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The Learning Assistance Review

Journal of the National College Learning Center Association

National College Learning Center Association

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About *The Learning Assistance Review*

The Learning Assistance Review is an official publication of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA). NCLCA serves faculty, staff, and graduate students in the field of learning assistance at two- and four-year colleges, vocational and technical schools, and universities. All material published by *The Learning Assistance Review* is copyrighted by NCLCA and can be used only upon expressed written permission.

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Letter from the Editors

As life's complexity grows, the seduction of recollecting when life seemed simple becomes a dangerous siren song. Life was never simple; it was— and is— always complex, but the complexities differ. Learning assistant professionals daily balance operating multifaceted learning programs with creating a serene, "simple" environment. It is a daunting task. This issue addresses the complexity in providing learning assistance.

It is very exciting to present the first "Idea Exchange" submission, part of the "Join the Conversation" segment in The Learning Assistance Review (TLAR) journal. This idea exchange builds on the TLAR article in the Fall 2007 issue that discusses considering Learning Assistance Centers with a business model. Remember, anyone interested in participating in "Join the Conversation" should see the Pertinent Publishing Parameters at the end of this journal for more information. We encourage everyone to "Join into the Conversation" either by submitting a follow-up article or by participating in the idea exchange.

The submissions in this journal each address a different aspect of complexity in higher education. The first article "What is a Learning Center in the 21st Century?" is an important contribution to the field because it examines survey results from 142 colleges and universities to identify various "Learning Center" functions in higher education. The article "Orientation to Self and Career: Constructivist Theory and Practice in the Classroom" looks at ways to use constructivist career development theory to help students in career exploration in an increasingly dynamic and complex business environments. The article "Outcomes in a Multilingual University Classroom" discusses a study with Generation 1.5 students that explores how writing life histories using their multilingualism enhances student success. The final article "Linguistic Politeness in Peer Tutoring" uses politeness theory to analyze the developing tutorial relationship between students and peer tutors in a university writing center. The book review of *Handling Complexity in Learning Environments: Theory and Research* brings theory to practice through elaborated theoretical perspectives to conceptualize complexity.

Each of these articles reinforces the complication and diversity connected with providing learning assistance in higher education. Because the complexity of students' lives, their careers, and their studies is addressed daily by learning assistance professionals, providing assistance is far from an unsophisticated task. This discipline directly responds to students' lives; therefore, it is in a state of continuing evolution with increasing intricacies. This issue addresses that evolution.

On an unrelated note, we want to take an opportunity to thank Vice Provost and Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Dr. Patricia Metting who has pledged support to NCLCA through The University of Toledo; without UT support, we would be unable to continue as TLAR editors. We are honored to say NCLCA has a commitment for the next four years. Similarly, we wish to also thank UT Director for Student Life and Student Affairs Della Croci, for her assistance in preparing this issue for publication. Without her assistance, the journal would not have been possible.

Christine Reichert
Editor

Jeannine Rajan
Managing Editor

JOIN THE CONVERSATION:
Idea Exchange
The Business of Academic Support

Potacco, D., & De Young, S. D. (2007). The business of academic support. *The Learning Assistance Review*. 12(2), 19-31.

Tacy L. Holliday
Montgomery College

Potacco and De Young (2007) noted that academia has avoided adopting the fast-paced, profit-oriented operational style that accompanies corporate culture. However, a business model can be successfully adapted to the unique needs of an academic institution. The authors chronicled the change of a science learning assistance center from a struggling to successful center due to the application of classic marketing mix theory that focused on product, promotion, place, and price. The crux was a transition from offering a primary product, promotion strategy, place of service, and price to a mix of these offerings tailored to the needs of subgroups of the student population.

Learning center administrators and service providers often find themselves as stewards of the gap between the needs of students and the resources available to meet those needs. In my institution, for example, we are tasked with the paradox of expanding services in response to the College President's call for greater access along with the call to cut expenses. I am intrigued by the notion of providing different levels of service as a potential way to address this type of challenge.

I found an illustration for this while obtaining my boarding pass for the flight to the 2008 NCLCA conference. I went online to print my boarding pass and was offered an upgrade to business class for a relatively small fee. This prompted me to think about ways that learning centers could offer service upgrades. Here are some examples of different levels of service:

- Basic Service: A homework lab where students who need minimal support can use books or computers and work independently or interdependently with peers or learning assistants.
- Intermediate Service: Group Tutoring/SI and workshops devoted to helping students develop the skills to work independently.
- Premium Service: One-on-one learning sessions with a tutor, academic coach, or mentor.

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Business models share the drive to maximize efficiency. The basic level of service meets the needs of some students while requiring fewer staff resources than the intermediate or premium levels of service. By providing a basic level of service, students who do not have substantial needs can receive help without taking a tutor's time for 30 minutes to 1 hour. The tutor is then free to work with a student who needs a more intensive type of intervention.

Business models also place great emphasis on cost. Returning to the boarding pass example, there has to be a way to cover the additional cost of higher levels of service that is incurred by the college. Without funding, services cannot continue no matter how great the need or how great the service. Most learning centers that I am familiar with do not require students to pay for services beyond the cost of tuition. In my experience, students tend to value services more when they "pay" for those services. Is there a way to involve students in paying for additional levels of service? I'm not suggesting money as a way to pay for these services because that leads to ethical issues regarding which types of students (wealthy vs. poor) have access to help. What about having students pay for premium services, where appropriate, by having the students volunteer to help at the center in exchange for tutoring? For example, my center is always in need of front desk/receptionist help; a student who needs tutoring could pay for their tutoring by volunteering one hour a week to work the front desk. If the student has talents in another area, maybe he or she could provide artwork for the center, or make photocopies, or even tutor in a different subject area. This is not something that I have yet tried, nor is it something that I am saying others should try, but I hope it gets those creative juices flowing for how we, as learning assistance professionals, can better bridge the gap between the resources we have and the needs of the students and staff that we serve.

National Survey – What is a Learning Center in the 21st Century?

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Abstract

This article examines survey results from 142 colleges and universities to identify various "Learning Center" functions in higher education. Surveys completed through telephone interviews and in person at two national conferences indicate that core student success services in higher education include tutoring, workshops, disability services, and programs for at risk students. Results from a subsequent review of participating institution websites identified learning centers' mission statements and services. A final internet search found frequency of learning center names. These findings indicate Learning Centers have evolved into an essential multi-faceted student centered division of higher education, but it is growing though an identity crisis.

Determining what the Learning Center can be in the 21st Century is a difficult task because of the multiplicity of definitions and "functions" connected to the term "Learning Center." The various definitions of what a Learning Center is, what it is designed to accomplish, and what services it provides to the student gives some insight into the complex nature of the learning assistance discipline. Several definitions are dated while others are more comprehensive in design and scope. For example, one of the earliest yet most comprehensive definitions of a Learning Center is by F. Christ (1971), who stated that,

> "A Learning Assistance Center is any place where learners, learner data, and learning facilitators are interwoven into a sequential, cybernetic, individualized, people oriented system to service all students (learners) and faculty (learning facilitators) of any institution for whom learning by its students is important" (p. 39).

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Several years later, G. Enright (1975) defined the Learning Assistance Center as

> ...a place concerned with [the] learning environment within and without; functioning primarily to enable students to learn more in less time with greater ease and confidence; offering tutorial help, study aids in the content areas, and referrals to other helping agencies; serving as a testing ground for innovative machines, materials, and programs; and acting as campus ombudsman (p. 81).

In an attempt to provide a more specific definition, one author discussed four areas which comprise a learning center. According to G. Peterson (1975),

> “A learning center is an amalgamation of four services: library, audiovisual service, nontraditional learning activities (including tutoring), and instructional development service (that is, the center assists faculty members in developing new teaching strategies, materials, and courses)” (p. 9).

A noted historian in learning assistance, M. Maxwell (1994), indicated that a Learning Assistance Center provides a variety of academic support to serve students, faculty, and staff in the most efficient manner. She also indicated that the director must coordinate programs and work closely with academic departments and other campus services.

A recent transformation in the model of learning centers moves toward the concept of a “learning commons,” defined by S. Keating and R. Gabb (2005) as follows:

> The learning commons represents a greater functional integration of learning support than the information commons. In addition to contributions from library and IT services, the learning commons brings together other student services such as student learning support and in some cases academic staff support. The library becomes one of three or more educational partners in supporting students. (p. 3)

Initially, the integration of these services may have caused concern that each service would become diluted due to the volume of work necessary to support the large number of students requesting help. The opposite was, in fact, true for many colleges; students found the cutting edge technology and skills available through library staff supportive in avenues that varied from those traditionally found in a learning center. As both academic services and student affairs professionals come to better recognize the skills available at the library, the learning commons, which often is complete with information technology as well, can become a place to serve students of today who have already come to expect quick response to questions through the internet. It appears that an approach such as collaborations found in a learning commons may be a win-win for both, student and institution, by addressing student needs and centralizing staff and equipment. The variety of learning centers identified by this background review has set the stage for this study to see what a learning center in the 21st Century may resemble.

Method

Participants

Based on a convenience sample, 142 colleges and universities participated in this national survey, which included community colleges (N = 83) and colleges and universities (N = 59). Eleven surveys were completed by telephone; the remainder were submitted at two national conferences (the National College Learning Center Association, held in Atlanta, GA and the College Reading and Learning Association, held in Portland, OR) during 2007.

Procedures

This research was conducted via a three-pronged approach. The investigator developed a survey instrument based on the questions which were posed from previous conferences during formal presentations and informal conversations. Using the survey, researchers telephoned institutions selected from the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS). Of the institutions contacted via telephone, many directors chose not to participate, citing the lack of time. Several indicated that they would return the call, which some did. Most of the surveys (N = 131) were completed at the National College Learning Center Association Conference and the College of Reading and Learning Association Conference. This may limit the interpretation of the findings due to the narrow focus provided by those attending the conferences; however, it was used as a sample of convenience. The second prong used the completed surveys as a reference list of institutions. This list was provided to a graduate assistant who was given directions on how to access the websites of participants in order to review online postings of mission and vision statements. The final prong was to compile all of the information and to conduct an internet search. This search, using the Google search engine, was conducted in order to determine the frequency of terms (names of centers) used.

Results

The following are descriptions of learning center services provided by the institutions participating in the survey. Table 1 highlights some of the total responses on what type of services learning centers provide.

Table 1

Number of Learning Centers Providing Selected Services

	Disability Services	Tutoring	Academic Advising	First Year Experience	Academic Improvement	Women's Center	Grant Funded Programs	At-Risk Student Services
College or University N=83	42	76	30	15	56	0	23	33
Community College N=59	17	49	21	10	36	3	12	26
Total N= 142	59	125	51	25	92	3	24	59

These services are included in some centers yet not all. Discussion is included along with the results for the wide array of services that center directors identified in their survey responses. While several of the services were identified by just one or two of the respondents, they are an important aspect of this survey, therefore, are included in this forum to maintain the integrity of the survey format and to provide complete information.

Survey Responses

The results from other survey questions are included following those for the services provided.

Responses per service.

- Tutoring and Academic Coaching (88% of respondents): Both are programs designed to support the student in learning specific material. According to Anoka-Ramsey Community College (2007),

  > Tutoring is an age-old practice and is defined as a person giving individual or in some cases small group instruction. Content knowledge is also an essential ingredient for a tutor; however, to be truly effective, a tutor must combine content knowledge with empathy, honesty, and humor (¶1).

  The purpose of tutoring is to help students help themselves, or to assist or guide them to the point at which they become an independent learner and thus no longer need a tutor. In several schools, tutors are required to complete training that focuses on 1) learning theory, 2) study strategies, 3) communication strategies, 4) learning preferences, 5) diversity, 6) change as a process, 7) customer service, and 8) content strategies.

