ABSTRACT

BUILDING FOR COMMUNITIES: DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTUAL MODELS, AND
ADAPTATIONS TO COMMUNITY LOCATED WORK

by David Coffin Halliwell

This thesis reviews scholarship to create a synthesized framework for understanding
community-based writing centers. It begins by establishing differences between writing
centers at colleges and in the community. The framework is developed by exploring
concepts of community, intersectionality, and writing. The thesis concludes by defining a
community-based writing center by this framework, reiterating the current exigence for
the proliferation of community-based writing centers, and also positing future directions
research may go.

BUILDING FOR COMMUNITIES: DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTUAL MODELS, AND
ADAPTATIONS TO COMMUNITY LOCATED WORK:

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, my shining star. Megan; this work is an insufficient offering to represent my immense gratitude and appreciation for your perpetual help, for shared conversations, vented frustrations, excited realizations, and being a source of helpful corrections. I could not have done this without you. I came to Oxford to stay with you, and for that alone, everything has been worth it. Thank you for being everything good in academe, and in this world.

I love you.

Building for Communities: Definitions, Conceptual Models, and Adaptations to Community Located Work

Introduction

Writing—indeed, all communication—matters. In her article, Jennifer Clifton states that "rhetorical education trains citizens 1) to make public claims, 2) to dialogue together with others who are also making (possibly conflicting) public claims, and 3) to make wise decisions under difficult circumstances with knowledge that is always limited" (Clifton 64). On an individual, inter-community, and national level, communication is the lifeblood of identity and change, and is only rising in importance (Brandt *The Rise of Writing*). Despite the need for lifelong writing learning to be supported, despite everything known about writing, most writing support comes from communities that take on the complicated work themselves.

Scholars in rhetoric and composition have long sought to understand how writing scholars can impact communities outside of ivory towers. Ellen Cushman's "The Rhetorician as Agent of Social Change" illustrates the kind of careful attention needed to transition ideas in university spaces into realities in public contexts. While calling for deeper engagement from academics with communities, Cushman stresses the "need to emphasize the difference between missionary activism, which introduces certain literacies to promote an ideology, and scholarly activism, which facilitates the literate activities that already take place in the community" (13). More specifically, writing centers are an academic institution that scholars are adapting to serve publics outside of academe. Tiffany Rousculp and Linda Flower have created centers made for non-academic participants and communities and grappled with the changes needed to adapt writing center practices that work with college students to varied publics. Similarly, Jackie Grutsch McKinney has argued that writing center work is not monolithic, and that there is more than one way to perform and understand writing center work. Although scholars have made great strides to bridge the academic/community divide in literacy work, there is still a need to establish a theoretical frame for approaching community writing center work, as well as a set of practical guidelines that can serve as a heuristic for those who wish to create such centers.

In this synthesis, I hope to present a framework for thinking through areas important to community-based writing centers. I hope to reach writing center scholars who are interested in learning more about community-based writing centers, and I want to give useful information to their creation, but also takeaways for academics who cannot run or work in those institutions themselves.

As I examine my position entering this research, I realize I have been defined by writing centers. Since starting my undergraduate, I have worked in three distinct writing centers: a predominantly drop-in community college writing center; an appointment-based small private college center; and an undergraduate and graduate serving writing center at a public university. Writing centers were my gateway to composition and rhetoric. I have firsthand seen and benefited from the amazing work that can be done in writing centers. But the first I ever personally heard of community-based writing centers was when I came to graduate school. When I finished reading Tiffany Rousculp's *Rhetoric of Respect*, I was left with questions: why isn't this something I had heard of before? Why isn't this more widespread?

I also approach this as a citizen who is concerned by the severe lack of literacy resources outside of educational institutions. Beyond public libraries, there are limited resources for literacy support, especially for communication. Having also spent years as a volunteer at my local library, I know how much work is done with community members and literacy sponsors such as libraries. I believe literacy support for communication and writing needs to reach the

widespread, professional levels of public libraries. I am a believer in the power of writing centers, and in this work, I want to help take a few more steps forward to understanding how community-based writing centers can be more commonly and meaningfully realized. To that end, I create a framework that identifies important areas of concern that must be met for a community-based writing center to authentically serve its patrons: it must be connected symbiotically and collaboratively with the community, it must practice understanding how intersectionality and matrixes of inequalities affect its patrons, and it must have a conception clearly conveyed of writing supported by writing research.

Community-based writing centers do not take one specific form. It may not even be completely accurate to refer to them as writing centers. The kinds of composing literacy work they can do vary and can include different types of meaning-making that "writing" may seem to exclude. However, pulling from writing center scholarship, writing center is my best term for this research. I do look forward to scholarship and community-based writing centers continuing to define themselves and finding more appropriate terminology. For the purpose of discussing community-based writing centers, it is useful to frame their variety as a spectrum. On the one end, community-based writing centers may closely resemble campus-based writing centers. They have consultants that meet with writers in a central location to discuss patrons' writing that makes up a core piece of their work. They may have specific programs, outreach, or other work as well, such as Flower's or Rousculp's centers.

On the other hand, there are programs that look very different. The nonprofit 826, with its different chapters, is a writing-focused organization that has a very focused goal of "supporting students ages 6 to 18 with their creative and expository writing skills, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write…[by] provid[ing] after-school tutoring, evening and weekend workshops, in-school tutoring, help for English language learners, and assistance with student publications" ("About"). This nonprofit has key differences from more campus-resembling organizations. Their mission is specific, down to an age-group and type of composing. Everything they do is built around that specific goal. Another example could be writing groups formed at/by local libraries. In Fairfield Ohio, the local library has several different writer-oriented services, including small groups for fiction and poetry, and a specific room in the library reservable by writers ("Just For Writers"). Such writing groups also differ from the recognizable writing center model, in this case orbiting heavily the resources available to the library and the interest generated among patrons. Both of these organizations show that community-based writing centers can vary wildly in execution depending on their mission and location. But what connects these? What are essential elements that guide all of these centers to work well with their patrons? By making this framework I seek to create my own addition to the field's efforts to positively impact the literacy practices of our citizenry and help begin mapping the essential elements to understand and create these centers.

To make this framework, I will draw on current successful examples of community-based writing centers and synthesize interdisciplinary research in order to 1) introduce readers to existing scholarship on community-based writing centers (Breuch; Flower; Rousculp), 2) argue for the theoretical approaches I see as essential to making these communities work (Adler-Kassner and Wardle; Grabill; Long), and 3) suggest useful practical advice, steps, and processes for establishing and maintaining community-based writing centers (Ingraham; Potts and Salvo).

To reach these goals, I will be synthesizing different theoretical lenses to create a robust guiding frame for community-based writing center work. Multiple theoretical perspectives are useful for navigating the complex day-to day-work of these centers and their diverse writers.

Threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner and Wardle; Meyer and Land) provide a language to describe and engage with the liminal, non-linear work of writers and their identities. Theories of publics provide the complicated and critical understanding that no two publics are alike and that community-based writing centers must actively seek understanding and support from their local contexts to be able to help those audiences most effectively (Inoue, "Afterword"; Long; Potts and Salvo). Feminist and antiracist frames caution us to remember that writing is not neutral but to take into account systems of power and the importance of intersectionality (Cooper; Inoue, "Antiracist Writing"; Ivanič; Winkler). Further, when navigating the aspects of funding, spaces, and questions that arise when rubber hits the road and work with specific publics begins, the work, scholarship, and survival of public libraries can serve as guide and ally (Darman et al.; Ingraham; MoneyGram International).

Chapter 1: Comparing Campus and Community-based Writing Centers

What are Writing Centers?

