participation of graduates, high rates of dropout and/or stopout, rising tuition rates, and a looming student debt crisis has created pressure on administrators to measure, demonstrate, and promote student student success especially for undergraduates (Arum & Roksa, 2011, 2014; Tinto, 2012). Evidence indicates that problems in persistence and degree attainment are more pronounced among minority and at risk student populations, including community college and transfer students (Roksa, 2011; Burrus et al., 2013). In response, researchers have focused heavily on developing models of student

retention -- examining factors such as institutional environment, student demographics and characteristics, commitment, academic preparation, psychosocial and study skills, integration and fit, and student finances (Burrus et al., 2013).

Integration. Researchers in higher education have offered many explanations for student attrition (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975, 1993; Bean, 1980, 1983; Astin, 1984) as well as frameworks for organizing institutional responses, such as involvement, engagement, and integration (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). Vincent Tinto's (1975) interactionalist theory of student departure is widely employed by scholars and practitioners to research retention methods. According to Tinto (1993), positive experiences with educational institutions contribute to student integration -- as a sense of belonging and community that fosters commitment to and shared values with the institution. Tinto argued that integration happens both socially and academically on campuses -- through a combination of interactions with peers, faculty, and staff in both formal and informal institutional settings and through a variety of intellectual and extracurricular activities (Wolf-Wendel et al, 2009).

The effect of successful integration for students is a stronger commitment to education goals as well as the institution, resulting in increased retention. Tinto's framework treats academic and social integration as distinct, "mutually compensatory" aspects of retention (Pascarella & Chapman, 1983). Positing a direct relationship between retention and integration, Tinto also acknowledged that, "the ability of institutions to retain students lies less in the formal programs they devise than it does in the underlying orientation towards students" (1993, p. 205). In Tinto's view, such an institutional orientation should permeate policies and procedures throughout the institution rather than any one program in particular. Social integration has

historically been measured through self reporting mechanisms (such as interview and survey data) from students about their perceptions of institutions, other students, and faculty and staff (Bahr et al., 2013, p. 477). Academic integration has been measured in a variety of ways including data relating to grade point average and continuous enrollment (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009, p. 415).

Multi-institutional studies have yielded empirical support for Tinto's model, especially the relationship between social integration and persistence in four year residential institutional settings (Kuh et al., 2006). However, some studies and reviews have examined and critiqued Tinto's' framework and concluded that Tinto's model does not adequately account for the experience of certain student characteristics and institution types (D'Amico et al, 2014; Deil-Amen, 2011; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Braxton & Lien, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Bean & Metzner, 1985). This is especially true with regard to the social integration dimension of Tinto's model for nontraditional and nonresidential students. For example, Pascarella and Chapman (1983) found that the strength of Tinto's model for community college students was in academic means of integration and even then depended on individual student characteristics. Webb (1990) found that family obligations and community activities played a more important role in commuter students' decisions about attendance than social connections to the institution. Bers and Smith (1991) found a significant relationship between outside working hours and persistence to degree, and Berger (2001) argued for more nuance in research employing Tinto's student departure model regarding varying organizational structures. Later studies have found that factors such as convenience, transfer credit options, smaller class size, and previous academic background are more significant for

community college student persistence than social integration factors employed by four year programs with traditional student populations (Townsend & Wilson, 2009; D'Amico et al., 2014).

In later articulations of his model, Tinto (1993, 2012) acknowledged such findings and the significance of factors like campus or program type, socioeconomic status, and nontraditional students' external responsibilities. Tinto recognized the limitations to social integration in two year and commuter programs and the influence of "external forces" on the decision making of students noted by other researchers. However, he argued that models of social integration or contact could still be adapted and operationalized in classroom settings so as not to compete with nontraditional students' other obligations (Tinto, 1993, 1997). Tinto also suggested that social integration might be instrumental in encouraging community college students to transfer to four year programs and argued that successful transfer might wrongly appear as departure in certain reporting or assessment structures (1993, p. 80).

Community college transfer students and integration. A significant amount of research related to CC-transfer student retention has focused on how best to apply Tinto's framework to this unique student population. In their comprehensive review of literature on CC-transfer students, Bahr et al. (2013) found studies using integration as a framework made up one of four main strands of the larger body of research on community college student transitions and outcomes (p. 463). According to Bahr et al. (2013), "more research is needed on the extent to which academic integration is related to transfer students' education outcomes in four-year institutions" (p. 472). Pointing to problems with the current body of research, they specifically argue that academic integration has been treated as "synonymous with academic performance"

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making it difficult to distinguish between measuring integration and other phenomena such as persistence (p. 472). On social integration, as previously stated, the most important unanswered question in previous research is the viability of the concept for different types of students. Bahr et al. (2013) argue that repeated studies have found institutional differences matter as do individual student characteristics. Consistently, purely social activities that might serve as integrative for traditional freshman seem to have little to impact on persistence to degree for CC-transfer students (Townsend & Wilson, 2009).

Socioacademic integrative moments. A significant finding of several studies on CC-transfer students and integration is the extent to which social and academic integration are treated as distinct processes when instead they ought to be linked. Townsend and Wilson (2009), for instance, found that academic tasks and experiences can serve as opportunities for social integration for CC-transfer students. Reyes (2011) found that academically oriented programs and services were perceived by students to help forge meaningful connections with peers. Similarly, Deil-Amen (2011), who researched commuting community college students, argues "a conceptual distinction between the 'academic' and the 'social' creates a false dichotomy" (p. 72). Deil-Amen proposes a new framework for understanding integration which she calls *socio-academic integrative moments*. She explains that the term

> can be used to describe opportunities for specific instances of interaction in which components of social and academic integration are simultaneously combined. The word "moment" is used to indicate that such an opportunity can, but does not necessarily have to involve formally structured, in depth, routine, or even frequent interactions… the *academic* influence is coupled with elements of *social* integration to provide needed support and enhance feelings of college belonging, college identity, and college competence. (p. 72-73)

Socioacademic integration is described as having the broad features of facilitating information gathering and exchange; construction of specific strategies for action; decreased alienation and enhanced connections; formation of postsecondary goals; and, procedural assistance leading to agency.

Deil-Amen (2011) calls for research to measure and describe integration through methods that reflect the fused nature of socio-academic experiences -- arguing that "traditional methods of conceptualizing and quantifying integration may be attributing too much importance to purely social or academic interactions" (p. 85). In her critique of previous research, Deil-Amen (2011) warns that future researchers should "resist desires to dismiss more traditional frameworks for understanding persistence (i.e. Tinto) based on their weaknesses" (p. 84). Instead, she suggests that new research should update existing frameworks with "research on the experiences of marginalized and minority students in different types of postsecondary institutions" and by identifying "vehicles" for socio-academic integration experiences and "consider[ing] their distinct impact" (p. 84). Peer-based writing center consultations are both social and academic experiences -- blending meaningful interaction between peers with collaboration on and discussion of academic concepts and tasks. Could careful consideration of such interactions add to the effort to develop the measures Deil-Amen describes? Additionally, can a better understanding of the characteristics of socioacademic integrative moments lead to more effective institutional efforts to enhance transfer receptivity and promote the academic success and achievement of CC-transfer students? To answer these questions and reflect the important distinctions between nontransfer and transfer students' integrative experiences, I will employ the

conceptual frame of socioacademic integrative experiences as an analytical tool for the data used in this study.

Methodology

The present study seeks to address the gap in the current body of research by using employing qualitative inquiry to determine to what extent writing center consultation facilitate socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students. Glesne (2016) defines qualitative research as, "A type of research that focuses on qualities, such as words or observations, that are difficult to quantify and that lend themselves to interpretation or deconstruction" (p. 299). The current study takes an interpretive perspective and draws on social constructionism, which posits that "reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" and "accessing the perspectives of several members of the same social group about some phenomena can suggest some cultural patterns of thought and action for that group as a whole" (Glesne, 2016, p. 9). When studying student integration, it is important to note that it is difficult to quantify complex feelings and behaviors such as identification with and commitment to a set of institutional practices and goals. Since qualitative research is "interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences," it is well suited for examining socioacademic integration of CC-transfer students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). Given the deficiencies of previous quantitative analyses to capture the socioacademic blend of integrative experiences for CC-transfer students (Bahr et al., 2013, p. 481) and the congruity of qualitative methodologies with the sociological origins of student integration frameworks, the current study employs a thematic analysis of peer based writing consultations through a qualitative case study.

Significance of the Study

Clearly, higher education professionals at receiving four year institutions need to make changes to policy and practice in order to create more receptive environments for CC-transfer students. Doing so has the potential to help close the baccalaureate attainment and retention gaps between traditional students and rapidly increasing populations of CC-transfer students. To prioritize and enact reform, Nunez and Yoshimi (2017) argue that research on CC-transfer students' experiences should aid in "develop[ing] more intentional institutional practices" (p. 185). They further challenge practitioners and researchers to examine practices which "help students find a sense of belonging… [and] offer students various forms of social capital such as encouragement, access to resources, mentorship, and critical institutional information" (Nunez & Yoshimi, 2017, p. 185).

As Bahr et al. (2013) note, previous studies of "integration too often fail to take a critical view of the dominant cultural assumptions and social structures at the receiving institution" (p. 481). Often, the social and academic integrative opportunities available at four year institutions are programs originally developed for nontransfer students. As Tobolowsky and Cox (2012) term it, CC-transfer students are *institutionally neglected* by four year programs, and many programs, learning resources, and services are not evaluated in light of how well they meet the needs of CC-transfer students. There is a gap in the literature regarding which specific institutional programs and practices at receiving universities facilitate socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students. This directed me to develop a study which would add to the current body of research. This study seeks to identify what an established institutional resource (peer-based writing center consultation) is explicitly or implicitly doing (if anything) to facilitate

socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students. For this study, I proposed the following research questions:

1) What can we learn from in-depth exploration of writing center consultations between peer mentors and CC-transfer students?

2) How and to what extent do writing center consultations facilitate socioacademic integrative moments for CC-transfer students?

Answering these questions can lead to the development of the "intentional institutional practices" advocated by previous researchers. If we can determine if a resource acts as a vehicle for socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students, it is possible to use that knowledge to develop grounded theories and practices for use in further research, reform of existing services, and/or establishment of new, innovative institutional policies and practices. The next chapter of this dissertation in practice explains the context of the study, how data sources were chosen, collected, and examined, and reports the findings from my interpretation and analysis of the data. I also provide detailed discussion of the above research questions in light of my findings in the second chapter. The final chapter of the dissertation leverages the results of my study to make recommendations and offer a set of priorities for action by practitioners and other researchers.

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MANUSCRIPT II:

DATA INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

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DATA INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

The problem of practice for this study is the disparity in retention and baccalaureate attainment rates between CC-transfer students and other student populations at four year, receiving institutions. Disparities in educational attainment for CC-transfer students reveal serious, persistent issues of equity, ethics, and social justice in higher education. CC-transfer students are more likely than nontransfer students to be classified as "at risk" (e.g. minorities, first generation, place bound, and low SES) (Kolodner, 2016). Transfer students are also more likely to be underprepared for upper level coursework and to need remediation or supplemental instruction, while also being less able to access available resources (Xu, 2016; Bahr et al., 2013). Since CC-transfer students have unique characteristics and needs for integrating into campus life and academics, interventions aimed at reducing this disparity should be *transfer receptive* (Bahr et al., 2013). Research on integration shows that CC-transfers respond best to integrative resources which blend social and academic endeavors and provide flexibility in terms of time and access (Lanaan, 2007). There is a gap in the literature surrounding this problem in identifying and characterizing resources and practices which facilitate or act as vehicles for *socioacademic integrative moments* (Deil-Amen, 2011). Addressing this gap is a key step in turning research knowledge into professional practice.

The disparity in educational attainment for CC-transfer students which has been documented on a large scale for nearly thirty years (Dougherty, 1992; Alfonso, 2006; Wang, 2009; Burrus et al., 2013) is also present in the my current professional context on two regional campuses of a large university in Mississippi. The enrollment on these campuses and sites is made up almost exclusively of CC-transfer students and our retention rates lag significantly behind the main campus (69.8% retention rate at regionals versus 85.3% at the main campus). The regional campuses also serve a higher population of minority, adult, place bound, and parenting students than the main campus, further highlighting the equity, ethics, and social justice issues surrounding this problem of practice. In my professional capacity as a writing center director and instructor, I am committed to improving my own and other institutional practices to better meet the needs of CC-transfer students. Although limited student services and resources are available to our students, these services were not necessarily designed with our students (CC-transfers) in mind. Often, the social and academic opportunities for students on the regional campuses are generic copies of programs originally developed for nontransfer students. Having completed secondary research on challenges faced by CC-transfer students, I believe that writing center consultations represent a transfer receptive institutional practice and the blend of social and academic integration practices called for in the literature (Bahr et al., 2013; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012).

