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All Writers Welcome: An Exploratory Study of the Potential Value of Academic Writing Center and Adult Community-Based Literacy Center Partnerships

by Allison Bennett

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
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Abstract

Writing center practices have been widely accepted as beneficial for literacy development, especially given the ubiquitous nature of writing. However, many off-campus communities lack writing support as visible, organized, and well-documented as that available to those on-campus through writing centers. Further, while evidence of writing center community-engaged initiatives exists anecdotally, research identifying the possible impact of such efforts on specific community partners and populations is limited. Hence, this study explores how literacy is supported in university/college writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers. Survey and interview data suggest the potential value that community-engaged projects between the two are likely to produce, as well as their unique challenges. For writing center and community literacy center practitioners interested in creating community writing spaces and/or exploring community engagement projects, study findings present important considerations for future collaborations and challenge existing assumptions of institutionalized and community literacy distribution.

Part I: Background & Significance

Introduction

> *"All writers need—and benefit from—readers with whom they can interact as [their writing] takes shape, skilled coaches who can offer appropriate guidance as the writer moves through the various writing processes, and responders who can offer meaningful response to and evaluation of a final draft."*
>
> Muriel Harris, "The Writing Center" 109

I have had the privilege of supporting a diverse group of students in academic writing centers, first at a small, private liberal arts university, then at a slightly larger Historically Black College and University (HBCU) institution, and, most recently, at a large public research university. These varied academic environments allowed me to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Yet, I am concerned that there are still many outside of formal academic settings who would benefit from similarly visible and organized writing support and instruction but cannot access it simply because they are not part of an institution. Having witnessed first-hand the value of one-on-one attention in writing development afforded to the students, faculty, and staff with whom I have worked, I cannot help but wonder about accessibility. Quoting David Russell, Joan A. Mullins points out that institutional writing centers have historically developed as a means of providing "'greater access, greater equity'" (182); in terms of academic literacy, this is certainly true. Somewhat ironically, however, secondary and post-secondary writing centers frequently promote their services to all writers. What this often means is that they are available to all student writers and, even more exclusively, all currently *enrolled* student writers. In fact, from 2014–2015, according to data collected by the Writing Centers Research Project, only three percent of writing centers surveyed offered their services to "those not attending/matriculated/employed at [the] institution"—or, in other words, to the public ("Writing Centers").

Linda Bergman argues that writing center community engagement frequently begins when those outside of the university—the public—contact a writing center, seeking "various

kinds of help, knowledge, and interaction with projects related to writing and literacy" (160). The fact that individuals reach out to centers in the first place suggests that similar support is not otherwise available to them. As Tiffany Rousculp asserts, the space between institutional support and community deserves our attention (*Rhetoric of Respect* 15). This void is illustrated well by the number of centers available: there are at least 1,400 academic writing centers in the US alone (Williams). As of 2016, only seventy-two higher education institutions offered a community equivalent (Saginaw Community Foundation). While the number of writing centers within traditional academic settings (e.g., high schools, colleges, and universities) continues to grow, the lack of comparable writing resources and support for off-campus communities is troubling. This reality is especially disconcerting because writing has begun to rival reading as the "literate experience of consequence" (Brandt, *The Rise* 3); being able to write is, in some circumstances, just as important—if not more—as being able to read and understand someone else's writing.

Certainly, writing support and instruction occur outside of traditional educational settings; I do not mean to suggest otherwise. For example, there are an infinite number of creative writing support organizations; formal and informal writing groups; and writing institutes, camps, and workshops that do not require direct institutional affiliation for involvement (Rousculp, *Rhetoric of Respect* 2). These various opportunities represent community writing spaces: locations and occasions for writers to develop outside of formal education. But these types of programs are usually targeted toward K–12 students (often with the goal of encouraging an early, important interest in literacy), as well as recreational and professional writers looking to advance their craft. Beyond targeting a specific audience, these programs also often require a fee, which can limit participation further. Rousculp, founder of the Salt Lake Community College Community Writing Center (referred to as the CWC) explains

that this limited reach of writing support for the general community, and especially those who take advantage of adult literacy education, justified the development of their center (*Rhetoric of Respect* 15). As Rousculp and others have noticed, there is a need for greater access to writing support.

While Salt Lake's CWC was the result of one community college's engagement with the local community, some higher education writing centers are similarly establishing community writing centers, offering individual writing assistance to everyone—community members and enrolled students alike—and moving closer to supporting *all* writers. Assistance in these centers commonly comes through one-on-one attention or workshop settings. Because of the range of writers' needs and projects that these community writing centers experience, no two interactions look the same. For instance, one individual may seek brief feedback on a completed comic book. Another might want to talk through ideas for her memoir and needs the tutor to write down their lengthy discussion. Yet another may need support studying for the essay portion of an entrance exam or writing a letter to the city council. Often, but certainly not exclusively, these centers are the result of collaborations between a university/college writing center and a public library. Bronwyn T. Williams reasons that public libraries provide both "free and open community space" in which "people already ask for help with writing," so these partnerships are not surprising. But these efforts beg the question: How do academic writing centers benefit from expanding their services to populations who might not otherwise receive similar writing support? Further, are there populations in particular that would benefit from these partnerships, and what organizations beyond public libraries might present opportunities for the creation of more community writing centers?

In regard to the first question, community engagement[1] in traditional classrooms continues to be researched frequently in scholarly literature. Discussions of similar efforts by writing center administrators, staff, and tutors to interact and partner with the general community are less common by comparison, even though collaboration is at the heart of writing center work. There is much evidence to suggest that students whose coursework allows them to engage with university *and* community members benefit from authentic pre-professional experiences that aid their transference of course content beyond a given semester (see Deans; Deans et al.; Adler-Kassner et al.). But academic writing centers—that is, sites of literacy support available to faculty, staff, and students—are intentionally different from classrooms. Thus, research investigating possible partnerships, including shared values and anticipated risks and benefits, stands to serve as a valuable resource for writing center administrators curious about engaging with their neighboring communities but unsure of the considerations unique to the writing center environment or even where to begin. This research is also valuable to community literacy educators who are either similarly interested in collaborations or may not have been previously aware of such opportunities.

As for the follow-up questions, while community writing programs such as groups and camps do support a variety of individuals, adult literacy learners in particular are often excluded from such initiatives. Literacy centers and programs—that is, sites of literacy support available to the public, including General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation centers and organizations offering classes for English language learners (ELL) or low-literate individuals—serve these populations, yet they consistently offer limited writing support (especially in

[1] Throughout my study, I use the terms community engagement and service-learning generally to refer to collaborative projects that connect higher education and communities. I recognize that these terms are subject to various interpretations but are not interchangeable. Despite relying on both terms, I am sensitive to the complexities surrounding each and the inherent differences in definition, theory, and practice (see Bergman).

comparison to students enrolled in higher education) and lack evidence of effective writing instruction (Nielsen 143). Those who take advantage of literacy education within their communities certainly require more than reading support. As evidence, the LINCS Community (an online professional resource for adult educators and learners) recently announced a webinar for spring 2018 titled "Teaching Academic Writing to Adult English Learners." LINCS' email announcement of the opportunity explains that "under WIOA [the Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act], academic and professional writing is increasingly important for transitioning adult English learners to postsecondary training for careers that pay family-sustaining wages" (LINCS Community). Just like college and university students who have access to writing centers, individuals seeking literacy support through the community experience very real consequences (often economic) based on their writing abilities. Hence, because of their attention to literacy development and their frequent interactions with individuals in similar age groups, writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers could potentially form valuable partnerships—collaborations which are currently scarce at best—through community engagement projects.

These relationships would also further call attention to an important kairotic moment. In his 2014 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Chair's Address, Howard Tinberg passionately implored his audience to reunite higher education and the public, arguing for a recommitment "to the importance of literacy instruction at all levels, from novice writer to graduate student to adult learner" by way of genuine engagement with all student writers. Citing John Trimbur's "Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers," Phillip Bode agrees that, at least for writing centers, "embracing social justice [would serve] as a means of establishing continuity between the academy and civic life." The partnerships that Tinberg and

Bode call for take time and continued effort to develop, and we are in the midst of that effort now.

Obviously, for the many communities in which university/community engagement has yet to result in community writing centers, regardless of location (e.g., public library), writing support for the general population comparable to that offered in writing centers is limited. For example, Georgia, where I currently reside and attend graduate school, represents a geographic area devoid of community writing support similar to that experienced in higher education. Despite this fact, the state, like many others, has a history of attending to literacy development efforts within communities. In fact, in June 2017, the Georgia Literacy Commission was created by "business leaders, educators and lawmakers" to address the reality that one out of every six adults in Georgia are low literate—that is, unable to read at expected levels (Dalton). Citing the economic effect of this rate, felt by both the individual and the state, the commission continues to research and study literacy in Georgia to provide recommendations for future endeavors that will help those who struggle with reading ("About"). Unfortunately, this most recent effort is not unlike those in the past: little attention is given to writing as it relates to literacy development. Therefore, writing support is not considered in the resulting literacy initiatives.

Thus, in the chapters ahead, I will first explore the consequences of what Deborah Brandt describes as our "mass daily experience" of writing (*The Rise* 3), questioning the distribution of literacy in and outside of formal education. Such efforts necessitate establishing definitions of writing center community engagement, academic and community literacy, writing centers, and adult community-based literacy centers, which Chapters One, Two, and Three provide, respectively. Next, I will explain the design of my IRB-approved exploratory study of writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers in Georgia. Survey data from writing center

and community literacy center administrators, as well as interview data regarding community literacy engagement projects, will follow. Finally, I will explain the implications of my study to persuade readers of the advantages partnerships between academic writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers can present, while also highlighting important considerations for such collaborations and identifying areas for further research and attention.

Chapter One: Literature Review

In 2004, Kathleen Blake Yancey described a "tectonic change" in literacy: writing was changing (298). Twenty-first century technologies made the act of composing more accessible, new genres developed, and traditional definitions were challenged, all consequences that continue today. Yancey observed that more and more people were writing, no longer motivated simply by academic accomplishment, as occasions and audiences presented themselves regularly (301–02). Just as a reading public had developed because of technological advances in nineteenth-century Britain, what Yancey and others were witnessing was a "*writing* public made plural" (300; emphasis original).

In the case of any foundational shift, geologic or otherwise, effects are experienced long after the initial moment is documented. More than ten years after Yancey's CCCC Chair's Address referenced above, in 2015, Deborah Brandt argued that "writing seems to be eclipsing reading as the literate experience of consequence" (3). Further evidence of the impact of a writing public exists in definitions of literacy. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) acknowledges that literacy is "now understood as a means of . . . *creation*, and *communication* . . ." ("Literacy"; emphasis added). Clearly, literacy refers to more than the consumption of others' writing; it extends to the construction of one's own (Greenberg 39), thereby calling attention to the interdependent relationship between reading and writing. Importantly, at the risk of slipping into an "'idolatry of literacy'" cautioned against by J. Elspeth Stucky in *The Violence of Literacy* (qtd. in Rousculp, *Rhetoric* 31), the social capital of literacy persists, regardless of changing definitions (Kirsch et al. 649; Brandt, *The Rise* 32). As Robert F. Arnove and Harvey J. Graff illustrate in their historical examination

of literacy campaigns, literacy is a means through which individuals achieve goals (592). While the nature of these goals varies immensely, in the absence of literacy, attainment is affected.

In the past, reading's assumed dominance over writing influenced all aspects of literacy (Brandt, *The Rise* 2). For example, community-based literacy centers often served to address the gaps in privilege, power, and autonomy that illiteracy (specifically the inability to read) produced; many still do by providing access to books, offering educational programs for families, and teaching individuals how to read. Grace V. Malicky and C. Herb Katz note that community-based literacy programs encourage "economic independence and self-sufficiency for both students and their communities." Historically, the ability to read has received much attention both in formal education (e.g., K–12 and higher education) and within the general community (e.g., after-school programs and public library initiatives) (Brandt, *The Rise* 2). Various forms of reading support are available to most regardless of enrollment in school. Conversely, writing support, while present, is not as universally available. However, as "people increasingly read from . . . inside acts of writing" (17), the need for writing instruction, resources, and support increases concurrently. Perhaps this necessity fuels Beth Godbee's contention of "a community writing center movement," as university writing centers begin to explore the community equivalent (158). Responsible for offering writing support, writing center practitioners are well-positioned to witness the writing public that Yancey and Brandt both describe, to explore and experience users' experimentation with language and literacy, and to observe the ways that reading and writing skills circulate within a given community.

Literacy Distribution

Because of writing's pervasive role in our lives and the complex boundaries in which centers exist, writing center practitioners must maintain awareness of an important question

posed by John F. Szwed in "The Ethnography of Literacy": "how is the ability to read and write distributed in a community?" (428). In simple terms, writing centers disseminate literacy skills through the dialogic nature of their services. But unpacking the "how" also means examining access: to whom is the ability distributed? For most writing centers, the answer is students. To be fair, Lester Faigley observes that "many writing centers are not situated in American colleges" (3). For the general public, writing support exists in a variety of forms, including but not limited to after-school programs for elementary through high school students (e.g., 826 Valencia); workshops, classes, and consultations tied to a registration and/or membership fee (e.g., the Decatur Writer's Studio, Decatur, GA, [Van Atten]); and community writing centers established by academic writing centers (e.g., the Salt Lake Community College CWC, [Rousculp]).

Nevertheless, community writing support falls far short of both the previously mentioned reading support and the ubiquitous status of academic writing centers. As evidence for the latter, the National Census of Writing researchers collected data from 900 total two- and four-year institutions between March 2013 and October 2014 and found that nearly ninety-eight percent of those surveyed have a writing center (*National Census of Writing*). As previously mentioned, Williams notes that there are 1,400 institutionalized writing centers in the US. Understandably, Lori Salem and Jennifer Follett conclude that higher education has "embraced" student writing support (51). University and college writing centers currently provide the most visible and well-documented representation of organized writing and literacy support outside of the classroom. However, this assistance still occurs *inside* the academy; therefore, academic writing center practitioners should be concerned with the accessibility of literacy support they offer.

Beyond the sheer number of university and college writing centers, higher education's inherent boundaries—and the writing center's position in and among these borders—further

complicate distribution. Salem contends that, because of the access to professional literacies they provide to students, "universities are among the most important sponsors of literacy" ("Opportunity" 23). While this responsibility is certainly shared in some capacity by the entire institution, the writing center intentionally exists as a collective body of sponsors, tasked with delivering the "ideological freight that must be borne for access" (Brandt, "Sponsors" 17). Furthermore, writing center administrators are acutely aware of and concerned with boundaries, both physical and metaphoric, and rightfully so: they frequently exist in the margins of the academy, outside of a specific discipline and classroom yet inextricably and understandably tied to the study of English (Bergman 160; Rafoth; McCleese Nichols; Doggart et al.). Despite their awareness of borders, these centers also often contribute to the problem of limited access. Their services are, in general, exclusive to a specific community, namely those enrolled in or otherwise directly affiliated (e.g., faculty and staff) with the academic institution in which they reside. In other words, not all writers are able to take advantage of writing center support. Julia Doggart and her coauthors remind readers that "those of us in the university can easily take excursions into the community, while those in the community can less freely explore the university" (75).

Even for those who *are* members of a campus community to whom writing center services are available, some argue that pedagogical approaches such as nondirective tutoring can exclude students further (Jacobs). For instance, asking certain individuals, "How can I help you with your draft"—a question common in writing center settings—can be at once unnerving and completely unproductive (Jacobs). English language learners, for example, may not know how to answer this question. A delicate balance of accessibility and exclusivity has always been a logical if not ideal consequence of higher education (Rousculp, *Rhetoric* 66), so it should come

as no surprise that the writing center is not exempt from the important struggle of maintaining this balance.

Additionally, writing centers often, by default, serve “institutional practices of literacy,” resulting in a “painful paradox” for tutors and administrators who regularly navigate the hierarchies of literacy present in higher education (Grimm, “The Regulatory Role” 5–6). Most centers aim to support and develop the writer’s process over product; however, the immediacy of deadlines and the perceived value of grades, among other competing concerns, too often sustain the institution’s “regulatory power” (Grimm, “The Regulatory Role” 8; Rousculp, *Rhetoric* 68). Hence, one form of literacy dominates another (often at the expense of the student). While Rousculp acknowledges that writing centers are certainly capable of “call[ing] academic expertise into question,” institutional culture often limits the frequency of this occurrence (*Rhetoric* 67). The writing center’s distance from the classroom and the beneficially “alternate” place it provides are intended to foster a sense of freedom and safety to experiment; and they often do (Lerner 15). However, as Salem explains, “a university targets its resources so that *certain* people . . . can learn *certain kinds* of literacy in ways that cohere with and support the university’s overall mission and goals” (“Opportunity” 23; emphasis original). Writing centers exemplify this description; consequently, they are “align[ed] . . . with privilege” (Salem, “Opportunity” 35; see also Grimm’s “Retheorizing” and García). Through their service to the university community and their complex role in support of course-related writing tasks, writing centers perpetuate the perception that only certain writers warrant and/or need support. With privilege all too often comes exclusion.

To be clear, I do not fault writing centers for their paradoxical position. From their inception, these centers intended to support students, and I am not suggesting that this original

aim should stop. I agree with those who contend that the academic writing center's first priority is to the institution (Bergman 173; Anson 35). What I am arguing, instead, is that writing centers continue to do what they have always done: adapt. Such centers are often hubs of creativity, responding to the climate and culture in which they reside. As literacy needs continue to evolve, the writing center's purpose, reach, and approaches can and should adjust accordingly. Just as Brizee and Wells argue, choosing between service to on-campus or off-campus communities is often neither necessary nor productive (132–33). Fortunately, scholarly literature suggests that there are possible solutions to help university writing centers more consistently expand their impact, solutions that stand to benefit both writing centers and the greater community and allow writing centers to more concretely consider this both/and paradigm.