- Workshops (65% of respondents): Many colleges and universities have a unique set of skills workshops, some of which are not academic and are focused on life skills. Some of the improvement workshops include 1) managing or dealing with academic stress; 2) alternatives to medical school; 3) choosing a major; 4) dealing with procrastination; 5) being a first generation college student; 6) how to get into top MBA programs; 7) how to be successful in math/science classes; 8) reading speed; 9) internships and career preparation; 10) memorization techniques; 11) midterms and finals preparation; 12) managing money; 13) opportunities in studying abroad; 14) reading a text book; 15) test taking strategies; and, 16) living with other people. Select schools also have workshops such as grammar workshops and calculator workshops which are provided in collaboration with host academic departments. Several learning centers also provide tip sheets and online resources related to study and skill improvement.
- At-risk student services (41.5% of respondents): Higher education institutions are either proactive, targeting the low income or first generation students, or retroactive, providing services to those students who receive less than a 2.0 GPA. An at-risk student can also be undeclared, academically disadvantaged, have a

disability, or be in need of any developmental course. According to Ferguson (2000), the at-risk student is defined as someone who is underprepared or a person who lacks the skills necessary to meet the academic demands of higher education.

- Disability services (41.5% of respondents): Specific services are provided to students with various physical or mental challenges. According to the Cornucopia of Disability Information (2007), in the fall of 1986, over 12.5 million students were enrolled in the nation's postsecondary institutions. Over 1.3 million of these students (10.5%) reported having at least one disability. Schools participating in this survey indicate that academic accommodations can include making special arrangements with individual instructors to allow special seating arrangements, the use of tape recorders or other recording devices in class, and extended time for examinations. Tutors, readers, interpreters, and note takers may be available to students depending on the nature of their disability. Some students may be provided with an aide to assist them in accessing books in the library. Most of the services are designed to provide reasonable accommodations to support student learning.
- Academic Advising (36% of respondents): Centers provide a program designed to assist students to navigate coursework, obtain necessary referrals to campus resources, register for the next term, or obtain guidance related to academic issues. According to Tuskegee University (2007),

  > Academic advising is a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life / career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and advisor (¶ 1).

- Grant funded programs (24.6% of respondents): These respondents indicated support by internal or external grants and are designed to support student learning. Often, the general focus is primarily on students who are low income and first generation college students. Services include assistance in completing applications for financial aid and testing; academic counseling to understand each participant as a multidimensional individual with a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses; tutoring services provided for participants with academic assistance on an individual basis; and career guidance. Usually, a grant-funded program is an equal opportunity program, success program (primarily foundation based), or Federal TRiO program, e.g. Student Support Program or a state program which supports a similar population.

- Professional development services (21% of respondents): These centers are predominantly professionally based (e.g. faculty) with a few reporting some student based services. The professionally based programs include teaching and learning processes, teaching style, classroom management, and college / university rules. The student based services include preparation for high stakes tests offered through praxis classes and GRE improvement courses. Some also have PSAT / SAT improvement programs.
- First Year Experience (FYE) (18% of respondents): FYE is a program designed for the first year student who is making a transition from high school to college. According to many colleges which participated in this survey, an FYE is an academic program designed for entering college for the first time. FYE includes co-curricular elements, such as student gatherings, activities, study skills, life skills, and college success skills. The program provides an integrated and challenging experience which serves as a "starting point" to assist students to make choices leading to academic success.
- College or University Access Programs (6% of respondents): According to Lynn College (2007) access programs are defined, "as [the] students' ability to access and achieve success in higher education" (¶ 2). The foci of access programs are usually specifically designed for a particular under-represented population: low-income, first generation in family attending college, under-represented minorities, students with disabilities, and students who are returning to college later in life. Some of the specific types of programs are designed to assist students to enroll early, e.g. a summer bridge program, or to identify specific types and places of support service, in addition to those provided in the learning center itself.
- Academic Improvement Courses or Workshops: (65% of respondents): Programs are provided to support and ameliorate identified skill deficits. According to Hattie, Biggs, and Purdie (1996), some of the most prevalent student identified needs include time management, note-taking, goal setting, motivation, and basic study skills. Eberling (1998) also reports that the lack of preparation is a strong contributor to students failing to complete degree requirements.
- Women's Center: (2.1 % of respondents): Centers provide services particularly focused on women's issues. Many colleges define a women's center as a place and a resource open to all members of the college community. It is a space available for programming and events, advising and outreach, information and referral, leadership development, advocacy, meeting space and hosting various resources (books and magazines). Some women's centers work to transform discriminatory institutional structures by educating the college community about gender-related issues and the intersections of gender with race, class, and culture. Some centers also provide course work and integrate their focus into separate disciplines such as the Psychology of Women or Women in Politics.

- Other Categories: These include writing, math, tutor, language, computer, and testing labs. Two percent of learning centers report having language labs to support ESL students, as well as those taking foreign languages including Arabic, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. Computer lab access is described as having computers available, which students may use on a first-come first-served basis. Testing lab services are described as testing labs where instructors may send students for the purposes of re-testing, make-up testing, and special needs testing.

Decision making results.

- Professional Staff: With a clear majority of responses (31%) indicating that professional staff members primarily are responsible for daily operations of running a Learning Center, anecdotal notes were used to ascertain additional information. Through many conversations with colleagues, one question asked was, "Who is in charge of or directs the activities of the learning center?" Many said that their particular learning center activities were being directed correctly; however, none seem confident that the national consensus would encourage them to change leadership toward administration, staff, or faculty. This area was also confusing to those who were completing the survey, in that 22% either provided several answers or left the questions unanswered. Subsequent questions from the survey yielded the following results.
- Tutoring Fees: A portion of the survey addressed the fiscal viability of learning centers. Responding to a question concerning tutoring fees, most of the respondents (96.5%) do not charge for tutoring services, and, for those who do, the fees range from minimum wage to $15.00 per hour.
- Learning Center Management Tracking: Center directors indicated assessing the use and need for services by tracking students and the use of program elements. Most of the centers surveyed (66.9%) track services used by students. Of those programs that track students' use of services, the majority use either a home grown system such as scan in / out with ID cards, paper and pencil, or a log book; however, many reported the use a database or spreadsheet (13.6%), e.g. Access or Excel; others use a commercial software system such as Tutortrac (9%) or Accutrack (7%).
- Tracking for retention / persistence of students has become a more recent addition to the job of many directors. Of those schools in this survey who responded, a majority (50.7%) indicated that they now track student retention. A method to track students is through a mechanism noted above or through the data collected by the college / university institutional research department.

Identified best practices.

Most learning centers are proud of the services they provide to students and their focus on academic success. When asked what would be considered as "best practices" in providing services in the learning center, there was a wide array of responses.

- Service in Response to Student Need: An overarching theme was to assist students in their academic development. Directors are proud of their flexibility and their fluid response to student needs and providing services such as expanding hours of operation based on the time of the year and the requests of the student. Several programs tout their certification (CRLA Tutor Training Program was the only certification noted) indicating they have met a national standard. Others report that centrality and a "one stop shop" is important. They report that they are located around the high traffic patterns of the student body and that they do not require the student to go to many locations for the services that are required. Several note a strong collaborative model that includes faculty liaisons, supplemental instruction, and specialized training programs. Drop-in labs and extending learning center hours, as well as drop-in tutoring to assist students with content areas, are described by many learning center programs. Additionally, many programs report that they provide instruction on study skills, and, in particular, time management issues. These study skill programs are strongly recommended to students.
- Assessments: Assessments that include an early alert initiative to identify at-risk students and their specific needs, coupled with early Interventions for at-risk students, are reported by several schools. These assessments focus on early identification and early treatment of the particular needs of each student through the use of skill based or deficit based instruments. Instruments such as the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (1987) by Weinstein, Palmer, and Shulte are used by institutions as a means of helping the student to identify strengths and weaknesses. As the student proceeds through answering the short statements with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all typical of me" to "Very much typical of me," individual behaviors and perceptions on ten different scales are established. The scales include anxiety, attitude, concentration, information processing, motivation, self-testing, selecting main idea, use of support techniques, time management, and test preparation and strategies. When the student has completed the assessment, the learning center professionals are able to support the strengths and enhance the skills which were weak as identified by the student. In this manner, students can overcome areas they identify as weak and become more strategic learners.
- Tutoring: Tutoring is another area which many schools indicate is an effective practice. For example, several schools note that open tutoring hours, individual attention, opportunities for one-on-one tutoring, peer tutoring, learning commons, and walk-in tutoring are all important services. Several programs note that trained tutors available 60 hours a week, tutors for as many majors as

possible, and providing supplemental instruction are important for their students and have resulted in higher graduation rates. An issue that was noted often includes the de-stigmatization of students who seek assistance at the learning center or tutoring center.

- Additional Components: Those that were identified include 1) excellent customer service; 2) flexibility of subjects supported; 3) friendliness and professionalism of the staff; 4) individual attention; 5) diagnosis related to learning issues and learning; 6) promotion of student independence; 7) providing a supportive atmosphere for students; 8) meeting the needs of the non-traditional student by providing an evening family tutoring program; 9) strong counseling program; 10) supplemental instruction; 11) tailoring programs and services to the needs of the student quickly; 12) comprehensive testing services for all students; 13) time management workshops; 14) assisting students in a manner which supports Vygotsky's Scaffolding; 15) providing web-based resource and comprehensive computer labs; 16) assisting students with comprehensive information which is located on WebCT; and, 17) providing a welcoming environment.

Reviewing Mission and Vision Statements

When reviewing the learning center mission statements posted on websites (N = 107), it became clear that most are committed to supporting and strengthening the academic experience of students. Several statements included terms to describe students' self reliance, enhancing their self-regulation, and assisting students in developing academic and educational goals. There was also a focus on empowering students to reach their full academic potential and to provide a supportive learning environment. Learning centers also promoted retention through mission statement phrases such as "to provide individualized instruction to promote retention" or "to assist students in meeting demands of college level work."

Along with the mission statements, which are predominantly student focused, some learning centers posted values in global terms. For example, one learning center website had values which include "A strong commitment to diversity and respect for all races, nationality, gender, social-economic status, sexual orientation, education, physical ability, age, faith, geographic origin, language, family background, culture, individuality, or veteran status." Others have used language to include "Customer Service," "Standards," and "Team Work," which are similar statements made by corporations and not necessarily institutions of higher learning. Another learning center's mission statement included "Providing an intellectually stimulating environment for students and faculty conducive to study and learning." This particular learning center is in the library, and as a result its focus encompasses learning for the entire campus and not just the student body.

Another component of what a learning center tries to accomplish is outlined in terms of outcome based performance. This learning center director includes that its student body will achieve one of more of the following outcomes: 1) become more independent learners; 2) increase self-confidence; 3) decrease stress level; 4) improve grades; 5) become more aware of how they learn best; 6) increase knowledge of the subject;

7) complete homework assignments; 8) achieve potential; 9) better define and solve problems; 10) become more comfortable in using technology; 11) work more often with others; and 12) prepare for their goal, e.g. transfer to another college/university, obtain employment, etc. The director may be creating a concern with this outcome based list by overlooking the responsibility of assessing and providing evidence of accomplishing any of these goals. For example, with the goal to achieve potential, is there a corresponding assessment to determine achievement potential? In addition, most of the other outcomes would require an assessment prior to the student attending the learning center in order to determine if improvement did indeed occur.

What seems to be a more contemporary mission of a learning center is to provide access to online resources and data bases. Learning centers now often include one or more computer labs which are usually outfitted with a variety of software programs and Internet and e-mail access. Several learning centers also maintain a library of reference and course materials plus study resources for graduate and licensure examinations.

Internet Name Search

Learning centers can be a powerful and integral part of a campus which encourages community and may enhance retention. It is a location where a student's major is not at issue because the focus is learning. The learning center is a space on the campus that provides access to the connective tissue—or a hub—where students can go to learn how to write, read, study, learn or do mathematic calculations, or learn a specific content area. However, uniformity in what a learning center is or what services it provides is not evident in the survey outcome. This is further complicated by the various names a Learning Center is called. The Learning Support Centers in Higher Education (LSCHE) website (December 2007) reported that there are over 140 different names given to learning centers from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.

