This thesis argues for the application of participatory design methodologies in the context of online writing center training programs. Such an approach will help engage consultants more actively in the work of writing centers and help them to better understand how to work effectively online. This research is a preliminary exploration of the connections between participatory design methodologies and online consultant training and uses two case studies of consultants in online training. Data is coded for three key themes that connect consultant reflections to participatory design: previous practice, preferences, and descriptions of training experiences. I conclude by contextualizing these themes in current scholarship, articulating a participatory online training program heuristic, and arguing for more research to better explore the relevance of these methodologies.
This Thesis titled

RE-THINKING CONSULTANT PARTICIPATION: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN METHODS IN AN ONLINE CONSULTANT TRAINING PROGRAM

by

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has been approved for publication by

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Dedications

To my love, adventure buddy, and anchor these past few months, Sarah. She gave me nothing but encouragement, love, and support through all the trials and tribulations thrown my way.

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Finally, I would like to thank the entire Howe Writing Center, especially the online consultants. Their hard work and dedication throughout all the tribulation of starting and maintaining a new online program continues to amaze me.
Chapter 1: Introduction: Understanding the Work of the (Online) Writing Center

“The compleat tutor then, knows theory, isn't constrained by guidelines of exactly what to do and when to do it, and has the strategic knowledge to turn theory into practice” (Harris, 2006, p. 303)

“…the goal [of participatory design research] is not just to empirically understand the activity, but also to simultaneously envision, shape, and transcend it in ways the workers find to be positive” (Spinuzzi, 2005, p. 164)

Writing centers value collaboration—this we know. Whether this ideal manifests in the form of theoretical foundations (Bruffee, 1984; Ede, 1989; Lunsford, 1991) or administrative methods for running a writing center (Mattison, 2006, for example), collaboration is the heart and soul of writing center work. A necessary part of this heritage, I would argue, is the inclusion of consultants in these collaborative practices. We see this practice reflected in the move towards empirical research, which drew more heavily on consultant-based studies, especially in online writing centers (OWCs). Yet we should always be looking for new ways to continue this collaborative endeavor. The goal of this thesis, then, is to explore the potential for a methodological approach that continues our consultant-based work and encourages new ways to systematically engage consultants as active contributors in shaping the work we do. I argue that participatory design methodologies, drawn from theories in technical and workplace communication (Spinuzzi, 2005)¹ and rhetorics of civic engagement (Moore & Elliot, 2016; Simmons, 2007)², provide a more systematic methodological approach to collaborative consultant engagement.

Specifically, I intend to explore these ideas in the context of an OWC training program. In an OWC, consultants learn about and negotiate different approaches to consulting, especially approaches that may be new or challenge their preconceived

¹ Spinuzzi’s (2005) participatory design looked at the importance of understanding tacit knowledge (i.e., less visible processes of knowing and doing) to democratize workplaces and allow workers and researchers to collaborate together to shape artifacts and products. I discuss this in more depth in chapter 3.

² Scholars such as Moore and Elliot (2016) and Simmons (2007) examined participatory design methodologies as a way of informing engagement with local and civic issues. This is discussed in more depth in chapter 3.
notions of writing center work; because of this potential, I see the OWC training program as a rich site for exploring participatory design methodologies. Specifically, a training program has the potential to study tacit processes\(^3\), or knowing by doing—a key focus in participatory scholarship. Harris (2006), for example, discussed how many approaches to tutoring cannot be "taught by telling" (p. 304). Indeed, they can really only be known by doing. Helping consultants become more aware of their own tacit processes and ways of knowing can help consultants recognize their agency in making contributions to programs and pedagogies. I would note, however, that I certainly do not think writing centers have ignored consultants in their work nor failed to actively engage them in the work we do. Rather, I am arguing that participatory design methodologies might offer a new, more systematic perspective for continuing the excellent tradition of collaborating with consultants.

In the rest of this thesis, I will explore the potential of participatory design in relation to an OWC program, as I have yet to find scholarship connects participatory design to the democratizing of a work place in the way that my study will. To explore these ideas, I employed two case studies of online consultants in training. Narrating these case studies will help me explore the possible ways that participatory design methodologies and the study of tacit knowledge articulated by Spinuzzi (2005) and others might contribute to the ongoing study of OWCs and online consultant training programs.

**Participatory Insights from the Online Writing Center’s Pilot Semester (Fall 2015)**

My own experience with OWCs has been interesting, to say the least. Still relatively new to writing center work and wildly underprepared, I felt my first online consulting experience challenging my previous face-to-face training. If we recall any tutor-training manual (e.g., *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*, *The Bedford/St. Martin’s Guide to Peer Tutoring*), we see a “grand narrative” of writing centers, to which I steadfastly clung. McKinney (2013), describing this grand narrative, suggested that writing centers saw/see themselves as “comfortable, iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing” (p. 6). Harris (2006) further noted

\(^3\) In the context of this study, “tacit,” or “tacit knowledge,” refers to assumptions, biases, or ways of knowing and doing that are not immediately obvious to an individual (i.e., engrained habits, such as playing an instrument).
that we sometimes let all of these materials on training speak for themselves without critically interrogating what we can and cannot learn from such material. This grand narrative, then, creates a space where some perspectives and ways of knowing and doing are left out. When moving online, I realized that so much of what I knew did not quite work; because of such a dissonance, I felt the need to change how I tutored online. Doing so made me very uncomfortable. I asked myself: should I change? If so, how would I? As I continued to work with and muse about OWCs, I realized that, as a consultant, I wanted to play an active role in shaping and determining what a good writing center would look like. I wanted to see my own hesitations and concerns reflected in the OWC.

In Fall 2015, I helped start the OWC at the Howe Writing Center (HWC) at Miami University (see Appendix A for program details). The program we developed offers both synchronous (audio/video/text-chat through WConline) and asynchronous consulting approaches (email/document sharing through Google). As the program developed, I wondered how my own experiences, anxieties, and perceptions of writing center work informed the program’s design. As my co-coordinator and I began training new consultants to work online, I wanted more than ever to ensure that their own experiences, anxieties, and perceptions were helping to inform not only their own learning but also the shape and direction of our program. So, we built space for reflective work into our training program that would help consultants tease out these experiences and preferences. In doing so, we, as administrators, learned so much more about what consultants have to offer in terms of the design and scope of the program. After analyzing initial, IRB-approved data gathered during our pilot semester, we quickly realized that the reflective writing and conversations we were having with our consultants offered productive insights into their processes and preferences, which we then incorporated into changes and improvements to the program. In other words, we were seeing consultants attempting to play an active role in their own learning and contributing to the shape of the program. It is a search for and desire to collaboratively create these spaces—spaces where negotiations of anxieties previous experiences, descriptions of training experiences inform programmatic design—that drives this current thesis project.

To better illustrate what I hope to accomplish, let me parse out my research questions. These questions began as general thoughts that encompassed a range of ideas:
I wanted to better understand how we were preparing our consultants to work effectively online. Because the OWC was new, the purpose of this research was to convince HWC administrators that our program was working within our writing center’s mission. However, the pilot semester helped morph these questions into a curiosity about what our consultants were saying and doing that created productive conversations about improving the program. In other words, rather than simply observing and reporting to administrators, I started wondering how our consultants could more directly develop their own pedagogies and actively help shape and inform our new program. Consider the following consultant responses to various parts of their training:

Receiving feedback via email was nice because I could repeatedly refer back to the email. However, I enjoyed the face-to-face discussions we had after the consultations because they allowed me to vocalize my immediate thoughts and initial reactions. So, the multiple forms of feedback were the most effective portion [sic] of online training for me.

Specifically, it was hard to recommend restructuring sections since I usually prefer to have this type of conversation face-to-face so that I can gauge whether the writer is on the same page as me.

While I know our procedure (when face-to-face) entails negotiating with writers what’s feasible, I wonder how we might still negotiate length and time when asynchronous. I got through the 12-pages, and I know it’s on me to manage my time and to not comment on everything—to comment economically if you will—but I still felt as though I wanted more space to negotiate with the writer what I felt was feasible.

In each statement, we see more than the consultants describing a specific aspect of the program or pedagogy: they were articulating what they desired pedagogically (more spaces to negotiate with the writer, to address issues related to feasibility within time constraints) and programmatically (multiple ways of receiving feedback). While they did
not actively offer any suggestions for shaping the program at this point, they did illustrate ways training could better support their development, and they were able to do this by writing about their experiences and processes. To me, creating space for their experiences was a crucial idea I wanted to find ways to better design a training program that would create the spaces to negotiate experiences and processes, allow consultants to contribute to the construction of these spaces based on their experiences, and help make more visible the tacit knowledge, processes, biases, and assumptions consultants brought to online training. The first step, then, is to establish space for consultants to better understand their experiences and the ways they consult: doing so may create the conditions for consultants to offer productive suggestions for the program’s development. A participatory design research methodology, then, can help both a researcher and participant more systematically understand such experiences and processes. To better study this participatory dynamic, my revised research questions reflect an emphasis on participatory dynamics:

• In what ways can consultants improve OWC training programs through a more active presence in our research and in the day-to-day work of writing centers? How can we make this work more participatory, iterative, and informed by consultants?
• In what ways can consultants participate in discussions about local pedagogy and productively challenge ideas about writing center work and our OWC program design?

To best address these questions, then, consultants need a stronger role in shaping the answers. Participatory design opens up space for such roles. But in order to answer such questions with consultants, researchers and participants must study tacit knowledge and processes. Studying tacit knowledge helps consultants become more aware of their own practices, giving them the tools to question them, if they so chose, and also gives them the language to help change the program based on their own tacit assumptions. Such focus, I will argue, provides a productive foundation for exploring future participatory work. So, to better articulate this need for more consultant-driven participation in an online consultant-training program, the rest of this thesis is broken up as follows.
• **Chapter 2: Consultant Roles and Representations in Online Writing Center Research.** This chapter will review OWC scholarship, starting with the earliest manifestations of such centers. It will examine how early scholars theorized the work of OWCs in relation to the collaborative mission of writing centers writ large. I will also trace when and how consultants began to play a stronger role in scholarship and what those roles were. I will articulate the need for more research emphasizing active participation from consultants.

• **Chapter 3: Participation in the OWC: Participatory Design Methodology and Research Design.** This chapter provides context for the HWC’s online training program and my research methodology (both data collection, rationale for methods, theoretical tenets of participatory design). I will also describe Spinuzzi’s (2005) participatory design methodology in more detail to explain its role in this thesis. This chapter will also discuss how data was analyzed in relation to participatory design.

• **Chapter 4: “Every consultant has their voice”: Shaping Participatory Practice with Consultants.** This chapter will narrate the experiences of two consultants as they began and completed training. By narrating their experiences, I can examine how their tacit knowledge became more visible to myself as the researcher and to them as the consultants. I will also show how the developed codes/themes help tease this tacit knowledge out.

• **Chapter 5: The Participatory Consultant: Critically Negotiating a Participatory Future with Consultants.** In this final chapter, I offer a few takeaways from my research. First, I contextualize the key codes/themes explored in the case studies to scholarship in composition and writing centers. Then, I examine the changes we’ve made to the HWC’s online program. Finally, I offer a few general ideas for generating a heuristic that would inform a more participatory online training program.

**Conclusion**

I would like to end by noting that, while my study is highly localized, I believe there are important, immediate takeaways for other OWCs. What I do hope these findings
offer, then is a sense of how participatory design methodologies might be applied in other contexts, give OWC coordinators a sense of what a participatory training program *could* look like, and argue for the potential of the themes/codes articulated in later chapters as starting points for future research. The next chapter will contextualize this work within writing center/OWC scholarship.
Chapter 2: Consultant Roles and Representations in Online Writing Center Research

Online writing centers (OWCs) have a history rife with conflict, misunderstandings, and struggles to prove their pedagogical value, much like writing centers writ large had to do in the 1970s and 1980s. To address such conflict, scholars grounded their understanding of OWCs in the theory and practice that had helped establish writing centers as a legitimate field: collaboration and conversation (see Bruffee, 1984, for example). Indeed, the introduction of new technologies in the writing center (e.g., the networked computer) prompted early attempts to tutor online that challenged the work of writing centers (Coogan, 1995; Kinkead, 1987). As technology evolved and became more prominent in the composing process, the reality of OWCs became almost inevitable. This inevitably reiterated common critiques and misperceptions of technology in the writing center (i.e., does technology support the “real” work of writing centers?) that OWCs were forced to contend with. A key question for writing centers, then, remained focused on answering the “problem” of the OWC.

Furthermore, much like Hewett (2001) helped to push the field of online writing instruction toward more empirically grounded understandings of online writing environments, writing centers have also seen a similar drive to conduct empirical research in recent years (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014), and OWCs have certainly participated in this trend. However, while much of the empirically driven scholarship in OWCs emphasized (and continues to emphasize) the perspectives of consultants, I argue that participatory design methodologies can improve the ways we engage our consultants in such research. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss the early hesitations surrounding technology in writing centers, the persistence of these hesitations into OWCs, and attempts to address them in scholarship. I will also trace how and when consultants entered into the discourse surrounding OWCs and in what ways consultants have contributed to resolving the above-mentioned conflicts. As I suggested in my introduction, the primary goal with this thesis is to explore the potential of participatory design methodologies, where consultants have a larger role in informing practice and policy. This review, ultimately, serves to illustrate where we might situate participatory methodologies in online writing center scholarship.
To best organize this review, I draw from LeCourt (1996). LeCourt (1996) traced how the field of composition and rhetoric has thought about writing-across-the-curriculum work, how it has progressed in this thinking, and where the field can or should go. I’ve developed similar stages to articulate how OWCs were theorized and understood, how writing center perspectives on OWCs evolved, in what ways consultants became more present, and where we could or should go (i.e., engaging consultants from participatory design perspectives):

- **Early Theories of Technology in the Writing Center.** This section will overview how writing center scholars responded to early technology in the writing center, emphasizing many of the hesitations and fears. I will examine how technology was theorized and what such theory meant for the development of OWCs.

- **The Development of OWLs and Early Online Tutoring: 1987-2000.** This section details a continuation of theoretical explorations, specifically in the context of online writing labs (OWLs) and OWCs. I will discuss how such scholarship contributed to the development of OWC training and pedagogy.

- **Changing Perspectives in Online Consulting Training Research: 2000-Present.** This section begins with Breuch and Racine (2000), who made the argument that online tutors need online specific training. I will explore how scholars addressed this call through an increase in empirical research to answer OWC pedagogical questions. Consultants were also more present in this research, reflecting the potential for stronger contributions.

- **Consultants Are “Students and Learners as Well”: Building Practice and Theory with Consultants.** This final section suggests where we can go as a field, with our consultants. I will discuss how participatory design methodologies fit into the rich history of scholarship surrounding OWCs and situate the potential benefits of my research within the current scope of OWC research.

As a quick note, scholars frequently referred to online writing labs (OWLs), though I use the terminology of online writing center (OWC). In the rest of the review, I will use OWLs to refer to websites or other repositories (e.g., the Purdue OWL) and OWCs to
refer to online tutoring approaches, unless I’m discussing a scholar who specifically refers to OWLs in relation to online consulting.

Early Theories of Technology in the Writing Center

Technology has, without a doubt, had an uneasy history within the writing center field. Indeed, the very introduction of computers into the writing center inspired a trend of serious critique, or what Carino (1998) described as an either-or state of “technological endorsement and technological resistance” (p. 172). Technology had both an optimistic potential for, and a perceived danger to, the writing center writ large. Writing center professionals began questioning how technology challenged or supported both our theory (Bell, 2006; Farrell, 1987; Harris, 2000) and our visibility within an institution (Smith & Sloan, 2009; Wambeam & Nelson, 1995). Specifically, critiques of technology in the writing center drew on key theoretical writing center work, which built the foundation for our values and beliefs (Bruffee, 1984; Ede, 1989; North, 1984), such as collaborative learning, conversation, student-centered learning, and the canonized axiom that we “produce better writers, not better writing” in an attempt to decry any return to the clinical, “fix-it shop” models of writing centers (North, 1984, p. 438).