Writing Center Community Engagement

Since the early 90s, service-learning—which is now sometimes captured in the broader term community engagement—has presented opportunities for higher education institutions to interact, partner, and collaborate with off-campus communities for pedagogical purposes (Rose and Weiser 1). Service-learning initiatives occur as a curricular component of a university or college course, offering students authentic learning opportunities when engaging with a community beyond the classroom. For example, composition students may collaborate with a local non-profit during the semester, producing writing deliverables that serve the specific needs of the organization and/or reflect on their experiences. Within secondary education especially, community engagement has received attention for many years, perhaps gaining initial steam from Ernest Boyer's 1996 article "The Scholarship of Engagement," which Diann Olszowy Jones and Joonghee Lee describe as a "rallying call" for institutions' participation in surrounding communities (69). Within composition and rhetoric, scholars such as Thomas Deans, Eli

Goldblatt, Linda Flower, and Ellen Cushman have compelled readers to appreciate and understand the value of service-learning and community-engaged practices for the writing classroom. However, as previously mentioned, similar attention to community engagement specifically in writing center scholarship is scarce (Rousculp, *Rhetoric of Respect* 46; Brizee and Wells xiv), even though centers often form partnerships both on and off college campuses (see Rousculp, "Connecting the Community"; Kinkead; Deming and Valeri-Gold). As Bergman argues, the nature of writing center work, centers' figurative position within the institution, and the benefits experienced by both the community and the center confirm that such efforts deserve further scholarly consideration.

Scholarship in this area is also important because while the advantages and challenges associated with community engagement projects in writing center environments are similar to those experienced in the classroom, there are a few important exceptions. For example, both share the goals of service to community, knowledge exchange, and experiential learning. Moreover, those working in the writing center and participating in community engagement develop professionally through authentic challenges that involve very real consequences beyond a grade or evaluation, just as students in a course do (Bergmann 166). Concerns of sustainability and reciprocity also remain common among both curricular and writing center community engagement.

That said, writing center collaborations are often free of course constraints such as learning objectives and are frequently not limited to an academic semester. Writing centers must also consider appropriate compensation and staffing concerns, as the center's priority is to support student writing within its institution (Bergman 173). In addition, the structure of engagement projects is different in the writing center than the classroom, as the nature of the

collaboration is not reliant on a course's curriculum. For instance, there may be more freedom to explore diverse partnerships. While a handful of sources confirm these more-often anecdotally observed qualities, more consistent scholarly attention would help practitioners understand their implications, allowing their civic endeavors to continue in new and exciting ways. Composition and rhetoric, as a discipline, certainly offers useful and extensive scholarship on community engagement; however, to realize and experience its benefits completely, as well as acknowledge and address its challenges, writing center community engagement warrants further research that not only reflects on past projects but also investigates new opportunities that suggest the possibility of community-engaged initiatives.

Generally, writing center community engagement falls into two categories: partnerships within the academic community (e.g., university departments or campus organizations) and collaborations with individuals and organizations off-campus (Rousculp, "Connecting the Community"). Examples of campus outreach include tutors creating writing resources and workshops for a specific faculty member, course, or assignment; centers partnering with a campus library; and sessions being offered at satellite locations (e.g., a student center or residence hall). Tutors offering writing support to professionals (Bergman 168–71), creating writing resources and materials for community organizations (see Brizee and Wells), and establishing community writing centers (see Rousculp, *Rhetoric of Respect*) illustrate the various ways that centers can engage with those outside of their institution. Importantly, Kinkead argues that the goals of "publicizing writing and teaching writing" should be maintained by those engaging with entities outside of formal education (10).

Beyond these two categories, it is also necessary to note that collaboration is a vital part of a writing center's mission. As such, even within tutoring sessions, and especially in centers

that rely on peer tutors, writing center work is in itself service-learning; tutors learn through their service to and experience with other students (Kramer and Davis). As Rousculp elucidates, a writing center's mission extends beyond those it serves to include those who work there and are, "more often than not, also situated as learners encouraged to develop their own intellectual, educational, and professional strengths" (*Rhetoric* 57). The value of community engagement to students enrolled in a course is obvious, but the value to writing center tutors who participate in outreach not reliant on course structure is just as important, especially considering the range of engagement opportunities a writing center can present.

It is not surprising, then, that writing center practitioners have long championed the benefits of extending their services to those outside of the academy, even going so far as to warn of the consequences of "living within the walls of our built-house" (Rafoth 18). In fact, just one year prior to Yancey's call to action for compositionists regarding the emergence of a writing public, Rousculp predicted in 2003 that "growing beyond campus borders into the possibility of community" might be "the future for writing centers" ("Into the City" 13). While Faigley agrees that writing centers should be concerned with "how to amplify [the invaluable] experience" of individuals whose quest for writing support is met "with genuine concern" (5), we have yet to truly experience the future Rousculp predicted. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the human connection—what Faigley argues makes a writing center "work" (6)—and the sense of community so commonly experienced in the writing center make outreach a logical endeavor for most centers.

As a result, within the limited writing center community engagement literature, a variety of projects and programs are discussed, and activities vary from face-to-face interactions to an online presence and/or asynchronous online resources (McCleese Nichols; Brizee and Wells;

Jesson). Additionally, as previously mentioned, some higher education writing centers have established community writing centers, often for "individuals who tend to fall through the gaps found in adult educational opportunities," as was the case for the Salt Lake Community College CWC (Rousculp, "Into the City" 12). Other institutional efforts include the University of New Mexico's Albuquerque Community Writing Center, Auburn's Community Writing Center, and Utah Valley University's Community Writing Center. Generally, these centers operate much the same as an academic writing center, offering the public one-on-one support for all genres and stages of writing. However, as services are open to all community members, there is obviously far less focus on academic literacy. Some, but not all, of these examples offer their services through public libraries, but may not partner with the library beyond utilizing its space. Rousculp reasons that these sites of community writing support "[represent] some kind of shift in how academic institutions relate to people living in the communities that surround them" (*Rhetoric* 153).

Given their foundations in academic writing support, it stands to reason that, while certainly serving different populations, genres, and writing concerns, these community writing centers have much in common regarding praxis and theory with their university or college counterparts. Accordingly, in the absence of a specific community partner with which to engage and interact (as is the case for several of the examples above), the proliferation of literacy oppression and limited distribution might unintentionally persist off-campus, an "insidious" problem caused by "well-meaning volunteerism" of which Linda Flower cautions against (96). Michael H. Norton and Eli Goldblatt argue that "we grow . . . when we address language practices that run counter to the norms and conventions of dominant culture" (30). Therefore, rather than merely moving beyond campus confines, centers that partner or collaborate with

other literacy support organizations in the community may find existing assumptions and limitations challenged in beneficial ways, while also offering valuable writing support to populations that might otherwise not receive it.

Further, while this change on the part of the institution is admirable, what about those communities not currently connected with a higher education institution, or those areas where general writing support within the community is limited or nonexistent? As of 2016, there were seventy-two colleges and universities in the US with some form of a community writing center (Saginaw Community Foundation). Community writing initiatives created by university writing centers, while present, are few and far between; the problem of limited access persists. Moreover, despite evidence that many writing centers consistently interact and partner with others both on and off campus, and have for some time (Rousculp, "Connecting the Community"; Deming and Valeri-Gold; Kinkead), discussions of engagement in scholarship are limited in number and scope (Rousculp, *Rhetoric* 46; Brizee and Wells xiv). The small body of literature that exists most frequently appears in the form of reflection and advice. These contributions are certainly useful, but as Bode observes and my research confirms, there is little if any evidence of specific community spaces and partners that stand to benefit most from collaborating with a writing center. Looking back is always worthwhile but so is looking ahead. Doing so might help centers move beyond occasional outreach to mutually beneficial "sustained commitment" (Brizee and Wells 2). Studying the potential for collaborations can also help writing center administrators interested in community-engaged work prioritize and locate community partners within their own local context. The interest in community engagement is very much alive for writing center practitioners. But the dearth of scholarship on the topic

implies that valuable collaborations are only just beginning to be shared in print and partnerships that result in continued engagement beyond intermittent involvement are waiting to be explored.

The Case for Literacy Centers as Sites of Engagement

Given the transition from a reading public to a writing public, as well as writing's symbiotic relationship with reading, partnerships between academic writing centers and community literacy centers and/or programs warrant scholarly attention. Furthermore, as G. Travis Adam illustrates through a conversation amongst writing center administrators on an electronic mailing list, many argue that attention to reading is not appropriate in the writing center; instead, centers should exclusively focus on writing (74). However, this view creates an unnecessarily binary distinction between the importance of both reading and writing, to participants' detriment. While her argument is directed toward Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines programs, Ellen C. Carillo's contention that reading and writing development deserve simultaneous attention is equally relevant for writing center practitioners. At the same time, community literacy centers lack resources for writing instruction specific to adult learners (Nielsen 143). In other words, writing centers have generally excluded reading development and community literacy centers have conversely excluded writing development. Hence, collaborations between these sites of literacy support would be mutually beneficial: writing centers lack reading-based literacy approaches, while literacy centers would find value in attending to writing-based literacy pedagogy.

To build the argument for such collaborations, a clearer understanding of literacy centers must be established. In their quest to prove the writing center's legitimate role in the academy, writing center scholars have defined, articulated, and illustrated the concept of academic writing centers (see North; Harris, "SLATE"). While comprehensive understandings are less available

for literacy centers, Malicky and Katz explain that most adult literacy programs are defined by three categories: fundamental, functional, and community-based. Whereas the first two categories "focus on individual achievement," community-based programs are concerned with the greater good, addressing social issues of empowerment and equality (Malicky and Katz). Further, while the range and variety of community literacy centers in operation make generalizations difficult (Norton and Goldblatt 34; Wells 51), notable differences between university writing centers and community literacy support are present. For example, the community literacy center's pedagogical requirements are often more diverse than the academic writing center's, requiring responses to an even wider representation of learning preferences (Brizee and Wells 64, 104). In addition, community literacy educators support an array of writing, from workplace to creative genres and everything in between (Greenberg 39). Finally, literacy centers exist in a variety of locations, including on- and off-site of educational institutions, offering their services in a variety of structures, such as courses requiring enrollment and drop-in assistance (39).

Regardless, general observations hardly do these centers justice. A more complete contextual understanding is necessary to invite and encourage engagement between university writing centers and community literacy spaces, a reality shared by all community engagement projects (Brizee and Wells 87). Given the continued growth of a writing public, now is an opportune time to explore these possibilities. Additionally, because fewer writing resources exist for adults than school-aged children and teens, and because they serve similar age groups as university writing centers, adult community-based literacy centers are positioned not only to provide a bridge between those with limited literacy skills and students enrolled in higher

institutions but also to serve those whose literacy has developed beyond basic reading and writing but who still struggle to “achieve things with writing” (Rousculp *Rhetoric* 45).

Despite Malicky and Katz’s contention that community literacy programs are “autonomous and do not rely on a larger organization such as a college or school system,” collaborations between higher education and community literacy programs are common. A well-known example of these partnerships exists in Pittsburgh’s Community Literacy Center (CLC) (Department of English). Additionally, several other “university-based” literacy initiatives exist, such as Georgia State University’s Adult Literacy Research Center (“Adult Literacy Research Center”), Colorado State University’s Community Literacy Center (Community Literacy Center), and Niagara University’s Family Literacy Center (FLC) (McGrath and Erwin). While each of these initiatives is unique, they generally all focus on providing literacy development opportunities for the public in a variety of formats including workshops, summer and after-school programs, and professional development for adult literacy instructors. They also often serve to coordinate and centralize literacy research efforts, especially of university faculty. Locally, Kennesaw State University participates in community literacy outreach through the Bagwell College of Education’s Academy for Language and Literacy. This reading intervention program for P–12 students provides one-on-one reading instruction and tutoring for a fee from graduate students pursuing their Master of Education in Reading (“Welcome”).

Yet, except for Pittsburg’s CLC, these examples are not specifically the result of collaborations with writing or English departments, and none represent partnerships with writing centers. This reality illustrates Norton and Goldblatt’s observation that “writing programs involved in community literacy initiatives [are] institutionally hard to find . . .” (42). Perhaps this absence also explains the above examples’ disproportionate focus on reading. Further, all but

Pittsburg's CLC provide support on campus rather than being situated in the community, which complicates issues of access and borders. In their exploration of university/community literacy partnerships, Norton and Goldblatt argue that the location of these collaborations is critical, affecting viability and sustainability (33, 45). While the four programs they describe begin to suggest similarities and differences between academic and non-academic approaches to literacy, because this is not their aim, they fall short of helping readers understand areas of overlap and dissonance. What is more, they discuss writing programs in general; so, while they briefly mention writing centers (45), none of their examples involve writing center community engagement.

That said, additional sources reveal similarities between literacy centers and writing centers. For example, Daphne Greenberg observes that "literacy programs are usually situated in informal places of learning" (39). Much like writing center work, adult literacy instruction "can focus on a variety of skills" (40). In addition, adult literacy instructors concern themselves with creating resources for individuals to use asynchronously (45). Finally, assessment for the purposes of "accountability and reassurance" and confirmation of instructional success is a constant concern of literacy centers (45).

Jaclyn M. Wells offers the most direct comparison between community literacy centers and university writing centers in "Investigating Adult Literacy Programs through Community Engagement Research: A Case Study." Wells makes a strong case for the benefit that researching adult literacy programs could yield for both community and university partners but acknowledges that the literacy center's commonly-experienced lack of resources, time, and staff—challenges similarly faced in writing centers—threaten this research (49). Wells's goal is to provide evidence for the opportunities community-engagement research can offer for valuable

case studies of adult literacy programs, thereby combatting some of the challenges this research presents (50). Through observations and interactions with four teachers at one community-based literacy program, Wells presents a picture of the literacy center's work that is much like that of university writing centers. For example, Wells notes that "all interview participants discussed how students' personal lives influence their academic success" (57). In one-on-one settings, writing center tutors often experience and witness influences peripheral to academic concerns. The literacy program that Wells studied is also "open entry-open exit" (58). Similarly, most writing centers leave it up to the student to decide when to visit, how frequently to visit, and when the visits will stop. Additional similarities include pedagogical approaches of "directive instruction and guided independent study" (59) and the types of handouts and resources available (61). However, despite the parallels present in Wells's case study, it is important to note that her research presents evidence of only one literacy center, which is obviously not a valid basis for generalizations. Furthermore, her article presents research reliant on an existing engagement project rather than intentionally exploring possibilities for future collaborations. Nevertheless, the similarities between adult community-based literacy programs and university writing centers suggest that partnerships between the two could expand the reach of literacy distribution within most communities.

One wonders, then, how a greater understanding of adult community-based literacy centers in comparison to university writing centers might affect the possibility of future engagement, thereby adding another opportunity beyond community writing centers and university-based literacy centers/programs for the writing public to receive support. Given their shared goal of supporting literacy, collaboration seems appropriate and worthwhile to both; therefore, a comparison of university writing centers and adult community-based literacy

centers/programs will better establish the idea of community writing spaces, challenge existing assumptions regarding university writing center models, and reveal opportunities for community-engaged projects between the two. But before this comparison can proceed, it is necessary to clearly define institutionalized and community literacy support, as well as explore the documented histories of both, through secondary research. Thus, Chapters Two and Three offer a scholarly foundation for the study that follows in Part II.

Chapter Two: Defining the Writing Center

History frequently plays a significant role in defining what we know and experience in the present. Therefore, understanding how and why writing centers and community literacy centers developed into the sites of literacy support we know today helps to identify differences as well as shared characteristics, pedagogical goals, and practices. Brizee and Wells suggest that establishing and maintaining awareness of this "contextual information" is a worthwhile endeavor for scholars engaged in community collaborations, especially those partnering with organizations that regularly serve marginalized populations (26). University and community partners participating in community engagement initiatives are constantly learning about each other. I believe that comparisons are also useful in revealing the possibility of community-engaged projects, and thus valuable even before partnerships are established, especially since Brizee and Wells contend that research should inform collaboration (13).

Before delving into the history, theories, and common practices of writing centers and community literacy centers, an important observation must first be acknowledged: university and college writing centers and community-based literacy centers/programs foster unique literacies. Writing centers regularly attend to academic literacy, which refers to one's ability to rely on the language, format, style, and genres specific to an academic discipline in order to communicate within that field. Students are encouraged to enter existing conversations with peers and scholars alike and contribute to the discussions that are perpetually ongoing, but they must maintain some level of familiarity with a given discourse community's conventions to do so successfully. From this perspective, academic literacy is very simply the language of higher education.

On the other hand, literacy centers and programs often support community literacy, which is inextricably tied to social action and requires a bit more explanation. Linda Flower

describes community literacy as a "form of literate action" (44). In other words, through collaboration, those of privilege share in the pursuit of social justice at the same time that those marginalized act for themselves and their community. Rather than a static noun, the term is every bit an active verb. For all involved, there is an exchange of and exposure to knowledge and experience that then creates space for the discussion of differences (Higgins et al. 167). Those engaged in community literacy efforts are usually far less concerned with initiating individuals into the ways of sharing knowledge within a given community and more concerned with allowing those—individuals, groups, and organizations—who are otherwise unheard to find their voice. As a result, they can finally express their knowledge and experience through personal agency.