Based on a list of names compiled from the survey respondents, an internet search (using Google search engine) was conducted as a snapshot of the same time the surveys were gathered to search the "hits" on the labels used to identify their facilities. By far, the most popular label identified was Learning Center, with 82.9%. The next most frequently name is Writing Center at 7.12%. The least popular terms for the center were Academic Skills Coaching with .0002% and Academic Enrichment and Learning with .0003%. All of the titles and number of hits when conducting an Internet search can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Learning Center Name Frequency of Participating Survey Respondents

Number of Hits	Percentage of Total Hits	Title
44,800,000	82.9003%	Learning Center
3,850,000	7.1242%	Writing Center
1,190,000	2.2020%	Learning Resource Center
1,000,000	1.8505%	Educational Center
847,000	1.5673%	Success Center
548,000	1.0140%	Center for Teaching and Learning
438,000	0.8105%	Academic Support Center
402,000	0.7439%	Tutoring Center
344,000	0.6366%	Student Success Center
308,000	0.5699%	Teaching and Learning Center
200,000	0.3701%	Learning Assistance Center
88,100	0.1630%	Academic Support Center
25,000	0.0463%	Study Skills Center
410	0.0008%	Learning Achievement Center
170	0.0003%	Academic Enrichment and Learning
120	0.0002%	Academic Skills Coaching

Note. Search was conducted November 2, 2007 using Google search engine as a snapshot in time to correlate with when the surveys were gathered. The "hits" are for each quoted term and not the number of organizations with the title in their name.

Discussion

Conducting a national study on learning center functions and services is important to the field, as well as to the personnel who work in them. Clearly, there is a better sense of the organization of learning centers; however, it is also apparent that there must be a moderate amount of refinement related to terms, titles, structure, and so on. Additionally, areas of concern arose in the survey itself with open-ended questions that allowed for such wide ranging answers, evidenced in the naming of such a center. As the future of learning centers is pondered, professionals in the field are urged to identify additional best practices that are utilized on campuses of all types. By sharing this information at conferences and through additional research and publications, colleagues may embrace and utilize them to support student learning.

As the manager of the center looks to improve what is accomplished in support of student goal attainment, juggling demands is an ongoing feat. Identification of standards that support center and student needs, yet address the overarching goals of individual colleges and universities are individually driven. While recognizing that standards for learning assistance, such as those updated in 2008 by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), the manager will need to complete an assessment and then identify the goals to work toward. It is hoped that the information from this survey helped to identify both commonalities and exceptionalities which will be considered.

Further Study

This research has resulted in some questions being answered, but omissions related to important questions did not become apparent until the data was analyzed. For example, many of the centers indicated having similar services yet these vary in their marketing. This may cause confusion to some due to the wide array of the institutions represented in the survey where a construct may be simple for some to create and sustain while for others this can be a major struggle. Most respondents indicate having peer-tutoring, an important construct for all centers, yet peer-tutoring can also be a struggle for the staff in a 2-year institution. This is because the peer will generally only work in the second year of college. After that year, the student may graduate and move on; whereas in the 4-year institution, peer tutors may well work three or four years and sometimes even as a graduate student.

The survey shows that learning assistance is different in different institutions because of many factors specific to the type of school and its mission. A 2-year college may serve two masters, such as a terminal degree student and a transfer student, so learning assistance must serve both general and technical education. Likewise 4-year institutions serve those who enter: arriving directly from high school, transferring from a 2-year college, or entering graduate school. Each of these populations may need a variety of assistance, and it will be up to the learning assistance professional to ascertain what is necessary.

It is recommended that another national study should be conducted in order to determine information beyond structure and function. For example, what are the salaries of the director, professional staff, and faculty, as well as the tutors and supplemental instructors who work in learning centers? Related to tutoring, this survey did not assess the number of peer tutors, professional tutors, faculty tutors, or specialist (skill, writing, or math) tutors; this topic should be assessed in future research. A comprehensive set of data should be collected by all learning centers in order to support their needs and successes related to student persistence/retention. Learning center directors should be encouraged to review the best practices of other programs and integrate them into their programs.

Conclusion

These results reinforce how learning centers have evolved into a multi-faceted professional operation that addresses student success in higher education. Direct programs such as tutoring, workshops, programs for at risk students and services for students with disabilities are core aspects to learning centers in the 21st century. However, the results also indicate that learning centers are as varied as their names and provide a myriad of services that are individualized by the community college, college, or university setting. As a result, national organizations such as the Association for the Tutoring Profession (ATP), the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), and the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) are urged to develop a working committee which can consolidate all of the similar terms and operationalize them for future study. Working with representatives to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), as well as the member organization of the Council for Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations (CLADEA), collaborative efforts to share the best practices in learning assistance will support the learning center of the 21st century. However, the work of these organizations crosses many categories ranging much further than the focus of this article.

There are issues which focus on tutor training for individuals as well as programs. The work of the ATP concerning individual tutors and that of the CRLA for tutor training programs generally may address tutor needs. Recently a certification was developed by the NCLCA for learning center personnel which may be embraced by all learning center professionals. This type of certification identifies reasonable standards for the professional to reach, or aspire to, and helps to create a higher quality of leadership for a learning center program. Through identification of best practices in student service delivery, center management, training, and other areas of concern, the work of learning assistance professionals is to be appreciated for what is accomplished on a daily basis. That is providing students with access to systems which support successful completion of their goals.

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Orientation to Self and Career: Constructivist Theory and Practice in the Classroom

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Abstract

As the world of work becomes increasingly dynamic and complex, career courses must shift to reflect the growing diversity of those in the beginning stages of career exploration. Constructivist career development has emerged as one way to help young adults meet the challenges of the 21st century. Yet, there is a dearth of constructivist career development curricula and coursework. The current paper provides a detailed overview of one constructivist career course for culturally diverse college students called "Orientation to Self and Career." The paper includes a description of the course's theoretical underpinnings, modules, activities, and outcomes.

As the world of work becomes increasingly dynamic, flexible, and complex, career development courses must shift to reflect the growing diversity of backgrounds, needs, and meaning sought by those in the beginning stages of career exploration. Classroom preparation for this constantly changing, more globalized world of work has truly outgrown a dominant reliance on trait and factor approaches. Part of the foundation of the vocational guidance movement, trait and factor approaches to career development assume that finding one's place in the world of work is primarily a matter of uncovering one's traits and abilities, learning about the job market, and finding the match between these two factors (what one can do and what is available in the job market). However, in the current post-industrial age where students are being prepared for jobs that may not even exist yet, developmental and postmodern perspectives that provide young adults with a balanced, comprehensive, and meaningful process for exploring and making sense of the interconnections between identity and vocation seem most relevant.

In particular, constructivist career development has emerged as one way to integrate trait/factor, developmental, and post-modern perspectives to help young adults meet the challenges of the 21st century where careers

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are forged rather than foretold (Chen, 2003; Hoskins 1995; Peavy, 1995; Savickas, 1996; Watts, 1996).Yet, there is a dearth of constructivist career development curricula and coursework. With hopes of inspiring similar initiatives, the purpose of the current paper is to provide a detailed description of one constructivist career course for culturally diverse college students entitled "Orientation to Self and Career." In addition to describing the constructivist activities embedded in the course, the current paper will (a) describe the theoretical underpinnings and thematic bridges connecting the course activities, (b) illustrate how the course unfolds over one semester—including the three course modules, and (c) discuss the effectiveness of the course, including findings from recent outcome studies.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Orientation to Self and Career

At the core of the "Orientation to Self and Career" course is a focus on constructing one's identity and subjective career through meaning-making (Savickas, 1993; Schultheiss, 2007). Super's self-concept (1990) and Savickas' subjective career (1993) are central to this process. In order to develop the self-concept and subjective career, the course draws from three major perspectives of career development—career as self-realization, career as growing experiences, and career as context conceptualization—and includes the basic constructivist tools of narrative (authoring or telling one's own story), action (exploring aspects of oneself such as culture, values, and beliefs), construction (constructing identity within context), and interpretation (using personal identity and meaning to inform career directions) (Chen, 2003). Trait/factor and developmental approaches to career are integrated into the course via the three thematic bridges and basic constructivist tools.

The first theme, career as self-realization, is based on the fundamental idea that a person's internal sense of self plays a key role in his or her career across the life span. In order to extend students' self-concept and subjective career, the course includes the constructivist tools of narrative, action, construction, and interpretation to integrate predominant trait/factor approaches such as Holland's RIASEC codes (i.e., six basic personality types and work environments, including Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional; 1997) and Myers Briggs Typology (i.e., 16 different personality types, including how one perceives the world and makes decisions about information; Pinkney, 1983). The second theme, career as growing experiences, takes into account the long, developmental process which begins in early childhood where children's first career choices are expressed through fantasy (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951) and attends to the process of evolving and implementing the vocational self-concept through the exploration of work roles and lived experience (Savickas, 2005). The constructivist career course uses narrative, action, construction, and interpretation to help students integrate and understand the role of growing experiences in contributing to their self-concept and subjective career. The third theme, career as context conceptualization, examines the multiple contextual variables that come together to create meaning in one's life, including gender, race/ethnicity, and class, and again the course uses the basic tools of narrative, action, construction, and interpretation to help students explore the role of gender, race/ethnicity, and class in contributing to their self-concepts and ideas about appropriate career options. Through career as context conceptualization, the "Orientation to Self and Career" course also makes room for circumscription and compromise, (i.e., how young people recognize and select from the many vocational choices currently available to them; Gottfredson, 1996). Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the course activities, themes, and constructivist tools.

Constructivism is not only a dominant emerging perspective in career theory but also part of the current zeitgeist in the field of education (Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison, 1998). The course draws upon constructivist practices in education where the classroom is made up of active, engaged students who are viewed as collaborators in the process of teaching and learning and who are empowered to search for novel solutions to problems (Gray, 1997). In the constructivist classroom, the teacher is considered the facilitator of learning rather than all-knowing expert, and the process of learning is considered just as important as the outcome (Gray, 1997). As in constructivist career theory, the focus of constructivist practices in education is on the process of meaning-making.

The "Orientation to Self and Career" course sets the stage for a constructivist approach to education in the career classroom by using collaborative inquiry, play, negotiation, and active learning. For example, one of the first activities on the first day of class is "Chair Mates" (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1983), a game implemented to help students learn one another's names and take risks in a fun and engaging way. In addition, ice-breakers such as "Fantasy Island," "Slogans that Fit," "Life Events," and the "Color, Car, Character" exercise (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1983) are included to help students (a) get to know each other and feel comfortable in the classroom, (b) incorporate creative vantage points for extending their self-concept and subjective career, and (c) remain active and engaged in course activities.

Developing a safe space for collaborative inquiry is paramount in setting the stage for a constructivist learning environment. Collaborative inquiry involves the sharing of ideas and experiences where students offer their own thoughts and respond to the views of others (Staples, 2007). Through the process of collaborative inquiry students generate shared meaning and construct knowledge and understanding as part of a community of learners. In "Orientation to Self and Career," play and negotiation are key elements for developing collaborative inquiry. Play makes room for imagination in the classroom which facilitates creative approaches to problem-solving and permission to question, investigate, and hypothesize. Play also facilitates positive relationships and a sense of openness and community in the classroom. The sense of community, openness, and rapport provides a safe base from which to engage in collaborative inquiry. Particularly in the "Orientation to Self and Career" course where students are expected to engage in deep personal exploration in order to extend the self-concept and subjective career, play, comfort, and rapport are important. Comfort taking risks in low-stakes playful situations can help facilitate the group cohesion, interpersonal sharing, and interpersonal learning needed for more meaningful self-exploration, disclosure, and risk-taking.

In addition, negotiation is used to develop a safe space for collaborative inquiry. In the "Orientation to Self and Career" course, teachers and students work together early in the semester to develop and negotiate class norms, i.e. rules for engagement. In this process, the teacher and students both generate ideas about the characteristics needed for a positive learning environment (e.g. respect, humor, and openness to diverse opinions) and commit to working together to incorporate and maintain these elements in the current learning environment. Developing a safe space for collaborative inquiry sets the stage for a constructivist learning environment in which students can actively engage in narrative, action, construction, and interpretation to develop their self-concept and subjective career. Meeting once a week for two hours over the course of a 15 week semester, "Orientation to Self and Career" unfolds through three class modules: "Exploring the Past and Present," "Constructing the Future," and "Planning, Action, and Integration."