This dissertation in practice aims to provide concrete documentation and qualitative description of peer-based, one-on-one writing center consultations and their relationship to socioacademic integration. The current study employs a thematic analysis of peer based writing consultations through a qualitative case study. Such research could be instrumental towards

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developing frameworks for assessing learning services and resources, training institutional agents, and creating effective programmatic efforts to enhance transfer receptivity.

Research Questions

For this study, I used the following questions to guide my research:

1) What can we learn from in-depth exploration of writing center consultations between peer mentors and CC-transfer students?

2) How and to what extent do writing center consultations facilitate socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students?

Data Overview
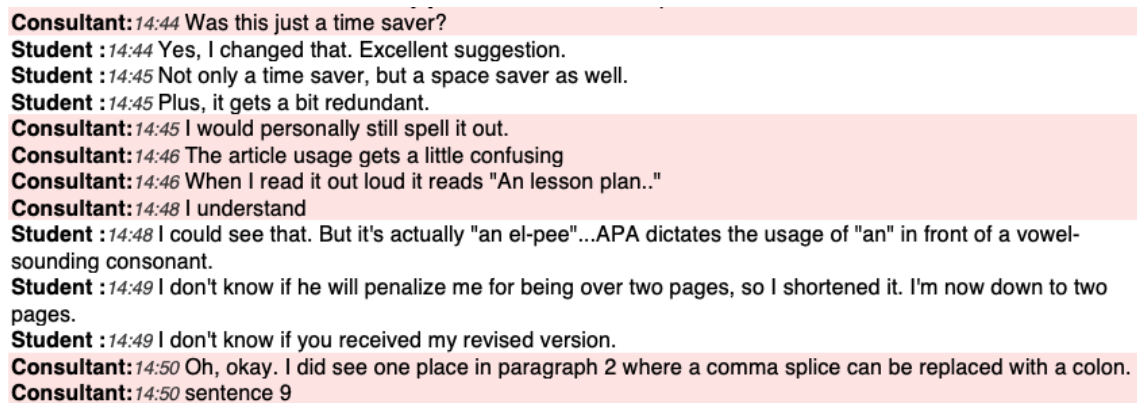
The data used in this study was a corpus of transcripts of writing center consultations with CC-transfer students conducted over a specific two year period. These transcripts were sampled from the two regional campus writing centers of a large research university in Mississippi. For this study, I employed a qualitative case study method. The unit of analysis for the case study was archived transcripts of peer consultant-student interaction during a writing center consultation from two regional campus writing centers. I chose these centers for examination because of their programmatic connection to the CC-transfer student population. I chose two different centers because I supervise one of the centers used in the study and I wanted to include a second location to address concerns related to my objectivity as investigator (Patton, 2015). Also, the second regional campus writing center is essentially a mirror of my professional context, so it could provide a check on my personal assumptions about the problem of practice based on my own local context and experiences.

The consultation transcripts gathered for this study were produced through an appointment management software program called *myWConline*, which is commonly used by writing centers for scheduling and as an online appointment platform. The appointment transcripts examined were conducted through the online chat-based function of the *myWConline* software program. The student and peer consultant both sign in to the system and are able to chat in real time with one another through text while also viewing a shared "whiteboard" where the student can paste their writing and they can edit the text together (see below Figure 1).
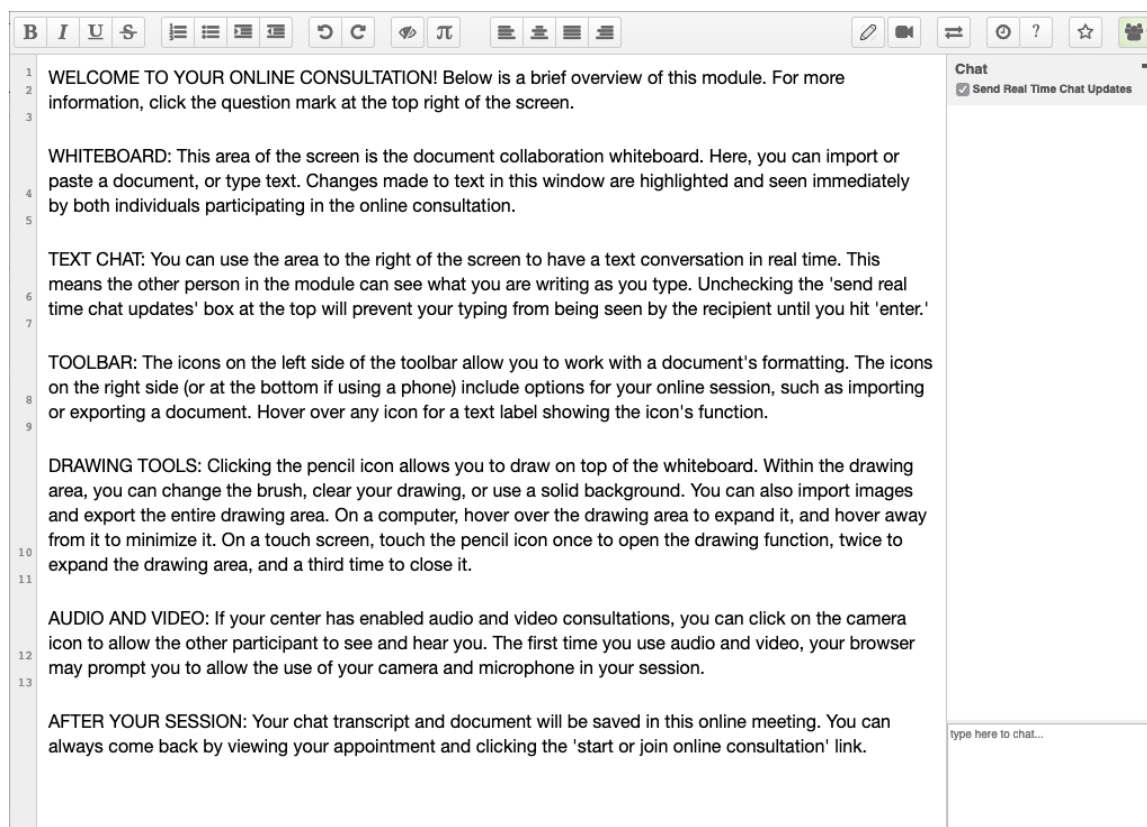

Figure 1. Screenshot of the online appointment writing center consultation chat platform. During an appointment the instructional text on the left can be deleted and replaced with the student's writing.

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These specific appointments were chosen for examination because they provided me with an unobtrusive opportunity to examine the CC-transfer student-peer interactions of writing consultations. Since student-peer tutoring consultations are typically conducted as one-on-one sessions, the presence of a research observer in person or in real time online would inevitably alter the interaction and make it more difficult for me to analyze the socioacademic components of writing center tutoring (Grutsch-McKinney, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transcripts of these online consultations are automatically generated and archived as the appointment is conducted by the *myWConline* system and can be accessed later by a system administrator. This afforded me the opportunity to act as a complete observer and to conduct my analysis in such a way that the interaction between the student and peer consultant was not altered by my presence. In my role as a writing center director, I have administrative privileges on the *myWConline* software system. I sought and received approval to examine anonymized versions of the transcripts through my institutional review board. With approval from the IRB, I enlisted a research assistant to anonymize the data before I reviewed it (see below Figure 2).

Consultant: *14:44* Was this just a time saver?
Student : *14:44* Yes, I changed that. Excellent suggestion.
Student : *14:45* Not only a time saver, but a space saver as well.
Student : *14:45* Plus, it gets a bit redundant.
Consultant: *14:45* I would personally still spell it out.
Consultant: *14:46* The article usage gets a little confusing
Consultant: *14:46* When I read it out loud it reads "An lesson plan.."
Consultant: *14:48* I understand
Student : *14:48* I could see that. But it's actually "an el-pee"...APA dictates the usage of "an" in front of a vowel-sounding consonant.
Student : *14:49* I don't know if he will penalize me for being over two pages, so I shortened it. I'm now down to two pages.
Student : *14:49* I don't know if you received my revised version.
Consultant: *14:50* Oh, okay. I did see one place in paragraph 2 where a comma splice can be replaced with a colon.
Consultant: *14:50* sentence 9

Figure 2. Screenshot of a portion of an anonymized writing consultation chat transcript.

For this case study, I used purposeful sampling techniques (Creswell, 2013). The criteria for choosing the sample of transcripts for this study were: (a) the consultation transcript had to

represent a meaningful interaction between a student and a peer consultant; (b) the consultation occurred during the academic semester from Fall 2015 to Spring 2017; (c) and, the student who made the appointment was a CC-transfer student. These criteria emerged from several important considerations.

First, when I accessed the consultation transcripts I found that some consisted of a peer consultant typing a greeting to a student, but the student did not "show up" for the appointment (e.g. never joined the chat or did not type a response to the consultant). Since there was no interaction in these types of transcripts, I eliminated them from the sample. I did not, however, impose a time constraint for the transcripts for inclusion in the sample since previous research has suggested that the specific duration of an interaction is not a significant factor socioacademic integration (Deil-Amen, 2011). If a student joined the appointment late or an appointment did not last the full pre-scheduled period of time, I opted to include these transcripts in the sample, as long as there was interaction between the student and peer mentor.

The two year period chosen for the sample was based on considerations related to objectivity and fairness to the research subjects. Since both of the centers in this case operate on regional two year campuses, choosing transcripts from the specific time period ensured that most of the students and peer consultants from the sample would no longer be attending the university or working at the writing centers (the WCs are staffed by peer consultants who typically graduate after two years). This was important to me since I am a supervisor at one of the centers and an instructor on one of the campuses. Although the data was anonymized, I wanted to address and eliminate (as much as possible) any concerns about my objectivity as the investigator analyzing the data. Finally, consultation transcripts included in the sample had to be made by a CC-transfer

student. If the system data indicated that a different type of student such as a graduate student or "traditional" student from the main campus made the appointment, the transcript was eliminated from the sample. In total, this produced a sample of 220 transcripts that met the criteria for analysis. In addition to the transcripts of the writing consultations themselves, I also collected appointment reservation forms (described in more detail below) and data from the online appointment management system (i.e. appointment length).

While I was able to obtain a large sample of transcripts for this study and reach a point of saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), there were some challenges associated with using this data. In particular, the transcripts used in this study came exclusively from online appointments with CC-transfer students, not in person appointments (which both of the writing centers used in this case study offer). As stated above, using transcripts from online appointments was an intentional choice because I wanted to examine student-peer interactions in an unobtrusive manner, but it also excluded in person appointments and subjects from the sample. Analyzing transcripts from recorded in person appointments might reveal new data and/or confirm the findings of this present study and would represent a possible extension. For the purposes of this study, I was not interested in assessing the impact of the online platform/setting, though such questions could be addressed in future research. Another challenge of the data for this study is that I conducted qualitative thematic document analysis. Working with this type of data meant that I could analyze perceptions or feelings of the students and peer consultants only when they were explicitly stated in the transcripts. Limitations of time and scope did not allow for triangulation with other methods of qualitative inquiry, such as student surveys or interviews.

Adding other qualitative methods would be a logical and valuable continuation of the present study.

Finally, an important challenge for my study was that the centers I studied are directly connected to my professional practice. I am the director of one of the centers and the other, although not under my supervision, operates through my academic department. It is possible that the way in which I interpreted and collected the data could have been influenced by my own personal experiences. To address such concerns, Creswell (2013) suggests a number of actions a researcher can take including "asking peers to comment on emerging findings" (p. 234). To that end, I asked several colleagues to discuss my project and provide feedback on my ideas at several points in the research project. Additionally, to establish inter rater reliability, I asked another higher education and writing center professional who was not involved in my research or practice to analyze and code a smaller sample of the anonymized transcript data. I provided her with basic information about the subject of the study and reviewed her analysis of the data. This collaboration yielded an inter-rater reliability score of 84%. The differences between our analysis resulted from how we named or termed certain features of the data. For instance, what I called "rapport," she tended to call "relationship." These differences were resolved through discussion.

Interpretation

The findings of this study are the result of a thematic content analysis of the sample of 220 writing center consultation transcripts and supporting documents described above. According to Krippendorf (2013), content analysis is "an unobtrusive technique that allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meaning, symbolic qualities and expressive contents they have and of the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data's

sources" (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 179). I reviewed each transcript in the sample thoroughly and noted significant words, phrases, and exchanges between the student and peer consultant. Using open coding procedures, I created a list of codes and continued adding to the list as I reviewed more transcripts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this initial coding process, my goal was to explore the qualitative data thoroughly and create a "tentative or provisional" framework that could be altered or reworked as I progressed (Clarke, 2005).

I originally identified over 30 features of the student-peer interactions. As I continued, I combined some redundant codes (e.g. "abbreviations" and "informal language" eventually became "slang") and dropped others that became irrelevant (e.g. simple greetings such as "Hi, how are you?" were so ubiquitous in the sample that they were not significant for my analysis). Through these notations and initial analytical steps, a coding framework with patterns and themes began to emerge. I constructed categories and subcategories based on significant, consistent features of the data (Saldana, 2016). After reviewing and coding the corpus of transcripts, I examined the data collectively and organized my findings to connect to the larger conceptual framework of this study, systematically answer the research questions posed above, and make recommendations for professional practice.

