Assessing the Cyborg Center: Assemblage-Based, Feminist Frameworks Toward Socially Just Writing Center Assessments

Erin M. Andersen
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!
Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the Rhetoric and Composition Commons

Recommended Citation
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2298

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
ASSESSING THE CYBORG CENTER:
ASSEMBLAGE- BASED, FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS TOWARD SOCIA LLY JUST
WRITING CENTER ASSESSMENTS

by

Erin M. Andersen

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
ASSESSING THE CYBORG CENTER:
ASSEMBLAGE- BASED, FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS TOWARD SOCIALLY JUST
WRITING CENTER ASSESSMENTS

by

Erin M. Andersen

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of
the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date     Dr. Mark McBeth, Chair of Examining Committee

Date     Dr. Eric Lott, Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Mark McBeth
Dr. Sondra Perl
Dr. Jessica Yood
Dr. Carmen Kynard

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Assessing the Cyborg Center:
Assemblage- Based, Feminist Frameworks Toward Socially Just Writing Center Assessments

by
Erin M. Andersen

Advisor: Mark McBeth

This dissertation will broaden the purview of recent scholarship pertaining to socially just writing assessments by making connections among assemblage theory and materialism, studies of ecological and anti-racist assessments, and studies of writing center work, to ground theoretical conversations in everyday practices. Focusing on systemic oppression in the neoliberal university and consciously using assemblage theory as a mechanism for confronting multiliteracies allows writing center directors to see the constant movement and reshaping of students’ knowledges as they approach different environments, different courses, and different genres. Notions of intra-relatedness and intertwinings evident in assemblage theory are essential to this dissertation’s consideration of pedagogy and administration. Expanding upon research on ecological and anti-racist assessment practices, I argue that it is vitally important for writing program administrators and writing center directors to bring complex views of literacies and identities to their assessment protocols. I further argue that this practice can be aided by frameworks based in assemblage theory. Using archival research and critical discourse analysis, this project explores one WC’s history and current practices in a large public, urban university system as a case study. Acknowledging the burden of negotiating hurdles set up by corporatized university structures, this dissertation examines the ways institutional pressures can shape
assessments, and makes suggestions for new, socially just approaches relying on assemblage theory that follow current trends in writing assessment.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, my gratitude goes out to Livia Katz, who generously allowed me to analyze and poke around her writing center for this study. Livia is a dynamo, and her tutors and students are very lucky to have her fighting for them. I hope to be half the writing center director she is throughout my career. I am also grateful to Pat Licklider and Bob Crozier for taking the time to record oral history interviews with me. Pat sat through the interview twice due to a technical glitch, and also allowed me to reference her personal files from her time at John Jay for this project, which makes her an absolute saint. Thank you also to the librarians and archivists at the Lloyd Sealy Library at John Jay, and to the interlibrary loan librarians at both Taylor Memorial Library at Centenary University and the Mina Rees Library at the Graduate Center.

I am also unendingly grateful to Mark McBeth, my committee chair, without whom I would never have completed this journey. His unflagging support, generosity, and brilliance (and knack of finding archives where none are supposed to exist) continues to inspire me. Mark, I have been incredibly fortunate to have had you as an advisor, and I hope I can live up to the care, encouragement, and critiques with which you guided me during my graduate studies as a mentor to my own students. Sondra Perl and Jessica Yood, two of my committee members, have also been instrumental in helping me achieve this goal, and I thank them for their advice and presence during my time at the Graduate Center. Sondra and Jessica, both of your classes shaped so much of my thinking for this project. I’m so grateful to both of you, and to you, Sondra, for taking on this project with me despite its late hour in your time at CUNY. Happy retirement! Carmen Kynard, my fourth reader on the committee, has been inspiring me to experiment in the classroom and remain critical of writing studies since she sat in on the John Jay Teaching Practicum with me in 2013. Carmen, Mark, and Tim McCormack, the former Deputy Writing
Program Director at John Jay, taught me to teach, and to love teaching. Thanks to all of you for giving me that wonderful gift, and for showing me the importance of having *fun* with my pedagogy.

I also thank the past and current members of CompComm, the student composition and rhetoric group at the CUNY Graduate Center, for their emotional, professional, and scholarly support. You are truly a family for me, and I hope future students realize what a special group we have at the GC. I particularly recognize Seth Graves, Andrew Lucchesi, and Sean Molloy for their friendship and thoughtful collaborations, as well as Robert Greco, Lindsey Albracht, and Rohit Lanez-Sharma for their sharp peer reviews of my chapter drafts. I could not have done this without you folks next to me. Robert, your friendship and input has influenced my approach to so much of my work. Thank you for geeking out with me about politics, *Doctor Who*, and the latest *CCC* issue in the cafeteria for so many years. Thanks also to Emilia Phillips of UNC Greensboro and Emily Anderson of Centenary University for their companionship during long days of writing this summer and for being such strong, engaging, supportive presences in my life. I also thank Alicia Clark-Barnes for her friendship and input as I began developing the ideas for this project at the NEWCA conference in 2015. My professional gratitude extends to my colleagues in the English department at Centenary University, especially my chair, Sharon Decker, and my long-time mentor, Lisa Mastrangelo, who have supported me personally and professionally this year. I’m lucky to be part of such a wonderful department. Lisa, thank you for your teaching, scholarship, mentorship, and friendship that has been with me professionally since I can remember. Thank you, as well, to my staff of peer tutors in the Writing Collaboratory at Centenary University, who continue to inspire me and challenge me with new ideas. I’m grateful to be part of such a remarkable group in our writing center!
On a personal note, thanks to Laura for being a sounding board for my frustrations and for checking in on me periodically to make sure I didn’t perish in a dark library corner, laptop open and coffee mug in-hand. Thanks to my family and in-laws for their confidence and cheerleading. In particular, thanks to my parents, Tom and Jeanne, and my brothers, Michael and Glen, for inspiring my love of learning and writing, and for collectively being my “last homely house” when I needed a break. Thanks to my cats, Rocky and Blues, for always knowing when I needed a couple of fuzzy muses to keep going. But mostly, thanks to my husband, Dave, a person who took on more than his share of house chores and who never complained when asked to turn down the TV volume so that I could concentrate - even during the playoffs. I’ll never be able to fully express my gratitude for his love, his support, and for taking care of me on the most difficult writing days. I love you, Dave.

… Lastly, thanks to NJ Transit: Some days you tried your best to foil my attempts at traveling to my research site. Some days you provided me with three hours of solid writing time. We’ve had a love-hate relationship for seven years and over 5,000 hours together (yes, I did the math). I’m not sure if this expression of gratitude is sincere or sarcastic - probably both - but anyway… thanks a lot.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 ................................................................. 1

*Introduction*

Chapter 2 ................................................................. 27

*Assembling the Cyborg, Searching for Missing Parts: A Literature Review*

Chapter 3 ................................................................. 56

*Why a “Cyborg”?: Methods and Theory*

Chapter 4 ................................................................. 68

*Finding the Center: Historical Context and Institutional Pressures*

Chapter 5 ................................................................. 97

*“Lots of Moving Parts”: Discourse Analysis of Current Assessment Practices*

Chapter 6: Conclusion ................................................ 127

*The Cyborg Center: An Assemblage-Based Heuristic for Socially Just Writing Center Assessment*

Appendix A: Interview Questions (Crozier and Licklider) .............................................. 141

Appendix B: Interview Questions (Katz) ........................................................................ 142

Appendix C: Oral History Transcript, Crozier ................................................................. 144

Appendix D: Oral History Transcript, Licklider ............................................................. 151

Appendix E: Oral History Transcript, Katz ..................................................................... 164

Appendix F: CDA Coding Sample ................................................................................. 173

Works Cited ......................................................................................... 178
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1  Approximation of organizational structure of the stakeholders of John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s Alan Siegel Writing Center. ................................. 5

Fig. 2  Approximation of an assemblage of the stakeholders of John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s Alan Siegel Writing Center. ................................. 6
Chapter One
Introduction

Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action...

Karen Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, ix

To return to the title of this piece, and the juxtaposition that Haraway (unfortunately, but presciently) renders, would I really rather be a cyborg than a goddess? The former hails the future in a teleological technological determinism—culture—that seems not only overdetermined, but also exceptionalizes our current technologies. The latter—nature—is embedded in the racialized matriarchal mythos of feminist reclamation narratives. Certainly it sounds sexier, these days, to lay claim to being a cyborg than a goddess. But why disaggregate the two when there surely must be cyborgian goddesses in our midst? Now that is a becoming-intersectional assemblage that I could really appreciate.

Jasbir Puar, “I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess,” 63

Like the subject/object and science/politics binaries, this [individual/network dichotomy] is a distinction that rhetoric should no longer recognize. ‘To use the word “actor,”’ writes Latour, ‘means that it’s never clear who and what is acting when we act since an actor on stage is never alone.’ Agency is not something we own.

Paul Lynch and Nathaniel Rivers, Thinking with Bruno Latour in Rhetoric and Composition, 5

In my junior year of college, I began working as a peer tutor in the learning center of a small women’s college in New Jersey. It was an eye-opening experience. I was at the top of many of my classes, something I’d fought hard for as I tried to “make up” for receiving my GED rather than finishing high school. Writing had always come easily to me - it was an escape, solace, familiar. So, the prospect that anyone could see it as something to be afraid of was strange to me. As I encountered my peers during tutoring sessions, my view of writing and language grew more complex - and with it my worldview. Writing was not a universal experience. Education was not a universal experience. The longer I worked as a peer tutor, and then a professional tutor after graduation, the more I began to see the writing center as a place where diverse experiences converged and influenced both teaching and learning in positive ways. In Mary Louise Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone” she describes the contact zones where
people of varying cultures and linguistic abilities coincide to address the power structures of those sites, but she also extends the idea to includes “safe houses” where groups of people can:

[…] constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression. […] Where there are legacies of subordination, groups need places for healing and mutual recognition, safe houses in which to construct shared understandings, knowledges, claims on the world that they can then bring into the contact zone. (40)

Her theorizing of these types of spaces and her descriptions of what they would do for their participants parallels the best practices of writing centers. My writing center experience made me aware of my own privileged literacy acquisition opportunities and how others’ educational backgrounds hadn’t afforded them these rehearsals.1

This idea of literacy disparities became most apparent and moved me most directly during my tutoring sessions with fellow students. Given the unique makeup of our all-women student body, our tutors and administrative staff shared concerns about gender identifications, but were also concerned about topics regarding other identities - race, (dis)ability, class, sexualities, religions, socio-economics. As tutors, we knew these identities came with an ambivalent range of power dynamics which would then affect our writing center interactions, depending on how they had played out in our clients lives and our responses to their literacy challenges. We also knew that tutor-tutee interactions were fraught with issues of authority, past literacy accomplishments and failures, and the sense of self-worth that accompanies advanced literacy acquisition. For example, an odd combination of the conservative Catholic nuns and the progressive women of color from urban Northeast New Jersey using our services brought an interesting variety of identity-driven projects to our tutoring sessions and the conversations that

1 Cf Lee Ann Carroll, Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers
spilled over into our daily operations. While ideologies clashed - as they often do in the contact zone of the WC - we found common ground in discussions of the ways our sociocultural backgrounds impacted our writing. Our shared interests helped us build a community - what Pratt might call a safe house - that interrogated issues of identity at its core, and our staff became focused on how those issues might impact serving our student writers. As a result, my personal view of writing completely changed to one that considered the social circumstances of my tutees and fellow tutors.

Yet, when I was eventually handed some administrative responsibilities, it was dismaying to note that our assessment practices ran counter to our community’s careful consideration of identities and alternative literacy practices. Our surveys, reports, and data focused less on our students as individuals with diverse backgrounds, and more on neoliberal ideas of productivity and efficiency. Assessment practices largely ignored student identities and multiliteracies, and took little account of students’ lives beyond their coursework or the number of visits they made to the center. Although the center was implicitly committed to anti-oppressive work and although the staff pushed for tutoring pedagogies that valued a diverse view of literacy, those notions were left unexplored in its assessments. Although we collected data regarding students’ participation in various academic programs, the narratives given to administrators flattened the complex values and nuanced labor practices that were so crucial to the successful community environment of the center.

When a co-worker and I began questioning this situation, the director pointed out the high stakes of these assessments: “The people in charge want numbers, and they give out the money.” In many ways, her hands were tied. This is a disappointing, but completely valid and all-too-common reaction. The institutional pressures faced by that center, and countless other
WCs currently, are very real motivators for abiding by reductionist assessment protocols. Early WC assessment scholarship worked to negotiate that very hurdle. However, in recent years, as writing assessment in composition and rhetoric writ large has followed a mission-oriented approach to assessments by recognizing their potential as institutional narratives, WC assessment scholars have pushed for similar work to be done in the WC. Institutional mandates must be taken into consideration in any assessment recommendations. However, as WC administrators, we must ask to what degree we can also represent our core values and progressive practices in that documentation. To what extent must we cater to “the people in charge”? What is the place of WC assessment in the larger anti-oppressive work being done by educators across our campuses?

This dissertation will offer insights and arguments regarding WC assessment strategies that will take into consideration a broader view of our students’ literacies and identities as related to institutional forces such as university literacy policies, budgeting decisions, and assessment protocols. As I build on ecological, materialist, feminist, and critical race interrogations of literacies, WPA work, and WC studies, I will incorporate recent research by composition and rhetoric scholars who utilize actor network theory and assemblage theory to view the teaching of writing in dynamic ways. This combination of theories allows me to position the complex network of student identities alongside the equally-complex network - or ecologies - of writing in the university.

This network is so often overlooked or misconstrued in administrative conversations surrounding writing in the university. Take, for example, the simple organizational chart that so many of us have had handed to us during faculty or department meetings.

---

3 Cf Eileen Schendel and William Macauley, Building Writing Center Assessments that Matter (2012)
4 Here, I am referring to “assemblage” as discussed by Jasbir Puar in Terrorist Assemblages (2007) and “I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory” (2012), discussed below.
Figure 1 shows a rough depiction of what this may look like using the departments and services typically included in WC assessments. Here, the WC is positioned far down the chain of command, as is the WP and other programs integral to the makeup of writing at the university.

Because this chart is clearly focused on the academic end of the institutional structure, only academic departments are visible. A revisualization of these same structures using the rhizomatic model of assemblage, however, shown in Figure 2, tell a different story.
Here, the WC is positioned at the core of writing activity at the university in a nonhierarchical map detailing the circulation of writing education at the institutional. The institutional forces no longer reside at the top of the structure, for in this model, there isn’t any “top.” Instead, the eye is drawn to the arrows and motion amongst the different stakeholders depicted. Furthermore, this model allows for a multitude of programs to be visible - of note, departments dealing with sociocultural factors that impact students’ experience of writing at the university more directly, perhaps, than the academic departments pictured in Figure 1. This is a student-centric model, which, I would argue, is exactly how all university functions should be geared. In his article,
“Arrested Development,” Mark McBeth confronts the complexity of contact zones and safe houses in the university, writing:

For developmental students whose issues of literacy entangle with issues of academic socialization (and often educational resistance), their literacy growth is often linked with their reading and writing behaviors (or, as I like to think, their literacy misbehaviors). These branches of intensive writing courses create a classroom “contact zone of proximal development,” a learning environment where students’ specific problems of literacy issues are posed in the reading, in-class exercises, and collaboration they have with their instructor and peers. The “actual development” of students in these courses differs greatly, and their achievements depend on the instructors’ abilities to identify students’ misperceptions and devise ways for students to negotiate their tricky processes of reading and writing and, ultimately, resolve and master them on their own. During this slow and arduous progression, it is often difficult for both students and teachers to pinpoint the actual improvement being made—also because the progression is often accompanied by moments of regression. (“Arrested” 38-39)

Here, McBeth denotes the difficulty of identifying “actual improvement” in student literacy development. While the author focuses on the classroom here, it could be said that a crucial aspect of this conversation should involve looking outside of the classroom, or, for that matter, the typically hierarchical spaces of the university. Perhaps renegotiating our attitudes toward student writing involves placing its non-classroom spaces at the center of our discussions, as well as in making important connections to non-academic spaces in the university. I argue that assemblage theory, in its acknowledgement of the instability of notions like “identity,” “time,” or
“space” offers a way of complicating ideologies that impact assessments in ways that have rarely been acknowledged or conceived.

**THE WRITING CENTER AS A THIRDSpace**

In approaching the task of assemblage-based assessments in the WC, and in making connections to assemblage theory, we, as WCDs and WC administrative staff, must first consider both the nature of the WC in the larger university community, and the role of identity work in the liminal space of the WC, keeping always in mind the instability of identity. When composition and rhetoric scholars talk about student identity, they take into consideration, in 21st c. writing programs (WPs) and WCs, that the lives students live outside the first-year composition (FYC) classroom affect their writing inside those classrooms. Countless scholarship in the field of composition have pushed the field of composition and rhetoric closer to a sociocultural view of literacy education at the postsecondary level. We’ve also, in recent years, placed more value on the ways literacies transfer into and out of the FYC classroom. This inevitably has led to discussions of pre-FYC literacies and thinking of transfer as a series of processes that are, according to Elizabeth Wardle and Rebecca Nowacek respectively, sociocultural in nature. In these discussions of transfer, we start to acknowledge the different discourse communities our students are a part of in (and outside/alongside of the university, which becomes important as

---

5 Cf Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*; Keith Gilyard, *Voices of the Self*; and Victor Villanueva, *Bootstraps* for literacy narratives. See also sociolinguists Geneva Smitherman and Deborah Tannen, and literacy scholars Marilyn Sternglass, James Paul Gee, and Deborah Brandt.


7 In describing context-based conceptions of knowledge transfer, Wardle defines a sociocultural approach as one that “shifts the emphasis from individual learners to interactions between people ‘involved in the construction of tasks’” (Wardle, “Understanding” 67, citing Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 27).

8 Here, I am referencing Gee’s work on Discourse as “a socially accepted association among the ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’” (Gee, “Literacy” 537). Literacy, for Gee, takes on a similarly broad definition as mastery over a Discourse. Discourses - and therefore literacies - do not simply refer to reading or writing in the traditional sense; rather, they refer to any communicative activity, behavior, or ideology. With this in mind, for the purposes of this
we design curriculums and WC initiatives that work to embrace prior literacies and encourage
the transfer of composing knowledges amongst coursework, tutoring sessions, and other aspects
of our students’ literacy landscapes. What all of that begins to point to is a vast network of
identities, but one that can’t (or shouldn’t) be seen as static. Our students’ university-based
communities as well as their extra-campus discourses are in constant dialogue. If we embrace the
ever-shifting nature of this situation, a re-examination of the frameworks used to depict and
explore writing and students in the university becomes necessary. Recognizing the intra-actions
amongst those spaces of literacy, following assemblage theory, is an important tool in resetting
our thinking as WC administrators and staff.

A space like the WC becomes a perfect environment for observing the benefits of new
theoretical frameworks such as assemblage theory. The questions I pose in this project bridge our
conceptions of literacies as they appear in our assessment practices with the material realities of
our students’ writing as well as the identities/identifications that surface in their composed texts.
In this type of investigation, attention to space and interactive dynamics as an important element
of composing allows us to connect the writing activities of students to multiple environments,
both on and off campus with their families, bosses, teachers, and tutors. Equally important,
considerations of spatial dynamics highlight interconnections between multiple institutionalized
spaces of composing in a university - upper administration to writing programming, writing
programs to its instructors and, in particular, the composition classroom to the WC.

In examining the space of the WC in the university and the interactive dynamics that play
out there, we find a long history of alternative pedagogical practices that the institutionalized,
normativizing space of the classroom cannot effectively utilize. The Writing Center’s position as

study and anti-oppressive assessment, we must account for students’ literacies grounded outside of an educational
environment.
a “thirdspace,” as Rhonda C. Grego and Nancy S. Thompson call it, or its “in-between-ness,” as Bonnie S. Sunstein terms it, is what makes the WC a crucial element in anti-oppressive writing education in the university. This positionality must be acknowledged to fully understand the importance of alternative assessment practices that highlight the true nature of WC work. In *Geographies of Writing*, Nedra Reynolds relies on contemporary spatial theorists to point out connections between literacies and space as a material thing: “Places evoke powerful human emotions because they become layered, like sediment or a palimpsest, with histories and personal geographies” (Reynolds 2). By emphasizing materiality in her consideration of writing instruction, Reynolds reiterates the calls of multiliteracy and critical race scholars to acknowledge students’ lived experiences in our approaches to teaching writing.9 Reynolds’ notion of spaces of composing is connected to several spatially-oriented strands in WC scholarship which highlight the importance of the WC as a non-classroom space. She urges, “[I]t is urgent for us to consider how spaces impact upon learning, reading, and writing when opportunities for communicating expand through electronic technologies while, at the same time, moving through the world seems more difficult or more dangerous” (Reynolds 3). Those of us in WC studies might heed that call directly, as we are a discipline based upon the very notion Reynolds argues for.

Elizabeth Boquet in “Our Little Secret” positions the WC as a space that simultaneously participates in institutional discourses and maintains an “at-odd-ness” with those structures (“Our Little Secret” 466). Exploring the textual, pedagogical, spatial, cultural, professional, and institutional liminality of WCs, Sunstein, in “Moveable Feasts, Liminal Spaces” writes:

---

A writing center cannot define itself as a space—we’re often kicked out of our spaces. It’s not a pedagogy. We’re always re-articulating our pedagogy. It’s certainly not an academic department. It crosses all disciplines. A writing center does not produce a text—the texts in writing centers are unfinished. And we don’t own the texts our students create; those texts are cross-curricular, cross-linguistic, cross-discursive. And we can’t really call a writing center a culture; it exists where differing cultures meet. Non-traditional students, failed students, needy faculty, lost students, LD and ESL students, gifted and average students, blocked and oppressed students—and we hope other “kinds” of students and faculty—pour in our doors daily. We allow our centers to mold themselves to our institutions’ needs. And that too presents a problem because when we must define ourselves to our colleagues in more academic, “fixed” places of our institutions, we know we’re not telling the whole story—and they’re not hearing it.

(Sunstein 9)

For Sunstein, these liminalities are a boon to WC work, as they allow WCs to operate for students in ways other more structured academic spaces cannot. They also underscore the marginal space of the writing center in the university and the marginalized labor that goes on their while also pointing to how this intellectual work is absolutely necessary to the rehearsal, process, and progression of college students’ literacy development. Sunstein’s comments on the importance of liminality in the WC are echoed in works such as Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces, in which Grego and Thompson examine a studio approach, closely tied to WC practices, as a way of democratizing the WP and pushing back against the institutional space of the writing classroom. However, as Sunstein notes, liminality also makes the full story of the WC difficult to describe to outsiders. We can see this as the central reason for complicating our
assessment narratives. If our liminality cannot be highlighted, if not explained, in our assessment narratives, that liminality and its relationship to how our students (counter)identify with academic work will not be understood by other institutional stakeholders who have the power of funding and/or policy decision-making. Furthermore, the necessity of ecological, assemblage-based frameworks for WC assessment becomes clear.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO ASSEMBLAGES IN (AND OF) THE WRITING CENTER

With the liminality of the WC in mind, and with an eye towards the materiality of the WC as a space on a university campus, we can begin to see that assemblages as interactive social dynamics rather than singular, over-determined identities (labels such as “basic writer” or “honors student” or “at-risk writer”) become a more accurate and generative framework for describing our students and indeed, our work with them. Traditionally, intersectional feminism has been the popular mode for confronting multiple identities in the writing classroom and in the WC. With Kimberle Crenshaw’s famous model of the traffic intersection\(^\text{10}\) in mind, administrators of writing education work with the notion that students, staff, and faculty perform and are influenced by different patterns of identity that interact with each other and that should not be separated from one another (i.e. politics of gender cannot be separated from politics of race, sexuality, etc.). While this model is crucial in building an understanding of the outside influences in our students’ writing in the university and in helping to de-privilege normativizing frameworks in our spaces of composing, I question whether this viewpoint of multicultural settings and the identities within them is the most fruitful tool for approaching anti-oppressive work, particularly in the WC. Instead, we might use intersectionality as a helpful tempering agent to the potentially-relativist theories of assemblage and posthumanism, as Jasbir Puar argues. Below, I describe the important nuances Puar brings to light to highlight both the

\(^{10}\) Cf Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”
conflicts between, and the interdependency of, these theories and to show their usefulness in WC practice and theory.

In working toward WC assessments that simultaneously articulate the liminal position of the WC in the university, acknowledge the multifaceted unstable identities of student writers, and support the anti-oppressive practices thereof, I turn to assemblage theory to ground the conversation and eventually to guide heuristics for developing new protocols. This framework is useful particularly as perceived of by Puar, who emphasizes the complementary nature of assemblage theory and intersectional feminism. Although intersectionality can be seen to be at odds with the work of assemblage theorists, Puar argues that both frameworks are conterminously necessary for a complex view of identity in political and ontological spaces.

To begin with a clearer understanding of assemblage theory, we may turn to Puar’s 2012 article, “I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess,” as well as her 2007 book, *Terrorist Assemblages*. Puar both follows and critiques the definitions of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who develop the idea of “assemblages” in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The authors define assemblages as multifaceted networks of being and understanding, constantly in dynamic upheaval. For Deleuze and Guattari, books and writing are useful tools for illustrating assemblages. They write:

An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously. ...There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes *connections* between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. In short, we think that one cannot write
sufficiently in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no
subjectivity. The book as an assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of
the world. A rhizomatic book, not a dichotomous, pivotal, or fascicular book. (Deleuze
and Guattari 22-23, emphases mine)

While Deleuze and Guattari refer to notions of literature here, composition and rhetoric scholars
may be reminded of Pratt’s contact zones, as well as the work of Reynolds, and Grego and
Thompson, mentioned above. Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on the active connections
between these layers of existence and knowledge, rather than on the layers themselves, hearkens
back to work in composition and rhetoric that places high value on the multitudinous nature of
literacies. In essence, this is a theory that is focused not on the content of beings or of matter,
but on actions and connections between them.

This depiction of the intertwining/interacting nature of assemblages offers insight into the
operations of both identities in the world and institutional spaces, such as WPs and WCs.
Deleuze and Guattari highlight the connection between objects, actors, and discourse in ways
that intersectional views of identity cannot, given the multi-stranded way Deleuze and Guattari
and other assemblage theorists see the motion of these elements. If in intersectional theory
identities “are,” in assemblage theory identities “do” and “do to each other.” The authors’
famous image of the rhizome highlighted early in their text, as well as their use of writing quoted
above, strikes me as a way of imagining the structure of writing education within the university
setting. Composition and rhetoric scholars have begun to use assemblages as a lens in other

---

11 In fact, John Phillips, whose work Puar cites, points out that Deleuze and Guattari’s illustrative definition of
assemblages must be understood in relation to the text’s translation. The original French term, agencement,
highlights the “relations” rather than the “content” of assemblages. Phillips explains, “Agencement implies specific
connections with the other concepts. It is, in fact, the arrangement of these connections that gives the concepts their
sense” (Phillips 108; “I Would” 57). This issue of translative misunderstanding might, perhaps, highlight even
further the instability of discourse and language, as well as of identity, so central to the conversations of this
dissertation.
aspects of our work. Paul Lynch and Nathaniel Rivers’ collection makes similar moves using Latour’s work on assemblages, asserting that “To believe in rhetoric, then, is not to assert anything, but, rather, to commit to seeing things through, to go all the way in following networks” (Lynch and Rivers 6). By advocating for, to use a term from Puar, “cyborgian” WC assessments, I aim to do just that.

To clarify the connection between assemblage theory and the importance of space, place and material positionality in this work, it is important to focus on the movement-oriented nature of the theory of identity and matter. The instability and fluidity highlighted in this work on identity is key in an understanding of the importance of recognizing the changing circumstances of the students using our WCs and who appear, in some way, in our assessments. Karen Barad’s argument for an acknowledgement of the very tangible intra-relationship between place (and the objects in the place) and the way we function in the world in Meeting the Universe Halfway draws us back to ideas of liminal spatiality and echoes Reynolds’ call for a greater emphasis on the material circumstances of composing in the university. “Matter and meaning are not separate elements,” she writes in a direct correlation to Reynolds’ words regarding space and emotion (Barad 3; Reynolds 2). Framing her scholarship in spatial theory, actor-network theory, and quantum physics, Barad offers an interdisciplinary, feminist materialist lens through which we can view our perceptions of student literacies, introducing the notion of “agential realism”:

I propose "agential realism" as an epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human and nonhuman, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices, thereby

---

12 Barad uses the prefix “intra-” throughout her text in order to acknowledge the unstable nature of matter, a notion largely supported by the work of assemblage theorists. Puar uses this idea to discuss identities as unstable.
moving such considerations beyond the well-worn debates that pit constructivism against realism, agency against structure, and idealism against materialism. (Barad 26)

Defining agential realism in more detail while emphasizing an alternative way of thinking of causality, Barad writes:

This relational ontology is the basis for my posthumanist performative account of material bodies (both human and nonhuman). This account refuses the representationalist fixation on words and things and the problematic of the nature of their relationship, advocating instead a relationality between specific material (re)configurings of the world through which boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted (i.e., discursive practices, in my posthumanist sense) and specific material phenomena (i.e., differentiating patterns of mattering). This causal relationship between the apparatuses of bodily production and the phenomena produced is one of agential intra-action. (Barad 139)

Agential realism, then, is a way of centering the networks of assemblage theory in matter - a concentration on the push-pull of human and nonhuman matter that remain unrecognized in many discussions of identity and power structures. The “mattering” that Barad refers to here is, as she later explains, connected to issues of race, sexuality, gender, religion, and other identity structures that determine the way a person’s being moves through the material world influenced by both material and nonmaterial power structures. Puar shows Barad’s work, and the work of similar theorists often referred to as “feminist materialists,” as creating a material base for the work of philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari. Here, the idea of the cyborg finds its place through the work of Donna Haraway and others focused on bodies as the ever-amorphous “matter” to which Barad refers. Human bodies - like any other matter - are constantly in
upheaval, impacted by, and adapting to, the material situations in which they find themselves. Puar writes, “Categories—race, gender, sexuality—are considered events, actions, and encounters between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects” (“I Would” 58). With this in mind, we can see that Barad’s agential realism helps us think about the ways material circumstances must come into play in our assessments in the WC, as well as the need for acknowledging institutional pressures as something to be both pushed against and worked with. If there is a constant pushing and pulling in the systems in which we find ourselves as WC administrators and staff, those motions must be accounted for and played with in our assessments to fulfill our missions of anti-oppressive work. This grounding in the material is important in extending the conversation of ecological assessment and its connection to assemblage theory, as it allows us to acknowledge the intra-relatedness yet separateness of the WP and the WC while reminding us of the material impacts of power structures on our students. We must account for situations that show how a student from a low-income background who works three jobs, comes to the center, and still fails their course is different - or perhaps quite similar to - the student of color who attends regular tutoring sessions at the center but who is the first person in their family to attend college and is receiving little academic support at home. In assessments, in the WC and elsewhere, matter needs to matter.

But while Deleuze and Guattari, Latour, Barad, and other like-minded theorists are necessary to an understanding of ecological frameworks of literacy and writing in the university, critiques of posthumanism, a close relative of assemblage theory, must be considered. Commenting on remarks she received after the publication of her book, Puar writes:

Part of the assumption at work in these queries [from feminist colleagues regarding her alleged dismissal of intersectionality] is that representation, and its recognized subjects, is
the dominant, primary, or most efficacious platform of political intervention, while a
Deleuzian nonrepresentational, non-subject-oriented politics is deemed impossible.
Perhaps these queries also reveal concerns about how they might be somehow
incompatible or even oppositional, despite the fact that intersectionality and assemblage
are not analogous in terms of content, utility, or deployment. As analytics, they may not
be reconcilable. Yet they need not be oppositional but rather, I argue, frictional. (“I
Would” 50).

Puar’s take on assemblages reconciles the supposed conflicts between these two frameworks in
her care for feminist ethical and political concerns. Taking a transnational feminist stance, she
acknowledges the value still apparent in intersectional feminism, bypassing the critiques of her
colleagues who point to the flattening of identity and sociocultural oppressive experiences that
occur when applying posthuman frameworks such as assemblage theory. She argues:

As opposed to an intersectional model of identity, which presumes that components -
race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion - are separable analytics and can
thus be disassembled, an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven forces that
merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and
permanency. (Terrorist 212)

Rather than seeing people as individual bodies that take part in predetermined identities,
assemblage theory posits that bodies are “unstable entities that” can’t be pinned down to
intersections (“I Would” 56). Assemblages do things with or to each other, expressed in Barad’s
notion of “intra-action.” The key, for Puar, is to see intersectional identities in perpetual motion.
Puar asks us to place “emphasis not on entities but on the patterns in which they arrange
themselves” (“I Would” 60-61). If we begin to see matter as indiscrete, then our perceptions of
how we see students in our WCs becomes complicated. If we keep in mind the “affective conditions necessary” (“I Would” 61) for assemblages to be or act, then we are being responsible in our confrontation of identity as WC and WP administrators.

Building on Puar’s ideas of “affective conditions” (“I Would” 61-62), then, we might think about ways that the WC can act as that event-space in bringing together different collages of student experience to best serve a multiplicity of learners. For instance, how might we more closely interrogate and make use of students’ participation in specialized students services (e.g. educational opportunity programs or disability support services), student activities, and off-campus jobs alongside their classroom work to better understand patterns of questions during tutoring sessions or common writing struggles? By focusing on the intra-actions of these seemingly disparate spaces of literacies in which students partake, we might find answers about the circulation of writing knowledge on our university campuses. Rather than focusing on the separate identities of our students that might impact their composing, in other words, we might try to focus on the interactions between those identities as they clash and entwine with the environment of the university and the WC and, indeed, the tutoring session they happen to be experiencing at a given moment.

In some ways that seems so simple, and familiar - like much of what we already do in the WC. But I am suggesting that in continuing that work, let’s not treat students as stopped cars at an intersection; they are vehicles that should be studied in motion. Like Puar, I’m not suggesting that intersectionality, and therefore identity, be ignored in the WC. Rather, I suggest a more fluid view of that work. Assemblages make room for movement and change and happenings, whereas intersectionality alone does not.

Making connections between affect and assemblage theory, Puar asks:
“...How might identity-as-retrospective-ordering amplify rather than inhibit praxes of political organizing? If we transfer our... momentum from the defense of the integrity of identity and submit instead to this affective ideation of identity, what kinds of political strategies... might we unabashedly stumble upon?” (Terrorist 215)

These questions might be reconsidered in terms of literacy education - specifically, for the purposes of this dissertation, writing tutoring. If writing educators change the way we see students when they come into our WCs, if we look at them as part of vast networks-in-motion, how does our role in their writing processes, and in the university, shift? Assemblages add a more logical component to our thinking about identity in our day to day work as compositionists, and is particularly suited to the WC. The WC’s liminality lends it to pedagogies and practices that allow WC communities to more fully acknowledge their own ever-changing eventness in the university while also serving students’ eventness-es.

NETWORKS OF WRITING SPACES AND ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT MODELS

In some ways, the influence of this networked thinking is already there in writing studies writ large. Making connections to other progressive assessment research, Asao Inoue and other anti-racist assessment scholars often approach assessment ecologically. Inspired by the work of Elizabeth Wardle and Kevin J. Roozen among others, these radical assessment designers ask composition and rhetoric researchers to think of assessment as a larger systemic process impacting students’ lives across their educational experiences.

According to Wardle and Roozen, traditional assessments of student writing are based on a vertical model of literate development. Vertical models of assessment focus on “a systematic and carefully detailed study of writing tightly situated within the circumscribed boundaries of school” (emphasis added, 107). Vertical models are useful because they follow students over a
period of time in tight constraints. This results in well-controlled data, but this model also
privileges intersectional identities over assemblages due to the model’s “situated” nature.