Early examples of technology in the writing center inspired tension and fear because of a lack of human presence (i.e., grammar drills or autotutorials), in which the computer replaced the consultant. Indeed, such approaches raised serious questions about whether technology would help us accomplish or enhance the work we were currently doing or detract from our theoretical values. Coogan (1999) recounted the troubled development of automated instruction machines meant to improve the work of teaching writing (e.g., teaching grammar and grading papers). These automated machines were seen as a reinforcement of current-traditional writing theory and pedagogy. While advocates of automated machines emphasized that such technology “promised to ease the burden of teaching writing,” Coogan (1999) suggested that they did not “promise to change the meaning of writing instruction, or the relationship between functional literacy [read current-traditional], English departments, and the university” (p. 10). Given that writing centers have relentlessly needed to fight for and justify their existence to a wider institution (Boquet, 1999; Carino, 1995), it is no wonder that scholars perceived
technology as leading writing centers in unfavorable directions. Carino (1998) noted that a dominant discourse regarding computers and technology in the writing center at the time was one of attempting to tell the story of success, which may have been used to counter the perception that OWCs don’t do the “real” work of writing centers. Carino (1998) articulated,

> Given institutional constraints, the lack of time to reflect on technology, and the need to create more effective pedagogies, it is not surprising that success stories, as a genre, continued in subsequent years side by side with more restless discourse” (p. 180).

Indeed, such narratives sought to counter discourse that viewed technology in substantive ways (i.e., it doesn’t appear to support what we are doing, so we won’t use it).

Furthermore, Carino (1998) suggested that 1989 to 1991 was a “coming of age” for computers and composition, as “scholars in the field began to politicize and theorize their work on computers and writing” (p. 174). Wambeam and Nelson (1995), for example, theorized how writing centers could maintain agency regarding technology use on a wider institutional level. They argued that writing centers take an “active part in determining the nature of computer technologies on campus,” suggesting that to do so “means forming partnerships with a wider variety of people and groups not usually associated with writing centers” (p. 136). Attempting to maintain agency and control over technological decisions was a sentiment that most likely stemmed from the many fears, anxieties, and perceived threats of returning to current-traditional, fix-it shop images of the writing center.

As I’ve suggested, early attempts to understand OWCs articulated many of the frustrations present in North’s (1984) “idea” of the writing center, which sought to legitimizethe field, move it towards a theory with a richer epistemological tradition than that of current traditionalism, and simply let the field know what writing centers actually do. Scholars continued their attempts to further theorize the work of technology in the writing center. An important attempt to theorize technology in the writing center focused on critical theories and perspectives of technology (Blythe, 1997; Thomas, Hara, &
DeVoss, 1998). Specifically, Blythe’s (1997) theorization of technology attempted to move writing centers away from more instrumental views of technology that dominated early scholarship towards critical perspectives of technology, drawing heavily on Feenburg’s (1991) critical theories of technology. This call appeared to be an attempt to ease the sense of endorsement and resistance noted by Carino (1998). Blythe’s (1997) critical theory asked that writing centers avoid simply rejecting or accepting technology and move away from viewing technology as neutral artifacts; rather, he suggested that we make technological decisions carefully and mediate them with flexibility in pedagogies (as opposed to conforming technology to existing practice). Thomas et al. (1998) followed up just a year later, reinforcing the importance of a critical theory of technology, which “opens up the possibility of change because critical theory acknowledges the substantive claim [either-or] that each technology contains bias while offering us something more productive than a take-it-or-leave it approach” (p. 73-74). Furthermore, they noted that “we began to understand that we could, in fact, exert some influence over the direction technology was taking the teaching and learning in our writing center and on our campus” (Thomas et al., 1998, p. 74). Similar to the leadership and agency positions described by Wambeam and Nelson (1995), Thomas et al. (1998) also noted the collaborative work they did with bringing student writers “into the academic community” (p. 74).

These calls for more critical considerations of technology, even today, emphasize the importance of who makes technological decisions, how to make these decisions, and maintaining a sense of agency about technology use. While consultants did not play a role in developing such theories, these early calls for critically interrogating technology began to spill over into conversations about OWCs, where consultants did, in fact, start to have a stronger presence.

The Development of OWLs and Early Online Tutoring: 1987-2000

The development of online writing labs (OWLs) and OWCs created new challenges for the writing center: they were haunted by the early concerns regarding technology discussed in the previous section. Indeed, early fears about technology in the center (e.g., reproducing current-traditional pedagogies through grammar drills and
autotutorials) dominated the discourse surrounding OWCs. Such fear continued to ground themselves in visions for an “idea” described by North’s (1984) canonized articulation of writing center work. This section will continue exploring concerns surrounding technology and OWC work, the ways that writing centers began to address the new questions of online tutoring and grapple with these concerns, and ways that scholarship moved towards more empirically-based, consultant-driven work.

The Early Manifestations of OWLs and Online Writing Centers (OWCs).

One of the earliest mentions of online tutoring (what we think of asynchronous online tutoring today) was by Kinkead (1987), who first introduced the concept of email tutoring. This approach to online tutoring would soon become the most contentious (and in some ways still is today). Kinkead (1987) wrote, “Often when computers are introduced into writing programs, teachers see them first as super-typewriters, able to help students rewrite essays with relatively little discomfort, which in turn moves students to better attitudes about writing. The main interaction, then, is between student and text via machine” (p. 337). Kinkead (1987) emphasized the role of email in the classroom and its potential to conduct peer review (see Breuch, 2004), writing that “Email more closely parallels a phone conversation than a letter; the language is lively and informal with students engaging in meaningful discourse. We sought to mine, channel, and build on this informal interchange” (p. 338). Reflecting on how students perceived the use of email for peer response, Kinkead (1987) concluded that “the computer encourages students to produce text” (p. 339). While this piece offers potential ways to think about using email in the classroom (and by extension, the writing center) to improve writing, the ways students responded to email also offered the type of success story articulated by Carino (1998).

However, perhaps because of the newness of email, email was not discussed again until nearly a decade later when Coogan (1995) further articulated the ways in which email was still a new (but potentially productive) way to respond to writing. Coogan (1995) reminded us that “Although writing centers have used computers for over a decade now, they have used them primarily in autotutorials (computer-assisted instruction)” (p. 171). Coogan (1995) then went on to illustrate how new developments
with email may offer a new way of addressing composition’s the social turn and resisting the critiques leveraged against earlier manifestations of technology in the center (i.e., reproducing current-traditional theory). Indeed, Coogan (1995) optimistically articulated the potential of technology in the teaching of writing. Yet, as Coogan (1998) suggested three years later, the potential of such a new form of tutoring seemed limited, suggesting, it is here, in the student-centered conference that the computer secured its place in the writing center. What it secured, however, was not so much a future, as it was a kind of servitude to the process movement in its cognitivist and expressivist forms (p. 171).

Essentially, Coogan (1995, 1998) suggested that while early technology was plagued with the reminder of current-traditional theory, email tutoring still had demonstrated a potential to revive collaborative conversation within the writing center online.

As OWCs became more of an unshakeable reality, Harris and Pemberton (1995) described some of the main concerns and issues associated with what writing centers called online writing labs (OWLs). Harris and Pemberton (1995) were among the earliest scholars to articulate that “it is important to recognize that OWLs can have a number of very different configurations—configurations that take advantage of the strengths of online environments and that work with, not against, both local conditions and writing center theory” (p. 145). They described several forms online writing services could take, such as website spaces for storing handouts (i.e., the Purdue OWL) or creating what Harris and Pemberton call “virtual writing spaces” (p. 146), what I call OWCs. Harris and Pemberton (1995) offered an important takeaway, which asked writing centers to think about different approaches to utilizing online spaces with the goal of maintaining writing center theory and practice. Importantly, we can ask: how do we develop approaches that work within local conditions? Who is involved?

**Coming to Terms with New Ways of Doing Writing Center Work.** Initial manifestations of OWC work were certainly not accepted without serious, critical interrogation. Wambeam and Neslon (1995) wrote, “Understandably, many UW Writing
Center [their writing center] staff members are not enthused about an OWL, primarily because participants in OWL conferences will be moving into an unknown style of conferencing” (p. 139). Shadle (2000) expressed a similar concern five years later, writing that “The basic resistance to OWLs included the following concerns: philosophic disagreement with the idea of an OWL; lack of equipment, money, and/or personnel; resistance of faculty, staff, or tutors to online tutoring; and the usefulness of existing OWLS” (p. 5). Johanek and Rickly (1995) discussed these concerns by listening to the anxieties and worries of consultants and students. They discussed consultant’s perspectives in the context of a training program that used Daedalus InterChange, a synchronous, text-based conferencing system. While they emphasized how to train face-to-face consultants, their discussion reveals ways consultant perspectives contributed to understanding of the online space. First, Johanek and Rickly (1995) suggested that Daedalus InterChange:

fits naturally into a writing center philosophy. The epistemology that undergirds the Daedalus system, much like that upon which writing centers are based, is one of social construction: Meaning is constructed dynamically within a community, with each member having a voice; and dissension and chaos, in addition to consensus, are necessary for dialogue that defines a community. (Johanek & Rickly, 1995, p. 239)

The ability to create meaning simultaneously with others is why scholars prefer synchronous digital technologies and probably why consultant reactions were generally positive. Johanek and Rickly (1995) concluded by suggesting that “Using this available technology in a writing center merely because it is available is a dangerous application of an otherwise valuable tool” (p. 244). Reflecting back to scholars such as Blythe (1997) and Thomas et al. (1998), flexibility and negotiation is necessary when integrating technology into writing center work. In this context, consultants helped negotiate with Johanek and Rickly (1995) the potential benefit of online synchronous writing spaces.

As writing centers started coming to terms with newer ways of consulting, scholars began to realize the potential of consultant perspectives to influence ways of
using technology. This will be explored more in the next section. Much of the theorization and attempts to clarify technology’s purpose in the writing center came primarily from writing center scholars. However, examining Johanek and Rickly (1995), we see a glimmer of hope that consultants will have an increased role for informing, developing, and expanding conversations about online writing centers (an important part of participatory design). The next section will continue highlighting the increased presence of consultant perspectives and the role they played in empirical research in OWCs.

**Changing Perspectives in Online Consulting Training Research: 2000-Present**

Reading the work of early OWC scholarship (for example, see Coogan, 1995; Harris and Pemberton, 1995; Kinkead, 1987), it is clear that early online tutoring was conducted *asynchronously* (delayed communication) usually through submitting an electronic document to an email or a dropbox. A consultant would typically respond with comments on a text document or insert commentary into the email itself and send it back to the student. As Harris and Pemberton (1995) noted, many OWCs also offered synchronous (real-time) approaches to online tutoring, which fit more with the theoretical tradition of writing centers. Synchronous sessions typically used real time chat and eventually expanded (as technology allowed) to include screen sharing and audio-video approaches. As online tutoring become a more prevalent part of writing center work, challenges to pedagogy persisted. Asynchronous consulting, especially, posed the most concerns for the writing center and tended to induce a fair amount of skepticism from writing center professionals. Bell (2006), for example, noted her struggle to alleviate perceived rhetorical differences between face-to-face and online consulting, and Castner (2000) described the difficulties and inabilities to ask questions and clarify ideas in asynchronous environments. Even with synchronous consulting, scholars expressed concern about the lack of visual cues and ability to communicate orally. Yet, both approaches to online consulting are used today: primary research shows that out of 79 universities in the East Central Writing Centers Association (ECWCA) region, 49 offered online consulting, with 16 offering asynchronous, 19 offering synchronous, and 14
offering both (the Howe Writing Center, with its model that offers both types, makes the total number 50).

So, the important question: how did scholarship seek new ways to answer the questions and alleviate the perceived concerns of OWCs? How do we uphold the values of conversation and collaboration articulated by early writing scholars (Bruffee, 1984; Ede, 1989; Lunsford, 1991; North, 1984)? Put another way, in what ways have consultant perspectives become more prevalent in scholarship and what role have they played in shaping discussions about online pedagogy, training, and theory? As I’ve outlined in the introduction the consultants are the ones doing the work of the writing center and they contribute useful perspectives for program development and negotiations about pedagogical differences between face-to-face and online. The rest of this section will examine how consultants become more present in OWC scholarship and how they influenced the conclusions drawn by scholars.

An Early Call for Online Specific Training. Breuch and Racine (2000) examined asynchronous consulting with the specific goal of offering suggestions for effective consultant training and improving the pedagogical quality of asynchronous consulting. Most important, however, was their argument that online consultants need online specific training. They suggested “sound pedagogy not only is possible, but that it can thrive in online tutoring centers when tutors are prepared for online environments through appropriate activities, readings, and exercises that support online tutoring” (p. 245). Breuch and Racine (2000) emphasized the importance of training in shaping asynchronous tutoring strategies that still utilize student-centered practice, effective written responses, and approaches for negotiating consultant roles in these environments. Their argument marked an important moment in the development of online consulting training, though their work left unanswered questions regarding how consultants perceived or interacted with specific consultant training approaches. As earlier scholarship indicated (Johanek & Rickly, 1995; Wambeam & Nelson, 1995), consultants were expressing anxieties related to online consulting and thinking critically about them. Furthermore, Breuch and Racine (2000) wrote “Tutor trainers can help online tutors make the adjustment to online environments by discussing the advantages of a text-only
environment” (p. 247). I would ask: in what other ways can we help consultants make the adjustment?

Castner (2000) further articulated many of the problematic aspects of asynchronous consulting and attempted to rectify them. She noted three primary issues that a perceived lack of dialogue posed: (1) contradicting writing center philosophy, (2) decreasing ability to clearly understand the writer and the assignment, and (3) promoting an inaccurate image of the writing center. Scholars such as Bell (2006), while recognizing that working with OWLs requires a commitment to change, also expressed similar reservations about the challenges posed to writing center values by certain OWC approaches. Castner (2000) began her short study of asynchronous consulting perceptions by trying to understand the concerns student writers had after receiving asynchronous written feedback, focusing on the second primary issue noted above. She surveyed students as to why they didn’t try to get their questions about feedback answered (i.e., respond to the consultant) and concluded that “This small study suggests that time constraints limit e-mail dialogues more than anything else” (p. 123). Her conclusion demonstrated the need for effective pedagogies and preparation for online work, which left space for further research about how consultants address such issues. Indeed, the conclusion that “Writing center consultants should ground their use of technology in the theory supporting their pedagogy and should examine the context of technology use” begs the question of what theories they draw from (p. 127)? How do they negotiate their pedagogies in these new environments? Given Castner’s (2000) fear that “email sessions may not always be pedagogically sound,” I wonder what her consultants had to say on the matter. What might consultants contribute to the goal of ensuring sound pedagogy online?

**Working Towards Empirical Training Research, With Consultants.** Carlson and Apperson-Williams’ (2000) emphasized consultant perspectives in a study focusing on consultant reflections on anxieties in online contexts; they used these perspectives to offer implications for training and program development. Similar to the brief interjection of consultant perspectives present in Wambeam and Nelson (1995) and Johanek and Rickly (1995), Carlson and Apperson-Williams used consultant reflection to describe
how consultants developed interpersonal relationships in asynchronous spaces and the anxieties and difficulties of doing so. Of interest here is the shift towards more heavily foregrounded consultant voices. Furthermore, they suggested, “Distance continues to be a central element of our online tutors’ work. We envision that what provokes anxiety now about online tutoring will eventually become comfortable and familiar as tutors gain experience” (p. 139). These reflections offer useful insights into how we can better improve online consulting training and listen to issues consultants have.