Module 1: Exploring the Past and Present

The structure of the course is based on the notion that students must develop a solid sense of self in the present in order to successfully project themselves into the future. Developing a solid sense of self in the present requires making sense of and understanding the past. Thus, the course begins in the past and focuses on authoring a coherent self-narrative. The narrative begins with students' earliest memories of identifying with a career or "wanting to be something." Students' first homework assignment—to uncover and write about their earliest career fantasy—taps into career as self-realization and growing experiences using narrative and action. During the following class period when students explore the relationships, role models, and environments that influenced the development of their earliest fantasies, career as context conceptualization is emphasized.

Students' second homework assignment—the career genogram—continues the focus on career as self-realization and context conceptualization using construction and narrative. The genogram activity (Brown & Brooks, 1991b) also taps into a developmental process relevant for many college students—the process of transitioning into adulthood. For many, the transition involves individuation; that is, carving out a unique identity from parents and family. However, particularly for more collectivist college students, the transition can involve gaining an understanding of the family values, traditions, and missions that they will honor and pass on. The career genogram helps facilitate the transition to adulthood by (a) uncovering family legacies and messages that have been passed on to students across generations, (b) providing the opportunity for students to rewrite messages taken in from the family that no longer fit for the individual, and (c) providing the opportunity to reaffirm the family missions, values, beliefs, and traditions that students desire to honor and carry on.

To help students integrate the past and present, experiential activities using action and narrative further promote career as self-realization and context conceptualization. The identity experiential, for example, calls for posting several aspects of identity, such as race, class, gender, religion, spirituality, work, education level, ability, family, and neighborhood/community around the classroom (National Conference for Community and Justice [NCCJ], personal communication, March 30, 2007). Students listen as the instructor reads from a list of eight statements including (a) I think about this aspect of my identity most; (b) I think about this aspect least; (c)

This was emphasized most in my family; (d) This was emphasized least in my family; (e) This part of my identity most affects how people treat me; (f) I feel the most discomfort about this part; (g) The most painful experience I have had was a result of this; and (h) The most rewarding experience I have had was a result of this. In response to each statement, students silently walk to the label that best fits, and following the activity, students reflect on their experience and identity through writing and discussion. The values (NCCJ, 2007) experiential continues the focus on career as self-realization through action and narrative and unfolds much like the identity experiential, except 23 different values are posted around the classroom and students respond to 17 statements. The "Who Am I" exercise (Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972) attends to career as self-realization and context conceptualization using action, narrative, and construction as students pair up to explore elements of their personas or public and private selves. In pairs students are given 5 minutes each to respond to one question: "Who are you?" As one student talks, the other student listens without interrupting. Then students are given additional time to respond to a second question: "Who do you pretend to be?" As with the values and identity experientials, the "Who Am I" exercise is followed by reflective writing and class discussion.

The exploration of career as self-realization and growing experiences is implemented using action and narrative. Specifically, students engage in life story writing focused on uncovering character qualities and identifying their achievements across the life span. Uncovering and articulating character qualities through life story writing not only helps students define core aspects of themselves in their own words but also challenges students to think dialectically about the positive and negative aspects of the same trait. As with the reflective writings, the achievement and character stories become part of the self-narrative.

Toward the end of Module 1, the course emphasizes synthesis, and students are required to integrate the reflective and life story writings, early career fantasy, and career genogram with career assessments through a midterm self-analysis paper in which they interpret the results from their "Strong Interest Inventory—College Version" (2007) and "Do What You Are Self-discovery Assessment"—college version (2008). Career assessment from a constructivist perspective focuses on how one makes meaning of test results, and opportunities to explore oneself prior to assessment are essential for creating a context for meaning-making (Chen, 2003). In the "Orientation to Self and Career" course, the interest and personality inventories are included only after students have had numerous opportunities to explore and narrate their experience through homework, discussion, experiential learning, and reflective and life story writing. Then to synthesize a coherent self-narrative, the midterm requires students to integrate the pieces of the narrative they have constructed over the semester with their "Do What You Are Self Discovery Assessment" and "Strong Interest Inventory-College Version" assessments.

Module 2: Constructing the Future

Once students have had the opportunity to make sense of the past and develop a solid sense of self in the present, "Orientation to Self and Career" extends students' thinking into the future. As students explore their conceptions of how the past, present, and future relate to each other, the "Circle Test" (Savickas, 1991) facilitates career as self-realization and context conceptualization using construction and narrative. Tapping into these same two themes using action, construction, and narrative, the "Career Gender Role Reversal Fantasy" (Brown & Brooks, 1991a) provides students with the opportunity to test new identities and the relative importance of gender to their self-concepts and subjective careers. As the exercise helps students reflect on various life pathways across gender, the processes of circumscription and compromise become clear. The "Who Will I Be/What Will I Do," "Career Lifeline," and "Obituary" exercises (Savickas, 1991) extend the density and range with which students can imagine their futures and tap into career as self-realization, growing experiences, and context conceptualization using construction and narrative. Other activities such as the "Career Visualization" exercise and the "Vision Statement" also focus on self-realization and context conceptualization using action, construction, and narrative. A guided fantasy, the "Career Visualization" exercise brings into focus a day in the lives of students ten years from now, starting with when they wake up and ending with when they go to bed. Following the visualization, students discuss their fantasies and create a vision statement articulating future goals, potential obstacles, and ways to overcome obstacles. The course then moves from constructing the future to planning, action, and integration.

Module 3: Planning, Action, and Integration

Planning is the bridge from present to future, and the "Force Field Analysis" (Lewin, 1938) helps students begin conceptualizing that bridge. Tapping into career as self-realization and context conceptualization, the "Force Field Analysis" focuses on driving forces that move one forward and restraining forces that hold one back. To conceptualize the driving and restraining forces in their own lives, students in the "Orientation to Self and Career" course engage in action, construction, and narrative, and through Brott's (2004) "Goal Map" students identify resources, barriers, and action steps. Developing a vocational self-concept through work roles is also emphasized in module 3 along with Krumboltz and Levin's (2004) idea of doing in the present to create opportunities for the future. Through activities such as internships, job shadowing, informational interviews, and employment, the idea of career as growing experiences is underscored, and using construction and narrative students are required to research and select an internship or employment opportunity for which they are currently qualified and write about how they can use the position to create opportunities for the future. What follows is that students develop a résumé and cover letter for the position of interest.

Practice constructing résumés and cover letters involves active learning and small group collaboration, whereas during an in-class activity, students work in groups of three or four to develop one résumé and cover letter for an employment position selected by the instructor. Each group is given large poster-size sheets of paper to work on, and students are encouraged to combine their experiences and backgrounds to strengthen their résumés and cover letters. The importance of career as context conceptualization is emphasized as students are challenged to determine the information most relevant and appropriate for the résumé and cover letter by reading through the job description, sifting through their background experiences, and using the résumé/cover letter handout. Upon completion, each group posts their work on the classroom wall, and the teacher and students critique the résumés and cover letters by identifying those that seem particularly well-suited to the employment position and those that do not, discussing what makes some applicants weak and others strong. For homework, students create an individual résumé and cover letter for the internship opportunity identified earlier.

The "15 Step Plan" (Savickas, 1991) also taps into growing experiences through construction and narrative and represents the pinnacle of planning in the career course. The "15 Step Plan" is divided into three phases, where students first identify and write down 15 steps that will lead to a goal; then students identify and write down potential positive and negative outcomes that could occur at each step, and finally they identify and write down what they will need to do or how hard they will need to work at each step. Again active learning and collaboration are underscored, and students are encouraged to share their plans with peers for ideas and feedback. In line with constructivist educational strategies, the process of planning is just as important as the outcome; and once students have gone through the process of developing a solid plan to achieve a goal, the course pushes them to integrate and act upon the insights and future constructions they have developed over the semester. At this point, students take a class trip to the college career center to find career and major information relevant to their specific interests and are then given the next week off from class to explore on their own.

As the semester comes to an end, students conduct oral presentations integrating their insights, actions, and progress. In the oral presentation, students discuss their career journeys over the semester, including where they were when they started the course, where they are now, how they have used the course, potential career directions they are interested in pursuing, and next steps. The oral presentation brings together career as self-realization, growing experiences, and context conceptualization through narrative, action, construction, and interpretation. The career portfolio and final paper also integrate the three major course themes and four constructivist tools. The portfolio is made up of all significant course assignments completed over the semester and concludes with a final paper in which students identify and discuss themes in their self-concepts and connections across their past, present, and future. Table 1 provides a summary of the course assignments, major themes, and constructivist tools included in all three modules. Table 2 provides an example of the semester calendar.

The Effectiveness of the Course

Outcome studies of the "Orientation to Self and Career" course have found significant increases in students' career decision self-efficacy and significant decreases in students' dysfunctional, self-defeating thoughts (Grier-Reed & Skaar, in press; Grier-Reed, Skaar, & Conkel-Ziebell, 2009; Grier-Reed, Skaar, & Parson, 2009). We believe that developing students' self-concepts and subjective careers are integral to the success of the course. With a subjective career based in self-understanding, students can more

Table 1

Summary of the Course Assignments, Constructivist Tools, and Thematic Bridges across the Three Modules

Module 1: Exploring the Past & Present	**Career as Self-Realization**
Earliest Career Fantasy Essay	Action and Narrative
Career Genogram	Construction and Narrative
Identity Experiential Exercise & Reflective Writing	Action and Narrative
Values Experiential Exercise & Reflective Writing	Action and Narrative
Who Am I Experiential Exercise & Reflective Writing	Action, Construction, and Narrative
My Character/My Story Writing	Action and Narrative
My Achievements Writing	Action and Narrative
Do What You Are and Strong Interest Inventory Comparative Analysis Midterm Paper	Narrative, Action, Construction, and Interpretation
Module 2: Constructing the Future	
Career Gender Role Reversal Fantasy & Reflective Writing	Action, Construction, and Narrative
Circle Test	Construction and Narrative
My Life, My Decisions Reflective Writing	Action, Construction, and Narrative
Who will I Be, What will I Do?	Construction and Narrative
Career Lifeline & Obituary	Construction and Narrative
Career Visualization	Action and Construction
Vision Statement	Construction and Narrative
Module 3: Planning, Action, and Integration	
Internship Search & Creating Future Opportunities Writing	
Force Field Analysis & Goal Map with Next Steps Reflective	Action, Construction, and Narrative
Internship Resume & Cover Letter	
15 Step Plan	
Oral Presentation	Action, Interpretation, Construction, and Narrative
Integrative Final Paper &	Action, Interpretation,

Action—Exploring aspects of the self such as culture, values, and beliefs

Construction—Constructing identity within context

Narrative—Authoring or telling one's own story

Interpretation—Using personal identity to inform career directions

Career as Growing Experiences	Career as Context Conceptualization
Action and Narrative	Action and Narrative
	Construction and Narrative
	Action and Narrative
	Action, Construction, and Narrative
Action and Narrative	
Action and Narrative	
Narrative, Action, Construction, and Interpretation	Narrative, Action, Construction, and Interpretation
Module 2: Constructing the Future	
	Action, Construction and Narrative
	Construction and Narrative
Action, Construction, and Narrative	
Construction and Narrative	Construction and Narrative
Construction and Narrative	Construction and Narrative
	Action and Construction
	Construction and Narrative
Module 3: Planning, Action, and Integration	
Construction and Narrative	
	Action, Construction, and Narrative
	Construction and Narrative
Construction and Narrative	
Action, Interpretation, Construction, and Narrative	Action, Interpretation, Construction, and Narrative
Action, Interpretation,	Action, Interpretation, Construction,