This project must start by exploring the idea of writing centers. Writing center work is the work of defining and designing writing center practice and theory. In this chapter, I want to explore the ideas of writing centers, what they should be and do, where and who they work with, and how these ideas call for, support, and hinder community-based writing centers.

While writing center work defies easy encapsulation, it is helpful to form a definition of writing center work and examine how ways of reaching their goals vary between centers. A working definition for writing centers can be this: *Writing centers respond to a rhetorical, audience-defined need/desire for communication support.* They tend to be based in college campuses, often staffed by trained undergraduate/graduate peer consultants, and have sessions with writers that focus on one-to-one face-to-face tutoring. College-situated writing centers have the additional element of having a reliable rhetorical situation—a student (speaker), an assignment (purpose), an instructor (audience) Writing centers evolved to have particular strategies and concerns associated with them. In this early scholarship, writing centers are center on providing a minimalist style of face-to-face peer tutoring that helps writers navigate the higher order concerns of their writing—a focus on organization, argument, instead of grammatical concerns—by working with writers at "any time in the composing of a given piece of writing" (North 434). Collaborative, face to face peer tutoring is often seen as the staple of college writing center practice (Breuch; Bruffee; Harris, "Collaboration Is Not", "Talking in the Middle"; North). For the purpose of "Making better writers," writing tutor work is discussed as being optimal when accomplished through minimalist methods (Harris; North). Minimalist tutoring positions a tutor as performing ideally when "offering reader response, leading the student toward finding her own answers, suggesting strategies to try, diagnosing possible underlying problems, listening while the student articulates her message, and offering needed support during the composing struggle" (Harris 371). This understanding of writing center work has implications for how consultant authority is positioned in the writing center.

Minimalist tutoring practices position consultant authority as something to minimalize and balance between identities placed against one another: student and instructor. Scholarship guidelines frequently construct tutors as inhabiting a middle ground between student and teacher, and that tutors should actively avoid authoritative acts:

> A tutor may assess what the writer should work on, but statements such as 'You need to organize this paragraph' or 'Your conclusion isn't logical' aren't appropriate comments

from a tutor. Tutors too far down the road toward 'teacherhood' are no longer
sympathetic, supportive helpers, sensitive to the needs of fellow students whose world
isn't very far removed from that of the tutor (Harris 380).

Expressions of minimalist tutoring place also place student authority in a disadvantageous
hierarchy; North's remarks on how a student's "rhythm, has to change—preferably, though not
necessarily, under the writer's control" illustrate the fixed and uncomfortable ramifications for
writer agency in these models that lacked an expression of power (443). Early writing center
scholarship clearly sees the purpose of tutors in higher education as mediating and molding
writers to a dominant discourse to save them from later, harsher judges.

Writing centers are better understood by discussing the place of power in writing
consultations. Current writing scholarship is full of research and discussion surrounding a
writer's and writing center's complex contact zone of language and power (Fitzgerald 29). This
reorientation toward understanding and approaching power includes understanding the place of
writing centers to combat institutional racism, challenging students own understandings, and the
responsibilities involved for writing center research (Inoue). Often times as a result of the nexus
of institutional racism and the hierarchical demands of higher education, "writing centers are
expected to 'manage' those differences, to bring them under control, to make students with
difference sound as mainstream as possible" (Grimm xii). Sometimes, these expectations lead to
strategies being used by consultants that are actively harmful to marginalized writers (Denny).
Understanding the power dynamics in writing consultations helps writing center directors teach
their consultants tactics for "subversion" where tutor and student work together to resist the
academic hierarchy and not conform or be broken by the system (Denny 54). Contemporary
writing centers now seek to resist the forces pressuring them to force students' conformity, and
they are also beginning to realize the need to look for their own participation in broader
inequalities.

Understanding the presence of power in writing center sessions opens the door to
understanding how the very institutional infrastructure of writing centers affects their goals and
implementation. Online writing centers showcase how the initial assumptions of early writing
center scholar can be upset, challenging original definitions of writing centers (Breuch 23).
Writing center conferences make concrete how "this community is not actually one but many,
made up of different individuals with different identities, interests, and agendas, in different
kinds of institutions in different parts of the country—and the world" (Fitzgerald 27). From the
early days of writing center work, the forms writing centers take have grown considerably
(Breuch 35-37). As the diversity of writing center workers and missions expands, so to do the
points of inquiry and ways of doing writing center work.

Even across these shifts in understanding writing centers, understanding the frameworks
writing center theory and practice build remains a consistent concern. Every writing center has a
framework, implicit or explicit, from which it derives its identity. Online writing center work has
called attention to frameworks that are often invisible, as Breuch explains

The complexities introduced by online writing centers have gotten me thinking about
how a strong conceptual model is important to any design…examining conceptual
models more closely—particularly in relation to online writing centers—might be very
useful in making sense of the array and seeming inconstancy of online writing centers
(22).

These frameworks are fluid, responding to institutional changes. In an example of these changes
occurring on one center, Grimm explains how her center moved from the fixit model to a model

that emphasized , "productive and flexible engagement with linguistic, social, racial, and cultural diversity," the kind of "significant change" that only happens "when unconscious conceptual models are brought to the surface and replaced with conscious ones" (15-16). It is active and critical interrogation of driving concepts that allows the knowledge needed to understand current structures and their effects.

Writing center literature from across four decades demonstrates a consistent thread of writing center work involving questions of audience, of language, of literacy, and learning. Such commonalities that still pervade the different writing centers and theory scholarship today: the assumptions made about and in writing centers, about those made about "students, about language, about literacy, about learning" remain common points of inquiry for writing center work (Grimm 12). Even with the multiplicity in how writing centers are created and who they serve, when it comes to campus-based centers, the prevailing similarity is that they all seek to serve audiences that operate in a similar rhetorical situation of student, assignment, instructor. The rhetorical realities of higher education writing are built on the same assemblage of faculty, student, and assignment: a constant, if often troubled and contested, hierarchy. While contemporary campus-situated writing centers complicate the nature of the academy, students must still adapt to the writing requirements of assignments issued by instructors. There might be professors that contest the power dynamic, students that bring in outside work, or assignments that challenge expectations in a variety of ways. It is breadth, not depth, of complexity that I draw attention to as a difference between campus and community-based writing centers. Community-based writing centers may also develop in time predictable norms in their patrons' work and needs, but these will not be that predictable at the start. This variety is a key distinction, and one with consequences for understanding the work of a writing center.

What are Community-Based Writing Centers?

College-based writing centers' common rhetorical situation does not apply when considering writing centers serving public communities. The blanketing rhetorical situation of undergraduate work—a student (speaker), an assignment (purpose), an instructor (audience)—is gone. In its place is something else: writing center work that is embodied in a specific local community with patrons that have their own needs and desires engaging across a complicated network of possible exigencies—professional, political, personal, and all of these at once. To understand the key differences, one must understand community literacy work engaged by these centers, the distinctions between academic concerns and the specific problems community-based writing centers must struggle with, and how these all come together to make a distinct difference in the rhetorical situation concerns and set-up of community-based writing centers versus campus-situated writing centers. In essence, community-based writing centers respond to a rhetorical, audience-defined need/desire for communication support but serve a public, not higher-education specific audience. Community-based writing centers also live outside of the student, assignment sheet, instructor assemblage, and so the rhetorical situation of their work is in constant flux and cannot be assumed. This is not to say that variation does not exist in campus-based writing centers, but variation is the entire purpose of community-based writing centers, not the outlier.