On the surface, academic and community literacy may seem very different, especially when considering that discourse communities often reflect how scholars in a given field communicate with each other and, on the contrary, that community literacy is not the "language of urban 'others'" (Flower 19). That is, academic literacy is the language of a given community of individuals and community literacy is not. As a result, one may question the possibility of fruitful engagement between the two. Yet at the heart of both are inquiry, rhetoric, and the goal of successful communication for a specific purpose. Whether enrolled in formal education or not, we all participate within communities. As a result, we communicate with others, questioning, analyzing, challenging, and forming thoughts. We bring our own experiences, personalities, and perspectives to these thoughts and interactions. For the student developing academic literacy, agency within the academy is being formed, but agency is also emerging for the community member acting out his or her community literacy. These basic similarities are important to acknowledge because of the potential for one discourse to dominate another in "town and gown"

partnerships (Flower 102). Recognizing the qualities that make each literacy unique but also establishing common ground among the two is vital for achieving truly participatory engagement that allows partners to "work in the same room—and on the written page—together" (Flower 102).

Distinguishing between types of literacy is not the only concern of those interested in writing center community engagement. It is equally important to define writing centers and the community partners with which they wish to collaborate. But as the following sections illustrate, sites attending to literacy development can be difficult to define in concise terms. Writing centers generally provide those within formal education individual support and assistance as they develop into scholarly and professional writers. This goal is accomplished through collaboration and conversation, as practitioners focus on the writing process, valuing and encouraging experimentation and practice. Outside of academia, literacy centers and programs provide community members—often but not exclusively adults—with a range of literacy instruction including English language support; GED and/or workplace preparation; and basic reading and writing education. Instructors in these environments respect and acknowledge challenges unique to the populations served and collaborate with individuals to tailor the curriculum to their needs and goals. Yet even these definitions fall short of communicating a truly comprehensive understanding of each space; hence, a more thorough examination follows.

Writing Center Roots

Motivated by the hope of identifying an initial problem to which writing centers were the solution, Neal Lerner offers readers an historical overview of the beginnings of writing centers (15); true origins are rarely, if ever, so succinct and easy to locate, and the writing center is no exception. Despite Lerner's exhaustive searching, finding one specific point in history in which

writing centers were established proves impossible (32). Yet, Lerner does provide his audience with a clearer understanding of the theories, methods, and practices that likely informed early laboratories, studios, or centers—whatever they were called and wherever they existed.

As Lerner's research illustrates, many assume that stand-alone writing centers developed in the 1970s as a consequence of the experimental era (15–16). Given the rate at which writing center scholarship was being published near the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s, this assumption is understandable (17). That said, the concept and approach of individual attention in writing instruction so common in writing center settings can be traced back much earlier, before the turn of the twentieth century. Today's writing centers owe much to early scholars in the field of education who experimented with and witnessed the benefits of one-on-one instruction. For example, Helen Parkhurst's approach, referred to as the Dalton Laboratory Plan because of its initial application at a public high school in Dalton, Massachusetts, prioritized individual pacing and attention in instruction. Students sought help from the instructor as needed while they independently worked through predetermined tasks and were encouraged to learn through trial and error (Lerner 18–19). Parkhurst's book on the Dalton Plan is described by Christina Murphy, Joe Law, and Steve Sherwood as "'the central text and philosophy from which much writing center theory and practice derive'" (qtd. in Lerner 18). Lerner challenges this claim, revealing even earlier scholars whose work influenced writing center pedagogy (20–22). In short, discussion of the ways that a "nonevaluative, relatively safe [place]" (15) and direct attention can benefit writing instruction and education in general appear as early as the 1890s (22–25). Common among and central to these early scholars' educational philosophies were the ideas of experimentation (18), activity in the pursuit of self-reliance (22, 24), individual attention (23), laboratory work (25), and authentic tasks (32).

Of course, attending to the individual student is not without challenges, and as Lerner's research highlights, the persistent problems of time and labor have historically complicated the benefits of this instructional practice. At times, instructors simply removed those who needed more attention from their classrooms, sending them elsewhere for remediation. Consequently, the perception of the writing center as a clinic to "cure" individuals of their poor writing abilities (28–29) is one that centers have worked (and some, unfortunately, continue to work) tirelessly to change. No doubt because of the desire to create distance from these perceptions and, as Elizabeth H. Boquet explains, because most students face new audiences and disciplines in their academic writing, today's writing centers are available for all students and continue to expand their institutional role (464).

General Theories & Methods of Writing Centers

Lerner's historical account concludes by moving away from a specific site of origin to the philosophies that prove successful for many centers, regardless of location or time. For Lerner, the thought that sustains his writing center work is "the idea . . . of teaching and learning as a continuous experiment . . ." (33). Lerner's motivation is similar to what Boquet is after in her essay: her purpose is to understand the "master narrative" of writing centers (464). The challenge for a writing center's identity is that it is a combination of method of instruction and location, and an understanding of both is necessary when discussing pedagogical practices (465).

Confirming Lerner's historical account, Boquet explains that early pedagogical approaches to writing center work ignored the social aspect of composing in favor of the individual, often reserving development for those requiring remediation (468), contrary to current writing center practices. In fact, Boquet acknowledges that today, students often experience "possibilities not intended or accounted for in the original administrative idea of the

writing center" (469). In other words, instructional approaches in writing centers have changed considerably over time. For instance, in the 1940s, as psychology influenced educators and early writing center practitioners, the approach of questioning students (Rogerian nondirective counseling) to "lead" them to knowledge became common (469–70). Still often practiced, this method creates a sense of security so that students can confidently explore their own thoughts.

However, the perception of writing centers as locations for remediation reappeared during the open-admissions era of the 1970s, which fueled a "crisis" described by the public as an alarming decline in literacy skills (Boquet 472). As a response to this emergency, several methods emerged, including the auto-tutorial model that allowed students to work independently on grammar, an approach supported by the rationales that "individual pacing" and an "increased sense of student responsibility" were beneficial (473). Despite these justifications, the writing center's core principle of "one-to-one contact with 'a human being who cares'" persevered and, around this same time, peer tutors began to emerge in the writing center landscape (473–74). The social element of learning to write blossomed further under Piaget's and Vygotsky's philosophical influences (474). Specifically, Piaget's theories of the individual's process, initiation, active involvement, and unique development and Vygotsky's focus on the connection between social interaction and cognitive development justify the attention students receive and the collaborative atmosphere of most writing centers.

Importantly, as peer tutors found their place in writing centers, "for the first time, the space of the writing center [was] characterized as active and tutors [were] portrayed as having as much to learn as they have to teach" (Boquet 474). Peer tutoring allowed students to transition from passively visiting the writing center to actively inhabiting it (Boquet 475). This change explains many of the practices common in today's academic writing centers, such as providing

students physical space for composing independently or in groups and offering comfortable seating to encourage informal dialogue. The method of individual attention responsible for the establishment of early writing centers is still central to these practices, but authentic collaboration and conversation among peers is key as current writing center practitioners continue their quest to help writers develop.

Common Practices of Writing Centers

Despite the fundamental similarities most centers share, Emily Isaacs and Melinda Knight's analysis of 101 college and university writing center websites leads them to conclude that "one could reasonably come to very different conclusions about what constitutes a writing center, for the breadth of what writing centers present themselves as doing is wide" (38). Nevertheless, for all their diversity, writing centers have not changed much since the 1980s, as Isaacs and Knight's study confirms (57). In other words, each writing center enacts writing support in a variety of forms. One may offer writing events or workshops, while another only offers one-on-one tutoring. But every center relies on the same core principles described above—and has for several decades now—to inform their practices. For that reason, Muriel Harris's 1988 essay in which she identifies key characteristics offers a remarkably relevant lens through which writing center practices can be defined, nearly thirty years after it was published.

Just as Isaacs and Knight discovered in 2014, Harris notes that centers vary in physical size, location, and setting and acknowledges their frequent connection to large institutional entities (i.e., a learning center). Within these various environments, the focus remains largely on the individual (Harris, "SLATE"; Isaacs and Knight 57). Tutor backgrounds vary (as do titles, according to Isaacs and Knight); so too does the length of time interactions last, the frequency of visits, and the motivation for attendance (Harris, "SLATE"). But the fact remains that tutors

coach and collaborate with individuals and are careful not to categorize themselves as teachers (Harris, "SLATE"). Evaluations of writing are not conducive to the collaborative nature of writing center work. Instead, writing centers help individuals discover knowledge and solutions through discussion, feedback, suggestions, questions, and listening (Harris, "SLATE"). It should come as no surprise, then, that student needs are prioritized during tutorials (Harris, "SLATE"). As a result, every session is different but usually begins with an assessment of the student's goals (Harris, "SLATE").

Valuing process over product, most writing centers seek to develop the writer—especially his or her authority and autonomy—rather than the writing being discussed (Harris, "SLATE"). Additionally, the writing center's method of support frequently results in increased motivation, more positive attitudes, and reduced anxiety about writing (Harris, "SLATE"). These positive outcomes are also likely a result of encouraged experimentation and practice, the success of which is dependent on the center's "informal" and "active" environment (Harris, "SLATE").

Finally, Harris explains that some centers extend their services through outreach programs to faculty and staff, or, far less frequently, the community at large. But it is important to note that the outreach described by Harris (workshops, hotlines, contests, training, and conferences) does not provide the same services, namely one-to-one writing support, offered to students. Moreover, as the most-recent Writing Centers Research Project data reveals, ninety-seven percent of writing centers exclude the public from accessing their services ("Writing Centers").

The academic writing center's proliferation and, as Isaacs and Knight contend, permanence in higher education are a testament to the center's proven model, organization, and

philosophical and pedagogical approach. As Angela Clark-Oates and Lisa Cahill explain, "writing centers provide spaces and enact practices that construct literacy events in very particular ways," offering not only opportunities for conversation between readers and writers but also resources and references important to developing writers (111). Writing centers are so unique and essential to writing development that Harris argues "writing instruction without a writing center is only a partial program" ("Talking" 40). Unfortunately, presently, few writing centers feel responsible for writing support outside of the academy (Isaacs and Knight 57). Because of Brandt's contention that writing has become the "literate experience of consequence" (*The Rise* 3), it is concerning that the largest presence of such centers—those connected to formal education—remain largely uninvolved in the "thousands" of programs and initiatives outside of higher education that offer literacy support to communities (Rousculp 2). Community literacy centers are just one of the thousands. As the following chapter explains, they share much in common with the writing center's history, theories, and approaches to literacy support, suggesting that partnerships between writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers are a logical pursuit.

Chapter Three: Defining Adult Community-Based Literacy Centers

Likely the result of the academy's emphasis on inquiry and writing center scholars' quest for legitimacy, there is a wealth of information regarding the history, pedagogy, and practices of writing centers, of which I have only scratched the surface. For example, beyond the sources previously referenced, a variety of tutoring handbooks, such as *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, reveal even more discussion of common characteristics of writing centers. Unfortunately, similar histories and explorations of methods pertaining to adult literacy education are difficult to locate; perhaps the great variety of forms and structures in which these centers and organizations exist is partly to blame. This absence is also no doubt affected by Cristine Smith's observation that there are few avenues for disseminating adult literacy research and that funding for research is scarce (40). Despite its complexity, the process of "deconstructing literacy" is a worthwhile endeavor (Subban 69), especially given my goal of comparison as a means of exploring opportunities for community engagement. So, while specifics and comprehensive accounts are limited in the literature, some generalizations are certainly present and worth noting.

Community Literacy Center Roots

Around the same time that educators were exploring the benefits of one-on-one instruction, between 1890 and 1910, thirteen million immigrants journeyed to the US (NeCamp 1). This particular influx is important to note because, in contrast to past immigration responses, individuals were marked as not only racially and ethnically different but also linguistically and educationally unique (1). Samantha NeCamp explains that fear led these variances to "[become] a key marker of assimilation, worthiness, and American identity . . ." (2). What followed this thought process was a "rhetoric of literacy crisis": immigrants' illiteracy was perceived as a societal threat (2). Therefore, many believed that English and literacy education must be

provided (3). The response to this crisis was like that of the perceived crisis afflicting English departments in the 1930s. At that time, many English teachers felt that the range of students' writing levels made attending to their varied needs impossible; there simply was not enough time (Lerner 28). Ironically, these educators' perceptions were also affected by immigration (28). Furthermore, the crisis responsible for the development of community literacy centers shares much in common with the effect that declining literacy in the 1970s had on writing centers. Census results from 1880 to 1910 actually reveal that those born in the US composed the majority of the illiterate population (NeCamp 3–4). While immigrants were not the only individuals in need of literacy support, the pattern of "public attention to literacy issues" persists (NeCamp 39). That is, societal and institutional perceptions of crisis result in education or instruction as a panacea, often for a specific population. Given this cycle's presence in writing center history, it is certainly worth noting in the literacy center's history.

To address immigrants' literacy needs, schools, businesses, and community members established "Americanization programs" (NeCamp 40). During the twentieth century, literacy education for adults (specifically, anyone 18 or older) occurred in the social space of "public night schools and industry-sponsored schools for immigrants" (40). In 1911, Cora Wilson Stewart made it her mission to "eliminate" illiteracy among adults through the creation of Moonlight Schools, which were open only "on moonlit nights" for participants' safety (Sticht). Stewart's educational approach was the result of her belief that adults required different instructional materials than children and that self-esteem was a vital part of literacy education (Sticht). While Americanization schools were intended for immigrants, Stewart's Moonlight Schools supported illiterates born in the US (Sticht). However, regardless of populations served, these early community literacy centers "responded and reacted to a larger public discussion

surrounding student-centered pedagogies inspired by the pedagogical suggestions of John Dewey" (NeCamp 40), similar to writing center pedagogy discussed by Lerner (31). Both community literacy instruction and writing centers were founded on the philosophy of supporting individuals as they learned through experimentation and experience.

Because of the public's apprehension of illiteracy, efforts to support a community's literacy needs were often (and continue to be) the concern of both professionals and the general public; adult education initiatives frequently begin as volunteer endeavors (NeCamp 16, 105). This paradox can make professionalization of the field challenging. By comparison, academic writing centers do not usually receive the same attention and interest from the general public. However, writing center administrators would likely cite their own efforts to prove professional worth and disciplinary standing (Isaacs and Knight 60), especially among English and composition departments, as evidence that their journey in some ways mirrors public literacy education's difficult progression to a professional field.

Beyond the push for professionalization, several other important shifts occurred throughout adult literacy education's history. First, slightly before and during the period in which Americanization schools and Stewart's Moonlight Schools operated, adult education programs began to be perceived as "a charitable activity for . . . the undereducated and mostly lower economic classes" rather than maintaining the previously held belief that they were an opportunity for "self-improvement" (Sticht). Like writing centers, literacy centers were (and some still are) thought of as organizations for remediation meant to address individuals' deficiencies. Additionally, two categories of adult education emerged: liberal education and human resources development. Malicky and Katz describe these categories as fundamental or functional, respectively. As Sticht explains, still present today, the two are often pitted as one

versus the other among practitioners. Brizee and Wells's summary of their interaction with both provides a rationale for the contention. Educational organizations concerned with supporting employment generally offer "prescriptive, focused, and intense" instruction, as the aim is not necessarily to develop as a writer but to secure employment (Brizee and Wells 81). As will become evident in the discussion of theory and practice below, context greatly affects instruction (Brizee and Wells 44, 81). Finally, especially into the twentieth century, educators moved their attention from "'stamping out . . . illiteracy'" to focusing more on "degrees of literacy" and "the development of literacy" (Sticht). To borrow from writing center history, literacy educators turned from "curing" illiteracy to understanding their efforts as supporting each individual's process in the development of literacy.

As is true of writing centers, location is an important consideration of literacy centers. While writing center settings vary, because they are so commonly located somewhere within an institution, their physical location is more consistent than sites of community literacy support are. For instance, during what Knowles describes as the "'adult education movement'" of the late 1800s and early 1900s, businesses, cooperative extensions, government agencies, libraries, and religious institutions housed and/or sponsored community literacy programs (qtd. in Sticht). Today, opportunities for adult literacy education are usually offered as either informal or formal programs. Each of these two categories provide literacy support in a variety of formats (Taylor 500). For example, some initiatives are so informal that individuals rely on a network of friends and family to learn new skills. Others enroll in classes offered by volunteers or community colleges. Despite this variety, Greenberg explains that community literacy education often occurs in "informal" learning environments, relies on volunteers, and exists with limited government assistance (39). While some programs do exist within formal education (but usually outside of

regular instruction), most approaches are distinctly and intentionally different from traditional classroom experiences.

General Theories & Methods of Adult Community-Based Literacy Centers

Educational literacy theories exist on a continuum and include functional, cultural, critical, participatory, and community-based "perspectives" (Subban 70–71). Generally, this continuum ranges from passive learners to active participants, as the explanations that follow illustrate. Because of the variety of programs in existence, the numerous approaches to literacy instruction, and the diversity of student needs, these theoretical perspectives are likely all present to some degree in most literacy centers and programs.

According to Jennifer E. Subban, functional literacy represents the "traditional approach" in the US (70). This skills-based approach often enforces the unfortunate perception of students as "empty vessels" to be "filled with knowledge" by teachers, famously described by Freire (70). Often, it does not account for, respect, or incorporate what students bring to the instructional experience. But as Subban justly counters, skills taught through functional literacy approaches can "[reduce] social isolation, [increase] productivity and access, and [eliminate] the stigma of illiteracy" (71). Moving beyond skills, cultural literacy values cultural influences on learning and the social nature of literacy development (71–72). Some contend that decisions over which culture is valued through instruction can communicate an unnecessary hierarchy (71). Therefore, concerning empowerment and emancipation, critical literacy focuses on the development of critical consciousness (72). Creating even more distance from oppression, participatory literacy allows students to contribute to the educational decisions made and approaches offered (72). Finally, community-based literacy encourages learners to become active participants within their community, emphasizing both the individual and collective benefit (72–73). Malicky and Katz's

research illustrates three principles inherent in community-based programs: learner centeredness, critical literacy, and community building. As such, agency remains a primary focus in community literacy.