As technology became more advanced, so increased the possibilities to offering more semiotic ways of communicating. Thurber (2000) detailed the use of screen-sharing/audio approaches for synchronous consulting. Focused on training online consultants, Thurber (2000) identified an early need for tutors “to adjust perceptions and approaches to tutoring” (p. 156). Thurber used a case study of one consultant, suggesting that consultants need to both adjust their writing center practice and also understand how they are adjusting their practice (and, perhaps, why). While this piece is certainly condensed, the case study shares no actual input or reflection from the consultant, though a case study approach certainly offers that potential. Shewmake and Lambert (2000) further examined questions about effective text-based synchronous consulting approaches. Shewmake and Lambert (2000) demonstrated a growing awareness of how practice changes by sharing that some students in their observations concluded that a “lack of face-to-face contact does not keep learning from taking place in a reasonable amount of time with a reasonable level of computer capability” (p. 170). While the emphasis on students is certainly important, where is the consultant’s place at this point? While Thurber (2000) and Shewmake and Lambert (2000) demonstrate how consultants were able to express their anxieties and really talk about online consulting, it’s clear consultants could have a stronger voice. Growing trends toward empirical research that emphasized the study of work consultants actually do (i.e., observing consultations) seem to give consultants a stronger voice and role.

Developments in synchronous text-only environments offered new challenges and benefits, as well as new ways in which consultants participated in OWC discourse. Hewett (2006, 2015), who continues to be a leading voice in the field of online writing instruction (OWI), provides important insights for working with and responding to
writing online in text-based environments. A study conducted by Hewett (2006) explored the use of whiteboard technology for online writing conferences. These spaces are text-based and allow for real-time sharing of a composing space. Hewett’s (2006) study of linguistic features of written feedback online suggested the need to recognize “the hybrid nature of synchronous instructional conferences,” mirroring previous conversations (Shewmake & Lambert, 2000; Thurber, 2000). Hewett (2006) offered explicit training suggestions for these online conferences, concluding that online training should provide opportunities to practice synchronous teaching methods, simulations or “mocks” with other instructors and to create space for critical reflection of practice. But these conclusions are, more or less, drawn without consultants being given the opportunity to reflect, though the work they did was necessarily present.

Van Horne (2012) further explored text-based conferencing and suggested the need for more effective ways to communicate to writers, through writing (similar to asynchronous consulting). Van Horne (2012) discussed Vygotskian theories of education, notably, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), to offer new ways of theorizing text-based consulting strategies. The ZPD, according to Van Horne (2012), is the distance between what a person actually knows and what they can potentially know. Using the ZPD “is particularly helpful for developing a method of synchronous conferences because of its emphasis on how interlocutors construct the ZPD through semiotic mediation” (Van Horne, 2012, p. 94). In other words, online synchronous spaces benefit from theorizing the ZPD because of the variety of semiotic means of communicating available in synchronous spaces. Much like Hewett (2006), the emphasis on creating effective synchronous spaces for the writer requires research and theorization. Van Horne (2012) models how to engage writers in learning situations, but the tutor was Van Horne himself. While it such scholarship offered useful perspectives for theorization, it is another study lacking in consultant’s perspectives, processes, and abilities to self-theorize online consulting training practices.

Finally, the growth of audio and video brought its own set of potential promises and issues. Yergeau et al. (2008) attempted to theorize different audio, video, and textual (AVT) approaches, and argued that AVT was a better approximation of the face-to-face consultation. As other scholars have argued, Yergeau et al. (2008) sought online
mediums that that uphold the values of a writing center. More importantly, they made a compelling argument that suggested using AVT modes should be a process of “design.” They wrote that,

the field is poised to engage notions of design in practical terms. We are positioned now to evaluate and select features, mix and match components and functionalities. The question becomes not which technology and why but which technologies in what combination and why. Well aware that technologies structure learning environments, learning goals, and learners, what design choices will we make (Yergeau, et al, 2008, recalling f2f, 2)

The argument for a semiotically rich approach to online consulting is certainly a compelling one, especially in terms of how writing centers might make technological decisions. I would ask again: what role do consultants have in these kinds of decisions and design choices?

Wolfe and Griffin (2012) focused on synchronous technologies, exploring how to use more media-rich modalities for consulting (such as video technologies). They compared face-to-face and online approaches to consulting to better understand their differences and similarities and contribute to stronger theory about online writing instruction through suggestions for training. They collected both the transcripts of online sessions as well as surveys to gauge consultant and writer perceptions of the online versus face-to-face sessions. The sessions and transcripts were evaluated for the efficacy by a rater based on specific criteria, such as the number of turns in as session, how control was exerted, etc. Based on rater evaluations of sessions, they concluded that “while overall conference quality appeared consistent across all three environments [They chose three online spaces], the consulting environment did appear to influence the types of pedagogical strategies consultants used” (p. 78). Their surveys revealed that, generally, writers and consultants appreciated the online environments, concluding that “we do believe this study offers provisional evidence that media-rich online conferences can be nearly as pedagogically effective as face-to-face” (p. 83). Yet, while we are able to see what consultants were feeling, a participatory methodology might be able to help
consultants think through the work they are doing. What was their thought process? How could these perspectives shape both training and consulting pedagogy online?

While early scholarship indicated a glimmer of potential for the work of consultant narratives (Carlson & Apperson-Williams, 2000), it seems empirical research instead moved towards theorizing writing center practice based on more naturalistic observation of practice (i.e., observing consultations and coding conversation). In other words, attempts to theorize effective online tutoring practice and training have not used online consultant perspectives to their fullest value, I argue. This is not to deny the value of such empirical research; rather, it suggests that participatory design may take us in fruitful new directions.

Consultants Are “Students and Learners as Well”: Building Practice and Theory with Consultants.

As I’ve illustrated with the previous sections, OWC scholarship has certainly recognized consultants as important participants in research. However, I would argue that we should be doing much more research that encourages consultants to be more active contributors to OWC research. Kavaldo (2013) reminded us that “peer tutors own sentiments are crucial, since they themselves are students and learners as well,” (Conclusion). So, what more can we do? Where can we go from here? To answer such questions, we need to continue improving on our work engaging consultants as active contributors to our pedagogy and theory. Doing so might help create spaces and roles for greater consultant participation in program and pedagogy development. As I’ve noted in my review, online consultants have certainly made important contributions to the development of online consulting and training, but many times, we fail to slow down and listen to their perspectives, anxieties, and knowledge about writing center work. I think our consultants have much more to offer online consulting programs. We should be drawing more on their expertise and knowledge to develop grounded theory that can challenge, support, and develop how we consult online and, especially, our training programs. And we should be doing this work with the ultimate goal of encouraging consultants to participate. They are, after all, the ones doing the work of the writing center.
In the end, I hope to illustrate with my case studies the productive value of research grounded in our consultant’s perspectives, specific themes participatory researchers could be looking for to understand these perspectives, and how this might translate into consultants making greater contributions to pedagogical and programmatic development. In the next chapter, I’ll outline my methodology, how consultants are trained, the data I collected, the codes/themes through which I’ve analyzed the data, and other contextualizing information for my study.
Chapter 3: Participation in the OWC: Participatory Design Methodology and Research Design.

As I illustrated in the previous chapter, scholarship regarding online consulting and consultants may benefit from a participatory perspective. While writing centers certainly engage with their consultants, little to no research has been published that systematically explores the implications of encouraging participatory methodologies in online writing center (OWC) work. My emphasis on engaging consultants in productive, participatory ways in the continual development of an online training program might offer important ways to encourage consultants to participate in and contribute to conversations about effective online writing centers in other contexts. To better explore this methodological approach, I organize this chapter into the following sections:

- **Research Site.** Provides context for the center in which my research took place.
- **Research Questions.** Describes the questions I want to explore and answer with my research.
- **Participatory Design Methodology.** Overviews the methodological lens through which I am viewing my research project.
- **Participants.** Describes who participated in my research project.
- **Online Consulting Training Design.** Details how consultants were trained as well as the methodological lens that inform this training.
- **Methods: Data Collection.** Description of my use of case-study methodologies and the data I collected for my study.
- **Methods: Coding.** Outlines coding themes/categories deductively and inductively generated to inform the connections between participatory design and the online consultant-training program.

**Research Site: The Howe Center for Writing Excellence and Howe Writing Center**

The Howe Center for Writing Excellence (HCWE), founded in 2007, functions as two distinct, yet overlapping, operations. The Howe Writing Center (HWC) serves the student population by offering one-to-one consultations, workshops, writing contests, and as of Fall 2015, the online consultations for students. Consultants at the HWC undergo rigorous training: a tutor training class, observed consultations, ongoing mentoring during
their first year, training workshops each semester, and research immerse them in writing center work.

The (HCWE) is primarily a writing-across-the-curriculum program: they support faculty teaching writing across campus and leads the Advanced Writing initiatives taking place on Miami’s campus. Ironically, while the OWC falls under the HWC, my colleague and I who developed the program technically fall under the HWCE. My positionality is messy and interesting: I am both a researcher and a designer of a writing center program, a collaborator in writing-across-the-curriculum efforts, and a mentor to consultants. In this sense, I see myself already embodying important principles of participatory design, in which I attempt to work with them rather than solely for them.

We first began to offer organized online consulting services in Fall 2015 at the HWC (word of mouth suggested that online consulting had been attempted in the past, but had been absent of invested leadership). My colleague and I, the Special Projects Coordinator for the HCWE, proposed an OWC to a group of hesitant administrators within our center (see Appendix A). However, they were ready to be convinced and trusted us to develop the OWC. The online writing center works primarily with students in online degree programs and courses (though we only advertise to specific ones at this time), students studying abroad, and students with physical or learning disabilities. To assist these students, we offer an asynchronous, email/document sharing approach and a synchronous option, which utilizes WCONline’s audio/video features and text-only chat option. During our first year, we conducted 196 total appointments, with 163 (83%) asynchronous and 33 (17%) synchronous.

The purpose of discussing the HWC as a research site relates to the extensive training and ongoing development consultants receive. As I mentioned, consultants participate in a great deal of sustained training, which means that they come to the online program are already invested in the work of writing centers and eager and willing to participate. Their constant immersion in the work and practice of the writing center requires that they regularly think about and reflect on their practice. Thus, we modeled our own training to be as extensive and ongoing as possible, as you’ll see in subsequent sections of this chapter.
Research Questions and Purpose

I parsed out my research questions in my introduction, but I would like to reiterate them here:

• In what ways can consultants improve (online) writing center programs, such as training, through a stronger presence in our research and in the day-to-day work of writing centers? How can we make this work more participatory and informed by consultants?
• In what ways can consultants shape online pedagogy in local contexts to productively challenge ideas about writing center work as well as online writing center program design?

These questions were meant to explore both a more global and local perspective on my study. While the most of my research conclusions may be more relevant to the local questions, my research should also provide some general takeaways and thoughts about the connections between participatory design methodologies and OWCs.

Participatory Design Methodology

While writing for my thesis, I realized I needed a methodological lens that allowed for participant involvement in research and emphasized collaborative decision-making processes with consultants. As I searched for a methodology that would more aptly focus my research goals, I was introduced to participatory design methodologies in technical and workplace communication outlined by Spinuzzi (2005), who articulated that:

“although participatory design draws on various research methods (such as ethnographic observations, interviews, analysis of artifacts, and sometimes protocol analysis) these methods are always used to iteratively construct the emerging design [typically of technological artifacts], which itself simultaneously constitutes and elicits the research results as co-interpreted by the designer-researchers and the participants who will use the design” (p. 164)
In other words, participatory design is rooted in a Marxist “commitment to democratically empowering workers and fostering democracy in the workplace” (Spinuzzi, 2005, p. 164). Such empowerment allows for workers to make contributions to the development of processes and artifact designs within the workplace. Such an approach offered a productive potential for my own research and emphasized the democratizing, participatory values I found myself looking for. As I reflect on my general purpose (in what ways can consultant perspectives productively shape and inform an online consulting training program) I think participatory design can help encourage consultant perspectives in our training program.

Furthermore, Spinuzzi (2005) suggested, “the goal [of participatory design] is not just to empirically understand the activity, but also to simultaneously envision, shape, and transcend it in ways the workers find to be positive” (p. 164). The depth and variety of reflective work we collected from consultants in our pilot semester made us not only better understand the training program but also reconsider how we trained consultants and how we administered the program. Spinuzzi’s (2005) methodology also aligns with our growing focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by allowing us to foreground consultants’ choices. While I use participatory design ideals to qualitatively understand participant voices in this thesis, I do so to illustrate a productive way through which to view my case studies, better inform my own methodological approaches, articulate new categories for coding and analyzing data, and ultimately demonstrate the potential of participatory design.

Spinuzzi (2005) described participatory design methods as “explore, approximate, and refine.” These three stages can further be described as the following (p. 168):

• **Initial exploration of work.** “In this stage, designers meet the users and familiarized themselves with the ways in which the users work together” (p. 169)

• **Discovery Processes.** “In this stage, designers and users employ various techniques to understand and prioritize work organization and envision the future workplace.” (p. 169)

• **Prototyping.** In this stage, designers and users iteratively shape technological artifacts to fit into the workplace envisioned in Stage 2.” (p.169)
Other scholars (Luck, 2002; Simmons, 2007) have explored the potential of participatory design to user-design and local civic engagement. Specifically, Luck (2002), for example, offered important themes for coding data collected under participatory design methodologies (discussed in the coding methods section below). Even recent scholars (Moore & Elliot, 2016) have discussed the importance of emphasizing “participatory processes that include tacit knowledge and representative citizen participation” in order to, in their article, improve public planning projects (emphasis added, p. 59). Spinuzzi’s (2005) idea of tacit knowledge is defined as the less visible ways of knowing and doing. In the context of writing centers, I view tacit knowledge as the assumptions, biases, and otherwise ingrained ways of knowing and doing writing center work that consultants embed in their practice. In the context of a training program, preferences, previous practices, and spaces to reflect on current practice/experiences allow tacit knowledge to be made clearer. Such emphasis can help establish a common language (i.e., language understood by participant and researcher) that Spinuzzi (2005) described as important for developing a participatory foundation to the training program. In the context of my small-scale study, however, tacit knowledge, or “knowledge by doing,” seems to be a productive avenue of exploration.

Referring back to Spinuzzi (2005), I see these stages reflected (to an extent) in my own research design: “Initial exploration” points to the early stages of consultants becoming familiar with the work of consulting online, as well as online administrators becoming familiar with new consultants. The discovery process, then, might come during the mock consultation stage where consultants test and explore strategies and connect mock training to their experiences in training overall. The last part might then lead into prototyping: making meaning out of these first two stages and shaping or improving the online training program. However, while consultants did not have a say in the initial design of the program, categorizing data in this way might provide a way to start thinking about how to conduct participatory research in an OWC training program.

Furthermore, scholars in writing centers have begun to explore connections between user-centered design, universal design, and participatory design in relation to writing centers online and working with students with disabilities. Specifically, Brizee et al. (2012) articulated an empirical methodology that utilized participatory design.
However, their use of participatory design, while certainly helpful, focuses more on how it can help understand how students use certain services.