Table 2

Semester Calendar

Date	Activities and Assignments	Assignments Due
Week 1:	♦ **Earliest Career Fantasy**	
Week 2:	♦ *Identity Experiential & Reflective Writing* ♦ **Career Genogram**	♦ Earliest Career Fantasy
Week 3:	♦ *Values Experiential & Reflective Writing* ♦ *Who Am I Experiential & Reflective Writing*	♦ Career Genogram
Week 4:	♦ *My Character/My Story* ♦ *My Significant Life Achievements* ♦ **Complete DWYA and SII**	
Week 5:	♦ *SII and DWYA Interpretation* ♦ **Midterm Paper: DWYA/SII comparative analysis**	♦ DWYA ♦ SII
Week 6:	♦ *Career Gender Role Reversal Fantasy & Reflective Writing* ♦ *Midterm Preparation*	
Week 7:	♦ *My Life, My Decisions Reflective Writing* ♦ *Informational Interviewing & Job Shadowing* ♦ **Research Internship**	♦ Midterm Paper 1st DRAFT
Week 8:	♦ *Career Lifeline* ♦ *Vision Statement* ♦ *Goal Map and Next Steps Reflective Writing* ♦ **Obituary**	♦ Internship Printout and Statement about using the position to create future opportunities
Week 9:	♦ *Creating a Résumé and Cover Letter* ♦ **Résumé and Cover Letter** ♦ **Oral Presentation Instructions**	♦ Midterm Paper: Final Draft ♦ Obituary
Week 10:	♦ *15 Step Plan*	♦ Résumé and Cover Letter for Internship
Week 11:	*Meet in Exploratory Transfer & Career Services Center*	
Week 12:	*Time off for Individual Exploration & Preparing Presentations*	
Week 13:	♦ *Oral Presentations* ♦ **Portfolio & Final Paper**	
Week 14:	♦ *Oral Presentations*	
Week 15:	♦ *Oral Presentations*	♦ Portfolio & Final Paper

effectively engage in the processes of career exploration and planning. In an age where young people are often bombarded with information and overwhelmed by information overload, developing a subjective career that can aid in efficiently identifying and sifting through relevant and irrelevant career information is essential. Moreover, the "Orientation to Self and Career" course attends to the four major sources of efficacy found in Bandura's social cognitive theory—performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, anxiety management, and encouragement (Betz & Voyten, 1997)—through (a) life story writing focused on student achievements across the life span, (b) interpersonal sharing and learning through class discussion and oral presentations, (c) ice-breakers, play, relaxation and fantasy exercises that facilitate comfort and rapport in the classroom, and (d) instructor feedback, group cohesion, and positive relationships among peers.

Another reason the course seems to have potential to yield positive outcomes may be that rather than starting with action, it begins with contemplation; the curriculum takes into account the five-stage transtheoretical model of change, involving pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). Given the findings in one outcome study including a comparison group (Grier-Reed et al., 2009) where students who enrolled in the constructivist career course started with significantly lower levels of career decision self-efficacy and certainty and significantly higher levels of vocational indecision than their counterparts, we believe that students who register for "Orientation to Self and Career" tend to be beyond the pre-contemplation stage, recognizing that there is a problem even if they are not yet sure of the steps to rectify it. This course, therefore, begins with contemplation by orienting students to the past and present. It then moves to preparation by helping students construct the future. Modules 1 and 2 focus on the contemplation and preparation stages of change, and module 3 moves to action where students are expected to act on the insights gained and constructions of the future developed and to present their knowledge and actions through individual oral presentations. The oral presentations further push students to attend to maintenance by discussing how they will continue to make progress on their career paths after the course has ended (e.g. who they will meet, who they will talk to, the opportunities they will take advantage of, and the courses they will enroll in).

Finally, we believe the effectiveness of the course lies in its theoretical underpinnings. With an integrative approach to constructivism including trait/factor and developmental perspectives, the "Orientation to Self and Career" course has a sound theoretical foundation for developing students' self-concept and subjective career. With a focus on career as self-realization, growing experiences, and context conceptualization, "Orientation to Self and Career" starts with a question of central interest and importance to most college students—the question of identity (i.e. Who are you? Where do you come from? How has your past shaped who you are now?). The course then integrates constructivist educational practices and constructivist career tools to quickly and actively engage students in the process of self-exploration. As students explore their subjective realities and lived experience, they can make meaning of how personal identity is influencing their career paths. Thus, rather than looking at career through dispassionate, objective lenses, students can develop and extend a subjective career based in their identities, values, and aspirations. Furthermore, using personal history as the cornerstone for constructing the present and future sense of self not only renders the career course more personal, meaningful, and connected to the self-concept, but also provides students with the tools to narrate the subjective career in their own words. The result: students are empowered as their career decision self-efficacy significantly increases and their dysfunctional, self-defeating career thoughts significantly decrease (Grier-Reed et al., 2009).

Conclusion

In the current post-industrial age where change and uncertainty are hallmarks of the time, young adults need to feel empowered to construct their lives and forge their career paths. The constructivist career development course presented in this current paper shows the potential to empower young people (Grier-Reed & Skaar, in press; Grier-Reed et al., in press; Grier-Reed et al., 2009), and constructivism has been linked to empowerment across a number of fields (Gray, 1997 ; Greene, Lee, & Hoffpauir, 2005; Hoskins, 1995; Larochelle et al., 1998; Lee, 2001; Kiraly, 2000; Weissglass, 1990). In an era where "careers are forged, not foretold" (Watts, 1996, p. 46), empowering young people to make the shift toward self-efficacy and control of their career development is of utmost importance, and given the relative dearth of constructivist educational curricula for career development, we summarize the theory and practice of "Orientation to Self and Career" with hopes of inspiring greater future initiatives.

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Linguistic Politeness and Peer Tutoring

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Abstract

The goal of this research was to use politeness theory to analyze the developing tutorial relationship between students and peer tutors in a university writing center. The study monitored two pairs of tutors and students over a period of six weeks, focusing on weeks one and six. Using partial transcripts of recorded sessions along with observation notes, the authors used discourse analysis to determine the significance of politeness in the functioning of the tutorial sessions. The authors concluded that in initial sessions, tutors use politeness strategies to shift between the collaborative role as peer and the authoritative role as tutor, relying more on negative politeness strategies, and after six weeks of recurring sessions, tutors rely less on negative politeness strategies and more on positive politeness strategies.

In "Peer Tutoring: Keeping the Contradiction Productive," Jane Coagie (2001) uses the analogy of improvised dance to explain the dynamics and tensions between a student and a tutor performing collaborative work during a writing center session. Within the "collaborative dance," tension can stem from the seemingly contradictory roles that the tutor must play. Consultants are expected to have the capability to talk confidently and professionally about writing and the writing process, but conversely, they need to be egalitarian and engage in collaboration with students in order to help them through the writing process. Tutorial conversation can be considered institutional discourse because of the inherently unequal relationship between interactants—the consultant represents the institution while the student is bound by its rules and decisions (Bell and Youmans, 2006; Murphy, 2001). Yet, at the same time, writing tutors "strive to construct consultations in such a way that students find them non-threatening and collaborative, making the conversation more egalitarian and personal" (Bell and Youmans, 2006, p. 31). Coagie asserts that "tutors are asked on the one hand to restrain their authority so as to focus on the student while on

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the other to assert it so as to aid in student understanding" (p. 38).Caught between these complicated expectations, writing center tutors must situate themselves and somehow find a way to work productively with writers to improve their writing, yet manage to do so with minimal imposition upon the students with whom they collaborate.

This project investigates an important part of this very difficult and intricate dance—the use of politeness in writing center discourse. The study is divided into three parts. First is a review of the theory that drives the research project—politeness theory as discussed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987) in *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Next, using discourse analysis, the authors discuss their research on initial or first-time consultations and the role of politeness in that often awkward conversational dynamic. Finally, the project moves to an analysis of the use of politeness in recurring appointments after six weekly visits. The study's findings are as follows:

Finding 1: In initial sessions, tutors use positive politeness strategies when relating to the student as a peer, especially in the opening stages of sessions where they rely on laughter to ease the face-threatening act (FTA).

Finding 2: In initial sessions, tutors use negative politeness when taking on the authoritative role of tutor, especially integrating hedges, modals, and minimizers into their responses.

Finding 3: After six weeks of recurring sessions, the overall tone shifts. During later recurring sessions, tutors rely less on negative politeness strategies and use fewer hedges, minimizers, and modals. Instead, tutors rely more on positive politeness strategies, especially utilizing the term "we" as a positive politeness strategy.

Finding 4: Additionally, in later sessions, the question, "what do you think of that" is introduced as a negative politeness strategy.

Background

Politeness Theory

Briefly, politeness can be understood as a "discursive conversational contract" that depends heavily on tacit understandings of the terms and conditions of that contract (Murphy, 1999, p. 233). The dominant model of linguistic politeness is Brown and Levinson's (1987) based on Erwin Goffman's (1959) study of social interaction. The notion of "face" was derived from Goffman and the common expression of "losing face," which is defined as "an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (p. 5). Goffman (1967) explains that in social interactions, people "perform" in a certain way to present their self-image and give a certain impression of themselves to other people (p. 22). There is a mutual understanding between two people in conversation that they both acknowledge, consciously or unconsciously: the vulnerability of face. Thus they try to maintain each other's "face" accordingly. As Brown and Levinson (1987) point out, "face is something that is emotionally invested and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (p. 61). Therefore, maintaining face means putting forth an image one wishes for other people to discern. One of the tasks of participants in conversation is to maintain and protect each other's face. Although there is a mutual interest for both people within a conversation to maintain each other's face, there are some actions that intrinsically threaten face. Brown and Levinson refer to this as a face-threatening act (FTA).

Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that acts that threaten a hearer's positive face are criticism, disapproval, or disagreement. These acts impede the hearer's aspiration for approval. Acts that threaten negative face include suggestions, orders, and requests. These actions interfere with the hearer's wish not to be imposed upon or have his/her freedom restricted in any way. Brown and Levinson explain that it is through linguistic politeness that hearers and speakers mitigate face. Both positive and negative politeness strategies are used to maintain the face of interlocutors in conversation.

Positive politeness is used by the speaker to acknowledge and support the hearer's desire to be approved of and accepted. Brown and Levinson (1987) list 15 strategies of positive politeness. For example, positive politeness strategies include the following:

- Noticing and attending to the wants of the other person (I like your hair style.)
- Exaggerating interest, approval, or sympathy (I absolutely love those shoes.)
- Seeking agreement (That movie was sad, wasn't it?)
- Using laughter, humor, and joking, especially self-deprecation
- Showing optimism (You won't mind if I borrow this pen. I'm sure you'll all show up for the meeting on time.)
- Using the inclusive "we" (We should get some dinner.)

In the following exchange, Sue exemplifies positive politeness strategies.

> Dave: When you come over Friday, I can show you the videos of our last family vacation.
>
> Sue: Oh, I really look forward to seeing them. It's so wonderful when we get to spend time like that with our families. I'll bring the popcorn!

Here, Sue demonstrates positive politeness in a variety of ways. First, she demonstrates and perhaps even exaggerates interest by saying that she "really looks forward" to the videos. She shows approval that Dave spends time with family, and she uses the inclusive we, demonstrating that both she and Dave have common interests and likes. Finally, she uses humor and joking to further indicate that she understands Dave's desire to show her the video and that she agrees it would be a good way to spend the evening. Sue attends to Dave's positive face by noticing and approving of Dave's desire to share with her his family videos.

On the other hand, negative politeness attends to the hearer's negative face or his/her "want to have his freedom of action unhindered" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 129) by minimizing imposition of the speaker onto the hearer. It is important to remember that negative politeness isn't negative—instead, it creates rhetorical space in discourse in order for the speaker's face to remain intact. Brown and Levinson list 10 strategies for negative politeness. Some of them include the following:

- Being conventionally indirect
- Hedging (I think, maybe, you should put it on the table.)
- Showing pessimism (I know you're busy, but if you have a little time later, could you read over this paper?)
- Minimizing imposition (I just want to ask you if I can borrow a tiny bit of sugar.)
- Using modals (You might want to think about that some more.)
- Apologizing (I'm sorry to bother you, but may I ask a question?)