Power relationships are hard to predict in community situations, where campus-based writing centers are generally clearer, often taking the form of teacher and student. While there can be lots of complexity to that—is the teacher's pedagogy trying to share power in the classroom? Does the student have a group project there are struggling to find agency in?—

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generally, it will fall within the teacher, student, assignment dimension of power. Community-based writing centers have a more varied spectrum of possible power situations—is the writing for a job? Are they supervisor or subordinate? Are they writing for an internal or external audience for the company? While a stable genre of power relations may be identified in time—most of the patrons are coming in with a similar set, like work-related projects from a similar company—initially, that variability will be hard to predict.

What is Community Literacy's Place in Community-Based Writing Centers?

Community-based writing centers do have a shared set of questions and concerns around encouraging the rhetorical agency of their patrons. When thinking about the rhetorical agency of patrons, central questions include: "Who is being empowered? To what ends? By what means?" (Flower 53, 123). A similar concept articulated by Rousculp is "rhetoric of respect for the 'wholeness' of the person" at every level of interactions between their writing coaches and participants, is the essential determiner of her center's success" that drives the work of a community-based writing center (xiv). To be able to help grow their patrons' rhetorical agency and demonstrate a rhetoric of respect to them, community-based writing centers must understand and incorporate community literacy.

Community-based writing center work is intricately tied with community literacy with an emphasis on understanding the local concerns and situations of the community. Community-based writing centers are not passive or observers—they are full members of their communities, and to succeed in their missions means they must embrace and understand their particular place in their communities' struggles and successes. Flower establishes her definition of the term as "a rhetorical practice for inquiry and social change" that's main work is "linking learning, liberation, and community" (16). For Flower, the community-based writing center must help navigate and engage differences in their communities, because "in this *rhetorical model*, community literacy is a site for personal and public inquiry" (19) and the crucial work of community literacy is rhetorically realized. The rhetorical reality of community-based writing centers means that both political and personal work is done by them—and these are not mutually exclusive. Identity development, expression, and creation through writing has concrete consequences, since identity has "rhetorical dimensions, that how identity was invoked (its presentation) mattered and that, when well-executed, could make social change happen, maybe not monumental change, but local shifts or micro-successes, that might culminate in a tipping point" (Denny 7-8). This connection makes it crucial to understand the power and need for writing centers made and maintained for communities: there is power for people in their communicating their own identities and being able to connect their struggles to rhetorical action. Community-based writing centers help communities do this rhetorical work "not [in] that it convenes a preexisting community but that the community it creates is a deliberative one, a distinctive local public sphere that was unlikely to exist without it…what is unusual about community literacy is that without positioning itself in an adversarial or advocacy stance, it reverses some critical patterns of authority (though by no means all) and gives pride of place to the expertise and voice of community folks." (29). In other words, to encourage and tend to individual community members is inseparable from tending to the overall rhetorical life of the community. And to do that, a community-based writing center must understand itself as defined and determined by their communities. Rousculp describes the training material and policies of the Community Writing Center as creating "a place of collaborative experimentation, a place to take risks without evaluation": it is this "ideological DNA" that creates the "a rhetoric

of respect" that allows staff to "maintain a solid faith in the potential partner's own capability and in their agency to determine what they wanted or needed" (47, 27). The heart of community-based writing center work then is a specific mission accomplished in the face of thousands of unknown specific rhetorical situations, but against a known backdrop of a need for respect of community members, fostering of their rhetorical agency through community literacy practices, and understanding the center as embodied member of that community. To accomplish these goals, higher-education writing center practices need reviewed to understand what transfers into this new rhetorical situation, and what does not.

What Changes from Campus to Community-based Writing Center?

Reviewing writing center scholarship illustrates the need to rethink how power and authority in writing centers are constructed for community-based writing centers. Authority in community-based writing centers is complex, vastly depending on the embodied context of community writers, staff, and their writing situations and needs. The simple spectrum of authority that places consultants as tightrope walkers in a desirable middle is an inaccurate picture of power relations in community-based writing centers. By having candid discussions of power in community-writing center sessions, power differences between consultant and patron can be acknowledged, explored, negotiated.

All writers and staff live somewhere, experience something, and have stakes and contexts in each other's worlds. Power and privilege are often front and center in community sites, with tutors/consultants and (usually white) and privileged outsiders who need to be aware of the role they are enacting in a community: There are real implications of white privilege and how race and marginalizing others play out in writing center sessions (Denny 35-37). These encounters may come from fetishizing people of color and their experiences, as Innes reflects on and seeks to alter (Innes). Structural racism may also come through based on the artificial goals students are trying to reach: the overall white habitus of grading apparatuses in higher education automatically sets a white-privileged angle that is often regarded as invisible by white faculty and students (Inoue). Racist structures for assessment or interaction do not disappear when entering community-based writing centers. The need for honest dialogue such as discussed by Flower and Innes is needed for working with writers. Power must be understood to enter writing consultations from a whole manner of contexts, including the staff's lives and connections to communities involved.

What is a Community-Based Writing Center Framework and Why?

Theories have concrete power for good or ill in how they drive praxis. It is important to revisit, deconstruct, and rebuild theories to do the best work they can. As Grimm says, "Theory often works in much the same way as the quilting stories, haunting and worrying us and only sometimes instructing us in practical decisions" (ix). Building a framework for community-based writing centers requires such a revisiting of writing center scholarship, as well as pulling together frameworks from other disciplines and areas that can help explore working with publics.

Community-based writing centers get right to the heart of notions of the importance of participatory citizens who problem solve in their communities and society. Zimmereli and Bridges frame the importance of the civic empowering potential of community-based writing centers by stating "extending [writing center] services beyond the campus community…is consistent with the liberatory ideal of democratic education" and the impetus for their

partnership (2). To buy into the ideals of writing centers in college campuses necessitates acceptance that the same exigence for writing support is needed in communities; writing cannot merely matter to the lucky few who enter college campuses and engage with their writing centers and learning: writing and communication support is a lifelong need that does not wait for degrees, does not end or begin on college acceptances. Even North's monolithic "Idea" contained statements like "Maybe in a perfect world, all writers would have their own ready auditor…who would not only listen but draw them out, ask them questions they would not think to ask themselves. *A writing center is an institutional response to this need*" (440, emphasis added). It is not a perfect world that all writers should have this access, but a necessary world. If one believes in the purpose of college writing centers, it takes very little to see the need for community-based writing centers.

Community-based writing centers have a rich history and published works on them ("Write From the Heart"); what is missing is that research synthesized with other related fields and theories to build a framework that can be deployed when creating a community-based writing center. Theories including those that explore working with publics, threshold concepts, feminist, antiracist; these can help a community-based writing center be responsive to their patrons. It is important that before a prospective center director begins breaking ground on a writing center, that they know what ground they are entering. The methodologies that can help guide where to look and what questions to ask are explored in the second chapter, where the theories critical the development of the community-based writing center framework are explored and interwoven. Grimm highlights the importance of theory, for "revised theories offer backwards lessons, providing foresight through hindsight, allowing today's contradictions to shape tomorrow's practice" (x). With as messy and as important of work as community work is, there must be goals set, plans in place, to help navigate uncertain waters of practice.

Theory and framework matter for community-based writing center work. To be able to keep direction and remain oriented toward the needs and desires of their patrons, community-based writing centers must be able to understand and articulate who their patrons are and be able to negotiate and explore what communication support means for them. Community-based writing centers must understand that the ways they present, discuss, and imagine language to have consequences for the writers they work with, and that those writers experience those consequences from other places in their lives as well. Thus, frameworks are extremely important for writing center work. Rousculp articulates that a "rhetoric of respect for the 'wholeness' of the person" at every level of interactions between their writing coaches and participants, is the essential determiner of her center's success (xiv). A new framework is necessary. One where participants, literacies, languages, and learning are explored with the particular needs and challenges of community-based writing centers in mind. Distinguishing campus-situated writing centers and community-based writing centers is an important difference: campus-situated centers may operate under the assumption their audience are students and their needs/desires for support orbit the rhetorical situations involved as being students. Community-based writing centers crucially cannot make such assumptions; instead, their audiences are locally defined and more multi-vocal, multi-audienced, and kaleidoscopic, with a range of rhetorical situations and needs/desires for communication support to match.