Wardle and Roozen instead call for an ecological model of assessment that follows
students across academic and extracurricular boundaries to more fully capture the factors
impacting their development as writers. They write:

While it is important to understand how expertise develops in one community, rhetorical
dexterity across communities and situations is perhaps the most common sort of literate
practice from moment to moment. In addition, as we mentioned earlier, a person’s full
range of literate experiences and histories are brought to bear on all of his or her literate
activities, even on vertical development and expert practice within one community. Thus,
what a person writes privately out of school may, in fact, be deeply relevant to his or her
efforts to take up a particular school genre. This view, which we will describe as an
“ecological” model, understands an individual’s writing abilities as developing across an
expansive network that links together a broad range of literate experiences over lengthy
periods of time. (Wardle and Roozen 108)

This model more cohesively integrates the notion of assemblages as the basis for identity
formations by privileging movements amongst spaces of literacy development in student writing.
Furthermore, Wardle and Roozen argue that the changing spaces of literacy highlighted by
ecological models of assessment help establish identity production by our students by showing
the “work of reconciliation” between often-disparate literacy practices and discourses (Wardle
and Roozen 109). This exemplifies the necessity of complex models of assessment for doing any
type of anti-oppressive work in spaces of writing education. Showcasing the impact of identity
formation on our students’ writing in our assessments, and showing the intra-actions, to use
Barad’s term, of different spaces of composing in the university, gives voice to some of the
values we hold as WPs and WCs by privileging the sociopolitical above neoliberal ideals of
success.

It must be noted that the ecological assessments posited by Wardle and Roozen are more
than complex; they involve the participation of multiple offices, departments, and faculty and
staff members, making them difficult in institutional settings that overburden administrators and
value siloed models of educational administration. However, this collaborative work not only
more accurately portrays our students’ work and identities in our WPs and WCs; they also give
us an outlet for implementing the collaborative practices we hold in such high regard in our
pedagogy. In arguing for these models, Wardle and Roozen discuss changes to models for
writing program assessment, centering the work done in the classroom while noting the
importance of “third space experiences” (109) such as the WC. I argue for a rethinking of these
practices by placing the WC as a focal point in place of the classroom. In centering such a “third
space experience,” traditional models of writing education in the university are disrupted, and,
along with them, institutional ideas of where literacy is allowed to take place.

Puar’s argument complements the ecological assessment frameworks of Wardle and
Roozen in its focus on the unstable, networked, movement-based nature of identities in ways
similar to Reynolds and Barad. As Puar critiques intersectionality’s static renderings of identity
that then preclude epistemological change over time and geopolitical space (“I Would” 54), we
can find connections to our own work in that very language. As we group students into
populations for WC assessment documents - documents which are frequently individually-
authored by WCs and remain unshared amongst other university offices - are we not focusing on
static identity formations? In the necessary day-to-day bureaucracy of WCs, we must work to
move past our traditional, vertical models of assessment and instead incorporate fuller visions of our collaborative work and our students through ecological, assemblage-based models. This idea of a networked WC is nothing new, per say, as Grego’s and Sunstein’s work exemplifies. But by taking this to the level of networks and ecologies, we move away from stationary ideas of collaboration, and instead towards movement-oriented frameworks of writing, teaching, and assessment in the university.

An ecological framework reinforces the identity-based work being done by multiliteracy scholars, WAC scholars, and, indeed, WC scholars, who take a broad view of writing education, and who place importance on the lived, material circumstances of students. Yet despite these important trends, there is little cross-over, in assessment considerations, amongst sub-fields of composition and rhetoric study. The resulting gap in research between identity-driven WC scholarship and anti-racist assessment scholarship, is where I situate my arguments in this dissertation.

These notions of intra-relatedness and intertwinings are essential to this dissertation’s consideration of pedagogy and administration. Expanding upon Wardle and Roozen’s work, as well as upon Inoue’s, I argue that it is vitally important for WPAs and WCDs to bring their complex views of literacies to their assessment protocols. I further argue that this practice can be helped along by an assemblage-based framework.

While it has not been applied to assessment, or, for that matter, WC studies, using this framework is becoming increasingly important to composition and rhetoric as a field. Jacqueline Preston, outlining a theory of “writing to assemble,” looks at writing contextually in the first-year writing (FYW) classroom rather than as situated and representational in her article, “Project(ing) Literacy: Writing to Assemble in a Postcomposition FYW Classroom” (2015).
Relatedly, Lynch and Rivers’ 2015 collection described above brings together ideas of agency and collectivity in teaching and theorizing about composition. Because of these recent trends, and because of the necessity of including the WC in any discussion of writing ecologies in the university, this study incorporates these theoretical lenses to strengthen the case for anti-oppressive assessments in the WC.

ASSEMBLING TOWARD ANTIRACIST ASSESSMENT IN THE WRITING CENTER

Focusing on materiality and using assemblage theory as a mechanism for confronting multiliteracies allows us to see the constant movement and reshaping of students’ knowledges as they approach different environments, different courses, and different genres, both in- and outside of the university, as this recent scholarship exemplifies. This dissertation will continue to broaden the purview of this scholarship by making connections among assemblage theory and materialism, studies of ecological and anti-racist assessments, and studies of WC work, to ground theoretical conversations in everyday practices. Three questions frame this dissertative research: How are spaces of composing, so linked to identities and literacy practices, reflected in the assessments we make of our own writing? How are our ideologies, particularly those many of us value as progressive teachers and feminist/anti-racist activists, reflected in those assessments? And, most importantly, how are our students’ identities and multiple literacies reflected (or not) in the assessments they undergo?

Using one WC in a large public, urban university system as a case study, the following chapters will explore the ways institutional pressures can shape assessments, and will begin to make suggestions for new, ethical approaches relying on assemblage theory that follow current trends in writing assessment. Chapter Two, “Assembling the Cyborg, Searching for Missing Parts: A Literature Review,” will offer a review of scholarship in writing center studies,
assessment studies, and literacy studies as a way of building context for the rest of this
dissertation. Chapter Three, “Why a ‘Cyborg’?: Methodology and Theoretical Frameworks,” will
outline the methodology for my project, and will further emphasize the importance of
assemblage theory and an ecology-based approach to assessment as a theoretical framework.
Chapter Four, “Finding the Center: Historical Context and Institutional Pressures,” will address
the history of writing at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, the location of the case
study, with special focus on the founding of the John Jay Writing Center (JJWC), later renamed
the Alan Siegel Writing Center (ASWC), and the institutional-political context in which it came
to exist. Chapter Five, “‘Lots of Moving Parts’: Discourse Analysis of Current Assessment
Practices,” will offer a discourse analysis of current assessment documentation from the ASWC,
placing it in the context of the theoretical framework described in previous chapters. Chapter Six,
“The Cyborg Center: An Assemblage-Based Heuristic for Socially Just Writing Center
Assessment,” will argue for renewed connections between WC and writing assessment
scholarship and practice, and will offer suggestions for future assessment research and practice in
WC assessments.

At the end of her article, Puar solidifies the non-sequitur of the question originally posed
by Donna Haraway, as shown in the epigraph to this chapter. Intersectional feminism or
assemblage theory? Cyborg or goddess? “[W]hy disaggregate the two,” she responds, “when
there surely must be cyborgian goddesses in our midst?” (“I Would” 63). I aim to espouse this
sentiment throughout this study as I rely upon theory from both identity-driven studies and
assemblage theory to complicate the practices of assessment in the WC. Throughout the

---

13 Due to the nature of the renaming of the JJWC, which is discussed in Chapters Three and Four, and to the
historical nature of much of this dissertation, I will be referring to the center by its original name until my
chronological narrative reaches 2014, when the center was renamed. At this time, I will begin referring to the center
as the Alan Siegel Writing Center (ASWC).
following chapters, it is important to remember that intersectionality is necessary to a project geared toward social justice educational activism; it is equally as important, however, to investigate the instabilities of those intersections, to allow our centers’ assessments to be shaped by the relationships of their students’ literacies and be the collaborations in which they take part across the university.

Throughout the following chapters I invoke Puar’s image of the cyborg as a central conceit in the chapter titles and discussions of assemblages. While this image is, as Puar herself considers, problematic when not used in a nuanced way, it offers a helpful touchstone for thinking of WCs as taking part in university assemblages. While Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the rhizome offers insight into the intertwinings of matter and knowledge-making, it centers nature and organic connections. As this dissertation shows, a large part of WC assemblages consists of neoliberal institutional structures - inorganic corporatizations of education that work against the WC’s mission. It seems only fitting that in interrogating the tension that ensues from this symbiotic relationship, we use a potentially-unpleasant image as a central metaphor. The image of this complex cyborg - or “cyborgian goddess,” to use Puar’s phrase - emphasizes the WC as a combination of many separate, moving parts and acknowledges intra-actions with other spaces of composing. In this project, I use that image to center this dissertation in the work of a feminist woman of color, and to place value on the individual identities of WCs, peer tutors, and students while acknowledging and working against systems of oppression that impact some of those students disproportionately.
Chapter Two
Assembling the Cyborg, Searching for Missing Parts: A Literature Review

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their
nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago
denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is
unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a
claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of
its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm
strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity
and uphold the right of students to their own language.

Conference on College Composition and Communication, “Students’ Right to Their Own
Language”

IDENTITY IN COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC SCHOLARSHIP

Issues of identity, despite coming and going trends in composition and rhetoric
scholarship, have remained a central tenet of the field’s guiding principles. In 1974, CCCC
adopted the Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution in a historic decision
promoting the importance of “linguistic justice” and the need to give students agency over their
language in the writing classroom (Smitherman; NCTE resolution; Perryman-Clark, Kirkland,
and Jackson 2). SRTOL opened the door for writing program administrators, writing instructors,
and composition and rhetoric scholars to lobby for broader definitions of literacy and language in
writing education, and introduced an emphasis on thinking about the outside influences on
literacies in students’ lives, as well as the political problems of privileging a standardized
academic English in writing instruction.

Following SRTOL, composition and rhetoric scholarship of the 1990s continued
developing social constructivist and sociolinguist ideas of writing studies that served as a
counterbalance to the trend toward cognitivist scholarship of the time.14 As the field of
composition and rhetoric evolved, it paid closer (yet irresolute) attention to students’ literacy

---

14 Cf Carol Berkenkotter, "Paradigm Debates, Turf Wars, and the Conduct of Sociocognitive Inquiry in
Composition."
acquisition and literacy identifications. Scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster, with *Traces of a Stream* and other work, and Shirley Wilson Logan, with *We Are Coming*, present histories of multiple literacies of marginalized people. Royster and Wilson Logan’s work on African American literacies from the 19th centuries offer insights about the relationship between race and literacy formation at a specific time in history. These historical accounts help contextualize literacy education today, and begin a conversation amongst scholars of historical rhetoric that expands definitions of “rhetoric,” “literacy,” and “education.”

In addition to historical accounts, literacy scholars within composition and rhetoric lobby for the necessity of acknowledging and studying multiple literacies in first year composition courses. Geneva Smitherman, writing during the early 1990s, argues for the importance of acknowledging multiple literacies and the identities that accompany them as an antiracist act. Victor Villanueva, in his important work, *Bootstraps*, makes connections between economic class and race as he interrogates the position of students of color in the writing classroom. Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary* and other work in the same tradition confronts the necessity of acknowledging economic inequalities in the college classroom. By broadening the definition of literacy to make room for the individual experiences of students across a wide variety of economic, racial backgrounds, these scholars place identity at the center of writing pedagogy.

The influence of the 1990s and SRTOL can be seen more recently in the work of multiliteracy studies scholars. Carmen Kynard, Adam J. Banks, Vershawn Ashanti Young, Elaine Richardson and others, have built on Smitherman’s work, extending the social turn of composition and rhetoric to speak to first year composition (FYC) in the 21st century. Kynard’s work, featured in her book, *Vernacular Insurrections*, traces histories of Black Freedom Movements, and examines their importance in student work in the composition classroom that
confronts power structures in the university. Young’s work in *Other People’s English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy* emphasizes the importance of recognizing home literacies in the college writing classroom, privileging the concept of code-meshing over code-switching as a way of de-centering Standard Vernacular English (SVE) as a dominant discourse. Richardson’s work spans across several topics, including the story of her journey from economic and educational disadvantage to a PhD, *PHD to PhD*, and her work on cultural rhetorics, *African American Literacies* and *Hiphop Literacies*. Richardson’s powerful work serves as a connection between those working on literacy studies and those focused on social justice work in other disciplines, and shows the need for valuing cultural spaces of rhetoric, just as Smitherman’s early work does. These important pieces have helped push the field of composition and rhetoric toward new appreciations of the sociopolitical systems in which we, as writing instructors and writing students, operate.

However, the work is far from finished, as disparities between subfields, such as writing center scholarship and research, persist. Many of the works mentioned above focus on classroom practices and the pedagogies of individual instructors rather than on the institutional supports necessary to make these ideas globally accepted in universities. Others are narratives of literacy landscapes centered outside university structures. This scholarship serves as a backdrop for studies done in other subfields of composition and rhetoric, and, indeed, influence this dissertation in their interrogations of identity-based paradigms and socially-just practices in the writing classroom. However, the important triangulation of identity, literacies, and assessment is often overlooked in this scholarship - an oversight that is only recently being taken up by assessment scholars. That gap, specifically in terms of writing center studies, is where this dissertation focuses its attention.
WRITING CENTER STUDIES AND INTERROGATIONS OF IDENTITY

WC studies has been late in adopting identity-based frameworks for its scholarship due to an early need for justifying the existence and professional standing of WC work in the university. This struggle led to decades-long obsession with and over-determination of remedial language standardization and psychometric testing regimes as WC directors fought for recognition of their role in English departments, and across universities. Some of the first published work on WCs offers advice on handling grammar correction and remediation during tutoring sessions. Early Writing Lab Newsletter (WLN) issues consider grammar and “ESL problems” central to the concerns of WCs, despite contributors’ questions about the efficacy of “proofreading” services. This focus on lower order concerns is reminiscent of Mina Shaughnessy’s text, Errors and Expectations (1979), a book which greatly influenced the general field of composition and rhetoric at the time, yet came under major criticism because of its apolitical representations of the “Other” in terms of second-language and basic writing identities.15 Early assessment protocols reflected Shaughnessy’s influence, as can be seen from the second issue of WLN, in which editor Muriel Harris recommends instructor evaluation forms with questions regarding grammar knowledge (“How are Labs Evaluated?” 3). As the field of composition questioned the definitions of developmental students and language proficiency, and WC scholarship developed from “fix it shop” theories to a more nuanced idea of its role, WC publications began looking towards broader conceptions of literacy and the work of one-on-one tutoring. Pioneers such as Muriel Harris, Stephen North, Frankie Condon, and Neal Lerner worked to refocus WC studies on the needs of students and the professionalization of WC labor. Kenneth Bruffee, writing from Brooklyn College CUNY, inspired modern WC pedagogy by emphasizing the importance of

15 Cf See Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu, Representing the “Other”: Basic Writers and the Teaching of Basic Writing
collaborative writing and peer critique in “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” (1984) and other articles. All this founding scholarship shaped the approach to writing tutoring we know today as one that values listening, collaborating, and extending conversations of writing instruction beyond the classroom. However, that scholarship often bypassed crucial tensions that arise in WC work regarding identity, difference, and equality.

The impact of student identities in WC work began to be acknowledged in the mid-1990s, similar to the progression of classroom-based studies in composition and rhetoric. Although many Writing Center Journal (WCJ) articles such as Harris’ “What's Up and What's In: Trends and Traditions in Writing Centers” (1990) reaffirm the WC’s identity in the university, others, such as Marilyn Cooper’s “‘We Don’t Belong Here, Do We?’: A Response to Lives on the Boundary and The Violence of Literacy” (1991) negotiate connections between the classroom and the writing center as sites for student identity interrogations. This turn continues as John Trimbur, in “Literacy Networks: Toward Cultural Studies of Writing and Tutoring,” (1992) makes an important distinction for WCs. The author highlights the importance of looking at WCs as part of “wider social and cultural relationships that shape students’ literacy” (Trimbur 174). In a move that contextualizes conversations of student identity in the WC, Meg Woolbright’s “The Politics of Tutoring: Feminism within the Patriarchy” (1992) connects collaborative pedagogy to feminist values, and emphasizes the importance of using collaborative learning in the WC. Arguably, one of the more important moments of Woolbright’s article occurs at its beginning, when she inextricably links feminist pedagogy and theory to that of the WC, tying Stephen North’s and Andrea Lunsford’s17 concepts of the WC as a place of non-

---

16 Cf The Writing Center Journal 28.2 (Fall 2008) “Special Issue on Kenneth Bruffee and Collaborative Learning” for more on the impact of Bruffee’s work on the field.
17 Cf North, “The Idea of the Writing Center” and Lunsford, “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center”
hierarchical, communicative learning to feminist ideals of cooperation and equality. Cooper, Trimbur, and Woolbright all respectively highlight the fact that in WC collaborations, it is important for tutors to acknowledge social inequalities as a way of connecting with students more responsibly in the WC. This scholarship cites the WC as a nexus for these important confrontations of difference, and lobby for the necessity of WCs in the writing life of the university. Through the depiction of the centrality of the WC, this work also hearkens back to assemblage models of writing education in the university discussed in Chapter One as if affirms the labor networks of WCDs, WPAs, and other writing instructors.

Other scholarship from this era takes on issues of identity more pointedly. Anne DiPardo’s “Whispers of Coming and Going,” (1992) a story of a first-generation student and her work with a peer tutor, and Julie Neff’s “Disability in the Writing Center,” regarding dis/ability-friendly tutoring practices, are cited in many tutor training manuals as equally foundational to identity-centered tutoring pedagogy. Additionally, articles discussing directive versus non-directive tutoring such as Lunsford’s “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of the Writing Center” (1991) frame a discussion with acknowledgements of power systems, paving the way for future scholarship regarding systemic power via race, ability, gender, and sexuality in the writing center. Perhaps most famously, Nancy Grimm’s Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times (1999) pushes WC administrators to think beyond “the literacy myth” of a singular literacy that students should obtain and instead situate writing problems in the social inequities which often are the root cause. Also published in 1999, Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski’s “Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center” argues for WC practices that allow students to question and subvert the systemic oppression in which universities and WCs function. These texts are essential to the history of WC scholarship that recognizes the
connections between social inequalities and literacy education, as each one acknowledges the
importance of individualized writing tutoring as a place for helping students overcome
inequalities they face in the university. If WC staff attend to the inequities that tutees experience
as the acquire new literacies, they act as liaisons to introduce those inequities not as a “fault” of
the student and then help them navigate through the high grasses of literacy acquisition in post-
secondary education.

The first decades of the twenty-first century have built on that work. Identity has become
a more frequently-interrogated topic in WC scholarship, and has sparked some of the most
critical pieces in recent years as WC studies confronts its status as a largely white sub-field. In
addition to scholars such as Nancy Grimm and Harry Denny, Frankie Condon has played, and
continues to play, a significant role in exploring the sociopolitical landscape in which WCs
function. Condon’s 2007 article, “Beyond the Known: Writing Centers and the Work of Anti-
Racism,” expands upon the ideas posed in Victor Villanueva’s 2005 IWCA Conference keynote
speech18, and calls on the predominantly-white sub-field of WC studies to self-reflect and to take
conscious anti-racist action at the local level. Condon’s work with frequent collaborator
Vershawn Ashanti Young has brought WCs into larger conversations of social justice work in
composition and rhetoric, and her recent collaboration with Bobbi Olson, “Building a House for
Linguistic Diversity: Writing Centers, English Language Teaching and Learning, and Social
Justice,” offers a new lens for tutoring multilingual students. Condon’s work exemplifies WC
studies at its best - that is, WC studies that actively works toward confronting inequalities in
writing education while simultaneously pushing the sub-field to be more diverse in the
membership it encourages.

---

18 Cf Villanueva, “Blind: Talking About the New Racism”
Denny’s work follows a similar trajectory. In 2010’s *Facing the Center*, Harry Denny, a leading voice in rethinking gender and LGBTQ issues in the WC, examines the ways that WC scholarship largely neglects sexuality, gender, and race in discussions of pedagogy and administrative practice. Denny writes:

*Facing the Center* is about process and politics and their implications for learning and teaching, particularly in the context of one-to-one collaborations. At its core, face is about identity and raises questions about who we are, and how we come to know and present identity, as a phenomenon that’s unified, coherent, and captured in a singular essence, or as something more multi-faceted and dynamic. While on one level, I want us to think about face vis-à-vis writing centers; I also want us to be aware of margins and center, to think of the ways of privileging, to explore the dynamics of ordinary caste. (*Facing the Center* 2)

By thinking through the lens of “face,” Denny reviews the impacts of identity politics and process theory on one-to-one collaborations in the writing center. Denny acknowledges that the need for diversity and identity-based scholarship is not singular to WC scholarship. However, he sees the WC as “a site par excellence” (6) for working through these issues, due to its liminal position and the individualized pedagogy that resides there. Denny does not seek to perform the task of many WC texts - to present a “how to” guide about identity politics and tutoring; instead, he seeks to analyze common occurrences in the WC in which identity is at the core of the work being done by tutors rather than a simple discussion of the writing process.

With chapters on race, class, sexuality/gender, and the responsibilities of WC administrators to advocate resistance, Denny shows the importance of taking on difficult conversations in a space that has traditionally been seen as “comfortable.” He asks, “How do we
get real without creating too much discomfort? Moreover, how do we tap those feelings as fodder for sustainable learning and teaching?” (33-34). The answer, as readers see from his text, is to allow these conversations to happen in the WC, to “face” them head on, and to make a space for them to occur in our centers. This confrontation of difficult issues would demand an explicit and transparent focus in the assessment of writing center work and, subsequently, recurring training of WC staff to deal with these contentious yet not insurmountable issues. The non-hierarchal “safe spaces” of the WC offer an easier, level playing field rather than the writing classroom, where unavoidable authority issues of teacher/student, submission/evaluation, and grader/graded all seem overly ingrained.

Denny’s work can be placed alongside other major texts in WC studies published between 2005 and 2012 that address issues of inequality and oppression in the WC. *The Everyday Writing Center* (2007), co-written by Anne Ellen Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, and Elizabeth H. Boquet, acknowledges difference among student visitors to the center as well as among tutoring staff members. Working against traditional WC narratives of isolation and marginalization, Geller et al confront the intersectionality of the WC, viewing its place as part of a larger group of communities of practice in the university. A central method for taking on these issues is an emphasis on collaboration in the book: “Our unified voice dignifies the mess of learning - the worries all of us have felt and shared about whether we belong, the value of our contributions in both personal and professional terms, the points of disagreement and of contestation” (Geller et al 3). Through this examination of the collaborative possibilities in the WC in a way that unconsciously evokes assemblage theory, authors place value on the in-betweenness of WC culture and practice, and encourage readers to view the everyday moments of WC work (the small “qualitative” happenings that we often ignore or pass over) more
critically as part of how meaning is made in the WC. In addition to a discussion of the Trickster figure and need to push against hegemony, against commodification, and against routine to allow space for accidents to promote change in the WC, perhaps the most important moment in the book comes as the authors argue for the need to use the WC as a space to work against institutional racism and to recognize identity rather than ignore it. They write:

So much, we believe, of what draws folks to writing center work is our individual and collective investment in being careful, caring, and reflective in teaching and talking with students about their writing. To begin to realize and account for the possibility that racism is woven into that identity too, wound through even those practices that we hope are expressions of our most dearly-held principles, is to experience profound dislocation. The understanding of racism offered above does not invalidate that which is at the heart of our work in writing centers—the principles and commitments to responsive practice. On the contrary, when we try to engage with this understanding of racism, rather than ignoring or dismissing it, our work is enhanced. (Geller et al 95)

Acknowledging the potential harm of implicit, systemic racism in our WCs in addition to the explicit instances we may come across is essential to anti-racist work in the WC, as the authors point out here. While these acknowledgments may be uncomfortable at times, as Geller et al argue, it is up to us to be stakeholders and leaders, rather than simply overseers and managers, who take the necessary actions to combat the inequities and oppressions of literacy acquisition. Once again, the authors do not specifically focus on assessment in their text; however, the implications of doing anti-oppressive work in the WC as “leaders” should, I argue, be translated into the work we do as “managers;” beginning with our assessment practices.
Taking a more direct approach to the subject, Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan, in their groundbreaking collection, *Writing Centers and the New Racism* (2011), offer multiple perspectives on systemic racism’s impact on WC work. Building on Victor Villanueva’s 2006 IWCA/NCPTW keynote address and the organizational discussions that followed it, in their introduction, Greenfield and Rowan argue that:

Although matters of racism certainly intersect in important ways with questions of language and conceptions of “preparedness,” the writing center community’s inability to maneuver through such complex, integrated discussions results not in an enriched understanding, but in an abandonment of race altogether. (Greenfield and Rowan 8)

As a result of this negligence, Greenfield and Rowan see their collection as groundwork for more focused conversations of race in the WC. The editors ask, “How does racism operate in the rhetoric and discourses of writing center scholarship/lore and how do writing centers cooperate, however unintentionally, in racist practices?” (9). This acknowledgement of the stickiness of systemic racism opens the doors for more specific conversations of racist practices in the WC, including this dissertation regarding the ways WC assessment practices participate in the systemic oppression so obvious in other university spaces.

In addition to these growing conversations surrounding race-based identity in the WC, studies on multiple oppressed populations are becoming more frequent. Ben Rafoth’s *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers* (2015) continues discussions of multilingual learners in the WC and makes recommendations for WCDs and tutors for acknowledging multiliteracies across languages. Rafoth’s text is part of a growing body of research on translingualism and the WC, and offers new takes on standard “ESL” or “NNES” pedagogies often prescribed to new tutors as a way of advancing linguistic diversity in WC studies. Similarly, scholars such as
Denny have pushed for greater attention to sexuality and gender in WC practice, making connections between LGBTQ experiences such as “coming out” and WC work in the university. In “Queering the Writing Center,” Denny writes, “Queer theory advances awareness of the presence and multiplicity of these binaries [of identities] as means for constructing individual and collective existences as well as knowledge of the politics involved in navigating and subverting them” (“Queering” 96). His argument for “queering” identities in the WC pushes us to move beyond either/or identity labels. By de-centering any one particular epistemology, and, in essence, creating an assemblage of ideologies in our work, our WCs may become places of greater learning and efficacy for our students and peer tutors.

Following critiques such as Rafoth’s and Denny’s, even the very “idea of the writing center” is being questioned in terms of the identities of students, as Jackie Grutsch McKinney critically analyzes the grand narrative of WCs. Grutsch McKinney’s *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* (2013) asks WCDs to reconsider how that narrative misconstrues student needs and perceptions based on their diverse life experiences and literacies. Expanding upon her 2005 article, “Leaving Home Sweet Home,” Grutsch McKinney points out that a great deal of WC theory and lore is built on assumptions of privilege that not all centers, directors, tutors, and/or students are afforded. In fact, it predetermines the function of the WC itself in potentially harmful ways:

The effect of the writing center grand narrative can be a sort of collective tunnel vision. The story has focused our attention so narrowly that we already no longer see the range and variety of activities that make up writing center work or the potential ways in which writing center work could evolve. (*Peripheral* 5-6)
By upsetting the “grand narrative of writing centers,” Grutsch McKinney offers the chance for alternative WC discussions, ones that do not take difference of identity for granted. Grutsch McKinney’s text, and the others mentioned here, position WCs as spaces with the potential for activism in the university, and make important connections between WC praxis, student identity, and multiliteracies. McKinney’s work offers ground from which other alternative visions of WC praxis, including, for the purposes of this project, assessment, to flourish.

This body of work is only expanding in WC scholarship. The current issue of Praxis focuses on graduate writing, but places value on the multiliteracies of graduate students and the need for diversity in graduate institution writing centers, and features an afterword by Asao Inoue, whose award-winning scholarship is widely recognized as being at the forefront of antiracist activism in the field of composition and rhetoric. The International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) is reflecting these trends in its own ways. The IWCA website, Writingcenters.org, features resources from the Antiracist and LGBTQ SIGs alongside its more traditional peer tutoring and administrative resources\(^{19}\), and more articles and conferences are assuming a social justice framework.\(^{20}\) The organization’s Position Statement on Racism, Anti-Immigration, and Linguistic Intolerance, has been in place since 2010. This work, and the aforementioned scholarship, all points to a scholarly atmosphere poised to take on new challenges to the neoliberal systems in which WCs operate, and should give those of us working toward socially just pedagogy and practice hope for the future of the field.

However, there is still a great deal of work to be done. The 2016 IWCA Conference in Denver, CO featured only five panels mentioning the word “race” in their descriptions, only two

---

\(^{19}\) In fact, the Antiracist SIG has been a functioning part of IWCA conferences since 2006 (IWCA, “Readings for Racial Justice).  
\(^{20}\) Cf While the 2017 IWCA conference theme is not related to social justice, the keynote speaker, Neisha-Anne Green, will speak about code-meshing and its impact on the WC.
mentioning “feminism” or “feminist,” and only one panel referencing queerness in some way, out of three days of over 170 panels, workshops, and poster presentations, according to the official program descriptions.21 A search of The Writing Center Journal archives results in less than 20 articles mentioning “race,” “feminism,” or “social justice.” This is not to say that WC studies has completely ignored issues of identity; the work of the aforementioned authors is evidence of that. However, as the field moves toward research that privileges quantitative studies22, we cannot say that identity, social justice, or other sociolinguistic issues are exactly at the forefront of WC scholarship - at least, not in ways that address those concerns explicitly.

If the scholarship in the sub-field overall is lacking despite progress being made, the work currently being done on assessment in WCs paints a more dismal picture. Early on in WC assessment scholarship, Mark Waldo, Jacob Blumner, and Mary Webb argued for a disciplines-based approach to WC assessment in their chapter in the 1995 collection, Writing Center Perspectives. The authors are most concerned with the pitfalls of not recognizing difference in rhetoric amongst the disciplines. Focusing largely on the testing measures and writing classes in the WAC program at University of Nevada, the authors argue that “blanket assessments” from the perspective of one discipline do not do student writing justice (Waldo, Blumner, and Webb 39). By offering individual disciplines the chance to define success in writing on their own terms, the WAC program, in collaboration with the WC, is able to understand what efficacy may look like for writing programs. While this approach offers the opportunity for greater understandings of WID/WAC in a localized context, the authors do not address the ways that

21 Of course, discussions of race, inequality, social justice, etc. may have been part of these panels without being listed in their descriptions.
22 Cf Driscoll and Wynn Perdue, “RAD Research as a Framework for Writing Center Inquiry: Survey and Interview Data on Writing Center Administrators’ Beliefs about Research and Research Practices”
systemic inequalities - across the disciplines - are enacted in these multidisciplinary definitions of writing.

Other early work in WC assessment follows this apolitical trajectory. In one of the most widely-cited texts on WC assessment practices, “Counting Beans and Making Beans Count,” Neal Lerner offers a narrative of his quantitative assessment methods to encourage WCDs to back up their claims with numbers as they argue for their WCs’ efficacy to upper administrators. While he admits that his methods were not perfect, Lerner still argues for simple, statistics-based assessments that justify WCs’ budgets: “[F]or the purposes of semester-by-semester justification, for securing some portion of that shrinking pile of beans, results such as these can be far more persuasive to policy makers and budget disbursers than the anecdotal accounts or “felt-sense” reports that come easiest to us” (“Counting” 3). In a follow-up article three years later, Lerner qualifies his call:

My intention in this article is certainly not to squelch attempts to assess effectiveness through statistical means; I fully agree with Johanek’s call for more scientific inquiry in composition studies and less reliance on narrative and anecdote as the basis for knowledge building. However, those studies need to be statistically and logically sound, and we need to conduct assessment on our terms, particularly before those terms are handed to us by those who might not have a clue. Assessment should be tied to our values and theories, as well as to larger institutional goals as described in college or departmental strategic plans or mission statements. (“Choosing” 4)

Lerner’s reformed argument for quantitative assessment does the important work of making room for WCDs to make use of the theories and ideologies of WC work writ large. However, since the second article’s publication in 2001, the field has failed to be more specific about the
values we should be portraying in assessments. The inability to label those values belies any progress done in pedagogy-focused pieces that confront the concerns of social justice ideology.

Similarly, in “Student Centered Assessment Research in the Writing Center,” Jon Olson, Dawn J. Moyer, and Adelia Falda argue for a more dynamic view of assessment in the writing program and the writing center. “[A]ssessment,” the authors argue, “can be the very thing that reveals and enacts the very reason why the writing program exists in the first place: to improve communication between readers and writers” (Olson, Moyer, and Falda 111). To accomplish these assessment goals, the authors suggest programmatic assessments that stretch beyond the “writing program’s disciplinary home” (112). While this student-centered, interdisciplinary framework offers promise for the identity-based activist concerns many WCs espouse in their mission statements and pedagogies, the authors do not specifically address this work. As so many other scholars have done, these authors’ recommendations fall short of activist administration.

This trend continues in “Writes of Passage: Conceptualizing the Relationship of Writing Centers and Writing Assessment Practices,” Lisa Johnson-Shull and Diane Kelly-Riley describe the symbiotic relationship of Washington State University’s WC and its office of assessment as a way of bridging WC practice with institutional evaluations.23 Interestingly, the authors use the language of networking or “cybernetics” to describe the symbiotic relationship between the two campus spaces: “Theoretically, writing assessment and writing support services are a good match because of what cybernetics would call a feedback loop: two counter forces working in opposition to each other to establish equilibrium” (Johnson-Shull and Kelly-Riley 84). While the thought of assessment and the WC as part of the same systems within the university is an

---

23 For a review of early assessment literature in WC studies, see Miriam Gofine’s “How Are We Doing? A Review of Assessments Within Writing Centers” (2012)
encouraging framework to take, the impact of the frame is lost when the WC and assessment offices are placed in opposition to one another. I argue that writing assessment should never be in opposition to support or pedagogy; instead, it should be part of the same goals and ethical backgrounds.

And in the vein of these earlier shortcomings, even the most influential book on WC assessments to date, Ellen Schendel and William J. Macauley’s *Building Writing Center Assessments that Matter*, does not incorporate strategies for considering student identities and multiliteracy practices despite its progressive views of assessment strategies that move beyond grades-based measurements, echoing the shortcomings of the works mentioned above. In their text, like Waldo, Blumner and Webb, Olson, Moyer and Falda, and Johnson-Shull and Kelly-Riley, the authors see WC assessment as necessarily collaborative, both among WC staff members and students, and among various academic disciplines on campus. The authors also offer frameworks for considering the values of the WC, arguing that “when we share our assessment results with others - when we make decisions about what information to gather and how to gather it - we engage in larger conversations about what writing centers value” (Schendel and Macauley xvii). This is a crucial statement, one that pushes against previous notions of “bean counting,” thereby affording this text its place of importance in WC scholarship.

But while the authors express a need for the greater importance of carefully-considered assessments, their arguments do not specify what larger conversations should be confronted. Despite the authors’ intentions of pushing readers to assess beyond the required paradigms, a “values-based assessments” framework, without any indication of the specific values being referenced, simply echoes institutional rhetoric that places emphasis on the needs of WC Directors (WCDs) as guardians of university missions and standards rather than on the needs of
diverse student bodies. In this way, Schendel and Macauley’s text is not atypical; rather, it is merely reflective of other discussions of assessment in the WC.\textsuperscript{24} This trend actively works against the scholarship of anti-racist and anti-oppressive researchers elsewhere in the WC studies oeuvre, as it reaffirms the place of the WC in the neoliberal university structure in ways that make null and void the scholarship of writers such as Condon, Denny, and Greenfield and Rowan.