A good example of the use of negative politeness can be seen in this unlikely exchange between Dave and Sue:

> Dave: I'm thinking of giving up my job in sales and training to become an astronaut!
>
> Sue: You know, Dave, I think you would need to have some kind of scientific qualifications and aeronautical experience, but your background is in retail, so I'm just not sure you ought to do that. You might want to check this idea out before you give up your job.

The exchange above demonstrates several examples of negative politeness at work. Sue does not want to impose her potentially hurtful suggestions on her friend Dave, so she mitigates what could be a crushing response to his dream to become an astronaut by softening her comments and being conventionally indirect. Dave's confession is a face-threatening act and, sensitive to preserving Dave's face, Sue engages in negative politeness strategies. First, she implies that his idea is a bad one by hedging: I think you would need to have some kind of qualification (which Dave does not). She then uses a minimizer (just), a hedge (not sure), and a modal (might) in order to avoid issuing a direct suggestion. The point of this exchange has been that Sue has tried to be considerate of Dave's face, but she has also voiced her concern that she thinks his idea is not a good one. Sue successfully avoids imposing her will or suggestions on him, and the outcome should be that, whatever Dave decides to do (and it will probably be to keep his day job), the illusion is maintained between the two friends that it was Dave's own sensible idea not to proceed with his astronaut plan, instead of Sue's. As per the Brown and Levinson model, Dave's negative "face" is saved by Sue's use of negative politeness. The examples above show how positive or negative politeness "saves face," or the image the speaker wishes to convey, which can be compromised in face-threatening circumstances.

One of the premises on which this research project is based is that the writing center conversation, like other kinds of conversations, is a face-threatening situation mediated through politeness (Bell & Youmans, 2006; Murphy, 2001; Thonus, 1993, 1999, 2004; Williams, 2004). At least two types of face threats occur in this context. Bell and Youmans (2006) explain that "by visiting the writing center, students leave themselves vulnerable to imposition by allowing consultants to help determine the direction of their writing projects. In addition, students leave themselves open to criticism of their work and, by extension, their writing abilities" (pp. 35-36), which characterizes the situation as a face-threatening act for students. This project looks specifically at the way tutors mitigate the face-threatening act (FTA) during their consultations.

Method

The Writing Center in this study is located at a mid-size southern research university. During the semester in which the research project was conducted, the writing center had 11 employees—nine undergraduate writing consultants ranging from sophomores to seniors, all seeking various liberal arts degrees, along with two master's level graduate teaching assistants, both of whom were majoring in English. Of the nine undergraduates, six were returning consultants with at least one year of experience. The graduate assistants were new to writing center work and had not previously worked with student writers. The writing center, which is open for 50 hours a week, is a successful and popular resource with students. During the semester when this research was being conducted, the writing center engaged in 1,258 30-minute appointments. Half of those consultations were with freshmen and the other half ranged from sophomores to graduate students.

The goal of this research was to investigate the developing tutorial relationship between first-year students who had never used the services of the writing center and returning peer tutors with one year of experience. In this case, both participating tutors began working in the writing center the fall prior to this study; as a result, they had the same level of experience and training. Although trained in interpersonal communication, composition pedagogy, and learning style/multiple intelligence theory, the tutors had no knowledge of politeness theory at the time of this study. Subsequently, politeness theory has been introduced as part of the ongoing training that tutors receive.

The students were first-year students enrolled in the same section of freshman composition, and they voluntarily scheduled weekly 30-minute appointments with an individual tutor for the duration of the semester. It was important to the study that the students work with the same tutor throughout the term in order to determine the shifts in politeness as their relationship developed over time. All names are pseudonyms to protect participant identity; however, those pseudonyms do acknowledge gender.

The study took place over a six-week period of time and concentrates on sessions one and sessions six. In this case, the authors monitored two pairs of native-speaking students and tutors through six weeks of recurring meetings. Using session notes and partial transcriptions of recorded sessions, the authors identified linguistic politeness as put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987). Discourse analysis was used to determine the significance of politeness in the functioning of tutorial sessions.

Results

Initial Sessions

Finding 1: In initial sessions, tutors use positive politeness strategies when relating to the student as a peer, especially in the opening stages of sessions where they rely on laughter to ease the FTA of the session.

Finding 2: In initial sessions, tutors use negative politeness when taking on the authoritative role of tutor, especially integrating hedges, modals, and minimizers into their responses.

An important part of the dance that tutors must perform is the movement between the authority of the tutor and the egalitarianism of a peer. For example, in an initial session between tutor Mary and student Joan, Mary asks Joan about her assignment. Instead of relaying information about the assignment, Joan proceeds to tell Mary about her first grade, which was an 88. Mary responds in the role of student rather than of tutor by acknowledging the feeling of "being almost there." They then laugh together, a positive politeness strategy that acknowledges their camaraderie as students. Mary recognizes Joan's frustration and places herself in the position of student as she commiserates with Joan about the feeling of being on the verge of an A. Through laughter, the two show that they have common ground upon which to work, and Mary puts the student at ease about her grades. The laughter emphasizes their working together as peers, as they both have experienced this situation, and helps them situate themselves to engage in productive dialogue about Joan's writing.

Laughter is further used to smooth over an awkward moment at the end of the session. Tutors have to keep track of the time during tutoring sessions in order to remain within the 30-minute time limit. Usually, another student is waiting for his/her session to begin. This time constraint puts both the student and the tutor in an awkward FTA situation because it sometimes disrupts their rhythm in working together and getting tasks accomplished. Having to abruptly put a stop to the session can be uncomfortable and can cause a face-threatening act for the tutor who doesn't want to come across as uncaring. Mary and Joan experience this discord at the end of their session; however, this time, the student uses the positive politeness strategy of laughter to mitigate Mary's face-threatening act.

> Mary: All right, we have only about two more minutes.
>
> Joan: (Laughs)
>
> Mary: I always have to check the time (Laughs).
>
> Joan: (Laughs)

It is important to note that neither person said anything funny or humorous here. Instead, laughter is used as a politeness strategy to ease Mary's FTA and to, again, show camaraderie in what could be an awkward situation. The fact that they laugh together is important, as it shows empathy and connection, emphasizing their peer-to-peer relationship.

Although the two use positive politeness in the form of mutual laughter at the beginning and ending of the session, the bulk of the session demonstrates a propensity toward negative politeness strategies on the part of Mary, who shifts into negative politeness when she moves into the more authoritarian role of tutor as she begins responding to Joan's essay. Joan had written and brought with her a rough draft of an argumentative paper with which she needed help. She tells Mary that she did not fully understand the assignment nor did she fully understand the genre of an argumentative paper. Mary spends the majority of the session explaining to Joan about the need to present her own position on the issue rather than simply summarizing the pros and cons of the argument without indicating her own position. Throughout this exchange, Mary struggles with her shifting role as peer and tutor as she tries to explain the assignment in a way that the student can understand and also not feel imposed upon, embarrassed, or belittled. In order to do so, Mary relies on negative politeness strategies, especially incorporating hedges to avoid imposing her own opinions on Joan. For example, Mary says, "OK, umm, I would say that just as far as a good piece of writing, that you could write about this [topic], but since [your teacher] is asking you to argue for or against it, then it sounds like she really wants you to take a side." Here, Mary negotiates the task of providing authoritative advice by using negative politeness in her tentative assertion that Joan is going to have to take a position on the topic. In order to mitigate Joan's FTA of having someone critique her writing, Mary couches her comments in linguistic hedges such as "would" and "could" and "sounds like" in order to soften the blow of her critique.

As Mary struggles to get the student to understand the assignment, she increases her use of negative politeness.

> Joan: Do you think I could present both sides and then pick which side I want?
>
> Mary: Yea, I think so.
>
> Joan: So, I could just change a little bit then. I understand now.
>
> Mary: So (pause) and I mean (pause) depending on how you want to handle it, you could just (pause), you know, ask the teacher what would work for her because, I mean, you may not have to take a side necessarily, but the assignment itself just says are you for or against. So that kind of makes me think she really wants you to say one or the other is better.
>
> Joan: Uhmm (pause) I kinda have (pause) both. That's what I was, I don't know. I'm not really (unintelligible).

In this part of the conversation, Mary hedges her statements and minimizes the imposition through such terms as "just" and "you know." Mary uses negative politeness to attend to the student's negative face. In fact, in the entirety of this initial session, Mary uses a total of 27 forms of linguistic markers of negative politeness: 12 modals, nine hedges, and six minimizers. Mary obviously does not want to assert her opinion over that of the student, although, from her experience as an expert writer and returning tutor as well as Joan's response to her comment, it can be deduced that Mary is proceeding based on the premise that the student does not understand the assignment. The imposition of the suggestions for the student to go see her teacher is doubly troubling. First, Mary tries to defer her authority as a tutor onto the classroom teacher, thereby downplaying her authoritative role as tutor. However, to compound the situation, Mary tries also to downplay her advice to see the teacher. By saying, "depending on how you want to handle it" and "you could just (pause), you know," the imposition of the suggestion is minimized and the decision is left up to the student.

Although negative politeness is not usually considered a negative discursive move and can often be quite productive by protecting interlocutors from a face-threatening act, in Mary's case, her overuse of negative politeness further complicates an already complex conversational dynamic. Mary's attempt to downplay her authority as a peer tutor only serves to intensify the face-threatening act. Here, Mary is conflicted between her role as an authority and her role as a peer, and in her attempt to reconcile these competing roles, she diminishes her authority too much. Trimber (1987) states that the words "peer" and "tutor" conflict. He points out that, traditionally, tutors earn high grades and are independent learners. He says that these students are selected to work in tutoring centers because they have shown some level of success in their writing and learning abilities. He explains that "the tutors' success as undergraduates and their strength as writers single them out and accentuate the differences between them and their tutees—thereby, in effect, undercutting the peer relationship" (p. 23). On the other hand, the term "peer" demonstrates a belief that consultants are, like the students they work with, simply students attending classes, earning grades, and dealing with the stressors that come with being college students. So, peer tutors are expected to have the capability to talk confidently about the writing process but also be able to establish an egalitarian and collaborative relationship with the students with whom they work. Obviously this is not an easy task. Coagie (2001) explains that "tutors are asked on the one hand to restrain their authority so as to focus on the student while on the other to assert it so as to aid student understanding" (p. 38). This intricate dance is not always easy to perform, as can be seen in the dialogue between Mary and Joan. Mary is more comfortable in the egalitarian peer role while she awkwardly, and perhaps unproductively, provides advice in her authoritative tutor role.

Michael is more successful in his initial session with a student enrolled in the same freshman composition class. Similar to the session between Mary and Joan, Michael begins his consultation with Sandy by using positive politeness as he inhabits the peer role and creates rapport with the student. The session starts when Sandy explains her paper to Michael and lists examples she uses to support her ideas. When she finishes talking, Michael expresses his support by saying, "That's a good point. Yeah, OK, that's a good point. No one has brought that up yet for this topic." Michael's use of positive politeness reinforces that the student has something interesting to say and begins the session positively.

However, as in the earlier session, Michael shifts from his role as enthusiastic peer into his role as tutor and, likewise, his use of politeness strategies moves from positive to negative. Sandy sets the agenda for the session and Michael responds to her concerns.

> Sandy: My biggest problem is wording and just getting things to work together. I've got tons of these "to be" verbs and passive voice.
>
> Michael: OK, so do you want to just work on that? (Pause) Do you have any questions about, as far as your main argument or main points or anything like that?
>
> Sandy: Ummm, not really much about that. (Pause) Just more along the lines of revision type stuff.