Chapter 2: A Framework for Community-Based Writing Center Concerns

So far, this thesis has considered how important theory can be in shaping how a writing center functions: defining the work it does, the writers it works with, and the concerns it can respond to--even see at all. Community-based writing centers have been established as requiring a critical, complex understanding of the unique situations they respond to. This chapter puts forward a framework for understanding and responding to those concerns with flexible theories that help conceive, identify, and address community-based writing center problems and possibilities. While chapter 3 will have examples of specific, on the ground strategies, allies, approaches, this framework reaches for a comprehensive strategic level approach to understanding what must be considered for a socially just, local serving community-based writing center.

Already, there is research in community literacy that brings together coherent systems for thinking through and mapping publics, understanding positionality and community, and even some that connects writing practices with these areas (Flower; Long; Moore; Rousculp). What I aim to do is synthesize this existing research for the purpose of building a framework of areas of inquiry and tools for answering them that will help prospective community-writing center creators. I am particularly interested in beginning to find areas of writing studies that can be translated across disciplines to empower those outside the writing studies' field who also believe in and can do this important work. As I synthesize from existing research, my framework is that community-based writing center creators and directors should pay special attention to theorizing and exploring these areas:

- *Communities*
- *Intersectionality*
- *Writing*.

Theories of communities draw attention to the complicated interplay of systems and networks that constitute places people live and work. For community writing centers to work, directors must do their homework in understanding their specific local contexts. A key aspect of communities is that the people who live in them are intersectional. Intersectional experiences affect community members' rhetorical strategies and purposes, making understanding the experiences that come from living intersectionally affected lives an integral part of a community-based writing centers. A community-based writing center must understand how identities—whether marginalized or privileged—shape all angles of writing. It is also important that directors who do not come from rhetoric and composition programs are able to create and run these writing centers. The framework of threshold concepts--especially drawing from those articulated by writing studies, as identified by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle--contribute both a framework for thinking of learning as messy, and a possible path to learning writing studies' values and research.

My goal is that community-based writing center directors could use this framework to learn more about the needs and desires of their communities, as well as to be able to apply relevant research from composition and rhetoric without being full members of the fields.

How to Theorize Communities?

When looking to create a community-based writing center, the most important facet to understand is the community itself. Having a purposeful approach to mapping and communicating with communities is essential for a director's success in establishing and

maintaining a community-based writing center. Having a close understanding of community is important because, as illustrated in the work of Adam Banks, "Community literacy work must be about community even more than about literacy itself and must begin with the beauty, power and agency of the communities we enter and the people we hope to build with" (Banks x). The community of each writing center is unique: it is a complicated ecosystem of local publics and interests combining in any number of functional and frictious ways.

Researchers have already illustrated what successful and unsuccessful engagement with communities can look like. In the work of Flower and Rousculp, successful collaboration with their patrons in their centers is achieved by drawing on knowledge of the local contexts at play in communities. Flower's amplifying and listening practices–specifically lifting teenage resident voices of the neighborhood—responded to a local need. Conversely, the failures in programming Jeffery Grabill reports stem from ignorance of community needs. Flower's Community Learning Center engaged in dialogue with community members and constantly made itself a listening space for them, with the programs and participation of teenage community members being an especially strong example of listening to member needs (174-184). Grabill's work describes the classes at Rosewater Publishing for workers as making no connections for its members to their work or elsewhere, and through policies and choices of scheduling even disincentivized participation, through actions such as scheduling certification tests during work days and refusing to give time off (Grabill 61-63). In each instance, a connection with and willingness to listen and change dictated successful or unsuccessful interactions between stakeholders. Clearly, an accurate understanding of local contexts is of high priority for community-based writing center efforts.

Communities are messy. Making sense of the local realities of complex networks of people and organizations can be daunting. One way to see the pieces making up the puzzle is to think about communities as being made of local publics. Elenore Long defines communities as being "symbolic constructs enacted in time and around shared exigencies—in other words, *local publics*" (15). Communities are constructed around "distinct rhetorical agendas" that local publics contribute to, make up, and often subvert and exist outside, around, and within; theories of local publics can help directors understand that communities are not homogenous, and to avoid thinking of them in simple "geographic" terms (Long 15). Instead, local publics have purpose, connection, and heterogeneity. For community-based writing center directors, work with local publics entails working on both the macro community and micro individual areas of community-work, understanding their connected nature. In community writing work, it is the real relationships formed with others that matter most; as Cella et al unpack their own community partnerships, they especially point to authentic friendships reducing burnout in draining work (Cella et al. 44-45).

There are two established mapping tools that can be useful for community-based writing center directors. The first, from Elenore Long, helps think through discussing established communities and how they are talked about (I return to this framework in the third chapter to adapt into a heuristic for directors). The second, from Kristen Moore, is a great tool for guiding directors through the discovery and mapping of places and communities for prospective community-based writing centers.

The work of Elenore Long is especially helpful for breaking down how composition and rhetoric have approached community literacy work. This sketch gives different images of how different projects have interacted and identified with local publics. Her framework for

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understanding local publics consists of five parts that facilitate comparing ways of understanding communities (see table 1). Her method involves establishing five points of comparisons and pairing them with brief descriptions: this minimizes superfluous data and helps paint a helpful picture of the public. 1) Guiding Metaphor helps illustrates the ideological differences in conceptions of community initiatives "to structure and to define 'the human conceptual system'…indicating the 'working theories,' or internal representations, people build to interpret and to carry out complex discursive phenomena such as teaching, composing, deliberating, and theory building" (Long 17). 2 Context continues to draw attention to the fact that literacies and local practice exist in an ecology, not a vacuum. 3 Tenor of Discourse provides a way to describe the harder to pin down aspects of emotion and expression in literacies and communities that is important to note. 4 Literacy is the actual practices, genre sets, that are used in the communities. And 5 Rhetorical Invention is the category that explores how community members go through rhetorical processes to meet and compose those genre sets.

Point of Comparison	Brief Description
1. Guiding Metaphor	the *image* that describes the discursive space where ordinary people go public, including distinctive *features*
2. Context	*location,* as well as other context-specific *factors* that give public literacies their meaning
3. Tenor of the Discourse	*register*—the affective quality of the discourse
4. Literacy	key *practices* that comprise the discourse; how people use writing and words to organize and carry out their purposes for going public
5. Rhetorical Invention	the *generative process* by which people respond to the exigencies that call the local public into being

Table 1
Community Literacy and Local Publics
Source: Elenore Long. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics*. Annotated edition , Parlor Press, 2008.

Using these components, Long compares elements of different studies of community literacy, including Flower's Community Literacy Center (CLC) (16). The framework allows Long to articulate in shorthand the approach from each literacy initiative. Flower's CLC is described as a "community think tank" with the highlights being, "diversity, conflict, and tools" (Long 118). A very different approach and highlight appears when Long considers Cintron's Angel's Town as a "shadow system", which "mimics and shelters difference" (137). This approach by Long helps illustrate the various natures possible in local publics, and how knowing these local publics is essential for community-based writing center work.