While the range that Subban describes can certainly be seen in the many literacy programs available, Maurice C. Taylor argues that within adult education, the current consensus is that literacy is a social practice, rather than a "simplistic . . . functional skill" (500). Consequently, like the writing center's method, "informal and incidental learning is at the heart of adult education because of its learner-centered focus and the lessons that can be learned from life experience" (Taylor 501). And just as Lerner explains is true for those utilizing writing centers, adult learners benefit from authentic writing opportunities that offer writing practice relevant to their lives (Taylor 501, 508). Furthermore, Taylor argues that the individual learner's needs and ways of learning are important elements of adult literacy education (507). Like the results of writing center pedagogy, when literacy instructors value and rely on the adult student's learning preferences, fears and anxieties recede, creating room for development (507). Lerner's concept of the writing center as "an *alternative* place" separate from the classroom (15; emphasis original) is equally important in adult literacy education because so many who participate have previously experienced failures and setbacks in formal educational settings (Nielsen 144).

Common Practices of Adult Community-Based Literacy Centers

Community literacy education's diverse locations, environments, and structures complicate generalizations of literacy center practices (Wells 64). Additionally, as Subban aptly observes, definitions of literacy and resulting practices to support literacy are influenced personally, culturally, historically, and politically (69). That said, through her case study of four teachers from one adult literacy program, Wells argues that the characteristics she observed can

offer some understanding—albeit limited—of the "strategies" common among literacy centers and programs (51). For example, her research suggests that, while community literacy education attends to the individual, the community in which these organizations exist is also affected by the educational support provided (Wells 56). Furthermore, literacy center practitioners often accommodate challenges competing with educational pursuits that are unique to adult learners (50, 56). Hence, daily practices vary from group instruction, if several students are working on the same general topic, to independent study and direct attention from teachers (58). In the case of the center Wells studied, "traditional" classes are not offered because of the fluidity of attendance (58). Instructors discuss lessons in collaboration with students, often relying on "directive instruction and guided independent study" grounded in "students' existing knowledge and experiences" (59–60). Various instructional resources are regularly implemented, and teachers take seriously the responsibility of connecting students with the right resources (62).

Wells's case study confirms several key characteristics of adult learners, as well as the ways that these attributes affect instructional approaches. For example, because adults often desire a certain level of control over their learning, they respond best to peer relationships with instructors and need to be actively involved in the process of identifying and fulfilling their educational goals ("10 Characteristics"). Perhaps more than their younger peers, adults call on prior experiences and knowledge when encountering new ideas and concepts. As a result, it is important for educators to allow time to learn more about the individual learner and to be sensitive when faced with a learner's resistance to change ("10 Characteristics"). Whereas a writing center generally hopes to affect global change in the individual, "incremental change" may be a more realistic goal among practitioners who support adult learners. Focusing on measurable progress provides the opportunity for continued growth that then leads to global

changes in the long run ("10 Characteristics"). That said, time is a precious commodity for adult learners who are juggling a multitude of responsibilities outside of their educational pursuits. Because "student" is rarely the primary role of an adult learner, pragmatic information and knowledge usually becomes more important than theoretical ("10 Characteristics"). Furthermore, as confidence can wane for adult learners, collaboration is vital for success. Comfortable, accommodating, non-threatening environments also foster confidence for the learner who is perhaps unsure about his or her abilities ("10 Characteristics").

While characteristics of adult learners are certainly important considerations for instructors, they must also remember that definitions of literacy remain in flux. Even though, historically, literacy has generally referred to one's ability to read or write (Sticht), Kristen Nielsen claims that adult literacy educators often are not prepared to teach writing (143). General adult education theories and methods are certainly important to explore. However, because of the nature of my project's comparison and the reality that adult literacy learners "often struggle with writing" (Nielsen 143), it seems even more prudent to turn my focus toward the limited observations regarding writing instruction specific to adult learners.

In short, Nielsen's literature review reveals key instructional considerations similar to writing center approaches: adult literacy educators can develop and foster individual enthusiasm and persistence through small goals that show progress and create opportunities for feedback (143). She notes that many adult literacy practitioners often rely on methods of writing instruction for "other populations" because little research exists on writing instruction for adult literacy learners (143). While writing center scholarship also explores multi-disciplinary research on writing, it largely provides concrete examples and empirical evidence for practices specific to the writing center environment. By comparison, literacy center research relies on general

recommendations from practitioners while calling for further proof to substantiate anecdotal advice.

Because of the adult learner's "distinct needs," it is important to establish strategies unique to the literacy centers' population(s) served (Nielsen 143). For example, given the high rate of "attrition, absences, and failure to complete assignments" often experienced in adult literacy programs, motivation and persistence are incredibly important pedagogical considerations (144). Opportunities for practice and evidence of development are key, as is direct and specific reference to collaboratively established goals (144–45). Further, in a description strikingly similar to that of writing centers, Nielsen explains, "individual conferences with students can complement written feedback with verbal explanation and can take place informally during class" (145). Just like writing center tutors, literacy center instructors attend to individual learners, and contextualizing tasks helps move them toward an "authentic audience" (146). Explicit explanations are important for adult learners, and Nielsen also recommends journaling to provide practice and reinforcement, noting that it "create[s] a dialogue between teacher and student" (146–47). Finally, the use of technology in adult literacy is important because it gives students the chance to maintain and return to their writing, enforcing drafting and revising practices (148).

Despite the wealth of suggestions Nielsen offers readers, she argues that, because the success of certain instructional approaches among adult learners has not been thoroughly studied, more research is warranted (149). Furthermore, inquiry into adult literacy programs in general would benefit "university partners" and "drive improvements to adult literacy education" (Wells 49), especially since research on community-based literacy programs is limited (Malicky and Katz). Partnerships between university and college writing centers and community literacy

centers could provide opportunities for the continued research that Nielsen encourages. Building upon this idea, Part II presents my IRB-approved study of Georgia-based writing centers and community literacy centers. Through survey and interview data, I explore this possibility further.

Part II: Study Design, Results, & Discussion

Chapter Four: Study Design

Writing center research has garnered much attention in recent years, particularly in terms of the methodologies relied on to inform research approaches and the methods employed to yield sound evidence. The debate surrounding replicable, aggregable, and data-supported (RAD) research, lore, and everything in between (see Driscoll and Perdue; Babcock and Thonus) informs my process of collecting evidence that others could similarly employ and that produces results at least anecdotally applicable beyond local institutions. In pursuit of primary research, I relied on the blending of multiple methodologies to establish my method of inquiry, illustrating the "methodological pluralism" for which Liggett et al. advocate (51). Consequently, what follows are first the methodologies—the "underlying theor[ies] and analysis" detailing how my research will "proceed" (Liggett et al. 51)—that then inform and explain the process through which I collected data.

Relying on Theoretical Inquiry, one of three categories under Conceptual Inquiry in Liggett et al.'s taxonomy (66), I looked beyond writing center scholarship to community literacy studies and adult education pedagogy to inform my understanding of writing center practices, as well as challenge my understanding of existing writing center approaches. Conceptual Inquiry also aided the development of survey and interview questions. Additionally, I used Descriptive Inquiry, one of two categories for Empirical Inquiry (66–67). While Liggett et al. caution that Descriptive Inquiry outcomes "should not be generalized to dictate global courses of action for other writing centers" (67), Driscoll and Wynn-Perdue advise researchers to "work locally but envision broadly" (qtd. in Babcock and Thonus 21). In this case, to avoid hasty generalizations, responsible "envisioning" means understanding that "successful tutoring"—and more generally, successful writing center and literacy center work—is "complex and multivariate," so attempts at

blanket “standardization” would be detrimental to the principles of such work (Abbott 208). That said, the type of comparable data I sought (e.g., What do centers look like? Whom do they serve?) has previously proven “useful to writing center administrators and their work” (Babcock and Thonus 62). Further, survey questions solicited not only context regarding each site of literacy support but also insight into each organization’s values and missions, information which Brizee and Wells argue is of interest to those interacting with communities from the perspective of an activist and generally necessary for community engagement projects (26, 44).

To gather evidence, I employed a mixed-method approach (McKinney 11), performing an IRB-approved qualitative and quantitative study of university writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers. Specifically, my study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are writing and literacy skills distributed and supported in university writing centers and community literacy centers?
2. What theories and practices overlap between university writing centers and community literacy centers; conversely, how do theories and practices diverge?
3. How does attention to knowledge distribution as well as a comparison of theories and practices affect the possibility of engagement and partnerships between university writing centers and community partners?

Data collection occurred in two sequential phases. First, administrators were surveyed to establish a “big picture description” (McKinney 73) of the formal and local publics (Higgins et al. 169) of each space, as well as their general goals and practices. The decision to first understand the context of each literacy support location before researching engagement further was heavily influenced by Brizee and Wells’s observation that “differences in context created

more differences in teaching practices than [they] could have imagined" (45). This decision was also influenced by Trixie G. Smith et al.'s Attraction, Selection, Attrition (ASA) theory-based heuristic to establish effective faculty writing groups. As Smith et al. explain, shared values and common interests are a vital part of developing and sustaining collaboration (177–78). Finally, to address the third research question, writing center scholars and their community partners were invited to participate in a brief interview so that I could more thoroughly explore and understand writing center community engagement. As readers will understand from the explanation that follows, this process was not nearly as linear and succinct as it may seem. Study instruments and samples were revised numerous times to encourage participation. The appendices included illustrate these necessary revisions; for reference regarding how the study began, original survey and interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Georgia lacks identifiable community writing centers comparable, for example, to Salt Lake Community College's CWC. As such, I chose to compare university and college writing centers to community literacy centers in this state because the absence of community writing support presents an opportunity for community engagement initiatives to develop. While university and college writing centers are generally easy to define and locate, community literacy centers offer a unique challenge, often existing in a "patchwork of local programs" (Noriega). Locating established, operational centers with correct contact information can be difficult. Hence, I initially relied on the structure of the University System of Georgia (USG) to establish both the university and community sample. USG institutions serve all four regions of the state (north, south, east, and west) and include research universities, state universities, state colleges, and regional universities. Of the twenty-eight institutions composing USG, twenty-six provide writing support to their students. Of those twenty-six, twenty-four institutions provide writing

support for the campus community onsite in a writing center, lab, studio, or tutoring center. To establish university writing center goals, as well as how they are achieved, the administrators of these twenty-four institutions were asked to complete a survey identifying individuals served (e.g., demographics, needs, etc.), genres of writing supported, staffing concerns, and specific services offered.

Because a major goal of the research was to reveal possibilities for future engagement, the geographical footprint provided by the university writing center sample informed the initial organizations selected for the community literacy center sample. Relying on the National Literacy Directory, created in 2010 and containing over 7,000 "educational agencies" throughout the US ("About"), I located community literacy centers within Georgia located near the twenty-four USG institutions surveyed. Only centers who serve adults (but may also serve younger populations) and do not partner with community or technical colleges were initially selected. Further, centers providing only conversational English classes and/or ESL services were also excluded. As a result, nineteen community literacy centers were identified, and the administrators of these centers/programs were invited to complete a similar survey.

Unfortunately, this initial literacy center survey sample yielded zero responses. So, I revised my sample to include adult education/literacy programs connected to community and technical colleges in Georgia. This decision was further supported by research revealing an absence of academic writing center support at the community and technical colleges identified. The sample pool of literacy centers grew from nineteen to twenty-nine as a result; however, this adjustment again produced no results. Hence, I expanded my sample a third time to include those organizations in Georgia with the Certified Literate Community Program (CLCP) distinction. The CLCP represents a state-wide effort to address illiteracy through a "grass-roots" network of

non-profit collaboratives ("About CLCP"). The collaborative nature of these organizations seemed important given my project's goal of identifying future partnerships. And, again, because of the variety of literacy centers, the large number of organizations present, and the somewhat unreliable contact information available, I needed to rely on an existing organizational structure to establish centers to contact. The CLCP website listed community programs and initiatives alphabetically by county; I excluded those organizations identified as a "Georgia Family Connection" initiative because they exclusively serve school-aged children. I also adjusted my study to include telephone recruitment and survey participation, allowing for completion of the survey online or over the phone (see Appendix B for Revised Survey & Interview Questions, Community Literacy Centers). Giving administrators options for participation proved more productive, especially because several indicated during telephone recruitment conversations that they simply did not have time to participate while at work. In total, after three attempts at collecting data from community literacy centers, I contacted forty-six administrators.

Phase two of my research relied on interviews for data collection. Survey participants were asked to indicate in the initial survey whether they had partnered with either university writing centers or community literacy centers and were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview regarding this engagement. However, no participants from the survey of phase one indicated engagement and/or the willingness to be contacted, so I selected university writing center and community writing/literacy center administrators to contact based on secondary research detailing past or ongoing partnerships. Twenty scholars and/or administrators were contacted for participation. More than half of these individuals were selected because of their presentations at the 2017 Conference on Community Writing (CCW). Relying on presentation titles from the CCW, I was able to locate a number of scholars actively pursuing similar areas of

inquiry. While this approach exposed me to valuable research to include in my project, interview participation was still limited. As a result, I revised my interview questions and sent a request for participation to an electronic mailing list for writing center administrators, known as "wcenter" (see Appendix C for Revised Interview Questions, Writing Centers and Community Partners). Qualitative data provided through interviews illustrates and further reveals how attention to the overlap and divergence in theory and practice between writing centers and community partners affects engagement, as well as how collaboration affects the organizations involved. Together, the survey and interview data establish concerns and considerations for future collaborations between university writing centers and community literacy centers.

Because several authors in the literature reviewed note that the imposition of university standards, approaches, "ideas," and "structures" can hurt and limit university/community partnerships (Doggart et al. 73; see also Brizee and Wells), exploring university and community literacy centers in relation to each other has the potential to advance collaboration, engagement, and continued research. Survey and interview data was analyzed with the intent of informing future community engagement projects between university writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers. My hope was that, as Norton and Goldblatt explain, the "outside" and "inside" practices, goals, and norms would "meet and mix productively" on the page so that "the lessons from one environment" could "circulate to others" (30), thereby fostering enthusiasm for the formation of partnerships *off* the page.

Chapter Five: From Theory to Local Practice

While secondary research is useful in providing examples of general practices and approaches common in academic writing center and community literacy center environments, local data establishes context and allows community-engaged partnerships to form (Brizee and Wells 26, 36). Primary research suggests that collaborations between writing centers and adult community literacy centers present particularly valuable endeavors, especially in those areas where community writing support is otherwise not consistently available. The following comparison of institutional and community literacy support provides a clearer understanding of the local conditions in one state, thereby suggesting opportunities for future engagement and strengthening my claim that these collaborations can be both logical and mutually beneficial. Specifically, survey results, although limited, further define writing and literacy support in higher education and the general community within Georgia. The survey was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How are writing and literacy skills distributed and supported in university writing centers and community literacy centers?
2. What theories and practices overlap between university writing centers and community literacy centers; conversely, how do theories and practices diverge?

The practices, structures, populations served, and missions of participating writing centers and community literacy centers provide a snapshot of literacy distribution in Georgia, both on and off campus. Thus, this study allows me to explore and anticipate the challenges these collaborations might present, as well as potential advantages. Survey data reveal the possibility for a specific population (i.e., adult literacy learners in the community) and writing centers to experience reciprocal value from community engagement initiatives. These findings are particularly useful

to institutional and community administrators as they consider their own local conditions, reflect on current partnerships, and pursue future collaborations within their communities.

Survey questions were organized by the following categories: purpose, general information, practices and theories, individuals served/demographics, and services offered. The aim of the study was to establish the structure and common practices of both writing centers and literacy centers, as well as to discern the individuals who regularly occupy these spaces and the means through which knowledge is dispersed. Of the twenty-four university and college writing center administrators recruited for participation, four completed surveys online. Of the forty-six adult community literacy centers recruited, three administrators participated; two were surveyed over the phone and one completed an online survey. While this response rate is low (16.6 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively), the data reported reveals important characteristics of higher education writing centers and adult community literacy centers, which contribute to a more thorough understanding of both institutionalized and local writing support and literacy distribution. Furthermore, it affirms the need for continued research and scholarly attention regarding literacy support and writing center community engagement.

University and College Writing Center Data

First, to establish the general purpose of university and college writing centers, administrators were asked to provide their center's mission. This data quickly defined populations served, goals maintained, and approaches relied on by each center. All four mission statements confirmed that writing center services were explicitly exclusive to the university community: three of the four statements repeatedly described their population(s) served as students, while two additionally extended services to faculty and staff. The fourth response, while omitting the words students, faculty, and/or staff, explained that their center's purpose was

to serve the "university," describing individuals as "writers from all disciplines" rather than students.

Furthermore, the verbs each center relied on to describe their work confirmed secondary observations of the writing center's role in academic writing support. Obviously, all four centers strived to aid writing efforts. Two of the four labeled this action as "assistance." Another explained that they "promote" the understanding, value, and support of writing, which leads their center to "advance" and "cultivate" literacy skills. The fourth center described their actions as "coaching." In sum, each revealed that the university writing center was available to assist, support, guide, and/or coach student writing. That said, only one mission statement directly referenced literacy and did so in broad terms.