In his role as tutor, Michael explains the definition of active and passive verbs by saying, "When you say 'they're blamed by,' well, who are they blamed by? Is it society at large or is it a particular group of people? So, (pause) I think those are a couple of reasons why we prefer active voice." As an experienced writer and a trained and returning writing center tutor, Michael knows the difference between active and passive and also knows that Sandy's teacher prefers active voice; nonetheless, when talking to the student about this writing issue, Michael uses the hedge "I think" as a negative politeness strategy when offering his advice in order to protect Sandy's FTA. However, unlike in the session between Mary and Joan, Michael communicates the importance of the writing preference to Sandy, but he does not rely so much on negative politeness that his authority and Sandy's understanding are compromised. Nonetheless, like Mary, Michael uses negative politeness quite frequently in this initial session—a total of 21 times compared to Mary's 27. The difference is that Michael's use of negative politeness doesn't compromise the student's understanding of his suggestions. In this session, he effectively asks questions and demonstrates to Sandy the difficulty he has in understanding her meaning when she uses passive voice. Thus, Michael's use of negative politeness is an effective part of his linguist choices in his role as tutor.

These early sessions demonstrate the tutors' attempts to create rapport through the use of linguistic politeness. Both Michael and Mary are aware that these sessions create a FTA for the students, and they try to negotiate this potentially awkward situation by using both positive and negative politeness strategies. The tutors demonstrate positive politeness through the use of laughter and by emphasizing their role as peers in order to put the students at ease in the session. They also use negative politeness as they take on the more authoritative role of the tutor so as to provide advice without imposing their will on the students' writing processes. In these initial sessions the tutors use politeness to establish the ground rules of the weekly sessions. They want to emphasize that their comments are suggestions and that the writers are ultimately in control of their own rhetorical decisions.

Sixth-Week Returning Sessions

Finding 3: After six weeks of recurring sessions, the overall tone shifts. During later sessions, tutors rely less on negative politeness strategies and use fewer hedges, minimizers, and modals. Instead, tutors rely more on positive politeness strategies, especially utilizing the term "we" as a positive politeness strategy.

Finding 4: Additionally, the question, "what do you think of that" is introduced as a negative politeness strategy.

Discourse analysis uncovers a distinct change in relationship between these tutors and students over a six-week period, made obvious by the change in the types of politeness that consultants use and the shift from one type of politeness to another, for example, from negative politeness to positive politeness. This analysis highlights important changes from the initial session to the follow-up session in the audio-taped pairings. In follow-up consultations, there is a distinct change in rapport between the peer tutor and student, which can be seen through the change in manner in which politeness is used to facilitate the ongoing collaborative relationship. This section will concentrate on the same two pairs of participants: peer tutor Michael with student Sandy and peer tutor Mary with student Joan.

In order to analyze the discourse, this study focuses on the three most recurring and easily identifiable types of negative politeness being used in recurring sessions, modal auxiliaries, hedges, and minimizers. Discourse analysis of audiotapes reveals that the tutors use considerably fewer negative politeness strategies in later sessions. While Mary uses 27 linguistic markers of negative politeness in her initial session with Joan, by her sixth session she uses only 13: 6 modals, 4 hedges, and 3 minimizers. Likewise, Michael, who used 21 markers initially, dropped his number of negative politeness markers to only 7 by the sixth session.

The significantly fewer instances of negative politeness strategies in later sessions demonstrate a shift in the rapport between the tutors and their clients. This change can be interpreted as an increase in assertiveness in suggestions on the part of the tutors since the relationship has developed to the point where the students now understand the spirit in which they are made. There is a tacit understanding between the tutor and student that the students maintain control over their own writing processes. The FTA has less of an impact because of the rapport that has developed over the six weeks of ongoing sessions between participants. Consequently, the tutors no longer need to couch their suggestions in negative politeness because the students understand that the suggestions are not orders or directives but feedback that they can either embrace or reject.

In the individual sessions, it can clearly be discerned that a relationship has developed. For example, Mary and Joan have a good rapport; in contrast to the first sessions, both Mary and Joan are more confident in their conversational patterns and more open when discussing Joan's writing.

> Joan: Ah, the third essay thing.
>
> Mary: The third essay, which is, ah, music? Do you know when it's due?
>
> Joan: No (pause), but I did the [concept] map.
>
> Mary: OK, that's cool. Do you want to work on the map?
>
> Joan: Yeah. Ah, I was doing Green Day [and] American Idiot.

> Mary: OK, makes sense (laugh together). So, what about this album can we use to persuade the class?
>
> Joan: Ah, it's an opera. It tells like a whole story.
>
> Mary: OK, so opera style. What do you mean by opera?
>
> Joan: Um, it tells like a story about a character, like throughout the whole album. [The singer/songwriter] like goes places and then meets people and then comes back home.

This exchange shows a significant shift in rapport between Mary and Joan. Both demonstrate confidence in their roles within the tutoring session. Six weeks into the semester, the returning session is considerably less of a FTA than the initial session. The participants are comfortable in their roles, and linguistic politeness, especially the negative politeness that caused confusion in the initial session, is all but eliminated.

It can be inferred from this reduction that the use of negative politeness strategies is most prevalent when peer tutoring relationships are in the very early stages but are used less when the relationship has developed and are consequently replaced by positive politeness; in this case, Mary and Joan move more towards positive politeness by using laughter and joking as well as small talk. The laughter and chat between Mary and Joan clearly establishes common ground for them, a goal of positive politeness.

> Mary: [Reading] OK, ahhm, it says, "the essay also expresses that people were comfortable with continuity." Do you mean…what exactly? Do you have an example? (both laugh).
>
> Joan: Like, ah, [the sitcom] *Friends*.
>
> Mary: Right! Awesome!
>
> Joan: They wanted to keep watching it, I guess, so they had it on.
>
> Mary: Well, it's a release, like..
>
> Joan: [interrupting] Yeah, Yeah! A release! (laugh together)
>
> Mary: Right, like [the movie] *Training Day*.
>
> Joan: Do you like that movie? I never actually saw it.
>
> Mary: Yeah, it creeped me out [laugh together].
>
> Joan: But like, I heard it was very violent.

Here the participants engage in several forms of positive politeness. First, Mary provides praise when she tells Joan that her idea is "awesome." Second, in this short excerpt, the pair laugh together several times, demonstrating unity and agreement. Finally, Mary and Joan engage in peripheral chit-chat.

Although they bring the session back to the point of the essay, they do spend a few minutes talking about movies, especially the *Terminator* series. In the end, Mary's and Joan's change in rapport demonstrates an important shift; they rely on positive rather than negative politeness. Mary no longer feels the need to couch her suggestions so as not to impose her will on Joan, and the pair has clearly established rapport.

Likewise, Michael and Sandy also demonstrate a shift from negative politeness strategies to positive politeness strategies. After a period of six weeks and after six meetings with their clients, both Mary and Michael reduce the number of times that they use modals, hedges, and minimizers; as reported above, Mary shifts from 27 markers in her initial session to 13 in the sixth week, and Michael uses 21 in his initial session with Sandy but only 7 markers after six weeks. Perhaps most importantly, however, the analysis of discourse between Michael and Sandy shows a significant increase in Michael's use of the positive politeness strategy of using "we" to clearly show that he now views himself and Sandy as a single unit. Michael uses the inclusive "we" 5 times in the initial session and a whopping 15 times after six weeks. Indeed, he both opens and closes the follow-up session by referring to himself and Sandy as "we" as can be seen in the following examples of opening and closing statements:

> Michael (opening statement): What are we going to go over today, Sandy?
>
> Michael (closing statement): We're doing well, then!

The use of inclusive "we" here in the opening and closing statements is expected; it is within those statements that positive politeness strategies occur more frequently, even during initial visits. However, analysis shows a distinct shift in the way the term is used in follow-up visits. In fact, Michael uses this strategy significantly more in this follow-up visit compared to his initial sessions, demonstrating that in these later sessions positive politeness is used throughout the sessions rather than being concentrated at the beginning and ending of sessions as was found in the initial visits and as can be seen above.

In the initial session between Michael and Sandy, the status of the inclusive "we" was problematic because it seemed to be used as more of a negative politeness strategy rather than a positive one. Brown and Levinson (1987) make clear that the inclusive "we" is considered positive politeness, but in this research, the authors also see the term "we" being used by tutors in initial sessions to avoid imposing their ideas onto the student, which would categorize the use as negative politeness. Susan Wolff Murphy (2001) asserts that there can be interplay of politeness used in a session at any one time. She says, "It is important to recognize that strategies are used simultaneously, and that multiple motivations may be attributed to each act. Positive and negative politeness acts occur together, and actually may overlap quite a bit, when cases are considered" (p. 116). So, Murphy sheds light on the fact that that there are occasions, especially in initial sessions, where negative and positive politeness cross over.

For example, the following excerpt from the initial session between Michael and Sandy illustrates how the inclusive "we" can also be used as a negative politeness strategy. In this initial session, Michael uses the inclusive "we" sparingly, suggesting that he is not yet looking to establish a single unit with Sandy in the same way as can be seen in later sessions. Indeed, the occasion in the initial session in which Michael uses the inclusive "we" is quite telling. He says to Sandy, "How can we integrate that in there so you don't repeat that again?" Here, Michael needs to make a suggestion to Sandy which she will potentially construe as an order and may also require extra reworking on her part, which threatens her negative face. The coping strategy Michael implements is to soften the imposition on Sandy by shifting the burden onto both of them in the first part of the sentence, making this example one of those problematic uses of the inclusive "we" that seems to shift intent from positive politeness, creating an inclusive unit, to negative politeness, trying not to impose upon Sandy. The "we" is not used to make her feel liked and part of a team, but is a way to deflect a suggestion. Interestingly, the pronoun shifts back to the second person in the second part of the sentence, indicating, perhaps, that the purpose of the comment is for Michael's benefit and not Sandy's.

However, in the follow-up session, Michael's use of the "we" proves to be inclusive, which is a positive politeness strategy, rather than the use of "we" that can be interpreted as negative politeness.

> Michael: [Reading] There we go! There! [pause] OK, OK, yeah, I think that works, and then we can add in some examples.
>
> Sandy: Yeah, that would help us with length, right?
>
> Michael: Oh yeah, and it will help explain the summary and learning how to pick out the important things without the add-ons. Then we can see how to do that later, I'm sure.
>
> Michael: Are we going to do layout and background as two different things?
>
> Sandy: Yes, let's do that.

Sandy's response also uses the inclusive "we" and shows that she is aware of and comfortable within this unit that they have established over six weeks. Both pairs of participants have formed a much more distinct relationship in the follow-up sessions, and, in fact, the students acknowledge their acceptance of the concept of unity by using positive politeness, especially relying on the inclusive "we." In the follow-up consultations, this increase in the use of the inclusive "we" as a positive politeness strategy combined with the reduction in the use of modals emphasizes a significant shift in the relationship between the tutor and student.

Finally, the study uncovered an unexpected finding in the follow-up sessions. While, for the most part, recurring sessions used more positive politeness than negative politeness shown by a reduction in the employment of modals and hedges and an increase in the positive use of the term "we" to demonstrate solidarity, the authors noted a new negative politeness strategy being employed in later sessions, one that was most difficult to categorize:

the posing of the question "what do you think?" or "what do you think about that?" Although both consultants used this strategy, Mary once and Michael three times, it showed more prominently in sessions between Michael and Sandy. These questions tended to follow a situation where Sandy tried unsuccessfully to explain her thoughts or intentions, but owing to uncertainty and a lack of confidence, her dialogue is vague and inarticulate. Michael's response is to "solidify" Sandy's comments into a coherent whole, which he then offers back to her as a much more focused and organized statement or idea. He then checks for understanding and agreement, trying to see if she is amenable to the idea of using the statement by asking her what she thinks of it. Below are examples of exchanges between Michael and Sandy where Michael utilized this strategy:

> Michael: Here you can explain by showing an example of where you don't want to be when you are retired—what do you think?
>
> Later he says:
>
> Michael: It gives the ad a theme—what do you think about that?
>
> Finally, they have this exchange:
>
> Sandy: …there are steps to reaching the goal of (pause) I don't know (pause) (Here, Sandy's tone expresses exasperation and frustration).
>
> Michael: Financial security? What do you think about that?