Another method for identifying communities involves using place-based experience architecture. Moore explains that "Place-based methodologies begin with the assumption that place, with all its cultural, political, and material complexities, matters" and that it is essential to see "participants as meaningfully entrenched in a particular locale" rather than as simply "users" (145). Moore draws from her research to cultivate a framework for learning about local sites that can be used for learning about community-based writing centers as "places." The framework

provides a heuristic for beginning to understand a community. As such, it can be an invaluable starting place for those looking to form a community-based writing center. Moore's approach involves questions to be asked by the person interested in reaching a community, a summary of what answering that community can look like, and a detailed explanation of what that answer can mean. The "What do I not know" draws the community-writing center director to immediately consider critically what they think they know and what they do not about the community. "What about the Place" situates the information in the geographic realities of the community: this can be cultural, spatial, historical. "Where do local communities gather" emphasizes that different people circulate in different ways within communities, and community-based writing center directors must think tactically about places to advertise and places to actually locate their work for both advertising and access. Finally, "How do local communities communicate" has the director investigate how communication within and between local publics actually happens. This knowledge can be crucial to avoid missing entire segments of the population based on misconceptions of how certain groups can be reached.

Question	Summary of Practice	Explanation
1. *What do I not know?*	*Reflecting on our own positions*	Experience architects in local communities must become an expert on what they know and what they don't know about the local community. When they assume they know something, they must consider how they know it, what might be missing from their understanding, and how to deepen their understanding.
2. *What about the Place?*	*Gathering Stories, Narrative, and Learning about the Land*	Experience architects in local communities must understand the land and its value to the community. The first step to this is spending time in the place they're studying (a series of questions below elaborates on this)
3. *Where do local communities gather?*	*Finding a time and place to meet*	Place-based XA requires meeting in a shared location. As a form of intercultural communication, experience architects must strategize meeting sites that maximize the potential for inclusivity. Any choice of meeting location will disclude particular community groups, and this, in turn, determines what kinds of feedback the XA will elicit.
4. *How do the local communities communicate with one another?*	*Determining media and modes*	XA in local communities requires that the XA works with communities in the modes and media that they use in their daily practices. This sometimes means that the most cutting edge approaches to XA are ineffective for particular communities; it often means that multiple modes are required.

Table 2
"Experience Architecture in Public Planning"

Source: Kristen Moore. "Experience Architecture in Public Planning." *Rhetoric and Experience Architecture.* Ed. Potts and Salvo. Parlor Press. 2017.

Both frameworks have the strength of providing direction through open questions: there are no set formulas for success when doing community-based writing center work. Instead, heuristics that guide thought and practice yet remain open to variables and upsets serve best. While Long uses her framework to analyze researcher depictions of communities, it is possible to see how it might be used to help make sense of local public interactions, and even work with local publics to formulate answers and increase understanding of them. Moore's framework for experience architecture gives a clear process for an often-nebulous task: actually learning about a community. Considering place, means of communication, target demographics, and how choices will deselect possibilities inevitably call to mind the importance of purposeful, reflective choices in community-based writing center work.

A community-based writing center must do its diligence, its research, and make genuine connections to be able to match the needs of the rhetorical situation of the possibly multiple local publics it might serve. Understanding these communities is essential for community-based writing work. Writing needs and desires are "ecological," coming from a variety of "socially constituted systems" that influence and mediate writing (Cooper 367). Ways of writing and reasons for writing are all bound up in the histories and practices of local publics (Cooper 370; Cushman; Grabill 3-7). Without understanding community concerns and the local publics that constitute it, a community-based writing center *cannot* serve its community.

How to Understand Intersectionality?

Once an organizer has examined the elements of their local communities, then they must consider the intersectional needs at play there. The types of support for their needs and desires will be profoundly shaped by the intersectional shape of its members. The idea of intersectionality is that people and events are influenced by inequalities of power. These inequalities in power come from multiple factors and identities, not just one. It is also not possible to just say these are markers of the past without current relevance, better ignored than acknowledged. Kimberle Crenshaw notes the importance of responding to these matrixes of inequality and critiques attempts to ignore them: "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite-that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences" (1242). While intersectionality as a concept covers a wide range of approaches, definitions, and applications, Patricia Hill Collins provides a helpful overview:

> When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (11).

Languages, race, gender, sexuality, class, ableness, age: all issues of power, marginalization or dominance affect the communication needs and desires of writers and the obstacles they may face (Adler-Kassner and Wardle; Clark; Crenshaw; Cushman; Denny; Grabill). Community-based writing centers must not be afraid to engage with intersectional concerns in their communities and support their voices and problem-solving of local/glocal (glocal being the convergence of global and local) concerns. They must be confident that including intersectional

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training and missions in their goals is an inseparable part of, not a distraction from, their mission to support community writing needs. This intersectional commitment is modeled in community literacy work such as Zimmerelli and Bridges. Zimmerelli and Bridges describe the partnership between Loyola's writing center and the Bridges organization to help intercity high school students. To do this, Loyola's writing center made the partnership and integral part of their tutor training and their organization's life: their training is deeply enmeshed in learning in preparation and from working with the high school students they are partnered with, they "read writing center, service-learning, race and class privilege, literacy, and education texts...discuss the readings in the context of our students' Bridges and Loyola tutoring experiences...weave Bridges into the class when we discuss composition and writing center theory and praxis" (5). Loyola's writing center understood and committed to engaging with the intersections of class and race involved, and made meeting their partners' needs an integral, not sideline, goal.

Community literacy work has inseparable connections to intersectional concerns. Rhetoric as a field has placed great emphasis in understanding the connections among marginalized communities. Access to technology is connected with class—the "technopoor" having disadvantage compared to the economically privileged (Grabill 72-75); women rhetors through history have needed to seize the available means of persuasion to access and change public participation they are routinely attacked for participating in, from the highest forms of democratic participation, to simply entering online spaces; black communities have rhetorics that respond to the institutional racist structures of America that have "calcified" in this century and find alternative paths of truth telling often through remix (Banks 5, 16; Richard and Gray; Royster). These intersectional issues live as interwoven realities of consequential history that impacts the composing practices and support needs of patrons of community-based writing centers.

One way of recognizing intersectional realities is by considering literacy sponsors in communities. Sponsors, sources and controllers of literacy access, are explained by Deborah Brandt as a useful source of information of literacy:

> This analysis of sponsorship forces us to consider not merely how one's social group literacy may differ from another's, but how everybody's literacy practices are operating in differential economies, which supply different access routes, different degrees of sponsoring power, and different scales of monetary worth to the practices used. (21)

Considering sponsors in relation to literacy means considering the "range of human relationships and ideological pressures that turn up at the scenes of literacy learning—from benign sharing between adults and youth, to euphemized coercions in schools and workplaces" and more (Brandt 18). It helps community-based writing centers interrogate their own actions: how are their tools and services conditional? What is required, implied or explicit, to be a patron of the community writing center? Using sponsorship as a lens helps a center's staff identify agents and controllers of literacy in local communities.

Patrons in community-based writing centers may come from any number of standpoints or positionality mixing different marginalized and dominant identities and legacies. This translates to different accesses to power. When these writers enter community-based writing centers, these legacies of felt histories, strategies and symbols and positions: they will be present and a part of the work they do. A community-based writing center must be ready to respond to these positionalities and help writers navigate their rhetorical situations. The recognition of privilege is especially important if writing staff and community writers do not belong to the same communities (Flower 137-138). Intersectionality awareness can help shape programming, staff

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training, and mission goals for a center that match their community more closely. This awareness is something practiced already in university writing centers; Denny discusses how intersectional knowledge greatly affects staff and student interactions in writing sessions (149).

How Do We Understand Writing?