Regarding pedagogical practices, three of the four mission statements referenced attention to process, either through direct use of the word "process" or through similar description (i.e., "stages of writing"). Only one writing center described their approach as "one-on-one" in their mission statement; however, individual attention was clearly articulated by other administrators in a later survey question. Another center defined their work as "tutorials," and this same mission statement also listed "class visits and specialized workshops" as additional services offered. By comparison, the other three described their services more generally. Additionally, only one mentioned the task of "evaluating and editing," but explained that these were responsibilities of the individual writer, not the center. Two of the four centers directly referenced attention to writing in all disciplines, while one of these two—and, importantly, only one of the four—also extended attention to extracurricular writing.

Most of the mission statements provided clearly focused on student writing within the institution. Moreover, additional survey data further clarified the reach of writing centers: all of

those surveyed extended their services to currently enrolled students and three of the four served faculty and staff as well. Only one center offered services for alumni, and none of the centers' services were available to individuals unaffiliated with the institution. Frequently, universities and colleges proclaim community engagement as an institutional priority. So, it is interesting that all of the writing centers surveyed were not currently engaged in community writing initiatives and/or programs (nor had they in the past), including (but not limited to) partnerships with community literacy centers. However, three of the four indicated interest in participating in this type of opportunity. When prompted to explain what has kept community-engaged initiatives from occurring, respondents listed time, limited staff, and financial concerns as factors impeding collaborations.

Regarding general information, administrators were asked to list when their center was established, the main location of the writing center on campus, and approximately how many individuals their center served in 2016. Three of the four writing centers had been present on campus for several decades: two noted their centers were established in the 1980s. Somewhat surprisingly, at least given the secondary research previously presented, one noted that their center was established in 2012. One center did not provide the year established. Location of academic writing centers varied, but half of those who responded indicated that their centers were housed in the English building. Another center was located in the campus library, and the fourth resided in a learning center. Within these various locations, in 2016, three of the four centers served more than 1,000 individuals; the newest center served between 501–1,000.

Beyond mission statements, year established, and location, understanding the kind of assistance individuals seek from writing centers helps to clarify how writing centers advance literacy. Therefore, survey respondents were asked to rank the frequency with which specific

genre categories were supported in their centers. All four centers indicated that academic writing (e.g., reports, essays, articles, etc.) received the most regular attention and support. Applications (e.g., scholarships, admissions, and jobs) were the second most-frequent genre supported and professional writing (e.g., resumes, emails, memos, etc.) was listed as the third. Three centers listed creative writing (e.g., non-fiction, fiction, poetry) as the genre least frequently supported. The fourth writing center administrator listed "other" for the genre least frequently supported but did not specify what this included. Furthermore, when asked to note frequent writing concerns of individuals served, all four administrators marked grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, format, citations, organization, and thesis statements. Three centers also indicated brainstorming/"getting started" and two marked style. Additionally, one center marked transitions, another word choice, and a third "appropriateness," which was a response written in. None of the respondents indicated that vocabulary was a frequent concern of individuals served.

When asked to describe their center's general practices, three of the four administrators defined their approach as one-on-one (despite only one mission statement referencing this method), and all directly described the interactions between staff and individuals as collaborative (some relied on nouns such as "collaborations" or "discussion," while others simply described the relationship between tutor and tutee). Two responses alluded to pedagogical freedom afforded to and encouraged among tutors. In addition, two descriptions emphasized the responsibility of the tutee to come prepared with specific concerns. Finally, one response prioritized global concerns over local and another mentioned the conversational nature of most interactions. When prompted, only three respondents contributed explanations for the practices they described. That said, they provided a variety of reasons, offering much less overlap in this response than in others. One administrator highlighted the value of autonomy for both the tutor

and the tutee by explaining that they maintained respect for the instructor's preferences and the writer's work. Another cited process-centered and rhetorically focused theories as the basis for their practices. The third noted that the success of general practices for the tutor and population served explained the persistence of their approach.

While administrators described practices in their own words, they were also asked to indicate the frequency with which certain services were offered at their respective centers. The only service all centers regularly offered was writing workshops. Most (three of the four) regularly offered one-on-one support by way of appointments and/or walk-ins, as well as provided online writing resources, and did not offer publication opportunities to individuals who utilized their services. For a complete breakdown of responses, see Table 1 on page 58.

In addition to the type of assistance provided, participants were also asked to identify the means by and through which they disseminated knowledge. All writing centers surveyed frequently relied on computers and websites to support writing and literacy, three regularly relied on pens/pencils and paper, two on writing handbooks, style manuals, and writing/reading handouts, and one each on mobile devices and a white board. None of those that responded regularly relied on SMART boards (or similar technology), audio, or video. Further, the centers made similar use of their physical space. All four offered a single studio-style room with desks or tables for independent and collaborative work. Three centers included offices for administrators and staff as well as space for a waiting area. Half offered a computer lab as well as a conference room. None of the centers that responded offered private work or study rooms.

Table 1. University and College Writing Centers: Type and Frequency of Services Offered

	Regularly	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
Offered one-on-one support (including accommodations for groups if necessary)	III		I	
Offered appointments	III		I	
Offered online scheduling for appointments	II			II
Offered walk-in services	III		I	
Offered online synchronous and/or asynchronous writing support	II		II	
Offered writing workshops	IIII			
Offered scheduled writing classes*		I	I	I
Hosted writing events and/or clubs	I		I	II
Published the work of those who use the center*				III
Provided hard copy writing handouts	II			II
Provided online writing resources	III		I	

**One survey participant did not respond to this category.*

Because of the potential for the demographics of individuals served to reveal important similarities between university writing centers and community literacy centers, administrators were asked a series of questions related to the age, education, and language(s) spoken of those served. All four writing center administrators served those eighteen to twenty-five years old, while two also marked the twenty-six to thirty-five age range and two additionally selected thirty-six to fifty years old. Hence, most academic writing centers surveyed worked with young adults. For the majority served at these centers, high school was the highest level of education

completed. Additionally, three of the four centers regularly served non-native English speakers/writers. For these centers, their unique offerings to this population included grammar instruction, workshops for English language learners (ELL), and one-hour tutorials with a tutor specializing in English as a second language (ESL).

Finally, staff sizes varied in the academic writing centers surveyed. Two centers maintained a staff less than or equal to five, while one center's staff ranged from six to twenty employees and another from twenty-one to fifty. However, the majority of centers employed individuals from the institution. Three employed paid graduate students and/or faculty/staff, while two centers also employed paid undergraduate students. Half of the centers surveyed additionally relied on paid professional consultants (neither students nor faculty/staff), but it is important to note that all centers employed students of some level (e.g., undergraduate or graduate). This observation confirmed that, of those surveyed, peer or near-peer tutoring models were the norm. Regarding training, all centers offered group instruction. Two also used independent study, one offered coursework for credit, and another offered online modules in conjunction with monthly whole-staff meetings.

Of course, in terms of community engagement opportunities, the writing center data presented above becomes much more useful when considered next to community literacy center data. The following section presents community literacy center survey results before I offer an analysis and discussion of the combined data.

Adult Community-Based Literacy Center Data

In comparison to writing center mission statements, adult community literacy center missions were slightly more varied. For example, several key words (e.g., "writing" and "process") appeared in multiple places in more than one campus-based writing center mission

statement; yet, all three literacy center mission statements provided had less frequency of similar language and word choice. While exact language did not appear from statement to statement, key concepts were shared among these literacy centers, which was similarly observed in writing center missions. For instance, all three suggested similar positive outcomes for populations served. Each center described individual advancement, relying on terms and phrases such as “strengthen,” “confident,” “build self-sufficiency,” and “reach their dreams.” Additionally, all mission statements expressed the goal of increased economic success for participants of their services/programs. Beyond the individual, each mission statement also referenced the desire to benefit the community, for example by “equip[ping] adults to function in a higher level in the community” or “strengthen[ing] [the] community’s economic base.” Only one center directly mentioned reading in their mission, and none mentioned writing. Another mission provided mentioned neither reading, writing, nor literacy: instead, their goal was to “assist adult learners in obtaining *skills* which make students more successful and confident in the workplace and in society” (emphasis added). This center’s mission mentioned “skills” more than once. The third center simply described their focus as “adult literacy services.” Finally, one center also expressed the goal of positively affecting not only the individual and the community but also the individual’s children and grandchildren.

Results regarding general information were even more diverse than mission statements. Survey respondents indicated that their organizations were established in 2005 and 1993, while one respondent did not provide an answer. Locations varied from a technical college to a “plaza” in which classroom and office space was rented. One organization served “at least 45” individuals in 2016, another 832, and the third more than 1,000. Among the three respondents, the age range of individuals served ran from eighteen to eighty years old. Two centers similarly

served the age group twenty-five to thirty-five; one of these two additionally served those eighteen to twenty-five years old. The third center served those forty to eighty years old. Two served the general public, while one served individuals enrolled in the organization's services, classes, and/or workshops. Regarding highest level of education completed by those served, one center indicated ninth to eleventh grade, another middle school, and a third explained that "one individual actually had an associate degree," but most have a fifth grade or lower reading level. Two of the centers did not regularly serve non-native English speakers/writers, while one did, offering citizenship, ESL, GED, and reading and writing support to non-native English speakers. All three centers relied on a combination of paid staff and volunteers, and presented relatively similar numbers of staff members: one center had ten staff members, another eleven, and a third six to twenty. Most incorporated group instruction for training (e.g., workshops), while one also included independent study.

While not surprising given the range of needs experienced in community literacy centers, the types of writing support offered by these organizations is equally diverse. For a complete listing of services offered and their frequency, see Table 2 on page 62. Additionally, one center ranked creative writing as the genre supported most frequently, followed by professional, academic, and application genres. Another indicated that academic genres were most frequently supported, specifically through the GED classes offered. This center also supported non-fiction, fiction, and poetry in their language arts GED curriculum, and previously offered a "story camp" in the summer. But they did not frequently support professional and application genres of writing. Finally, the third center administrator explained that all genres of writing were unsupported because, since the population served struggled with reading, it was extremely difficult to get them to write, despite previous attempts to support writing. When asked to

indicate the writing concerns most frequently expressed by individuals, two centers indicated grammar; punctuation; sentence structure; and brainstorming/"getting started." One marked vocabulary, organization, and word choice, and only one indicated thesis statements were a concern for individuals served.

Table 2. Adult Community-Based Literacy Centers: Type and Frequency of Services Offered

	Regularly	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
Offered one-on-one support (including accommodations for groups if necessary)	II		I	
Offered appointments	II		I	
Offered online scheduling for appointments				III
Offered walk-in services	I		II	
Offered online synchronous and/or asynchronous writing support			I	II
Offered writing workshops			III	
Offered scheduled writing classes		I	I	I
Hosted writing events and/or clubs			I	II
Published the work of those who use the center			II	I
Provided hard copy writing handouts	I	II		
Provided online writing resources		II	I	

To disseminate literacy support, two centers relied on computers, but only one also utilized SMART board technology and websites. Two also indicated the use of pens/pencils, paper, and one also incorporated books into the support offered. When asked to describe how the organization's space was utilized, one administrator explained that their center boasted a single

studio-style room with desks/tables for independent and collaborative work, a computer lab, private work/study rooms, offices for administrators and staff, a conference room, and a waiting area. Another explained that their organization was set up like a "traditional classroom." The third described their space as two large rooms, one utilized as a classroom and office, another for GED instruction. One-on-one tutoring also occurred in these multi-use spaces, so activities had to be carefully scheduled to accommodate various functions. This center hoped to incorporate a lending library in their "back space" in the near future.

All administrators indicated that they relied on group instruction of some form (e.g., one instructor or teacher) as a general practice. Additionally, one indicated grouping individuals by similar needs and providing mentors for the small groups, and two explained that they also offered one-on-one tutoring/attention. Rather than explicitly referencing theory to explain these practices, all three directly cited practicality. One explained, "adult students learn best hands-on and with individual attention." Another noted that "adults need to feel safe and comfortable with the instructor, so instructors use techniques to help students feel engaged and comfortable, align[ing] practices with student needs and goals."

Finally, none of the literacy centers surveyed were currently engaged with a university writing center (nor had they in the past). One center did partner with a community/technical college, but not directly with the writing center. Two administrators indicated interest in engagement with university writing centers (one, *very* enthusiastically), while one indicated "maybe." When asked what has kept these partnerships from forming in the past, one noted that she was unaware of the possibility; another guessed that limited resources played a part, making it difficult to initiate collaboration; and the third speculated that varying levels of education kept collaborations from developing

The limited data my study provides suggests important similarities and differences between academic writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers in Georgia. These observations are certainly of interest to those considering community engagement, but careful analysis, interpretation, and discussion of survey results are necessary to make this information truly valuable to writing center and literacy center practitioners. Brizee and Wells explain that one needs more than just "basic" details about a potential partner, such as contact information, hours, and location, for collaborations to form and develop (16). In the early stages of community engagement, each partner must learn about the other's "needs, values, and [level of] interest in collaborating" (Brizee and Wells 16). The discussion that follows explores these considerations based on survey results, identifying what can be learned from asking how and to whom literacy is distributed and what theories and practices overlap and diverge in each environment, as well as gauging overall levels of interest in engagement.

How and to Whom Literacy is Distributed

Obviously, mission statements are intentionally concise and cannot exclusively and completely describe an organization; however, these brief descriptions combined with survey data do suggest several interesting observations that could affect opportunities for community engagement. First, writing centers surveyed existed for the support of student writing and, by default, for the support of the institution of which they are a part. Survey data indicated that some writing centers have physically moved outside of the often-assumed home discipline of writing (i.e., the English department) and are, presumably, more central to the general campus community. Yet, without more information regarding the campus culture of each institution surveyed, it is difficult and unwise to speculate further regarding increased accessibility on campus. That said, survey results illustrated the range of the writing center's reach on campuses

(e.g., campus library and learning center). The different locations on campus might also help explain the large number of students, faculty, and staff supported by writing centers. Three of the four writing center administrators surveyed noted that their centers served more than 1,000 individuals in 2016; only one of the community literacy centers surveyed had served more than 1,000 during the same period. In terms of the scope of literacy distribution of those surveyed, university writing centers appeared to be supporting more individuals' literacy development than community literacy centers. Consequently, one could reason that, at least among survey respondents, writing centers are regularly advancing literacy on campus. On the other hand, even though literacy centers served fewer individuals, survey results indicated that their services were available to a wider population. Two of the three literacy centers surveyed supported the general public, while the third limited their services to individuals who enrolled in the organization's services, classes, and/or workshops. As writing center locations continue to evolve and literacy centers work to increase the number of individuals who utilize their services, it is not unrealistic to think that collaborations between the two could positively affect distribution of literacy on and off campus, likely resulting in more impactful literacy support for all.

However, for these partnerships to be successful, each organization must maintain a keen awareness of their value to each other. Based on goals provided, survey results help to illuminate that worth. For example, as evidenced in the mission statements included, writing centers intended to develop and support more than academic literacy and course-related writing; their mission statements communicated interest in individuals' success and abilities outside of the academy. One could argue, again based on the mission statements and data provided, that they shared community literacy centers' goal of supporting individuals in pursuit of the knowledge and skills that will help them succeed in life. That said, while writing centers aimed to support

students beyond academic pursuits, they most frequently supported academic writing over other genres. Perhaps community engagement partnerships with literacy centers, which support other genres of writing but share a similar quest to foster individual success, might help to expand the literacy support offered by writing centers, moving them closer to achieving the goal of developing the *writer* rather than the writing. Since one literacy center administrator expressed regret over not supporting professional and application genres of writing, it is also important to note the potential for reciprocal benefits. Perhaps partnerships with writing centers would allow community literacy centers to interact with genres of writing previously excluded. This experience could then influence and potentially increase the breadth of genres they are able to support. Additionally, both writing and literacy centers provided support to those concerned with issues of grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, organization, word choice, and the early stages of writing (i.e., brainstorming). To a certain extent, then, both spaces supported similar writing needs, despite the individuals who visited representing a variety of writing and reading levels.

Of course, the benefits of collaboration cannot occur without overcoming challenges and maintaining awareness of differences. For instance, writing center survey results implied slightly more rigid definitions of literacy compared to the community literacy centers that participated. All of the writing center mission statements explicitly referenced “writing.” One also more generally referenced “literacy,” but none mentioned “reading.” On the other hand, none of the community literacy center mission statements mentioned “reading” or “writing” and only one directly refered to “literacy.” Perhaps because of the diverse populations and needs served—analogous to what Brizee and Wells observed in their community engagement project—community literacy centers must maintain a more fluid definition of their services. As the most

detailed literacy center mission statement provided explained, "a flexible program has been created which meets [adults'] needs." Despite the level of detail, this mission statement mentioned neither "reading," "writing," nor "literacy." Instead, their goal was to "assist adult learners in obtaining *skills*…" (emphasis added). Due to the importance of process that most writing center administrators indicated, this definition of literacy support might present a challenge for effective writing-focused or tutoring community engagement partnerships or projects. Skill development suggests a more linear approach to learning than is common in writing center environments.

Regardless of attending to skills or process, writing centers and literacy centers relied on similar verbs to describe how literacy distribution was achieved, which communicated their respective tutoring styles and approaches. Simply put, both are committed to assisting individuals. However, the verbs that writing centers consistently incorporated into their mission statements suggest a more collaborative approach to distribution (e.g., "advance," "cultivate," and "work with"). Comparatively, literacy centers "equip" and "provide." Further, the majority of writing centers surveyed described their approach to working with individuals as "one-on-one," and did so in the first sentence of their survey response, implying the priority of this practice. While two of the three literacy centers surveyed also regularly offered one-on-one support, group instruction seemed slightly more prevalent in these settings. But, unlike writing center group instruction, in literacy centers, this approach did not usually come in the form of workshops.