Discussion of Findings

In order to answer my research questions, I coded and analyzed all 220 of the sample of writing center consultation transcripts and the supplementary documents and data. For Research Question 1, what can be learned from in-depth exploration of writing center consultations between peer mentors and CC-transfer students, the major themes that emerged from my analysis are discussed below and feature examples from the transcripts as well as quotations in the exact

words of the CC-transfer students and peer writing mentors involved in these interactions. To avoid unnecessary confusion when quoting the transcripts, I have opted to use the generic term "Consultant" to label the peer mentor in all examples/quotations (although the data include interactions with several different consultants) and assigned random unique pseudonyms to the students to make my discussion of the data and use of examples easier to follow. When necessary, I have added bracketed text to clarify, add context to, or condense lengthy segments of example quotations; however, I have not altered meaning, spelling, grammar, or word choice for either the consultants or students in order to preserve the integrity of the tone of the interactions, which were often rather informal.

I answer Research Question 2, how and to what extent writing center consultations facilitate socioacademic integrative moments for CC-transfer students, separately and discuss the data in relationship to the literature on socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students. My findings provide in depth description of the interactions between CC-transfer students and peer mentors in writing consultations, important and distinctive characteristics of these interactions, and connections between writing consultations and socioacademic integration. To organize my discussion, I adopted a thematic structure consistent with the codes that emerged in the data and the body of research literature on CC-transfer student experiences. My findings are presented through a discussion of the major themes of competence, belonging, and identity.

Background

The consultations at the centers used in this case study were conducted in an online platform using a schedule management and online chat combination software called *myWConline*. Prior to an appointment taking place, the student signs in to the system, reserves an

available appointment with a consultant, and fills out an electronic form describing the reason for

the appointment. This form also includes details about whether the writing is for a class

assignment, specific concerns about the writing, and other personal details such as campus

location (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3. Screenshot of the electronic form for appointment reservations in *myWConline*.

Once the reservation is made, the peer consultant can view the appointment reservation form and the student's responses. At the designated time, both the student and peer consultant sign in to the *myWConline* system and begin the appointment (see above Figure 1 for a screenshot of the online appointment platform). Generally, the peer consultant signs in prior to the student. Consultants are trained to begin a session by introducing themselves and sharing that they have viewed the appointment reservation form. The average length of an appointment in the sample used in this study was 51 minutes. Of the consultation transcripts reviewed, 89% were for academic writing projects and 11% were for a personal or professional writing task.

Table 1

Coding Framework

Theme	Pattern	Concept Category	Code
Competence	Teaching and Learning	Skills/Knowledge Building	Technical Task
			Concept/Definition
			Resource/Locating Information
			Student Questions
		Skills in Context	Conventions of Academic Writing
			Audience
			The Writing Process
	Mentoring	Expertise	Prioritizing
			Constructive Critique
			Directive Feedback
		Experience	Modeling
			Insider Knowledge
			Strategy
Belonging	Relationship	Rapport	Slang
			Emoticon
			Joke
		Identification	Empathy
			Encouragement
	Community	Connections	Last Resort
			Campus Resource
			Invitation
			Regular User
Identity	Confidence	Adversity	"I am not a writer"
			Past difficulty
			Frustration
	Authority	Action/Ownership	Facilitative Feedback
			Negotiation
			Participation

The themes of competence, belonging, and identity present in my analysis of the data reveal important characteristics of peer writing consultations. Through a discussion of patterns and categories within these themes, I describe how peer mentors and CC-transfer students interact, communicate, and collaborate during their consultations. I also describe important features and relationships within and between characteristics of the consultations.

Competence

The transcript document analysis shows that there are implications for developing CC-transfer students' college competencies through one on one peer consultations. Competence refers to the ability of a student to complete a task effectively. Within the sample for this case, students used the peer writing consultations to develop skills, learn new information, and correct past errors to produce more effective academic writing products and processes. This primarily occurred through practices related to teaching and learning as well as peer mentorship.

Teaching and learning. Since writing center consultations are generally focused on helping students develop a set of skills and thought processes, it is not surprising that one of the most common patterns that emerged throughout the content analysis was teaching and learning. Notably, within this pattern I found two distinct concept categories: skills/knowledge building and skills discussed in context. Skills and knowledge building codes were key features of nearly all of the appointment transcripts examined and included relatively simple interactions such as a peer consultant helping a student with a technical task like using the formatting features of Microsoft Word or helping students locate reliable resources or information through databases, websites, or handbooks. Other skills and knowledge building codes related to students asking

relatively simple questions and consultants offering definitions or teaching a straightforward concept, as in this interaction related to grammar:

> *Consultant:* In the first sentence, right after you list the title, you would need to put a comma because "by…" is a prepositional phrase. You should use a comma after an introductory clause of more than four words.
>
> *Karen:* ohhh ok! got it!

Below is a similar example related to the mechanics of in text citation:

> *Carl:* what do i do if there arent page numbers [in a source]
>
> *Consultant:* In APA, you would use the abbreviation "para." before the paragraph number or you could use sections/headings. Here's a link that explains and shows examples: [link to webpage]

Other uses of modeling included consultants showing students how they could use an information resource to solve a problem.

> *Consultant:* I know that this is a bit off topic, but here is an example of an effective thesis statement (from the writer's reference)
>
> *Greg:* anything will help me
>
> *Consultant:* Although the ad works successfully on an emotional level, it is less successful on a logical level because of its promise for an equal exchange between consumers and farmers. Here is an ineffective thesis statement - Consumers who purchase coffee from farmers in the Equal Exchange Network are helping farmers stay on their land.
>
> *Greg:* second one sounds more like a fact so I can see how its ineffective

Consultant: Yes, that's correct.

The second teaching and learning concept category that emerged in the sample was skills and knowledge taught in context. This differed from the previous concept in that peer consultants not only helped students with the skill of writing by pointing to information sources and introducing definitional or conceptual knowledge, but they also consistently staged the knowledge they shared in relation to the larger contexts of academic writing conventions and audience awareness. What distinguished the skills categories from one another was that consultants, when asked a question that could be answered with a simple response, opted consistently to provide a more nuanced answer introducing more context than could be captured by a stating a rule or parroting a textbook definition. For instance, in the example below, the student asked about the use of verb tenses in her paper. Rather than providing a simplistic answer, the consultant offered an explanation which introduced the student to types of academic writing and expectations of specific discourse communities.

Sarah: i have issues with keeping my verb tense, which is right?

Consultant: In literature writing you want to stick with present tense verbs - its called the literary present. Because even though the book was written in the past the work is existing and being analyzed in the present. Make sense?

Sarah: ok!

Consultant: Present tense will include words like: have, has, am, is, are, do, does, leap leaping, etc. :)

Consultants also regularly introduced ideas related to audience awareness when prompted by students to assess features of a piece of writing. This took the form of calling the student's attention to the needs of a reader, as is demonstrated in the example below:

Taylor: i just need help with how to organize each idea

Taylor: and a better thesis

Consultant: I am looking at your thesis right now. Ok. What audience are you targeting with your thesis statement?

Taylor: well [name of school] is the highschool in my hometown. But i guess i would be proposing it to the school board.

Consultant: Ok. good. Being more specific is a good idea for a thesis no matter what, but adding more about that would be helpful to your reader here for sure

Taylor: so, i could add "proposing more opportunities for career based learning"

Consultant: Yes! That is really neat!

Taylor: oh thank you!

By discussing writing tasks and skills in broader context, tutors and students often ended up discussing different genres and purposes for writing and the interaction between others' expectations and a particular writing choice/task. In the following example the student wanted to know why his professor had taken off points when he used the first person in his paper.

Jeremy: okay so i don't use I at all?

Consultant: Your professor says in his instructions to 'Write objectively, NOT subjectively: Try to keep your voice in the 3rd person to make concrete, confidet [sic] statements in defense of your claim.' I am assuming this means for the whole assignment.

Consultant: Since this is an informative paper, avoid words like I, me, we, or you. Focus on the evidence. If you use I it'll seem like you are being opinionated or biased and not using research to make your case.

Jeremy: i see

The consultant goes on to provide an example of writing a personal statement and how the personal statement would be an appropriate context for using the first person. As demonstrated above, the consultant's explanation is tailored to Jeremy's specific assignment and to his professor's expectations. This demonstrates to Jeremy how writing choices or "rules" may shift in various academic and personal contexts. By providing the student with a broader explanation of a writing choice or skill, the consultant helped the student to see himself as a member of a future profession or community of practice and to see the act of writing as something that is not done in isolation.

Mentoring. In addition to teaching and learning, another pattern that surfaced in the data was mentorship. The model for writing center consultations is a peer consultant, who is trained in the practice of tutoring and responding to writing, working with a student to aid in the development of that student's personal writing process, skills, and practices. The transcripts revealed that these interactions were more than simple question and answer sessions and depended very much on the ability of the peer consultant to leverage their own expertise and experience to act as a mentor or guide. For instance, a persistent feature of the transcripts was what I coded as "prioritizing". Often, students would join consultations without stating a specific writing concern to address or by identifying less important or tangential features of their writing to work on. The consultant would help focus their attention on issues that were the most

impactful or important in the writing. In the example below, Jon stated at the beginning of the appointment and on his appointment reservation that he was interested in help with sentence level errors and grammar. After reading some of Jon's work, the consultant helped redirect Jon to an issue of greater concern in his paper - citation and attribution.

Consultant: Before we look at grammar, you might want to check on these citations.

Jon: okay, what is wrong with it?

Consultant: I saw you have a parenthesis citation at the end of each paragraph, but I can't tell which things come from the source. Are you quoting or using your own words?

Jon: some of it is quotes, some of it is my ideas

Jon: do i havr [sic] to put quotations

Consultant: Yes, for any words that came directly from the source you need quotation marks and a page number. Like this "..." (Poe 9)

Consultant: If you don't put quotes, it can look like plagiarism to the professor.

Jon: i def don't want that! okay

Even though Jon said he wanted help with grammar, the consultant knew based on the type of assignment (a research paper) that what Jon needed first was to revise for a major content error. Later in the appointment, Jon stated, "im glad you caught the citations, now i know what to do". Many student's in the sample stated that they wanted help with something like grammar or formatting and their peer consultants ended up identifying other writing issues for revision. This showed that consultants acted as though their role in the interaction was not only to listen and respond to students but also to guide them.

Students and consultants regularly engaged in exchanges involving honest, constructive critique. This was sometimes actively sought by students in the form of questions like, *Greg:* "do you think this seems awkward?" or *Michelle:* "Is this section too long?" At other times, the consultant would offer a critique without being directly asked, as in the example below.

Consultant: The prompt I see talks about examining what the relationship between tradition and modernity is in a set of stories... It seems like more of a compare and contrast essay rather than an argumentative essay. The thesis you have now is not quite right for the type of assignment.

Jane: really? ok. can you please help guide me to making a thesis for that kind of paper

Consultant: Yes! of course!

Between peers, critique (even when constructive) has the potential to signal confrontation. However, within the corpus analyzed for this study, the student participants did not openly express frustration or defensiveness when presented with critique. In fact, the opposite was true. Students regularly stated that they were grateful for the advice or that something was pointed out to them that they could not find for themselves (e.g. *Laura:* "the information you're telling me, is already really helping me see what better things i can do"). Students seemed to view the consultants as trusted sources of expertise in writing and would enact the changes suggested or discussed with the consultant in real time.

Consultant: Is this your research question that I underlined?

Michelle: Yes

Consultant: I believe your professor may not want a literal question posed in your paper, but rather a thesis statement that has a claim -- that your thesis statement answers your question.

Michelle: I think you're right I remember him saying that the question won't be your thesis But it looks like I forgot to change it I'm going to try to rewrite it into a thesis statement now

In the interaction above, the critique offered by the consultant made a connection to and reinforced Michelle's professor's directions and prompted Michelle to revise her work.

Consultants' critiques were generally constructively paired with directive feedback in the form of modeling, providing strategies, or what I referred to in my coding as offering "insider knowledge." The ability of consultants to provide this directive feedback was clearly related to their role as experienced writers and students. Consultants would reference their own experiences taking specific classes, using specific tools or resources, working with certain professors or departments, and completing types of assignments. What I coded as "modeling" was a mentoring tactic common throughout the corpus of transcripts and generally operated akin to the example below.

Consultant: I see a consistent problem with fragmented sentences.

Keisha: 3rd and 4th para?

Consultant: I am now underlining specific examples that you can apply throughout... there seems to be a repeating issue with not placing commas after adverbial clauses and prepositional phrases [refers to specific examples in the text and shows the change]

When using this tactic, consultants would either show a change on the screen to a student's writing or would provide an example through the chat itself as in this example with Wendy.