This disconnect is still actively occurring, and is observable even in casual conversations among WC professionals. As I looked over the program during my flight to the 2016 IWCA conference in Denver, CO, I was encouraged to see several presentations listed with foci on neoliberal WC practice, postcolonial thought in the WC, and the WC as an anti-racist space.\textsuperscript{25} However, as I sat through these sessions, I was disheartened; assessment was not addressed at all. What’s more, the assessment panels I attended, as well as the assessment SIG, did not confront issues of difference at all. During small group work at the Assessment SIG, I mentioned my concerns to some of my fellow participants. I was smiled at politely, and my comments were shrugged at. “That’s hard work to do when you’re trying to secure funding,” I was told. I do not think the ambivalent reactions were a result of my fellow participants devaluing social justice. Rather, as their reaction revealed, the situation seems to point to the hopelessness some WCDs feel when confronting institutional structures. In a panel with Michele Eodice, an audience member remarked upon the fact - most likely paraphrasing a source - that social justice will never be achieved if we don’t start by imagining that it’s possible. This seems to be the point at

\textsuperscript{24} Since the publication of Schendel and Macauley’s text, little new scholarship has been published about assessment in the writing center in the field’s major journals.

which WC studies finds itself. It’s much easier to confront social justice in terms of dialogues in
the center or peer tutor training. It’s another - entirely more difficult - thing to think about
translating those practices into what the WC presents to the upper administrators of our
institutions. The fear of losing funding due to non-traditional assessment methods is
understandable. After all, the very idea of assessment is largely built on neoliberal privileging of
productivity. But if we do not begin by imagining that we can, at some point, perform
programmatic assessments that work against that traditional system, we will never get our feet
off the ground. I argue that one way of starting this work is to take a cue from assessment
scholarship focused on the writing classroom.

**WRITING ASSESSMENT STUDIES AND THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TURN**

Assessment scholarship has recently taken on a social justice turn, evolving from an
erlier social constructivist turn of composition and rhetoric studies. Early anti-testing
scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s, followed by work on portfolio assessment throughout the
1990s by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Bob Broad, and others broke ground for new approaches to
WC initiatives. In her chapter in *Exploring Composition Studies*, Yancey acknowledges that
“[w]riting assessment is … both hero/ine, the practice that brings us into relationship with our
students, and villain, an obstacle to our agency” (167, emphasis original). Yancey characterizes
three assessment movements or “waves” in composition and rhetoric work since the 1960s and
1970s: early test-based assessments, holistically-scored assessments of the late 1970s and early
1980s, and the portfolio-based assessments that have been popular since the end of the 1980s
(Yancey 168-169). The result of these waves appears in the seminal texts of the sub-field. Bob
Broad, in *What We Really Value*, Brian Huot, in *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for
Teaching and Learning*, and Ed White, in *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, among others writing
during Yancey’s “portfolio wave,” argued for a broader conception of assessment that pushed the field of composition and rhetoric towards a generative model of evaluating student writing.\(^{26}\) Just as WC assessment scholars have pushed for assessments that espouse values, and that move beyond evaluations of efficacy or mastery of writing, so do scholars focused on classroom writing assessments. As discussed below, however, the work of Broad, White, Huot, and others is a precursor to a more activist focus for assessment scholarship, rather than a means unto itself as is the case in WC studies.

While the above texts focus on classroom-based assessments, scholarship on programmatic assessment follows similar trends. Bob Broad, Linda Adler-Kassner, Barry Alford, and Jane Detweiler take up that conversation in *Organic Writing Assessment: Dynamic Criteria Mapping in Action*, echoing the calls of other programmatic assessment scholarship for the importance of local design.\(^{27}\) The focus on the local is echoed, as previously discussed, by writers in WC studies urging practitioners to keep institutional circumstances in mind when developing assessments, such as in Schendel and Macauley’s text. Programmatic assessment scholarship also begins to turn the conversations toward the larger impacts of narratives of writing programs. In *Reframing Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning*, Linda Adler-Kassner and Peggy O’Neill argue that to help policymakers understand the purpose and practices of writing instruction, assessment narratives must move away from the work of prescribing what writing instructors should and should not do. Taking a view that places the writing center under the umbrella of “writing programs,” the authors argue that:

\(^{26}\) Cf Cindy Moore, Peggy O’Neill, and Brian Huot, “Creating a Culture of Assessment in Writing Programs and Beyond” for more about assessment as a self-advocacy project in composition and rhetoric studies.

\(^{27}\) Cf Paul Walker’s critique of multireader “norming sessions” as a common practice that devalues the local aspects of good assessment in, “Composition’s Akrasia: The Devaluing of Intuitive Expertise in Writing Assessment”
Those discussions that we as two- or four-year college writing teachers or program directors might have about assessment—with other instructors in our program, with colleagues in our department, with campus administrators, or with people outside of our institutions—aren’t just about writing assessment. Instead, they exist within an ever-expanding galaxy of questions about what people need to know to “be successful” in the twenty-first century. These questions are inexorably linked to other items that populate the galaxy, as well—ideas about what it means to be a part of “America” as a country; ideas about how America develops as a nation and what is necessary for that to happen; ideas about how the nation’s youth become “productive” citizens and what “productive” means.

This argument connects to Adler-Kassner’s earlier work with Susan-Marie Harrington which critiques the use of “accountability” as a framework for assessment, suggesting instead that “responsibility” more appropriately speaks to the work done in writing classrooms.28 Furthermore, their view, which incorporates WC into conceptions of writing at the university, foregrounds work being done with ecological assessment, discussed below, offering opportunities for assemblage-based ideologies in assessment structures. These arguments push assessment towards a greater understanding of its position in sociopolitical conversations about education, and places a great emphasis on the need for ethical understandings of our assessment narratives.

Taking another approach, Chris Gallagher offers caution against the traditional models of outcomes assessment (OA) with which many writing program administrators and writing center directors are familiar in “The Trouble with Outcomes: Pragmatic Inquiry and Educational

28 Cf Adler-Kassner and Harrington, “Responsibility and Composition’s Future in the Twenty-First Century”
Aims.” Gallagher bridges past scholarship on programmatic assessment with recent trends as he writes,

While I believe we would do well to abandon the commonsense model of OA, I am sufficiently “pragmatic”—and here you should catch a whiff of reluctant resignation—to recognize the hold it has over postsecondary assessment. But even—rather, especially—if we work within the OA model, it is important to consider carefully (and perhaps reconsider) how we frame and use educational aims in our profession, departments, programs, and classrooms. Specifically, we need methods for framing and using educational aims that allow us to avoid the problematic tendencies of outcomes while addressing institutional demands for assessment of student learning and achieving some measure of program coherence. (“The Trouble” 43-44)

Gallagher’s argument for assessment structures that carefully consider what values and narratives we present to upper administration, as well as these other critiques of traditional models of programmatic assessment, foreground recent work in anti-racist assessment strategies and serve as precursors to potential new veins of WC assessment scholarship.

Yancey notes this new trend toward ethical assessment work, acknowledging critical assessments, such as those that question the cultural impacts of assessments: “[One theme] examines how writing assessment reproduces social inequities, especially racial inequities; such reproduction these critics claim, challenges a validity that claims to be racially blind” (172). The work Yancey references builds on the scholarship of sociolinguistic researchers, in part. As early as 1993, Arnetha Ball, in her work on literacy diversity in the writing classroom, began making
connections between race and assessment through testing and portfolios, pushing the conversation towards the anti-racist work being done today.\textsuperscript{29}

This work is continued recently by scholars such as Asao B. Inoue, who has spearheaded work on advocacy through assessment, in both his single-authored text, \textit{Anti-Racist Writing Assessment Ecologies} (2015), and the collection \textit{Race and Writing Assessment}, co-edited with Mya Poe (2012). In their co-edited text, Inoue and Poe focus on race and racial formations as a central concern of writing assessment. By focusing on race specifically, the editors argue that “[w]e need studies that look at the mix of sociocultural variables that students bring to our classrooms as well as studies that focus on individual variables such as gender or race” (\textit{Race and Writing} 2). The collection uses “racial formations” as a frame, rather than “race,” as a way of avoiding the essentializing of identities while exploring the particular impacts of that identity formation (\textit{Race and Writing} 6). Importantly, the editors acknowledge the shortcomings of the collection, including the fact that no writing center scholarship is included (\textit{Race and Writing} 10). As they state, however, this is a reflection of composition and rhetoric as a whole, particularly within assessment studies (\textit{Race and Writing} 10): we composition and rhetoric scholars are not adept at branching out in our areas of study. This collection should be seen as a starting place, then, for researchers to begin making the necessary connections to establish race - and other identity formations - as central to ethical, valid writing assessment.

Branching from his collaborative effort with Poe, Inoue’s single-authored text considers structural racism in the college composition classroom and assessment’s place in that oppression. Pointing to the white racial \textit{habitus} in which most traditional pedagogies and assessment

\textsuperscript{29} Cf Ball, “Incorporating Ethnographic-Based Techniques to Enhance Assessments of Culturally Diverse Students' Written Exposition” (1993)
practices operate, Inoue argues for alternative approaches that make room for students’ self-advocacy. He asks,

[H]ow can a conscientious writing teacher understand and engage in her classroom writing assessments as an antiracist project with her locally diverse students? My answer is to see classroom writing assessment as an ecology with explicit features, namely a quality of more than, interconnectedness among everything and everyone in the ecology, and an explicit racial politics that students must engage with. Additionally, this antiracist assessment ecology contains seven elements that can be reflected upon and manipulated.

This means that when we design our writing courses, we must think first about how writing assessment will exist and function in the course, how it constructs the ecology that students and teachers work and live in, how it is sustainable and fair. (Antiracist 9)

By centering assessment - specifically ethical assessment - in this way, Inoue lays the groundwork for an anti-racist classroom in toto. Inoue’s study of his own FYW classroom, along with the heuristic for anti-racist writing assessment provided in his final chapter, give a framework for future scholarship in assessment, and, indeed, serve as a direct influence on the heuristic provided in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Other works, such as White, Norbert Elliot, and Irvin Peckham’s Very Like a Whale, have recently influenced the landscape of social justice assessment work by arguing further for modifications of writing assessment purposes. In their text, the coauthors offer heuristics based on their Design for Assessment (DFA) framework. Placing instructors at the center of programmatic assessment in order to more accurately localize protocols, they write, “[I]t is best to understand DFA under the universal frame of consequence: if we attend to the impact of what we do as the initial step in writing program assessment, then what follows will be - at the very
least-sensitive to context” (White, Elliot, and Peckham 166). As in Inoue’s work, this scholarship refuses to centralize efficacy in assessment work; rather, impact and consequence, which emphasize responsibility, are at the center of assessment work. While this highlights a small difference in terminology, the result is an assessment ethos that uses methodology to push against neoliberal paradigms in university administrative work.

Recent publications build this vein of work by thinking in terms of decolonization in writing program assessments, such as the Spring 2016 issue of the *Journal of Writing Assessment*, dedicated to ethics, and presentations at the 2016 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) by David F. Green, Jr. at Howard University and Matthew Gomes at Michigan State University on a panel moderated by Inoue. The Fall 2016 issue of *College English* is centered solely on the idea of writing assessment for social justice, and is guest edited by Poe and Inoue. These researchers offer insights regarding problematic classroom practices and make suggestions for programmatic assessments that overcome systemic racism in institutionally mandated assessment protocols. And they’ve shown a pointed influence; for one, Inoue’s arguments for grading contracts as anti-racist student writing assessments have started a trend that moves away from rubric-based evaluation in composition classrooms. Likewise, an increase can be seen in the number of CCCC and CWPA conference panels addressing the need to rethink assessment.

But despite the growing influence of social justice writing assessment work, the WC is largely absent from the scene. This is frustrating and a bit surprising, given the collaborative approaches many of these researchers take when dealing with assessment. Taking a sociopolitical approach to some of the ecological frameworks brought up in Elizabeth Wardle
and Kevin Roozen’s 2012 article, “Addressing the Complexity of Writing Development: Toward an Ecological Model of Assessment,” discussed in Chapter One, Inoue argues,

A theory of writing assessment as ecology adds these theories to our thinking about classroom writing assessments. Thus it doesn’t matter if teachers or readers see or read student writing with prejudice or with a preference for whiteness in their classrooms. It doesn’t matter at all. What matters is that the assessment ecology produces particular results, determines (in the Marxian sense) particular products, reinforcing particular outcomes, which make racist cause and effect difficult (even impossible) to discern.

(Antiracist 16)

Inoue’s theory for writing assessment ecology places writing assessment as an important part of the life experiences of our students, taking into consideration the networks of identity that influence, and are influenced by, our writing classroom evaluations. In a recent work not focused on assessment specifically, Yancey and Stephen J. McElroy also takes a networked view of writing development and pedagogy, relying on assemblage theory as a guiding principle.30

Looking back at the work of sociolinguists and multiliteracy scholars such as Kynard, Smitherman, Young, Richardson, and others, this turn seems to be a natural progression for views of writing in the university. If we take into account the personal experiences and identities of our students as we rethink writing pedagogy and FYW assessment - as we should - should we not also be incorporating other spaces of writing into our assessment ecologies? What’s more, should WC scholarship not be making moves to participate in this work?

This dissertation will confront these gaps, arguing for new considerations in WC assessment. Building on ecological, materialist, feminist, and critical race interrogations of literacies, WPA work, and WC studies, I will incorporate recent research by composition and

---

30 Cf Yancey and McElroy, Assembling Composition (2016)
rhetoric scholars who utilize actor network theory and assemblage theory to view the teaching of writing in dynamic ways. Four questions frame this dissertative research: How are our progressive ideologies, as well as our students’ identities and multiple literacies, reflected (or not) in writing center assessments? How have institutional pressures impacted the agency WCDs can claim over writing center assessments? How can an assemblage-based approach to writing and assessment in the university help WCs expand the social justice work so many of us see ourselves taking on? And how might WCDs use antiracist and feminist frameworks currently applied to FYW programs to more directly claim a place in the ecology - or assemblage - of writing in their institutions?

The marginal place of the WC in the university has been a part of WC lore since the sub-field’s early days. Elizabeth Boquet famously deemed WC work “our little secret,” a scholarly field and a campus location removed from the rest of the bustling academic spaces on campuses, inhabiting an in-between space that embodies the “at-odd-ness” of WC work (“Our Little Secret” 465). Grutsch McKinney confronts this issue as well, critiquing the separatist nature of the field’s grand narrative. This liminality affords WCs many opportunities, but should not necessarily close off our scholarship from the influence of interdisciplinary work. In his 2014 study, “The Unpromising Future of Writing Center Studies,” Neal Lerner points to the “inward gazing” of WC scholarship appearing in its major journal over a twenty-year period. He writes, while the first 30 years of WCJ represent a period of tremendous growth for writing centers… this growth masks the limited influences of writing center scholarship or the larger contributions to what we know about learning and teaching writing. In other words, at this moment in time, writing center scholarship can no longer afford primarily

31 Cf Grutsch McKinney, Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers
to be read by writing center scholars; we can no longer afford to embrace marginality.

(“Unpromising” 70)

Lerner’s observations, and the critiques of Grutsch McKinney, are certainly observable in our approach to assessment. Not only do WC scholars not cite current scholarship in writing assessment, but writing centers are rarely mentioned in that assessment work.32 This dissertation attempts to address this issue, placing writing centers as a necessary component of socially just writing assessment. By making these connections, I aim to not only to cover a scholarly gap, but also to push against the institutional structures impacting students and their writing in the university. To invoke the image of the Cyborg WC, I hope to address the tension between the organic “matter” of the WC and its cyborgian, institutionalized components installed by the neoliberal university. In their discussion of the postcolonial WC, Bawarshi and Pelkowski write,

Thus, the university, too often with the help of the writing center, imposes on students one more subject position to which they “willingly” consent because they are not conscious of it as being a subject position, a particular, politically embedded, and discursive way of experiencing and articulating knowledge and reality (Bawarshi and Pelkowski 49).

Condon, seven years later, makes a call based on similar ideas:

To begin the work of anti-racism in and through our writing centers will entail a sustained consideration of whether, how, and to what degree writing centers have historically been used as or complicit with racial projects within our institutions and higher education writ large. (Condon, “Beyond” 21)

32 In Inoue’s, Inoue and Poe’s books, and in the recent special issues of College English and the Journal of Writing Assessment, writing centers are mentioned only as an afterthought, if at all.
It is this work that must be done at the level of assessment. Creating a truly postcolonial, socially just, anti-racist WC must go beyond our tutor training methods or daily pedagogy; that work must be present in the ways we narrate our praxis and justify our existence to our institutions through assessment protocols.
Chapter Three
Why a “Cyborg”?: Methods and Theory

As might be expected of an experience that is an important professional rite of passage, no one historian’s archive is ever like another’s (let alone like Jacques Derrida’s). Each account of his or her experience within them will always produce counter narratives, of different kinds of discomfort.
Carolyn Steedman, Dust, 9

Writing center research needs to move toward research methods that better capture the situatedness of writing center work and toward studies that, in addition to studying the tutorial, also go beyond the narrow focus suggested by North some thirty years ago to explore other aspects of writing and writing center work.
Jackie Grutsch McKinney, Strategies for Writing Center Research, 17

This chapter will describe the methods and theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation to explore a case study. Taking into consideration the importance of local circumstances in writing program administration, curriculum design, and programmatic assessment, this dissertation will examine the practices of a particular site - the Alan Siegel Writing Center (ASWC) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. Founded in 1984, the John Jay Writing Center (JJWC), as it was originally called, emerged as a student resource sponsored by the English department. Recognizing the need for tutoring services for first-generation college students attending John Jay through Open Admissions policies, the official center opened and played an important part of the writing culture at the college. As it grew and developed, the JJWC cycled through phases of test preparation for standardized writing exams, WAC/WID services for multiple departments, and close collaborations with the FYW program in the English department. The JJWC followed the trajectory of many other university WCs throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, as it moved from a “fix-it shop” model towards offering a larger spectrum of services for students as it expanded. Its typified history, moving from a remedial space, to a test prep center, to the literacy-focused resource it is currently, makes it a rich site for research that recounts, analyzes, and critiques these benchmark evolutions in writing center ideologies, theories, and practices.
As a writing center located in one of the largest public higher educational systems in the country, the JJWC presents the opportunity for discussions of the ways complex bureaucratic systems and state-level mandates affect our assessment policies, thoroughly exemplifying a Cyborg WC that has allowed its mechanical matter to work against its organic agenda. This WC offers both a thirty-plus-year history and multiple sources for text-based archives and oral histories that will help establish an assessment narrative spanning several important eras in composition and rhetoric studies. A focused exploration of the JJWC allows me to create a full assessment narrative that accounts for situational concerns and that makes specific recommendations for future research and practice. In its examination of this site, this dissertation will rely on archival and qualitative methodologies, along with critical discourse analysis (CDA).

**BUILDING AN ARCHIVAL NARRATIVE**

I will first establish a timeline of assessment practices in the JJWC using writing center documents as archival artifacts to show the ways that popular theoretical lenses have impacted - or not - the assessments of a particular writing center over time. Documents were provided by the current director of the JJWC via Dropbox.com folder. These documents included annual administrative reports, preliminary data spreadsheets, student and faculty survey questionnaires, and other assessment-related documents from 1997 through 2016. Additionally, to establish the history behind these assessment documents, I consulted the personal files of Patricia Licklider, former Deputy Director of First Year Writing, for contextual information regarding the English department activities leading up to the formation of the JJWC. Files from CAWS, unofficially collected by Mark McBeth, also provide insight into the history of writing at John Jay. The Lloyd Siegel Library archives at John Jay College of Criminal Justice were used for references of the JJWC in the larger history of the college. While mention of the JJWC in text-based
documentation is sparse, as I discuss below, the documented evidence paints a portrait of the WC that shows the impacts of institutional ignorance and a deficiency of resources - a fact emphasized, perhaps, by the very scarcity of WC documentation in the larger files of the English department, writing program, and college. By reviewing the archival sources that are available, I aim to interrogate this tension between the center’s importance and its absence from departmental memory, and to show the development of the JJWC under the mandates of the CUNY system as a power structure.

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida focuses on the power structures inherent in the development of archives, and the archive’s importance in creating the future. He writes,

> This is another way of saying that the archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content *of the past* which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. (Derrida 16-17, emphasis original)

In short, “[t]he archivization produces as much as it records the event” (Derrida 17). The idea of a generative archive is an important concept to keep in mind when working with the archives of composition and rhetoric, which typically focus on program development. Echoing Shirley Rose’s arguments in her work on WC archival research, Stacy Nall acknowledges “writing program archives are not only a scholarly source but also an administrative one, informing WPAs’ planning, evaluation, and learning about ‘what is do-able in our institutional context and what the potential roadblocks are’” (Nall 103; Rose 108). Keeping this in mind, as well as noting the methodological connections to assemblages in this Derrida’s and Nall’s conceptions of the
archives, I chose to use archival methods in order to ground any suggestions for the future of WC assessment in a history of practice that shows the importance of this work in both the WC and the university.

In addition, it was necessary to use oral histories given by past English department administrators and the current WCD at John Jay to fill in the historical gaps left by missing documents, given the ways that administrative documentation is often not considered archivable.\(^{33}\) In *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration*, Barbara L'Eplattenier and Lisa Mastrangelo point to the dearth of histories and archival studies of administrative composition and rhetoric work in the university. Arguing for the importance of such histories, they write,

> Traditionally, histories that focused on introductory composition could be divided into roughly two groups: 1) inquiries into the ideological/pedagogical theories and practices of composition; and 2) more localized inquiries into the classroom practices of individual teachers. ...As any WPA knows, local politics are an important component in the creation and shape of the composition program... [I]n ignoring such interactions we miss an opportunity to explore a significant factor in the existence and formation of the composition program. ...How do external political issues become institutionalized both administratively and departmentally? These types of questions are quite different from those that drive a history focused on the lives of the students and/or teachers.

(L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo xviii-xix)

While L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo speak of writing programs writ large, their arguments are even more applicable to WCs where historical records (i.e., manuals, tutor training syllabi,

\(^{33}\) Please see Appendices A and B for a list of questions administered during oral history interviews, and Appendices C, D, and E for edited transcriptions of those interviews.
literacy initiatives, and budgetary documents) get lost with the changes of institutional policies and staffing, and at times, with the changes of physical location so common to WCs. The frequent turnover of WCDs also contributes to these issues, as Nall points out, reminding readers of the importance of documentation in the transition from one WCD to the next. Nall further points out that,

The reasons for a dearth of archival material in our writing centers are myriad; space limitation may play a part… as may time limitations WCDs face due to their many other responsibilities. In the face of those material constraints, the archiving of programmatic successes and challenges… can seem overwhelming given the competing priorities that WCDs balance. Moreover, with the limited university space typically provided it is simply unrealistic for a writing center to save every document it produces. (Nall 105)

Ergo, the liminality of the WC may present beneficial pedagogical opportunities, but it makes archiving that work difficult. Nall argues that a the most thorough WC archives would include references to the interpersonal work done by WCDs in forging partnerships. In this study, I emphasize that claim by showing the necessity of those partnerships in evaluating the WC. A crucial component to understandings of writing education in the university includes the WC, and WC histories are incomplete without attention to administrative practices such as assessment.

What’s more, WCDs, similar to WPAs, are often subject to having their position devalued, either through the denial of tenure, the removal of faculty status, or the elimination of particular literacy programs. Mark McBeth, echoing Richard Miller in his exploration of Mina Shaughnessy’s administrative prowess at CUNY in “Memoranda of Fragile Machinery,” asserts that archival work is necessary to establish the WPA as an “intellectual bureaucrat” - an administrator whose work is scholarly rather than simply service-oriented (“Memoranda” 50;
This, of course, recalls Derrida’s ideas of power structures in the archive. It is up to WCDs and other WPAs to ensure that these stories are told and utilized to overcome future challenges for the WC.

The particular type of administrative history I will be examining in this dissertation - which revolves around and analyzes the assessment methods used in WCs - is one not often discussed in WC studies. Muriel Harris, in “Diverse Research Methodologies at Work for Diverse Audiences,” argues for the necessity of WC archives to incorporate our WCs into the larger institutional memory of our universities (14). WC historians such as Peter Carino (“Early Writing Centers”; “What Do We Talk About”) and Elizabeth Boquet (“Our Little Secret”) have focused on pedagogy and tutor training practices, establishing the trajectory of educational practices in the WC starting with remedial editing services in the 1970s and following trends in broader foci and attention to diversity in tutor training. However, little is said about the evaluative practices of WCs over time. My study will fill this gap, examining shifts in the assessment practices of a case study site to exemplify connections between changing trends in assessment theory and WC work.

Furthermore, I aim to follow Nall’s call for more WC archival studies that highlight partnerships across the university. Nall argues “that institutional memories of relationship building, and their various challenges and compromises, are a particularly overlooked aspect of writing center histories and one for which WCDs might build a space in their documentation strategies” (Nall 102). With this in mind, my archival research will emphasize the collaborations between the JJWC and other university spaces and institutional structures. Not only will this offer a narrative of the decision-making process behind assessment practices and highlight the

---

34 Cf also McBeth, “Arrested Development: Revising Remediation at John Jay College of Criminal Justice”
liminality of this particular WC, but it will offer an opportunity to establish the larger institutional pressures impacting those decisions.

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND WC ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION**

In addition to this archival work, I will also rely upon critical discourse analyses of current JJWC assessment policy documentation and interviews with current JJWC administrators and staff. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a method often used for policy analysis in the field of educational research. To define this method, Elizabeth J. Allan first reminds readers that discourses “are never neutral,” mirroring James Paul Gee’s work. Writing outside of the composition and rhetoric discipline in the field of education studies, in *Policy Discourses, Gender, and Education*, Allan asserts that:

> Increasingly, discourse theory has been taken up as a lens by researchers who position their work within the frame of critical theory. Inspired by various oppositional movements, including feminism, Marxism, and race-specific social movements, inquiry positioned in a critical frame can be broadly described as activist. Critical discourse analysis and feminist critical policy analysis are two approaches that apply a critical perspective to the study of discourse and policy respectively. The use of the term *critical* here describes theoretical approaches influenced by critical theory and critical social science theory. ...Critical approaches to policy analysis can be described as openly ideological in their explicit intent to critique the social order and construct policy that empowers individuals to understand their social world and to change it in ways that promote justice and equality. (Allan 7, emphasis original)

Here, Allan’s concern is largely with educational policies at the level of state and national politics. However, her framework can be applied at most levels of educational decision making.
In this study, I aim to show how the discourse of assessment documents - policy documentation in their own right - is, or can be, reflective of a WC’s ideologies.

While writing and researching in a different discipline, Allan’s emphasis on the discursive nature of policy documents lends itself to many of the discussions composition and rhetoric scholars have regarding administrative work in WPs and WCDs. In fact, CDA, though perhaps not referenced by that term, is often employed in composition and rhetoric research. In *Strategies for Writing Center Research*, Jackie Grutsch McKinney writes,

> Discourse analysis, as the study of “natural” language use, is appropriate for studying written, oral, and gestural language. It is not a method for understanding perceptions or seeking to discover personal experiences or histories, nor is it the ideal method for understanding how users use tools or for taking action. (*Strategies* 40)

With these parameters in mind, I rely on CDA not to establish the history of the JJWC nor to analyze how the JJWC uses its assessment documents. Rather, I am using CDA to establish the language patterns in those documents as a way of gaining insight into the influence of institutional structures on the rhetoric of the JJWC’s assessments.

As well, I aim to establish the connections or disparities between that language and the language used to describe other aspects of JJWC work in oral histories and archival documents. Following the calls for validity as a framework from Samuel Messick, Inoue, in “Racial Methodologies for Composition Studies,” lobbies for research and assessment methodologies that give all stakeholders a voice. He argues, “If we do not construct methods of research that are reflective of the racial formations that surround our assessments (our civic communities) and make up our classrooms, then we risk (re)producing racism from our assessments and perhaps even from our pedagogies” (“Racial Methodologies” 127). As Inoue states, the language and
structure of writing assessments are inextricably tied to systems of power - systems that are often built around white habitus and that actively work to oppress certain populations of students (Antiracist 46-51). While I do not contend that this is done purposefully or even consciously, I do seek to critically analyze the appearance of these power structures in the assessment language commonly used in WCs. Due to the diversity of the student population, as well as the diversity of the tutoring staff, the JJWC becomes a prime source for examining identity as an important WC assessment issue.

Current assessment practices will offer insights into the JJWC’s climate and its relationship to CUNY as a larger institutional body at a moment when austerity funding from over the past decade has affected the program’s ability to implement new, responsible assessment practices. According to current JJWC administrators, the JJWC is undergoing an update to its assessment practices to more clearly portray new collaborative initiatives with other university entities. This offers a kairotic moment at which to research implications of new social justice and materialist frameworks on assessment there, and to explore the usefulness of assemblage theory in JJWC assessments.

MIXING METHODS, INCORPORATING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

I choose these methods pointedly despite recent calls in WC scholarship for replicable, aggregable, data-driven (RAD) research. Dana Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Perdue have argued, in their influential article, “Theory, Lore, and More: An Analysis of RAD Research in The Writing Center Journal, 1980–2009” (2012), that without RAD research WC work risks relying solely on “lore,” which becomes hard to put into practice across different spaces of WC work. However, aligning with some of the critiques of RAD research by composition scholars35, the nature of this dissertation requires a methodology that takes into account individual experiences that are not

easily quantified to acknowledge the effects of race, gender, or ability on writing education. Just as WC scholarship began with qualitative studies before moving toward RAD research, the as-yet-unexplored strain of research featured in this dissertation must begin with a careful archive-based narrative to build groundwork for future quantitative study.

Furthermore, I offer a mixed message approach to expand the typical methodological approaches of composition and rhetoric research. Christina Haas, Pamela Takayoshi, and Brandon Carr argue, in their chapter of *Writing Studies Research in Practice*, that “the field of writing studies needs to develop methods for the study of writers and writing that are specific to our own enterprise - ‘homegrown’ methods, as it were. One way to develop such homegrown methods is in the combining of research traditions” (Haas, Takayoshi, and Carr 60). The blend of methods I have chosen offers a unique approach to WC research as a way of speaking to the authors’ call; in fact, I utilize the three paradigms for institutional critique that Steve Lamos calls for in the same collection. Specifically, I employ spatial analysis to “illuminate how and why contemporary institutional spaces are configured to privilege certain groups at the expense of others.” I employ rhetorical analysis to “promote story-changing.” And I employ a critical historical approach “that is designed to illuminate how and why particular localized institutional configurations have emerged over time” (Lamos 159).

The triangulation of methods in this study work towards those goals while offering particular connections to the theoretical framework laid out in the introduction. Assemblages are, by nature, composed (or composing, if we remember that assemblages are constantly in states of upheaval) of plethora of moving parts. As such, it is only fitting that a dissertation exploring ideas of assemblages in the university spaces rely on multiple methods. Additionally, the combination of these methods with the framework of assemblage theory allows me to highlight
the often-contradictory work of the WC and assessment. Barad argues that, in reframing matter through assemblages, we begin to note the way matter both moves together and creates friction. Relying on Haraway’s notion of diffraction instead of the typical reflective ontological lenses\textsuperscript{36}, Barad argues that “the notion of intra-action constitutes a radical reworking of the traditional notion of causality. I can't emphasize this point enough. A lively new ontology emerges: the world's radical aliveness comes to light in an entirely nontraditional way that reworks the nature of both relationality and aliveness (vitality, dynamism, agency” (Barad 33, emphasis original). In short, assemblages allow us to examine tensions as well as echoes. Puar uses a similar framing, as well, to push back on the notion of the intersection as a visualization of multiple identities: “[O]ne of the big payoffs for thinking through the intertwined relations of intersectionality and assemblage is that it can help us produce more roadmaps of these not quite fully understood relations between discipline and control” (“I Would” 63). Following this thinking, just as Preston uses assemblage theory to rethink approaches to writing instruction in FYC programs\textsuperscript{37}, I aim to use assemblage theory to not only rethink assessment in the WC, but also to make use of the WC’s traditional liminality as an advantage in assessing with an eye toward multiliteracies and social justice in neoliberal university structures.

The following chapters begin to address these ideas in a more concentrated way. I will introduce the subject of my case study, the JJWC. After establishing the history of the center through the eyes of its long-time director and others involved in its development using oral history interviews and archival documentation. I will then analyze the assessment practices of the JJWC using current assessment documentation, continuing to contextualize the discussion by examining institutional pressures that have had particular impacts on both the assessment

\textsuperscript{36} Cf Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others" (1992) \\
\textsuperscript{37} Please see Chapter Two for more on Preston’s work.
protocols, and the JJWC’s everyday operations. By confronting this case study using these methods and theoretical frameworks, I will begin to broaden the understanding of what it might take to incorporate social justice work through assessment in the WC.
Chapter Four
Finding the Center: Historical Context and Institutional Pressures

_A science of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalization, that is to say, the theory both of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorizes it._

*Jacques Derrida, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, 4*

*What I hope to show as being true of the process of educational reform is also true of the process of studying the process of educational reform, since my selection of cases occurred within a similarly constrained field of choice. That is, to do historical research on educational practice, one must rely on what the archive has preserved, and this reliance itself is quite constraining - particularly if one’s interest lies with student work, which the academy endlessly produces and endlessly discards._

*Richard Miller, As If Learning Mattered: Reforming Higher Education, 44*

In the fall of 1985 under the new directorship of Carol Stanger, the John Jay Writing Center (JJWC) opened its door to students, but what students found there would barely be called a writing center or an academic resource by today’s standards. Later renamed the Alan Siegel Writing Center, the JJWC originally occupied a space in John Jay’s North Hall on 59th Street. Memories of the acquisition of this space bring up a persistent theme in the history of the center addressed in this chapter, however. Only the first of many troubles for the new center, the John Jay administration, unaware of the true purpose of a WC on a college campus, offered a small, single classroom at first. Robert Crozier, then Chair of the English department at John Jay, recalls,

[T]here was no place for a writing center, there was no room, there was no furniture. There was nothing, no space. So, we had to start to get a classroom and then the classroom had to be empty to fit stuff in. This was all a tremendous ordeal for the administration. And we ended up, I think, the first year we had furniture was from the dining hall! (Crozier, personal interview, June 2017)

Similarly, Patricia Licklider, then Deputy Chair of the Writing Program at John Jay, remembers the new director being on her own in overcoming this challenge:
[T]here was no space. I mean I don’t know what they thought she [Carol Stanger] was going to do. But I think Bob [Crozier] ...found her an office with some desks and stuff. They [college administrators] had no concept. Basil [Wilson] had no concept of what a writing center did; he’d never been to one. ...He just said, “I've given you the person. Let her figure it out.” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017)

Once again echoing the lamentations of so many WC scholars on the receiving end of such institutional cluelessness, confusion surrounding the fledgling center prevented it from even inhabiting a proper physical location when it first opened, creating an uphill struggle from the start.

These early troubles only multiplied, eventually forcing out the first director. In this chapter, I argue that institutional pressures from John Jay administrators not only impacted the ability of the center to succeed in its mission, but also the overall ethos of the center throughout its history. These pressures led, eventually, to very particular decisions made in the center’s assessment protocols, which will be addressed in the fourth chapter of this project.