Overlap & Divergence in Theories/Practices

Pedagogical approaches varied between both locations, but writing and community literacy centers allowed for (and in some cases, even encouraged) various forms of instruction

for different reasons. Within writing center settings, pedagogical freedom was present because most administrators seemed to respect the tutors' knowledge and expertise. In literacy centers, this freedom was present perhaps more out of necessity: instructors must frequently adapt because of the range of diverse skills and abilities of community literacy center visitors. Interestingly, excluding the availability of online scheduling for appointments, general practices

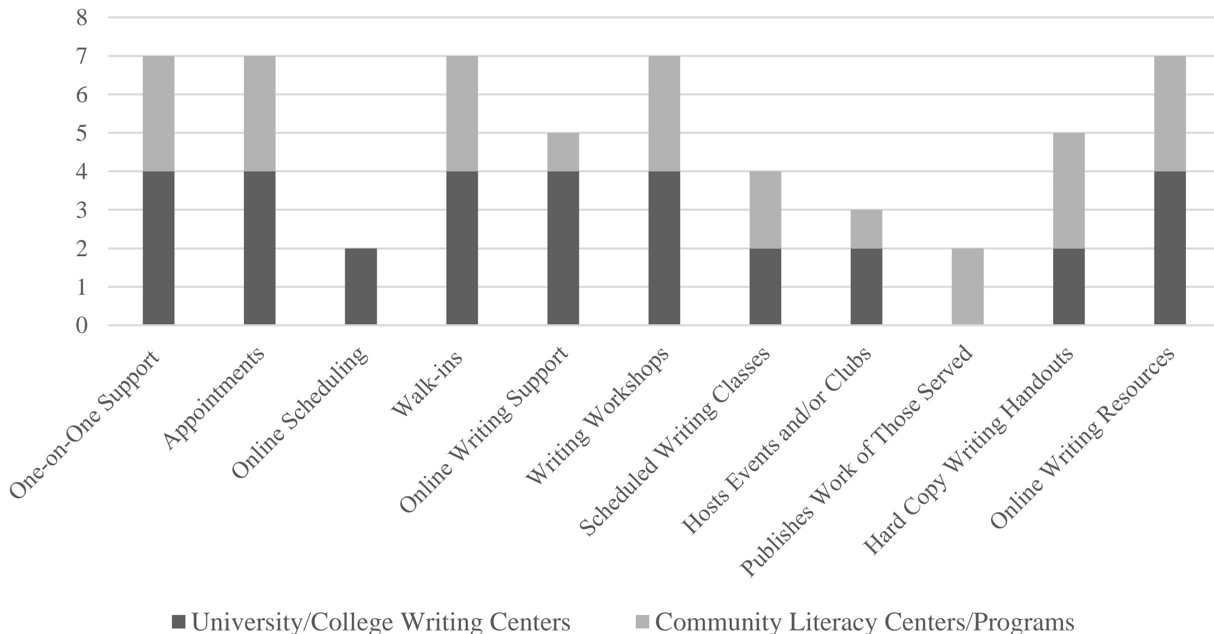
Table 3. Combined Type and Frequency of Services Offered

	Regularly	Often	Sometimes	Never
Offered one-on-one support (including accommodations for groups if necessary)	III (black) II (white)		I (black) I (white)	
Offered appointments	III (black) II (white)		I (black) I (white)	
Offered online scheduling for appointments	II (black)			II (black) III (white)
Offered walk-in services	III (black) I (white)		I (black) II (white)	
Offered online synchronous and/or asynchronous writing support	II (black)		II (black) I (white)	II (white)
Offered writing workshops	IIII (black)		III (white)	
Offered scheduled writing classes		I (black) I (white)	I (black) I (white)	I (black) I (white)
Hosted writing events and/or clubs	I (black)		I (black) I (white)	II (black) II (white)
Published the work of those who use the center			II (white)	III (black) I (white)
Provided hard copy writing handouts	II (black) I (white)	II (white)		II (black)
Provided online writing resources	III (black)	II (white)	I (black) I (white)	

Note: Black marks indicate university/college writing centers and white marks indicate community literacy centers.

between the two centers were relatively similar. For example, writing centers were more likely to regularly offer online writing resources than community literacy centers, yet some community literacy centers did still offer them occasionally. See Table 3 on page 68 for further details. Table 4 illustrates a comparison of services offered regardless of frequency, showing the only areas of significant difference between the two. Specifically, of those surveyed, writing centers offered online scheduling and literacy centers did not, while literacy centers published the work of those served and writing centers did not.

Table 4. Combined Services Offered



Regarding the approach of services offered, writing center practices were less formal compared to literacy center practices. Writing center practitioners' intention to create a unique space on campus, separate from the classroom (see Lerner) likely explains why none of those surveyed arranged their physical spaces like a classroom. On the other hand, the frequent support of a structured test (i.e., the GED exam) and service to young adults who are often familiar with

high school settings makes the classroom orientation of literacy centers understandable. Nevertheless, is it possible that the informal writing center could benefit from the more-formal literacy center and vice versa? For example, as Nielsen argues, adult learners' motivation can be negatively affected by past experiences, sometimes specifically with formal education (144). As such, there might be value in partnering with an organization that intentionally distances itself from the classroom (i.e., the writing center), especially since Taylor contends that adult learners benefit from informal learning. Additionally, while two literacy center administrators completed the survey over the phone and were asked to describe space utilization rather than selecting from a list of options, it is worth noting that the literacy center affiliated with higher education (i.e., a technical/community college) presented a much more diverse use of space than was described by the other administrators. For example, this administrator indicated that they had a computer lab, private work and/or study rooms, and a conference room available, among other amenities. The other two surveyed explained that their centers relied on multi-purpose spaces, with classrooms also functioning as tutoring and office spaces. Perhaps the partnerships I am arguing for would provide opportunities for additional uses of space and instructional styles that would benefit those who participate, or, at the very least, opportunities to collaboratively *explore* new options.

Along the same lines, one literacy center administrator mentioned that instructors at their center were often "teaching to a test" because many of the individuals they served were preparing to complete their GED. Presumably, although not expressed in survey results, because of the frequency of GED support offered, this reality is likely experienced by other community literacy centers, too. At first glance, this pedagogical goal might be concerning to writing center administrators interested in collaborating with community literacy centers. However, survey results indicated that all four writing centers served those eighteen to twenty-five years old, an

age range that includes traditional, first-year students straight from high school. Perhaps exposing writing center tutors to community literacy centers and the unique needs of those served would provide additional practice in helping on-campus writing center visitors with the transition from high school to college. Moreover, the repetition among all survey respondents concerning students' and individuals' goals implied that these instructional differences could likely be overcome, and challenging tutors to expand the types of goals they encounter might also help them grow as instructors and writers.

Furthermore, as anticipated, survey data confirmed that literacy centers often served individuals in the same age range as writing centers. Those who take advantage of GED preparation, especially, are often approximately the same age as traditional college students, as noted above. But both writing and literacy centers also served individuals beyond the "traditional-aged" college student. Of course, given the purpose of literacy centers and the admission standards imposed on those who utilize writing centers, it is not surprising that individuals served at literacy centers were less likely to have completed high school than those who visited writing centers. As one literacy center administrator noted, diversity in educational backgrounds might hinder the possibility of interest in forming community partnerships. Community literacy centers that engage with peer- or near-peer-based writing centers, especially, might be able to capitalize on the proven benefit of peer-to-peer learning previously discussed as a means of adapting to variances in education (see Chapter One). More than half of writing centers surveyed indicated reliance in some form on student staff (i.e., peer tutoring), putting this staffing model and collaborative approach in the majority. Finally, because three of the four writing centers surveyed served non-native English speakers/writers, it might benefit tutors to

work with similar populations in literacy center citizenship or ESL classes, which one literacy center in particular indicated they offered.

Interest in Engagement

Lastly, six of the seven total administrators surveyed confirmed interest in community engagement opportunities. That said, resources (both staff and financial) were the most frequently identified threats to the development of these partnerships. Unlike the writing centers surveyed, literacy centers relied on a combination of paid and volunteer employees. In addition, half of the writing centers surveyed relied on a staff smaller than literacy centers. This observation is interesting when considering the reach of both. For example, as previously mentioned, only one literacy center surveyed served more than 1,000 individuals in 2016 compared to three of the four writing centers surveyed. The relationship between staff size and scope of literacy distribution deserves more attention, and community-engaged partnerships might allow for further investigation. Beyond the advantages to each organization, the risks and benefits to individual employees and volunteers must be considered, as well. Accordingly, the following questions remain:

- How would the engagement be funded?
- How might each center benefit from increased staffing?
- If participation in community-engaged initiatives is voluntary, how might each center be affected when paying staff who volunteer elsewhere?
- What incentives would be present to encourage participation among staff?

While these questions alone warrant further research, my hope is that the potential benefits revealed by survey data substantiate the value of continued scholarly attention to community-engaged collaborations between campus-based writing centers and community

literacy centers. The advantages of increased literacy distribution and variation in the types of writing and writers supported; continued evolution in how support sites define literacy; and exposure to a more diverse set of individuals, needs, and concerns are unique to these particular partnerships and cannot be realized in the absence of community-engaged initiatives. Simply put, survey results indicated that, at least in Georgia, collaborations between writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers were limited, at best. Given the value that many higher education institutions place on community engagement, survey results also suggested that partnerships between academic writing and community literacy centers could present opportunities to enrich students' experiences and learning while benefiting relationships between universities and communities.

As noted, survey findings imply that these partnerships are not without their challenges. For those interested in community engagement, it can be important to anticipate hurdles as a means of preparing oneself to respond appropriately should they arise. Therefore, Chapter Six discusses current writing center community literacy efforts, confirming that it is possible to respectfully capitalize on similarities and navigate differences among organizations to the advantage of all involved. More specifically, interviews with writing center administrators and their community partners revealed observations similar to survey results. Thus, these interviews allow writing center administrators and community literacy educators to more completely consider future projects and appreciate the worth inherent in writing center community literacy engagement.

Chapter Six: From Local Practice to Action

Comparing sites of literacy support is an important step for writing center and community literacy center administrators interested in participating in community-engaged literacy initiatives. Understanding how to move forward with these observations is another. Therefore, I invited writing center administrators who were or are currently involved in an off-campus engagement project that directly supported/s community literacy to participate in a brief interview. My intention was to better understand how knowledge distribution as well as a comparison of theories and practices impacts the possibility of community engagement initiatives between universities and community partners, even before these partnerships begin. These interviews revealed observations analogous to survey data previously presented. As a result, they provide important insight into the means through which engaged partners take advantage of similarities and concurrently address differences. These observations are important not only to my goal of encouraging future partnerships between writing centers and community literacy centers but also to my aspiration of increasing the number of writing centers who engage with community literacy support in general. I should note, however, that while all projects discussed during interviews supported community literacy with the goal of social activism, none involved adult community-based literacy centers, as defined in Chapter Three.[2] These specific collaborations were even more difficult to locate than I anticipated; nevertheless, my project aims to show their value to help these partnerships grow.

Secondary research directed me toward approximately twenty individuals who are (or, as I discovered in conversation, were) involved in writing center community literacy initiatives.

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[2] Community partners of those interviewed included a public library (historically serving African Americans); a religious non-profit offering temporary housing/services to families experiencing homelessness; a community resource center (historically serving African Americans); and a non-profit for single mothers enrolled in college.

While these initial exchanges were exciting and supportive, I struggled to identify individuals who could respond directly to my interview questions. In some instances, those contacted were no longer writing center administrators and, consequently, no longer leading writing center community engagement projects. In most other cases, administrators clarified that community engagement initiatives were the result of collaborations between institutions or specific courses (e.g., English composition) and communities rather than the writing center. Thus, in one final attempt to reach writing centers serving the public, I solicited participants through an electronic mailing list for writing center practitioners in the US and abroad, known as “wcenter.” Despite casting such a wide net, this request resulted in only one interview. The outcome of my research efforts is certainly due to a variety of factors, but I have to believe it is at least partly because so few writing centers are involved in community engagement projects that directly support community literacy. It is also likely because the limited discussions about this work are usually confined to local institutions and communities rather than published as scholarly research. For those that do contribute literature, I am also curious as to how writing center administrators define “community literacy support” and whether variances may have additionally affected interview participation. In short, my quest for interview participants and data led me to experience first-hand the limited number (just three percent from 2014-2015) of writing centers supporting off-campus communities and individuals (“Writing Centers”).

That said, I believe that the interview data obtained from two writing center administrators and two community partners, combined with the survey data previously discussed, can persuade others of the value and opportunities this work creates. As I have argued throughout, forming the partnerships and sustaining community engagement are not enough. Writing center administrators, tutors, and community partners must talk about this meaningful

and worthwhile work—and not just in passing or in the halls of the academy amongst themselves. Direct scholarly attention and further research into possible collaborations—inquiry that supplements and moves beyond existing reflections of the past—are necessary to encourage the small number of writing centers that offer services to the public to grow. I hope that my research presents the beginnings of that discussion. At the very least, it makes a case for the value in researching community engagement before a collaboration begins, and perhaps convinces others to seek out, create, and otherwise pursue opportunities to support community literacy initiatives beyond their respective institutions.

The Interviews

Participants[3] were asked a series of questions aimed at identifying the impetus for collaboration; initial concerns going into the project; observed similarities and differences among partners and the resulting effect(s) on collaboration; and specific benefits of the partnerships. They were also asked when the community engagement began. All collaborations discussed were initiated no more than five years ago, and most were within the last two years. This information affirmed the perceived relative "newness" of writing centers supporting literacy off-campus. The literature reviewed in Chapter One indicates that writing centers have been involved in forms of community engagement for some time; for example, writing centers have partnered with local high schools to offer writing workshops or to develop a secondary school writing center. However, specific concern with and attention to community literacy efforts are far less common. Writing centers are no stranger to off-site partnerships, but collaborating to engage with marginalized individuals and groups in particular seems novel.

[3] To aid readers' understanding of interview data but also maintain anonymity, participants are identified hereafter as Writing Center Administrator (WCA) 1 and 2 and Community Partner (CP) 1 and 2.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that CP 1 listed a different start date for collaboration than their writing center partner (WCA 1). For the same partnership, the writing center administrator listed 2015 as the year it formed, while the community partner listed 2017. The other community partner (CP 2) and writing center administrator (WCA 1) agreed upon when engagement began. Understandably, as partnerships progress, it can be difficult to accurately remember when, exactly, they started. But because the discrepancy here was more than a few months or a year, I am curious if this difference represents more than benign misremembering and, instead, illustrates the varying perspectives between partners that can influence and affect engagement, previously noted by others (see Brizee and Wells). It is possible and certainly not unreasonable to think that two administrators can maintain different opinions of when a project began, but it is important to think through the consequences of these and other variances.

For all interview participants, the notion of access was central to their pursuit of engagement. Both WCA 1 and 2 explained that the decision to partner with the community was influenced by the mission and value of their respective institutions, as well as the anticipated benefits to students participating. Each institution's position in the community (i.e., an urban university) was also a factor. For WCA 1, the goal was to help "communicate the university *as* the community rather than [communicate] separate communities on and off campus" (emphasis original). For WCA 2, a central question guides his work as a director: "What would it mean if a writing center saw itself as a public resource?" As for one community partner who participated, she chose to collaborate with the university writing center "to help provide assistance to the community we serve, in improving their writing skills" (CP 1). The addition of this last phrase is important. It implies that the partnership offers support that was not previously available, which

again underscores my concern over access to writing assistance for the general public that motivates this project.

Initially, both writing center directors were worried about the sustainability of their projects, including factors such as staffing, avoiding over promising, and maintaining flexibility within the partnership. Both mentioned awareness of “issues of power” and “power imbalances” that can be common in university/community relationships, but they assuaged these concerns through continued dialogue with their partners (WCA 1; WCA 2). They additionally noted the importance of honestly identifying and articulating any tensions or conflicts that arise because of this dialogue. Furthermore, WCA 2 observed that many anticipated concerns are not actually viable threats to community engagement projects because there are often departments, offices, and/or resources on campus to handle issues that may or may not arise.

On the other hand, both community partners interviewed expressed no initial concerns about collaborating with university writing centers, contrary to observations in the literature regarding community members’ unease and skepticism (see Brizee and Wells; Flower) (CP 1; CP 2). One acknowledged that the project has been a “learning experience for all involved, but very rewarding” (CP 1). Of course, there are many factors influencing a community partner’s willingness to engage with higher education. However, research that observes, identifies, and values the community organization pre-engagement, as my study does, can surely help to change perceptions of those who have experienced the dominance and analysis that Flower describes as a result of partnering with a university or college in the past (102). As WCA 1 acknowledged in his interview, power does not disappear through dialogue, but exposing what it does and does not allow is possible through continued conversation. Accordingly, I hope that my research allows others to share in the openness to engagement expressed by the community partners interviewed.

Paralleling the similarities noted in my initial survey data, writing centers and their community partners interviewed shared much in common regarding theories, pedagogies, and approaches. For example, of those interviewed, general practices of one-to-one attention for writers occurred in all locations. Further, all listed attending to the individual's current knowledge as a priority. The community partner elaborated that, just like the writing center, they "meet each individual where they are and help them to grow to the next level in their writing" (CP 1). CP 1 continued that they take the time to explain concepts and guide individuals "to build on their knowledge" while promoting "continuous learning opportunities." The benefits of these similar values and priorities are tangible for all involved. For example, one community partner explained that the noticeable advantage of a shared approach to literacy has been their organization's shift to a "central position that there are multiple forms of literacy" (CP 2). Further, this community partner argued that "the similarities of our goals and approaches strengthen the collaboration but more importantly benefit our students," fostering a "relationship that strengthens [their] likelihood of taken [sic.] advantage of university resources" (CP 2). As interview data illustrate, collaborations between university and community partners are not without their differences, however.