Participants

For this study, the two consultants in my case studies were chosen primarily based on their availability due to scheduling concerns and having fewer consultants than usual to select for online training. Even so, we still made sure these consultants met criteria we had established based on scholarship in OWCs and online writing instruction (OWI) (CCCC Committee on Best Practices for OWI, 2013; Hewett, 2015; Martinez & Olsen, 2015). The following criteria determined how we currently select online consultants:

- **Consulting experience.** Online consultants should have some level of familiarity with face-to-face consulting and writing center practice.
- **Desire to work in online spaces.** Online consultants should have a desire and a personality to work online.
- **Positive views of online learning and accessibility.** Similar to having a desire to work online, consultants must also have positive views of online consulting (so as not to discourage the students they work with).
- **Comfort with technology.** Finally, we wanted consultants who were familiar with, or willing or excited about becoming familiar with, technology for consulting (especially real-time).

The two participants, one graduate and one undergraduate, provide a range of perspectives and backgrounds that productively informed this study:

**Charlotte.** Charlotte is a first year master’s student in Speech-Language Pathology, and currently served as one of the three Graduate Assistant Directors at the HWC. Charlotte started at the end of her first semester as a consultant.

**Levi.** Levi is a junior undergraduate philosophy/English literature double major, and works as one of our hourly undergraduate consultants. Levi began online training at the beginning of his second semester as a consultant. Levi took the required tutor training course for undergraduate consultants (graduate students are not currently required to take the course).
While new to the HWC and the work of writing centers, Levi and Charlotte productively engaged with training and offer useful perspectives on improving the program and their own practice (which will be shared in the next chapter).

**Online Consulting Training Design**

Our initial training design was created with more rigidity to demonstrate to writing center administrators a training model clearly grounded in scholarship. This initial model trained them to use WCOnline’s audio-video approaches, how to write comments to writers using only text, how to troubleshoot technology issues, and how to mediate different consulting techniques in different environments. This initial model, in terms of general structure, is also not much different than the one presented in this section. What is different, however, is how consultants engage with training. While our training built on an array of scholarship in OWI (see CCCC Committee on Best Practices for OWI, 2013; Hewett, 2015; Martinez & Olsen, 2015), an especially important resource for designing training experiences for consultants builds on the work of Ehman and Hewett (2004). Though we did not explicitly draw on it, we utilized their principle-centered approaches to training, such as their concepts of investigation and reflection, reflected what we were trying to accomplish. Investigation, for example, was described as a “bottom-up,” or “grass-roots” approach to training, providing space for educators (in my case, consultants) to speak and be heard about their practice. Ehman and Hewett (2004) explained that such investigative approaches to self-learning and self-discovery are empowering and “without such empowerment, we could not fully take advantage of the instructors’ [read: consultants] experiences—a primary focus in investigating the overall efficacy of online learning and of OWI in particular” (p. 8).

Furthermore, our training built on these initial ideas in order to incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concepts into training, which we think will build even more opportunities for consultants to speak about effective training, effective practice, and for us to continue shaping the online program. The rest of this section will overview the five flexible stages of our current training program:

1. Sessions as the student
2. Online Orientation
3. Best practices training
4. Mock consultations
5. Live consultations

I will also illustrate how consultants might proceed through training, where we’ve created space for them to experience consulting on their own terms, and the spaces we’ve invited them to participate in shaping our online consulting program.

**Sessions as the Student.** In the first part of training, consultants schedule both an asynchronous (which I will refer to as “written response” from now on) and synchronous (which I will refer to as “real-time” from now on) consultation. As a student, they work with an experienced online consultant or an online consultant in training. These sessions are meant to expose consultants to how online consulting is conducted at the HWC, introduce them to the work they would be doing, and give them a chance to decide whether or not they want to proceed in the online program. If they do, they can also decide if they prefer one type of consulting over the other. If they do wish to continue, they provide two hours in their weekly schedule set aside for online training and consulting for the duration of the semester.

**Online Orientation.** Online orientation introduces consultants to the more logistical aspects of the online program (e.g., login information for the online writing center’s email, how appointments are scheduled in WCOnline, where to go for real-time appointments, how to retrieve writing for a written response appointment). All of this information is listed in the Online Orientation Document (Appendix A). They also discuss their experiences as students in the previous sessions they conducted before orientation.

Consultants must then complete three aspects of training per consulting modality (written response and real-time): best practices, mock sessions, and (observed) live sessions. To allow for better flexibility in training in relation to the pilot semester, consultants can choose how they move through training. Figure 1 illustrated for the

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4 Real-Time and Written Response are the terms we use to communicate synchronous and asynchronous consulting to students and consultants.
consultants how fluid their path through training could be. Consultants begin in the middle for orientation and then branch out to specific sections, return to certain parts of training at any time, and move through this diagram at their own pace. For the purpose of this thesis, this was the training model we used. It is still a scaffolded process, but also a process in which the consultant has autonomy to choose their path. Their choices, responses, and feedback are a vital part of this study and to the development of the online program.

Consultants are asked to choose a training path, documented in the Training Module document shown in Figure 2. They can drag and drop various components onto the table to decide how they want to progress through training. For example, they could, if they so choose, start with a mock session (rather than best practices training) if they think doing so will provide them context for better understanding best practices. They could also choose to start with real-time first, written response first, or both at the same time. All of these ideas are informed by our attempts to incorporate UDL and reflects the participatory design lens through which this study is conducted.

![Figure 1. Original Training Path Visual (2015-2016)]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Hour 1</th>
<th>Hour 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (date)</td>
<td><strong>Written Response App (as student)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Real-Time Appt (as student)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (date)</td>
<td><strong>Online Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Training Module Document*
**Best Practices Training.** Before being approved as a fully trained online consultant, each consultant must complete a best practices training session for each type of consulting they would like to work with. Each session introduces consultants to empirically established best practices in the field of OWCs and OWI (Ehmann & Hewett, 2004; Yergeau et al., 2008; CCCC Committee on Best Practices for OWI, 2013; Hewett, 2015; Martinez & Olsen, 2015). For more detailed information, see the Real-Time Best Practices document (Appendix B) and Written Response Best Practices (Appendix C).

**Mock Consultations.** Mock consultations offer consultants a space to try out and practice different approaches to consulting online. The mocks are typically conducted by myself or the Special Projects Coordinator, but when available, with another consultant (whether online or not). Consultants do at least two individual mock consultations, though they can choose to remain in mock training for as long as they feel necessary. Once they’ve completed the requisite number of mocks, they can move into being live (work with actual students) if they feel ready.

**Live Sessions (with Observation) and Training Completion.** Consultants reflect regularly on their consultations once they are available to work with students and are observed by an online administrator (myself or my co-coordinator). The approach draws on OWC/OWI scholarship (Johanek & Rickly, 1995; Ehmann & Hewett, 2004; CCCC Committee on Best Practices for OWI, 2013). Consultants remain in this stage until the consultant and administrator both agree that the consultant is ready to be fully live without guidance. Depending on how consultants approach their training, this can take up to a month.

**Methods: Data Collection**

To best collect data in a way that let me listen to and analyze consultants’ perspectives on their own terms, I chose case-study methodology for studying and collecting data. I argue that case-studies offer an important way to begin addressing my primary research questions. Scholars such as MacNealy (1999), for example, suggested
that case study research requires a delicate understanding of its purpose and uses. Specifically, the immediate results of my case study research would not be generalizable to a wider writing center audience; that is, the results of my own case studies are largely applicable to the HWC. However, I chose a case study approach because of its productive potential to begin understanding what happens when we encourage our consultants to participate in the development of online training programs. I hope that my methodology might offer ideas for other centers. As MacNealy (1999) wrote, the purpose of case study research is “exploring, describing, and/or explaining aspects not previously known or considered. The purpose is to develop new insights, new knowledge” (p. 197). Because I have not encountered OWC training research (let alone writing center scholarship in general) grappling with participatory design, my case studies offer room to study the potential of consultant driven practices and processes and to develop a better understanding of how consultants and administrators can work together. Case studies will help not only to answer these questions in my own contexts, but provide other OWCs with ideas to continue this research with the variables I will identify later in this chapter and in the subsequent two.

To better reflect more engaging and participatory case studies, a revised IRB was resubmitted and approved in January 2016, which maintained many of the components from our pilot research5 but incorporated a few revised data collection methods to promote a more triangulated approach to understanding a consultant’s experiences in online training. The revised approach consisted of three primary data collection methods: open-ended and prompted written reflections, one recorded consultation per consultant (either a synchronous or asynchronous consultation) and a brief, ten-minute interview after completing training.

Data was collected at various points throughout the online consultant training process (discussed below). This collection approach was designed to both allow them to reflect at several moments throughout their training progress (e.g., after their first mock, after their first live) but also so I could understand what they were thinking and saying at specific points. Doing so, I believe, helped to begin establishing a participatory approach

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5 Our initial pilot had only open-ended reflections after each stage of training had been entirely completed (e.g., all mocks completed) and did not allow us to record a consultation.
in terms of developing the program and online pedagogy together. The rest of this section will describe the data collected, the kinds of questions that were asked, and how these helped contribute to my process of answering my research questions.

Before their sessions as a student, consultants compose written reflections about they perceive these sessions might go and any concerns they might have (or excitements, of course)! The first reflection questions are as follows:

- Why are you interested in online consulting?
- What are your initial thoughts or perceptions about Real-Time and Written Response consulting?
- What questions or concerns do you have about consulting online?
- Do you think you will prefer one approach (Real-Time or Written Response) more than the other? Why or why not?

After completing their first online session, consultants then compose a second reflective response to the following questions:

- What did you like or dislike about these sessions as the student (do not list the consultant’s name)?
- Did you prefer one type of consulting over the other as a student? Why or why not?
- What are some differences or similarities you notice between face-to-face and online (Written Response and/or Real-Time) consulting?
- Did you learn anything about consulting strategies from your consultant (do not list names)?

This part of training is studied in order to understand the consultant’s initial perspectives about online consulting, questions or concerns they might have, and give them a chance to respond to these sessions as part of their training (i.e., whether they found training effective). This is important because I can begin to see how they respond to online consulting, and their answers provide them with a good point of reference as they reflect on their previous work. They can then discuss these reflections in orientation, which helps them determine what direction they would like to go in for proceeding with training (see Fig 1 above, Training Module Document).
When consultants complete each of Best Practices Training sessions (which can come right after orientation if they choose), consultants compose another written reflection:

- Were there any aspects of (Written Response/Real-Time) Best Practices training that were most useful for you?
- Was there anything that wasn’t useful from Best Practices? If so, how might you change it?
- What are your thoughts about effective online pedagogy based on orientation and (Written Response/Real-Time) best practices?
- Do you have any concerns as you move forward into (Written Response/Real-Time) mock consultations? If so, how can training better support these concerns?

These questions begin to get at important ideas: how they are progressing as consultants and practitioners in the online writing center? How is the program helping and supporting them (or not)? These reflections create productive space for consultants to let their voices be heard.

The data collected during the mock consultation training stage involves two components: open-ended reflections and prompted reflections. The open-ended reflections are written after each mock they complete, and the prompted reflections occur after they have completed all mocks and are ready to move into consulting live with students. The prompted questions we ask are as follows:

- Now that you’ve consulted online, have your thoughts about effective online pedagogy changed? If so, in what ways?
- Would you change anything about (Written Response/Real-Time) Mock training? If so, what and why?
- What would be helpful and supportive for you as you begin live consultations?

These questions, again, help us see how they are progressing in their practice and allow them a space to offer suggestions for the programs, and help us to better understand what we could be doing differently in training. At all times, these reflections can shape their course through training.

Once consultants have entered the live stage, they will compose short, open-ended reflections after each session. They will also have one consultation record (for this study,
I collected one real-time and one written-response). Once an online administrator and the consultant determine they are ready to move out of training (again, reinforcing the participatory focus of training) consultants met with me for a brief reflective interview responding to the following questions:

- What have been the most effective parts of (Written Response/Real-Time) training? The least effective parts? Why?
- How have your experiences in online training (Written Response/Real-Time) influenced your online pedagogy? How would you describe your online pedagogy now?
- Do you have any suggestions for how to change or further develop (Written Response and/or Real-Time) training? If so, what and why?
- Are there any other concerns, issues, or ideas you would like to discuss?

Data was collected in this fashion to help provide me with a holistic understanding of the consultants as they progressed through and responded to training, which helped to uncover the tacit knowledge presented by the consultants, a vital focus used to create more participatory ways of engaging consultants in our work.

**Methods: Coding Dimensions, Categories, and Analysis**

In order to code data in regards to a participatory design methodology, the central focus of my coding schemes needed to find ways of uncovering *tacit knowledge* demonstrated by consultants in their written and spoken reflections. In other words, all codes are seeking to understand the less visible processes of not only how consultants practice online pedagogy but also how they attempt to think about and articulate their experiences with online training.

To start, I broke up my data, initially, into the three stages articulated by Spinuzzi (2005) as an attempt to view the data as working towards or attempting to inform a participatory methodological approach. The stages (and data included in each) are as follows:

- **Initial exploration of work.** Spinuzzi articulated that “In this stage, designers meet the users and familiarized themselves with the ways in which the users work together” (p. 167). According to Spinuzzi (2005), this is when designers
becoming acquainted with how the users work. I would consider the consultants designers and users, so in this dimension, I look for how consultants begin to make sense of the work and processes of online consulting and our program. Data included in this category includes Components 1-3 (Sessions as Students; Orientation).

• **Discovery Processes.** "In this stage, designers and users employ various techniques to understand and prioritize work organization and envision the future workplace” (p. 167). This category will group together how consultants envision the future of the program, and in what ways they are beginning to experiment with pedagogy online. Data included in this category include Components 4-6 (Best Practices Reflections; Mock Training Reflections).

• **Prototyping.** "In this stage, designers and users iteratively shape technological artifacts to fit into the workplace envisioned in Stage 2” (p. 167). This category examines in what ways a consultant’s practice or reflective processes illustrate or actively seek to shape the training processes in our program. While my study does not fully achieve the iterative process articulated by Spinuzzi (2005), I emphasize this stage to highlight the potential of future work to build on my study and make a training program more iterative. Data included in this category include Components 7-9 (Live Reflections; Recorded Consultation; Final Interview).

Again, these categories serve as initial coding dimensions to categorize consultant responses and thought processes; my unit of analysis, then, were whole responses, sometimes individual sentences.

Once consultant reflections were categorized into these dimensions (in order to visualize how my study attempts to embody a participatory process), additional coding schemes were employed to more closely analyze the responses and explore how tacit knowledge is revealed throughout the training process. Data was analyzed through both an inductive and deductive approach. It was deductive in the sense that I was looking for specific themes that would help to better understand consultant tacit knowledge and connect participatory design to my study. These were based on previous scholars who had engaged participatory design in their work (Brizee et al., 2012; Moore & Elliot, 2016; Luck, 2002; Spinuzzi). For example, Luck (2002) articulated four themes through
which the interview responses of disabled individuals regarding the construction of a building were analyzed. These themes were: “The ability to generalise needs based on user groups; Examples of the expression of user preference and knowledge; Language as a medium for sharing common understanding; The language mechanisms used to describe user preferences” (Luck, 2002, p. 527). Of specific interest for this study are themes surrounding language use for common understanding and the articulation of user preferences. As Spinuzzi (2005) articulated, establishing a common language (or language games, as he referred to them) are important to establishing a language through which both researchers and participants can understand each other and program processes. Luck’s (2002) codes, then, emphasize the importance of themes such as preferences and common languages to participatory research and how they can be applied methodologically.

In addition, when considering the most effective coding scheme, an inductive approach was used to validate the ways in which the deductive codes were present in consultant reflection. The key inductive codes that were revealed were as follows: Previous Practice, Preferences, and Descriptions of Training Experiences. The three primary codes are described as follows:

- **Preferences**
  - This code looks for how consultants articulate learning preferences (e.g., being a visual learner), work styles, or individual choices for training paths. This is drawn from Luck (2002) but also present in how consultants are choosing to move through training and consult online.