Consultant: It looks like you are missing the date of publication and page numbers in your citations. If you have the Writer's Reference 7th edition, it is shown on page 459.

Wendy: ok where would I put it?

Consultant: Example: According to Smith (2010), "You are beautiful" (p. 45).

Consultant: This will indicate where the quotes came from. Does this make sense?

Wendy: ok thank you

In addition to modeling and demonstrating, peer consultants would share strategies they had learned or used related to completing specific tasks. In the example below, the student asked as her current appointment was ending about making another appointment and being short on time before her assignment was due.

Carrie: Can I make another appointment?

Consultant: Sure thing. The schedule will show the openings and I work tomorrow if you're free.

Consultant: Meantime, sometimes when I have something written I will print it out and read it OUT LOUD [sic] to myself. I catch my mistakes better and not looking at the computer helps.

Carrie: oohhh

Carrie: Good idea! I will do that

In some instances, the strategies shared by the consultants were not about the writing itself but more about how to be successful as a student. For instance, on more than one occasion

consultants advised students to send their professor an email or otherwise contact them. In one

consultation, the consultant and student spent the majority of the appointment discussing how to

choose a group of sources for a paper. At one point, the consultant wrote (referring to a

professor), "i have sent her my ideas through email before and she likes that" and encouraged the

student to send the list they worked on in the appointment for review by the professor. In another

example, the student, Ashley, shared the name of the course that she was working on an

assignment for. The consultant responded enthusiastically, "I took that last semester!" As they

discussed the work that Ashley had already done the consultation continued,

> *Consultant:* Can you hold on for a second. I'm going to show a similar example of what I
>
> have done [for this class]
>
> *Consultant:* My research was on the backlog of rape kits. I did not do a survey and graph
>
> like you but I did small scale research through interviews
>
> *Ashley:* That's a good topic. You're protocal [sic] has a lot of detail. I see what you mean
>
> now. I wish I had thought of that topic!
>
> *Consultant:* Haha, thank you! It was a hard class. Glad I am done ;)

Guidance of this nature fundamentally differed from the other mentoring aspects of these

consultations and depended on the peer consultant sharing a kind of "insider's perspective" with

the student. When I found examples of this in the transcripts, the peer consultant and student

tended to have a strong rapport with one another and demonstrated camaraderie through

compliments or expressions of appreciation and identification. It is important to note that

examples of consultants sharing insider knowledge were not confined to academic writing or

tasks. For instance, in the example below a student was working on professional materials for a job fair (cover letter and resume).

> *Consultant:* this is the hardest kind of writing for me too. You have to write about yourself but not brag. Lol.
>
> *Christina:* I know!!!
>
> *Consultant:* The [career center] workshop I went to said they also sometimes go through machines before people see them. So you have to have thr [sic] right words to describe thngs [sic].
>
> *Consultant:* Ugh, I can't type today!! I will send you the handout we have with resume action verbs.
>
> *Christina:* Hahaha… thanks girl you are THE BEST

In addition to discussing the writing itself, the consultant and Christina interacted in a way that clearly demonstrated their relationship as peers. Alongside mentoring and advice, the consultant made jokes and staged her access to the knowledge she shared about writing as a member of the same community as Christina. The consultant attended a workshop that Christina could also go to, introducing her to a potential resource.

Belonging

In addition to building writing and other college competencies, writing consultations consistently appeared to influence belonging for CC-transfer students. Peer consultants and students established relationships and rapport with one another in various ways while working together on writing tasks. Students were also connected to members of their peer, campus, and institutional communities in the course of the consultations. The theme of belonging, acceptance,

or affinity was demonstrated in different ways in the sample. Generally, students would either directly articulate that they felt more connected or accepted and had found a community or implied such feelings through specific features of the interactions.

Relationship. One consistent coding pattern within this theme related to the relationship between the peer consultants and the students. While the appointments varied widely in length and scope, many features of the interactions were related to rapport building and identification between the participants. For instance, the transcripts contained a great deal of slang, colloquialisms, and abbreviations from both the student and the peer consultant. For example, one consultant had a habit of using the phrase, "Awesome sauce" and "you're golden". Students regularly used phrases like "okie dokie" and "i hear ya", often ignoring the rules of grammar like capitalization and punctuation in their chats. Additionally, students and consultants used abbreviations like, "lol", "u", or "brb". These linguistic choices were commonly paired with emoticons. With consultants, they were typically used when greeting/signing off with a student and when offering compliments or praise.

Consultant: It was great talking to you! :)

Shari: You too! I'll be back!

Students and consultants also sometimes made jokes during their interactions, though students were more likely to do so. For instance, in the example below, a student typed a list of questions one after another in quick succession then wrote:

William: Does that make sense?

Consultant: Hold on just a sec

William: Sorry if I am confusing you! That was alot [sic] haha

Another student joked about her own writing process saying:

> *Sue:* I got some points taken on the formatting.
>
> *Consultant:* I understand. Is it supposed to be MLA or APA?
>
> *Sue:* My fault though, I waited til the last minute haha then I saw the sample after and saw why it was wrong
>
> *Consultant:* TOTALLY UNDERSTAND. I'm a procrastinator too :)

The particular use of language by both peer consultants and students created a tone of informality within these interactions. I found it important that the informalities were not confined to student participants. Consultants who incorporated emoticons and creatively used punctuation to signal feelings or attitudes (such as the all capital letters above) seemed to transfer their tone to the students. As in this exchange below:

> *Consultant:* Excellent! I agree.
>
> *Consultant:* Yes!
>
> *Kelly:* :)
>
> *Consultant:* :)
>
> *Kelly:* Thank you for your help!!
>
> *Consultant:* No prob!!

Even in an online platform where the two participants could not see or hear one another, it was clear that these consultations were taking place between peers and that students had the freedom to express themselves in ways that might be deemed inappropriate in other settings. This rapport between consultants and students allowed for more open communication, especially since students often felt free to express or share personal feelings and concerns.

Concurrent with slang and other informal language used in these interactions, students and consultants discussed personal feelings and identified with one another's experiences as students and writers. With regard to peer relationship building, this took the form of expressions of encouragement, shared experience, and empathy. For instance, in a lengthy consultation about a research paper, LaToya shared that she was feeling overwhelmed about her workload. She also wrote,

> *LaToya:* I have 2 other research papers and essays to complete by next week as well. That is why I am trying to finalize this paper so that I can work on the other ones as well.
>
> *Consultant:* I am sorry about that! I have been there. Schoolwork can be very stressful on top of other things you may be experiencing.
>
> *LaToya:* That is my biggest worry. I am depending on this paper for this class because I need it to graduate so this is becoming a headache
>
> *Consultant:* I understand. You got this! I love the ideas and points you're making and we already made a lot of important changes!

In the case of LaToya, the consultant reacted to her feelings as a fellow student who had experienced similar feelings and challenges. In another consultation, the peer consultant shared her own experience with writing personal statements for graduate school admission.

> *Dorothy:* I don't know where to start with this. I've read it a bunch of times and don't know what to change
>
> *Consultant:* Gotcha. I've written several of these before, and they are definitely not fun.
>
> *Consultant:* Very difficult because there really are no exact guidelines
>
> *Dorothy:* So true

Students and consultants sometimes spent time commiserating with one another as in the examples above. But, in other instances, the consultant would express empathy without necessarily sharing the student's point of view.

>*Sophia:* I have a topic. I am just not confident at all in the writing area. It's not something that I am use [sic] to doing.
>
>*Consultant:* That is how I am about doing math!
>
>*Consultant:* Have you written anything? We can start with whatever you have. :)

In each of these cases, consultants offered words of encouragement to the students. Many of the consultants used simple phrases like, "You've got this!" or "I can help with that!" At other times, consultants would respond to students' expressions of doubt, insecurity, or frustration with specific compliments and encouragement about their writing.

>*Consultant:* I know you are worried about it, but I really like the way you made your case in paragraph 3. Your analysis is GOOD.
>
>*Shari:* really? Thank u
>
>*Consultant:* Yes. Work on keeping that going!

While not all students expressed doubt or difficulty, encouragement still permeated the transcripts and was one of the most common features of the data. Peer consultants offered praise and positive comments to students, especially when working together to enact changes or revisions.

Students sometimes described their reasons for using writing center services in terms that I coded as "last resort" and indicated a lack of connection to other people and resources. Students stated that they had tried to find answers or understanding on their own and were using the

writing center when none of those methods worked. For instance, one student said regarding her questions, "I have been asking other people but they were in the same situation as me." One student described her process of working alone at home in this way, "i was on the internet for like 5 hours and i didnt know if any of it was right so i just was wasting time and gave up". Unfortunately, other students specifically mentioned being unable or too intimidated to contact faculty:

> *Consultant:* Did you by any chance ask your prof?
>
> *Daria:* I am worried that he will just tell me to look at [course learning management system]

The most common response amongst peer consultants in these situations was to express empathy and offer encouragement. Notably, there were several instances when consultants would indicate that the struggles that the students expressed were normal and a kind of raison d'être for the center, as in the example below.

> *Caroline:* This was very helpful.
>
> *Consultant:* Im glad :)
>
> *Caroline:* I feel bad...I took up so much of your time.
>
> *Consultant:* Don't feel bad! That's why we are here!

Earlier in Caroline's appointment she stated, "I didn't want to ask it in class in case it was a dumb question. I am awful at analyzing poetry." Some students, like Caroline, seemed to view the peer consultation as a safe place to seek guidance without fear or embarrassment.

Community. Another significant pattern that emerged in my analysis of the transcripts was community building through increased connections for students. Promoting connections

went beyond the specific interaction of the one on one writing consultations to the writing center itself, the regional campuses, and, ultimately, the institution. As demonstrated above, students and peer consultants developed individual connections with each other through rapport and identification; however, there were persistent characteristics within the sample of interactions that signaled attempts by the peer consultants and students to broaden those connections.

One of the most common ways in which this occurred was through an invitation from the peer consultant to continue using the services of the writing centers. Consultations at the writing centers are available for reservation in thirty minute and one hour blocks of time. Often, the peer consultant and students would not have enough time to address all of the student's concerns in one session. The transcripts in the sample showed that peer consultants made a habit of inviting students to continue working with the writing center and to make more appointments. This usually took the form of exchanges at the end of the consultations like the one below.

Consultant: Our time is about to run out

Consultant: Is there anything else I can answer real quick?

Kiera: Okay I know I will have more but I can put in the tips you suggested for now

Consultant: Okay! If you finish this part, just make another appointment with us. I hope I helped!! Good luck!!

Kiera: You did!

Kiera: Okay. Thank you I will need all the luck I can get

It is significant in the interaction above that the consultant encouraged Kiera to make an appointment with "us" -- the center itself, a community of peer consultants -- not necessarily with him. Rather than emphasize the individual connection and rapport he and Kiera developed

in the session, he emphasized the presence of the staff of the writing center as a constant resource at her disposal. Some students were clearly regular users of the centers and worked seamlessly with various peer consultants. I was able to identify this through some of the interactions between students and consultants.

Consultant: Hi! My name is [consultant]! I believe we have worker [sic] together before. What kind of revision are you most concerned about with the assignment?

Amber: Ha yes we have. I frequently visit the writing center. :)

A similar familiarity existed between Tyler and another peer consultant.

Consultant: Heeeeeey! Back again I see! :)

Tyler: Haha yup, every friday

Consultant: You worked with [other peer consultant name] last week?

In addition to inviting students to continue using the writing center, peer consultants made reference to other people or entities on the regional campuses that students could work with. Writing consultants recommended that students reach out to their professors and advisors, and, in one case, a consultant discussed an upcoming campus event hosted by a student group related to the student's major. Peer consultants also made reference to broader institutional resources. Since academic writing is very much connected to research skills, peer consultants often recommended library services to students.

Consultant: do you know this page from the [library] website?

Lori: which one?

Consultant: [provides page link]

Lori: oh

Consultant: This has the link for getting stuff sent to you. You can get a book brought

here to [the regional campus]

The peer consultant was referring to the interlibrary loan system, an institutional resource that

the student had not used before. In another example, a consultant discussed detailed steps for

how to navigate the electronic system used by the university for course registration and advising.

The discussion of registering for classes was incidental to the larger focus of the appointment,

which was a portfolio assignment. While such discussions were not necessarily common, they

did reveal the freedom with which both students and peer consultants felt they could treat the

content they covered in writing consultations and the purpose(s) their conversation should serve.

Identity

The final theme in the data was related to CC-transfer students and their identification as

college students and writers. The data showed that the students viewed themselves and their

relationship to academic tasks in specific, often complicated ways. A common pattern of

expression for students was related to self doubt and lack of confidence. Peer consultants

responded to students in strategic ways that appeared to facilitate the construction of more

positive feelings and identifications with course material and academic tasks. Specifically, peer

mentors focused on promoting students' agency over their work and, by extension, ownership of

their successes and improvement.