The second director of John Jay’s WC, Livia Katz, is the main focus of this chapter due to the growth of the center under her leadership and the many changes the college has undergone during her tenure as WCD. In this chapter I create a portrait of a WCD and the work she accomplished under less-than-ideal circumstances. I focus on Katz as an agent of change here because she, truly, was and is a force unto herself, according to both Crozier and Licklider during oral history interviews38 as well as according to all other evidence of the evolution of the JJWC. Crozier sees Katz as “the genius” of the JJWC, reflecting that over time, Katz took care of most issues faced by the JJWC:

---

38 Please see Appendix C for Crozier’s edited oral history responses and Appendix D for Licklider’s edited oral history responses.
After she became the writing director, she [saw] the problems were still there, [and] she solved them. As other ones came up, she solved those... middle stage evaluations, all of kinds of, you know, people going to look at the center and to evaluate, including the provosts and the provost’s ‘minions.’ She handles everything, and she is very possessive, of course, of the center and very proud of it. With good reason, I think. So, I would say that if you get someone like that running a writing center ...everything is solved. (Crozier, personal interview, June 2017)

Likewise, Licklider remembers Katz’s work with admiration, as a “fierce” promoter of the JJWC and a determined problem-solver (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017). It is important to remember that this project centers upon a case study of one particular WC. As the history presented in this chapter arguably shows, any WC is irrevocably dependent upon the efforts, commitment, and passion of its administrative leadership.

WC scholarship that calls for RAD research, such as that of Dana Lynn Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Perdue, speak back to exactly this type of situation. However, it is the individual experiences of WCs and WCDs that contextualize the data in quantitative research, making them an important part of WC scholarship as long as the individualized circumstances of the WCs are emphasized. As such, I present this history with a particular emphasis on Katz not to valorize the actions of a single administrator, but rather to help us remember the nature of individualized experiences. The distinction between success and failure can come down to the efforts of just one person. In chapter four, I even out this praise-filled discussion by showing that the work of one person, even one who is well-intentioned and “fierce” in their advocacy, can struggle against institutionalized neoliberal systems of education.

---

39 Cf Driscoll and Wynn Perdue, “RAD Research as a Framework for Writing Center Inquiry”
Looking at the JJWC through the lens of historical narrative, we can see the echoes of larger trends in WC practice and scholarship. Elizabeth Boquet reminds us that WCs were originally conceived of as fix-it shops, moving later to test preparation sites (“Our Little Secret” 468, 477). The JJWC, as a service originally conceived of as a way to “fix” the papers of remedial students admitted under OA.40 It was also not until the process and collaborative writing movements of the 1960s and 1970s under Kenneth Bruffee that WCs began to embrace peer tutoring pedagogy (“Our Little Secret” 474). Similarly, while the timelines don’t match up specifically, the JJWC only turned to peer tutoring after testing the limits of professional tutors, a fact that highlights the revolutionary nature of peer tutoring to practitioners in the field.

Additionally, services that push the WC beyond one-on-one, face-to-face tutoring is also a practice that developed over time, both in terms of WC scholarship and the development of the JJWC, in accordance to trends in WC scholarship after its initial focus on collaborative pedagogy (Fitzgerald 77-78). What’s more, the importance of collaboration between the WC and other programs is something more recently seen as “canon” WC practice, just as this was one of the more recent developments for the JJWC.

While the JJWC is just one example of WC practice and WC issues, I argue that these connections to common discussions within the field make it a worthwhile case study to examine as a starting point for future research. As Grutsch McKinney and others have reminded us, each WC is unique, making local research paramount to understanding best practices for a WC (Peripheral 21). If this is kept in mind, I posit that these narratives of case studies are a necessary

40 In “Our Little Secret, Boquet states, “A post-open admissions category is, of course, a slippery slope: How does one know when or whether open admissions became "post?" The concerns of open admissions writing labs were not new, having been factors in the writing lab's existence throughout its history. And the problems of open admissions writing labs have yet to be solved. With that said, I am placing the beginning of the post-open admissions writing center somewhere around 1980, give or take a year or two” (475). Given John Jay’s delayed reactions to OA at CUNY, however, and given the persisting upheaval at the college that started even before OA at CUNY, I argue that the John Jay WC cannot be considered “post- OA.” Even in its early days, the JJWC was responding to the effects of OA; to consider it “post-OA” would de-emphasize that important fact.
counterbalance to RAD research and quantitative studies in that they establish the real impacts of scholarship in functioning WCs. The need for replicable studies to produce more robust scholarship does not preclude the necessity of storytelling that expresses local concerns. In fact, the two research ideologies interdependent.

WRITING AT JOHN JAY COLLEGE DURING OPEN ADMISSIONS

Open Admissions (OA) irrevocably impacted each college in the CUNY system, solidifying the landmark educational experiment in its place in educational histories. John Jay, a college already impacted by upheaval due its struggles to remain open despite CUNY’s central administration wishes, perhaps experienced those repercussions more directly than other, more established CUNY institutions. Speaking specifically of the John Jay experience of OA in his history of the college, Educating for Justice, Gerald Markowitz remarks, “Providing a place in the University for every high school graduate who desired to attend college profoundly affected all campuses, but at John Jay it unleashed a hurricane of change that transformed the college” (Markowitz 39).

John Jay, first opening in the fall of 1965, began its unusual history in the NYPD police academy on 20th Street. Immediately the site for unique educational interactions between the “liberal arts faculty and police students” amidst the heightened security of the academy (Markowitz 4), the college’s first decade brought dramatic changes in campus culture due to the national political atmosphere, a space crisis as the campus moved locations, a shutdown in 1976, and a subsequent elimination of humanities majors - all accompanied by the advent of OA (30-31, 39, 63-78). Perhaps one of the most directly impacted areas of the resulting transformation at
John Jay, reflective of other CUNY campuses, was writing education. After quoting John Jay’s mission statement, Mark McBeth writes, in “Arrested Development,”

Obviously, as noted in this [mission] statement, the college hopes to prepare students for leadership in public positions, but almost all of the skills it “endows” to achieve these goals are fostered in writing classrooms: critical thinking, effective communication, creative problem solving, information technology, and evaluation. In this mission statement, we see that the college’s identity is securely attached to students’ literacy development. (“Arrested” 33)

Both Markowitz and McBeth express the drastic changes at the college as a result of OA, due to a move from being a largely professional school to a four-year institution, which I discuss below. As McBeth expresses, however, all tensions and transitions following OA policies can be traced back to a focus on defining what literacies should be valued most at the college. Writing education at John Jay, then, was the center of Markowitz’s “hurricane of change.”

Crozier, the chair of the English department from 1974 to 2002, stated in interviews that OA completely changed the face of the English department and, in fact, writing at the college. “John Jay first got underway in 1970, which was the beginning of Open Admissions, and there was a grant from a school and the student body was almost entirely police, people in their late 20s, 30s, 40s and so on,” Crozier recalls. “And suddenly we got thousands of students who were quite unprepared for college nor were we prepared to [instruct] them” (Crozier, personal interview, June 2017). Licklider, Deputy Chair of the Writing Program 1975-1980 and 1998-

---

41 “[John Jay College] strives to endow students with the skills of critical thinking and effective communication; the perspective and moral judgment that result from liberal studies; the capacity for personal and social growth and creative problem solving that results from the ability to acquire and evaluate information; the ability to navigate advanced technological systems; and the awareness of the diverse cultural, historical, economic, and political forces that shape our society. . . . It serves the community by developing graduates who have the intellectual acuity, moral commitment, and professional competence to confront the challenges of crime, justice, and public safety in a free society. It seeks to inspire both students and faculty, to the highest ideals of citizenship and public service.” (qtd in McBeth, “Arrested” 33)
2004, remembers, “[W]e didn't know what to do with these Open Admission students who couldn't write or who read very poorly as well” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017). The English department became a service department, as typical English courses made way for remedial writing.

Licklider remembers testing and remediation as taking over the conversations surrounding writing at the college, recalling the increase of necessary courses which coincided with the decrease of class sizes to give remedial students the attention necessary to be helpful. This caused budget trouble immediately, as CUNY and John Jay struggled to pay new instructors for new courses. “Remediation is expensive,” Licklider surmised. The cost of these remedial courses, which often bore no credits for students, in addition to the cost of “exams at every level,” created a culture of testing while simultaneously taking funds away from other programming. “All of that takes away from the teaching of writing, of course,” states Licklider (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017).

The WAC program, and other similar initiatives at John Jay, led to a focused discussion of general writing support within the English department and across the campus. However, test scores on proficiency exams remained low, leaving many students stuck in a vicious cycle of testing and non-credit-bearing coursework.\footnote{Cf Sean Molloy’s dissertation, “A Convenient Myopia,” for a more in-depth discussion of this cycle across the CUNY system.} Licklider recalls the difficulty of developing language surrounding remediation, and that as students continued failing proficiency tests, new courses were added to the John Jay writing curriculum:

The language around the courses that were [non-credit bearing was] very problematic.

“Remedial” suggests that the patient is sick and needs a remedy to make [them] well.

“Developmental” suggests that the patient or the person is immature, you know, not 18
but 14 or whatever. ...But we called that course English 100 and all of those names figured into the description of it. It was a one-credit course but it had three hours attached to it - so it was pretty heavy for that one credit. And we still found that many students didn't pass it the first time around. We had about a 60% pass rate as I recall. So, we set up yet another course below it... called English 099. And we joked that we could continue going right down to 098 and 097…” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017)

Licklider’s emphasis on problematic language here stresses the core issue: Not only were students failing the tests, but this cycle was accompanied by a constant gauntlet of shame-filled rhetoric.

As Licklider begins to describe, the department at first introduced ENG100, “Introduction to College Composition” in 1977. According to the course catalog for that year, the course was meant to be an “[i]ntroduction to the elements of writing” with an “[i]ntensive review of sentence structure and standard English usage” (John Jay Undergraduate Bulletin 1977-1979 81). As students entered the course, and promptly began to fail it, the department added ENG099, “Elements of Writing,” to the course catalog in 1981, which was an “[i]ntensive study of subject-verb relations, user of modifiers, and sentence generation” (John Jay Undergraduate Bulletin 1981-1983 72). In addition to these remedial courses were three levels of composition geared toward multilingual or ESL students.

Accompanying the course progression was a placement test, administered as students entered the college. Labeled various combinations of acronyms over the years, including the WAT or CATW, the exam determined into which level of writing course the students would progress. Following the CATW the ACT exam was used. More than a simple placement exercise, however, the ACT held students’ ability to progress through degree programs hostage:
if students could still not pass the ACT after taking a remedial writing course once, they were kept in basic writing until they were able to do so (“Arrested” 35).

The descriptions of appropriate college-level writing that resulted from remedial courses and gatekeeping examinations solidified definitions of literacy at the college to ones dealing with white, normative concepts of language. In order to pass the exams, students were forced to conform to very specific standardized forms of writing that, for the most part, did not reflect their personal experiences of literacy and language nor their rhetorical abilities. At a college where the student body was undergoing a broad swath of changes, demographically speaking, this had many consequences for faculty designing writing initiatives.

Along with Crozier and fellow English faculty member Shirley Schnitzer, Licklider was instrumental in navigating the influx of testing for CUNY student writing at John Jay. Licklider, a member of the English Department Articulation Committee in 1984 and a member of the department Curriculum and Composition committees prior to that, participated in the revision of these exams - and the subsequent analysis of the language surrounding the tests and remedial courses - through membership in the CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors (CAWS). “It was an exciting group to be part of,” Licklider recalls. “We all had great ideas… and no money” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017). CAWS was instrumental in attempting to move definitions of writing “proficiency” away from the grammar-oriented ideas of early testing strategies. According to Molloy’s history, Kenneth Bruffee, Mina Shaughnessy, and other WPAs across CUNY began meeting in the fall of 1970 to discuss OA-related concerns.

[T]his “Shaughnessy Circle” quickly became a welcoming community, sanctuary and professional network for the first generation of CUNY composition and rhetoric teachers, scholars and administrators who were often overwhelmed by impossible expectations and
challenging work. ...The Shaughnessy circle evolved into ...CAWS, although non-administrators like [Sondra] Perl, [John] Brereton, [Donald] McQuade and [Richard] Sterling soon joined it. They traveled to conventions together and Shaughnessy assigned everyone to attend different sessions and report back to the group. She encouraged the whole circle to read and discuss books, assigning discussion leaders. (Molloy 340-341)

For Licklider, a later member of CAWS, this interaction helped form her response to remediation and OA, and inspired her future work. She recalls,

So, when open admissions came and all the students were just thrown on the colleges we all went, “What are we going to do?” all of us - especially those of us directing writing programs. And so Bob Lyons at Queens and Ken Bruffee at Brooklyn, and Richard Larsen at Lehman, and Bonnie August at Bronx Community, and George Otte who when he first came on was at Baruch - a whole bunch of people got together and said… ‘Let's get together and talk strategy, talk policy, talk issues become a kind of political bloc that can argue for things, for and against certain educational principles.’ So, we did that.”

(Licklider, personal interview, July 2017)

This collaboration was crucial to the design of CUNY WPs at the time, from Licklider’s perspective. CAWS inspired instructors, many of whom had no formal training in writing pedagogy, to take on the increase in basic writing needs with gusto. “I mean for me it was fun because I was young. I had never been taught how to teach writing,” Licklider remarks. “I was a literature professor with a degree from Columbia. They [advisors] assume you ‘know’ to write. So, all of this was fascinating …[P]eople were beginning to see [that writing needed more attention throughout CUNY]” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017).
But students were not the only John Jay population of concern. Faculty who had little experience with writing pedagogy, much less pedagogy geared toward students hitherto absent from the US university landscape, had to be instructed on teaching the new student body - a particularly arduous task at John Jay, which was also seeing a change in the age and concerns of students as it moved from a vocational school focused almost solely on police studies to a more multifaceted institution with more professional degrees (i.e., forensic psychology, forensic science, and criminology). Later in the process of testing at CUNY, Licklider and Schnitzer developed a series of faculty development workshops to aid faculty in other departments in using and grading student writing in their classes as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. One of their emphases was dealing with basic writers and multilingual students, something that Licklider felt was important during the early days of testing. Licklider recalls,

[W]e began to see that you have to have writing everywhere. This is the same time when writing across the curriculum was also beginning [for composition and rhetoric], right in the early ‘80s. So, you know, if you're going to have writing in a psych course where the tests are all machine graded, as we used to say... you’ve got to help that instructor learn how to make a good assignment, how to respond to the writing that's produced, how to grade it. All that stuff was not in their training. Just as it wasn't in our training - we were literature PhDs. (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017)

WAC Workshops - affectionately referred to as “Pat and Shirley’s Dog-and-Pony Show” in Licklider’s personal correspondence (Licklider, “Writing Across the Curriculum on a Shoestring,” 1986 CAWS Conference, Licklider personal files) - consisted of day-long gatherings of faculty from across the college departments, and sometimes from across multiple CUNY institutions offering advice on assignment design, commenting on student writing, and
general advice for including writing-based assignments suitable for multiple disciplines (Licklider, personal files). Licklider and Schnitzer’s workshops were supplemented with monthly WITs - Writing Instruction Tips, published in the college faculty publication, “The Week Of…” “To be sure students have picked up all the important material in a lecture of class discussion,” reads the first weekly “W.I.T.” from November 18, 1986, “announce at the start of the period that everyone will be required to summarize the class content in writing the last 10-15 minutes of the session. If there is time, ask several students to read their summaries aloud…” (Licklider and Schnitzer, “W.I.T. November 18, 1986” 3). Clearly catering to a wide audience of instructors who may not have received pedagogical training, much less training in writing instruction, Licklider continued to publish “Weekly W.I.T.s” in “The Week Of…” until 1989 (Licklider and Schnitzer, “W.I.T. October 7, 1989”). Following the weekly publication run, Licklider and Schnitzer collected the tips in a bound volume, Quick WITS (1994), as a nod to the publication’s popularity and importance in the pedagogical history of the college.

The support provided by Licklider, Schnitzer, and the WAC program was particularly important for the new instructors brought in to deal with the influx of remedial courses in the English Department and for faculty who would encounter the same students in “content-based” courses. These instructors were mostly adjuncts and graduate students, many of whom had little pedagogical training in the teaching of writing. According to Crozier, “We couldn’t find anybody who knew enough about composition ...The problem of course in composition was that we had, when I was there, about 30 full time people to teach everything and 120-something adjuncts - the adjuncts who taught most of the composition courses” (Crozier, personal interview, June 2016). As WAC became a larger part of pedagogical conversations at the college, the English department and writing program saw that, given the circumstances, both
students and faculty needed extra support - support that the WAC workshops and large class sizes, even after placing a lower cap, made impossible.

**FOUNDING THE JOHN JAY WRITING CENTER**

The renewed focus on writing due to placement exams throughout CUNY led the English department to discuss creating a support service for writers at the college. Licklider remembers that “everybody had to teach one or two sections of writing a semester, so we were all in it. And we all said, ‘Help, we need help! We need a writing center! Why can't we have a writing center like Lehman or Hunter? What's the matter with us?’” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017).  

The request for a WC and the subsequent comparisons to other institutions were prompted, in part, by Licklider’s work with Bruffee in CAWS. Bruffee, an instructor and sometimes-administrator at Brooklyn College CUNY during the early days of OA and CAWS, was instrumental not only in regards to WCs in the CUNY system, but also to notions of collaborative pedagogy and WC work within the larger field of composition and rhetoric. Bruffee received approval to found the writing center at Brooklyn College in 1972, making it the first writing center in the CUNY system (Bruffee, *Cadre*, October 24, 1972). Bruffee’s work at Brooklyn helped him earn a FIPSE grant for an institute in peer collaboration from 1979-1982 (Brooklyn College, “Kenneth Bruffee: A Brief Biography”), which subsequently inspired a focus on WCs and peer collaboration throughout CUNY. Indeed, Bruffee’s influence stretched well beyond CUNY; Bruffee is seen as one of the founders of modern-day WC studies, as evidenced

---

43 Comparatively, the English department’s request for a WC came late in the general narrative of WCs in US universities. WC studies as a field did not begin to emerge professionally until the late 1970s, with the Writing Lab Newsletter and the Writing Center Journal beginning their publication runs in 1977 and 1980 respectively. However, Peter Carino, in his WC histories “Early Writing Centers” and “Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History,” traces the history of WCs to well before OA and the professionalization of the field (“Early” 104, “Open” 31). Carino rejects the model of WC history that cites OA as the “watershed” moment for WCs due to the important presence of WCs in universities in the early Twentieth Century (“Open” 31-32). However clearly, for John Jay, OA was the watershed moment, a fact that makes sense considering the college’s founding in the 1960s and its early identity crises.
by the 2008 special issue of *Writing Center Journal* focused on his work. While there is no
documentation as evidence, one might surmise that Bruffee’s presence, already influential within
the CUNY system, had an impact on Licklider through her CAWS membership.

As chair, Crozier took faculty complaints to then-provost, Basil Wilson, and in AY 1984-85, the department began gathering information and planning the start of a WC. Early efforts
were thwarted by the college’s unsteady budget, according to Crozier. An influx of students also
meant an influx of faculty at a college already suffering from growing pains in its first decade of
operations. After early failures to get through to administrators, the English department sent for
back up:

So, I called someone at the University of Pittsburgh, whose name I don’t know44, I don’t
remember but who was at the time nationally-known composition person and asked if he
would come and look over our English department, so he did come. And it was he who
made the case to the administration that we needed a writing center. (Crozier, personal
interview, July 2017)

The unidentified outside help was successful, and soon the English department successfully
requested funding, space, and a line from the provost. “And that’s how it started,” Crozier
remembers.

After the initial approval of a line for WCD by Wilson, the department began searching
for someone to fit the role. Crozier, along with the rest of the department, held gross
misconception of what would need to go into a WC, which greatly impacted the support
available to the center’s first director. According to both Licklider and Crozier, the WC was

---

44 Despite multiple searches through Licklider’s files, the CAWS files, and the John Jay Lloyd Sealy Library
archives, no documentation of this meeting could be found, leaving the name of this individual a mystery. One
might guess that David Bartholomae, a major figure in composition and rhetoric at that time, is the person to whom
Crozier refers, but no evidence is forthcoming of that fact.
originally conceived of as a service for unprepared students attempting to pass the writing tests and remedial courses. For Licklider, the writing center was a place for students to practice their skills outside of a testing environment. “The students really needed a place where they could go and practice skills that they were learning that week in the classroom,” she states, “in a kind of a nonjudgmental, non-graded atmosphere” (Licklider, personal interview, July 2017). Crozier saw the center as being “in service to the English department.” It wasn’t until later that he and other department faculty members began to see it as “college-wide support… not just for the English department” (Crozier, personal interview, July 2017). Like so many other WCs of that era, then, the JJWC was first conceived of as both a fix-it-shop for remedial writers and a test-prep center for proficiency exams. Boquet reminds us that WCs were, and still remain, a mystery to many university personnel, making self-definition extremely important in WC work (“Our Little Secret” 465). At John Jay, the situation was no different, and this impacted many early administrative decisions regarding its operations.

Wilson offered a classroom in North Hall, Room 1301, for use as the WC. Space had been a problem at John Jay even before the influx of OA students, with the Board of Higher Education begrudgingly granting the college a home in the former Miles Shoe Building in 1969 and the move to 59th Street delayed four years (Markowitz 52). This meant that, almost as a rule, any request for a room was met with pushback on the administrative level. The English department considered themselves lucky to have obtained even a tiny classroom, according to Crozier. At the time, North Hall, the former shoe factory, was the college’s main campus building, meaning that despite the cramped quarters, the JJWC was located truly at the center of student activity at John Jay. A small source of pride to its founders and its current administrators, considering the few positive aspects of its founding, the central location was particularly
important at a college in which most students were, and are, commuters with work or family responsibilities; the central location made attending tutoring sessions easy. Space was one of Stanger’s few victories, as she was able to move the center from Room 1301 to Room 2450 near the end of her tenure, giving tutors more room in which to work while maintaining the central location. Jackie Grutsch McKinney reminds readers that for WCs, location is paramount to successfully being seen as a legitimate space of writing assistance on a college campus. (*Peripheral* 21). The care with which past and present administrators speak about the physical space of the JJWC is evidence of this at a hyper-local level.

As Stanger, who could not be reached for comment for this project, worked to develop the center, she hired adjuncts as professional tutors to staff the center. As Crozier commented, the department, including Stanger, was only just becoming aware of WC scholarship of the time that advocated for the benefits of peer tutoring. The center began with a staff of graduate students, underpaid and often under qualified. Crozier remembers this resulting in an “unstable” staff and an “arduous” process for making tutoring appointments. Also not very convincing for faculty or students to call upon the services of the center. According to Crozier, as Stanger became acclimated to WC work and identified the staffing problems, she proposed a one-semester tutor training course in order to move from tutoring done by adjuncts and graduate students to a peer tutoring model. Crozier remembers this as an improvement that helped the center gain some much-needed momentum (Crozier, personal interview, June 2017).

In these early days, the center operated on an appointment basis, with one-on-one sessions offered. During these early years, Stanger occasionally advertised in “The Week Of…,” showcasing periodic workshops in collaboration with other student service offices. As early as 1985, Stanger posted a schedule of workshops in the “The Week Of…,” advertising offerings in
test prep, “sentence combining,” and “subject-verb agreement” for student finishing the fall semester that year (Stanger, “WRITING CENTER WORKSHOPS”). Both Crozier and Licklider recall the English department faculty making the most use of the center’s services, although the confusion about its function persisted. Lack of funding had a great deal to do with the limitation of WC services at this time, a problem plaguing WCs across the nation at that time - and that continues to be a major issue in WC administration. The college as a whole was still floundering financially after the $3 million budget cut that saved the college’s independent status in 1976 (Markowitz 76-77). The repercussions of that were felt deeply in all departments, but particularly in humanities-related programs that were not seen as a crucial part of the criminal justice-focused educational mission of the institution.

In reflecting on Stanger’s time as WCD at John Jay, then, it is important to remember the perfect storm of lack of space, lack of funding and the lack of experience of the entire English department regarding WCs and WC practice faced by the inaugural director. Both Crozier and Licklider admit to not “even knowing what a WC looked like” (Crozier, personal interview, June 2017). With that in mind, Stanger’s funding- and space-related challenges can be seen in a larger context, one in which she was also fighting to clarify the purpose and function of the WC at John Jay. In 1990, in “The Week Of…,” Stanger posts:

The Writing Center has revised its mission. Its main purpose is now to help upper level undergraduate students learn to write academic discourse… While students in remedial courses, WAT-candidates, and students in academic difficulty will be welcome at the Center, they are better served by other courses and programs at the College more closely tailored to their needs. (Stanger, “Writing Center Update” 4-5)
Here, we see evidence of Stanger’s attempt to move the center beyond the test prep pedagogy it had been forced to take on by its institution. It is no wonder, then, that Stanger struggled to improve the conditions of the John Jay WC. Documents from the 1996-1997 academic year, the end of Stanger’s tenure as WCD, exemplify this struggle. A series of memos between Stanger and Wilson show that the constant dearth of funding stymied her efforts to provide a computer lab, digital scheduling system, and website for the center at a time when the college was moving toward digitizing records and improving technology on campus. Echoing several other messages in the string, Stanger’s exasperation is apparent in a November 1996 memo to Wilson reading, “The next time used computers and printers are given away, please consider the needs of the Writing Center. One of the Center’s goals is to create a John Jay Writing Center on the Internet, but, of course, the Center cannot do this without computers” (Stanger, “Request for Used Computers”). As Stanger worked towards obtaining the second WC space in North Hall, her memos to Crozier show a lack of support in renovating the space to fit the center’s needs (Stanger, “(1) Wall in 2516”). In a November 1996 memo to Crozier, Stanger mentions a struggle even to be properly compensated for teaching ENG295, the tutor training course, which was taught “over [her] 35 hours” before then, reminding Crozier that she had taught the training course “without salary… since 1985” (Stanger, “My Goals” 2-3). The tone of these memos, as well as their content, illustrate clearly that Stanger was met with resistance at every turn by the institution, either through a lack of funding or through a hesitation to treat the WC as the important resource it should have been on campus. Although Stanger’s efforts to reform or improve the WC seem tentative at best in her early days as WCD, the memos from her last year as director show that there is much more to the story than a willful ignorance of how WCs should
work. Unsurprisingly, then, receiving little support from colleagues and upper administrators who, although well-meaning, lacked experience themselves, Stanger grew discouraged.

CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP AT THE JJWC

In 1996, Stanger stepped down as WCD after a rough beginning for the JJWC. Crozier immediately hired Livia Katz, an adjunct at John Jay since 1977, to take her place on a one-year substitute line. After her first year, Katz was re-interviewed and hired for the full Director position. Crozier sees this as his “main contribution” to the legacy of the JJWC, as it was a major turning point for the center. Both Licklider and Crozier remember the poor performance of the center before giving Katz the reins, partly due to a lack of funding from upper administrators. Adler-Kassner reminds us that WPA - and WCD - positions require bureaucratic savvy, and remain ineffective unless the positions are seen as agents of advocacy (Adler-Kassner 6). This plays out in the leadership change in the JJWC’s history, as Katz’s approach to the WCD position created a substantial series of improvements, both inside the JJWC’s performance and in John Jay faculty members’ attitudes toward the center.

Her first order of business was remedying the space and furnishings for the center. Seizing on this issue, Katz began planning a larger center that would accommodate the services she sought to provide. In her oral history interview, Katz recalled, “[T]he place was very small, we were located on the second floor of North Hall.” Requesting more physical space from the provost room by room, Katz showed her strength early on in her work as WCD. As the center grew in size, and as its physical space has continued to develop over time, Katz kept its mission close to mind. “I made sure that [the center] is centrally located,” she states.

---

45 In the memo regarding her compensation for tutor training courses, Stanger mentions a FIPSE grant for tutor training from 1982, exemplifying why Crozier may have hired her in the first place, and, more to the point, showing that she was not completely without training in tutoring pedagogy, as may have been speculated given the relative silence of the WC in the history of the English department and Writing Program during this era.
46 Please see Appendix E for a transcript of Katz’s edited oral history responses.
Amazed by her determination and commitment to serving students, Licklider and Crozier remember that period of the JJWC’s existence as a hard-fought and hard-won battle for recognition. “All of these problems about the furniture, and this or that with their space,” Crozier states. “…She solved them, one after the other. And every single problem that she had, that every writing center had, she solved them” (Crozier, personal interview, June 2017). Her vigorous approach yielded results, which inspired the confidence of other faculty members in the center and gave her the momentum needed to create further change. Katz not only upgraded the space of the WC to the best of her abilities at the time, she also, perhaps even more importantly, increased its visibility as part of the campus community. After Katz took over in 1997, the JJWC was suddenly mentioned in “The Week Of…” almost every week. Suddenly, workshops featured faculty facilitators and took on more complex topics such as “Organizing Your Thoughts” and “Documenting APA Style” (Katz, “From the Writing Center” March 9, 1998). These advertisements show not only a shift in the pedagogy of the center to one geared toward a broader range of process-oriented writing topics, but also a dedication to raising awareness of the WC within its community to establish buy in from faculty and students.

Soon after these changes, Katz changed the format of tutoring in the JJWC, at first revising the original course to a more rigorous curriculum and eventually switching to a two-semester tutor training course sequence for undergraduates and using strict criteria to hire a new staff of peer tutors. Katz began reaching out to faculty members across the campus, asking for recommendations for potential peer tutors. Early on in this practice, Katz reached out via phone message, advertising services and asking for recommendations for the tutor training course. Currently, her emails to faculty serve the same purpose as those phone messages, and evoke the same fierce rhetoric:
I am sending you the usual request for identifying competent, skillful writers who would make good tutor training candidates for the first tutor training course, English 255… The prerequisites are a minimum B+ or A writing level, good social skills, a reasonable level of maturity, and a willingness to help others. Candidates must have completed English 101 and 201 with a grade of B+ or higher in each course (A’s are preferable). I am NOT looking for seniors because the tutor training courses run for two semesters and I cannot get any mileage out of graduating seniors or hire them for the Center. If you have any good writers who fit the description, please forward to me their names… (Katz, email correspondence, April 2016, emphasis original)

Following the practices she established early on, after looking over the students’ transcripts and recommendation notes from faculty, Katz invites the students to take the first class in the training sequence in the fall. From there, potential tutors undergo a rigorous training regimens and vetting process before being hired. The care with which Katz undertook hiring new tutors was, for Crozier and Licklider, another key element of the JJWC’s eventual success, making it a source of pride to be hired as a peer tutor. “There are …tutors who stay for a very long time, sometimes after they graduate. And they’re all very good students and they’re very proud of being part of the center, which I think is really a wonderful place,” Crozier reflects. The feeling of pride Katz has cultivated in the center has likewise spread to the faculty recommending students. “I loved going in there and seeing the kids that I recommended,” Licklider states. “And then they go on. They graduate, they go on but they’ve got that experience they can put that on their resume. It's a wonderful work experience to have.”

This faith faculty placed in tutors grew over time, largely due to Katz’s calls for recommendation and her rigorous vetting process. Additionally, her training curriculum ensured
that peer tutors were amply prepared to aid a diverse student body and to be attentive to multiple literacies. The sequence, still currently in place, introduces tutors to WC theory and practice using important scholarship from the field. Katz credits her predecessor with laying groundwork for the training courses which she then revised. “Carol understood peer critiquing, she understood how to teach the students to credit each other, right?” Katz states. “How to respond to each other” (Katz, personal interview, March 2017). Using Stanger’s emphasis on peer collaboration through readings of Kenneth Bruffee’s “Conversation of Mankind” as a starting point, Katz redesigned the courses to incorporate more complex discussions of WC work. She reflects,

Okay, so when I took over the writing center, I remember Pat Licklider had gone to the library and brought me a number of writing center books, among them *The Practical Tutor... Writing Center Administration...* I got Donald Murray and I got Peter Elbow and some other books and in [ENG]316 [the second semester course], I decided that there has to be writings of the theory, has to be writing center tutoring pedagogy, and we’ve started doing actually reports. …[M]y whole thing was I couldn’t make them buy books; so I compiled handouts which I would give them and they would then do reports on the various handouts. I’m still doing that today but in a much different way. (Katz, personal interview, March 2017)

Moving to this two-semester sequence, with classes originally designated “Collaborative Tutoring and Writing I” and “Tutoring and Writing II,” made the tutors more invested in the community of the JJWC and in the work done there. After going through the training courses, students apply and are interviewed by Katz. All these carefully-sequence steps place a high value on the work and mission of the JJWC and instill that feeling of pride in the new tutors.
The revised training course sequence, first appearing in the 2005-2007 course catalog now designated ENG255 “Argument Writing” and ENG316 “Advanced Argument Writing and Response: Theory and Practice,” has evolved based on Katz’s experience with the needs of tutors in the JJWC. The first semester course, ENG255, focuses on “distinguishing and writing” arguments, with foci on audience and genre (John Jay Undergraduate Bulletin 2005-2007 115). This framing allows Katz to instruct potential tutors in rhetorical modes and genre studies before moving them to a more pedagogically-focused course. The second semester course, ENG316, takes “the work begun in Argument Writing to a higher level,” and “combines composition practice with exposure to theories and paradigms of responses to writing,” encouraging a more active engagement with the JJWC community and offering potential tutors more hands-on practice (John Jay Undergraduate Bulletin 2005-2007 115). In many ways, this pedagogy is reflective of the JJWC’s mission statement in ways that the center’s administrative protocols - namely, assessment - are not. According to the executive summary offered in all JJWC annual assessment reports, the JJWC’s mission is:

The Writing Center is committed to providing writing assistance to students from all courses across the curriculum. The Center’s primary goal is to provide students with long term assistance that improves their abilities as writers and makes them more independent. In the short term, the Center helps students with skills including brainstorming, outlining, organizing and developing, sentence construction, grammar, and effective use of evidence, to name a few. The Writing Center also offers numerous in-Center and in-class workshops, which are a core component of the Center’s ability to serve such a large population. (Katz “2014-2015 Annual Report” 4)
The emphasis on the whole writer here is clearly evidenced in the training courses’ commitment to collaboration and understanding of student literacies. While Standard Vernacular English (SVE) is still emphasized in the statement, and likewise in the content of the training courses, it is contextualized in larger conversations of rhetorical thinking and inquiry-based writing.

As Katz developed the new curriculum, remediation at John Jay and throughout CUNY began to change. According to McBeth, in 1998, CUNY revised its policy regarding remediation, mandating that any senior CUNY institution that did not grant Associate’s degrees eliminate all remedial, non-credit-bearing course offerings (“Arrested” 34). As a result, the writing curriculum at John Jay began to shift away from test preparation towards a more rhetorically-focused program. Without the placement or proficiency exams, Katz and the JJWC staff were faced with a new-found freedom to pursue initiatives geared towards writing education rather than test preparation. Katz ensured that the JJWC played an active role in the transitions taken up in the English department.

As these curricular changes took place, the college was making preparations to move a large part of the campus to a new building, Haaren Hall. As the renovations of Haaren Hall took place, including a major extension simply called the “New Building,” Katz geared the center up for the big move. Katz successfully lobbied to get the JJWC space in the New Building, and in 2011 the center was moved to its new location, renamed the Alan Siegel Writing Center after a donor to the college three years later.47 This new space gave the center more room, and was integrated amongst classrooms and recreational space for students on the first floor of the New

47 Katz notes that this name was given at the administration’s pleasure, not because of any benefit received directly by the JJWC. In fact, in her assessment report that year, Katz included the statement: “On September 18, 2014, the Writing Center became officially the Alan Siegel Writing Center, named after a trustee of the College who donated $250,000 to the creation of The Siegel Fellowship in Strategic and Non-Profit Communication. The fellowship has no bearing on the Writing Center and the Center has not benefited from such funding, but the College honored Alan Siegel by naming the Writing Center after him” (Katz, “Annual Report 14-15”).
Building. Katz was also able to procure a secondary space - also amongst classrooms - especially for workshops to allow for multiple tutoring activities in the center. Katz reflects,

> Now when the architect designed the writing center for the new building, my chair wanted to be on the seventh floor together with the English department and I objected. I said that the writing center has to be... situated where there's student traffic... Prime real estate. You go where the students are. (Katz, personal interview, March 2017)

That sentiment - “You go where the students are” - is echoed throughout Katz’s overall approach to running the JJWC. Her training courses, workshop offerings, and the design of the physical space of the center all work toward the student-centered pedagogy Katz espouses through the JJWC. This is continued in the faculty-JJWC relationships that Katz has worked hard to build up over time.