- **Previous Practice**
  - This code examines the ways in which consultants draw on previous writing center experience or writing experiences more generally to make sense of online consulting. This is deductively drawn from Spinuzzi (2005) regarding the development of language games (i.e., a common language between researcher and participant) but also a key pattern recurring in how consultants think about online pedagogy.

- **Descriptions of Training Experiences**
This final code looks for instances where consultants rely on describing or narrating a training process or to describe something they took away from a training experience. While inductively coded (consultants describing what happened in a training session) it is also deductively constructed in the sense that descriptions provide useful ways of understanding of tacit knowledge.

**Conclusion**

As I hope I’ve illustrated, exploring consultant perspectives in relation to tacit knowledge might help establish a participatory foundation. Specifically, I believe the codes generated (while they could certainly be expanded on) also offer a useful starting point for exploring participatory design. In the next section, I will narrate the case-study results from the two consultants in my study. The results are, as I’ve mentioned, preliminary and exploratory. However, by constructing a narrative from the collected artifacts and weaving it with methodological perspectives from participatory design, I hope to articulate the ways in which a participatory lens can help illuminate what an online program can do to create spaces for more active participation from consultants.
Chapter 4: “Every consultant has their voice”: Shaping Participatory Practice with Consultants

In this chapter, I will narrate the experiences of two consultants in online training, based on their written reflections, recorded consultations, and final interviews. I have broken this data into three categories to begin considering and visualizing Spinuzzi’s (2005) participatory design methodology: initial exploration, discovery processes, and prototyping. Once categorized, consultant responses will then be analyzed in relation to the codes established in the previous chapter: previous practice, preferences, and descriptions of training experience. These codes were developed (1) deductively, based on ideas from participatory design methodologies, and (2) inductively, derived from patterns in consultant responses. The goal for such analysis was to understand how these themes helped articulate, inform, or clarify the tacit processes consultants brought to online training. Tacit knowledge, or the less visible processes and ways of knowing (Spinuzzi, 2005), is a focal point of participatory research and therefore useful as an initial focus of analysis for the following preliminary research. As Moore and Elliot (2016) wrote, “employing transparent strategies in participatory design without collecting tacit, contextualizing knowledge as data still limits citizens’ opportunities for co-creating and more concretely influencing the project” (p. 74). Thus, in order to open spaces for “co-creating and more concretely influencing the project,” the rest of this chapter will look at how the developed codes reveal the tacit processes in consultant reflective work. In the end, I argue, these codes/themes need further study and elaboration to explore how they could become more prevalent in online consultant training (I will detail my suggestions in the concluding chapter).

Initial Exploration of Work: Student Sessions and Orientation

This section will analyze the initial reflective work of the consultants, where they began by experiencing online consultations as students and an orientation that introduced them to the program policies and procedures. They were then asked about their preferences and perceptions of online consulting. The most prominent coded themes, then, were previous practice and preference. With these codes, we can see how consultants made sense of the program. Mention of previous practice, for example,
illustrates when and how consultants draw on prior writing center experience (e.g., collaborative learning, rapport building) or prior writing experiences (e.g., commenting on friends’ drafts). Mention of preference, on the other hand, illustrates how consultants’ learning preferences (e.g., being a visual learner) can illustrate why they might be struggling with a certain aspect of online consulting or excelling at it. Analyzing these perspectives with the coded themes will, furthermore, help both myself as a researcher and the consultants to understand and better articulate the ways in which tacit knowledge and processes manifest. This analysis will also illustrate, I hope, preliminary thoughts on how these codes might inform ways to begin building participatory design spaces in the beginning of a training program.

**Sessions as Students.** Before officially starting training, consultants scheduled appointments with experienced online consultants. Prior to attending the sessions, consultants reflected on questions regarding online consulting concerns, purposes, and preferences. In these initial reflections, consultants drew heavily on previous practice and preference. For example, in his initial reflection, Levi wrote that:

I think I will prefer the written-response, so I would have more time to respond carefully. The Real-time is a bit more traditionally related to in person consulting, so I feel as though that might be more familiar; because of that I find the written more interesting for finding out its strengths and weaknesses. I think how we consult may need some adaptation to make it effective in both forms, but consultation is all about self-discovery.

Levi clearly stated that he preferred written response consulting over real-time. This preference, however, is also rooted in previous practice; his preference is based on an interest in exploring what he perceived as a difference between his face-to-face experiences and written response consulting. To make sense of the different online consulting approaches, Levi drew on his previous practice to qualify his preference for written response.
The use of previous practice seemed to reveal Levi’s face-to-face consulting processes (i.e., dialogic, deliberative, collaborative methods). Regarding tacit knowledge, we might see Levi’s statement as an example of thinking through ways of “doing” or consulting: we see him articulating and understanding practices and theories that inform his decision-making. Furthermore, as Spinuzzi (2005) noted, drawing on a common language (in this case, previous face-to-face practice) can help establish a foundation for understanding and engaging more actively in future participatory work. So, we might think of this response as an example of how previous practice can help develop a participatory online training program.

We also see the presence of previous practice and preference in Charlotte’s first reflection, but in the form of an anxiety about consulting online. Charlotte wrote:

I am concerned with being comfortable and becoming accustomed to consulting when I am not physically with the other person. I am a very visual person and often write notes on scrap paper as I listen and work with a student. My biggest concern is how I will translate that onto a computer.

Preference plays an important role in understanding this statement: by reading her concerns, it is clear not only what she was concerned about, but why she was concerned. Her concern, then, stemmed from Previous Practice.

The connection to previous practice (i.e., face-to-face pedagogy) is present in her discussion of the importance of collaboration, a vital component of general writing center practice. She wrote, “The real-time consulting seems like it will be extremely beneficial to students who are away from campus. It is an extremely interactive and collaborative way to work without physically being in the same space” (Charlotte). Charlotte used these connections to understand the function and purpose of online consulting.

Together, Charlotte discussed previous practice and reference for consulting (working with scrap paper, working visually, collaborating with others) and had initial anxiety, based on how she viewed the online process. Charlotte’s articulation of previous
practice and preference are two ways of understanding the knowing and doing that are informing her initial perceptions of online consulting.

Before even starting online training, useful codes such as Previous Practice and Preference are important to understanding how consultants work through and make sense of a new program. Being able to understand tacit, contextualizing knowledge about a user’s process is vital to participatory research, and these two initial responses provide a start to understanding these ideas.

**After Sessions as Students.** After having completed sessions as a student, consultants reflected about online consulting (e.g., what they did/didn’t like or what they may have learned from this initial encounter) now that they had some initial experiences to draw from. Both consultants approached these second reflections differently: Levi discussed perceived similarities to face-to-face consulting (his previous practice), and Charlotte offered a descriptive account of her session (a description of training experiences). Levi reflected on a real-time session where technological issues caused only the consultant’s audio to work, requiring the student to communicate via chat:

> Even with only one voice available (the Consultant) It felt like a usual session that we would have in the center. In some ways it was even improved, with both the writer and the consultant being able to see the work without one having to oppressively lean into another’s space.

In this reflection, we can see how previous practice informs Levi’s understanding of “doing,” or pedagogy for consulting online. Face-to-face consulting emphasizes student-centered pedagogy, where the consultant maintains a distance from the student, in the sense that the student is supposed to do all the work. Levi’s discussion of “oppressively” occupying a student’s space illustrated an important way he made sense of consulting online. Furthermore, such connections illustrate a potentially tacit way of understanding a real-time consultation; the online space made Levi very aware of the implications of working in different spaces. Previous practice continues to be a useful theme of analysis for understanding the ways of knowing and doing consultants bring to online training.
Charlotte, on the other hand, offered a more general description/narration of her experiences and takeaways from her initial experience as a student. Descriptions of training experiences, especially for Charlotte, is a way of recounting an event, describing what happened, and in the end, making tacit ways of knowing and doing in online spaces more visible. Reflecting on her written response session, Charlotte wrote:

I really enjoyed my asynchronous mock trial [...] I enjoyed the asynchronous training and felt that I was able to utilize Google Docs in ways that would enhance and expedite the editing process for the student. Previous training helped me to feel prepared and confident in this training exercise.

First, Charlotte’s description was useful for her to articulate how this specific component of training (participating in a written response session) helped her understand what she did and didn’t like about online consulting. Furthermore, that activity increased her confidence and understanding regarding technology in future consultations. Similar to Levi’s use of previous practice to inform future practice, descriptions of training experiences helped Charlotte think through and apply many of the training ideas to theorizing future ways of practicing. When Charlotte wrote that Google Docs was an effective tool for enhancing the editing process on her part, this could potentially be an indicator of how Charlotte connected descriptions of training experiences with previous practice because of the collaborative feel that reminded her of face-to-face consulting. Overall, her response seems to illustrate how these codes can reveal the tacit processes/knowledge a consultant brings to each stage of training. It can help show the processes by which she is growing and challenging initial perceptions as well as making new connections—primarily through previous practice but also through preferences and descriptions of training experience.

With these two written reflections (before and after sessions as students), we see the presence of all three codes, though previous practice and preference seem to play the most in how consultants answer questions about a new online space. These codes appear to be acting as important ways to negotiate and make more visible their tacit ways of
doing, especially online—an important first step towards making the program a more participatory space.

**Online Orientation.** Having completed initial sessions as students, each consultant attended an orientation session (see Appendix A), introducing them to the program’s policies and procedures. In lieu of a written reflection, both consultants completed our Training Module Document (see Figures 3 and 4) to document the order and speed in which they wanted to complete their online training. Figure 3 shows Levi’s choices, while Figure 4 reflects Charlotte’s choices. Reflecting back on some of their writing from the first two components, it is clear to me why they chose their specific paths: Levi, for example, wanted to better understand written response’s connections with other modes of consulting, though still completed both modalities at once. Charlotte also favored written response, but chose to start exclusively with this modality, noting that “I will be able to work at my own pace and there is a sense of comfort that comes from knowing I can simply express myself through writing and commenting at my own pace.” Yet, while having similar preferences for modality, they had different preferences for their specific training paths, offering just two perspectives on what the training paths could look like. For example, a typical training path (similar to Levi’s) looked like the following: Orientation→Best Practices→Mocks→Lives, with written response and real-time training being completed at the same time. More discussion about a revised program, including training path visuals, is provided in the next chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Hour 1</th>
<th>Hour 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (date)</td>
<td>Written Response Appt (as student)</td>
<td>Real-Time Appt (as student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (date)</td>
<td>Online Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week (date)</td>
<td>Hour 1</td>
<td>Hour 2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1 (date)</td>
<td>Written Response Appt (as student)</td>
<td>Real-Time Appt (as student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (date)</td>
<td>Online Orientation</td>
<td>Written Response Best Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (date)</td>
<td>Written Response Mock 1</td>
<td>Written Response Mock 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (date)</td>
<td>Written Response Live Session</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Levi’s Training Module Document.
These Training Module Documents offer an important space for consultants to articulate their preferences. They do not have to explain their choices; they simply need to tell us how they wish to move through training. Programmatically, this component gives consultants agency to continue building off their initial reflections about online consulting and articulate their preferences. The combination of writing reflections and actively illustrating their training path provides an understanding of consultant tacit knowledge and processes of what may or may not work best with online consulting.

Once consultants have completed both reflections (before and after a session as a student) and orientation, they have completed the preliminary components of training. Before moving onto the next stage, I would like to offer a few summative comments. First, we’ve seen how each coded theme plays out in the consultant reflections. Previous practice, preferences, and descriptions of training experiences are all used to help consultants understand the new work they are participating in; in doing so, these codes seem to help reveal the tacit processes consultants draw on in order to understand these new spaces. Second, if these themes remain important and prominent, then such themes are important for establishing a foundation (such as a common language) on which a more participatory online training program would be situated. As I continue with the consultant reflections, I will further illustrate the importance of these key themes.
Stage 2: Online Consulting Discovery Processes: Best Practices and Mock Consultations

The next key stage of consulting involves participation in best practices and mock consultation training for written response and real-time. Best practices introduces consultants to empirically-established pedagogy in the field of online writing centers and mock consultation training (at least two mocks per consultation type) gives consultants space to practice these strategies with other online consultants or administrators. Consultants can complete these components in any order, and both chose to complete best practices before mocks (see Figures 3 and 4). I’ve labeled this section the discovery process stage following Spinuzzi’s (2005) articulation of participatory design methodology. This stage emphasizes how users and designers start to envision the future of a workplace or artifact (see Chapter 3 for more detail). I will continue narrating and exploring the ways in which the coded themes (previous practice, preference, and descriptions of training experiences) are useful for analyzing consultant work as they more actively engage with the program, online pedagogy, and new issues and concerns. I will continue my attempt to show how tacit knowledge and processes can be uncovered in this stage and the importance of understanding such knowledge and processes for the development of more participatory spaces.

**Best Practices.** Best practices training introduced consultants to researched strategies for consulting online in real-time and through written response (see Appendix B and C f). After each best practices session, consultants are asked to reflect about what did or did not work well for them during this training component. They are also asked what suggestions they might have for improving this part of training. This opened up important space for consultants to negotiate potentially new or different approaches to consulting online (and, in doing so, offer ways to more clearly illustrate and make sense of their tacit knowledge’s role in developing their online pedagogy).

Levi decided to complete both best practices training sessions (real-time and written response) back to back. After these sessions, Levi offered an insight for improving both best practices, writing that:
Every consultant has their voice, and something I think could allow for consultants to effectively translate that voice into an online environment would be to try and integrate a some way for us consultants to observe each other in online consultations, or perhaps even implement some models of written responses and video/audio/chat transcripts from experienced online consultations into the training process (though there was evidence of that with using Ryan’s [me] comments, though getting more samples is always good).

An interesting (and less explicit) aspect of this statement is the connection Levi made to previous practice. The suggestions Levi made (more observations, more examples) were grounded in the kind of experiences consultants have in their face-to-face training at the HWC (e.g., record and generate transcripts of their sessions, observe other consultants, be observed by other consultants). Interestingly, each best practices document offers a few generic suggestions and models for composing effective textual feedback in written response and real-time chat contexts. We also have recorded a sample video chat and live text-chat session for consultants to view. However, Levi articulated that more was needed: more perspectives, more ways of understanding the tacit knowledge and processes of other consultants. So, analyzing for previous practice, we can see what Levi drew on in order to suggest what would make the program better. This also helps illustrate how Levi continued to use previous practice as a common language (Spinuzzi, 2005) to make programmatic suggestions.

Reflecting on Levi’s previous statements about the connections between his previous practice and online consulting, we can also analyze his statement for preference as well. It is clear that Levi worked well by seeing other models. By articulating his preferences and processes of previous practices, Levi further revealed his own tacit processes for consulting. In order to learn how to “do,” Levi valued other perspectives to make sense of his own approaches. This discussion of what is included in an effective training program is again revealed through an analysis of previous practice, helping to draw out the tacit knowledge and processes Levi brings to the program (knowledge that values examples and other perspectives).
Charlotte reflected on her real-time, text-chat only consultation, articulating the difficulties of transferring her previous experiences to this online context:

Having typed text as my only form of communication with the student made me realize that I need to make sure I portray an encouraging demeanor rather than a condescending one. I have helped friends with papers before, providing comments and suggestions, but I have never realized that the level of comfort I have with my friends affects how concise my comments are for them.

Analyzing previous practice helped illustrate how Charlotte differentiated between working outside of the writing center (with friends) and in the writing center (creating an encouraging demeanor with unfamiliar people). We see her attempting to understand how to create an effective, encouraging, and friendly persona in a space where she cannot be seen. By drawing previous writing center experience regarding rapport building, Charlotte again revealed an important part of her tacit processes for working online, a process that values rapport building.