Writing comes later in building this framework for a reason. Depending on the other factors of communities and intersectional concerns, the writing needs and desires of the community served may vary wildly. However, there are dependable tools that can be used to help a director understand writers' needs and approach what learning may look like and what goals and expectations are reasonable. A framework I see having use for community-based writing centers is that threshold concepts of writing.

So to summarize, I see threshold concepts as being used to make two important moves for community-based writing centers: 1) to break down the field of composition and rhetoric's understanding about writing to be approachable and translatable to non-discipline experts that may run/staff/use community-based writing centers, and 2) to allow community-based writing centers to develop understandings of success and assessment such as liminality that allow for success, failure, and community work to be conceived of in more helpful frames.

Threshold concepts are a framework that emerged from research by Erik Meyer and Ray Land on teaching practices, growing from one study into a more largely applied framework. The threshold concepts framework has been used to identify fundamental, yet troublesome, understandings discipline that are held "central to the mastery of their subject" (Cousins 4). Threshold concepts vary from discipline to discipline, but they have five dependable characteristics to identify them by: they are transformative, irreversible, integrative, bounded, and troublesome (Cousins 4). Threshold concepts have been adopted and utilized by a variety of disciplines, including writing studies. Elizabeth Wardle and Linda Adler-Kassner's *Naming What We Know* reflects findings from a study in which writing studies scholars worked together to identify threshold concepts of their field. This project culminated in five umbrella concepts with multiple subconcepts. What makes writing studies' concepts particularly interesting is that they may be less bounded—or only useful to those in a specific discipline—than others, because learning about and using writing as a technology has implications that expand far beyond a single academic field, or academe itself.

Community-based writing center directors do not need to know every piece of writing-related research, but there are elements of writing research that are needed to do writing center work. To be clear, threshold concepts are *not* expected to make disciplinary experts of non-discipline insiders. However, community-based writing center directors can benefit from writing research without having to be discipline insiders. For example, writing studies research on identity and growth leads experts to recognize that "All Writers Have More to Learn" (Adler-Kassner and Wardle), and findings from this area of research is synthesized within this specific threshold concept. By reading about threshold concepts from writing studies, community-based writing center directors can learn and build from existing knowledge about diverse writers. However, the threshold concepts of writing studies (as articulated in Adler-Kassner and Wardle's text) are still written for a primarily academic audience. Later in this piece, I will discuss the potential in translating—or modifying for audience—threshold concepts of writing studies for practitioners and directors of community-based writing centers.

Directors of the community writing centers may use the threshold concepts framework, including theories of troublesomeness and liminality, to structure how they plan and execute

their missions in communities. Planning with threshold concepts may involve recognizing how writing concepts may prove troublesome for some patrons. If a particular writer is struggling with writing to different audiences, a critical but complex ability, directors may draw on the theory of troublesomeness and how learners move through complicated understandings. In this situation, a director could see that the writer is encountering the kind of "ideas that learners must 'see through and see with' (Kreber 2009, 11)" (qtd in Adler-Kassner and Wardle ix), which different learners may experience with difficulty, leading to different learners internalizing and applying such transformative concepts in differing ways.

The concept of liminality applies well to the work of community-based writing patrons for a similar reason. Liminality is useful to consider as "The idea that learners enter into a liminal state in their attempts to grasp certain concepts in their subjects presents a powerful way of remembering that learning is both affective and cognitive and that it involves identity shifts which can entail troublesome, unsafe journeys" (Cousins 4-5). Threshold concepts as a larger framework have also explored how periods of uncomfortable transition—or liminality—and learning accompany one another. Local publics move unpredictably, and initiatives may not succeed in traditional ways, meaning non-traditional views of success may be necessary (Long; Mathieu 19, 30). The ideological direction of writing threshold concepts may be as useful as its direct application. Writing threshold concepts orient ideas of uptake from in the moment to a wider window of learning that serves well the work of community-based writing centers. Patrons may find themselves' emmeshed in troublesome concepts for long periods, or they may not be regulars, and only have a session and leave.

Looking at Flower's use of "rivaling" can help show the multiple ways threshold concepts might serve and assist community-based writing center work, including helping programing and facilitating transparency and collaboration between staff and patrons. Rivaling speaks to that specific center's approach to problem solving and their overall work using tools that involve community members in brainstorming and trying on differences to build a multi-sided discussion. As Flower discusses the mission and work of her CLC, it becomes clear the work done in these rivaling centers speaks to the heart of her work, and maybe to other threshold concepts of community-based writing centers: collaboration, writing as power, the center's role as a listener and mediator of networks. Rivaling's use in Flower's center serves as a model for how I see threshold concepts possibly working for community-based writing centers.

Rivaling also shows a useful potential of threshold concepts as a tool that can increase transparency and discussion between staff and patrons. The key strength for rivaling is that everyone is in on it. The patrons must be informed, onboard, and find some use from it. It isn't something done to them, but something they decide to do together. Flower has to fully explain and create buy-in for the technique. The same can be done with threshold concepts through disclosure and dialogue. I would go so far to argue that this collaboration is a potential threshold concept of writing centers—both campus and community based—this interconnected, negotiated, and informed collaboration.

Writing studies understands that writing can help reveal socially constructed, valued aspects of the field and may help non-disciplinary experts who are community-based writing center directors become more knowledgeable of writing-studies' research. Making writing studies' values explicit for potential community writing center directors helps provide a guide to the conversation and nature of the field of writing studies. And unlike many bounded—or discipline-centric—threshold concepts, writing studies threshold concepts may help many different writers, as explained by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (3). These scholars present writing

threshold concepts in component pieces, and I believe these pieces can be a vital tool to exploring the needs of patrons at community-based writing centers *and* understanding the specific writing needs of the local publics of communities. One category of an articulated writing threshold concept, "All Writers Have More to Learn," helps change frames from a model of deficiency to a growth-mindset approach to writing. Perhaps a writing center might have patrons including:

- a person attempting to rise to new work responsibilities that require specific form conventions
- a person managing a non-profit that is in need of monies
- a person creating a video for the first time.

These writers are all responding to diverse and complex rhetorical situations and bring their own unique combination of individual experiences and local public stakes to their work. However, each of these situations might benefit from approaches that understand and draw from writing knowledge based on "All Writers Have More to Learn" *and* "Writing Speaks to Situations through Recognizable Forms" as they navigate learning and practicing new genre expectations.

To be able to recognize and react to these moments, staff in community-based writing centers need training in writing threshold concepts. Threshold concept usage for staff training might encourage more substantive engagement with patrons and give staff a language to discuss different writing moments (Nowacek and Hughes 171-183), influencing how they implicitly or explicitly engage with patrons. Having discussions, accessible readings, hypothetical sessions, and above all, observations and ongoing professional development can help this framework shine in a writing center. It will likely fall apart without follow-through from sustained professional development. For it to have its best chance to affect the patrons' takeaways, implicit or explicit, it should be discussed with patrons to create dialogue and a shared lexicon.

These might influence the work of writers at the mission-level of the community-based writing center, affecting their outreach and the types of composing and writers imagined by, partnered with, and explored by the center.

I argue writing threshold concepts may be used to concisely phrase and help explain major conceits of writing research for uptake by non-disciplinary experts. Threshold concepts can give some direction, clarity, and flexibility to conceptions of, support for, and redefining success of writing for community-based writing centers.

Why Does This Approach Matter?

A community-based writing center engages a complicated task. To be able to meet the ever-shifting rhetorical situations of local writers, this framework posits that beginning the creation of a center with a firm understanding of community, intersectionality, and a clear articulation of writing, allow a community-based writing center to accomplish its goal. What this framework hopes to do is establish the importance of investigating, planning for, and supporting a community's local publics, intersectional needs, and serving and aiding writing literacies across time with varied definitions of success. It is through careful planning, networking, and collaborating that a community-based writing center can be a welcome addition, not an intrusion, to a community. The intersectional needs of a community make up a major part of the communication practices and lived realities of citizens. Supporting writing across time with clear conceptions of writing best practices *and* with nuanced goals for success is essential for the longevity of the project.