**BUILDING “BUY-IN” THROUGH COLLABORATIONS**

Perhaps the most significant change Katz introduced is the incorporation of collaborations among departments, offices, and the JJWC. By including a wide variety of programs in the development of JJWC initiatives, Katz fostered a culture of faculty and staff buy-in that has ensured the necessity of the JJWC in the John Jay community. Stacey Nall reminds us of the importance of collaborations in WCs, and of the necessity of highlighting them in WC histories (102). Building on this idea, I argue that examining the history of collaboration in a WC is the first step to developing networked, assemblage-based assessments. Furthermore, these collaborations place greater value on literacy as a global enterprise - not something that occurs in siloed, institutionalized spaces.48

---

48 While the WC, academic departments, and other offices mentioned here are, indeed, institutionalized spaces, focusing on the networked nature of them helps turn the gaze of discussions of literacy from a harmful focus on writing in the classroom, and/or literacy/writing as simply an institutionalized practice. Allowing for possibilities of instability of connections in our research in institutions guides us toward broader conceptions of literacy as a whole.
Katz’s early collaborations began with the WP during the major curricular changes in the WP at John Jay. Once testing was no longer an issue, new composition and rhetoric faculty members moved the focus of the program from the traditional notion of bellettristic writing education to an inquiry-based curriculum that emphasized WAC/WID. Without the concerns of test prep in the JJWC, Katz sought to provide workshops that would help students pass the required two-semester FYW sequence. She began developing workshops for students focused on writing concerns and genre conventions commonly covered in ENG101 in Fall 2011, expanding the JJWC repertoire with support for ENG201 in Spring 2013. These workshops, run by peer tutors, offered group instruction for both WAC/WID and special curricular topics. Katz, according to her interview, approached Tim McCormack, then-Director of FYW at John Jay, to determine the areas to address in group workshops. For Katz, the workshops came about as a way of connecting to FYW in the absence of proficiency exams. These workshops became not only a key component of the daily praxis of the JJWC and the culture of collaboration she cultivated, but also a major part of her assessments.

In 2014, Katz expanded her work with the English department by incorporating literature workshops into her lineup. These were meant to aid students in the required literature courses in the general education curriculum. Creating these separate workshop series has allowed Katz to emphasize the particular nature of composition and rhetoric within the department, highlighting it as a field quite different from literature studies despite its being housed in the same department.

Other collaborations followed, according to Katz’s oral history interview and JJWC assessment documentation, underscoring the JJWC as its own entity and as a center for writing


50 Please see Chapter Four for more detailed information about this workshop sequence.
education throughout the college. The nature of John Jay as a criminal justice institution meant
that writing in the hard sciences and social sciences was, and remains, a top priority for students
and faculty. Katz’s dedication to hiring peer tutors from a wide variety of academic programs
confronts this reality, paired with her science writing workshop series run by peer tutors
majoring in the sciences. By using these peer tutors, Katz reaffirms the curricular collaborations
she undertakes to produce these workshops. She is currently working on new collaborations with
the social science departments to develop similar collaborative initiatives.

Katz continues to offer programming in other areas as well, notably through alliances
with the Freshman Experience Program, by choosing a select number of students who must
apply to participate in mandatory tutoring sessions and workshops throughout their first
academic year. Additionally, the JJWC participates in the Writing Intensive Partnership, working
with individual faculty members and their students to provide resources for writing across the
curriculum. Katz, and through her, JJWC, is also a member of the Learning Centers Committee,
putting the center in touch with offices such as the Math Center and the dedicated SEEK tutoring
services.

Throughout its history, the JJWC’s model of collaboration has exemplified the ecology in
which so many WCs operate, consciously or unconsciously. Katz’s innovation lies with her
ability to overcome struggle within institutional limitations, more than in the specific programs
being offered in the JJWC. Here, we can return to the framework provided by assemblage theory.
The intersecting components of the JJWC’s operations are crucial to writing education at John
Jay, but are only marginally impactful in and of themselves. What has made the JJWC, and Katz
with it, indispensable to writing education at John Jay is, instead, the forces moving between
those programs and the presentation of them as a full line up being offered. In other words, their
combined impact - the push back Katz has worked on against funding limitations, the doubt of faculty as well as their buy-in, the commitment of peer tutors from across departments working within the center - these intra-actions, to come back to Karen’s Barad’s term, truly center the JJWC in the college. Returning to Jasbir Puar’s discussion of the cyborg in assemblage-based ideology, we can see that the JJWC takes on the role of the mechanisms of conjuncture - screws, circuit boards, wires - holding together and sometimes sparking in collision within the frame of writing education at John Jay. In this way, despite the local circumstances that have impacted CUNY, John Jay, and the JJWC, it can be seen as a model of countless other WCs. While Katz does not frame her practices in the language of assemblage theory, the ethos is present. Katz encourages active recognition of the symbiotic relationships of writing spaces across the university, and has used that to the advantage of her center.

Katz has cultivated this tightly-knit community in the center, all the while holding her staff to high standards of operation and while committing to a diverse approach to literacy. Looking around at the staff on any given day at the JJWC, students of color make up the majority of both the tutoring staff and the students using the center. By working with many different departments, Katz exemplifies the need to think of both diversity and writing in broader, complex terms that do not necessarily privilege what goes on in FYC classes. By offering tutoring for texts outside of class-related work (resumes, etc.), Katz instills a necessarily broader view of what literacy looks and sounds like in the center. None of this is said out loud; in her interview, Katz did not mention a dedication to social justice or diversity at John Jay. However, the JJWC exhibits these ideals in its everyday operations.

With this in mind, on the local level, there is much research left to be done about the English department at John Jay. Future research might take on a RAD approach to the WC, one
which explores the lasting impact of testing structures on JJWC training curricula. Currently, Tim McCormack and Mark McBeth are rigorously studying the current WP at John Jay. The archives of the English department as a whole, however, have more stories to tell. My next chapter will continue to explore just one more small corner of this story - the assessment practices of the JJWC as they have developed over the last decade and their connections to the mission, practices, and pedagogies of the JJWC.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{51}Cf McBeth and McCormack, “Equal Opportunity Programming and Optimistic Program Assessment”}\]
Chapter Five
“Lots of Moving Parts”: Discourse Analysis of Current Assessment Practices

In general our field has failed to consider writing centers an appropriate area of inquiry into composition's politics of location, yet writing centers remain one of the most powerful mechanisms whereby institutions can mark the bodies of students as foreign, alien to themselves. Foucault shows us, in the first pages of Discipline and Punish, that to extend power is to put it at risk. This has certainly been true of the university’s relationship to the writing center, a symbiosis highlighting the degree to which institutional power becomes most vulnerable at the very point at which it becomes most visible. Nowhere in our field has this tension been more apparent than in the writing center, a space where the consolidation of power shifts as the idea of the writing center metamorphoses from being one whose identity rests on method to one whose identity rests on site, and back again.

Elizabeth Boquet, “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions” 465

So much of the writing assessment work we do seems complicit in sustaining inequality. No wonder we are drawn to seemingly more democratic assessment methods like directed self-placement, portfolios, and contract grading. If we were to make this desire for more democratic assessment more visible in our profession - to say that we value socially just writing assessment - what would it mean? Would assessing for justice be asking something of writing assessment that is simply, to echo [Iris Marion] Young, a strange dream?

Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe, “Toward Writing as Social Justice: An Idea Whose Time Has Come” 119-120

In this chapter, I will review current assessment documentation from the Alan Siegel Writing Center using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as my method of investigation. The documents I have examined include annual reports, student and faculty satisfaction survey forms and their results, and internal assessment reports, all provided by Katz. Due to the repetitive nature of these documents, I have used the 2014-2015 assessment year as a baseline for analysis, as the center was renamed the Alan Siegel Writing Center in 2014, therefore signaling the beginning of what I will call the “current era” of the ASWC timeline. Additionally, that academic year encapsulates several then-new initiatives, as well as older initiatives that have recently been phased out for various reasons, making it a comparatively robust year for assessment of the ASWC.52

There are two levels of assessment documents composed each year by Katz and her staff. The Internal Assessment Report, which offers detailed statistics regarding goals and outcomes, is

52 Please see chapter two for a more description of this chapter’s methodology.
sent to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies at John Jay, as well as to the Provost as a courtesy. The Annual Assessment Report is an overall narrative of the initiatives, outcomes, and future goals of the ASWC, and is sent annually to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Writing Program director, and the English Department Chair. The Coordinator of the Literature Major is sent an excerpt of the literature programmatic initiative outcomes.

In reviewing these documents, I aim to establish the ways the ASWC presents itself officially, focusing on language use and methodology. I will place this analysis in conversation with Katz’s commentary on the ASWC’s mission and pedagogical ideology in the hopes of showing where both similarities and differences lie. Within this analysis, I show the overarching influence of institutionalized discourse on the ASWC’s ability to present itself using disciplinary terminology. With this in mind, I argue that careful reflection on WC assessment is necessary to fulfilling an implicit mission that places value on anti-oppression action and/or pedagogy.

**TAKING ON ASSESSMENT AT THE ASWC**

As the JJWC developed over the last three decades, so did conceptions of assessment at CUNY. Programmatic assessments were introduced around the mid-1970s, during major CUNY-wide budget crises and in the midst of OA concerns. As Fabricant and Brier argue, the increasing corporatization of universities has placed greater emphasis on assessment, meaning that since the start of CUNY assessment culture, the repercussions of these evaluations have become harsher.

The JJWC began assessments at the end of its first director’s tenure. In 1995, John Jay was going through the process of preparing for Middle States. Licklider, as a member of the Policy Subcommittee for University Assessment at that time, played a key role in this important moment for assessment at John Jay as the committee searched for evidence-based claims about
each program and department at the college. From correspondence amongst subcommittee members and marginal notes on drafted documents in Licklider’s files, Licklider can be seen advocating for a greater emphasis on writing process, rather than grammar, in university assessment measures. The conversation showcased in these documents highlights the transformative nature of assessments, both then and now. As the subcommittee worked to evaluate the neoliberal principles of efficiency and productivity, Licklider had to work to avoid returning to the grammar and mechanics focus of the early days of OA.

The JJWC began official assessment practices around this time, most likely due to the work of Licklider and the subcommittee. The earliest assessments on record for the JJWC were compiled for the 1996-1997 academic year by Stanger, according to documents found amongst the unofficial CAWS archival files. This minimal assessment focuses mainly on the computers newly installed in the lab at Stanger’s request, and a “risk assessment” of software used for signing in tutees. Elsewhere, informal mentions of assessments from Stanger’s performance reviews and budget requests, show that traffic and tutor hours were another main source of assessment. Beyond this, however, it seems that the true era of assessment began the year Katz took over as WCD.

Starting off with student satisfaction surveys and attendance records for the 1997-1998 academic year, Katz eventually moved towards assessing on a larger scale. Katz recalls that the revival of the WAC program in the English department inspired the JJWC to begin grades-based assessments around the 1999-2000 academic year. “[W]e used to be funded by the Perkins Grant, okay, for associate degree students, and we used to do grade based outcomes there,” Katz

53 In her interview, Katz recalls that a similar assessment renaissance occurred during the 2010 Middle States accreditation cycle (Katz, personal interview, March 2017).
54 ASWC funding from this grant ceased after the 2014-2015 academic year, according to ASWC assessment documentation (Katz, “Annual Report 2014-2015).
stated during an oral history interview. “[B]ut they were very rudimentary grade based outcomes - just pass and fail and incomplete” (Katz, personal interview, March 2017). For Katz, assessment was crucial to improving the JJWC through funding, both from CUNY and John Jay. Turning to grades as a tool was appealing to upper administrators. “This college happens to like grade based assessment so we continued doing that. ...Hey, right?” Katz continued:

I mean, we always knew that grade based assessments actually do not tell the entire story because grades are determined by so many factors and the grade that one professor gives to a student is not the same as another grade that [another] professor gives to a student. Or the [other factors that go into] determining the grade like attendance. So there’s so many variables here that the final grade is really not [an] accurate reflection. (Katz, personal interview, March 2017)

Despite the admitted inaccuracies that may arise in grades-based assessments, Katz catered to her audience, and brought grades into the larger purview of her evaluations.

In doing this, Katz was reacting to the never-ending struggle for funding. As addressed in the previous chapter, many of the JJWC’s early problems arose due to a lack of funding and support from upper administrators. This budgetary dilemma has not changed over time, as evidenced by current assessment documents. In the 2014-2015 annual report, Katz laments the loss of funds from the Perkins Grant, which supports initiatives benefitting Associate's degree students. Under “recommendations” that year, Katz writes:

[G]iven the complete demise of the Perkins grant, which the College did not replace, the Writing Center will need to look back in regret upon its former glory and student success in writing will be greatly diminished by the necessarily crippled services of the Center. As it is, the Director is being told that there is no replacement for the Perkins grant in
sight and the money gift the Director hoped for last year is no longer viable. (Katz, “Annual Report 2014-2015” 55)

With setbacks such as this loss of the Perkins Grant and other funding over the course of its history, the ASWC has had to reinforce its importance on campus, often turning to neoliberal paradigms of efficacy to get the attention of administrators. For this reason, Katz implemented grades-based assessments early on, even though no specific mandates were handed down from CUNY or John Jay administrators. Katz felt, and still feels, pressured to justify her existence by whatever means necessary. Despite her acknowledgement of the shortcomings of grades-based methods, Katz was inadvertently pressured to taking on assessments in a way that she might not otherwise have chosen. Here, then, we can see the impact of institutional structures bearing down on the WC, directly impacting its practice. To fully see this picture, careful analysis of the language used in these documents is necessary.

**FRAMEWORK FOR CDA OF ASWC ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION**

In the rest of this chapter, I will analyze the discourse of annual assessment reports from the ASWC using CDA methodology. Educational researcher Elizabeth J. Allan asserts that CDA, particularly policy discourse analysis, “understand[s] language and discourse as socially constituted - fluid and dynamic meaning-making systems that are not rooted in a singular or essential concept of truth” (Allan 52). According to Allan:

Policy discourse analysis rejects an essential correspondence between language and reality and instead relies upon an understanding of discourse as productive - actively shaping and producing subject positions and the material realities in which we find ourselves. In short, policy discourse analysis provides a method that foregrounds the written text of policy. (Allan 52)
With this definition in mind (and its commensurable parallels to assemblage theory), I will use CDA as a means of exploring connections between the ASWC’s mission statement and the functions Katz sees the ASWC as undertaking as a way of determining how closely the language surrounding ASWC assessments is related to the actual work being done in the center. Furthermore, I will begin to apply my own framework of concern for WC assessments, namely that of socially just WC assessment protocols. My analysis will approach these concerns with the following questions in mind:

1. How is the language used in documents presented to upper administrators reflective of the values held by, and the self-determined mission of, the ASWC?

   Given the hierarchy in which the ASWC operates, its assessment documents are used specifically, according to Katz’s interview, to provide evidence of the center’s impact on the college as an argument for continued and/or increased funding. Given that situation, assessment documents form the ASWC can be seen as the center’s “public face,” so to speak. As Schendel and Macauley argue, it is important for WCs’ assessment protocols to mirror their missions (Schendel and Macauley 50). This question explored the extent to which the ASWC annual reports accomplish that mission, which focuses largely on collaboration between writers and ASWC staff.

   2. How do neoliberal determinations of concepts such as “success,” “efficiency,” and “efficacy,” key terms in determining what college resources receive funding, play into the language of assessment in the ASWC?

   As argued in the previous chapter regarding the ASWC’s overall history, institutional pressures have an enormous impact on the ways WCs are able to operate. With definitions of neoliberal educational complexes used by Miller, Adler-Kassner, and Strickland, respectfully, in mind, I
examine this question through the annual reports as a way of exploring the extent to which pressures from outside the ASWC impact their ability to self-narrate and self-define practices.

3. \textit{How does the absence of concerns regarding diverse student identities and literacies impact the rhetoric of these assessment documents?}

Lastly, this question more directly speaks to this project’s overall goal of connecting current work in anti-racist and social justice frameworks for writing assessment in FYC to assessments of WCs. In her interview, Katz clearly stated that her assessments and WC practices were not intentionally anti-oppressive in nature. I do not seek to call out the ASWC or Katz for their performance on these issues. As stated above, quite the contrary: I aim to explore how institutional paradigms have restricted their ability to do any such thing. Given Katz’s statements, however, I will examine what the absence of identity-driven discourse does to the sociocultural meaning of the ASWC assessments, thereby showing the ways structures of the neoliberal university play a part in deterring truly values-based assessments.

As I examine each question, the discourse of the ASWC annual report from the 2014-2015 academic year will be subjected to a coding scheme. Assessment documents from 2010-2016 will be referenced summarily throughout the discussion, although given the repetition evident in the reports, which follow the same templated format and include the same basic content for this time span, only 2014-15’s annual report has been coded. The coding scheme used is based on three sources, and groups the discourse of the assessment into three categories.

First, the discourse of “neoliberalism” is recognized as its own category. In \textit{Composition in the Age of Austerity}, Nancy Welch and Tony Scott point to the influence of capitalism in writing education, and highlight “neoliberalism” as an important term for critical studies of university initiatives. They write:
While neoliberalism was devised as a solution to the long post-World War II boom, it has proceeded since the mid-1970s, with accelerating speed and whether in moments of economic boom or bust, to roll back a century’s worth of public programs and social rights. ...Neoliberalism is rife with paradoxes, but among them is the perpetuation of the theory that government best achieves the greater public good by serving private interests and privatizing government functions. (Welch and Scott 7)

The authors’ definition\(^{55}\) highlights the privatized and profit-driven notions pushed forward by neoliberal rhetoric. With this definition in mind, the coding scheme used in this chapter points out corporatized discourse in the ASWC assessment documents, largely inspired, I argue, by the need for funding and evidence the corporatization of the larger CUNY university system rather than any economic political agenda of the ASWC or its director.

The second category analyzed is that of “whiteness,” based on Asao Inoue’s “Discourse of Whiteness in Discourse Version 2,”\(^{56}\) a handout from his 2017 Council of Writing Program Administrators Summer Conference workshop. While this dissertation does not solely focus on anti-racism as a category of anti-oppressive educational justice work, I argue, following Inoue, Mya Poe, and other scholars, that the effects of institutional racism must be at the forefront of discussions of feminist or social justice activism to move beyond other oppressive structures. The categories for assessment protocols outlined in the final chapter of this project will consider socially-just frameworks for WC assessment from several different perspectives; however, the work of anti-racism is at the heart of this work, first and foremost. With this in mind, using

---

\(^{55}\) In her single-authored text, *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*, Welch further defines neoliberalism: “[Neoliberalism] is, in part, a reassertion of classical economic liberalism’s central tenet that major political and social decisions are best decided by the market” (Welch 7; qtd in Welch and Scott 7).

\(^{56}\) Recognizing that anti-racist activism, and, for that matter, educational research, is/are in a state of constant flux, I adapt this particular heuristic as Inoue’s most recent to date, rather than relying upon the heuristic published in his 2015 text. The 2015 published heuristic will be referenced in Chapter Six.
Inoue’s heuristic regarding *white habitus* as a coding scheme underscores the goals of this dissertation.

Inoue’s heuristic is broken into six main categories regarding the ways whiteness is exhibited through language: an unseen, naturalized orientation to the world; hyperindividualism; stance of neutrality, objectivity, and apoliticality; the individualized, rational, controlled self; rule-governed, contractual relationships; and clarity, order, and control. I will use three of these paradigms that appear most frequently in the assessment documents. Namely:

*Hyperindividualism* -- self-determination and autonomy is most important or most valued; self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-control are important...

*Individualized, Rational, Controlled Self* -- person is conceived as an individual who is rational, self-conscious, self-controlled, and determined. ...Social and cultural factors are external constraints to the individual... Both success and failure are individual in nature; failure is individual and often seen as weakness. Control of self is important, as is work and staying busy, or being industrious and productive...

*Clarity, Order, and Control* -- Focus on reason, order, and control; thinking (versus feeling), insight, the rational, order, objective (versus subjective), rigor, clarity, and consistency are all valued highly. Thinking/Rationality and knowledge are non-political, unraced, and can be objective... (“Habits of Whiteness in Discourse”)

Focusing, in particular, on hyperindividualism, rational, controlled self, and clarity/order/control allows me to exam common tropes in WC assessment documentation, much of which crosses over with the discourse of neoliberalism. Within this framing, using the ASWC documentation
as an example highlights the entrenched oppressive structures in crucial operations in the WC, and hopefully serves as a call to change our practices given the evidence.  

Lastly, and more positively, my analysis interrogates notions of “collaboration and ecology” in the ASWC assessment reports as a way of starting to analyze the assemblages in which the ASWC takes part. According to Elizabeth Wardle and Kevin Roozen, ecological assessments consist of broad, long-term collaborations across departments and offices dealing with student writing. They write:

Based on a perspective that situates students’ writing development across an expansive ecology of literate activities rather than within any single setting (what we refer to here as an ecological model of literate development), an ecological model of writing assessment gathers data addressing students’ wide range of experiences with writing and the impact those experiences have on their abilities to accomplish academic tasks. (Wardle and Roozen 107)

Although the authors ultimately argue for longitudinal programmatic assessment, I use their framework as a basis for exploring the ASWC’s use of data from, and pedagogical collaborations with, a wide variety of John Jay offices and departments to better serve students and to understand the impact of their services across campus. In using ecological, collaborative discourse, the ASWC assessments push against the discourse more negatively categorized as neoliberal or white by offering connections to outside influences on student writing that complicate understandings of traditional models of “success.” By highlighting this discursive aspect of the assessment documents, I aim to show the potentiality for assemblage-based frameworks of assessment, even in at a center that clearly struggles to maintain its identity amidst neoliberal educational institutional structures.

57 Please see Appendix F for a chart of the CDA coding scheme and results.
PROGRAMS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING ASSESSMENT IN THE ASWC

Currently, the ASWC undertakes assessment on several levels. Workshops, collaborative programming, and student satisfaction are all taken into consideration. Student grades are used to argue for the efficacy of the ASWC’s initiatives, particularly in terms of collaborations with specific courses or John Jay programs. The ASWC assessments are intricately designed to highlight a vast network of WC practice; this, I argue, should be seen as an assemblage, as all distinct sections rub against one another, intra-acting, to use Barad’s terminology, to form an assessment ecology. Katz herself describes her assessments as having “lots of moving parts” (Katz, personal interview, March 2017). Despite this intertwining, the separate aspects can be broken down into by several categories for the purposes of explanation.

Jump Start and Quick Start FYW Workshops

In 2011, Katz’s formal collaboration with the FYW program began in the form of workshops. At this time, the college obtained senior college status from CUNY, meaning that remedial courses were removed from the curriculum. Although this removed impediments to students’ graduation, the fact that many students still struggled to pass a freshman writing course was unaddressed by the college. Approached by then-Deputy Director of the Writing Program, Tim McCormack, Katz began collaborating on a workshop series that would guide struggling students as they approached Composition I and Composition II.

The two-semester workshop series syncs up the material covered in the two-semester FYW course sequence, with Jump Start running in the fall with Composition I (ENG101) and Quick Start running in the spring with Composition II (ENG201). Due to budgetary constraints, participation in Jump Start is limited: “eligible students must be first-time entering with no prior English at JJ (meaning first semester freshmen); no transfers of any kind with previous English”
are able to sign up. Students are selected at the beginning of the fall semester using a triangulation of SAT scores, Regents exam\textsuperscript{58} scores, and placement test scores. ENG101 instructors are also able to choose up to five additional students for the program based on first-day diagnostic writing samples. Students entering ENG201 in the spring are selected for the Quick Start program based on the recommendations of their ENG101 instructor, or by their ENG201 instructor after a diagnostic writing sample on their first day of class. This vetting process allows for an allocation of resources to those students who are predicted to need them the most.

The four-workshop JumpStart sequence includes “Developing Ideas,” addressing inquiry; “Close Reading, Summarizing, Paraphrasing,” addressing using reliable sources ethically; “Sentence Intelligibility, Integrity, Coherence/Clarity,” addressing sentence-level mechanical concerns; and “Comparison-Contrast Strategies,” addressing analytical skills. According to Katz, these workshop topics were decided upon by her and the director of FYW in order to address the needs of FYW students in ENG101. Similarly, the Quick Start workshop series, which was piloted after Jump Start in 2014, was developed based on the weakest outcomes commonly exhibited by ENG201 students: “Rhetorical Contexts” addresses rhetorical analysis and terminology; “Recognizing Useful Research Sources” addresses finding reliable sources and the research process; “Source-Based Paragraphs” addresses using evidence to back up claims and support an argument; and “Using Evidence in the Disciplines” addresses the WAC/WID component of the ENG201 curriculum. Workshops have a limited attendance cap, and are led by ASWC peer tutors and professional tutors.

\textsuperscript{58} NY State requires all students graduating high school with the intent receiving a Regents diploma before attending post-secondary school to pass the Regents exams, which are standardized tests in major high school subjects (e.g. history, earth science, Algebra, etc.).
In addition to the mainstream sections of Jump Start and Quick Start, the ASWC also runs special programming for distinct student populations. The ASWC began offering Early Start, a program “to help students who were skills certified in writing but were still considered at risk in lagging behind because of their borderline scores,” in 2011 (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2011-2012). The NNES population of the college is offered Spring Start. As described in the assessment documentation, “Unlike JumpStart, which offered students catch-up skills to make them better prepared to handle the curriculum of English 101, Spring Start addressed the stumbling blocks in the English 101 assignments/curriculum” (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 28). Similarly, the ASWC caters to John Jay’s ACE program, standing for “Accelerate, Complete, Engage” and part of a CUNY-wide sponsored initiative, is a selective supplemental initiative for first year students. According to the program office, “John Jay ACE is a baccalaureate completion program based on the principles of the successful CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and designed to significantly increase timely baccalaureate graduation rates” (John Jay College, “About ACE at John Jay”). The workshops for ACE are no different than the Jump Start and Quick Start series; ACE workshops, however, are mandatory for all students in ACE students. Addressing these types of initiatives, then, exemplifies the ASWC’s reach beyond FYW collaborations, solidifying its place in the institution.

**Lit Smart**

The Lit Smart program, initially called “Lit Start,” began in 2014 as a way of supporting students taking literature courses to fulfill general education curriculum requirements. Through collaborations with the English department and Writing Fellows from the Graduate Center CUNY assigned to the English department at John Jay, Katz designed a four-workshop sequence, echoing the format of the FYW workshops, that supplemented classroom instruction in
key components of literary analysis and research. According to the assessment documentation, the program was, “[d]esigned by two Writing Fellows in conjunction with the Writing Center director and piloted during spring 2014. LitStart consists of catch-up skills for literature majors and targets students enrolled in LIT 260 and the core literature courses, students who are not “major” ready, so to speak” (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 24). This collaboration is, rhetorically, a savvy one for both the English department and the ASWC. Not only does the ASWC increase its user base and show support for the department that founded it; the English department becomes more strongly invested in the conversation surrounding writing at John Jay, particularly important for a humanities department functioning in a social science-focused college.

The workshop sequence begins with “Exploring Fiction,” addressing “reading and analyzing a story.” Following this first session, “From Close Reading to Writing” addresses developing a thesis statement about that story,” and “Exploring Poetry” addresses “reading and writing about a poem” (Staines, personal email, August 2015). Despite the literary focus of these workshops, the benefit to students is cross-disciplinary. By confronting these topics in a dedicated space of composing that is clearly invested in WAC/WID rather than in any one subject, students might more easily see the connections between the writing they do in literature courses and the classes they take for their majors.

WAC/WID/WI Courses and the Writing Intensive-Writing Center Partnership

In 2006, the ASWC began tracking students from writing intensive (WI) courses across the curriculum. This data included attendance in individual tutoring sessions, grouped by course and department, as well as WI student attendance in workshops. In 2011, the ASWC began collaborating in a formal partnership with the Writing Intensive Program. According to
assessment documentation from that year, “The project ...paired Writing Center tutors with faculty teaching WI literature and WI philosophy courses to further support the writing done in these courses and to enhance the relationship of WI courses and the WC” (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2011-2012” 22). Here, Katz clearly identifies her goals of collaborations and establishing buy-in across campus. This program does this by not only offering specialized support for these courses, but by bringing the WC directly to the students and faculty, and establishing a long-term bond between tutor and instructor.

*Science Writing Workshops*

The science writing workshops are less formal than the aforementioned FYW series, but began earlier, in 2007. The sheer number of students majoring in the hard sciences or social sciences placed high demand on science writing education at John Jay. To help meet that need, Katz, placing her trust in specific peer and professional tutors majoring in the sciences, developed workshops to teach genres of science writing such as lab reports, research writing, and experiment proposal design. Changes in personnel in the center, however, constituted a new approach to science writing. According to assessment documentation:

> During the year [2014-2015], the Writing Center did not offer any biochemistry workshops but, instead, expanded its tutoring to include many more science courses. The faculty in the Forensic Science department continued to support the tutoring initiative specifically geared to address the unique challenges faced by science students. (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 26).

Not only does this programming show the ASWC’s efforts to connect to a major part of the college’s major-specific curricula, this situation also exemplifies the reliance upon peer tutors as WC curricular advisors and facilitators.
Usage, Student Satisfaction, and Faculty Satisfaction

In addition to the workshop data, with its connections to student grades in various academic programs, ASWC assessment reports also include traffic or attendance data, a common feature of WC assessments. Attendance is tracked using the online appointment system, Tutor Trac. Katz also includes data from student satisfaction surveys in her ASWC annual reports. While the data cannot be considered for validation purposes, it is still useful in determining which services make the biggest impact on students’ perceptions of writing education. Their inclusion in annual reports can be read as a push back on the hierarchy of data in assessment reporting and a nod toward the suspicions of grades-based data alone. Rather than simply relying on quantitative data for her reports, Katz places value on students’ own perceptions of the value of the ASWC instead of solely basing the assessments on grades - the instructors’ perceptions of efficacy of tutoring. This practice further shows that Katz strives to focus assessments on the ASWC itself rather than on individual tutors, most of whom are student workers.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ASWC ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

The following section outlines the ASWC Annual Report from the 2014-2015 academic year, with supplementation from previous assessment years and the ASWC’s Annual Internal Assessments in terms of the three categories of discourse I outlined above. This particular year’s assessment was chosen to be coded due to the robust nature of new assessments taken on in that year, it’s repetition of previous assessment structures, and because it marks the first assessment under the center’s new name. I rely upon the Annual Report for this year, rather than the Internal Assessment, due to the Internal Report’s replication of data presented more narratively in the Annual Report. The Internal Report is used to supplement my analysis due to its more thorough explanations of assessment procedure and methodology. Both documents, however, are
presented to the same audience. Through an exploration of the discourse of the Annual Report, several patterns emerge, emphasizing the push and pull between Katz’s progressive, collaborative agenda and the institutionalized structures in which she must operate.

**Neoliberalism**

Perhaps the most prominent feature of the ASWC assessment documents is the overarching neoliberal discourse pervading through each section. This begins in the mission statement featured at the top of the executive summary. The “primary goal” of the ASWC, according to the mission statement, is to “to provide students with long term assistance that improves their abilities as writers and makes them more independent” (Katz, “Annual Report 2014-2015” 4). With this in mind, all initiatives assessed in these documents have the express intent on making students self-sufficient. While thinking of the whole writer is a noble undertaking, and one which many composition instructors and administrators would purport to work towards, the framing of this language removes any consideration of the writer, instead positioning students as being responsible for their own learning rather than for participating in a learning community.

The rhetoric of self-sufficiency, present in the mission statement and repeated in the future goals for the ASWC, is accompanied by other corporatized terminology echoed throughout the report. After coding, several key terms stood out as reinforcing a capitalist discourse. Target and serve are terms typically associated with public-facing businesses. Their appearance in these assessment documents positions students as customers who will purchase or subscribe to the product of tutoring after connecting to advertising specific to their demographics. “Spring Start targeted students enrolled in English 101 in the spring—repeaters, students who have taken English 100, transfers—in other words, potentially at-risk students who
had yet to master the curricular skills needed to succeed in English 101 at John Jay,” one passage reads (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 6). While the discourse here also features several key terms discussed in the other coding schema below, the use of “targeted” exemplifies the militaristic language often combined with corporate rhetoric.

Likewise, *improve, success,* and *effective* also steer the discourse of assessment toward a product-driven outcome. Implied is a reliance on a very specific definition of “success” - namely, a passing grade of A or B in a course. The very framework of grades-based assessment pushes this narrative forward. Throughout the executive summary, paragraphs discussing separate initiatives are often punctuated by statements regarding the statistics of students receiving high letter grades in the courses connected to the WC initiatives, placing grades as the central concern of the ASWC, rather than other student-driven goals. This normative, neoliberal depiction of what constitutes “success” in the ASWC limits any interrogation of alternative paradigms of success, returning to some of the problems of determining “proficiency” with an exam. This takes away from the “whole student” rhetoric seen elsewhere in ASWC documentation, namely tutor training materials. Instead of rhetoric that reaffirms a pedagogy that meets the student where they come in, this vocabulary hearkens back to deficit models of education: students seeking tutoring are doing so because they need to be better, more productive, citizens.

*Productive,* along with *efficient, precision, performance,* and *outcomes,* continues in this discursive vein. These repeated themes come through in the emphasis on numbers of students served, number of appointments, time spent during each appointment, and the students’ grades after visiting the ASWC. An entire subsection of the report reviews the outcomes assessments of the center, largely referring to pass rates and grades-based data (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015 40-45). Taken by themselves, data regarding traffic is useful for examining
the overall impact of a WC on a college campus. However, placed within this cushion of discursive capitalism, and paired with corporate buzzwords *innovation* and *integration*, the statistics take on a tone suggesting that more needs to be accomplished, that the work of the WC is aiming at a peak or productivity goal.

By placing such value on the ASWC’s productivity and ability to make students “independent learners,” the documents serve the purpose of aligning the ASWC with the overall learning goals of John Jay, thereby also aligning the assessments with the recommendations of Schendel and Macauley. However, these goals are in and of themselves part of the institutionalized structure of the university; by aligning with the institution, the documents ensure the center’s importance to furthering the college’s agenda but simultaneously push the ASWC into an active role in supporting a neoliberal educational agenda.

*Whiteness*

Closely interconnected with the discourse of neoliberalism is the discourse of whiteness in these documents. Using Inoue’s categories for discourses of *white habitus*, several key terms stood out during coding. Although success can be seen as partaking in neoliberal discourse, the closely related *mastery, pass, fail*, and *scores* fall under the purview of whiteness, specifically. The same neoliberal systems that espouse rhetorics of productivity do so within systems that are geared toward white, normative success. Passing and failing, or receiving a particular grade or score, becomes a moniker of how well a student takes part in white paradigms, then, rather than how their writing has grown and changed through tutoring sessions. Underscoring this is the idea

---

of *mastery*, which in terms of writing, signals the mastery over the paradigms of Standard Vernacular English (SVE).\(^6^0\)

Along those lines, *clarity* and *correctness* are heavily featured paradigms in the discourse of these documents. Throughout descriptions of “measurable outcomes,” clarity, cohesion, and mechanical correctness appear, with the rhetorical effect of these elements being one of the more highly-valued outcomes of WC work (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 40-45). Each time these terms are used, the larger concerns of deficiency and success through use of SVE come back into play. In their chapter in Inoue and Poe’s 2012 collection, Nicholas Behm and Keith D. Miller discuss the “absent presence” of systemic racism in the language of assessment in our classrooms (Behm and Miller 127). While clearly unintentional, the rhetoric of competency based on standardized forms of English featured in the assessment documentation here as it posits student success in terms of white middle-class paradigms. Students falling short in these narrow definitions of success constitute the *at-risk or not-ready* population frequently referenced in the report. At a WC in which diversity plays such a role in the overall makeup of tutors and tutees, it becomes particularly problematic to feature discourses of standardization and normative language structures in assessment documentation.