Confidence. As previously discussed, students and consultants often were very open with

one another about challenges related to writing and being a student more generally. Many

students expressed adverse feelings and experiences related to writing, especially writing they

were completing for assignments and academic purposes. The most common refrain in the

transcripts from students related to this pattern was a variation of the phrase: "I am not a writer." One student put it, "I am just not confident at all in the writing arena." Another wrote, "I know i am terrible at this." And still another student stated, "this just isnt my thing." The reasons why students did not see themselves as writers were not always clearly articulated in the consultations. However, some students would explain or share past difficulty and frustrations with their peer mentors. For instance, one student wrote,

> *Consultant:* Can you tell me what you'd like to work on?
>
> *Carson:* All of it, to be honest it sucks right now
>
> *Consultant:* I'm sure there's some good we can build on! Okay. Do you have an assignment requirements sheet?
>
> *Carson:* I wrote the first draft and he [the professor] literally ripped it apart

Like Carson another student, Blanche, shared comments from her instructor.

> *Blanche*: she [the professor] said it isnt academic enough cause i dont sound formal
>
> *Consultant*: We can work together on that.
>
> *Blanche*: this just isnt my thing i think i write how i talk

Negative feedback from current or past instructors was the main reason that students did not feel confident in their writing, but another common feature was that students felt wary of certain genres of writing. For instance, some students stated that they found academic requirements like specialized formatting or using scholarly research very difficult and intimidating. One student, when discussing trying to write a research paper, put it, "I feel so overwhelmed with all of the info I feel I do not know where to begin." In another consultation a student stated, "I actually like writing for myself. Like I like poetry, but not this kind of stuff." When faced with students who

expressed a lack of confidence, peer consultants responded in interesting ways. Most often, peer consultants would encourage and work alongside students to help students develop confidence in their skills and address their concerns.

Authority. Peer consultants emphasized authority and ownership for the student over their own writing by soliciting active participation, promoting a negotiation of writing choices, and engaging strategically in facilitative feedback. Students sought out writing center consultations for feedback and guidance for their writing, but peer consultants did not simply edit student work or, as previously stated, provide simplistic answers to student questions. Instead, peer mentors encouraged active participation on the part of students in their consultations. Sometimes this was reflected in the linguistic choices of the peer consultant (e.g. "*Let's* strengthen this with more detail" or "*We* can start with just the thesis and go from there." [emphasis added]). In one lengthy consultation, Jenny was concerned about whether or not her paper adequately proved her thesis.

> *Consultant:* When you say "with an underlying meaning, a moral life lesson," i am having trouble understanding what point you are trying to get across to your reader. Can you maybe reword it, to make it more clear?
> [the student edits the sentence and makes changes in the whiteboard space of the chat]
> *Jenny:* like so?
> *Consultant:* Yes that is so good!

The peer consultant pointed out potential areas for improvement and then engaged Jenny actively in making changes to her paper, emphasizing that Jenny was in control of the writing. In addition

to enlisting students as active participants in the session, peer consultants also deliberately allowed students to make their own choices, as in this exchange below.

Consultant: I think the content of this sentence is good [highlights a passage on the whiteboard], but what do you mean by 'children fulfilling'?

Allison: She married and bore his children to find life fullfilling [sic] but she did not

Consultant: I think 'life fulfilling' is not quite describing it the way you want it to.

Allison: Should I reword it or add to say that she did not find it enjoyable or that it did not meet her expectations?

Consultant: The second way I think has more of the meaning you described to me, however, it is what you think best fits because you know your paper and claim more than anyone else! :)

Allison: I will go with the second one.

I coded interactions like this as "negotiation" and they were present in some form in nearly all of the transcripts I reviewed. During such exchanges, peer consultants did not definitively state how a student should proceed but would instead call attention to an issue and leave space for students to address it according to their own sensibilities.

Consultant: In the third sentence, did you mean to include something else? I think something is missing.

Stephen: i was talking about the story

Stephen: I thought it was understood but it might be confusing without it. ill add "story" after [the word] original

Consultant: I think that definitely works.

In this example with Stephen, the consultant acted as a facilitator. The consultant's perspective and advice are important, but she allowed Stephen to make the choice himself to change his own writing. The principal tactic peer consultants employed when acting as facilitators was to ask targeted questions. For instance, in a consultation with Tori, a consultant pointed out a section of the writing that incorporated a quotation.

> *Consultant:* Are you sure if it is quoted exactly from the original source? What you have in the text looks like a fragment.
>
> *Tori:* hmmm, i think that is actually how it is, one sec
>
> *Consultant:* Ok
>
> *Tori:* oops you are right! i forgot two words!
>
> *Consultant:* Haha, ok :)

In this interaction, the consultant notably did not *tell* Tori that she made a mistake or that she *definitely* misquoted the text. The consultant's question (which she based on her knowledge of proper sentence structure and grammar) prompted action on Tori's part and allowed her to find the mistake for herself. This tactic of negotiating did not always result in the student's recognition of an error, especially if the student was not fully aware of underlying writing principles or standards, as in the exchange below.

> *Consultant:* Your thesis is here, correct? [highlights a sentence on the whiteboard]
>
> *Madeline:* yes
>
> *Consultant:* What would be the arguable claim it is making?
>
> *Madeline:* what do you mean
>
> *Madeline:* i put my points about the book and character

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Consultant: the two rules for thesis statements are that they should be specific and

debatable, so it needs to be something someone could oppose making it arguable

In situations like this interaction with Madeline, the question asked by the peer consultant served

to help the consultant gauge the student's knowledge and understanding in order to provide

further guidance and (eventually) switch tactics and take on a more directive role.

By asking students to take an active and meaningful role in improving their writing, peer

consultants emphasized and contributed to students' identities as college level writers. In many

cases, the appointments would have been simpler for the peer consultant if they had told the

student what to do or change in their work. Guiding students in making their own choices

preserved the student's agency in the consultations.

I also observed a connection in the transcripts between facilitative feedback from peer

consultants and statements of positive feelings about the appointment by students. Students often

expressed gratitude and stated that the appointment was helpful directly to the consultant.

Terri: I feel so much better. You have been so helpful! I can not thank you enough

Consultant: Thank you! :) That's what we are here for.

Sessions with more facilitative content tended to last longer than other consultations and dealt

with lengthier pieces of writing. Some students openly expressed feelings of improved

confidence and competence (e.g. "Now I'm starting to see the commas too! I just caught a few

more" and "pretty sure i can correct the rest of these [citations] when I get home").

Transfer Shock and Stigma

While some evidence of *transfer shock* and *stigma* is reflected in the examples and

themes discussed above (especially identity and belonging), substantial further evidence within

the transcript data warrants further discussion. According to researchers, *transfer shock* is a phenomenon marked by a significant drop in GPA and social, emotional, and community adjustment barriers for students (Rhine et al., 2000; Ishitani, 2008; Townsend, 2008). *Transfer stigma* is characterized by negative assumptions on the part of faculty and other students as well as self-doubt from transfer students about their own aptitude for higher level study (Shaw et al., 2018; D'Amico et al., 2014).

Based on the type of data examined for this study, I can make no exact determination of a specific impact of transfer to a four year institution on CC-transfer students' GPA. However, a substantial number of students voiced concerns about dropping grades and poor academic performance between institutions in their interactions with peer consultants. Such admissions took many forms and sometimes did not relate specifically to the writing being discussed in the consultation. One particularly poignant statement came from a student working on a proposal assignment for a business class. He wrote, "I used to think I was pretty smart until I got here." Later in the appointment he mentioned how important achieving a higher grade was to maintaining his scholarships, "if I don't get a B… I'm in trouble". In another exchange, a student was attempting to revise her work after receiving poor grades.

Consultant: What would you like to work on today?

Shannon: I dont exactly know… I used to always get good grades on writing at [previous school name] but i guess Im not doing it right

Consultant: I see, do you have some writing we can look at together?

Although students regularly mentioned a concern for making better grades and/or experiences with achieving far below their previous grades, some students shared difficulties related to

having to adjust quickly to changing course or program expectations. As mentioned above, some students described difficulty with balancing work, home, and family life alongside their academics (e.g. "I don't feel like I have free time anymore ,lol", "my husband can't wait for me to graduate ;)" and "I'm drowning in stuff I have to do"). Others referred to how different their courses were post-transfer than at their previous institution. In the following example, the pace of the course was intimidating to the student.

Consultant: When I write my reflections I usually get out my notes and work on ideas from there.

Darren: Yea, I have some notes but he goes fast and theres so much to read… like 100 pages a week

In a similar exchange a student seemed less concerned with the work of any particular class and more about the cumulative effect of managing multiple classes.

Spencer: they [instructors] don't think about how much it is, I mean, I got four classes

Consultant: lol

Spencer: how im gonna do all that in one weekend???

Consultant: i hear ya

In addition to concerns about dropping grades and adjusting to a new campus community and culture, students in these consultations regularly discussed difficulty related to faculty, which aligns with elements of transfer stigma. Some students had negative associations with contacting or meeting with faculty due to previous bad grades, but these were not as common as expressions of trepidation about revealing their own perceived inadequacies. Since these transcripts came from campus locations which serve almost exclusively CC-transfer students, I was not expecting

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to encounter a great deal of stigma surrounding transfer status. However, data within the transcripts suggests that perceived stigma might be a byproduct of specific institutional factors of the regional campus. For instance, some students mentioned distance learning (DL) delivery methods as a complication to interacting with faculty. In the example below, the peer consultant asked if the professor had mentioned specific expectations for a writing assignment.

Stan: he [the professor] doesn't pay attention to us at [our location]

DL courses take place through video conferencing technology where the teacher is at the main campus and students from various other locations are able to view the course in real time on screen. Remote students have the ability to ask questions and participate, but there may be a slight time delay or it may require them to interrupt the professor in order to be noticed. Some students mentioned not wanting to bother a professor as a reason for not asking questions and not wanting to "sound dumb" as one student put it. Other students mentioned not receiving an answer to a question in a timely manner or not being able to meet with an instructor on campus. As discussed above in relationship to the theme of identity in the transcripts, students also expressed varying forms of self-doubt and diminished confidence in their abilities post-transfer (e.g. "I just wis h writing was easier for me" and "i dont even no [sic] what im doing").

Socioacademic Integration in Writing Consultations

As previously discussed, student integration has been articulated as positive experiences with an educational institution. These experiences then ideally contribute to a sense of belonging and community -- fostering commitment to and shared values with the institution (Tinto, 1993). Tinto argued that integration happens in two distinct ways on campuses: socially and academically. Other researchers have added to the body of literature on integration for diverse

students by incorporating the experiences and needs of CC-transfer students. Townsend and Wilson (2009) found that academic tasks and experiences can serve as opportunities for social integration for CC-transfer students. Reyes (2011) found that academically oriented programs and services were perceived by students to help forge meaningful connections with peers. Deil-Amen (2011) further argued that social and academic integration for CC-transfer students were inevitably linked and that embracing such a connection could yield important results for successful transfer and retention. She termed interactions which harnessed the blended nature of social and academic integration, *socioacademic integrative moments*, and called for work that identified and described "vehicles" for these moments.

My study sought to understand to whether, how, and to what extent writing center consultations facilitate socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students (Research Question 2). Based on the data reviewed in the present sample, peer writing consultations do appear to facilitate integration. Throughout the literature, socially integrative experiences are described as having characteristics such as decreasing alienation and combating self-doubt for students (Bahr et al., 2013). In this sample, students regularly made connections with their peers, identified with each other's experiences, and gained access to other campus personnel and resources. The theme of belonging and descriptions of the coding categories rapport, identification, and connection exemplify the social characteristics of writing consultations. Academically integrative experiences are described by researchers as facilitating information gathering and exchange as well as the acquisition of knowledge to make more effective choices (Deil-Amen, 2011). Based on the data associated with the theme of competence (especially in the categories related to skills), writing consultations also appear to act as a resource for academic integration.

The focus of this study was not, however, to examine writing center consultations simply for their separate academic and social integrative qualities. It was aimed rather at determining if "academic influence was coupled with elements of social integration" to produce a distinctly blended socioacademic integrative experience (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 73). The writing center consultations examined in this case study not only include characteristics of social and academic integration separately. They showcase multiple ways in which the two can be combined and are inextricably linked. This is demonstrated especially in the mentoring conducted by peer consultants featured in the examples above. For instance, when consultants provided "insider knowledge," they did so because of shared/common experiences and identification as peers, but, notably, they had already gained a set of skills and level of expertise that could be passed on in the consultation to address an academic need. Consultants occupied a unique position as a *peer plus*, straddling the line between fellow student and institutional agent. The dual role of the peer consultant allowed for a degree of authenticity and trust that might not be easily recreated in other settings with staff or faculty.

Major Findings

Examination and analysis of the data presented above revealed five major findings related to the research questions:

1. Consistent with previous studies, the writing consultations examined for this study provide further evidence of phenomena of *transfer shock* and *transfer stigma* for CC-transfer students.