No community-based writing center looks exactly the same. Flower's CLC privileges use of strategies such as rivaling to help different local publics communicate and use the CLC as a space to facilitate connection and productive conflict (Flower). Rousculp primarily documents how her center grew in many different directions, responding to both individual patron needs and also to local institutions by having partnered programming beyond sessions. A community-based writing center might find itself best serving the community by hosting events, by having sessions with writers in person, by holding workshops, and any or no combination of these and more. What defines a successful community-based writing center is whether it is serving its community's communication needs.

The next chapter explores what this framework means for community-based writing centers, possible allies for their creation, exigences in this current moment, and recaps tools to take a community-based writing center toward a concrete reality.

Chapter 3: Takeaways and Future Work

Chapter one reviewed writing center scholarship and discussed ways that scholarship does and does not successfully circulate to community-based writing centers. Chapter two focused on three major areas to explore and establish for founding a community-based writing center that is locally responsive while serving community needs and following writing research. This last chapter explores possible allies of community-based writing centers, expands on the current exigence that demands them and the opposition they may face, and recaps possible tools for community-based writing center directors. Finally, I conclude with future work that might be done on community-based writing centers.

Building this framework has given me a vision of what a community-based writing center is. Even considering the vast spectrum of ways and functions a community-based writing center can take, I have a stance on what a community-based writing center is, can be, and should do. Community-based centers must be made for and with their local publics. They must be collaborative in its long-term mission and its day-today work. It must engage in assisting and advocating for marginalized communities and their needs, working to name and expose the invisible to the majority power lines that lay across our society. It should be staffed by people who live in and are a part of the communities served: ideally, this includes the director as well. If this is not possible, every effort must be made to avoid an evangelizing mindset. A community-based writing center cannot do its work by invading a community.

I have been asked where I would open one, when, and why. I believe these centers as expressed belong in any community to provide a resource and guide for composing literacies. Whether it is functional literacies or organizing literacies that might be useful to a post-industrial community changing direction, or social literacies needed in a majority-white area that needs to build its understanding of power and race. For myself, I hope to engage with this kind of community partnership in my future, even as I exit academe. But this work is not for graduate students and contingent faculty to hold: this is for established members of communities—ideally for people with some financial stability. This is hard and long work that needs its participants to have some structural resilience.

This wide definition does not include every program. If there is a community program for writing that does not meet the needs of its local patrons, that does face the real concerns of intersectionality, that does not treat with writing as research understands it but how standardized tests deform it, then that is not a community-based writing center. At its worst, a center that does not practice these elements can reinforce or replicate dominant power structures and actively harm communities. Such a place will not do the work needed for the life of a community, and if a center director is put in the place of compromising their mission to the point it no longer resembles these qualities, they should consider closing the writing center, because it will no longer truly serve the community if it loses these traits.

Heuristics for Learning

The process of learning about community-based writing centers is not straightforward, but it can be helped with tools that guide the learning process. Moore's methodology for thinking through local publics can be particularly useful for learning about what one does and does not know. Long's framework for comparing scholarship on community literacy can be readapted to help academics learning with communities. Instead of completing the framework guiding questions alone as an exercise in textual analysis, scholars might use it as a brainstorming tool to

prompt discussion with a community partner to help focus their expertise and insights. I have taken Long's framework, leaving the points of comparison the same and revising the brief description to be open-ended questions intended for use by a community member. For example, I changed the metaphor from an assessment of an academic's stance to a generative exercise for a community member to describe their group.

Point of Comparison	Brief Description
1. Guiding Metaphor	What is an image that captures the feeling of your group? It can be a painting, a picture, or a metaphor or analogy that describes this group? Example: are you tending a garden? A ship at sea in a storm? Why do you think these images fit?
2. Context	What are important things to know about the *location?* What are related pieces of the community that affect this group? Why?
3. Tenor of the Discourse	What's the emotional energy of the group? The *register?*
4. Literacy	What are the core activities of the group? What are the practices that are most important to your group, and why?
5. Rhetorical Invention	How does your group make these activities? How do you refine them? How do you communicate with each other, and about what?

Revised in this way, Long's framework can be used to help build open-ended questions and responses from community members. This adaptation is far from perfect, but I hope the shift from scholarship interpretation to *collaborative discussion* is useful in itself.

This shift of knowledge-making is crucial, because in many cases *you do not have authority in this community*. At least, not as a scholar. No one is waiting with baited breath for you to share your knowledge and take charge. This ecosystem exists without you. Instead, academics who want to learn from and work with local communities must remember to interact with the standpoint they occupy in their own local communities if applicable, and that the work of other scholars such as Cushman shows the importance of knowing how to lend, not force, academic privileges.

Importance of Allies

Community work requires allies for many reasons. As has been discussed before, partners help avoid burnout, give perspectives, and enhance work toward writing center visions in many ways. Rousculp's writing center work shows that the literacy sponsors in a community that might work with a center can be varied and plentiful with the right outreach and approach. Organizations that worked with Rousculp included a center for homeless youth, local cultural groups, the Salt Lake Library, and more (88-101). Importantly, work with allies must be negotiated: Rousculp explains that the "realization that the CWC could not determine the methods or outcomes of the projects it facilitated was central to the evolution of how [it] engaged with partners" (99). When Rousculp attempted to control what partnership would always look like by having intake forms and similar confines, no one was willing to work with them, until she changed her approach to meet each partner in their specific circumstance and interest. Each community member, each potential partner has their own interests they might wish to see

fulfilled in working with a community writing center; following and trusting those local interests was the key to building relationships for Rousculp's center and will be for others as well.

One potential ally in many communities I wish to call directors' attention to are local public libraries. They have been engaged in the complicated and underfunded work of community literacy work for a long time and are accustomed to making arguments for their survival, changing to fit the needs of communities, and networking to create funding opportunities. Public libraries' missions for holistic literacy support for communities makes them natural models for emulation and possible partners for community-based writing center work. Public libraries have a rich history of fighting for community literacy and meeting community needs and also build on similar ground, including threshold concepts (Johnson and McCracken; Thompson; Townsend). Libraries make natural allies for their shared values, as well as the resources and expertise they may offer, including space and access.

These alliances may not be easy to forge, especially in an environment of scarcity. Libraries continue to have funding cut, their public worth questioned. For writing centers to make partnerships work, they must do work. Contributing writing expertise is one such way: in-house grant writing support can be a valuable benefit for both organizations' programming and funding. Pooling volunteer/staff resources may be another. There is some research and testimonials already to campus-based partnerships between writing centers and academic libraries, such as the work of James Elmborg and Sheril Hook. These works may be places to start, as might networking with those people such as Salt Lake Library. Ultimately, remembering and practicing reciprocity and respect is key to sustaining a relationship between strained but compatible organizations.

Even academics unable to word directly with community-based writing centers may be able to help their work through adapting scholarship in writing studies to be more accessible to various audiences—or assisting through translation. While I believe threshold concepts of writing are a strong framework that can be useful to community-based writing centers, there is much rich research in the field of writing studies that is locked away by insider jargon, pay walls, or simply by not being familiar with the field and its research. Academics interested in helping community-based writing centers might use their insider knowledge to adapt key writing ideas and debates for a more mainstream audience. Making this research available gives more tools to directors and will help make a more fertile soil for the cultivation of more community-based writing centers nationwide.