*Ecology and Collaboration*

Although the above analysis may paint a dreary picture of the ASWC assessment discourse, it would be wrong to overlook the more nuanced discursive patterns found within those same pages. Hidden amongst the corporate terminology and reliance upon white normativizing linguistic structures, the reports offer insights into the collaborative practices and ideals of the center. The most obvious example of this comes from the reliance upon data of

\(^{60}\) Cf Inoue, “Grading Contracts: Assessing Their Effectiveness on Different Racial Formations” as well as chapter one of *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for A Socially Just Future*
WAC/WID workshops from various initiatives. While the aforementioned grades-based
assessments are funneled through the lens of these initiatives, the importance of these
collaborations within the work of the ASWC is evident in their centralized position in the report.

Later in the document, survey data is referenced, further pushing the narrative away from
the grades-driven discourse of the executive summary. Relying on survey responses from student
users opens up the notion of “success” featured elsewhere in the report to include students’ own
perceptions of success. By giving students a voice in these assessment measures, the ASWC
gives agency to students, placing value on students’ notions of what constitutes things like
“help,” “success,” and “efficacy.”

Along with these more methodological instances of an ecological approach, several key
terms can be added. Support, guidance, and facilitate all move away from the skills-based
conversation toward one that values collaborations between students and WC personnel. Rather
than bestowing knowledge or evaluating it, ASWC practices are positioned as advocating for the
student. Statements such as, “In total, the Center served students in almost 50 subjects across the
curriculum, continuing its long trend of strong support for students in numerous areas of study”
exemplify this, and stand in stark contrast to the use of “target” and other neoliberal terminology
elsewhere in the report (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 4). This rhetoric both
highlights the actual work of the ASWC and also showcases the ASWC’s connections to the WC
scholarship and theory.

In addition to terminology reflecting collaborations with students, the reports also
highlight the network of campus services and departments that connect to the ASWC. Phrases
such as in conjunction with, joint initiative, relationship, tied to, paired with, work with,
coordinate, partnership, closely connected to, programmatic involvement, and alignment turn up
frequently in the documents, once again belying the neoliberal structures of data so heavily featured in the assessments. “[T]o strengthen the relationship between…” (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 5) is a frequent qualifier within the documents, a phrase which shows the commitment to collaboration evident in both the pedagogy of the center and its dedication to partnerships. To emphasize this language, the end of the report features faculty survey responses alongside those of students. This method, paired with the discourse of collaboration, exemplifies how crucial the ASWC’s ecology is to its self-value.

Looking at these more positive discursive elements complicates an overall negative view of the ASWC Annual Reports, speaking to the complex nature of WC work at John Jay, and, indeed, in institutions nationwide. It is too easy to write assessment off as partaking in harmful corporatizing movements in education; that is certainly occurring, as evidenced by the necessary rhetoric featured in the ASWC documents. However, as assessment scholars have argued, there is more to the story. It is clear, throughout the document, where Katz negotiates the precarious position of the ASWC as an epicenter for collaborative learning that relies on neoliberal educational structures to continue functioning. The rhetorical savviness necessary to navigate the labyrinth created by funding requests in a public institution is clear here, and offers an alternative take on the perceived necessity of something like grade-based assessments.

REFRAMING ASWC ASSESSMENTS AS ASSEMBLAGE

Useful, perhaps, in parsing the complexity evidenced above, is an exploration of the intra-actions of the different stakeholders mentioned in the reports in an attempt to reframe the ASWC - and its assessment documents - as taking part in assemblages of writing at John Jay. In “Projecting Literacy: Writing to Assemble in a Postcomposition FYW Classroom,” Jacqueline Preston argues that “[t]o approach writing as an assemblage in the FYW classroom is to move
away from a set of discrete skills and processes and rather to draw attention to the heterogenous components that go into the production or genesis of the writing” (Preston 40). Although Preston refers directly to student writing rather than to the institutional spaces in which that writing is done, her argument denotes the importance of examining the intra-relations of the contexts surrounding writing. I would extend that argument to emphasize the importance of examining the intra-actions between spaces of composing as a way of recentering the hierarchy of those spaces in neoliberal university structures. ASWC assessment documents serve as fruitful ground for this exploration.

Although Katz did not characterize her assessment strategies as assemblage- or ecology-based during her interview, that fact is evident in the nature of her programming and subsequent assessments. Her reliance upon workshop data as a major source of assessment is one of the first noticeable factors in viewing the ASWC as taking part in an assessment ecology. When asked if other departments used her data for their own assessments, Katz responded that no, no such reciprocation occurred (Katz, personal interview, March 2017). An actively assemblage-based approach might feature this reciprocation.

Despite the lack of participation from outside departments, it can be seen in the narrative Katz creates for the ASWC that each component is inextricably linked to the others, as evidenced by the coded collaborative language discussed above. On the surface, the breakdown of ASWC assessments shows mostly the common features of WC assessment documentation. I argue, however, that it is more than the interdependence of each assessment component that makes the ASWC assessments stand out; following assemblage ideology, it is the active relationships between those components shown in the cohesiveness and tension in the discourse of the
documents. By creating a network of data points, Katz not only complicates what it means to assess a WC, but also emphasizes the intra-actions among those programs.

**ASWC ASSESSMENTS AS VALUES-BASED NARRATIVE**

While Schendel and Macauley do not specifically advocate for anti-oppressive work, and while some of their language hearkens back to neoliberal institutionalization of writing education (similar to the ASWC assessment reports), the authors’ basic call for “values-based assessments” should still be recognized here (Schendel and Macauley xvii). Besides its capacity for complex assessments, another remarkable trait of the ASWC is its diversity, both of students and tutors, as well as of the variety of languages and literacies addressed there. Just as the de-siloing of the ASWC is an important factor in appreciating the narratives as depicting an assemblage, so too is acknowledging the complex literacy networks intertwining within its walls. One way of interrogating whether this is achieved is an examination of the ASWC’s mission statement and pedagogical materials in comparison to its assessment narratives. Do the values apparent in the mission statement connect to those evoked by assessments?

In the 2014-2015 annual report, the ASWC’s mission is the first element of the center mentioned. The mission statement states:

> The Writing Center is committed to providing writing assistance to students from all courses across the curriculum. The Center’s primary goal is to provide students with long term assistance that improves their abilities as writers and makes them more independent. In the short term, the Center helps students with skills including brainstorming, outlining,

---


62 A more valid method for studying this might be focus groups including students and tutors, as well as discourse analyses of observed tutoring sessions. The scope of this project does not include those methods, however, as my focus is on the discourse of documentation rather than on the daily practices. Future researchers should take this up, however, at the ASWC or at other WCs.
organizing and developing, sentence construction, grammar, and effective use of evidence, to name a few. The Writing Center also offers numerous in-Center and in-class workshops, which are a core component of the Center’s ability to serve such a large population. (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015” 1)

Here, the ASWC is seen to value the writing process, developing long-term relationships with students, and offering guidance in multiple formats. Despite the clear use of neoliberal ideology (e.g. independence, skills), the emphasis of the statement is still on student support and long-term collaboration. As outlined above in the CDA of ASWC assessment reports, this ethos is present throughout the documents. What’s more, in addition to the discourse analyzed above, the assessment methods are collaborative, as Katz recruits peer tutors to help with the work (Katz, personal interview, March 2017). Katz spends the majority of the documents discussing cross-curricular activities of the center, and expresses the value of the center in terms of its ability to work on multiple levels with multiple initiatives. In one line of thought, then, it could be said that yes, the assessment documents do exemplify the values of the center’s mission statement.

Several factors complicate this evaluation, however.

A major caveat is, of course, the fact that the ASWC relies upon grades-based measurements, a factor critiqued previously in this chapter, which can be paired with the overall institutionalized rhetoric of the reports. Inoue advocates for minimal grading in writing classrooms, instead suggesting grading contracts as a more compassionate form of grading procedure in the writing class (Antiracist 332). The very fact that grades are such an essential part of the ASWC assessments, then, puts the protocols at odds with the diverse view of literacy it promotes through training and its mission statement. Furthermore, alongside the corporatized discourse featured, the grades-based methodology emphasizes the systemic oppression already
prevalent in public institutions of higher education by further placing value on grades as an accurate measure of “success” or “mastery.” For a center that operates using peer tutors from such diverse cultural and linguistic background, serving a student population with similar traits, establishing the broad spectrums of literacies coming into, and going out of, the center should be an important and valuable part of its identity. In addition to claiming itself as a space on the college campus that values identity-driven work, highlighting this diversity would make a pointed move in terms of WC studies - a discipline made up largely of white professionals and that has traditionally taken part in white paradigms of “good writing” through the early fix-it-shop models. What’s more, to fully consider the center as collaborative and, more pointedly, as taking part in assemblages of student literacies, particularly ones that aim for anti-oppressive work, the presence of conversation about multiliteracies and identity are important, if not crucial.

INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE AND PRESSURE IN ASWC ASSESSMENT

Any contradictions between the collaborative, proto-assemblage-based work done in the ASWC and its grades-based assessment protocols can be traced back to institutional pressure. According to Katz, the very reason for assessing the ASWC is CUNY and John Jay as overlying structures, pointing to the rise of “so-called assessment hysteria” after more the initial call for revisions in the mid-1990s (Katz, personal interview, March 2017). The need to justify the ASWC for funding purposes can be traced throughout its history, as per discussion in Chapter Four regarding the center’s early years of operations. That pressure has clearly not gone away, evidenced in the sprawling, thorough nature of the ASWC assessment reports. In a summary of “Recommendations” in the 2014-2015 report, Katz states:

63 See Appendices B and C for Crozier and Lickliders comments on the specter of funding throughout the history of the ASWC, as well as Chapter Four for a discussion of the larger context of funding in the ASWC.
Although our budget, albeit some reductions, remained the same as last year, we are unsure of what to expect for 2015-2016. In fact, given the complete demise of the Perkins grant, which the College did not replace, the Writing Center will need to look back in regret upon its former glory and student success in writing will be greatly diminished by the necessarily crippled services of the Center. As it is, the Director is being told that there is no replacement for the Perkins grant in sight and the money gift the Director hoped for last year is no longer viable. The only hope the Director has at the moment is that the Writing Center’s tax levy allocation will be restored to its former level so that the Center can sustain the loss of Perkins grant funding. (Katz, “Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015)

This section follows the litany of grades, outcomes, and usage statistics that comprise the bulk of the document. Katz is able to make this funding-oriented lamentation only because she has proven the “value” of the center using the terminology of the corporatized university earlier in the report. Not only do we see the stranglehold the university has on the ASWC’s ability to function and grow given the content of this statement; we see the impact the university has on the rhetoric of the center’s assessment documentation.

This localized situation exhibits echoes of WC scholarship bemoaning institutional pressures on WC outside of assessment protocols. Frankie Condon and Bobbi Olson use a parable of a giraffe building an inaccessible house for an elephant to illustrate the university’s impact on students who do not conform to white middle class standards of literacy development.64 The authors write:

---

64 Condon and Olson paraphrase the parable, originally featured in R. Roosevelt, Jr. and Marjorie Woodruff’s *Creating a House for Diversity*, writing: “A giraffe and an elephant were best friends who liked each other so much they agreed to live together. In service of this goal, the giraffe engaged in an extensive renovation of the home they planned to share and was eager to show off the beauty of the reconstructed house to his friend. Accordingly, on the
As we talked together about what we perceived to be the disparities between our aspiration to enact a well-theorized, inclusive, one-with-one writing pedagogy in our work with all student writers and the social justice principles to which we publicly subscribed, we began to see that not only were we embedded within a giraffe-like institution, we were also enacting giraffe in the very writing center we had posited as both a counter and a transformative agent within that institution. (Condon and Olson 31)

Although Condon and Olson refer specifically here to multilingual students’ experiences in tutoring sessions in the WC, their point about operating within the structures of the university is well taken in the context of WC assessment. When we take part in university structures (the giraffe-built house), we estrange, and even harm, students of color, multilingual students, working class students, and others. And yet it is that system in which we operate.

The question becomes why should justifying the existence of a WC in any context rely on data that reflects oppressive educational paradigms? Why does diversity and inclusion - buzzwords in the mouths of many a higher education administrator in other contexts - not matter

morning the house was completed, the giraffe called out to his friend. "Elephant, our beautiful house is finished! It's so lovely, and I’m so excited to share it with you." The elephant, eager to see the fruits of the giraffe's labors and delighted at the prospect of spending every day with his friend, began to climb the porch steps to the front door. The steps cracked under his weight. "Wait!" cried the giraffe. "You are breaking my beautiful steps! They aren't made for someone like you. Come round the back where I've built an egress into the basement. You can come in that way." Accordingly, the elephant circled the home, observing the lovely landscaping of the grounds along the way, but leaving deep footprints in the freshly watered lawn. At the basement egress, the giraffe met his friend and waved him down the concrete steps into the basement. The elephant found himself in a lovely family room, graced with a home theater and a wet bar. The giraffe invited him to sit and view a movie, but when the elephant lowered himself into one of the chairs appointed for that purpose, the seat crumbled beneath him. "Wait!" cried the giraffe. "You have broken my beautiful chair! You cart watch later from the back of the theater where there's room for you to stand. Let me just show you the rest of our house first " The elephant took in the craft room lined by shelves with materials for every sort of project he and his friend might embark upon together. But he couldn't fit through the door. "Nevermind," said the giraffe. "Come upstairs and see the kitchen where we'll eat together and your new bedroom." The elephant started up the staircase, but it was much too narrow, and his girth broke the bannister. By this time, the elephant was near tears. He yearned to fit into this beautiful house and felt mortified at what he was certain was his failure. "Don't worry," said the giraffe. "I know exactly what to do. You can stay outside for now. We'll put you on a strict diet and exercise regimen. I'll help you change that body for a lovely new thin one, and in no time at all, you'll fit right in here with me." And so the elephant began the effort to transform himself so that he might fit into the house his friend, Giraffe, had promised to share with him. But in secret, he wondered whether they might not just start over and build a house from the ground up that would actually be built for both of them, with all their differences, to share.” (Condon and Olson 30)
when it comes to assessing for funding purposes? Does this not simply speak to the history of racist/classist/sexist/heteronormative tendencies in policy making in US universities? I argue that yes, it does. The fault here, then, cannot lie completely with the WCDs; they are merely operating within an always-already oppressive system and are trapped by the practices required to survive in that kind of environment. Arguably, though, this circumstance is integral to the definition of assemblage - pushing and pulling, constantly both working together and against each other. To return to the image of the Cyborg WC, the mechanical components cannot be successfully ripped from the organic matter; the two halves of the cyborg are constantly working with and against each other to keep the organism operational. That tension - the instability of forces and their constant renegotiating of one another - is the assemblage, is what makes the Cyborg WC cyborgian. The trick becomes consciously developing an anti-oppressive assessment assemblage to make sure the tensions that are already present are functioning in an ethical way.

As seen in the ASWC assessment, the strongest moments regarding adherence to the center’s pedagogical values, come through direct references to collaborations as an integral part of the assessment of the ASWC. When this occurs, the WC is de-siloed in a way that mirrors the collaborative pedagogy typical to many WCs. The shortcomings of the assessments, in terms of educational activist notions of assessments as sites for anti-oppressive work, lie in their reliance upon paradigms of white habitus. The two things push against one another, teetering back and forth between allowing for broader understandings of what writing may look like and what the WC is meant to be advocating for students, and participating in the larger neoliberal institutional maze of oppressive discourse. In my final chapter, I will make recommendations for exploiting the collaborative discourse and focus on ecologies through the framework of assemblage theory
as a way to extricate WC assessment discourse from the problematic frameworks of white neoliberal institutionalization.
Chapter Six
The Cyborg Center: An Assemblage-Based Heuristic for Socially Just Writing Center Assessment

...CBE [competency-based education] today imagines writing not as a means of participating in social and civic contexts, but rather as a means of producing material to be evaluated. Students are not provided the experience of writing, or the experience of being read, outside of a strictly utilitarian, strictly evaluative context. They may receive just-in-time feedback from mentors or success coaches as they work with lesson materials or prepare for assessments, but they do not participate in communities of writers or form the kinds of relationships with peers or teachers that nurture writing development over time.

Chris Gallagher, “Our Trojan Horse,” 29

I'm not embarrassed that I used the term “writing center culture” to describe what we’d created. But I've come to see an interesting opposition. A writing center is not a single space, an ideal product, or a shared pedagogical philosophy. Those are what we might call the features of a culture. Instead, it might be the absence of a culture that makes a writing center what it is: a temporary reflecting place, a movable spot, like Hemingway’s café in Paris...

Bonnie S. Sunstein, “Moveable Feasts, Liminal Spaces: Writing Centers and the State of In-Betweenness”

I also personally feel obligated to do something in this case, even if some members may feel that it is outside the bounds of what CCCC is about or does. I’m trying to think through how my own personal and ethical stance intersect with my duties as CCCC Program Chair. I do know that we are all connected, and laws, practices, and local aggressions against people of color in the state of Missouri are connected to all of our work and lives, even if we live far away from that place. I do know that Missouri is not alone in its racism and white supremacy, which is one reason why the local Missouri chapter of the NAACP in St. Louis opposes the national organization’s position since it suggests that Missouri is unique in its racism. I do know that these issues are real and serious. I do know that this decision is one about people first and only secondarily about a conference. I feel very strongly that #BlackLivesMatter and that CCCC’s response will reveal exactly how much the organization really believes that #BlackLivesMatter, and how much money matters.

Asao B. Inoue, “Letter to CCCC Members about the NAACP Travel Advisory and CCCC Statement on It”

In Chapters Four and Five, I examined the case study of one WC at a public university, considering the impact of its history on its current assessment practices. In this chapter, I will return to the theoretical frameworks discussed in the earlier chapters of this project. Using the case study of the ASWC as a grounding force, I develop a tentative heuristic for assemblage-based programmatic WC assessment with the goal of moving toward socially just WC assessment. These suggestions will bring into play my assemblage-driven view of literacies and will speak to current concerns of anti-racist/feminist assessment scholarship. I will discuss the implications of this research on current WC praxis and make proposals for future research. While
I believe the possibilities brought on by these suggestions are wide ranging, this chapter by no means argues for a singular response to the harmful repercussions of white neoliberalism commonly evidenced in WC assessments. Instead, I aim to offer a framework from which more expansive studies and nuanced suggestions can be derived.

**RETURNING TO SOCIALLY JUST ASSESSMENT SCHOLARSHIP**

In “Our Trojan Horse,” Chris Gallagher lays out a dismal picture in which our “progressive” portfolio-based assessments have become “conscripted into an outcomes-based agenda.” Gallagher writes:

In a *College English* article called “The Trouble with Outcomes,” I argued that outcomes assessment operates within institutional and ideological logics - technical rationality, instrumentalism - that serve the interests of the managed university. ...I want to take that argument a step further to suggest that our participation in this practice - our tacit acknowledgement that results are all that really matter in education - has opened the door to CBE [competency-based education], which, in its worst forms, disregards the educational experiences of teachers and students together. Outcomes assessment has functioned as our Trojan horse: through our acceptance of it, we’ve unknowingly invited CBE. (“Our Trojan Horse” 23)

Gallagher continues, pointing out that outcomes are never “neutral tools,” despite criticisms of his initial article, and that by using them in assessments, we determine who, what, and how things are valued in educational practices, focusing solely on *products* of learning as opposed to *experiences* of learning (23-24). As shown in Chapter Five of this project, that process of eclipsing the experiences of learning with end-goal rhetoric happens all too quickly, and almost always unintentionally. Writing education that seemingly aims toward goals of productivity
renge on the decades of process-based research in composition and rhetoric while simultaneously placing education firmly in the parameters of oppressive paradigms that make up so many other societal structures. As WPAs, WCDs, and writing instructors in the university, we must work to avoid this slippage and to maintain a progressive agenda for our students, particularly those from traditionally underserved sociocultural backgrounds.

Writing in the same collection, Deborah Mutnick argues for a group effort, of sorts, to combat this decline in educational ideology in her chapter, “Confessions of an Assessment Fellow.” Mutnick argues for a collective resistance to neoliberal, oppressive educational structures, citing three types of resistance: 1) for administrators to “join a growing resistance to the underlying structural transformation of higher education through radical [professional] formations”; 2) for instructors and administrators to join “coalitions across institutions and disciplines in higher education and with K-12 teachers”; and 3) citing Bill Readings, for administrators to “provide a notion of educational responsibility, of accountability, that is markedly at odds with the logic of accounting that runs the University of Excellence” (Readings 151; Mutnick 46-47). Mutnick’s call to “join” on multiple levels indirectly echoes the calls of assessment scholars to think ecologically, with David Green Jr. arguing for HBCUs and other racially-diverse institutions to “link program and classroom assessment” in order to “honor the creative tensions of push-pull attitudes toward race and language” (“Expanding the Dialogue” 170) and Inoue building “ecologies” of anti-racist assessments in the classroom in order to move from paradigms of white habitus in classroom-based assessments (Antiracist 8). The emphasis on collaboration and partnership in this work is a stark contrast to the individualized nature of neoliberal rhetoric so often seen in higher education and, even, assessment scholarship, and

65 Cf Bill Readings, The University in Ruins (1996)
hearkens, I argue, to a paradigm shift closer to an assemblage-based view of writing in the university.

Subverting the hyperindividualism of corporatized educational models, then, is rooted on many levels to collaboration. I argue that for this reason, the WC, as a stronghold of collaborative pedagogies and as a liminal space with stakeholders across the university, is the optimal place to begin this work. Assemblage theory, as a framework designed, one might say, to overthrow typical hierarchical structures through a primacy of intra-connectedness, is the optimal lens through which to view this subversive assessment work. Assemblage is beginning to have a renaissance in the field of composition and rhetoric, with Jacqueline Preston’s 2015 *CCC* article focused on assemblage in the FYC classroom and Yancey and McElroy’s 2017 collection, *Assembling Composition*, allowing for assemblages that “look different in different contexts” and that can be used in “multiple contexts” (Yancey and McElroy 16-17) leading the way. With this timely new trend in mind, and following in the footsteps of both Inoue, and Schendel and Macauley, who offer heuristics rather than canned solutions to assessment problems, I offer some evaluative questions in the form if a heuristic for assessment structures as a way into - or, perhaps, out of? - assessment conversations in the WC. Here, I also value Jasbir Puar’s caution against the relativist streak in assemblage work evident in the theories of Latour, Deleuze and Guattari, and others who lean toward posthumanism. Rather than using assemblage as a way of getting around difference, I argue that it should be used to confront it head on in our assessments.

---

66 As Puar states in “I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess”: “[T]o dismiss assemblages in favor of retaining intersectional identitarian frameworks is to dismiss how societies of control tweak and modulate bodies as matter, not predominantly through signification or identity interpellation but rather through affective capacities and tendencies. It is also to miss that assemblages encompass not only ongoing attempts to destabilize identities and grids, but also the forces that continue to mandate and enforce them. That is to say, grid making is a recognized process of agencement. But to render intersectionality as an archaic relic of identity politics bypasses entirely the possibility that for some bodies—we can call them statistical outliers, or those consigned to premature death, or those once formerly considered useless bodies or bodies of excess—discipline and punish may well still be a primary apparatus of power.” (I Would” 63)
HEURISTIC FOR ASSEMBLAGE-BASED WC ASSESSMENTS

While this heuristic is not a solution, my goal is to spark a discussion that moves away from neoliberal paradigms of assessment, in part by placing a liminal space of writing education at the center of the discussion. An alternative space of composing at the core of programmatic assessment allows hierarchical, grades-based traditions of assessment to be pushed to the margins of concern, allowing the intra-actions of university structures and extra-university spaces to be placed in conversation. My heuristic for assemblage-based assessments in the WC relies on the work of three previously developed heuristic schemes: 1) Inoue’s Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies; 2) Schendel and Macauley’s Building Writing Assessments that Matter; and 3) Mandy Suhr-Sytsma and Shan-Estelle Brown’s “Theory In/To Practice: Addressing the Everyday Language of Oppression in the Writing Center” (2011).

Inoue’s lengthy heuristic taps directly into social justice work at the level of classroom writing assessments through a valuing of labor. Organizing the list as a series of questions upon which to reflect as writing instructors design their own assessments of student writing, Inoue’s recommendations emphasize the importance of non-hierarchical and non-normative structures of evaluation in the classroom to offer compassionate praxis and agency over their grades to his students (Antiracist 284-290). Keeping Inoue’s non-hierarchical structures of assessment in mind, I aim to move beyond social justice considerations in classroom-based assessments.

Schendel and Macauley’s more pragmatic heuristic focuses on the process of compiling a WC assessment report and the rhetorical choices to be thought of as it is composed (Schendel and Macauley 138-139). Schendel and Macauley’s work is an important step in WC scholarship, as it addresses the needs of many practitioners who are not as well versed in the theories of composition and rhetoric, and who instead need a basic guide from which to begin assessment.
protocols. My heuristic builds from the co-authors basic guide, with the goal of refining some of their more generalized points about the rhetoric of assessment.

The addition of Suhr-Sytsma and Brown’s influence, coming from their *Writing Center Journal* article on a case study of tutoring discourse, offers a bridge between WC studies and social justice assessment frameworks. The co-authors’ heuristic focuses on the rhetoric of tutoring sessions, making it a remarkable resource for tutor training courses and WCDs developing policies for their centers (Suhr-Sytsma and Brown 22). In referencing Suhr-Sytsma and Brown, I aim to extend social justice conversations from the tutorial to the assessment document.

My heuristic is grouped into several categories, detailed below:

1. **Collaborative definitions of writing**

Placing the WC at the core of programmatic assessment allows for a decentering of traditional paradigms, not only of departmental structures, but of what constitutes “writing” in the university. In the spirit of honoring this destabilization, the very definition of “writing” must be collaboratively developed. Turning to partners in English department's, writing programs, writing intensive initiatives, WAC offices, and elsewhere on campus would give WCDs insights into what instructors and administrators feel is (or should be) addressed in the WC, and would offer the opportunity to address tensions amongst ideologies of WC stakeholders. Not assuming a clear definition of what we do seems logical, given the confusion so often swirling around our services. A dialogue surrounding how we define writing, how our tutors and tutees define writing, and how faculty and staff across the university define writing would offer an interesting commentary regarding how varying epistemologies impact WC work.

2. **Assess based on process, not product**
Given the discussions in Chapter Four, this element should come as no surprise. Rather than grades-based or outcomes-based assessments of WC work, WCDs should be analyzing the “experience” versus the “product of learning” (“Our Trojan Horse” 23-24). In his own heuristic regarding writing assessment in the classroom, Inoue manages this task by recommending grading contracts that value labor (Antiracist 285). The WC might follow this example by placing emphasis on the types of topics covered during sessions - the labor being done during sessions - as well as by the level of drafts reviewed during sessions and workshops. Self-evaluations by students and commentary from peer tutors could play a crucial role in this, as a practice driven by student agency rather than by the evaluations of instructors and other higher in the power structure of the university. Through collaborations with other university entities, the WC might use focus groups and perform portfolio assessments of sorts, albeit ones that avoid outcomes-oriented language. These practices may sound familiar, as they are common amongst many WC assessment designs, including that of the ASWC. They key here, I argue, is focusing on these practices rather than on productivity via attendance numbers.

3. **Emphasis on collaborative programming**

Once again, this will sound familiar, and is a lesson learned from the ASWC’s assessments. This is an opportunity for WCs to extend their collaborative pedagogy and to redefine “success” and “efficacy” in their work. With a focus on partnerships, the WC can show its overall impact at the college without determining its value through outcomes or product-driven models of success. This would emphasize values on multiple literacies, as the assessments would, preferably, stretch across academic departments to include other services on campus, and would underscore the WC values of collaboration, rather than institutional values.

4. **Incorporations of data from across contexts of writing**
This paradigm would also open the door to place value on multiliteracy education, if done well. Painting a clear picture of the impact of multiple university spaces on students’ writing entails a great deal of communication amongst university spaces. In her historical study, Stacey Nall points out the emotional and interpersonal labors involved in WPA and WCD practices in their everyday work. If this were to be included in assessment narratives, value would be placed on that labor, in addition to it becoming a part of the self-advocated narrative of the WC. This practice would make a move toward the kinds of validity and fairness discussed in David F. Green Jr.’s work on WAC and WP classroom and programmatic assessments at HBCUs (“Expanding the Dialogue” 170-171), extending that conversation to include WCs, as well.

5. Acknowledgements of multiple literacies and identities by valuing non-academic spaces/writing

Based on Suhr-Sytsma and Brown’s heuristic paradigm asking WC practitioners to address “the elephant in the room” and to offer directness in discussion of race, gender, sexuality, and class (Suhr-Sytsma and Brown 22, 39), as well as on Puar’s caution to maintain identity as an integral part of any assemblage framework (“I Would” 63), this point asks WC assessors to make student identity visible in their assessments. In addition to simple moves such as including cultural demographics in reports, WCDs might include questions of linguistic and literacy experiences in student surveys. This is also another moment to underscore the importance of partnership building, at this juncture, both with campus diversity initiatives and with community resources - a move that also speaks to current trends in community writing. Paired with destabilizing definitions of writing in the WC, this practice would remove the mythological practice of editing services entirely from the WC narrative, instead showing institutional administrators that

67 Cf Laurie Cella, Eli Goldblatt, Karen Johnson, Paula Mathieu, Steve Parks, Jessica Restaino, “The Powerful Potential of Relationships and Community Writing” (2016)
diversity of identity, language, and literacy is valued in the WC and integral to our self-defined success.

6. *Frame assessment documents through a discussion of the mission statement*

Returning to the advice of Schendel and Macauley’s heuristic for WC assessment (Schendel and Macauley 138-139), the WC’s mission statement must play an integral role in WC assessment to ensure that our own definitions of success, value, and efficacy comes through in our assessment narratives. This offers an opportunity to those of us committed to social justice work to return to our centers’ missions and *directly state* those commitments. Matched with the other heuristic points listed here, a framing of the mission statement allows WCs to take charge of their identity in the university, to place themselves in conversation with the hierarchical structures of their institutions, and to commit to socially just work in their everyday practices.

**LEARNING FROM THE ASWC, FACING POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS**

Of course, these practices will be differently applicable across local contexts, which raises concerns regarding very real roadblocks that many WCDs face. There are many things to be learned from the ASWC (including - a personal plea - the importance of archiving, or at least, saving, all documentation related to your WC). One major lesson is that often, we have little choice regarding assessment practices, that even when we are told to evaluate in whatever way we’d like, we’re obliged via implicit circumstances to operate within the confines of the university paradigms lest we be bypassed in funding, space, and other resource-related discussions. While we can’t know, with certainty, that Katz would have been less successful in obtaining funding for the ASWC were she to have used this heuristic as a guide, it’s safe to say that she would, at the very least, been met with even more resistance than she already experienced. These pragmatic issues have very real consequences for the WCs, and become a
sticking point for many - if not most - WCDs considering the assessment practices of their centers. This is a larger set of problems than I can confront in this dissertation, given that they are largely systemic ones that are not easily approached.

As I currently approach the design of my first assessments as a WCD, I face many of the same difficulties that the ASWC did over its history. My center is being moved (as I write this); my school is undergoing a budget crisis and funding is being cut across the board; there is confusion about the function of my WC at my institution due to a long transitional period for the center. When the stakes are so high, how do I wrest control of my center’s narrative without doing damage to both my individual position as a second-year faculty member as well as to the center’s position in the university? I don’t have answers to those questions right now, just as I do not expect WCDs reading this to have immediate answers. These are difficult discussions. Nevertheless, simply put, they are ones that we must have - with ourselves, with our staffs, with our deans and provosts - if we expect the systems of oppression in the university to change.

Currently, this tension between responsibility to an organization and responsibility to our ethics is playing out at the national level in CCCC. Inoue, the 2018 Program Chair for the annual conference to be held in Kansas City, Missouri, is grappling with the possible repercussions of the NAACP’s Travel Advisory for people of color to the state of Missouri. Offering more insight into organizational procedure and care for the (alleged) social justice ethics of the organization, in his open letter to CCCC members, Inoue poses questions that get at the heart of the conundrum I pose here:

I want everyone, but especially our members of color, LGBTQ, and Muslim members to be safe, to know that their professional convention is taking all the measures it can to protect them and make their travel to and time at the convention safe and rewarding. But
I don't think Cs can guarantee safety for anyone when they travel or leave the convention site. We don't control such things. I also worry that if we boycott states like Missouri, we not only abandon members in such places, but we have in effect decided not to do work there, not to try to change those places for the better by our presence, by our language, by our laboring. In doing so, we harm those places, if we think we are agents of social justice. We cannot do our work if we do not go to places that need us to work. And yet, in this case, this is asking our black members especially to take on an extra risk, more risk than the rest of us. This is not fair to ask. And yet still, our black members always take this extra risk every day just living in the U.S. at this historical moment. How can we avoid asking some of our members to risk themselves, knowing that many others do not have to consider such risks, or may take much smaller risks, and some have the privilege of never needing to worry about such risks at all? (“Letter to CCCC”)

The tension in Inoue’s comments, in this passage as well as the epigraph for this chapter, exemplifies the hard decisions that we must take on. Do we use our positions of power as administrators to addresses social inequities and neoliberal structures, to actively work toward a more socially just future of writing education for our students? Or do we work on sustaining our existence to ensure that we are there to support those students to the best of our abilities given the systemic circumstances in which we find ourselves? As Inoue says at the end of the letter, “We have no good or clear choices to make” (“Letter to CCCC”). I would argue, however, that these potential impasses make small shifts, such as at least partial adaptations of assemblage-based assessment in the WC, crucial to changing the dialogue surrounding social justice in higher education.

CONCLUSION AND POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH
In Chapter Two, I laid out four framing questions for this project: How are our progressive ideologies, as well as our students’ identities and multiple literacies, reflected (or not) in writing center assessments? How have institutional pressures impacted the agency WCDs are able to claim over writing center assessments? How can an assemblage-based approach to writing and assessment in the university help WCs expand the social justice work so many of us see ourselves taking on? And how might WCDs use antiracist and feminist frameworks currently applied to FYW programs to more directly claim a place in the ecology - or assemblage - of writing in their institutions? The history and analysis provided in Chapter Four and Five offer answers to the former two questions based on a case study of one WC. These are questions that must be continuously re-examined at our own institutions to maintain a constant vigil over whether our administrative WC practices are espousing our values or those of our university. It is my hope that this final chapter has begun to address the latter two framing questions by offering a first step in the process of reimagining our assessments as anti-oppressive assemblages of writing in our institutions. This work, however, still has far to go.

Future research projects might begin by directly addressing the absence of WCs from WP programmatic assessments. Even when WCs do not have the close partnership exhibited by the ASWC, the WC has impact on the writing done in the FYC classroom. As such, it must be considered in any responsible, valid programmatic assessment to begin to account for the influences on student writing from outside the classroom.