2. Since students regularly encountered new concepts and strategies, developed connections to campus resources, and made statements about higher levels of confidence in their

abilities, the writing center consultations examined in this study displayed important

qualities of developing student's college identities and competencies as well as fostering

belonging and connection.

3. Consultants simultaneously leveraged their positions as fellow students and more

   experienced academic writers in order to mentor student-clients. Consequently, the

   writing center consultations examined not only exhibited independent social and

   academic qualities, but were dependent on a blend of the two.

4. The previous two findings support the assertion that the writing center consultations

   examined facilitated socioacademic integrative experiences as described and theorized in

   the literature for CC-transfer students.

5. Elements of writing center pedagogy and scholarship, which promotes peer mentorship

   emphasizing student agency, were present in virtually all of the transcripts examined and

   aligned with important features of socioacademic integration.

Next Steps

There are features of the data presented above that have strong connections to specific

writing center scholarship and pedagogical practice. Actions by the peer consultants related to

agency, mentoring, and teaching skills in context can likely be attributed to the training

consultants receive about best practices for tutoring and responding to writing. The extent to

which these well-established pedagogical practices promote socioacademic integration for CC-

transfer students is an important area for future study and consideration. In the final chapter of

this dissertation, I will discuss in detail the potential ways in which features of writing center

training and philosophy could be adapted and leveraged as a model for existing learning services,

and how a *peer plus* consulting model might serve as a template for establishing or piloting other integrative resources with transfer receptivity as a founding principle rather than an afterthought.

I will also discuss recommendations for extending research on CC-transfer student retention and persistence in the local context of the present study. Additionally, I will examine ways to emphasize and improve the socioacademic integrative features of the writing center consultations currently being offered in my professional context. Finally, I will offer practical suggestions for ways that varying delivery methods of peer-student services might influence such characteristics and amplify the potential integrative impact for students of diverse backgrounds.

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MANUSCRIPT III

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MANUSCRIPT III

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The disparity in educational attainment for CC-transfer students, documented on a large

scale for nearly thirty years (Dougherty, 1992; Alfonso, 2006; Wang, 2009; Burrus et al., 2013),

is also present in my current professional context on two regional campuses of a large university

in Mississippi. The enrollment on these campuses and sites is made up almost exclusively of CC-

transfer students and our retention rates lag significantly behind the main campus (69.8%

retention rate at regionals versus 85.3% at the main campus). While previous research has

focused on the role of the community college in promoting successful transfer, there is a lack of

definitive research about the role of the four year institution in retaining these students and

promoting their success post transfer (Bahr et al., 2013). Much of the existing culture (and

related processes) of four year programs ignores the presence of CC-transfer students within the

student body -- what Tobolowsky and Cox (2012) term *institutional neglect*.

Since education research first established its important impact on persistence and

retention (Tinto, 1993), promoting the social integration of students has served as a key

component of higher education programming and practice. Studies have revealed over time the

need to reexamine these practices in light of diverse student groups and important concerns about

equity, access, and social justice in higher education (D'Amico et al, 2014; Deil-Amen, 2011;

Braxton et al., 2004; Braxton & Lien, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Braxton, Sullivan,

& Johnson, 1997; Bean & Metzner, 1985). Furthermore, researchers who specifically focus on community college students have recognized that the relationship between social and academic integration is more complex and intertwined than other researchers have previously suggested (Bahr et al, 2013). Efforts to combine social and academic integration and incorporate peer relationships have proved more effective for community college students and CC-transfers at four year receiving institutions (D'Amico et al., 2014; Townsend & Wilson, 2009).

CC-transfer students are more likely than nontransfer students to be classified as *at risk* (e.g. minorities, first generation, place bound, and low SES) (Kolodner, 2016). This is also true in my professional setting, where we serve a much higher population of minority, parenting, first generation, and placebound students than the main campus. Transfer students are also more likely to be underprepared for upper level coursework and to need remediation or supplemental instruction, while also being less able to access available resources due to personal and economic factors (Xu, 2016; Bahr et al., 2013). This dissertation in practice took as its starting point the challenge from previous researchers to identify student resources and services at four year institutions that are *transfer receptive* (processes and resources that are friendly or tailored to the needs of transfer students) and that facilitate integration specifically for CC-transfer students (Bahr et al., 2013; Deil-Amen, 2011).

Writing center consultations are a supplemental learning service and offer access to peer-based writing tutoring at all stages of the writing process. Since writing is one of the most common forms of assessment in higher education, this student service is used widely across various programs and majors by many different types of students (Salem, 2016). The National Census of Writing (2013), a survey completed by over 900 U.S. higher education institutions,

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found that 99% of four year program respondents had some kind writing center (or learning center where writing consultations took place). Further, 91% of those centers were staffed by peer mentors. In my professional setting, we have writing centers on our regional campus staffed by peer tutors and offering both in person and online tutoring. I investigated the socioacademic integrative qualities of a sample of 220 writing center consultation transcripts from two writing centers in my local professional context. I employed Deil-Amen's (2011) framework of *socioacademic integrative moments* to examine these writing center consultations exclusively with CC-transfer students. This study aimed to answer the follow research questions:

1. What can we learn from in-depth exploration of writing center consultations between peer mentors and CC-transfer students?

2. How and to what extent do writing center consultations facilitate socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students?

This chapter provides a discussion of the major findings of this study, connections between my results and the literature and conceptual framework reviewed and described in the first chapter, and implications and recommendation for improved practice in higher education. I also discuss limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research.

Major Findings

Examination and analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter revealed five major findings related to the research questions:

1. Consistent with previous studies, the writing consultations examined for this study provide further evidence of phenomena of *transfer shock* and *transfer stigma* for CC-transfer students.

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2. Since students regularly encountered new concepts and strategies, developed connections to campus resources, and made statements about higher levels of confidence in their abilities, the writing center consultations examined in this study displayed important qualities of developing student's college identities and competencies as well as fostering belonging and connection.

3. Consultants simultaneously leveraged their positions as fellow students and more experienced academic writers in order to mentor student-clients. Consequently, the writing center consultations examined not only exhibited independent social and academic qualities, but were dependent on a blend of the two.

4. The previous two findings support the assertion that the writing center consultations examined facilitated socioacademic integrative experiences as described and theorized in the literature for CC-transfer students.

5. Elements of writing center pedagogy and scholarship, which promotes peer mentorship emphasizing student agency, were present in virtually all of the transcripts examined and aligned with important features of socioacademic integration.

The above findings have significant implications for programmatic efforts to enhance transfer receptivity at four year receiving institutions and for the professional practice of staff, faculty, and administrators in developing and implementing student services and resources. In the following sections, I discuss these findings in light of existing research literature and the conceptual framework reviewed and described above.

DISCUSSION

It is important to frame the discussion of the findings of this study within the context of the difficulties experienced by CC-transfer students during their transition from community college to four year institutions. As previously stated, transfer students commonly experience two simultaneous negative phenomena -- *transfer shock* and *transfer stigma* -- after entering a four year institution. Transfer shock is marked by a significant drop in GPA and social, emotional, and community adjustment barriers (Rhine et al., 2000; Ishitani, 2008; Townsend, 2008). Transfer stigma is characterized by negative assumptions on the part of faculty, others students, and staff as well as self-doubt from transfer students about their own aptitude for higher level study (Shaw et al., 2018; D'Amico et al., 2014).. These phenomena can significantly affect a CC-transfer student's ability to socially and academically integrate and thrive at a receiving institution.

Elements of transfer shock and stigma can be observed in the content of the sample examined for this study. Within the sample, the recurrence of several distinct codes lead to the emergence of categories which I termed "adversity" and "lack of confidence" (see Table 1). As discussed in the previous chapter, students openly expressed feeling deficient in their academic skills or unexpectedly receiving negative grades and feedback, which falls squarely in line with what researchers know about transfer shock. While direct evidence of statements from faculty of stigma towards the participants in this study was not present in the data, students did demonstrate and imply a level of discomfort and/or hesitation to connect with faculty and staff, for fear of receiving a negative response or "outing" themselves as unprepared. Students and consultants also expressed emotional concerns about the difficulty of balancing their studies with other

aspects of their lives such as family and working full or part time. Cox's (2016) "complicating conditions" (reviewed in Chapter I) for low SES students were definitively present in the consultation transcripts examined.

However, while providing increased confirmation of transfer shock and stigma as forces in the higher education experiences of CC-transfer students, other evidence in the sample and the wider research literature suggests that peer mentors are uniquely qualified to address student concerns and help them overcome the effects of these negative phenomena. For instance, several persistent codes in the sample like "empathy" and "encouragement" pointed to identification between the peer consultant and student-clients. The concept of social identification refers to "when a person exhibits a common characteristic or behaviour with other individuals of the in-group" (Wilkins, Butt, Kratochvil, & Blalkrishnan, 2016, p. 2234). A related concept, organizational identification, is "a form of social identification whereby an individual perceives a sense of belonging and oneness with an organization, its activities, and members" (Wilkins et al., 2016, p. 2233). Several researchers have found that greater levels of shared experiences, values, and norms between peers are related to feelings of support and community among college students (Hay, 2014; Smyth et al., 2013). Peer mentors, in this study and in other studies of student services settings, have proved to act as conduits for social and organizational identification (Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). Wilkins et al.'s (2016) recent study lends support to the idea that student commitment, achievement, and satisfaction are all positively influenced by social and organizational identification.

Remediation and Academic Support

Since CC-transfer students are more likely than other student populations to be underprepared academically, a significant focus of the literature on academic support for such students is the merits of different approaches to helping students address gaps in their knowledge. As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, some students may be required to take remedial or developmental coursework prior to admittance or advancement in a program. However, these requirements can interfere with what some have termed *academic momentum* (Adelman, 2006; Attewell et al., 2012). Academic momentum is described as the speed at which a student completes coursework and moves through their academic program. Academic momentum has been linked to higher rates of degree attainment and retention (Attewell et al., 2012). Remedial coursework can create barriers for students for starting and completing an academic major/program. Since we know that CC-transfer students are less prepared academically in general but also specifically in the area of writing (Xu, 2016; Bahr et al., 2013), the findings of this study on writing consultations and their contributions to the literature on approaches to academic support should be discussed.

Writing center consultations are a corequisite student learning resource. In other words, students can access the services of a writing center while they take classes and move through their academic program. Increased use of writing centers and similar services may help address some of the concerns in the literature about the negative effects of remedial programs and coursework. Throughout the data examined in this study, students were using their own current writing projects and assignments as opportunities to learn new skills and build competencies. The skills and knowledge building codes discussed in the previous chapter demonstrate that a

major focus of the consultations was teaching and learning. Students regularly admitted or revealed gaps in their knowledge of specific genres of writing, technical skills, research, and information resources through specific questions and observable errors. However, in addition to these gaps, the consultation transcripts provided ample evidence that peer consultants were able to mentor students in the development and mastery of new skills and knowledge. This is exemplified by the transcript excerpts discussed in the previous chapter related to mentoring, negotiation, and facilitative questioning.

The findings of this study are also in line with recent calls from education and writing scholars to develop pedagogical practices which emphasize self-efficacy and community over deficiency. In particular, Relles and Duncheon (2018) propose a shift toward a *new literacies* approach to learning resources where "college-level writing is not just a skill one acquires in isolation; it is an identity one performs as a member of a community" in various contexts (p. 220). Alexander, DePalma, and Ringer (2016) make the case for the practice of *adaptive remediation* to facilitate the development of multiple literacies defined as "a set of strategies composers can draw on in order to adapt or reshape composing knowledge" to multiple situations, assignments, and mediums (p. 34). Pfrenger (2017) makes a similar case for the context of rural and regional campuses (serving students similar to those of my professional practice) arguing that writing instructors and writing tutors should "point explicitly and regularly to ways that students' literacy lives outside of the university and gives meaning and shape to their emergent academic lives" (p. 90). In other words, writing should be taught as a knowledge base that can be applied and adapted beyond any given course assignment or even beyond traditional coursework to the student's personal and professional life.

In the data examined in this study, there is evidence that peer writing consultations employ some characteristics of an approach to "writing as (multi)literacy" (Alexander et al., 2016). In addition to answering student questions and filling in gaps in knowledge, peer consultants taught students to view various writing related issues in and across context(s). For example, one of the most common codes in my analysis I termed "audience" and occured when peer consultants would discuss a writing concept or a question posed by the student in terms of the needs of a reader or wider audience. Rather than giving the student a definitive answer, the consultant would ask the student to consider the impact of a number of possible choices on the reader. Teaching students to consider their rhetorical choices in this way broadens the impact of the instruction beyond the current assignment and writing task. The student has the opportunity to see knowledge as something that can be applied, adjusted, reconfigured, and remixed in various academic, institutional, professional, and social contexts (Lea & Street, 2006).