Furthermore, Charlotte provided an interesting suggestion based on a preference for approaching online training. While she had not completed any mocks, Charlotte was aware of what occurred in mocks. She wrote:

I would suggest possibly doing Best Practices before any mocks where the trainee is the student. This strategy would introduce the Best Practices to [a] trainee, allow them to see the techniques first-hand, and then give them the opportunity to apply them in mock sessions.

By describing a preference for training, Charlotte noted what she considered an effective process for learning. Analysis of preference helped not only to see her process but also to offer a useful perspective for incorporating a scaffolded approach into training. In this case, preference seems to make it easier to understand how consultants work by doing and to work with consultants to develop ways to anticipate these ideas in future training.
Through analysis of preferences and previous practice, both consultants actively offered suggestions for improving the program (i.e., envisioning their future workplace), which helps illustrate their tacit knowledge for learning about online consulting. While descriptions of training experiences have not been as prevalent (though they will be more so in the next section), all codes so far illustrate general potential for studying consultant tacit knowledge processes, a step towards building more participatory programs.

**Mock Consultations.** Once both consultants completed best practices, they each chose to move onto mock sessions. During mock training, consultants received practice working as the consultant and testing out the best practices they’ve learned. This section will share three reflections from each consultant about each of their mocks (both did three mock consultations). First, Levi used his first mock hour to practice a real-time video and a text-only consultation. After the video session, he wrote that:

This most recent mock has highlighted some of the problems adjusting to synchronous from a face-to-face mindset. I felt really nervous about the whole endeavor; there was a pressure to be able to explain and provide all the options one has when it comes to the online process, and trying to troubleshoot audio issues while also needing to explain the various ways to send the paper led to some extreme anxiety over the subject.

Here, Levi described many of the technological issues that can occur in a session (e.g., troubleshooting audio). I see previous practice again informing his reflection—the nervousness he was expressing seemed to stem from a face-to-face experience that had not prepared him for this kind of technological work. Using real-time technology caused issues, both pedagogically and logistically, and Levi’s reflection illustrated how the various technological approaches for real-time consultations made him more aware of his personal processes based on previous consulting experience.

On the other hand, Levi responded very differently to the text-chat only session. He discussed that:
I found the synchronous chat mock to be very relieving of some of my concerns; in some ways I found the readily available text area provided more encouragement to help develop writing and give me easy reference to the writing than anything in a face-to-face session could, with the added benefit of that live interaction to provide a very similar experience to a face-to-face consultation.

Levi immediately noted that doing a real-time mock text-chat immediately alleviated the concerns about using video. Because he could interact more fully with a text during this session, he become more comfortable in this space, and therefore enjoyed this approach more than video chat (which I see as an articulation of preference). Furthermore, previous practice seems to inform how Levi understands what aspects of face-to-face did or did not inform his online consulting practice in this instance. Levi’s discussion of the connections to face-to-face seemed to help him articulate why this session went well for him, illustrating that it was successful because of what his previous face-to-face practice did (live interaction) and did not (shared text space) afford him. Analysis of previous practice and preference, then, helps to reveal the tacit processes through which Levi makes sense of this space.

Then, reflecting on how his written response mock informs the way he consults both face-to-face and in real-time online, Levi again pulled more strongly on connections to previous practice:

I personally noticed a greater shift in my language usage during the face-to-face and live consultations. The need to be conscious of the language usage in written response allows [sic] you to internalize those language choices in real-time face-to-face, thus saving time and furthering the tone you want to communicate via body language and the tone of your voice.

Levi drew on important aspects of face-to-face consulting that all consultants must consider (body language, tone of voice), and these are certainly ideas he was trained on at the HWC. Utilizing his prior experiences helped Levi make sense of the new work he
was doing online and how he continued to negotiate a common language between the two of us. Or, as Spinuzzi (2005) described it, playing a language game. Here, the mutually understood language seemed to help Levi further articulate his tacit ways of knowing and doing online, especially as he became more cognizant of his language choices, for example. Levi started to notice (whether intentionally or not) how his practice online was becoming “tacit” again—less visible, and only visible by doing.

Finally, before his session as a student, Levi commented on the usefulness of sharing text with the writer; in a similar vein, Levi wrote during his mock that:

> The shared workspace to drop in writing is a wonderful feature that allows both the writer and the consultant equal access to the writing; parts of writing that the consultant wants to point out become much easier to bring attention too with the tech available. A simple mouse click or highlight shows exactly what the consultant wants without editing the paper or having to search through an entire paper for one language issue. It also provides extra space to model for the writer, a space to brainstorm and write down ideas or record what the writer is saying.

I find this to be a very important statement because I think it illustrates all of the coded themes working together. First, though less explicitly, previous practice informed Levi’s reflection and helped him examine how to use the shared space to avoid editing. Then, preference is key when he noted his overall admiration for the shared workspace. Finally, descriptions of training experiences are used to describe and narrate how Levi used different technological approaches. Following the idea of tacit knowledge, all of these themes work together as Levi made sense of how his otherwise tacit processes were or were not challenged in the new space; when challenged, tacit knowledge is much more visible, and the three themes seem to help draw that out.

Charlotte’s reflections were coded heavily for descriptions of training experiences and previous practice, helping illustrate her tacit knowledge and assumptions. After her first written response mock, Charlotte wrote:
This mock was slightly more challenging for me, as I needed to check myself frequently on APA format to ensure I was providing appropriate feedback. I also had to re-read parts of the paper several times to understand its organization. This also helped me realize what on it would and would not be appropriate for me to leave comments. Though this mock was a little more of a challenge, I feel like it helped me further develop my skills.

First, Charlotte’s use of descriptions of training experiences provides important insights into her consulting processes, such as having to re-read sections of the writing. It is also a space that helps her to make sense of and actually visualize her otherwise tacit processes, such as knowing what to comment on. We can also see previous practice playing a role in understanding why she needed to reflect on what she should or shouldn’t be commenting on. The written response space seemed to create an instance where Charlotte wasn’t entirely able to translate her previous practice into the session; as such, she needed to reconsider how she responded to student writing in a live setting. The ability to describe and recount this session helped make that clear.

After her second written response mock, Charlotte again used descriptions of training experiences to work through what occurred in the session:

I devoted my time to general ways she could improve the format and grammar of her paper. I spent a good deal of time checking my feedback on Purdue OWL, as I was recommending some greater grammar and formatting changes. When I submitted my feedback, I felt somewhat uncertain as to whether or not I had adequately assisted this student. However, this is not unwarranted since the student did not indicate any specific concerns.

Similar to her previous reflection, Charlotte’s descriptions of training experiences illustrated her tacit processes. Her use of Purdue OWL is an interesting aspect to reflect on—describing her process allows Charlotte to reveal how she has used the OWL in her
own previous practice (as it is a common resource). It also allows Charlotte to more explicitly note that the Purdue OWL is part of her process of responding to students (which might be otherwise tacit). This impacts the way she consults online. Giving consultants adequate space to describe and reflect on sessions (as we had) offered important ways to reveal tacit processes, which in turn helps build a foundation for participatory work.

Finally, in her third mock (a real-time video session), Charlotte began to theorize and envision her future work:

> I realized the importance of making sure to invite the student to interact during the session rather than passively wait as I make suggestions. Though the “student” did interact, I could have been more explicit in encouraging their participation during the mock. I also realized that I should still take time to ask the student about their assignment (more than just asking if they have anything else they would like to address). I was eager to establish the space we would be utilizing for the session and should have slowed-down to inquire about the student’s writing. Overall, I felt that slowing down at the beginning of the session and encouraging participation more were the biggest areas in which I can improve from this session.

Once again, description of training experiences was how Charlotte made sense of what occurred in the session, what went well, and how she could improve. What is particularly interesting about this quote is Charlotte’s eagerness to establish a shared space. Analyzing for previous practice, we might recall the importance instilled in face-to-face consultants with setting agendas and establishing a friendly, cooperative space (which I think applies to most writing centers). The introduction of technology seemed to interrupt Charlotte’s tacit process of jumping right to establishing a shared space and Charlotte discovered a need to reconsider how she establishes this space. The description of training experiences as well as previous practice helped Charlotte understand her own tacit processes. As both Levi and Charlotte have suggested so far, these codes have
helped them understand how their tacit processes are less tacit in the new space, thus making them more visible.

After consultants have completed all of their mock training, they were asked to reflect on mock training overall: they discussed what they might do to improve or change it, as well as how their online pedagogy was developing. Levi, for example, discussed his preference that might have made the training process more beneficial for him:

I think the best thing to do, with both the mocks and the general environment, is encourage collaboration with other consultants also in the online writing programs. That could encourage the sense of community and learn-by-experience culture that is also present in the usual writing center community.

As he mentioned in his reflection after best practices, Levi wanted more interaction with other consultants. To again qualify this preference, he drew on his experiences in the face-to-face center. However, he now made claims in which online and face-to-face pedagogy inform each other—perhaps because his work in the OWC has caused his tacit knowledge and processes to see online and face-to-face work as more meshed together than separate. Analyzing through previous practice and preference themes, we can see how Levi continued to develop a language for effective online practice and began to “envision the future workplace.”

Charlotte reflected on one of her mocks where she worked with an online consultant from our pilot semester (Kevin) and wrote:

Consulting with Kevin was extremely helpful in that it allowed me to partake in a Real-Time consultation that was very casual. Kevin helped me to feel more calm about conducting Real-Time consultations. I realized that taking my time to talk to the student at the beginning of the consultation really sets the stage for a more open and comfortable session for both the writer and consultant (hopefully). Seeing how Kevin consults in Real-Time helped me feel more at ease.
Similar to Levi, Charlotte noted the importance of working with others to develop an online pedagogy. From a preference perspective, we see Charlotte draw on a way of learning that helped familiarize her with online consulting approaches. Also, similar to one of her previous mock reflections, Charlotte reflected on how to slow down the talk at the beginning of a session and how it helped to quell her anxieties. Previous practice, then, would play out again here.

Up to this point, both consultants’ responses reflected the three key themes in various ways to help them understand the new online space. Before moving on, I’d like to offer a few thoughts about the development of tacit knowledge. First, as these responses illustrate thus far, previous practice is an incredibly important way that consultants make sense of online consulting—previous practice, in and of itself, is a common language that the three of us share. I would certainly argue that studying for previous practice helps consultants understand their own previous experiences (which consultants might not clearly recognize until asked to think about them) when consulting online. By coding consultant data for previous practice, I can help consultants then see what processes might be otherwise tacit and how to use those to the advantage of working more closely together. Furthermore, while preference was slightly less prevalent, descriptions of training experiences offered an important point of analysis for the work consultants were doing. By coding for descriptions and narratives, I helped to better illustrate the tacit processes consultants already bring and the ways online consulting complicates tacit knowledge/processes. What does all this mean for participatory design? I think these codes work together to help consultants mesh and make sense of the new online space; in turn, this helps them better articulate and understand a common language that can be shared between us. This can give them a stronger sense of agency in terms of informing the direction of their “workplace” (to use Spinuzzi’s [2005] terminology again). As this section was meant to illustrate, the consultants in this study began to theorize and imagine the future of the program and their own work, and the next section will describe how they took all they learned into the live online space.
Stage 3: Prototyping: Becoming the Shapers of Programs, Becoming Experienced Online Consultants

After completing mock training, consultants were live in the schedule for online appointments with student writers. Consultants continued to receive consistent observation and feedback from my co-coordinator or I. This stage, for the purposes of thinking about how my data fits within a participatory design methodology, is meant to illustrate when consultants began to become more active members of the online consulting program. Therefore, their live session reflections, their recorded consultations, and their final interview are meant to envision Spinuzzi’s (2005) third stage, which he described as prototyping: here, researcher and participant actively and iteratively shape an artifact (though, certainly, these reflections do not achieve this goal, as later discussed. Yet, while my study lacks the iterative process of participatory design, I think that what has been articulated thus far in the consultant reflections (and what I will continue to illustrate) helps work towards such an iterative process. I offer this final section of the training narrative to show how and in what ways our program could continue developing participatory dynamics, especially those that iteratively and actively bring consultants into the design process of the program.

Live Consultations—Reflections and Recordings. Consultants wrote reflections at the end of each live session, recorded a live consultation, and participated in a final interview. A real-time was collected for Levi, while a written response was collected for Charlotte (to generate perspectives on each).

During his first live consultation, Levi noted several important aspects related to the real-time training process, notably his anxiety:

My First Synchronous appointment was the most nerve-wracking thing in my life. It felt almost like a right of passage; I felt that this was the final test as to whether or not I was cut out for this kind of consulting. I still regret how apparent my nervous nature was to the writer. I was the consultant, the authority on writing she appeals to, and here I am tripping up on basic agenda setting. After she got talking though, It felt much more
like a traditional consultation and I readily returned my face-to-face training and the language tuning acquired from asynch. In fact, I think her comfort level with the situation increased my comfort level, and vice-versa. If she had also appeared nervous, I think the situation might have spiraled a bit more than it actually did.

Here, previous practice is useful to understanding his reflection (both written response and face-to-face training, in this case). Because the technology seemed to create problems related to issues of comfort, Levi felt much more confident when the session began to feel more like a face-to-face session (e.g., the student did more of the talking). Furthermore, Levi revealed that written response approaches helped to inform the overall direction of the session (e.g., reminding him of the process for real-time consultations). We see descriptions of training experiences (attempting to set the agenda, appearing nervous), preferences (drawn from his anxiety about real-time), and previous practice (connections to face-to-face and written response) all coming together to describe how Levi’s online pedagogy is becoming more tacit when informed by multiple new perspectives. Furthermore, during the session, we see aspects of Levi’s previous practice more clearly illustrated. Take, for example, how Levi worked to establish an agenda in his online session:

Levi: yeah, um, so yeah, maybe organization is something we can look at, since your instructor was concerned about how far down your discussion of where you’re coming from is, maybe that’s something we can look at while you’re reading through, I’ll definitely um… take into account anything that uh, I find unclear, or maybe a little weird in terms of sentence construction, so um

From the session, we can see Levi clearly describing what they can and might look at during the rest of the consultation (a clear connection to face-to-face training—consultants are required to set detailed agendas with the writer—and written response,
which requires clear language for establishing session goals). Furthermore, Levi wrote in his reflection after this live that

It was empowering, and validating of the skills I’ve been developing this whole time. I could only think of more interaction with other consultants to compare strategies and expand to more techniques could enhance the consultant/writer experience.

Bringing together these three responses (especially the last one), we see Levi’s excitement that this session allowed him to bring all of the skills he learned together (whether online or face-to-face). This, I would argue, provides a useful starting point for a participatory program and research focus. Levi has articulated the ways his processes (which may have once been tacit) are now changing and being informed by the training program. Further study of an online program with the themes I’ve articulated thus far may prove useful to begin designing or developing participatory online training programs.

Turning to Charlotte, she discussed her concerns about being concise in her comments during a written response appointment. In her recorded session, a student had questions or concerns about spelling, heightening Charlotte’s concern about comment concision. Charlotte wrote:

Going forward, I think that if I get a spelling and word choice document, I might add additional spacing so that I will have more room to make comments without it looking quite so overwhelming to the student. I want to make feedback look less overwhelming without compromising the amount or quality of feedback I give.