Interestingly, the writing center directors interviewed commented on these differences, while both community partners observed no discrepancies in approach or practice among the two. It may be that the difficulty I experienced creating questions specifically relevant to community partners influenced this result. Nevertheless, this pattern is curious and leads to more questions. For example, is it possible that the issues of power noted by the writing center administrators interviewed affected community partners' willingness to acknowledge differences? If so, are community partners always afforded the same opportunities to learn about

both the individuals and the organizations in higher education with whom they intend to partner? How frequently are community members invited on campus to experience partners in their own environment? It is relatively common for institutional faculty and staff reflecting on community engagement to discuss the process of learning about and/or visiting community partners, but less common to find discussion of similar experiences for community members. It is also possible that a community partner's inability to identify key differences is a source of strain in itself. For instance, WCA 2 explained that an emphasis on practicality has created tension in one of his partnerships. At times, their community partner has been resistant to supporting creative writing—in the writing center director's words, resistant to "nourishing the creative souls" of those who face inequalities and need assistance beyond pragmatic, professional writing (e.g., resumes or job search documents) (WCA 2). Additionally, WCA 1 explained that "fundamentally, there's a sense of attending to skills but understanding that we're dealing with people who feel powerless, so we're trying to create a greater sense of confidence and agency as well as provide practical advice and skills." This balancing act between applied support and larger theoretical concepts appeared in survey data, as well.

Community literacy centers are often responsible for preparing individuals for standardized tests (e.g., the GED exam and US citizenship test) while writing centers are generally more concerned with the individual's overall development than his or her performance an assignment or test. Yet, the interviews confirmed my hope that both goals can be achieved in concert, and to the benefit of all. For instance, WCA 1 discussed several advantages his center has experienced as a result of the more structured and conventional approach of their community partner. Because the community partner tended to be more directive with instruction, working with this organization has helped the writing center director see and understand that, at times, his

center should offer students more direction as well. Additionally, by working with individuals for whom higher education is intimidating, the same writing center director observed that the community organization has a "patience for people that is important for the writing center to learn" (WCA 1). To put it differently, as WCA 2 noted, the relationship between tutor and writer is in some ways like the relationship of the writing center and community partner. Through truly participatory community engagement, writing centers offer their own experience, approaches, and knowledge while community partners do the same; there is an exchange, a give and take. In writing center settings, tutors and tutees alike share similarly.

That said, steps can be taken to more successfully navigate inevitable differences between the university/college partner and the community partner. Specifically, WCA 1 highlighted the benefit of maintaining an archive of the relationship as it develops. The collection might include compiled information about the community organization; notes regarding past meetings, events, or initiatives; and/or commentary on the relationship in general. This approach then records the process of learning about the partner, as well as what the partner has already learned or is learning about them. This last point is worth noting because of the turnover often experienced among both writing center directors and community partner administrators, which can lead to what WCA 1 described as "lots of reintroducing." Further, documenting the entire process of collaboration contributes to the responsiveness necessary for engagement. Notes WCA 1, "[the community partner] learns about us but we're trying to learn about them, too, and attending to this learning is important for lots of reasons." The study presented by this project represents a small part of attending to that learning.

Above all else, both writing center directors spoke to the ways that their community literacy partnerships have affected the culture of writing at their institutions. WCA 1 explained

that their writing center's primary goal was to work one-on-one with writers. Their secondary goal was to sustain and promote a culture of writing on campus, which, he argued, cannot be achieved without partnerships that extend the reach of the writing center (WCA 1). WCA 2 mentioned that he was constantly surprised by the ways that their community engagement informed approaches and conversations within and around the writing center, even for those not directly participating in the collaboration; as he explained, their partnerships within the community continue to create a culture that is worth the effort. In both instances, it is difficult to argue with those outcomes.

Part III: Conclusion

Chapter Seven: Limitations, Implications, & Future Research

While revealing useful comparisons between institutionalized and community literacy support and making a strong case that collaborations between the two are worthwhile (or at least worth exploring further within an institution's local context), my study of university/college writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers is not without limitations. For one, because my background is in higher education, especially in writing centers, my survey questions were biased. I knew what practices to ask about in terms of writing centers, but I was less aware of what questions would be equally important and relevant to ask of literacy centers. Furthermore, I struggled with how to ask questions so that literacy center administrators would know how to provide the information I was hoping to collect. For example, while I knew that most writing center administrators would understand what I was looking for when asked what theories and pedagogies guide their centers' practices, I was unsure how to ask a similar question to literacy center administrators. In other words, I approached the study and created questions knowing more about one location than the other, which in turn affected the data I gathered. While this approach is understandable—partners participating in community engagement cannot help but go into a collaboration with a greater understanding of their own organization, at least initially—my study illustrates just how difficult it can be to avoid beginning a community engagement project based on assumptions and preconceptions. Even though my goal was to learn as much as possible about a specific community partner, at times, my own ignorance about community literacy centers and my enthusiasm for community-engaged opportunities kept me from doing so.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, response to surveys and interviews was low at best and, at worst, initially nonexistent. I was forced to adapt my original plan of collecting data

from literacy centers in close proximity to universities and/or colleges and instead rely on literacy centers throughout the state of Georgia for information. In fact, if I had had more time to complete my project, I would have considered revising my methods further, moving away from surveys and interviews to case studies and on-site observations. All survey and interview instruments utilized are included in Appendices A through C to illustrate the process of revision that my research required and to guide others in similar pursuits.

My experience gathering primary research is telling for a few reasons. First, it confirms what Smith observes: literacy center practitioners do not follow the same research practices as those in academia, often because of limited time and resources (i.e., research funds) (40). Contacting literacy center administrators and asking them to read and sign an IRB-approved informed consent document and then proceed with the survey or interview may have kept some unfamiliar with these practices from participating. I was more successful in gathering data when I directly contacted literacy centers and spoke with administrators, explaining the purpose of my study and the nature of their center's involvement/participation. Again, learning about and maintaining an understanding of how those outside of higher education pursue inquiry and disseminate information seems important to the success of collaboration. Additionally, because funding for research in adult literacy education is scarce, partnerships between community literacy centers and academic writing centers might produce new avenues for resources and opportunities for further research. They might also offer literacy center practitioners new audiences for dissemination of findings, as Smith notes that there are few journals, for example, that focus on adult literacy (40). Second, limited literacy center participation might also suggest what one literacy center administrator who *did* participate explained: many are unaware of the possibility of collaborating with a writing center. However, the potential benefits such

community-engaged partnerships present to both (as described in Chapters Five and Six) suggest not only that more writing center administrators but also more community literacy center administrators should be made aware of this possibility.

Finally, my study offers a limited perspective of academic and community literacy knowledge distribution. Community writing support comparable to that available in on-campus writing centers is currently unavailable in Georgia. As a means of addressing this absence, I obviously restricted my exploratory survey and interviews to one state. However, as I mentioned in my study design, I understood from the outset that generalizations would be neither useful nor productive. Just as one writing center administrator explained in his interview, it is a misperception that grand theories will speak to writing centers everywhere (WCA 2). Instead, it is important to capture local conditions as a means of exploring community engagement opportunities in a specific location and as a means of speaking to those conditions. That said, I hope that my study also speaks to other writing centers in environments and situations similar to those that participated, encouraging them to pursue a greater understanding of their own local conditions, perhaps even in similar fashion.

Despite these limitations, my study reveals several key findings. In particular, the comparison I present challenges writing center practitioners to think beyond simply providing academic literacy support and begins to explore the potential consequences of doing so, specifically with adult literacy learners. It suggests that there is value in exposing tutors to other forms of literacy and asking them to support and aid individuals in the development of varied forms. Julie A. Bokser contends that writing center tutor training must address issues of belonging, especially for those writing center visitors "whose socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/or educational worlds differ markedly from the academic world they encounter in

college" (43). Survey data offers evidence that adult community-based literacy centers serve those whose backgrounds are often different than those of traditional college students. Therefore, through community engagement, the training that Bokser champions could be achieved not from a lecture, reading, or presentation but from direct experience with a greater variety of writers and needs.

Study data also suggest that community literacy centers could benefit from collaborating with organizations that offer more institutionalized forms of literacy support. For instance, literacy centers that partner with on-campus writing centers and offer consistent writing instruction, feedback, and support in addition to the reading support already provided could expand their reach and, in turn, increase their distribution of literacy skills and knowledge. What is more, as Ginger Cooper insists, when the writing center is a community resource, the academy becomes less mysterious to those otherwise less familiar with higher education. For adult learners not currently enrolled in colleges or universities, interactions with on-campus writing center practitioners may make the practices of both academic writing centers and formal education more approachable.

On the other hand, writing centers could benefit from the more directive approaches of community literacy centers, especially as writing center practitioners consider concerns of inclusivity regarding race, ability, and learning preferences, among others (see Salem, "Opportunity"; García). Moreover, the partnerships I argue for would allow writing centers to attend to more than just the individual, as community literacy center mission statements consistently referred to the benefits their services offer not only the individual but also the

community. Considering a somewhat controversial[4] interview with Lori Salem recently published by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Feb. 2018) that challenges writing center norms such as nondirective tutoring and attention to higher order concerns, these specific collaborations would also contribute to the necessary and at times contentious discussion among practitioners about what works and does not work in a writing center (Jacobs).

Equally important to note, my study reveals valuable observations regarding definitions of literacy. Simply put, academic writing centers and community literacy centers define the term differently. My research shows that on-campus writing centers that participated in the study singularly focus on writing and generally exclude reading in their literacy support. Conversely, the literacy centers surveyed do not consistently offer attention to writing comparable to that of writing centers (i.e., one-on-one feedback and/or instruction provided by a peer or near-peer). But these differences may actually be beneficial. For example, none of the writing center mission statements mention reading, and yet most who teach writing can agree that what and how we read affects what and how we write, and vice versa. Unfortunately, Carillo's research on reading-writing connections proves that many college students do not "meet minimum benchmarks for literacy or reading proficiency." The lower reading levels that community literacy center administrators referenced when asked the average highest level of education suggest that university or college writing centers could gain valuable insight into reading development through community engagement projects, which would then benefit students.

When I began my project, I assumed that it would be best for all literacy support to prioritize writing over reading because of writing's shifting presence in our lives, a change that

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[4] Salem responded to the *Chronicle* and its readers through a letter to the editor four days after the interview was published, contending that her views were "mischaracterized" and clarifying that she "[does not] believe that there is anything fundamentally 'wrong' with writing centers" ("Writing-Center Researcher").

Brandt and others have described. However, because of my research, I now believe a more successful approach to literacy development, regardless of the environment or type of literacy, is one that supports and attends to both reading and writing, and especially the effects of one on the other. As survey and interview data suggest, partnerships between academic writing centers and adult community-based literacy centers would allow for this dual-focus in environments that, previously, may have prioritized one or the other.

In spite of the well-documented advantages of community engagement, at least among the University System of Georgia institutions who chose to participate in this study, none of the writing centers support literacy development off-campus within their communities. As a result, on-campus writing centers in Georgia are far from realizing their potential as the "deeply transformative sites" that Grimm argues they can be when they are "open to rethinking their encounters with diversity in linguistic and cultural backgrounds," a direct consequence of community engagement initiatives ("Retheorizing" 90). Because initial survey data did not reveal academic writing centers that had previously or were currently engaged in community literacy efforts, I looked beyond Georgia for administrators with this experience. However, the difficulty I encountered locating individuals outside of Georgia to interview confirms that Georgia's writing centers are not the exception. If university and college writing centers had a stronger sense of which populations might benefit most from writing center community engagement, and if more community organizations understood that partnerships were possible and worth pursuing, the distribution of literacy skills and knowledge could not help but increase, along with the number of on-campus writing centers that support more than the campus community.

Of course, my study is but a small piece in the "what if" scenario presented above. Thus, further research is necessary. For example, what other community organizations, populations, and/or literacies present equally logical opportunities for writing center community engagement? More specifically, within community literacy centers, how might a peer or near-peer model of instruction and/or more clearly defined goals and objectives affect literacy learners? Regarding on-campus writing centers, what other forms of group literacy support beyond workshops might be beneficial? In short, how exactly do community engagement projects challenge and complicate the norms of on- and off-campus literacy support in meaningful ways?

As is often the case with research, this study complicates my argument that potential community engagement projects—not just reflections on past efforts—deserve scholarly attention to more efficiently identify opportunities for collaboration. For community engagement to be successful, it must be established locally, organically, and collaboratively. Mullin reminds us that a writing center "must shape itself according to its local context" (183). While she is referring to the local context of the institution and its influence on the center, I believe that writing centers must look beyond this limited view and into the off-campus community(ies) of which they have always been a part. As a result, my study is more than a simple comparison and contrast of two sites of literacy support. What I have attempted to show is that a comparative lens is useful in pointing academic writing centers and community literacy centers toward each other to help administrators consider and possibly pursue collaborations, assisting the natural progression of such partnerships so that all writers receive the support and interaction necessary for literacy development.

Appendix A: Original Survey & Interview Questions

Original Survey & Interview Questions

I. Writing Center Survey

A. PURPOSE:

1. What is your center's mission? *(If your center has a published mission, please include the entire text. If not, please list your center's goals and values.)*

B. GENERAL INFO:

2. When was your center established?

3. Where is your center's **main** location? (Please exclude satellite locations.)
   - English building
   - campus library
   - student center
   - other (please describe)

4. Approximately, how many individuals did your center serve in 2016?
   - ≤ 100
   - 101–500
   - 501–1000
   - ≥ 1000

5. Please rank the frequency with which the following genres of writing are supported by your center from 1–4 (1 indicating the highest frequency). If a genre supported is not represented in the options provided, please add and include it in your response.
   - academic (e.g., reports, essays, articles, etc.)
   - creative (e.g., non-fiction, fiction, poetry)
   - professional (e.g., resumes, emails, memos, etc.)
   - applications (e.g., scholarship, admissions, jobs, etc.)
   - other (please list)

6. What writing concerns are **most frequently** expressed by those who visit your center? Select all that apply.
   - grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
   - format
   - style
   - citations
   - vocabulary
   - organization
   - thesis statement
   - transitions
   - word choice
   - brainstorming/"getting started"
   - other (please list)

C. PRACTICES & THEORIES:

7. What equipment and/or tools are **most frequently** relied on at your center to support students' writing and literacy development? Select all that apply.
   - computers (desktop/laptop, provided by center or student)
   - mobile devices
   - writing handbooks
   - style manuals
   - pens/pencils
   - paper
   - writing/reading handouts
   - white board
   - SMART board
   - websites
   - audio
   - video

   Please list/describe any additional equipment and/or tools not covered above:

8. How is your center's space utilized? Select all accommodations that apply.
   - single studio-style room with desks/tables for independent and collaborative work
   - computer lab
   - private work/study rooms
   - offices for administrators and staff
   - conference room
   - waiting area
   - other (please briefly describe)

9. Please briefly describe general practices that occur during interactions with individuals at your center. For example, writing is read aloud and sessions are conversational in nature, or individuals meet one-on-one with tutors.

10. Please briefly explain **why** these general practices are followed at your center. For example, are these practices based in theory? If so, what theory and why?

D. INDIVIDUALS SERVED/DEMOGRAPHICS:

11. To whom are your services available? Select all that apply.
    - currently enrolled students
    - faculty and staff
    - alumni
    - area middle or high school students
    - general public
    - other (please describe)

12. What is the approximate **average** age range of individuals served at your center/organization? *(If your center/organization consistently serves more than one age range, please select all that apply.)*
    - younger than 10
    - 10–17 year olds
    - 18–25 year olds
    - 26–35 year olds
    - 36–50 year olds
    - older than 50

13. For the majority of those served by your center, what is the highest level of education **completed**?
    - elementary school
    - middle school
    - high school
    - college
    - graduate school

14. On average, and to the best of your knowledge, are the **majority** of individuals served by your center employed?
    - yes
    - no
    - not known

15. Does your center regularly serve non-native English speakers/writers?
    - yes
    - no

If yes, please briefly explain what, if any, services are **uniquely** offered to non-native English speakers/writers:

E. STAFFING:

16. Approximately how many staff members (including administration) does your center currently rely on?
    - ≤ 5
    - 6–20
    - 21–50
    - ≥ 50

17. How is your center staffed? Select all that apply.
    - paid undergraduate students
    - volunteer undergraduate students
    - paid graduate students
    - volunteer graduate students
    - paid faculty/staff
    - volunteer faculty/staff
    - paid professional consultants (neither students nor faculty/staff)
    - volunteer professional consultants (neither students nor faculty/staff
    - interns (paid or unpaid)
    - other (please describe)

18. How are staff members trained? Select all that apply.
    - group instruction
    - independent study
    - coursework for credit
    - training is not provided
    - other (please describe)

F. SERVICES:

19. Our center:

offers one-on-one support (including accommodations for groups)	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers appointments	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers online scheduling for appointments	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers walk-in services	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers online synchronous and/or asynchronous writing support	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers writing workshops	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers scheduled writing classes	regularly, often, sometimes, never
hosts writing events and/or clubs	regularly, often, sometimes, never
publishes the work of those who use the center	regularly, often, sometimes, never
provides hard copy writing handouts	regularly, often, sometimes, never
provides online writing resources	regularly, often, sometimes, never

Please list any additional services your center/organization offers and the frequency of these services:

20. Does your center currently engage (or has it in the past) in a community writing initiative and/or program, including (but not limited to) partnership with a community literacy center?
    - yes
    - no

    IF YES TO #20: Would you be willing to be contacted regarding participation in a brief follow-up interview regarding this engagement?
    - yes
    - no

    IF NO TO #20: Would your center be interested in engagement in a community writing initiative and/or program, including with a community literacy center?
    - yes
    - no

IF YES: Briefly, what has kept this type of engagement from occurring in the past?