Peer Based Learning and Mentoring

Writing center consultations are a form of peer support or instruction, which is used in many forms across higher education institutions. According to Colvin (2015), peer tutoring as an instructional practice has been shown to "increase self-determination and individual empowerment by taking learning out of the context of a controlled, teacher-directed environment" (p. 210). Writing centers originally began using peer tutoring practices out of a combination of innovation and budgetary necessity (Bruffee, 1984); however, the practice is now widespread. According to a recent census of writing programs, peer mentors were on staff at 91% of writing centers in the U.S. colleges and universities examined (Gladstein, 2013). North (1994) pointed to a lack of research on the characteristics and effects of writing center

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consultations. And, Boquet and Lerner (2008), upon reviewing nearly thirty years of writing center scholarship, have renewed North's call for more scholarly, rigorous inquiry into the questions of "What happens in writing tutorials? What are writing tutorials exactly? What are proven best practices?" (p. 183). Lerner (2003) also posed the question, "How does writing center work fit into current theories of student learning and development?" (p. 65).

Writing center scholars and practitioners have contributed research and provided data towards addressing these questions; however, the varied nature of institutional contexts and student populations warrants continued efforts (Babcock et al., 2012). The data in this study lends information to these questions in the field about what happens in writing center consultations, CC-transfer student populations, and connections to specific aspects of students' college experiences (e.g. integration). An important finding in this study is that the data showed peer consultants provided students with access to supportive institutional agents and various forms of social and academic capital (Nunez & Yoshimi, 2016; Bahr et al., 2013).

Bordieu (1986) defines *social capital* as "the network of existing or potential acquaintances - both informal and institutional - into which an individual is born and to which he or she adds through the cultivation of social, educational, or professional contacts over time" (as cited in Bahr et al., 2013, p. 492). Some education researchers studying community college students have adapted this concept to better understand the ways in which students build networks through their institutional experiences, relying on a related concept termed *academic capital* (Hagedorn & Kress, 2008). Academic capital refers to the "knowledge and abilities that enable success in academic contexts" (Bahr et al., 2013, p. 493). Within the data examined for this study, peer consultants added to students' social networks as a supportive peer connection;

provided access to specialized academic knowledge about writing; and, freely offered students, what I coded as, "insider knowledge," about how to be a successful student and access institutional resources (discussed in detail in Chapter II). Insider knowledge usually took the form of a consultant sharing some kind of strategy or insight that they valued having learned in their own experiences as a student and related to how to navigate different facets of and relationships within the institution. The insider knowledge offered by consultants depended on the ability of the peer mentor to blur the lines between the social and academic.

In Colvin's (2015) comprehensive review of peer tutoring and mentoring in higher education, a significant theme and concern that emerges in the literature about the use of these practices is the role that peers take on in tutoring/mentoring interactions and their connections to power and agency. Peer tutors can act as role models, teachers, information resources, connections, leaders, coaches, advocates, and even friends (Colvin, 2015, p. 213-215). However, these roles and categories, though certainly related, may not always have consistent or congruent goals and practices. For instance, if a peer is acting as a teacher, the interaction may include a hierarchical positioning between the peers, whereas a peer acting as a coach may not (Collier, 2017). If the role of the tutor/mentor in relation to the student is not clearly defined and understood by both parties, then the interaction or consultation can be ineffective (Colvin, 2015). Indeed, one of the top concerns related to peer tutoring from instructors and faculty is the danger that students may become too dependent on a peer mentor or that a mentor/tutor will find it easier to complete the work for another student than to teach and mentor the student towards independence (Colvin & Tobler, 2012).

Within the consultations observed for this study, I found that there was a clear emphasis on the part of the peer consultants to build competency and promote agency in their student-clients. In my analysis, I found evidence of facilitative or nondirective strategies to tutoring on the part of the writing center consultants. Consultants opted for dialogic approaches to teaching concepts related to writing and encouraged active participation on the part of the student in making rhetorical choices (see my discussion of mentoring and authority in Chapter II). In some instances in the sample, when a facilitative approach was not successful, consultants did adapt to a student's knowledge base and become more directive in their approach and take on a more authoritative role. Some studies of writing tutorials have found that a balance between directive and nondirective tutoring is essential to the success of a consultation (Williams, 2004; Bell, 2002; Harris, 1995), and that a student is more likely to make revisions when the tutor is "activating previous knowledge tuned specifically to learners' needs for improved performance" (Babcock et al., 2012). Salem (2016) argues that the needs of student learners in writing centers differ so widely that approaches to tutoring need to be, above all, flexible and adaptable.

In order to act in mentoring and tutoring capacities, peer consultants have to be granted some level of credibility either through the institution itself (i.e. a learning or tutoring center) or an individual representing the institution (i.e. an instructor or staff member) (Colvin, 2015). This granting of authority and credibility (which could be theorized as a form of capital) allows for potential transfer of agency and power from peer tutors to student-clients. The data examined in my study suggests that this transfer is dependent on a specific type of pedagogical training based on writing center scholarship and on a peer consultants' ability to successfully blend their social and academic positions within a consultation.

Socioacademic Integrative Experiences

Providing adequate support services and learning resources has proved crucial to improving outcomes for students in transitional educational periods. Research has consistently found that academic preparation is a predictor of degree attainment for transfer students (Wang, 2009). According to Nunez and Yoshimi (2017), the academic achievement of transfer students especially benefits from interactions with supportive institutional agents who can provide "encouragement, access to resources, mentorship, and critical institutional information" (p. 185). Such experiences then ideally contribute to a sense of belonging and community -- fostering commitment to and shared values with the institution -- termed integration by Vincent Tinto (1993). Multi-institutional studies have yielded empirical support for Tinto's integration model in response to student departure, especially the relationship between social integration and persistence in four year residential institutional settings (Kuh et al., 2006).

Other researchers have added to the body of literature on integration for diverse students by incorporating the experiences and needs of CC-transfer students. A significant finding of several studies on CC-transfer students and integration is the extent to which social and academic integration are treated as distinct processes when instead they ought to be linked. Townsend and Wilson (2009) found that academic tasks and experiences can serve as opportunities for social integration for CC-transfer students. Reyes (2011) found that academically oriented programs and services were perceived by students to help forge meaningful connections with peers. Deil-Amen (2011) further argued that social and academic integration for CC-transfer students were inevitably linked and that embracing such a connection could yield important results for successful transfer and retention. She termed interactions which harnessed the blended nature of

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social and academic integration, *socioacademic integrative moments*. In her study of students from 14 different institutions, socioacademic integrative moments were cited by students from each institution as precursors to persistence (p. 82) She called for work that identified and described "vehicles" for these moments. Through examining WC consultations in the context of socioacademic integration for CC-transfer students, this study sought to contribute to the ongoing project of building a larger research base for WC practice, while also working to understand the role of supplemental learning services in student success in specific institutional contexts.

Since the larger research body shows that socioacademic integration plays a positive role in CC-transfer student retention, the identification of a vehicle or facilitator for such integration is a significant finding of this study. The consultations examined for this study facilitated socioacademic integration as described and theorized in the literature for CC-transfer students. Socioacademic integrative experiences are described as facilitating information gathering and exchange; construction of specific strategies; decreased alienation and enhanced connections; formation of postsecondary goals; and, procedural assistance leading to agency (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 82-83). By helping student-clients gain knowledge about writing and related tasks (i.e. research), the consultations examined for this study promoted access to information and allowed peers to exchange ideas and strategies about academic tasks. As discussed in Chapter II, the social positions of the consultant and student as peers attending the same institution allowed for the building of positive rapport, identification, and increased connection between the participants. In some cases, this is also what allowed peer consultants to provide access to campus resources in the form of other services, as well as supportive faculty and staff. By

employing nondirective, dialogic approaches to teaching and learning, peer consultants helped

students build confidence, competence, and a sense of agency.

Writing Center Pedagogy

Writing center tutors are trained in my professional setting and in many writing centers

according to a set of principles and ideas about writing mentoring and instruction rooted in

composition scholarship and the subfield of writing center pedagogy. Notably, there is a specific

emphasis on collaborative learning, individualized instruction, teaching writing as a process, and

constant negotiation and interplay of authority between tutor and tutee in writing center

pedagogy (Pemberton & Kinkead, 2003).

Eodice (2003), building on work by Bruffee (1972) and Lunsford and Bruce (2001),

stages writing centers as a *collaboratory*, emphasizing writing consultations as forming

"networks of cooperation and inquiry" where students and tutors encounter, produce, and use

knowledge together (p. 124). Collaborative learning as a bedrock of peer writing consultations

corresponds with common tutoring practices such as modeling, listening, and questioning both

broadly and in the consultations examined here. In *Training Tutors for Writing Conferences*,

Reigstad and McAndre (1984) argued, "The tutor's goal is to first discover what the student

knows and needs to know; the tutor then tries to cue the student about what needs to be done

either by talking or demonstrating" (as cited in Soven, 2006, p. 6). This emphasis on

individualization is common in writing center tutoring manuals and often comes in the form of a

recommendation for tutors to use a tactic called "setting an agenda," where the tutor asks the

student to name reasons for the appointment and then helps the student to prioritize and address

concerns (Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010; Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2015). In my findings, tutors engaged

in practices I coded as "prioritizing", teaching students to notice features of their writing that they may not have understood as being in need of revision based on the agenda set at the start of the appointment.

Writing as a process of broad categories of action including prewriting, drafting, and revision (encompassing various activities) is a key principle of both composition as a discipline and writing conferencing. Writing center pedagogy tends to focus on training peer mentors to help students to develop strategies and practices for these different stages to become more independent writers (Soven, 2006; Perl, 1994). In the consultations examined in this study, peer consultants' actions reflected their training in the writing process in that they often shared tools and strategies or demonstrated ways to engage in such a process. For instance, peer consultants modeled creating an outline, critical reading tactics, note taking strategies, and ways to self edit or revise for specific errors.

In his landmark essay, "The Idea of a Writing Center," North (1984) proposed the axiom, "our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (p. 76). North's essay and this proclamation in particular deeply impacted the development of writing center practice and scholarship (Bouqet & Lerner, 2008). Specifically, this axiom and its dogmatic adoption by some (Babcock et al., 2012) led to greater emphasis on nondirective, nonauthoritative approaches to writing center tutoring and consulting. Some tutoring manuals for writing centers go so far as to suggest that tutors should not hold a writing utensil during a session to avoid the temptation to write on a student's paper or make corrections (Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010; Brooks, 1991). The justification of nondirect (sometimes called minimalist) tutoring is that the tutor should not "take

over" the session and simply do the work for the tutee and often employs features of Socratic or Rogerian teaching methods (i.e. questions).

Since there was a prevailing attitude within the academy at the time of North's (1984) "Idea..." that writing center tutors engaged in a kind of "dishonest academic exercise wherein an accomplished writer (the tutor) transformed the inferior work of a less accomplished writer (the tutee) to achieve better grades," the development of nondirective tutoring practices is understandable (Babcock et al., 2012, p. 4). More recent research has broadened understandings of the appropriateness of nondirective approaches to tutoring based on context and individual student needs (Salem, 2016; Carino, 2003; Jordan, 2003; Stachera, 2003; Bosker, 2000) and such practices are often now taught in conjunction with directive feedback techniques. However, due to the aforementioned history, writing center pedagogy has been permanently imprinted with a nuanced perspective on power and authority between peer tutors and students within writing consultations. Writing centers generally identify themselves as "nonhierarchichal, friendly places" (Carino, 2003, p. 101) and encourage tutors to cultivate student confidence and authority alongside their own as experienced writers (Grutsch-McKinney, 2013).

Attention to and negotiation of agency was present in the findings of this study as a theme reflecting the codes "facilitative feedback", "negotiation", and "active participation", which occurred throughout the sample. Tutors made deliberate efforts to emphasize students' ability to make choices, reiterate students' authority over their writing, and celebrate successes in learning. The use of modeling and demonstration techniques towards the theme of competence also shows that peer consultants balanced their use of nondirective tactics with some directive feedback and constructive, honest critique. Elements of writing center pedagogy and scholarship,

were present in virtually all of the transcripts examined. Importantly, these features aligned with and offered practical forms of the broad features of socioacademic integration described in the literature.

IMPROVING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The findings of this study have important implications for improving professional practice and promoting equity, ethics and, social justice in higher education. The problem of practice which provided the rationale for this study is the disparity in retention rates of CC-transfer students on regional commuter campuses as compared to other student populations on the main campus of my university. Based on the data collected in this study, multiple stakeholders can take proactive measures to address the needs of CC-transfer students more effectively and improve the transfer receptivity of the institution.