Figure 5 below shows how the comments began collapsing. The small icon on the bottom right of some comments illustrates such collapsing (i.e., not being able to see the whole comment without clicking on it). We advised against such approaches during written response training. See the written response best practices training document in Appendix
C). What is particularly interesting about this reflection is how Charlotte used Descriptions of Training Experiences. She realized that how she responded to spelling in student writing didn’t quite conform with what she had learned about written response best practices. So, she was able to describe a new pedagogical idea that we did not necessarily teach consultants (i.e., making more room for comments to avoid comment collapsing). As a result of all her training, Charlotte suggested a specific pedagogical approach that worked to mitigate some of the difficulties she faced. This presents an interesting moment in which Charlotte demonstrated the potential for a more engaged, participatory program.

By offering this suggestion, Charlotte drew from her time in online training, re-examining her otherwise tacit knowledge processes and inventing or revising approaches to consulting in this medium.

**Final Interview.** The final interview reflects a vital moment where the initial two stages could start to come together. Furthermore, the verbal nature of the interview presented a stronger way of examining tacit knowledge and processes (i.e., it represents a less formalized, less concrete approach to understanding tacit knowledge). Tacit knowledge, by its very nature, is difficult to write down. So, this final interview allowed consultants to talk through their experiences in training.

At the conclusion of their training, the consultants still expressed their anxieties and preferences towards online consulting and discussed different pedagogical approaches used online. For example, Levis continued to express worries about technology options:

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*Figure 5. Charlotte Written Response Session*
with the, with the downside I'd, at the same time, it did feel a little bit like,
um, the amount of options seem a bit overbearing? um... so there's a lot of
things that could go wrong in a synchronous session, um, that have
nothing to do with the way I would consult (laughs).

While in training, we tried to change and incorporate new approaches as we listened to
our consultants. What Levi revealed suggested that we might have gone overboard and
incorporated too many new suggestions. Rather than listening to and incorporating
everything they say, then, participatory design might have provided the iterative structure
for shaping and re-shaping what doesn’t work and avoid going overboard. In order to
reach that participatory stage, however, it is clear that consultants need adequate
preparation (in the form of, I would argue, a program that scaffolds for previous practice,
preferences, and descriptions of training experiences).

Another useful insight from Levi occurred when asked about what was and wasn’t
most effective in this training:

So, like, the this idea that I had to be completely perfect and there's an
ideal version of... written response, much like when you begin face-to-face
consulting, also, it's, I think, at least me [sic], and so the affirmation, you
know, there's variability and it's ok to be a bit different than another
written response consultant is something that I find, um, could be helpful

Levi drew on the variability we encouraged for how online consulting could be
approached, and he valued the space to explore, without pressure to be perfect. Analysis
of previous practice reveals that an ideal had been established in his previous face-to-face
training. Variability, perhaps, opened up such a space for individual consultant tacit
processes to be recognized and valued.

Charlotte also offered insights regarding her development as an online
consultant, especially in regards to what she continued to worry about and how she
continued to connect her online consulting practices to previous face-to-face experiences.
For example, when discussing the most useful (or not useful) parts of training Charlotte expressed:

…my worry is though with written response is that I might, if someone doesn't.. isn't very, explicit in what they're looking for, my fear is that I'm not giving them the feedback that they specifically wanted, like there's that, room for misunderstanding.

Here, Charlotte still worried about miscommunication. If we examine this from the perspective of previous practice, we might see how Charlotte’s experience with face-to-face (and being able to talk with and clarify issues with the writer) still created concerns in this new space. Furthermore, Charlotte discussed:

I've just really been ab... I don't know, it's, really different in some ways from face to face like having a student here in the writing center, so I think that through the mocks, those have really helped me seeing, people who are more experienced in online, and just seeing their strategies um…seeing them take the time to set the agenda and just like, let the student get acclimated, um, and then, that would be more of like a, real time training.

Charlotte noted that, through an analysis of previous practice, online consulting is different and she needed more space to learn about it. Reflecting back on the idea of consultation examples, Charlotte articulated the importance of seeing other consultants and even recognizing their tacit processes. Much like Levi, Charlotte’s processes indicated she preferred examples (indicating preference). In terms of the training program, space is needed to not only reflect and describe training experiences but act on these experiences

What I think could be taken away from this section is, again, the prevalence of previous practice as a theme. Because consultants need to understand a new context for consulting, their previous practice necessarily informs how they interact with the new
space. A program that is participatory seems to require significant connections to previous practice as well as preferences and descriptions of training experiences.

**Conclusion: Building Participatory Structures**

This narrative of consultants in training has revealed several things, but chief among them are the potential ways these coded themes might be used to develop more participatory spaces in an online training program. It is one thing to listen to our consultants and incorporate their feedback; it is another, however, to develop iterative structures for shaping and re-shaping *what might not work* and making decisions together. Such structures create a sense of shared responsibility among consultants and administrators. As these reflections have shown, consultants have valuable insights (though this, I think, we already knew). What is most important to take away from this, I would argue, is that a training program may benefit from being scaffolded to prepare consultants in certain ways and give them certain spaces to think about consulting. Thinking about previous practice, preferences, and descriptions of training experiences all helped the above consultants articulate both their current and newly developing tacit processes and knowledge. This, in turn, helped them perhaps internalize a “common language” through which more iterative work can be done. In the next chapter, I will explore the implications of these results, contextualize these three themes in current scholarship, and offer heuristics for further incorporating these ideas into an online training program.
Chapter 5: The Participatory Consultant: Critically Negotiating a Participatory Future with Consultants

As I begin this final chapter, I’d like to reiterate something I’ve mentioned a few times throughout this thesis: my research is preliminary and exploratory. Thus far, I’ve argued that further exploring the themes and codes explored in this thesis might provide a useful way to establish a foundation for participatory design research and work in online writing center training. A key focus of participatory design methodological research lies in its attempt to understand tacit knowledge and how it can help shape the design of technological artifacts. My analysis of the reflective writing, interviews, and recorded consultations in the previous chapter was my attempt to understand and identify the importance of tacit knowledge, thus articulating the potential starting point for further exploring participatory design methodology. Of course, the three themes I’ve articulated (previous practice, preferences, descriptions of training) are not the only themes that could be explored for uncovering tacit knowledge and they could certainly be parsed out more. These were simply the ones that reflected my methodology (deductive analysis) and the data I collected (inductive analysis). Different methods (ethnography, for example) may also reveal new and important themes of study or articulate a better sense of participatory design. What I hope this research does offer, however, is the importance of researching with consultants and developing understandings of tacit processes to begin working towards participatory dynamics in our training program.

So, what might I offer in terms of more concrete takeaways? In previous chapters, I’ve articulated the following research questions:

- In what ways can consultants improve (online) writing center programs, such as training, through a stronger presence in our research and in the day-to-day work of writing centers? How can we make this work more participatory and informed by consultants?
- In what ways can consultants shape online pedagogy in local contexts to productively challenge ideas about writing center work as well as online writing center program design?
Based on these research questions, I would like to offer two key takeaways that attempt to answer them. First, the themes articulated in this thesis (previous practice, preferences, and descriptions of training experiences) should be further researched to determine their relevance for implementing a participatory online training program, and this discussion may help answer the first question. Second, these themes can (and in some ways, already have) informed the direction of the online consultant training program at the HWC and the pedagogical approaches of consultants, so I will offer context on what has changed in our program to answer the second question. To better illustrate these key takeaways, this concluding chapter is organized into the following sections:

- **Contextualizing Codes/Themes.** To better understand how these themes might be further researched, I will contextualize each one within relevant scholarship in writing centers and composition more generally.

- **Revisiting the OWC at the HWC.** After contextualizing each theme in current scholarship, I would like to reflect on how these themes are or are not reflected in changes we’ve made to our training program at the HWC through specific examples. I will discuss how these variables might offer (or have offered) useful ways to continue revising.

- **Online Consultant Training Heuristic.** To conclude, I will look more broadly at online consultant training and participatory design methodologies to offer some general suggestions/takeaways for developing participatory online training based on the variables I have explored in this thesis.

### Contextualizing Codes/Themes

The three key themes (previous practice, preferences, descriptions of training experiences) that drove my analysis of the consultant responses in the previous chapter helped understand the tacit knowledge present in their responses, and how to categorize the tacit knowledge to help consultants understand such knowledge. In order to contextualize future study of these variables, I will situate them within relevant scholarship in composition and rhetoric/writing centers.
**Previous Practice.** The theme of previous practice was of great importance in the consultant reflections, occurring in almost every consultant reflection at almost every stage of training. This theme connects directly to recent scholarly study in the field of composition regarding transfer (Downs & Wardle, 2007; Wardle, 2007; Yancey et al., 2014, to name a few). Transfer examines the ways in which students take knowledge developed in one context and apply it another. For example, how do students transfer, if at all, writing knowledge from a first-year writing course to an advanced writing course in biology? How do students transfer, if at all, writing knowledge from a business-writing course to real-life business situations? How can composition scholars scaffold and teach for transfer? In the context of a program where consultants must be trained for face-to-face consulting first, studying transfer helps to explore how consultants translate their previous practice into a new space and better understand their processes for doing so.

In the writing center, scholars have also explored the implications of writing centers as sites for studying transfer of student writer knowledge (Hagemann, 1995). While most scholarship has focused on student writer transfer, scholars have also begun to explore the implications of transfer for consultant skills between contexts and based on experiences (Driscoll & Harcourt, 2012). Specifically, Driscoll & Harcourt (2012) discuss what they call “tutor learning” as opposed to “tutor training” (p. 1). They go on to discuss how transfer research argues that transfer occurs in learning contexts, not training contexts. Other scholars, such as Devet (2015) wrote that “Indeed, I argue that centers already teach for transfer every day. Transfer also provides a foundation for educating consultants, showing why training techniques are successful and how they can be improved” (p. 120).

Given the host of scholarship emphasizing how to transfer knowledge between contexts, I would ask: in what ways can the theme of previous practice and the idea of transfer be useful for creating more participatory programs? My case studies offer only a limited answer—simply that consultants draw on previous practice to inform their processes encountering a new situation. However, it is difficult to say what a training program that builds on previous knowledge looks like, though it is certainly worth exploring for the sake of participatory design. Furthermore, I have argued in the previous chapter about the connections between participatory design and Spinuzzi’s (2005)
concept of language games to create a common language through which researcher and participant can understand the project and its processes. I would argue, then, that more research is needed that studies the transfer of consultant learning from face-to-face to online contexts. Such research could help online training programs develop more effective common language for participatory work and research in an online training program and improve the efficacy of consulting learning in an online training program.

Preference. Notions of preference also played an important role in consultant reflections. Consultants reflected on what did or did not work based on their own personal work preferences/styles and the ways they preferred to encounter training. As far back as 1994, writing center scholars (Thompson, 1994) have explored the implications of personality preferences on how consultants do their work. What about learning preferences? In my own study, consultants used their preferences to make sense of concepts that might be unfamiliar to them and to express their own approaches to consulting and learning to consult online. Thompson (1994) wrote that “My goal here is to highlight a few of the ways personality preferences can influence tutoring styles and to argue that including a discussion of personality type theory in tutor training can help tutors become more aware of ways their preferred tutoring styles may match or clash with the preferred learning styles of their clients” (p. 136). This begs the question: how can we continue to recognize and make productive use of consultant preferences? Recent scholarship in Universal Design in Learning (UDL) in the writing center offers a useful way to answer that question. Scholars such as Kiedaisch and Dintz (2007) explore the importance of recognizing how students, tutors, and administrators all “bring aspects of our identity to tutoring and how these various aspects might shape a session” (p. 44). We might translate this into training and further explore the kinds of discussions Thompson (1994) sought to realize in consultant training.

Furthermore, there has been much scholarship published recently about universal design for learning in the context of writing centers. In fact, an entire issue of *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* was devoted to working with students with disabilities. The focus on disabilities emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive atmosphere in which students can learn in ways that work for them. Having conversations about preferences might also give agency to consultants to act on these preferences. By researching
consultant preferences in relation to participatory methodologies, we can better understand how preferences can inform program design and how program design can anticipate and create space for negotiating consultant preferences.

**Training Narratives.** Finally, descriptions of training experiences were an equally important theme. This theme is reflected in how consultants provided descriptions of a specific component of training (i.e., describing how a mock session proceeded) and, certainly, the other two key themes overlapped in these descriptions. As I hope my narrative reveals, spaces to describe training experiences were invaluable: it let consultants reflect and reiterate what they had done and how they had done it. In doing so, however, consultants were rendering their own tacit assumptions and knowledge more visible, not only for myself but for them as well. This theme, I think, connects to the rich history of writing center scholarship on the use of reflective writing and spaces for consultants to write about their experiences in the writing center (Hall, 2011; Mattison, 2007; Valentine, 2008). In my study, the descriptive accounts of training experiences were used to help the consultants make sense of the work they were doing. But did they serve an active purpose? If not, how could they? As Hall (2011) noted, consultant reflections may fall short of their purpose when only a consultant and a director read them. He calls for a more dialogic use of reflective writing among consultants and the creation of a writing center community of practice, writing, “Through critical reflection, theories and decisions remain open to inspection, evaluation, and revision” (p. 82). Reflection and the ability to recount training experiences gives consultants opportunities to examine their assumptions, which might help them to possibly intervene in and enact change for a training program.

These three variables are all clearly rooted in current scholarship. As I start to build a potential heuristic, I would like to continue drawing on this scholarship to inform the kinds of practices and programmatic designs I am going to argue for.

**Revisiting the OWC at the HWC**

This section will describe some of the changes we have implemented in our OWC (including revised training visuals) to illustrate the ways in which we have begun to think about and need to continue thinking about participatory design in our own program. I will
attempt to indicate where the themes discussed above come into play and how they are informing the development of a participatory.

**Consultant Reflection.** During the pilot year, consultants composed only written reflections, which was done for the sake of ease and time (because the program was new, we needed to make sure we were working efficiently with our limited time). Furthermore, we asked very few guided questions of consultants, so the revised IRB for this study reflected an attempt to ask more specific questions. We are also developing ways for consultants to compose a reflection using written text, audio or video. This approach is an attempt to value and respect consultant preference in our training program. A future study we could conduct in our own context might explore how consultants perceive the use of multimedia approaches for reflection, whether this opens or constrains their ability to describe and reflect on the sessions, and whether they feel these approaches privilege their preferences. In this way, we are further exploring the original themes of preference and descriptions of training experience.

**Using a Learning Management System (LMS).** IN the summer of 2016, we launched a Canvas site we started at the end of Spring 2016. We are storing all training materials here, creating modules for training, and utilizing it as space for all online consultants interact with each other. Because our online consultants are already limited in the number of online hours they can work and already have strong commitments to the face-to-face center and other non-writing center activities, it is difficult for them to have time to interact with others online consultants If we recall Levi’s suggestion for more examples and interaction with other consultants and Charlotte’s desire to work with other consultants, the Canvas site reflects an attempt to address those concerns. In this sense, we were addressing a work-style preference we had noted.

This was also the space in which consultants would post their reflections and ask questions of others. We had hope this will further develop the uses of consultant reflections and descriptions of training experiences and possibly offer a space in which consultants can negotiate previous practice with others. In addition, because many of the
online consultants are involved in summer work, we saw this as an opportunity to have them engage with this Canvas site and suggest, add, or edit content to this Canvas site.

**Revised Training Visuals.** I was very interested in the training paths consultants chose because they revealed how consultants preferred to move through training but also reminded us that we needed to maintain flexibility. We had already started developing a training program that gave the consultants choices in how they moved through training, but we wanted to better illustrate this to consultants. Consider the original training path visual (Figure 6).

![Original Training Path Visual](image)

*Figure 6. Original Training Path Visual (2015-2016)*

Now, consider Figure 7, our new attempt to illustrate the fluidity of training. Because all consultants complete orientation before the training components listed on the visual in Figure 6, the new visual in Figure 7 does not include orientation as the starting point. Instead, it helps consultants visualize that they can, indeed, start where they would prefer.