II. Community Literacy Center Survey

A. PURPOSE:

1. What is your organization's mission? *(If your center has a published mission, please include the entire text. If not, please list your center's goals and values.)*

B. GENERAL INFO:

2. When was your organization established?

3. Where is your organization's **main** location? (Please exclude satellite locations.)
   - office/building space owned or rented
   - community center
   - public library
   - public school
   - other (please describe)

4. Approximately, how many individuals did your organization serve in 2016?
   - ≤ 100
   - 101–500
   - 501–1000
   - ≥ 1000

5. Please rank the frequency with which the following genres of writing are supported by your center from 1–4 (1 indicating the highest frequency). If a genre supported is not represented in the options provided, please add and include it in your response.
   - academic (e.g., reports, essays, articles, etc.)
   - creative (e.g., non-fiction, fiction, poetry)
   - professional (e.g., resumes, emails, memos, etc.)
   - applications (e.g., scholarship, admissions, jobs, etc.)
   - other (please list)

6. What writing concerns are most frequently expressed by those who visit your organization? Select all that apply.
   - grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
   - format
   - style
   - citations
   - vocabulary
   - organization
   - thesis statement
   - transitions
   - word choice
   - brainstorming/"getting started"

Please add any additional frequent writing concerns not listed above.

C. PRACTICES & THEORIES:

7. What equipment and/or tools are **most frequently** relied on by your organization to support individuals' writing and literacy development? Select all that apply.
    - computers (desktop/laptop, provided by center or student)
    - mobile devices
    - writing handbooks
    - style manuals
    - pens/pencils
    - paper
    - writing/reading handouts
    - white board
    - SMART board
    - websites
    - audio
    - video

Please list/describe any additional equipment and/or tools not covered above:

8. How is your organization's space utilized? Select all accommodations that apply.
    - single studio-style room with desks/tables for independent and collaborative work
    - computer lab
    - private work/study rooms
    - offices for administrators and staff
    - conference room
    - waiting area
    - other (please briefly describe)
9. Please briefly describe general practices that occur during interactions with individuals at your center. For example, writing is read aloud and sessions are conversational in nature, or individuals meet one-on-one with tutors.

10. Please briefly explain **why** these general practices are followed within your organization. For example, are these practices based in theory? If so, what theory and why?

D. INDIVIDUALS SERVED/DEMOGRAPHICS:

11. To whom are your services available? Select all that apply.
    - selected populations (please list)
    - individuals enrolled in the organization's services, classes, and/or workshops
    - general public
    - other (please describe)

12. What is the approximate **average** age range of individuals served by your organization? *(If your organization consistently serves more than one age range, please select all that apply.)*
    - younger than 10
    - 10–17 year olds
    - 18–25 year olds
    - 26–35 year olds
    - 36–50 year olds
    - older than 50

13. On average, and to the best of your knowledge, what is the highest level of education **completed** by individuals served by your organization?
    - elementary school
    - middle school
    - high school
    - college
    - graduate school
    - not known

14. On average, and to the best of your knowledge, are the **majority** of individuals served by your center employed?
    - yes
    - no
    - not known

15. On average, and to the best of your knowledge, are the **majority** of individuals served by your organization currently enrolled in school (of any level)?
    - yes
    - no
    - not known

16. Does your center regularly serve non-native English speakers/writers?
    - yes
    - no

If yes, please briefly explain what, if any, services are **uniquely** offered to non-native English speakers/writers:

E. STAFFING:

17. Approximately how many staff members (including administration) does your organization currently rely on?
    - ≤ 5
    - 6–20
    - 21–50
    - ≥ 50

18. How is your center staffed? Select all that apply.
    - paid undergraduate students
    - volunteer undergraduate students
    - paid graduate students
    - volunteer graduate students
    - paid faculty/staff
    - volunteer faculty/staff
    - paid professional consultants (neither students nor faculty/staff)
    - volunteer professional consultants (neither students nor faculty/staff
    - interns (paid or unpaid)

- other (please describe)

19. How are staff members trained? Select all that apply.
    - group instruction
    - independent study
    - training is not provided
    - other (please describe)

F. SERVICES:

20. Our organization:

offers one-on-one support (including accommodations for groups)	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers appointments	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers online scheduling for appointments	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers walk-in services	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers online synchronous and/or asynchronous writing support	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers writing workshops	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers scheduled writing classes	regularly, often, sometimes, never
requires enrollment in courses	regularly, often, sometimes, never
hosts writing events and/or clubs	regularly, often, sometimes, never
publishes the work of those who utilize services	regularly, often, sometimes, never
provides hard copy writing handouts	regularly, often, sometimes, never
provides online writing resources	regularly, often, sometimes, never

Please list any additional services your center/organization offers and the frequency of these services:

21. Does your organization currently engage (or has it in the past) with a university writing center?
    - yes
    - no

IF YES TO #21: Would you be willing to be contacted regarding participation in a brief follow-up interview regarding this engagement?

- yes
- no

IF NO TO #21: Would your center be interested in engagement with a university writing center?

- yes
- no

  IF YES: Briefly, what has kept this type of engagement from occurring in the past?

Interview Questionnaires

I. <u>University Writing Centers:</u>

1. When did the community engagement begin? Is it still on-going?
2. Why did your center decide to partner with the community and/or establish a community writing center?
3. What, if any, concerns did you and your center have going into the collaboration?
4. What benefits has your center experienced as a direct result of the partnership?
5. How has the partnership allowed you to advance the work of your center?
6. What theories and pedagogies have you observed the community partner shares with your center?
7. What practices and/or approaches to writing support are similar between your center and the community partner?
8. How do these similarities in theories, pedagogies, and practices affect the collaboration?
9. What differences, if any, in theories, pedagogies, and/or practices have you observed between your center and the community partner?
10. How are these differences navigated and respected?

II. <u>Community Writing/Literacy Centers:</u>

1. When did the engagement with the university writing center begin? Is it still on-going?
2. Why did your organization decide to partner with the university writing center and/or establish a community writing center?
3. What, if any, concerns did you and your organization have going into the collaboration?
4. What benefits has your organization experienced as a direct result of the partnership?
5. How has the partnership allowed you to advance the work of your organization?
6. What approaches to instruction and writing support have you observed the university writing center has in common with your organization?
7. What practices are similar between your organization and the university writing center?
8. How do these similarities in approaches and/or practices affect the collaboration?
9. What differences, if any, in approaches and/or practices have you observed between your organization and the university writing center?
10. How are these differences navigated and respected?

Appendix B: Revised Survey & Interview Questions, Community Literacy Centers

Community Literacy Center Interview Questionnaire (revised for phone participation)

The first set of questions pertains to general information regarding your organization, including individuals served and staffing.

1. What is your organization's mission?
2. When was your center/program established?
3. Where is your organization's main location?
4. In 2016, approximately how many individuals did your organization serve?
5. From the following list, to whom are your services available?
    - selected populations (please describe)
    - individuals enrolled in your organization's services, classes, and/or workshops
    - the general public
    - Or other (again, please describe)
6. What is the approximate average age range of individuals served by your organization?
7. On average, and to the best of your knowledge, what is the highest level of education completed by individuals served?
8. Does your center regularly serve non-native English speakers/writers?
9. If so, what services are uniquely offered to non-native English speakers/writers?
10. How is your center staffed?
11. Approximately how many staff members (including administration) does your organization rely on?
12. Briefly, how are staff members trained?

The next set of questions pertains to the types of literacy support offered by your organization, as well as how this support is offered.

13. How frequently are academic genres of writing, such as reports, essays, and articles, supported by your organization?
14. How frequently are creative genres of writing, such as non-fiction, fiction, and poetry, supported?
15. How frequently are professional genres of writing, such as resumes, emails, and memos, supported?
16. How frequently are application genres of writing, such as scholarship, admissions, and jobs, supported?
17. Are any other genres of writing supported?
18. From the following list, what writing concerns are most frequently expressed by those who visit your organization:
    - grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
    - format
    - style
    - citations
    - vocabulary
    - organization

- thesis statement
- transitions
- word choice
- brainstorming/"getting started"

19. From the following list, what equipment and/or tools are most frequently relied on to support individuals' writing and literacy development?
    - computers (desktop/laptop, provided by center or student)
    - mobile devices
    - writing handbooks
    - style manuals
    - pens/pencils
    - paper
    - writing/reading handouts
    - white board
    - SMART board
    - websites
    - audio
    - video
20. How is your organization's space utilized? For example, are services offered in a single, studio-style room? Are there offices for administrators and staff?
21. Please briefly describe general practices that occur during interactions with individuals at your center. For example, writing is read aloud and sessions are conversational in nature, or individuals meet one-on-one with tutors.
22. Please briefly explain **why** these general practices are followed within your organization. For example, are these practices based in theory? If so, what theory and why?

The following questions pertain to services offered and the frequency with which they're offered. Each service will be followed by the choices "regularly, often, sometimes," and "never." Please respond accordingly.

Our organization offers one-on-one support (including accommodations for groups)	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers appointments	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers online scheduling for appointments	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers walk-in services	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers online synchronous and/or asynchronous writing support	regularly, often, sometimes, never
offers writing workshops	regularly, often, sometimes, never

offers scheduled writing classes	regularly, often, sometimes, never
requires enrollment in courses	regularly, often, sometimes, never
hosts writing events and/or clubs	regularly, often, sometimes, never
publishes the work of those who utilize services	regularly, often, sometimes, never
provides hard copy writing handouts	regularly, often, sometimes, never
provides online writing resources	regularly, often, sometimes, never

Are there any additional services your center/organization offers?

The final section of questions pertains to past and/or present collaborations and partnerships.

23. Does your organization currently engage (or has it in the past) with a university writing center?

IF YES TO #23:

1. When did the engagement with the university writing center begin? Is it still on-going?
2. Why did your organization decide to partner with the university writing center?
3. What, if any, concerns did you and your organization have going into the collaboration?
4. What benefits has your organization experienced as a direct result of the partnership?
5. How has the partnership allowed you to advance the work of your organization?
6. What, if any, approaches to instruction and writing support have you observed the university writing center has in common with your organization?
7. What practices are similar between your organization and the university writing center?
8. How do these similarities in approaches and/or practices affect the collaboration?
9. What differences, if any, in approaches and/or practices have you observed between your organization and the university writing center?
10. How are these differences navigated and respected?

IF NO TO #23: Would your center be interested in engagement with a university writing center?

IF YES: Briefly, what has kept this type of engagement from occurring in the past?

24. Finally, are there any additional literacy center directors you recommend I contact to be included in this study? If so, are you comfortable providing their contact information

Appendix C: Revised Interview Questions, Writing Centers & Community Partners

Revised Interview Questions

I. <u>University/College Writing Centers:</u>

1. When did the community engagement begin? Is it still on-going?
2. Why did your center decide to partner with the community?
3. What, if any, concerns did you and your center have going into the collaboration?
4. What benefits has your center experienced as a direct result of the partnership; how has the partnership allowed you to advance the work of your center?
5. What theories/pedagogies AND/OR practices/approaches to supporting literacy have you observed the community partner shares with your center?
6. How do these similarities affect the collaboration?
7. What differences, if any, in theories/pedagogies AND/OR practices/approaches to supporting literacy have you observed between your center and the community partner?
8. How are these differences navigated and respected?
9. To more fully understand the benefits and challenges of writing center community engagement, I'd like to ask the same questions of your community partners. If comfortable, would you please provide contact information (e.g., name and email address) for your community partner?

II. <u>Community Partners:</u>

1. When did the engagement with the university writing center begin? Is it still on-going?
2. Why did your organization decide to partner with the university writing center?
3. What, if any, concerns did you and your organization have going into the collaboration?
4. What benefits has your organization experienced as a direct result of the partnership; how has the partnership allowed you to advance the work of your organization?
5. What practices and approaches to instruction and literacy support have you observed the university writing center has in common with your organization?
6. How do these similarities in approaches AND/OR practices affect the collaboration?
7. What differences, if any, in approaches AND/OR practices have you observed between your organization and the university writing center?
8. How are these differences navigated and respected?

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Writing Center Administrator (WCA) 2. Personal Interview, phone. 5 Feb. 2018.

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Curriculum Vitae

Allison Bennett

Hiram, GA
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EDUCATION

M.A. in Professional Writing
Kennesaw State University | Kennesaw, Georgia
May 2018, Graduate Student Honors

Primary Area of Study: Composition and Rhetoric

Thesis Title: All Writers Welcome: An Exploratory Study of the Potential Value of Academic Writing Center and Adult Community-Based Literacy Center Partnerships
Thesis Committee: Laura McGrath, PhD and Lara Smith-Sitton, PhD

B.A. in English
Purdue University | West Lafayette, Indiana
May 2008

WRITING INSTRUCTION & RESEARCH

Graduate Research Assistant Aug. 2017 – May 2018
Writing Center | Kennesaw State University

- Helped develop an institution-wide Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, reporting on model programs and practices nationally and at peer and aspirational institutions, as well as researching best practices published in scholarly literature
- Investigated the current campus writing culture, identifying discipline-specific needs of faculty using writing to support student learning
- Developed materials including infographics; flyers; workshop and faculty fellowship instructional content/agendas; and web content to inform faculty of and promote KSU WAC principles

Community Engagement Intern May 2017 – July 2017
English Department | Kennesaw State University

- Under Department of English Director of Community Engagement's supervision, identified, researched, and presented local community partners to contact for future engagement opportunities
- Contributed sources, content, and feedback on a Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) National Service and Civic Engagement Research Competition grant application pursuing the development of replicable models of community engagement assessment
- Participated in the initial meeting with a community partner to discuss future projects and collaboration with the English Department

Teaching Assistant Aug. 2016 – May 2017
Department of English | Kennesaw State University

- Taught two sections of English 1101, First Year Composition, Fall 2016; created and delivered course content focused on rhetoric and argumentation
- Taught two sections of English 1102, First Year Composition, Spring 2017; created and delivered course content focused on academic research

Writing Assistant Aug. 2015 – May 2016
Writing Center | Kennesaw State University

- Advised and supported peers in the writing process, to include brainstorming, outlining, researching, formatting, citing, and addressing high and low order concerns (e.g., content and grammar, respectively)
- Frequently facilitated online, synchronous consultations and presented workshops as needed

Professional Writing Consultant Aug. 2010 – May 2012
Writing Center | Fayetteville State University | Fayetteville, North Carolina

- Supported students' academic writing endeavors, coaching writers at all points in their process
- Developed and presented writing workshops based on students' needs and faculty requests
- Completed Crossroads of Learning Level 1 Basic Tutor Training

Professional Writing Consultant Jan. 2010 – May 2012
Writing Center | Methodist University | Fayetteville, North Carolina

- Supported students, faculty, and staff, assisting and advising clients in all aspects of writing
- Worked with writers in a variety of environments, including face-to-face, as well as synchronously and asynchronously online
- Organized, developed, and presented seven grammar workshops within "The Dirty Dozen Workshop Series" over the course of an academic semester
- Developed and presented additional workshops and presentations as requested by faculty

ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Director May 2012 – July 2014
Writing Center | Methodist University | Fayetteville, NC

- Coordinated with Director to develop and maintain initiatives, creating seamless operations under limited supervision; offered on-site administration to cultivate inter-disciplinary relationships within the Writing Center
- Supported outreach efforts by coordinating workshops, in-class visits, and presentations and by distributing information to faculty, staff, and students
- Responded to inquiries regarding policy, procedures, initiatives, and activities

- Successfully balanced multiple projects, activities, and deadlines with daily consultation and administrative responsibilities
- Regularly wrote, edited, and revised (including organization and design) website content and advertising materials, thereby developing strong content judgment and editorial, writing, and design skills
- Researched and developed meaningful writing resources to include handouts, worksheets, and exercises, both online and in print; produced instructional writing videos and quizzes for website and social media
- Conducted one-on-one writing consultations with students, faculty, and staff
- Managed day-to-day operations, administered online scheduling program (WC Online), maintained records and statistics, scheduled part-time professional consultants, and interviewed/trained new hires.

EDITING

Editor Jan. 2012 – Apr. 2014
The Triangle Dog | North Carolina

- Edited and reviewed all copy for quarterly-published North Carolina-based canine lifestyle magazine
- Consistently contributed creative headlines and cover points; assisted in the development of copy ideas; and occasionally contributed copy
- Contributed to publication's style manual and maintained AP Style standards

Technical Editor Jan. 2012 – Jan. 2013
Diesis Literary Journal

- Served as one of two technical editors for academic literary journal, published biannually
- Edited for MLA style, grammar, syntax, format, accuracy, and clarity

PUBLICATION

Book Review, Allen Brizee and Jaclyn M. Wells's *Partners in Literacy: A Writing Center Model for Civic Engagement. Community Literacy Journal,* vol. 12, no. 2, Spring 2018 (forthcoming).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Southeastern Writing Center Association Annual Conference (SWCA)

"Exploring the Extracurricular: The Merits of Moving Beyond Assignment-Motivated Writing." Round table discussion with Casey Black, Sarah Cook, Tequila Jackson, and Valerie Smith. Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia. Feb. 2016.

"Common Ground: How Writing Centers Share Space and Community." Panel discussion with Robin Greene and Rebecca King. East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. Feb. 2014.

"The Decentered Writing Center." With Robin Greene. Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Feb. 2013.