Other projects might take on the historical feature of this project by using assemblage theory as a lens through which to view the history of WCs. Specifically, I would like to see a longer, more in-depth study of CUNY WCs, particularly given their importance in the history of the field (i.e. Bruffee and Hunter’s involvement with the founding of NEWCA). A new study
might consist of multiple oral histories across different CUNY institutions, as well as a recovery of documentation where possible. By undertaking this research, scholars would be addressing a major gap in the field and offering a new theoretical lens through which to view archival research studies.

Another option for research might be an ethnographic or autoethnographic study of assemblage-based assessment protocols, highlighting the difficulties and the benefits. This sort of study would showcase the decision-making process, as well as the actual process of taking on things like focus groups and “portfolio” review by WCDs to analyze the labor involved and to test the heuristic provided in this chapter.

Lastly, longitudinal assessment projects, such as that undertaken by Wardle68, that focus on the WC would offer an entirely unexplored branch of WC research. This type of study would offer ample space and time to examine the components of a WCs assemblage, the power dynamics involved in assessment documentation, and the groundwork necessary to plan a truly collaborative or ecological assessment centered on the WC. This would extend Wardle’s work, as well as Inoue’s, Green’s, and the work done in this project in a revolutionary way.

At the heart of any of these discussions, however, must be an acknowledgement of what is at stake. At a political moment when Affirmative Action in US universities is being questioned by the Department of Justice, now more than ever requires subversive ways of overturning current oppressive structures. As Mutnick argues, we must join together - forming a conscious assemblage - to accomplish this work. We must embrace the pop culture notions of a cyborg as a powerful force, one combining multiple ways of knowing, certainly; but one that, as an operative

---

of multiple spaces, one that offers multiple tools for social justice fights. Lest it be a misnomer, the WC should be *at the center* of that struggle, the heart of the cyborg.
Appendix A: Oral History Interview Questions (Crozier and Licklider)

1. How long did you work at/with JJWC?
2. What was your position there (or in the English department)? And how did you come into that position?
3. Why did you feel the need to start a writing center at John Jay?
4. How was the JJWC founded? (approximate dates, people involved, the process of founding the center, etc.)
5. Can you describe the JJWC when it was first founded? (where was it, what did the space look like, how big, how busy, staff, etc.)
6. What was the function of the JJWC when you first started?
7. What practices defined that function?
8. Did you have a mission statement when you first started here? Do you remember what it revolved around?
9. How do you feel practices lined up with the writing center scholarship/pedagogy and general composition pedagogy of the time?
10. What initiatives, special programming, or collaborations did the writing center take part in?
11. What was the relationship between the writing center and the English department? The WAC program? Other institutional programs, offices, or departments?
12. Did you do any in-house assessments of the center at first? When did they start, and what was your motive?
13. Describe some of the processes for assessment in the early stages. Were your methods mandated in full, in part, or not at all?
14. What was the college’s attitude toward the writing center in its early days?
15. What was the administration’s attitudes toward assessment - at John Jay in general, but also for the JJWC, specifically?
16. Would you say that your assessment practices in the JJWC’s early days were responses to institutional pressures? Can you say more about those pressures and how they impacted your format/methods/etc.?
17. Why/how did you stop working with the JJWC?
18. When you left, how do you feel the center had changed from its original form?
Appendix B: Oral History Interview Questions (Katz)

1. How long have you worked at JJWC?
2. What was your starting position? And how did you come into that position?
3. Who did you work with at first?
4. Can you describe the JJWC when you first started? (where was it, what did the space look like, how big, how busy, staff, etc.)
5. What was the function of the JJWC when you first started?
6. What practices defined that function?
7. When did that change, and how? (Or has it changed?)
8. Did you have a mission statement when you first started here? Do you remember what it revolved around?
9. How do you feel the practices matched up with that mission statement?
10. How do you feel practices lined up with the writing center scholarship/pedagogy and general composition pedagogy of the time?
11. When did you first begin assessing the center? Why did you start?
12. Describe some of the processes for assessment in the early stages. Were your methods mandated in full, in part, or not at all?
13. What was the reasoning or motive behind assessment at that time?
14. What was the administration’s attitudes toward assessment - at John Jay in general, but also for the JJWC, specifically?
15. Would you say that your assessment practices - then and/or now - were responses to institutional pressures? Can you say more about those pressures and how they impacted your format/methods/etc.?
16. What limitations were placed on you as you assessed?
17. How do your current practices differ from your original protocols?
18. How do your assessments speak to some of the unique circumstances/environment of John Jay and the JJWC?
19. In your current assessments, who are the participants? (Who takes on assessment tasks?)
20. What is assessed (students, writing at John Jay, tutors, JJWC efficacy, budgets/spending, efficiency of the center, etc.)?
21. Do your current practices respond to institutional pressures? Can you say more about that?
22. What would you change if you did not have to worry about institutional pressures (from CUNY and/or John Jay)? Describe your “dream” assessment procedures? Or would you not assess at all? Why?
23. What information would be useful for you to have access to in assessments that you may not have access to presently? (demographic information, educational background info, home literacy info, etc.)
24. In your assessments, who do you collaborate with? How?
25. What do you feel those collaborations add to your assessments?
26. Who else would you want to collaborate with and why?
27. What is your current mission statement and/or current function of JJWC?
28. How do your assessment processes line up with that?
29. How do you feel your assessments align with WC pedagogy and theory?
30. How do you see the recent anti-racist/progressive assessment scholarship impacting writing centers?
31. What limitations to that do you face, and do you think other WCs may face?
Appendix C: Oral History Transcript, Crozier, June 2017 (edited)

My name is Robert Crozier and I was chair of the English Department at John Jay from 1974 until 2002.

On JJ, OA, and founding the JJWC:

Well, John Jay first got underway in 1970, which was the beginning of open admissions, and there was a grant from a school and the student body was almost entirely police, people in their late 20s, 30s, 40s and so on. And suddenly we got thousands of students who were quite unprepared for college nor were we prepared to choose them. So, for the first four years we set up two levels of remedial writing and that we realized – I don’t know if that was 1974, I guess ‘75 that wasn’t enough. The students, no matter what we did, the failure rate was not acceptable...

And so, we as the administration for a writing center – of course the college was new, the administration was new. They didn’t know what a writing center was or whether there should be one...

And also the enrolment was burgeoning but the budget of the colleague at the same time was not matching the increase in undergraduates. So, there was no money. And so, there had to be reason for the administration to set aside a line, an academic line for reasons that they didn’t understand...

So, I called someone at the University of Pittsburgh, whose name I don’t know, I don’t remember but who was at the time nationally-known composition person and asked if he would come and look over our English department, so he did come. And it was he who made the case to the administration that we needed a writing center...

And then the administrations agreed to give us a line, to put that person on. That’s how it started.

On the physical space of the JJWC:

At any rate, and at the same time there was no place for a writing center, there was no room, there was no furniture. There was nothing, no space. So, we had to start to get a classroom and then the classroom had to be empty to fit stuff in. This was all a tremendous ordeal for the administration. And we ended up, I think, the first year we had furniture was from the dining room, dining hall. And it took at least another year before we got furniture with the appropriate
writing center which was in a classroom. And then after that it was another couple years before we got computers and that kind of things. It went very, very, very slowly...

The new location of the center, she’s [Livia] done an amazing job of making sure that that center stays right in the middle of student activity, with the new building...

**On staffing the JJWC:**

At the same time there was a question of who would be – who would staff the writing center. I think Carol began like getting graduate students and the problem there was that I was lately paid. And it turned out that they took a job but the writing center directly worse off than if they were teaching as adjuncts in the English department...

A lot worse off. And to get the tutoring was arduous. So, they came and went and so it was very unstable staff. And then Carol said well, I’ll have a course, I will start a course and put students in the course and use graduates in this course to teach in the writing center. So, we did that and it was a credit-bearing course and they were to learn how to tutor and also how to write, how to comment and all that stuff...

And so, that worked for a while but then these students turned out to be not terribly reliable either. And so, the center struggled along a couple of years and I could see that this was not going well, it was not the way that writing center should go, but I didn’t know if there was any model, if that was any better that was running on almost no money. And the money was not forthcoming and they were late in paying people, I mean a terribly unprofessional beginning took place...

And she [Livia, after Carol] developed two courses realizing that one semester, teaching people how to do this wasn’t enough and so she had a two-semester sequence and after that they did automatically become tutors. She would then pick and choose but she didn’t get any lemons...

She was very, very careful and she always had the highest starters and let everybody know about these starters including the students...

And if they didn’t work out, if they did something wrong she just throw them right out of there. There was no question about it and they never complained because they know her and they admire her tremendously, they always have...

**On hiring Livia:**
And then when Carol Stanger got a chance to move into administrator office, I had to take the line and my main contribution to the writing center was picking Livia Katz who I knew very well, because she was already in the English Department. And she turned out to be – well, she’s quite a genius of that place. Have you ever seen that operating?

All of these problems about the furniture and this or that and their space, I mean they were still there. So, she solved them one after the other. And every single problem that she had, that every writing center had, she solved them. One point I remember, many years ago, she went to a meeting of the writing center supervisors and discovered that they were still having the problems that she had already solved…

So, she said well, I’m not going anymore because all they want to do, all they do is to ask me question. So, that was the end of that. And she has more material, more things than she and the other tutors together. And that it’s really difficult to say all of the events or things that she’s done over the years and each time getting granted for the – city university does not give money out without saying that they give the money in response to some application showing creativity, a new approach to doing something…

But at any rate, Livia every year caught some new thing, the reason for getting the money from the CUNY administration and funding the place that way. At the same time, she got two assistants full time, one to keep the records and the other to do some specialized tutoring. One of the persons was doing letters and application to law school and that kind of thing, how to write that kind of thing…

And the other one kept the records – was a computer person and they both did general tutoring and they’re still there. That was a long, long time ago when they were hired…

Yeah. And there are likewise tutors who stay for a very long time, sometimes after they graduate. And they’re all very good students and they’re very proud of being part of the center which I think is really a wonderful place and it is. And Livia on her part with the tutor, she’s of course extremely straightforward. And if they go to graduate school she gives them two to three-paged, single space letters of recommendation…

And very thorough, very detailed, very persuasive. And that’s a lot of work on top of everything else that she does. She’s also on an academic line which means that she teaches – she is director of the writing center only part time and the rest of the time she’s teaching those two courses…

But to be under the direction of the writing center for the English Department, because she could always use that if she got into trouble or if the writing center got into trouble, the English
Department would speak up or she won’t have to do everything herself, which she nevertheless does...

Anyway, after she became the writing director she thought the problems were still there, she solved them. As other ones came up, she solved those and middle stage evaluations, all of kinds of, you know, people going to look at the center and to evaluate... She handles everything and she is very possessive of course of the center and very proud of it with good reason, I think...

So, I would say that if you get someone like that running a writing center maybe running anything else, everything is solved...

I don’t know how to say it. She’s teaching part-time but she still has to correct all the papers and so on. A lot of time goes into teaching and the correction of papers. She’s administering the center and teaching the new tutors, what their routine and having them scheduled and all of that stuff plus the difficulties that come up in the center and personalities and all of that stuff. It was a tremendous load...

**On the function of the JJWC:**

Well, at first I saw it as a support for the English Department. That’s how I saw it, and that we would send our student there. I don’t remember what school it was – well, that’s not the writing center, the writing center was a college wide support, not just the background for the English Department...

We had a narrow purpose at the beginning and that got much more complicated and as a result of kinds of tutors we needed change and we welcomed many majors in other departments, psychology and so on. And so, they were able to study or read upper level papers and other in psychology and so and non-English and able to contribute, whereas I think maybe at the beginning the tutors couldn’t have done that. So, the whole focus of the place to change just like a college function...

At the beginning, we had to get out of remediation, out of the second semester remediation, and into Registry accredited college, writing course had to pass a test, CUNY test. And much of the teaching was directed towards the test. And so, part of what the writing center did was to back up that kind of even narrower gauge purpose, to get them pass and they will be alright, that’s not necessarily true. But got the main registry accredited course and they were marvelous, absolutely marvelous. And Livia taught them and she was teaching some of those remedial courses. She would get 100% passed. And it was like unbelievable. They were all doing the same thing. It’s not 50% pass, 60%, no 100%...
So, she taught them [instructors and tutors] to do what she did. And they started having the same guidance or result, although they didn’t teach the courses they gave a little individual or little classes, one hour classes and did this day after day after day before the test, before the start of the test, so that they were a tremendous support there. But that was a very narrow thing and eventually I think they gave up the test...

**On the relationship between the JJWC and the English department:**

Well, I think that the people in the English Department really – many of them didn’t know any more about the writing center than people at the Spanish Department. They would send their students there not knowing exactly what was going on or what they expected the writing center to do. And then Livia would have to explain the teaching course. This is extremely irritating to her but she felt they should know about it...

But still there they would just casually tell half a dozen students to show up at the writing center. Very often they didn’t go, so Livia arranged some kind of receipt to be given to the instructor – if they went they would give the instructor the receipts, because that instructor was not always at the writing center but it would do any good. not knowing if they had ever gone. So, that helped tighten the relationship not only with the English Department but with other people as well...

**On administrative attitudes toward the JJWC:**

Well, the administrations, the deans and provosts of course over the time were changing every few years, so that each one had to figure out what the writing center was doing, and want to know why they needed any money at all. It was the same thing over and over again that Livia had to do. And they each had their own opinions as to how the writing center should be conducted and Livia had to straighten each one of them and then they had all these underlings too and there were constant tests. And so, she handled all of that stuff and there was a recognition that the writing center worked and everybody seems to know that...

And meanwhile Livia sent out her tutors across the college to speak to classes, to tell them what the writing center was and what they did, and if they had problems with the government papers, blah, blah, blah and what they should do. So, that was very, very successful and again Livia had to do it over and over and over again, or somebody had to do it over and over again. That was an ongoing struggle. I think at the end at least when I was there, they certainly did know about the writing center and it had a very good reputation in the college...
On funding and assessment:

What’s never been solved of course is the funding which she has to struggle for every year. And that’s because the budget of college is never secured, it goes up and down. And fulltime lines are not available and so on and so forth...

Well, I think Livia was able to – we kept track of everything, at least I kept track in the early days and then I have computers and the college keeps track of dropouts and failure rates and all that sort of thing. I think Livia was able to show that the people in English composition courses who came to the writing center had a much higher success rate whatever writing course they were in and that was a good nod. And so, the administration of course they can’t tolerate the high dropout rate either and the university doesn’t tolerate it...

So, this was important to them because they could then demonstrate that the writing courses together with the writing center were successful and retaining students. So, that was the argument that Livia used. And then a lot of her students, a lot of the tutors’ writing turned up in the student magazines... And her tutors tended to be very well represented there...

Well, I think the thing that’s hard to figure out is the coming, flow of money because that does determine a lot that goes on both in the writing center and when they try to increase the money for their tutors and all of that instances. It’s always a battle. And I don’t know how you would – I suppose you could get somebody in administration to tell you when the big and the down year was – when they had money and when they didn’t, because that certainly affected what we did in the English Department and had affected Livia’s operation too. I think that there were some – there were semesters passing. Well, a semester passed to get the furniture. I know that a semester passed while they were trying to hire this graduate system that would be another semester. And then the course started and then another – so that would be the time that they are going, that would be almost two years. And then the computers came and so on, you know, the time is passing and partly it’s all flawed because the money is never forthcoming. But that has to – that’s the City University and as I said with the fluctuations in enrolments and state emergencies of one kind or another...

On the development of the writing program at JJ:

Well, I don’t remember that the English Department, I mean the whole curriculum of the college changed after I left. But before that the curriculum was under our control and except for changing the English Department courses which we did sort of routinely but not in any – we didn’t have any compositions specialist although we tried to hire one, we didn’t get one until I
think back to the when lift. I think we hired one the year that I left. And now I think they have several... Mark McBeth, I think he was hired the last year I was there. And then they started go after the writing curriculum in a more organized way than we did. And we had known for years as things were not the way they could be. It was very hard to find anybody who knew enough to say although we interviewed people and so on, but they didn’t know. We couldn’t find anybody who knew enough about composition and about staffing and that kind of thing who could have actually done anything. The problem of course in the composition was that we had, when I was there, about 30 fulltime people to teach you everything and 120 something adjuncts, the adjuncts who taught most of the composition courses...

And of course, they changed from semester to semester as well. So, it was the question of what were they doing and how could we explain to them what we were doing and that kind of thing, and what should they be doing? How much should they read? How much should they be reading? What kind of readings should they be doing, blah, blah, blah, and how do you integrate a research paper into a composition course, that kind of stuff...

And we have various answers, none of which were very good. So, everybody knew it but we did the best that we could because we couldn’t not figure out how to do something else especially since we didn’t know exactly whether the adjuncts were doing what we wanted them to do or not because there were so many of them. And the only mandates we got from the administration had to do with the CUNY test...
I’m Pat Licklider. Around the time of the creation of the writing center I was Deputy Chair in charge of the writing program under Bob Crozier, who was the chair. So, there were two different seasons [1975-1980 and 1998-2004]. But what you're interested in the earlier the ‘75 through ‘80 because by the time ‘98 came around Livia was already and working hard to set up the Writing Center. So, I was basically in charge at that time of open admissions testing and placement of incoming freshmen to appropriate composition classes. That was a very tedious job. And then we had exit exams and I was in charge of creating and administering those as well. So, basically my job was purely administrative. I seldom saw students. I did a lot, I handled a lot of paperwork and I was also teaching composition as well. So, that's basically my job.

On JJ, OA, and the WP:

At the beginning, we didn't know what to do with these open admission students who couldn't write or who read very poorly as well. They weren't doing very well in our regular English 101 class which were 24 large classrooms taught in a pretty traditional rhetorical modes fashion. And many, many students were failing out of that course. Our fail rate was much too high...

So, at the very beginning we tried a couple of things. The first thing we tried was to reduce class size so we had English 101 large, medium and small. And for a while we seemed to think that was working because it was the students in the 101 small who were the weakest students. There were only 12 of them in the classroom so the individual professor could work with them really hard. But they still could not raise their writing ability in one semester to make up for 10 years of not having learned any writing skills. So, that really didn't work either...

So, then we decided to set up a second course which we would call remedial. The language around the courses that were not full college credit were very problematic. Remedial suggests that the patient is sick and needs a remedy to make him well. Developmental suggests that the patient or the person is immature you know not 18 but 14 or whatever. So, any language about “basic” sounds like kindergarten the ABCs so we really had a tough time. But we called that course English 100 and all of those names figured into the description of it. It was a one credit course but it had three hours attached to it so it was pretty heavy for that one credit. And we still found that many students didn't pass it the first time around. We had about a 60% pass rate as I recall...

So, we set up yet another course below it or in addition to it called English 099. And we joked that we could continue going right down to 098 and 097... But we stuck with 099 and that was
very small classes - 10, 12 students. Students who really could not put together a sentence or who were, and this was often the case, ESL students who were not, who did not belong in ESL because they had no language skills even in Spanish or whatever the other language was. So, these were students with very few language skills. And the students passed out of the English 099 probably at about a 40% or 50% pass rate and then they would move on to 100 and then on to 101. And then occasionally students who progressed very rapidly could move right into 101. So, that was our sequence around the crucial time that you're talking about...

And we could see that these students that twice a week meeting for an hour and 15 minutes it's not enough time for them to make up for years and years of not reading and writing. And this is before any of the high school English teachers started emphasizing writing again partly as a result of the open admissions debacle...

We were complaining loudly. You know professors complaining about how poorly prepared in articles and newspapers and so on about the high school diploma didn't mean anything. ...Johnny can't write, Johnny can't read, Johnny can't compute... And so, high school teachers heard that message and they began to thinking. They began to emphasize writing more and over the years we did see an improvement and there were no longer students who came to the college with 099 skills. Well, there were some but not in the numbers that we saw earlier and also... Anyway, so that was the basic structure of the courses. And we continued with that structure including a couple of levels of ESL, three levels actually of ESL, to mirror 101, 100 and 099 for students who came in speaking a second language...

That continued up until the university decided that students who could not pass the entrance exams should go to community colleges or they should go to prep centers. And since John Jay was at that time a comprehensive school in that we offered associate degrees we continued to accept community college students, that is students with low scores who had not passed the entrance exams, for a long time. And I'm not quite sure when exactly. I guess it was when we became a four-year school which is fairly recently. It's only about 15 years ago, 10 or 15 years ago ...

So, up until that time we were still trying to deal with all these students who couldn't read and couldn't write. It's gotten a lot better now. Students who come in many of them already have associate degrees. That doesn't mean necessarily that they can write very well. It means they know how to study, they know how to write an essay or they know how to put together research paper. So, things are a lot rosier now...

SEEK is interesting because it existed with its own tutors long before, not long before but quite a bit before we had our writing center. And those students did better than our students because they had a lot of counseling as well as. it was not just writing instruction and tutoring there was
a counselor attached to every group of incoming students. And they had, they were given some money, the students were given a little bit of money so they had more incentive to come to class and to work hard and to succeed...

So, I think that SEEK that's a really good model to imitate if one had the money. But that was federal money. So, and there was no federal money, that was no state money, there was no city money for any of this. They wanted to do open admissions on a shoestring. And that you can do it but it's not going to get done very well. So, SEEK is an admirable way of helping disadvantaged pre-literate students to pull themselves up into college...

...At the time that we had open admissions we also set up a reading faculty. “Communication Skills” it was called. And they taught reading and speech. Speech at that time was a requirement because originally the college was intended for police officers who had to be able to speak in the jury rooms and describe cases and read their notes and so on. So, speech was always integral to the curriculum of John Jay until very recently, that is...

**On testing and CAWS:**

Open Admissions was thrown out as it was a political move and nobody was given time to prepare for the onslaught of high school graduates who came. Before that everybody had selective admissions and so you had really smart but poor kids going to City College for example and becoming nuclear scientists and mathematicians and so on...

So, when open admissions came and all the students were just thrown on the colleges we all went, “What are we going to do?” all of us especially those of us directing writing programs. And so, Bob Lyons at Queens and Ken Bruffee at Brooklyn and Richard Larsen at Lehman and Bonnie August at Bronx Community and George Otte who when he first came on was at Baruch, a whole bunch of people got together… Mina Shaughnessy was very instrumental in this before she died, “Let's get together and talk strategy, talk policy, talk issues become a kind of political bloc that can argue for things, for and against certain educational principles.” So, we did that.

And it was the most wonderful kind of lively exchange of ideas because these are all smart people. Some of them trained in education like Richard Larsen was and education person. But others of us were literature teachers who liked teaching writing and who sort of got involved in the whole area. And this is a time when there was really no such thing as composition studies. It’s the very beginning of any talk about… Oh yes there were studies of literacy and how you teach a child to become literate and so on. There was nothing at the college level nothing at the early young adult level. How do you handle, how do you deal with someone whose language skills are all rather than literate and how do you help that person cross the line? ...
So, we sort of began talking about our own issues and that led to conferences. We had a conference every spring in which people present, people in the field professors, instructors came and presented ideas for how to handle this or that problem. And it was a very practical, pragmatic kind of organization. Never really we didn’t really talk politics very much except as it impinged on writing programs. But we really did get into the nitty-gritty of particularly program administration. It's also I think before the WPA was founded. And this was kind of WPA for opportunities for all the writing people...

And gradually more and more of the less committed or less involved directors of writing programs came on board because they saw that there were interesting things happening in the meetings. So, the meetings varied from month to month and would sometimes be… Oh Harvey Wiener was another. I forgot Harvey Wiener was also instrumental. Sometimes there were only eight of in the room, sometimes that were 13, 14 people depending on how many schools were represented. So, it was that was fun actually...

I mean it was for me it was fun because I was young. I had never been taught how to teach writing. I was a literature professor with a degree from Columbia. They assume you know to write. So, all of this was fascinating and really interesting. So, that was happening and the WPA was beginning, people were beginning to see...

**On the WP’s relationship to JJ as “a cop college”:**

Well, the founder of our department Robert Pinkert who died several years ago, was a dean at Columbia General Education School. And he had gone to Columbia himself as a Columbia graduate and a Columbia PhD and he loved the great books curriculum of the Columbia freshman year which is still in effect actually. And he translated that to John Jay...

So, when he set up the department and he and ...the dean of faculty started hiring people they were hiring literary types people with PhDs in literature who could teach Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton and so on. So, we had a fairly traditional department when it set up. And he thought and I think rightly that policeman do not have a very liberal background. They're not really interested in books that much at least as kids. They went into the police force the way people go into the army because it seems like the manly thing to do or their father did it or they don't like school.

But if you get them later when in their late 20s or early 30s you really open them up to all kinds of wonderful. And I can attest to that. In my early years teaching… the best classes were those that were full service people, cops. And I remember particularly a class of firemen who read
veraciously because what do you do between fires except read? And they would come in and we would talk about Dante, and Sartre, and Shakespeare just fabulous...

So, he [Pinkert] was right in making this classics-based curriculum. It was very old fashioned at the time. And writing you wrote to express your ideas about the reading. That's another very old fashioned way he had you know express. And if you were a creative writer you know in that creative writing separation from composition, well then you read short stories and you wrote short stories, and you read poetry and you wrote poetry. So, it's a very traditional kind of way of seeing things. And this was a way of liberalizing the police force and it really does work I mean if you can watch it in action...

...Now when CUNY became tuition based when it was no longer free policeman looked around and they said, “Well why should I bother going to CUNY when for the same amount of money, I can go to a school in my own town St John's, Mercy, Rockland Community College places where the cops lived?” The policeman it's very difficult to live on a policeman salary in Manhattan or in New York generally. And so are the number of people from the services who are at John Jay dropped precipitously in the two or three years right after the imposition of tuition...

So, we lost a lot of those guys and it really didn't come back in any way until the police department made degrees, progress toward degrees, made promotion contingent on progress toward degrees. So, you couldn't become a sergeant until you had a BA, and you couldn't become a lieutenant or whatever captain until you had a master's degree in something. So, this brought a lot of people back into the system.

But they were still mostly interested in professional education. They weren’t really that interested you know becoming literate. Those guys couldn't write better we found most of them than kids who had gone to inner city schools. They came a lot of them came from Long Island, Rockland County, Queens...

So, the public schools in those places were somewhat better than they are in inner city. And there was a wonderful, in those early days, a wonderful tension between the older guys in the room, the 28, 30-year-olds and the kids, we called them kids, the 18, 19, 20-year-olds. There was 10, 12-year gap but it was also those 60s and 70s so there was a tremendous political gap. You know Vietnam was a very hot subject... Richard Nixon was a very hot subject. And this really, I was so glad I didn't teach politics because it really was a very kind of. But it created wonderful discussion I mean if you could handle it. Wonderful sparks led to good discussions.

...The other thing about the college in those early years it was very largely male because the police force was predominantly male, the fire department was all male... So, it's only in later
years when the college became more of college aimed at prospective law school students and students interested in things like CSI… Women interested in psychology, women interested in helping the addicted, women interested in adolescent psychology and family dynamics that kind of thing. So, the college is now predominantly female, which is very interesting change from when it first started.

On founding the JJWC:

...There were other networks springing up in which people saw that they could get together and argue for good educational practices and they could develop good educational practices. I'm also thinking about the organization of writing centers. I'm trying to think that just around that time all sort of fits together. Writing centers elsewhere big universities had them. I’m trying to think Purdue comes to mind. Places in Washington State and California and most of the other CUNY branches had writing centers except for John Jay...

But even back then when we had those three courses we could see that twice a week was not enough for the students. So, we really, really needed some place where they could go and practice. Be forced to because they're not going to practice, many of them were not going to practice on their own. Go somewhere and have a tutor help them and every other college in the system had a writing center. Just the John Jay it’s a very new college. We were not founded until very late ‘60s 1970. Most of us came on board in ’70 and ’71. So, there wasn't really and it was not fully funded. It was never fully funded until very recently...

...So, we never had a writing center and so we began to demand what other places had. And that's basically the push came from the faculty teaching the writing students. We really need a writing center. It did not come from the administration. It came from the people in the trenches who said, “We really need this.”

...Well, I think the department as a whole, we all taught composition. That's another thing that I forgot to mention. Some of the other schools in CAWS in CUNY only had the younger untenured part time faculty, the adjunct faculty taught writing. At John Jay Bob Pinkert made it a point of making sure everybody taught composition of one kind or another.

Bob Crozier followed that pattern all the way up until the most recent set ofhirings and the early 2000s. Everybody had to teach one or two sections of writing a semester so we were all in it. And we all said, “Help, we need help! We need a writing center. Why can't we have a writing center like Lehman or like Hunter? What's the matter with us?” And Bob took these complaints to Basil Wilson. I think he was he was the provost at that point. And of course, everything cost money. Remediation is expensive….
Basil however could rub his fingers together and find a nickel and when he finished he could find bits and pieces of money here and there. So, we were allowed to hire someone to be the director. That was it.

That was the only money that he could come up with. It was a line. And it was not a faculty line. It was HEO line, you know higher education officer line which meant it was a little less expensive than a faculty line. And that's how Carrol Stanger came on... But there was no space. I mean I don’t know what he [Wilson] thought she was going to do. But I think Bob has probably told you that he found her an office with some desks and stuff. They had no concept. Basil had no concept of what a writing center did like he’d never been to one. ...He's just, “I’ve given you the person. Let her figure it out.”

**On Livia’s leadership in the JJWC:**

...Now to talk about somebody who could rub her finger together and make money appear is Livia.

Livia really knows how to work the system. I'm afraid Carol Sanger ...She tried to hire professional tutors but of course there was no money for it so she was stymied. ... it really wasn't working very well.

I mean that was nothing for her to work with really at the beginning. So, that's when he [Crozier] decided that it should be a faculty line to protect the head of the center from being fired. And the person would gain tenure by service rather than by publishing. He was very good at… getting that much for Livia...

So, one once Livia came on things began to change in the center. I don't know how she found the space or maybe she used the space but got furniture from somewhere. She figured out how to get furniture...

**On the function of the JJWC, during testing and post-testing:**

As I said earlier the students really needed a place where they could go and practice skills that they were learning that week in the classroom in a kind of a nonjudgmental, non-graded atmosphere. And Livia right from the beginning saw that she was not going to be able hire “professional tutors”. So, she herself, and she's an excellent teacher of writing by the way, decided that she would do peer tutoring. And she would train them and she would not let a
student tutor another student until that person had gone through two semesters of her training which included what would you call on the job training. She would supervise...

...And that proved to be the salvation of the writing center. There never was any money. And she scrounged for every little bit that she got and if you hired students, students don't need a lot of that. You don't have to pay them a whole lot in order for them to tutor. And she was willing to do the work of the training ...so the kids really could do the work. They really knew how to...

She broke the task of writing down into like units or compartments. Areas that students could work on in a segment of a lab let's say. So, for example how do you organize your thoughts into an essay? How do you write an introductory paragraph? How do you quote properly? Little units that you a student could come, could be referred and she would send around at the start of every semester and many intervals in the middle of the semester...

She would send around a list of things that could be covered in the writing center. And you would check off problems a student was having and then referred them to writing center with this piece of paper. So, they would go and they would work on whatever it was sentence fragments or whatever. And by doing that, by atomizing the process, she really made it easier for students both the tutors and the tutees to work together.

And she also figured out as she went on that she could have the tutors who were really good do little presentations and teach multiple students the same skill. So, that was another way to get some very money saving way of doing tutoring because the most expensive kind of tutoring is one on one. And so, if you can have three or four students in a group being tutored that's terrific. You're getting four for the price of one...

Well, Livia could never handle all the problem students. There's no way, I mean small writing center was never funded sufficiently to service the whole college. And not only was she supposed to be servicing writing students but she was also supposed to be servicing upper classmen. ...the college wasn't really willing to put the resources into this program to make it as big as it needed to be...

**On WAC at JJ:**

Also, we began to see that you have to have writing everywhere. So, this is the same time when writing across the curriculum was also beginning. And right in the early ’80s. And I was really involved in that as well at the college. So, that you know if you're going to have writing in a psych course where the tests are all machine graded as we used to say those psych people all they do is they feed the thing into. If you're going to have writing in a psych class you’ve got to help that instructor learn how to make a good assignment, how to respond to the writing that's
produced, how to grade it. All that stuff was not in their training. So, just as it wasn't in our training and we were literature PhDs.

...what came up were workshops for incoming faculty which he asked Shirley [Schnitzer] and me to teach actually offer. And that became a kind of a regular thing for several years but we did it for nothing. We didn't get release time, we didn't get paid, nothing.

So, when Shirley was becoming ill and she said, “I really can't do this anymore. I'm not going to do it anymore.” I buttonholed Michael Blitz who came in as a writing specialist and who was in thematic studies department at that time. He was a member of our department but he was on permanent long to thematic studies to do them with me because I think he would have been very good. He's much more knowledgeable about the field than I was although at that time, by that time I educated myself. But he refused to do it without getting paid. If he didn't get paid, he wasn't going to do it. So, the workshops came to an end.

So, that was one element of it. And I had people in later years faculty from other departments say to me, You remember that workshop you did? ...They really remembered it because it was one of the few times when something practical came to help them deal with the students. Many of them were again hired from prestigious universities and had never seen students with such poor writing skills, reading skills. ...Another thing that we did which was extremely popular was that we would put together tips for teaching writing. The WIT, writing instruction tips. And we published that once a week in the college’s newsletter which at that time of course was paper. “The Week Of…” it was called. ...we did that for three four years maybe. Can you imagine doing that once a week three or four years? There were so many. I mean we did repeat ourselves during that time… There were certain things that we had that were specific to a time of the semester. So, there were the beginning of the semester tips and there were end of the semester tips and they were exam tips. Anyway, somebody suggested we put them together. So, we put them together a little booklet [Quick WITS] and that got distributed to the new faculty and the subsequent provosts loved it because it was free.

Now the WITS ...were intended for faculty. They were not intended for students. They were directed at helping faculty include writing of different kinds. Not just papers but you know essay exam questions, prompts that students could write on for five minutes at the beginning of a class, prompts for writing after reading a difficult piece of reading. ...And then another element of our work was John Jay’s Finest. And that came out of one of those writing workshops that we gave. One of the faculty staff, I still remember who it is said, “Why don't you, we're focused so much on poor writing. Why don't we highlight good writing? Why don't we publish good fact student writing?”

...But you know you really need more institutional help to do writing across the curriculum. You
need smaller classes. You can't expect somebody teaching up to 150-student Psych 101 to put writing in her course. Who’s going to read all of that? We don't have any graduate students to read writing. There are no grad TAs. Only very few that have come in as a part of the composition program at graduate center you know. But there are no other resources and the college had no money. WAC in order to succeed WAC needs funding. It really needs funding...

**On the relationship between WAC and JJWC:**

Livia always loved all the stuff we were doing. And she would come to workshops and talk to them about the writing center and about what it offered and what she could do for them and did they have any ideas and could they be in communication and so on...

And she always… I think that's probably, you might ask her this, but that was probably how she started introducing workshop topics that were connected to subject matter. So, how do you write a psych paper? How do you organize a scientific experiment in your notes? How do you argue a point philosophically? All kinds of discipline specific topics. Not just topics sentences and paragraphing but things that you know. And I think that that was never anything that one talked about either. ...But a lot of students coming into CUNY are first generation college students, some of them first generation high school graduates…. they have no, nobody above them or older than they to help them figure out how to do things. ...And so, that's why the peer tutoring lab is so helpful because these are other kids or the students who look like them and who you know are...

**On JJWC practices:**

Now the way Livia does it she probably told you. She sends around a request for the student you think that's going to get an A in your literature class send me their names. It has to be somebody who's not a graduating senior. Somebody preferably an upper sophomore lowly junior who can take two semesters of her training and then… give her a couple of semesters of work. And many of her tutors now I recommended. I mean I love going in there and seeing the kids that I recommend. ...And then they go on. They graduate they go on but they've got that experience they can put that on their resume. It's a wonderful work experience to have. And talking in public, putting together a presentation all that stuff is valuable you know?