All of these revisions attempt to engage consultants specifically with the three themes identified in this research. More fluid training options attempt to respect
consultants' own preferences and the shared Canvas space can be a way for consultants to both reflect and engage with others. The one theme we need more research to better understand, however, is the idea of Previous Practice: this can give both administrators a better idea of how to develop effective learning opportunities and develop ways for consultants to participate in the development of the online program.

**Online Consultant Training Heuristic**

This section will discuss a heuristic (or rather, some general suggestions) that might offer immediate suggestions for researchers and scholars that want to further explore or implement these ideas in their own online training programs. Furthermore, my goal in working to develop this heuristic (informed by the themes) is twofold: offer a starting point for those wanting to further study these three themes (previous practice, preferences, descriptions of training experiences) in future studies related to online consultant training and to simply give those wanting to implement participatory design methodologies to an online training program a foundation on which to start. So, as a heuristic, I would argue that an online training program wanting to emphasize a participatory lens should explore the following:

**Building on Previous Practice.** As I’ve mentioned, more research is needed on consultant transfer between face-to-face and online writing centers to better understand how to implement this theme for participatory design. However, I would offer a preliminary thought on incorporating previous practice into a heuristic: begin an online training program by more actively surveying (or other data collection method) consultants' perceptions of face-to-face consulting, and helping them to be more aware of their current practice as a face-to-face consultant. Scaffolding for previous practice may give consultants agency by valuing the knowledge they bring from one context to the other. Previous Practice also provides a common language through which consultants can then engage with program administrators and researchers. To accomplish these goals, there certainly needs to be close collaboration and mutual respect between face-to-face and online writing centers (especially those that operate as similar operations).
Figure 7. Revised Training Path Visual (Summer 2016)
Valuing Consultant Presence and Acting on Preferences. A key idea we valued from the beginning of our program was finding ways for consultants to make choices about their own training. We wanted consultants to not only tell us their preferences but also act on them, to help shape a program that would benefit not only their preferences but those of others. Incorporating ideas of Universal Design for Learning, for example, is one way we’ve begun to address this concern; this is present in our flexible training design and the options for how to reflect. I would argue that infusing a training program with principles of Universal Design for Learning is a useful heuristic for creating a training program that has the space for consultant preferences to be emphasized.

However, I recognize that allowing all consultants to choose various different paths can become chaotic and difficult to see where each consultant is at and when. So, I would further suggest providing a few general options for consultants to choose from. Doing so allows them to choose the path that works for them while still allowing consultants to move through training in somewhat similar ways. Then, consultants can suggest and help re-think alternative paths for training.

Space for Consultant Reflection. As various scholars have noted, reflection is important to writing center consultant development, but only if the reflection has rhetorical purpose beyond just the director and a consultant. These spaces can start as simple discussion boards, for examples, but can and should morph into spaces where consultants can exchange ideas and work to give these ideas action and value. While there are certainly other variables that could be studied, my cases have shown the potential of these three themes for understand tacit knowledge and, in turn, helping consultants develop a common language (online pedagogy), which could then help them develop a more active role in shaping the direction of our program.

Because we were fortunate enough to have a budget that allowed our consultants additional time for reflection, we were able to do consistent reflection throughout. As budgets fluctuate, I would suggest negotiating with consultants about what the most important parts of training might be and have them reflect on key aspects of training, rather than after each specific training exercise as I did.
Regrettably, because of time concerns, I developed the heuristic (as opposed to collaboratively with consultants). Developing effective heuristics for participatory online training programs could be the prototyping stage of Spinuzzi’s (2005) methodology, but the consultants did not directly help me theorize its shape in this case: their contribution was through the reflective work presented in the previous chapter as well as their confirmation of the results. However, before future work building off of these preliminary ideas progresses in my own local context, consultants will be consulted about shaping the direction of such research.

Conclusion: Re-thinking Consultant Participation in Online Training Programs

I’d like to conclude, first, with a few limitations to my study, but then finish with a few high notes. Of course, my study is limited in what it can offer in terms of conclusions, but also methodologically. Chief among these limitations is the heavy use of written reflections; when discussing her own study, Luck (2002) noted that “the study focuses on the verbal exchange of design ideas that is critical during the early concept, pre-briefing stages of design. The process is iterative and both knowledge and understanding emerge as a consequence of the verbal exchange of ideas” (Luck, 2002, p. 524, emphasis added). My study was grounded primarily in written reflection (due to a collaborative decision made by online administrators). Naturally, the written reflections offer a more concrete and instantly paradoxical approach to understanding tacit knowledge. Attempts to formalize their understandings of the program and online pedagogical processes has the potential to contradict how tacit knowledge is meant to be understood, and thus, limits the conclusions I was making about tacit knowledge. At the same time, I don’t think the written reflection was detrimental to the study either, because consultants used them to work through some complicated ideas; I would suggest that future studies make stronger use of verbal data collection (such as interviews) when possible. Furthermore, I would argue that we need more research that studies consultant transfer of practice between face-to-face and online consulting spaces. For example, how do consultants learn about consulting when they practice face-to-face and online simultaneously? Such ideas were vital to the consultant reflections presented in chapter 4. Understanding transfer between spaces, I would argue, is also vital for the development
of participatory programs, as it helps consultants better understand new spaces and contexts in which they work and helps them develop a common language to discuss these new spaces.

Throughout the years, writing centers have certainly reshaped how they work with consultants and the roles consultants have in our research and scholarship. If I can make an argument broadly about the benefit of participatory design, it would be that it is just one lens through which we can continue the productive work we’ve done with consultants. And, if participatory design is a path we should want to follow (which I hope we do) then I think my study provides a starting point, highlights a few preliminary variables for further study, and establishes the benefit of such a methodological lens. My hope is that writing centers will continue to recognize the important insights consultants bring to the table and explore participatory methodologies as a way of further engaging them as active participants in both the research we conduct.
References


Appendix A: Online Orientation Document

Eligible Students
Online consultations are currently available to students with physical and learning disabilities; students enrolled in online courses, study abroad, and Project Dragonfly; and alumni living far from Oxford.

Project Dragonfly
- Project Dragonfly offers two master’s programs that combine fieldwork with online coursework.
- Over 1,000 students are enrolled in 45 states and 12 non-US countries.
- Many are non-traditionals returning to school, who haven’t written a paper in years.
- 60-70% of students are familiar with Google Docs.
- Project Dragonfly courses encourage creativity: students are not expected to follow typical scientific approaches to writing.

Types of Online Consulting
Students can choose from two types of online consultations:

- **Real-Time (synchronous):** Student and consultant meet together in WCOnline and discuss the paper through video, audio, and/or chat.
- **Written Response (asynchronous):** Student sends their paper through WCOnline, email, or Google Docs, and consultant provides written feedback in comment bubbles.

Howe Online Email
We have an email account for conducting Real-Time and Written Response appointments.

username: hwconline@MiamiOH.edu
password: [Redacted]

Scheduling and Conducting Online Appointments
One to two of your hours will be pulled from the KING schedule and placed in the ONLINE schedule. Scheduling instructions are on our website (http://miamioh.edu/howe/consultations/scheduling-online/index.html).

Real-Time Sessions
Real-Time appointment forms will have a red link to “Start or Join Consultation” that leads to the synchronous text- and audio-sharing space. Text from WCOnline is automatically generated in the whiteboard and can be deleted. Because this space can be difficult to work in, we suggest using WCOnline for video/audio but giving students the option to use Google Docs for text sharing.

Written Response Sessions
After a student schedules a Written Response appointment, they will send their paper in one of three ways:

- Attached to the appointment form in WCOnline.
- Emailed to hwconline@MiamiOH.edu.
- Shared via Google Docs with hwconline@MiamiOH.edu.

Consultants can return documents by attaching them to the Client Report Form in WCOnline or emailing them from hwconline@MiamiOH.edu

**Online Training Plan**

Online training includes orientation, best practices, mock consultations, and live consultations. You will finish training after completing a sufficient number of live sessions, consistently applying feedback, and no longer requiring alterations to your online pedagogy. Training is fluid, with multiple possible paths:

**Reflections**

You will write short and long reflections throughout your training: short ones after each consultation and longer ones after finishing (1) best practices, (2) mocks, and (3) live training. Reflections are for your own growth: you can discuss what worked or didn’t work, ask questions, or request specific feedback.

**Sample Reflection**

“This really made me reflect on how I give feedback to my own students. One concern of mine (overall, but in comment 12 specifically) is how to address a problematic argument without being too accusatory. I know you suggested being direct, so I would love some feedback on how to more effectively do that. I also didn’t realize how much I use ‘you’ when writing feedback. That was a hard habit to break.”
Support
During and after training, you can receive the following support:

- **Mentoring.** You will work closely with both online administrators and receive individualized feedback and help others by responding to their questions or concerns posted to HOWEONLINE.

- **Email Listserv.** [HOWEONLINE@listserv.MiamiOH.edu](mailto:HOWEONLINE@listserv.MiamiOH.edu) is for online administrators and consultants. You are highly encouraged to use HOWEONLINE informally to discuss the unique challenges of online consulting you encounter and seek advice.

- **Google Drive Resources.** We will share an “Online Consulting Resources” folder with you on Google Drive, which contains documents for the online program and Project Dragonfly.
Appendix B

Best Practices for Real-Time Consultations

Preparing for the Session

- Sit where you feel comfortable and not distracted (e.g., your usual table in the writing center, the consultants’ room, classroom, Kate’s or Jenelle’s office, or grad assistant cubby).
- Have a non-distracting background on your video screen.
- Position the camera so you are level with the student and not looking down at them.
- Login to hwconline@MiamiOH.edu and create a new Google Doc, just in case the student wants to work in this medium.
- Enter WCOnline’s synchronous space a minute or two early, when possible.

Beginning the Session

- Begin with informal conversation, like you normally would
- Inform the writer of the chat feature if video and audio fail or begin to lag.
- Ask if they would rather work in WCOnline’s whiteboard or Google Docs.
- If they choose WCOnline, let them know the format of their paper may be altered.
- If they choose Google Docs, share a new Google Doc through hwconline@MiamiOH.edu, or have them share theirs with hwconline.
- Ask if they have any technology questions.
- Clarify that sessions are 45 minutes.
- Let them decide which portions of the paper will be read and discussed.

Handling Technological Issues

- Address any issues in a light-hearted way. Reacting negatively gives the impression that you are uncomfortable in this space.
  - If you or your student loses video, use the chat feature to walk them through the following steps:
  - Make sure the student clicked “accept” when their browser asked permission to use their camera/microphone. If they did not accept the first time, they can close the window, enter the synchronous space again, and then click accept.
  - If the video stops working or starts slowing down, ask them to turn the video camera off and then turn it on again. This button looks like a video camcorder.
- Do not spend more than 5 to 10 minutes trying to connect to video/audio. If unable to connect, use the chat feature for the rest of the session.

General Effective Approaches

- Model technology use for writers every time you use a new feature.
When using both WCOnline and Google Docs, use two windows side by side.

Insert comments in Google Docs to record something the writer stated about their text. Encourage the writer to do the same afterwards.

Select and/or highlight text in Google Docs to point out text for discussion.

Bold text in WCOnline to point out specific words or sentences.

**Approaches for Sessions with Audio and Video**

- Ask students to read out loud, like a face-to-face session. Have them pause frequently, as you can’t use body language to stop the student when they are reading. While they are reading, model features/revisions for the student.
- Maintain “eye contact” and presence. Glance at the video camera occasionally to remind the writer that you are invested in them. Lean in to reduce the feeling of distance. Don’t slouch in your chair.

**Approaches for Chat-Only Sessions**

- Read the student’s paper silently to yourself and encourage the student to read with you. Let them know when you have finished.

- Talk through your actions to communicate often and clearly about what you are doing and ask frequent questions to make sure you are both on the same page.
- Remain patient: it takes time to type and responses. Don’t get frustrated while waiting for a response.
- Keep written response suggestions in mind while writing real-time comments.
Appendix C:

Best Practices for Written Response Consultations

Introductory Comment
1. Greet the student by name and introduce yourself as the consultant.
2. Repeat the areas that the student wants help with (located on the appointment form).
3. Begin the session, with a phrase such as “Let’s get started.”

Hello, Christopher! My name is Dan, and I will be reading your paper today. I see that you want help with organization and APA. I’ll keep that in mind as I look over your paper. Let’s get started!

Ending Comment
1. Greet the student by name and thank them for scheduling an appointment.
2. Clarify that the session has ended.
3. Compliment the student on strong aspects of their paper.
4. Restate your main suggestions.
5. Direct them to the Client Report Form for more details and encourage them to schedule an additional appointment.
6. “End” the session (e.g., “Happy writing!”) and sign your name.

Thank you for scheduling an online appointment, Ryan! Unfortunately, this is as far as I was able to read within this 45-minute session. Please feel free to schedule an additional online appointment and note if you would like them to begin on a certain page. I have summarized my overall suggestions in your Client Report Form. Have a great day! –Ashley

Time Management and Focus
- Expect to be slow at typing your comments when you first begin written response training
- Focus your attention on up to three main areas noted on the appointment form.
- Manage the amount of feedback you provide on each page. If comments begin condensing in the margins, you are commenting too much.

General Strategies
- Provide reasoning and explanation for all suggestions. Clearly explain why you are making a suggestion and how it will improve the student’s writing.
- Optimize clarity because students cannot ask questions or seek clarification in real-time.
- Provide at least two specific, explanatory instances of praise. Avoid vague, evaluative words like “good,” “great,” or “excellent.”
- Interact with students’ ideas to appear engaged.
• Ask open-ended questions to help the student elaborate or to convey your confusion.
• Highlight repeated patterns of issues, challenging students to apply solutions. Inform the student that you will be highlighting and with which color.
• Use smiley faces to soften suggestions and replace a friendly facial expression.
• Refer students to outside resources (e.g., Purdue OWL) when needed.

Strategic Language Choices
• Use second-person “you” when introducing the session, giving praise, and discussing the student’s opinion or effective writing choices. Avoid “you” when it may across as blaming.
• Use polite commands to be direct and clear, but soften them with words such as “consider,” “maybe,” or “think about.”

Grammar, Style, and Punctuation
• Locate patterns and recurring issues. For example, if you notice several run-on sentences, provide a comment or two about how to identify and fix them. Then, use the highlighter tool to help and encourage students to locate further instances on their own.
• Explain why something needs to be changed and the students’ options for changing it.
• Provide proofreading strategies for locating further instances of a repeating issue (e.g., “find” option in Microsoft Word for wordy/repetitious phrases).
• Use basic terms and descriptors, such as punctuation names or “noun,” “subject,” “verb,” “adjective,” and “adverb.” Avoid unnecessary and complicated grammatical terms (e.g., “introductory element” rather than “introductory adverbial clause”).
• Address issues and use terms correctly. If you’re unsure, ask or look it up beforehand.

Although literacy is mentioned a few times in this conclusion, consider ending the conclusion with a statement on literacy, as that was your main focus. Leave the reader thinking. What do you want them to take away overall?

This comma after ‘vacation’ is currently combining two complete sentences, but commas are not ‘strong’ enough to do so. This use of a comma would be called a comma splice. You have a few options to fix this small issue:
• add the word “and” right after the comma
• replace the comma with a semicolon (;)
• replace the comma with a period
Which option do you think would work best here?
Citations and Plagiarism

Addressing citation issues (e.g., missing citations, poor paraphrasing, copy and pasting) without accusation is essential, even if the student did not ask for assistance in this area. The word “plagiarism” should be used only in serious situations. Address citation issues in third person.