Transfer Receptivity on Campus

This study confirms the presence of elements of transfer shock and transfer stigma among the participants of the study. Research supports the implementation of various types of programming to ease the shock of transitions for community college students such as summer bridge activities, learning communities, orientations for specific majors/disciplines, clubs and organizations, and mentor matching programs (Bahr et al., 2013). Currently, the regional campuses offer mass, nonspecific student orientations and very few clubs/organizations. One approach to more fully addressing transfer shock in my professional context while incorporating the results of this study would be to develop and pilot academic peer mentoring opportunities to be incorporated into student orientations. For instance, student ambassadors/mentors could be recruited from the academic majors represented on our campus and trained to conduct rotating

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small group sessions during orientations with new student peers to address questions or share tips and experiences. Deil-Amen's (2011) research indicates that socioacademic integrative experiences do not require sustained or even lengthy interactions to be effective. Since the campus has existing orientations, adjusting these programs slightly seems like a logical and practical place to incorporate changes and would require collaboration with student services and admissions staff.

Clubs and organizations on commuter campuses often prove hard to sustain or maintain due to many factors, mainly the varying schedules and responsibilities of working students (Akin & Park, 2016). A potential solution with support in the literature would be to promote ways for students to connect and form communities to reinforce their campus life through technology (Bahr et al., 2013). Group messaging applications, learning management software, and even social media (e.g. LinkedIn) present opportunities for students to make formal or informal connections and networks for fostering belonging and community and are worthy of further exploration.

Since the results of this study indicate that students did feel some discomfort and disconnection from faculty, especially related to contacting their professors with questions and concerns, there is an opportunity to consider improvements to campus and classroom climate. One potential intervention would be to study faculty's perceptions of CC-transfer students through surveys or interviews or to analyze syllabus language about communication and access to faculty. Many of the faculty on the regional campus are not based at the regional campus but travel in to teach classes or use distance learning equipment to teach from a remote location. These faculty may be using standardized or generic class materials, unaware of ways to adapt

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their practice, or unfamiliar with the specific characteristics and needs of transfer students. Such inquiry could reveal concrete recommendations for actions from or professional development for faculty. A proactive measure would also be to invite faculty to attend student orientations and facilitate informal, low stress interactions between students and their future teachers (e.g. meet and greet events).

Writing Center Services

The writing center consultations examined in this study displayed important characteristics of building students' college competencies and identities, as well as enhancing belonging and connection. Peer consultants achieved this by blending their simultaneous social and academic positions on campus as members of the student body and experienced academic writers. I also found evidence that these consultations facilitate socioacademic integration. Given that socioacademic integration specifically benefits CC-transfer students in retention and persistence (Bahr et al., 2013), the findings of this study support the recommendation that increased use of writing center services could benefit students in my professional context.

The writing centers used in this study currently serve numbers equivalent to one third of the student body of the regional campuses in a given semester. These numbers could grow through increased awareness of the writing center and through diversification of our services. A significant majority of students who registered with the center's scheduling system listed a teacher's recommendation as the way in which they learned about writing center services. Building on the popularity of faculty referral could be a first step toward increased awareness. For instance, I could design electronic promotional resources for learning management systems for faculty to download and simply insert into their online course spaces. We could also provide

standardized syllabus language about our services for faculty to copy and paste into their existing course documents. Another facet of improving awareness of the writing center influenced by the data would be to be deliberate in advertising the center as a peer-student space. Since students seemed to identify with the peer consultants in the transcripts examined and expressed trepidation about connecting with faculty, students should know that the writing center is not a faculty space or an extension of the classroom. I can more deliberately emphasize these features of the center in written materials but also by having peer consultants visit orientations and events to represent the center.

Although our writing centers already offer both in person and online appointments (both synchronous and asynchronous), we have not implemented course embedded tutoring, a practice with broad research support. According to Corbett (2015), course based tutoring offers a "means for extending the dialogic, multiple-perspectival interaction" of writing center consultations (p. 9). Grutsch-McKinney (2013) makes the case for writing centers to broaden their traditional notions of what it means to serve students on campus to incorporate tutoring in classrooms, working more closely with faculty, and organizing campus events. In addition to piloting course embedded tutors, another expansion of our services could include strategically scheduled campus events where students access consultants conveniently between classes in student spaces such as lounges and study areas.

The writing center has a specific mission of offering services to students working on writing projects and assignments, so our services do not address other types of academic work in specialized subjects such as math or science. Learning centers and services for math and science are not available at the regional campuses (which is typical of a lot of regional campuses; see

Bird, 2014), even though there are such services on the main campus. While it may be impractical to expect the implementation of a brand new center at the regional campus, it is feasible to work to expand tutoring services in general on the regional campuses by raising awareness about the socioacademic integrative potential of supplemental learning services and offering insights for training and recruitment. This would require collaboration with administration and potentially other academic units from the regional or main campus.

The writing consultations examined for this study facilitated socioacademic integrative experiences for CC-transfer students and depended on the ability of the peer tutor to act as a *peer plus* (a fellow student and social peer with enhanced academic experience and expertise). Writing center pedagogy and scholarship promotes collaborative learning and peer mentorship while emphasizing student agency. The training and practice associated with writing center pedagogy is heavily aligned with features of socioacademic integration described in the literature. Therefore, one implication for practice from this study would be to consider ways in which specific features of writing center conferencing could be appropriately adapted for other services on campus. In particular, academic advising practices could be adjusted to incorporate tactics such as more negotiation of choices and facilitative questions, especially if we want to increase students' confidence and agency in the formation of their educational goals (Braxton et al., 2004).

Writing Center Staffing and Training

Within my own role as a writing center director and instructor, the results of this study can be used to continue to train and develop peer tutors as well as strategically recruit staff. The transcripts reviewed for this study offer a rich resource of examples of tutoring writing in real

time. A potential use of adapted portions of the data would be as training materials and points of discussions with the tutoring staff. Even though the consultations reviewed in this study demonstrate that writing center consultations facilitate socioacademic integration, it is not a term that is discussed deliberately in our training materials. I could make more deliberate connections in our training program to features of socioacademic integration (such as decreasing alienation and promoting community) in light of our specialized student population. I could also introduce a unit about common characteristics and needs of CC-transfer students based on the secondary research reviewed for this study.

With regard to recruitment, the results of this study can be used to impact the ways in which I and other writing center administrators recruit staff members to the writing center. Currently, there are no standardized interview questions and application materials are relatively generic (an application with an academic writing sample). However, the data from this study indicated that an important feature of positive interactions was the ability of the consultant to build a rapport as a fellow student, determine an individual student's needs, and navigate adjustments to their tutoring and mentoring tactics accordingly, all while accessing their skills and knowledge as an experienced writer. In the future, I could advertise the development of collaboration and communication skills as a benefit of the job and be more deliberate about screening for and assessing a candidate's aptitude with such skills. This could include developing scenarios for candidates to analyze or respond to in addition to submission of an existing writing sample.

Future Research

Finally, I believe this study has implications for research and action beyond the data present in the 220 transcripts. In their article about learning from and responding to the needs of transfer student writers, Gere et al. (2017) advocate for ongoing recursive professional practice based on the principle of mutual adjustment. Serving transfer students' educational needs, they argue, is an inherently local practice that requires "locally sensitive curricular and programmatic responses" (p. 336). One significant local concern I have is about the students who are not represented in the data for this study. In other words, I want to know more about the experiences of the CC-transfer students who did not schedule appointments with the writing center and therefore could not be studied. Salem's (2016) article about students' use of writing centers challenges scholars and practitioners to focus more attention on the non-users or non-visitors of writing centers. She argues that learning more about the personal and social factors influencing the "decision," or more appropriately perhaps "nondecision," of a student to use the writing center can be fruitful in critically examining and reforming our own practices. The data for this study show that writing center consultations, when they occur, are transfer receptive; however, is the process of scheduling, accessing, or attending consultations transfer receptive? I believe that more closely examining nonusers on the regional campuses in my professional context has the potential to speak to issues of equity, ethics, and social justice within writing center work that may not have been revealed through the examination of the transcripts for this study.

Limitations

This study is limited in that the data for the sample came from a single institution and the results are not necessarily generalizable. Although I took recommended measures to maintain

and ensure objectivity in my analysis, the qualitative nature of the data also imposes limitations related to my role as investigator and my closeness to the problem of practice in the research. A logical extension of this study would be to triangulate the data produced through the document analysis with other methods of qualitative inquiry such as interviews with students and peer consultants (Creswell, 2015). Additionally, there is the issue of the diversity of demographics within the subpopulation of CC-transfer students. From the data available in the *myWConline* system, it was not possible to determine individual student characteristics which feature heavily in the literature of CC-transfer students (i.e. parenting status, first generation college students, income level, length of enrollment, etc). CC-transfer students are not a monolith and an extension of this study could be to more closely examine subsets of this unique student population and pair qualitative with quantitative measures of analysis. Finally, the sample used in this study represented students who voluntarily used the writing center through an online system. An interesting extension of studying socioacademic integration in learning services would be to consider the impact of various mediums of student access and their unique characteristics (i.e. online static, online interactive, synchronous, asynchronous, phone, face to face, etc).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to study consultations between peer mentors and CC-transfer students at two writing center locations and the connections between writing consultations and socioacademic integration of CC-transfer students at a four year receiving institution. I studied archived transcripts and related documents (i.e. appointment reservation forms) of writing center consultations from a two year period. Analysis of the sample

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of 220 consultations revealed evidence of transfer shock and transfer stigma experienced by the CC-students who used the center. Additionally, the transcripts showed that students encountered new concepts and strategies, developed connections to campus resources, and made statements about higher levels of confidence in their abilities. The writing center consultations examined in this study displayed important qualities of developing student's college identities and competencies as well as fostering belonging and connection.

Furthermore, persistent patterns in the data showed that consultants simultaneously leveraged their positions as fellow students and more experienced academic writers in order to mentor student-clients. Consequently, the writing center consultations examined not only exhibited independent social and academic qualities, but were dependent on a blend of the two. In light of these characteristics, the study revealed that the writing center consultations examined facilitated socioacademic integrative experiences as described and theorized in the literature for CC-transfer students. Elements of writing center pedagogy and scholarship, which promotes peer mentorship emphasizing student agency, were present in virtually all of the transcripts examined and aligned with important features of socioacademic integration.

Connections to the research literature on institutional transitions, remediation and academic support, peer based learning and mentoring, socioacademic integration of CC-transfer students, and writing center pedagogy were discussed in light of the findings of the study. Implications for improving institutional practices to enhance transfer receptivity in my local context were discussed, including additions or reforms to campus orientations, peer mentoring programs, student clubs and organizations, faculty-student involvement, and creative uses of networking technology. I also reviewed changes for implementation in the writing center and my

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professional practice as an administrator, including improving student awareness of services, diversification of service offerings, adaptation of writing center practices to other services, course embedded tutoring and faculty partnerships, improvements to peer consultant training, and further study of non users of the writing center. Limitations related to the study were discussed along with potential future extensions of the project to address some of the limitations.

My aim in this inquiry was to provide concrete documentation and qualitative description of peer-based, one-on-one writing center consultations and their relationship to socioacademic integration, so that I and other professionals at receiving institutions can work to develop frameworks for assessing learning services and resources and creating effective programmatic efforts to enhance transfer receptivity. I believe that this study offers an opportunity for growth and to improve our practices as institutional agents of student learning and success, and that we can be confident when we assure CC-transfer students that they are indeed "in the right place."

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Education
MA English, Concentration: Cultural Studies, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA | 2013
    Graduate Certificate: Women's and Gender Studies
    Graduate Study Abroad, English Literature, Exeter College, Oxford University, UK
BA History, Minor: Gender Studies, Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, LA | 2008

Teaching Experience
Instructor, Department of Writing and Rhetoric, University of Mississippi, MS | 2014-Present
Faculty Affiliate, Sarah Isom Center, University of Mississippi, MS | 2014 - Present
Instructor, School of Management, George Mason University, VA | 2013
Graduate Assistant, English Department, George Mason University, VA | 2011-2013

Administrative Experience
Department of Writing and Rhetoric, University of Mississippi
    Director of the Writing Center (Tupelo Campus) | 2014-Present
Writing Center, George Mason University
    Technology Coordinator | 2013
    Online Publishing Manager | 2012
    Website Administrator, Tutor | 2011
English Department, George Mason University
    Mentor-Teacher | 2012-2013
Office of Student Media, George Mason University
The George Mason Review: Exemplary Undergraduate Writing across the Curriculum
    Graduate Advisor | 2012-2013

Professional Organization Leadership
Southeastern Writing Center Association
    Board Member, Mississippi State Representative | 2016-2018

- Scope: Regional
- Served on the conference planning and scholarship committees
- Member of 2017 conference planning committee

Mississippi Writing Center Association
    Board Member, Digital Presence and Communications | 2016-2021

- Scope: State/Local

- Developed and launched online presence for the organization; Co-chair for the 2015 annual conference; Proposal reviewer for the 2017 and 2018 conferences

Honors and Awards

Outstanding MA in English Graduate: Cultural Studies, George Mason University | 2013
Outstanding Mentor-Teacher, George Mason University | 2013
Graduate Teaching Assistantship, George Mason University | 2011-2013
Sven Eric Molin Prize for Excellence in Graduate Writing, George Mason University | 2011
President's Award: Full Tuition Scholarship, Centenary College of Louisiana | 2004-2008