Well, the writing center has become, I think Livia has made it much more central to the college than it was 25 years ago, 20 years ago...So, and she is a master, that is Livia, is a master of promotion of the writing center you know….So, I think that Livia although to hear her talk you wouldn't believe it, but I think she's in a good position to now she's very established...

**On assessment culture at CUNY:**
...Oh, right from the beginning of Open Admissions because students we decided, because people decided we needed a way of figuring out where students should go. And we thought it was a liberalizing thing to set up exams. It turned out to be quite demoralizing and quite it backfired in some ways that we had not expected. We thought we needed direction. We needed to figure out where the students were when they entered. We couldn't just throw them all into the same classroom. The classroom had a very wide range of abilities....

So, we proposed writing tests and we were very clear based on a lot of stuff that Richard Larson said and other people that it had to be a writing test. It couldn't be a grammar exam such as the SATs. It couldn't be that kind of, it couldn't be a reading comprehension exam. It had to be a writing exam. And so right from the beginning we emphasized that and we came up with the WAT...

And these exams would be read holistically. That was another thing we learned from Ken Bruffee and others that you can’t grade writing on grammar mistakes. You can't grade it on spelling or handwriting. It has to be graded on content… You had to score four [out of six points] in order to enter 101, English 101. Three to one meant that you needed some remedial work. So, the trick became then to decide what was a three and what was a four? And that was all decided. And this was, we did at John Jay forever. We never went to any other method of deciding placement.

And ...all the faculty teaching writing that semester got together and read placement exams. It took a whole day a whole Saturday or whatever. And we would at the beginning the people running the workshop, usually me and a couple of other people, would choose typical six, a typical one, a typical five, a typical two. We would try to choose essays that we thought, that we agreed the three or four of us agreed were passing, failing whatever. And we would pass those around we would make copies of them. And everybody would read all the samples and we would decide as a body what was passing and was failing essay. But only when we had come to a point of consensus would we start reading real life exams which is very tedious...

So, that's how we... And we had a chance because we learned from studies of composition students that one sample is never a good judge of ability. You really did two samples. So, we required every composition instructor at all levels 101, 100 and 99 to have the students write a sample piece of writing the first week. And we were allowed by the registrar to transfer people up and down across the system. The most of the labor intensive tedious work I ever did in my life. It was actually kind of fun but the transfer period was hell. We’re talking 1000 students. Yeah, we're not talking a small number. This is 1000 students and it’s really difficult. And it was difficult because students already had programs and had courses. So, you had to transfer them to at the same time slot or time slot when they were free and so it was very individualized.
Every transfer was like a little individual work… And it all had to be done on paper. There were no computers, right? Oh, my God it was so rigorous...

...So, that was the initial assessment. And then once the students were placed more or less where they belonged we thought then there was the final assessment. And for students in 099 the final assessment was another exam. And the exam for the 100 students was another WAC. For the 099 students, we made up another in-house exam that was more rudimentary that involved certain skills and paragraph structure. Not just, we asked them to write a shorter piece and then we asked them to proofread the sentence and find some mistakes. And so, it was not as rigorous as a test…

....If you taught 101 in the spring you always moved to different 101 in the fall. Yeah, it’s because you’re getting all the 100 graduates and you’re getting some ESLs and some 099 graduates. So, but nonetheless that’s you have to be fair and let the system work in that way… So, but that was assessment in the classroom.

I know that Livia had to write a manual report in which she self-assesses the work of the workshops and the tutors... And you know Livia is very good at collecting data and she would know to the minute how many hours were spent, how many students had attended each workshop and all that...

...We didn’t do a lot of assessments. Anyway, I didn’t do a lot of assessment, a lot of assessment of the program itself. It was more trying to keep my head above the water and trying to just learn stuff. It wasn’t really until we started hiring people like Mark who had training in it. We were just learning it on the flight on the job. Then we started to step back and the program was headed professionally.

**On ESL and the JJWC:**

I just want to say that early on the college tried, Basil tried to get Livia to deal with ESL as well. And she rightly said, “No that's a different set of problems. That's not literacy skills. That’s more of language skills.” And that really needs, that can be done by language instructors and that can be done probably some of it on machine. A lot of it you know learning verb forms and learning sentence structure in English that kind of thing can be helped by computer assisted construction, whereas writing is difficult to do any of that on a machine. So, right from the beginning she was pressured to include that but she always pushed it away...

ESL students ...have to go to an institute and learn English outside the college. But originally, they all came to the college. Whoever applied came. And if they came in with weak skills that
showed that they had second language interference, they were non-speakers, they were put in ESL classes separate from English 99 and 100. They didn't go into those until they had mastered the rudiments of English grammar and structure. And then they came into the English department sequence.

...So, ESL people were in our department but their sequence was parallel to, parallel but beneath ours. And they had the freedom to offer a third hour or a fourth hour I guess it would be. So, they had the students three times a week instead of twice. And that means more, that means a lot. They were paid the instructors are paid money to teach those courses. But you have to have that was always recognized graduate degree when you can get a TESOL degree...
Appendix E: Oral History Transcript, Katz, March 2017 (edited)

I am Livia Katz, Director of the Writing Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I think that this September, it’s going to be 20 years. I am in my 20th year of running the writing center. I started in September of 1997 on a substitute line. So, it’s going to be twenty years.

On being hired by Bob Crozier:

I didn’t work with the previous director. I was already on a substitute line as a writing center director. And Carol Stanger was no longer there. My chairman called me one day and he told me that “I am making you full time” and that was it.

I mean I was an adjunct lecturer in the English department before then and I was teaching English 201. At that time, it was English 102. So, I was teaching in what was not yet a writing program and I just – he just liked me, I had very good teaching record and I was very efficient in what I was doing ...And he talked to the provost and they decided that the writing center director at that time, she would be moved into a different position and then I would take over. The writing center position before was that of a HEO higher education officer and my chair insisted that it should be a faculty member position.

On the physical space of the JJWC:

So, the place was very small, we were located on the second floor of North Hall. The original place of the writing center was in 1301 and there was only one large room okay. Then the center was moved to the second floor of North Hall which was 2450 North Hall. And we had two rooms! That’s right! ...By the time, we move from there, there were four rooms. There were ...three tutoring rooms and one workshop room. Which I made sure, I made sure that I had more space...

I made sure that it’s centrally located... we were basically among classrooms... Except that area segment of North Hall was taken over by the psychology department and there were more offices there but it was in the midst of classrooms. Now when the architect designed the writing center for the New Building, my chair wanted to be on the seventh floor together with the English department and I objected. I said that the writing center has to be in among classrooms, it has to be situated where there's student traffic and that is how we ended up on the first floor with all the classrooms. Prime real estate. You go where the students are...

On the growth of the JJWC over time:
Well, originally when I took over, there were no workshops whatsoever, zero workshops. The tutoring was also down... I had to build the writing center from the ground up. And I did.

So, it took a while and I started doing the workshops, I started planning workshops, we created workshops. We didn’t have anything, we were just sitting around the table... doing the workshop. And there was nothing really advanced until I got the workshop going and we had the podium and we had the projector and everything changed at that point...

I think, I honestly can’t tell when I first started it, we had a very elaborate appointment both that was not computerized. Eventually, we had something that was computerized but nothing like we have now which is TutorTrac. So, yes, we made appointments for students and what I try to do is I immediately reach out to the faculty because I knew that to get students, you needed to contact the faculty...

...So, establishing a really, really good relationship with the faculty at John Jay college was the way to get students. So, I worked very hard, I remember that – I remember that I became pest because I had – I left phone messages, I had like a, you know how the story works right? I would have group phone voicemail that I would leave everybody reading the daily workshop in the writing center. But I would remind them of what the workshops were for the day. And I would do that routinely and... I was threatened they would block my phone calls! Yeah so, I stopped doing that, they changed the phone system, I stop doing that. I mean actually I used to advertise my workshops to the entire college differently but now they have the general – the college has a general announcement... so I started doing, we started offering workshops and the workshop numbers grew and the students grew and my model was, if they don’t come to you, you go to them...

**On training practices of the JJWC:**

...The courses that I’m teaching now were called, Collaborative Tutoring Writing One and Tutoring and Writing Two. The only thing that Carol Stanger had in there [the tutor training syllabus] was the Bruffee... She had the two courses but I’ve redone them, I revised the portfolio. They’re completely different. But I actually kept Bruffee in there. I kept Bruffee because even though the model of argumentation that he presents is very sophomoric... And I do my own - I do Toulmin for argumentation... but Bruffee is still very, very good. His “Conversation of Mankind.” And some of his – how to be a critiquing and the detail descriptive outline even ...a lot would make fun of it I know but... those are extremely useful when it comes to the writing of peer critiques, doing the descriptive, evaluate different substance of critiques and the responses but I’ve evolved so Bruffee is just there as a starting point.
Okay, so when I took over the writing center, I remember Pat Licklider had gone to the library and brought me a number of writing center books, among them *The Practical Tutor*, five copies of which you see on the shelf over there, *The Writing Center Administrator*... I’ve got the Donald Murray and I got Peter Elbow and some other books and in ENG316 [the second tutor training course], I decided that there has to be writing center theory, has to be writing center tutoring pedagogy and we’ve started doing actually reports. I’ve started asking my tutors to – my whole thing was I couldn’t make them buy books so I compiled handouts which I would give them and they would then do reports on the various handouts. I’m still doing that today but in a much different way. Actually, now they’re doing PowerPoint presentations or prezis which I then send out to the entire class and what they had is a portfolio full of these presentations. And they could refer back to them. In other words, it’s almost like compiling a text book.

And we start with the idea of the writings by Steven, you know Steven North ...But I have so many articles that I make them do. They go by three of them a class okay? And we discuss. And of course, I also do tutor training videos which I – there’s so many out there. So, writing centers have them, YouTube has a number of tutor training videos. So in reality, I mean I was very – I could just do one book in 316 but I can’t. How many books can I make the students buy?

So, this is what 316 the whole pedagogy, do the whole theory and I build up to the last article which is the scaffolding article which is the Nordlof article. By the time, we get to the Nordlof, the students will have done reports on most of what you mentioned. They would have done the peer critiquing and social construction and that works really well in writing, it doesn’t really work well when it comes to sitting one next to each other. Because these people are peers...

**On developing a mission statement:**

...Well, I don’t remember when we came up with the mission statement but we did, we were still in North Hall and we created it together, the tutors and I ...We try to fulfill that mission, we try to. Because to make students independent writers actually means that a student has to be committed. To come in to the writing center and to working regularly with the tutor. And to put there a theory of scaffolding in place if the tutor’s going to provide the training wheels for the student and eventually be able to fade, take away the training wheels and so that the student can become independent as a writer that is the goal. But that requires discipline and that requires commitment from the student and with the fly by night one appointment this semester students, such cannot be accomplished.... You start with the simpler things until and build to the more complex until the students are able to handle it themselves. You cannot do that with “check my paper, I need dependence here.”
On assessment and funding:

...I think that we started doing assessment, grade assessments, I can’t remember when, grade based assessment. We were always big of grade based assessment. And I think that maybe that came about with the advent of writing across the curriculum if I am not mistaken and that was around 2000, the grade based assessment came about with – I can’t really remember anymore which – I would have to go back to my report, it’s been 20 years...

...We used to be funded by the Perkins Grant okay for associate degree students and we used to do grade based outcomes there but they were very rudimentary grade based outcomes just as pass and fail and incomplete. And the guy who would fund us for the Perkins Grant, he got very, very happy with that. And then, we started doing with the CPE [exam] actually really good grade based assessment especially when Robert started working for us and that he evolved in that as well. So, we would do grade based assessment for any courses that like writing in tons of classes we were involved with, the CPE of course, we were very, very big with the CPE which was the junior, rising junior exam in CUNY. And so, but we eventually, we realized that grade based assessment ...I mean, we always knew that grade based assessments actually do not tell the entire story because grades are determined by so many factors and the grade that one professor gives to a student is not the same as another grade that a professor gives to a student.

...Or other factors go into determining the grade like attendance. So there’s so many variables here that the final grade is really not a reflection, accurate reflection… This college happens to like grade based assessment so we continued doing that. Hey, right?

But it was towards 2010 that we started doing the regular learning assessment and how did this learning assessment come about? The Middle States report that called for John Jay to have a better assessment program, right? So, John Jay rose to action because it was a preparation for Middle States, the next Middle States visit. Now, I don’t know whether John Jay would have been motivated by this search of – we have to do assessment because how do we know that a student learns anything if grades are not a good way, right? ...So then, how do you assess that learning okay? So, this is what John Jay actually was motivated by Middle States.

...So, we all have to come up with some kind of assessment of learning and I remember that Robert and Zully and I went to talk to Virginia Moreno ...She told us that we can assess anything okay? That it was really up to us what we wanted to assess as learning. So, in the beginning we did not know what to do so we decided that we’re going to assess task two of the CPE simply because the students who used to come to us would write practice exams and we could collect those practice exams and then seeing based how they have improved. Okay, and that would have
been, we would have created a rubric and that would have been perfect, right? So, then the CPE disappeared. And we had to do a very fast substitution.

**On assessing the science writing initiative:**

...We did the science assessment and that was Zully Santiago. She was an online tutor at the time and she would tutor the students for Chemistry 315 and she obtained permission to use the papers that they were sent online. ...She also based them on the workshops. And that was terrific assessment because she could see what needed to be done, where we were failing, what needed to be improved and I think that was perfectly successful assessment. ...I don’t think that we really got the help from the department. The only help that we had is that students had mandatory sessions in the writing center.

Students who did not, who had below a C+ or a C had to use the tutor. Now the science, three chems, bio, chem. 315 has eight mandatory sessions in the center. But Zully’s no longer there. She left the post… but she comes back to train students and the tutors.

**On the writing, intensive writing center partnership:**

The only other tutoring assessment that we did was for the Writing Intensive-Writing Center Partnership program. Okay, and that is where I need the faculty. The Writing Intensive-Writing Center Partnership program is a program that allows for continuity between the classroom and the writing center. I assign a tutor to a writing intensive faculty okay? And the tutor is not given over to the faculty like a teaching assistant or an exclusive tutor but the tutor establishes a relationship with the faculty member. They meet in the faculty member’s office or they speak over the phone or in the writing center, the tutor received the syllabus and explanation of the writing the assignments. Sometimes some books and is acquainted with the needs of the course with the expectation of the professor with writing assignments, what to look for when tutoring the students. So, how I do it is that each month once a month, I send the tutors in with his schedule to the classroom to sign up students for tutoring. He does it there. The students come to the center, right and we repeat the process every month because signing up students for the whole semester is not going to work.

They need to be reminded. Now if the students missed the appointments, the tutor is required to email the professor and also CC me. By there is a constant communication between the tutor and the faculty members. The people that I partner with love it. They love it. Because there is a certain consistency in the tutoring that the students received is the same tutor, but we don’t pigeonhole the students. If they want an appointment outside of the tutor’s time, you know of
course they can feel free. So as with my understanding with the faculty was when I was doing my two-year assessment is was that in returned from this wonderful opportunity to have a tutor assigned to them, they would have to evaluate the program ...in a survey and then they would have to give me the final papers that the students submitted.

And then we would see and we would also ask permission from the students to hold on to the draft, so we would have ...portfolios for the students and we would see even if it was not you know from draft to draft to draft, even if it is just from one paper, the second paper, third paper, fourth paper, we would see the improvement and that is why we assessed. We used rubrics. ...But my reports have evolved…. oh, my God we just got rid of a lot...

On the partnership with the JJ WP:

...The partnership with the writing program also came about as a result of the fallout from the CPE. We were so interested in the CPE and the college absolutely love the writings of them because all the time to do with the CPE, right. We made the college look good in pass rate, right. We really were very, very capable. So, after [that ended, the new dean] ...insisted we needed to have something else in place, okay. So, Tim proposed [the workshops] ... and then Kate Zsur, ...came up with this initiative for entering freshmen based on a certain criteria. In other words, the freshmen who probably passed the CATW but didn’t excel, they weren’t that good, their GPA and their score in high school weren’t good. So, she felt that if we could offer some kind of help for them then you know that would be wonderful. In a meeting with Kate Zsur and Tim and me and I think Robert, we came up Jump Start.

And I said let’s work out the areas that we would address and Tim said “okay, this, this” - you know the four areas, the four workshops and once we had them, I brought to my tutor and the tutor created the workshop...

This is what you see when I lost the CPE, which was a great number of students in sessions. I said what we are going to do. Okay, we have to regroup somehow as you know now when I looked back I don’t miss the CPE because its disappearance allowed me to come to create so many programmatic initiatives that more than make up for the CPE. From Jump Start we went to create semester English 101 initiative...The Spring Start initiative is curricular based. It addresses the stumbling blocks in the English 101 syllabus and we have again four workshops, again we created it…. And I thought why are we just doing all this for English 101, what about English 201? So, I talked to Tim and I said, why not invest - have a culture of the writing center with the writing program, first year writing program, so it all becomes part of the culture. And then that’s how Quick Start came about. Of course Tim is to blame for all the “Starts” ...
Yes, so eventually that became a beautiful workshop series ...They are really good. But I and my tutors cannot take credit for that because simply since 201 is so complicated. And so, after that of course we did the Lit Smart initiative which is actually aimed for the not yet ready you know for being a lit major, ...So all these have, have been sources of assessment...

...It’s a very strong collaboration. ...It’s a very elaborate, elaborate collaboration and it works beautifully...

On collaborations across campus:

I am collaborating both with the writing intensive faculty and I collaborate with the writing intensive faculty around the college. ...I partnered with people in sociology. I partnered with people in criminal justice. I partnered with people before in psychology, general studies. ...now I am in a middle of creating a social science and writing for social science initiative.

...The ACE program is just special program ...The workshop was called ACE to success, right? They were exactly the same workshop [as the writing program workshops, but mandatory for ACE students]. ...I am going to cry forever after those days because [the program] decided that ...not all students were demanded to attend the workshop. I don’t know. It would just put too much pressure, they have too many activities… but let me tell you something the outcome was fabulous. We are still going to have, we still are going to do the workshops because there is a new cohort coming in but I don’t think I am going to have the kind of attendance that - I mean the kind attendance that gives you know the workshop leaders energy. You know when you have a class full students, it’s fabulous...

...So, that I mean this has been a collaboration between the writing center. It’s not only between the writing center or the writing program. The writing center and the writing intensive program and it’s been a very fruitful collaboration...

On institutional pressures and assessment:

I think that this [Middle States] was the initial pressure and after that was taken over by the so-called assessment hysteria ...and I know that many, many faculty members resent the assessment. Assessment does not have a good you know reputation… Listen I have all my assessments documented, Robert keeps files, we have file cabin and you can check up on us, it’s there and assessment is done by everybody in the writing center. The tutors do it. Absolutely!...
...Rubrics are what tells the picture. Now, I would love if grades disappeared. ...because of the trending grade inflation that I see, and it’s not only at John Jay College and that’s not only inflicting the writing program and the lit courses. It is nationwide, a trend of grade inflation and grades no longer tell the story...

**On tutors helping with assessment:**

...I have the tutors who are very, very good, who do the workshop for example, so actually Robert organized all of this, okay. We have the scoring rubrics that they all get the batches and read and score them, because who better than the tutors who present the workshops. Virginia Moreno, always told us and she said assessment is everybody’s business. Everybody is involved in the assessment, so absolutely.

...It also helps to tutors because they know how they come across. In other words, they are doing the workshops they see their effect. I always tell them if the student doesn’t know it’s not your fault, trust me nobody is judging you. In the beginning when I had the writing intensive writing sense of program partnership, and I would tell the tutors that the professors will evaluate you and evaluate the program at the end. They were very skittish and I said it has nothing to do with you personally. I am not judging you personally. They are evaluating the program because you remember this is a dialogue here you know you might be doing a fantastic job but if the tutor is not, if the student is not participating or learning from you then it is not your fault, you tried the best. You know you can always come across but the professors love it, love it.

**On other areas of assessment:**

...Okay, you want to ask me what else is assessed right; okay, there are lots of moving parts. I assess basically the efficacy of the center too. Because I send all end of the year survey to the English department. I send our survey to the right writing intensive faculty. We assess tutoring by making the students fill out you know tutor evaluation form and we also assess the workshops. So, those are the kind of assessments that we do and getting the feedback from faculty is very important….

You see ...We aren’t just in a commuters school. This is an urban commuter college. You tell the students, we want you to be a much better writer. We don’t really care about the paper. We want you to become a better writer and let's just deal with your writing separate from whatever, and the students will walk out. They don’t have time for it, okay and number two it’s the kind of students we have it’s very rare. It’s not like they are students that we don’t have students actually care about their writing. We have many students who care about their writing but for the majority of the students who are come to the writing center, they only care for the grade.
They think that the diploma is you know the stamp of approval that now you are ready for the big money and the big job...

**On continuing assessments if she did not have institutional pressure:**

You know something by this point, we have ...endured in doing assessment that I probably would continue doing some form of it. Yes, some form of it, only as quality control. But it would be for internal quality control not to publish it….I think most colleges would breathe more easily if assessment became a thing of the past. Everybody feels that way. I mean that is the overall feeling that assessment is an incredible burden ...but you know… you are able to see what works, what changes need to be made, what does not work and for that reason assessment is very good. That honestly, I guess they want to see that you are doing a good job, that their budgets are justified.

**On her “dream” assessment:**

I would actually want to know – you know what, if I could, I would assess the tutors. How I would go about it, I don’t know but I would assess the tutors through observations. But there is never any time. We are so busy all the time. We try that, we try that, Robert says okay, I’m going to go around observing the tutors okay. I don’t think he liked what he saw that much in some tutors and others, he really likes. But I don’t know if I’m – if I really want to do that. It would empty the writing center. They would all leave. I mean observing tutors is important. I’ve tried that before okay. I’ve gone through around but it is only worth, in a busy center like ours, there is just no time. In a small writing center you can do that. You can have the tutors self-assess. Then you could observe the tutor and then you do your assessment and then it’s juxtapose the two and see, right? And then the tutor can then examine that and also then provide you with a moving forward plan. I mean that would be a really beautiful way of doing observations.

**On the future of the JJWC:**

Well, the writing center certainly has progressed over time. My great fear was that I would stagnate and that’s why I create more and more things. That’s why I move on. I want new initiatives. I want to branch out to different parts of the college…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neoliberal terminology (Welch and Scott)</th>
<th>Discourse of whiteness (Inoue)</th>
<th>Ecologies and collaborations (Wardle and Roozen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KEY TERMS:</strong> Target, improve, success, serve, independent, effective, productive, efficient, innovation, precision, integration, outcomes, performance</td>
<td><strong>KEY TERMS:</strong> Skills, deficiency, at-risk, not ready, grades, pass, fail, mastery, correctness, coherence, scores</td>
<td><strong>KEY TERMS:</strong> Support, in conjunction with, joint initiative, relationship, tied to, guidance, paired with, facilitate, student perception, work with, coordinate, partnership, closely connected to, programmatic involvement, alignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ● improves their abilities as writers and makes them more independent.  
   ● expand many of our new initiatives,  
   ● we served 3,513 students over 10,596 sessions  
   ● which students were served  
   ● targeting students  
   ● the Center served 715 students across  
   ● targets entering freshman  
   ● targeting students in an NNES English 101  
   ● targeted students enrolled in English 101 in the spring  
   ● served 157 students  
   ● improve the success of English 101 students  
   ● targets the curricular needs  
   ● served 86 students  
   ● served 76 students  
   ● served 61 students  
   ● merged with those offered  
   ● the Center continued its growth  
   ● 3,176 students were served  
   ● the Center served 13 students | ● students who are not “major” ready, so to speak.  
   ● offers the catch-up skills  
   ● LitSmart, grades and P/F  
   ● WI grades and P/F  
   ● “jump start” their core writing skills  
   ● course appropriate students  
   ● JumpStart grades and P/F  
   ● potentially at-risk students who had yet to master the curricular skills needed to succeed in English 101  
   ● targeted necessary core skills  
   ● SpringStart grades and P/F  
   ● targeting at risk English 201 students  
   ● the skills needed to succeed in the course  
   ● QuickStart grades and P/F  
   ● 100.00% of AA students who attended the Center for prep passed their courses and in the spring  
   ● 100.00% of students passed  
   ● collecting student writing | ● strong support for students in numerous areas of study  
   ● supporting students in high difficulty science courses  
   ● Designed by two Writing Fellows in conjunction with the Writing Center director  
   ● continued their joint initiative  
   ● enhance the relationship of WI courses and the Writing Center  
   ● encourage more WI students to use the services of the Center  
   ● strengthen the relationship between the WI Program and the Writing Center  
   ● Paired tutors with  
   ● SpringStart was tied closely to the English 101 curriculum  
   ● Designed by a Writing Fellow, under the guidance of Writing Program and Writing Center directors,  
   ● facilitate online tutoring  
   ● the Writing Center continued to work with faculty and students through  
   ● support for the learning |
Innovations

- several new innovations and changes to improve the overall quality of the Center’s services
- streamline bookings
- this year showed significant growth in numerous areas
- o evaluate its services and find areas for improvement
- recommendations to improve
- Students showed most improvement
- Center plays in the success
- improve quality of support to Gen Ed students
- individualized tutoring
- workshops targeted for particular areas
- to become more competent, more confident and, in the long run, more independent writers
- Writing Center helps students become their own proofreader
- crucial to student success and to promote writing competence
- dedicated to improving the students who were served
- the total number of students served college-wide
- and targeting three groups of students served college-wide
- the Writing Center served both undergraduate and graduate students
- the number of students served, for the second year
- a more precise method to calculate
- complete integration of ESL services
- the initiative that targeted and grades data
- their writing skills
- Writing Center contributes to long term skill improvements
- whose writing skills need
- with stronger writing in the disciplines skills
- assist students in mastering
- students become highly proficient, confident, active, and independent learners with the skills to excel in college and the professional world
- improve their writing skills
- editors by teaching them the necessary skills
- to impart to students skills
- writing level of all graduate students
- help them achieve greater eloquence and clarity in their writing
- skills and content oriented workshops,
- at risk students
- the writing skills of students enrolled
- distinct at risk populations.
- and the skills needed to succeed in the course
- students who are not “major” ready
- offering the catch-up skills such students need to read and write in the major
- the writing proficiency exam
- needed to pass the reading exam
- ESL students who still need to pass the proficiency exam
- the reading proficiency exam
- test dealing with grammar correctness that all ESL students who have attended high school abroad must pass in order to receive financial aid
- 4 withdrew, 1 failed, and

Community Showcase

- student perception of our services
- student perception of the overall learning experience
- students’ perception of
- demonstrating students’ perception that
- students’ perception of
- one-on-one tutoring
- importance of working closely with faculty
- intend to pursue collaborations with the ACE program and the Urban Male Initiative
- The Center’s services are closely interwoven with several important initiatives
- strengthened its programmatic involvement with
- in conjunction with the Writing Center
- involvement with WAC/WID
- The faculty in the Forensic Science department continued to support the tutoring
- their joint initiative during
- again paired Writing Center tutors with faculty teaching
- relationship of WI courses and the WC
- strengthen the relationship between the WI program and the Writing Center.
- we paired 4 tutors with 4 professors
- at the request of the Writing Program director
- co-curricular support
- tied to the first year writing program
- alignment with the English 101 curriculum
- close programmatic involvement with the first year writing program
- made outreach easier
175

| Students enrolled in | Outcomes for spring 2015 | Targets students enrolled in the outcomes for the LitStart | Depicts attendance and outcomes by refining and continuing conducted outcomes assessments for the The outcomes are very good outcomes show that courses and outcomes for expanded its tutoring refined our outcomes outcomes for fall in compliance with the outcomes attendance and outcomes for fall the required core’s outcomes of the targeted population series, targeting to improve the success of initiative targeting targets the curricular needs Outcomes for all three workshop of targeting fall NNES English to target three main groups targeted populations in the public management Performance Indicators As part of the performance objectives performance indicators for AA students AA student performance indicators in tutoring only All the innovations and changes its third cycle of outcomes assessment The outcomes are being successfully placed which target special populations of students it targets all literature

| 1 passed, giving us 50% pass rate | took the CATR and passed, and 3 students failed, giving the program a 25% pass rate | 2 passed, giving the program 100% pass rate enrolled in the program passed catch-up skills for literature majors who are not “major” ready the catch-up skills students need 132 passing grades and 2 failing grade in a total pass rate of 98.51% were between A and C 117 passing grades and 6 failing grades pass rate of were between A and C WI students passed their course and, in spring 2015, 96.77% of WI students passed an 87.01% pass rate in the fall students passed with a C or better who passed got a C or better students who were skills certified considered at risk in lagging behind because of their borderline scores at-risk English 101 students who have yet to master the skills required by the English 101 curriculum catch-up skills to make them better prepared experience with core writing skills at risk English 201 students the skills needed to succeed SpringStart P/F rate NNES P/F rates students would pass the courses AA P/F rates met its stipulated 75% pass rate in the fall and | under the guidance of Writing Program and Writing Center directors the Writing Center, namely its involvement with the Writing Program director’s request, the even more integrated into the Writing Center paired 4 tutors with 5 professors in 9 sections we paired 4 tutors with 4 professors in 10 WI sections and programmatic involvement. evaluate the partnership assessing students’ perception working closely with faculty In terms of students’ perception that connecting the Writing Center with a particular course strengthened the connections between students and tutors in conjunction with the advisor Connect each workshop with English 101 syllabi a partnership program in which specific tutors are paired with faculty members providing continuity between the class and the Writing Center Pair Writing Center tutors with a number of faculty teaching enhance the relationship of WI courses and the Writing Center to strengthen the relationship between Have tutors meet with professors will continue to work with the chair of the program continue its involvement with the FYE Student Showcase will be involved again in

| WI students passed their course and, in spring 2015, 96.77% of WI students passed an 87.01% pass rate in the fall students passed with a C or better who passed got a C or better students who were skills certified considered at risk in lagging behind because of their borderline scores at-risk English 101 students who have yet to master the skills required by the English 101 curriculum catch-up skills to make them better prepared experience with core writing skills at risk English 201 students the skills needed to succeed SpringStart P/F rate NNES P/F rates students would pass the courses AA P/F rates met its stipulated 75% pass rate in the fall and | under the guidance of Writing Program and Writing Center directors the Writing Center, namely its involvement with the Writing Program director’s request, the even more integrated into the Writing Center paired 4 tutors with 5 professors in 9 sections we paired 4 tutors with 4 professors in 10 WI sections and programmatic involvement. evaluate the partnership assessing students’ perception working closely with faculty In terms of students’ perception that connecting the Writing Center with a particular course strengthened the connections between students and tutors in conjunction with the advisor Connect each workshop with English 101 syllabi a partnership program in which specific tutors are paired with faculty members providing continuity between the class and the Writing Center Pair Writing Center tutors with a number of faculty teaching enhance the relationship of WI courses and the Writing Center to strengthen the relationship between Have tutors meet with professors will continue to work with the chair of the program continue its involvement with the FYE Student Showcase will be involved again in
- it targets all spring English
- to serve ACE students
- a very productive year
- generating contact hours that produce
- other successful initiatives
- showed substantial growth in countless
- to growth in several initiatives
- many other programmatically engaged initiatives
- gauge the growth of the Writing Center
- Progression of number of students served each year since 1997
- the Writing Center served 19.33% of the college population
- When we look at the growth rate
- the workshop growth rate
- of assessing outcomes in
- Continue gauging effectiveness of initiative
- In order to improve service delivery
- to ensure effective synergy between
- to gauge the effectiveness of the tutoring
- grade based outcomes at the end
- Continue to gauge the effectiveness of
- will target ACE Program students
- to promote student success
- can be effective
- Improve support for WAC/WID
- Encourage targeted students
- workshop based outcomes to
- Encourage targeted students to
- workshop based outcomes
- Faculty Outcomes Assessment Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>spring</th>
<th>MPAQE failures, and Capstone Project failures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students who were not qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>their prerequisite grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the fundamental skills necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide the fundamental skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in order to boost the skills of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marginally writing skills certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students whose entrance scores were marginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide the fundamental skills that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to handle successfully the English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>doing grade assessments at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conducting grade assessments at the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to write more coherent thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will show grade improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maximize correct usage of standard English sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more coherent lab reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students will show grade improvement and generate discipline specific lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maximize correct usage of standard English sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to write more coherent discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will pass the courses for which they were tutored and at least 75% will pass with at least a grade of C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>their targeted skills for English 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improve their targeted skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improve their targeted skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improve their targeted skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raise writing level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to boost/ strengthen the skills of students in the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Form partnerships with various programs
- past year’s partnership with forensic science
- become more programmatically involved
- Survey student satisfaction with individual tutoring sessions and workshops to gauge perception of progress
- Writing Fellow facilitated workshops and other discipline
- Coordinate more fully Writing Center WAC/WID services
- in collaboration with faculty teaching those WI Courses
- Coordinate with Writing Program Director and English faculty
- Coordinate with the Coordinator in the Major
- Coordinate with MPA faculty
- Coordinate outreach to students
- Strengthen college writing skills of marginally prepared EFs and First Year Writing Program students
- Continue with series of “skills booster” workshops in needed areas of writing through
- Further improve their skills in one-to-one tutoring in addition to
- Gauge grade based outcomes
- Discipline specific skills of marginally prepared
- The literature skill boosting
- Further improve their skills in
- Grade based outcomes
- Strengthen the writing skills
- Students with previous failures
- Pass rate based outcomes
- Rate the progress in your writing skills
Works Cited

SECONDARY SOURCES


Cooper, Marilyn M. "'We Don't Belong Here, Do We?': A Response to Lives on the Boundary and the Violence of Literacy." The Writing Center Journal, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, pp. 48-62.


Godbee, Beth, and Bobbi Olson, “Readings for Racial Justice: A Project of the IWCA SIG on Antiracism Activism” Writingcenters.org, 2014.


---. “Using Writing Assessment at HBCUs to Address Racial Injury.” CCCC, 2016, Houston, TX. Conference presentation.


---. “How are Labs Evaluated?” *WLN,* vol. 1, no. 3, 1976, pp. 3.


Horner, Bruce, and Min-Zhan Lu. *Representing the Other: Basic Writers and the Teaching of Basic Writing.* NCTE, 1999.


Moore, Cindy, Peggy O'Neill, and Brian Huot. "Creating a Culture of Assessment in Writing Programs and Beyond." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2009, pp. W107-W132.


Tom Phillipose et al, “You’re so Well-Spoken and Articulate (For a...?)” IWCA Conference, 2016, Denver, CO. Conference presentation.


Preston, Jacqueline. “Project(ing) Literacy: Writing to Assemble in a Postcomposition FYW Classroom.” *CCC*, vol. 67, no. 1, September 2015, pp. 35-64.


“Special Issue on a Theory of Ethics for Writing Assessment.” *Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2016.


**PRIMARY SOURCES**


---. “The Writing Center Annual Report for the Academic Year 2012-2013.” John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY.

Archival Collections
---. Bruffee, Kenneth A. Cadre, October 24, 1972
---. Stanger, Carol. “My Goals” November 1996
---. Stanger, Carol. “(1) Wall in 2516” November 1996
---. “Writing Across the Curriculum on a Shoestring,” 1986 CAWS Conference.
Special Collections. Lloyd Sealy Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. New York, NY.
---. John Jay Undergraduate Bulletin 1977-1979
---. The Week Of... 1977-2006
---. “From the Writing Center March 1998”
    ---. “W.I.T. November 18, 1986”
    ---. “Writing Center Update 1990”
    ---. “WRITING CENTER WORKSHOPS, November 1985”