Recognizing the Exigence

Community's literacy actions carry high stakes. More and more, composing literacies are being left unsupported by current education standards, leaving more learning to be done unsupported post-education, as "high-stakes testing has led teachers to necessarily focus on teaching to the test, especially in secondary English courses." (Adler-Kassner et al). This is in a period of intense turmoil in communities at all scales: national and local. In this environment, community-based writing centers can fill a clear need for helping local communities, amplifying and supporting voices. This exigence makes the intersectional knowledge and reality of community-based writing centers all the more important.

This exigence that calls for community-based writing centers also places unique barriers to helping communities and may even cause backlash toward centers. The continued legacy of misunderstanding the teaching and value of writing such as "Johnny Can't Write" may lead to confusion and pushback to a community-writing center that does not enforce Standard Written

English (SWE). SWE adherents are the embodied interactions with the systemic misunderstanding of writing in this nation. Believers in SWE as the only right option range from the misinformed but well-intentioned, to those hiding behind a concern for English to express English-only sentiments. Writing is understood in reductive, stilted, non-research-based terms in the general public: forms of knowledge-making don't consistently find their way into the publics, such as "teachers, students, parents, administrators, lawmakers, news media," understanding of writing, even as these publics "are important to how writing is conceptualized" (Ball and Lowe 1). Ball and Lowe's edited volume *Bad Ideas About Writing* discusses and speaks back to some of these ideas, such as "Strong Writing and Writers Don't Need Revision" and "There is One Correct Way of Writing and Speaking" (Ball and Lowe). These misconceptions can cloud collaboration with local publics, accompany writers into their work at the community-based writing center (and dangerously, staff working there), or even compel resentment of the ideological understanding of literacy that research has arrived at and the center represents (Long 31).

Rhetorics of hate may be encountered by patrons interacting in local publics. Local publics pushing against dominant narratives will need to combat established privileges and racism. Community-based writing centers following their mission of working with and amplifying the voices of marginalized—not straight, white, male—people will find those they serve encountering resistance that the center's staff must be trained to assist them through. As local publics marshal and engage with massive, systemic issues, hate groups work to silence, demean, and change frames of conversation about contending with social justice. For example, in his research of publics on the website Tumblr, Kyle Larson shows how writers encounter dominant narratives, they can be viciously attacked by those who want to silence them, as was the case of feminist writers on Tumblr being attacked through the "Operation Happy Birthday" raids on their local publics by hate groups (Larson 265). Like the feminist authors of these blogs, community members might want to write against dominant discourses, and therefore face resistance or reprisal. Similarly, the national stage of movements such as Black Lives Matter is creating ripples that bring social justice conversations to the surface in local contexts (McHendry). There may also be worries of mistranslation by other groups, and more personal dangers to patrons or staff, such as worries of domestic violence victims who require anonymity (Mathieu 37-38). The key takeaway is that the nation-wide incidents of hate are *never* purely national stage concerns: hate is not further than one's backyard. A star football player speaking to the national stage may not be a patron of one's local community-based writing center: but someone writing in support removing local Confederate statues might be. There might be a patron bringing arguments full of racially charged arguments for work and help at the center. The specific woman in online communities may not be a part of one's center, but a local community-based writing center will likely have online writers, who must navigate the at time perilous nature of online writing.

Finally, assisting laborers in unionizing, housing protests against elected officials, or other acts of dissent may cause a center to be viewed unfavorably by established powers. Returning to the concept of sponsorship helps explore how control of literacy can be used as a leash, and literacy sponsors are not necessarily operating with the needs of communities in mind (Brandt 17-19). It may also complicate beneficial alliances. If a community writing center is in a partnership with a library dependent on tax dollars, complications can ensue.

There are no sure solutions to these problems; instead, preparation is key. When working with local publics in communities, one cannot be sure where one's message will go and circulate

through. It is the responsibility of the community-based writing center to be ready to navigate these instances for themselves and in support of their patrons who may also be under attack. The writing center must be aware of the web of power relations it is a part of as a community organization.

Recapping Importance of Context

Ultimately, the greatest asset and set of factors for a community-based writing center is its own local context. What networks can be used? Who gets invested in its goals? What are the needs and desires of the communities it serves? The specific strategies and tools, while certainly often generalizable across centers, work best when applied or derived from the context of the center. The "rivaling" procedures in Flower's CLC encouraged multiple points of view to be explored and developed (66). It was a fit for the multiple local publics of youth, administrators, and conflicting understandings in the community. Rousculp leaned heavily into community partners to cooperate with in developing programing and functioning as literacy sponsors (89), drawing resources from the university, but also from businesses and other non-profits. She leveraged the community to develop and help continue the programming the publics wanted.

The affordances and constraints, the wants and needs of the patrons—a community-based writing center must read a complicated and ever-changing script, an elusive rhetorical situation that itself is both audience and speaker in. Ultimately, success and failure will hinge on how well it speaks to that local situation and—more importantly—how well it listens.

Future Research

The framework I have synthesized is one that I see having work that can take it further. The elements of the framework given in chapter two—referencing community, intersectionality, and writing—are all in constant cooperation and conflict with each other. While I separate them to a give a way to speak about them, in practice these pieces of the framework will be constantly mixing, inseparable components of the local reality work within community-based writing centers.

Chiefly, I hope this framework is interrogated and made stronger. Primary research involving community-based writing centers could complicate and challenge it. Interviews with community-based writing center directors, such as Flower and Rousculp, might yield interesting insights. Visiting local writing groups, such as the Fairfield public library writing groups—a west Ohio local library's set room and programming for writers—or 826 chapters to learn how they approach and conceive of their work might also provide useful guidance.

While much of this synthesis has looked into community-based writing center theories and possible benefits for them, the practices and approaches that they employ could be worth reviewing and experimenting in campus-based writing centers. Questions of agency in sessions and management of power in the writing center are not new to writing center scholars, but community-based writing centers collaboratively built directions and wide encouragement of different writing situations can be a radical model to campus-situated writing centers for pushing what is considered possible with writers.

Academics can also consider other means of learning more from their local communities, even on their local campus. Organizations such as their university's community engagement office can direct them to local actions ongoing. The important thing to remember is that when entering local initiatives, you are another citizen: no more or less. Academic acumen may be neither needed or desired. And, likely these organizations have their own understanding of and

expertise in their missions. Academics entering publics must remember to enter in a spirit of humility to learn, not evangelize with a scholarly mandate.

The greatest step I see that must be taken in community-based writing center work is one of translation for access; for community-based writing centers to spread and thrive, the necessary knowledge of the discipline must be translated into an accessible and searchable format and place for non-academic insiders to draw from. Scholars cannot do the work alone, nor should they. Often, academics are not the right people for the job; community members are. Writing threshold concepts, writing center practices, tools such as Flower's "rivaling": it all needs to be made findable and readable. Writing studies has much to contribute to literacy efforts and support across the country; it just needs to get out there.

Conclusion

Community-based writing centers are all about an idea. One that has connections to many others. That idea is an ideal, that community voices matter, to individuals, neighborhoods, local and global arenas. That the intense, poetic, mundane writing needs of American society should be cherished, supported, learned from, and worked with. That for the voices of all members of society to be heard, communicative literacies should be supported by ready and accessible support by people who help navigate and listen to contexts, rhetorical situations, and communicator needs. It is the idea that in a society that declares itself a democracy, every voice needs localized support that helps them achieve their goals and serve the community by furthering the creation of a more just society. Most importantly, it is a sacred notion that the communicative literacy actions of citizens, no matter what their audience, purpose, or expression, matter: that they are the music singing through streams of meaning, with every communicative moment another beat of the heart, pushing blood throughout the body. It is one of the ideas of writing centers, and it is time it spread.

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