In this last exchange, a potentially awkward and embarrassing situation is brewing as Sandy becomes frustrated at herself and her inability to communicate her idea. Michael has to react quickly and decisively in order to salvage Sandy's self esteem and the mood of the consultation. If he does not help her, the consultation may plummet into a long and awkward silence while Sandy gropes for words or expressions she cannot produce, and this will result in an uncomfortable FTA for both of them, which they equally want to avoid. Michael is in a quandary in that he could potentially threaten Sandy's negative face if he assumes control of the situation by making suggestions and effectively putting words in her mouth, but this is precisely what he needs to do in order to retrieve the session. Michael achieves his objective by completing Sandy's sentence with the words that she is struggling to find by herself, but at the same time, he is aware that his intervention could be perceived by Sandy as an embarrassing and presumptive interruption. Therefore, Michael uses negative politeness to minimize his imposition on Sandy by offering her the opportunity to reject his idea. The reality of the situation, however, is that Sandy cannot progress with the idea on her own and is reliant on Michael's guidance. She is thus unlikely to reject his idea, but Michael is still required to save Sandy's negative face and ensure a smooth consultation by avoiding imposing his will (or the appearance of imposing his will), which might run the risk of offending or embarrassing her. Michael must maintain the illusion that Sandy is involved with the solution to her problem, when really she is not. Michael is, for all intents and purposes, providing Sandy the answer, but is couching the answer in the guise of a polite question. Therefore, Michael is saving Sandy's negative face by ostensibly handing the final decision back to her. Of course, Sandy's decision is to accept his answer because she has already proven that she has no alternative, but Michael's strategy has ensured that the consultation can smoothly move on with her feelings intact.

Discussion

Investigating tutoring sessions through the lens of politeness theory sheds light on the way in which tutors and students build rapport; whether it is a one-time drop-in visit or a semester-long series of tutoring sessions, tutors and the students with whom they work negotiate the roles they play in this peer education setting through communicative patterns. The ways in which participants use politeness in their interactions can help or hinder the work that gets accomplished. If tutors mediate the dialogue with too much politeness, whether positive or negative, the session can be compromised, as we saw in the initial session between Mary and Joan. Mary was trying to avoid imposing her will on the student, a topic covered during training sessions. However, in this case, Mary's use of negative politeness created the potential for misunderstanding and confusion. This overuse of negative politeness can be especially problematic in first-time visits as the tutor and student begin negotiating their roles in this peer education model.

However, negative politeness is an important communicative tool within peer tutoring sessions. When tutors appropriately use negative politeness, they can help students understand two important tenants of the peer education model: first, that the student is ultimately responsible for the end result of the session, and second, that the goal of the session is to engage the student in learning and study strategies that help her become a more independent learner. Through negative politeness, tutors can emphasize the magnitude of the student's role in this collaboration and minimize the student's dependence on the tutor to accomplish her educational goals.

Likewise, positive politeness is a crucial component of rapport-building communication. Laughter, inclusive language, and praise all facilitate a bond between tutors and students that helps establish a positive learning environment. However, this study shows that tutors are reluctant to engage in too much positive politeness in first-time sessions, perhaps because they are aware that students sometimes expect them to work miracles, especially when the session is scheduled just hours before the paper is due. Instead, this study shows that positive politeness becomes more prevalent in returning sessions, after tutors are comfortable that the students understand their own responsibilities within the peer education dynamic. The tutoring session becomes less of a face-threatening act once trust has been established; the tutor trusts that the student will contribute and participate fully in the session and in her own learning goals, and the student trusts that the tutor has her best interest at heart as he challenges her to think critically. Thus, politeness, whether positive or negative, helps tutors and students shape their relationship and helps mediate the contradictions that often occur in peer education settings.

Implications

Understanding politeness theory and communicative patterns that employ politeness strategies can impact the ways in which learning center professionals think about, train, and prepare peer tutors. Often, preparing and training peer educators focuses on students and theories of the way students learn. For example, many learning and writing centers introduce their peer educators to Bloom's Taxonomy, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, and the Myer's-Briggs Personality Indicator. While all of these theories are vital in training and professional development, it is also important for tutors to consider their own function within the educational dynamic of a tutoring session—to begin looking at how they may impact the effectiveness of the session. Politeness theory provides a means to that end. Incorporating politeness theory in tutor training helps tutors think more carefully about what they say and how what they say is perceived by others.

One way to introduce politeness theory is through video or audio-taping tutoring sessions, as was done for this study, or through video-taping a mock session between two volunteers, a practice that these authors prefer. When tutors can see and hear a tutoring session from a third-party perspective, they can more readily engage in meaningful dialogue about the session, especially the learning strategies and communicative patterns that comprise both effective and ineffective moments that occur during the course of a given session. Watching these sessions together and discussing them as a group creates a non-threatening and positive group dynamic that aids an individual's tutoring technique, while also creating a way for the group to solve problems together.

Another way to incorporate politeness theory into a training session is to provide dialogue boxes, short examples of tutoring dialogue often taken from actual tutoring sessions that were either observed or audio-recorded. After the learning center professional introduces politeness theory in general, dialogue boxes help tutors focus on specific moments of politeness within tutoring sessions. Tutors can identify types of politeness within the dialogue boxes and then discuss their effectiveness. If the group finds a particular statement to be ineffective, they can work together to rewrite the dialogue box to demonstrate a more useful communication strategy. No matter the training tool, politeness theory is a valuable means of encouraging tutors to focus inwardly so that they can better understand their own responsibility for creating rapport and providing feedback to the students with whom they work.

Further Study

The authors acknowledge the limits of this study. Case studies such as the one undertaken in this context are useful in their ability to uncover important elements within tutoring sessions and to provide a broad view of the ways politeness may be used in other sessions. However, further study of this topic could lead researchers to attempt to replicate this research with larger numbers of tutoring sessions. It would also be interesting to investigate the use of politeness when tutoring subjects other than writing; math and science tutoring sessions, for example, would be especially interesting contrasts to determine whether or not tutoring of writing lends itself to a different kind of politeness strategy than do the more linear and content-based disciplines.

Another area of potential research using politeness theory to understand rapport-building between tutors and students might consider race or gender as an additional factor that might complicate the tutor/student relationship.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this project underscores the way in which linguistic politeness strategies can impact tutorial sessions. The authors found that in initial sessions, tutors use politeness strategies to shift between the collaborative role as peer and the authoritative role as tutor, relying more on negative politeness in these early sessions. However, after six weeks of recurring sessions, tutors rely less on negative politeness strategies and more on positive politeness strategies that demonstrate the rapport they have built over time. Politeness theory can provide a lens through which learning center professionals can understand the tenuous relationship that occurs between peer tutors and the students they serve. The linguistic dance that occurs as students and their peer educators establish their roles in the collaborative relationship is intricate. Building rapport, establishing effective communicative patterns, and negotiating authority all impact the success of the tutorial session. Understanding the ways in which politeness theory may help or hinder participants as they negotiate through this intricate dance can help writing and learning center staff better prepare themselves to work more effectively.

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Writing Their Own History: Student Learning Outcomes in a Multilingual University Writing Classroom

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Abstract

This paper describes a successful writing project with generation 1.5 college freshmen enrolled in a writing class. Generation 1.5 students may experience difficulties at universities when, despite being multilingual, the language they bring with them to college is often framed as a deficit. Students engaged in writing life histories experienced success using their multilingualism as a necessary strength, and they met specific student learning outcomes.

Even while acknowledging the need for a more multicultural curriculum, linguistic difference that results in non-standard English is often treated as a problem at many universities. Yet most universities are experiencing increasing numbers of multilingual students, including, generation 1.5 students. Generation 1.5—or the transitional generation—is a label that refers to students who are either children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, who came to the United States as children. While they are often graduates of U.S. public schools, in many cases, generation 1.5 students may not have received enough formal instruction in English specifically geared for non-native speakers to adequately prepare them for the writing and reading they will do in college. Other generation 1.5 students might have started their U.S formal education in later grades, after experiencing a time of interrupted education. Usually, these students have more fluency in English than international students, but their language is not the same as a monolingual (Native English speaking) students. Many of these students end up in basic writing classes because of low test scores or because their English does not seem standard. Often the language they bring with them is seen as deficient – a problem to fix.

Despite this view, students' cultures and languages can be carefully positioned as assets for students, while providing real contexts for language learning. This study explores a life history project with community elders implemented in a freshman writing class that promotes English fluency and positively influences student status. The assignment builds on students' cultural competencies rather than treating them as a problem. Importantly,

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generation 1.5 students are in the unique position of speaking the language of their elders and recording their stories in the language of future generations —English. This project uses the students' multilingualism as a strength, putting a new frame on students' multilingualism in the university context. A program for immigrant and refugee students at a large Midwestern university has developed and used such a project with considerable success, challenging the deficit model of student language while meeting academic language and writing goals. This life history project has made a place for students' cultures in the classroom and given a real and meaningful purpose to student writing.

Background

A change in immigration laws in the 1960's promoted the current influx of new refugees and immigrants from Asia, Africa, and the Near East with dramatic effects on U.S. education. Many school districts are overwhelmed by the multiplicity of cultures, languages, and challenges that students present. This current immigration has increased the number of school age children and adolescents who immigrate with their families (Harklau, Siegal & Losey, 1999). Between 1975 and 1995, "the number of immigrant children ages 5 to 20 living in the United States more than doubled, from 3.5 to 8.6 million" (Ruiz Velasco & Fix, 2000, p.2). Locally, the Minneapolis Public Schools (2004) reported that 23% of its student body is English Language Learners. Generation 1.5 students face specific and unique challenges in post secondary educational settings, but they also have unique resources which can be drawn upon by educators to help them achieve at the university level. Specifically, English language instructors can use these strengths in writing classrooms to teach generation 1.5 students academic English skills they will need throughout the college experience.

In U.S. high schools, generation 1.5 students can have vastly differing experiences. Often, they are not fully prepared for the rigors of college work because either they have not received any or very little English language instruction. Conversely, students who have been in long-term ESL programs often are not prepared for college because their weaknesses in their writing and reading are masked by a high level of oral proficiency and fluency. These students have not had experience working with academic texts (specifically reading longer passages), creating source-based texts, and practicing critical reading (Murie, Rojas Collins & Detzner, 2004). As such, generation 1.5 students have varied English language abilities and often face challenges when they enter college. Students who have completed most of their education in their native countries might have a high level of academic skills but not language skills. The time spent in U.S. high schools aids in their English proficiency; these students may transition into U.S. schools and colleges with fewer problems (Harklau, Losey & Siegal, 1999). On the other hand, Thomas and Collier's (1997) research shows that students who switch languages during their education often need 5-7 years to catch up to other students in their grade level. Even more difficulties are faced by refugee students who have disrupted educational backgrounds. Murie, Rojas Collins, and Detzner (2004) describe Somali students at the University of Minnesota who typically have experienced a 4-6 year stay in refugee camps with little access to formal education. Similarly, students have, in the past, faced even longer disruption: seven to twelve years in refugee camps with little education.

Because immigrant students entering the university are often the first in their families to attend universities in the United States, they may be under pressure to succeed in the "new world" while maintaining cultural values from their country of origin (Weinstein-Shr & Henkins, 1991). As immigrant students become more educated, they may find themselves in conflict with their families. The knowledge of community and family elders may seem less relevant to them as they become proficient academics (Xiong, Detzner & Rettig 2001; Xiong 2000; Liebkind 1993; Tobin & Friedman, 1984). Ironically, the goals of their immigration — often including education and economic mobility—may simultaneously create conflict and distance in their families. In addition, these students (and those whose families do create significant motivation and support networks that encourage success) face additional challenges: financial limitations, social isolation at the university, and stigma about language or cultural background (Rodby 1999).

Moreover, immigrant students in college may feel that they are being asked to acculturate and give up their identities or that their difference is something they have to "overcome" (Gay 1993; Lu 1992). As is true of other first generation college students, the experience can be described as disruptive. They may not be as prepared as other students to navigate the complex structures at the university, including housing and financial aid. London (as cited in Thayer, 2000) argues that such students "may find themselves 'on the margins of two cultures' and must often renegotiate relationships at college and at home to manage the tension between the two" (p. 5). Thayer builds on London's assessment and adds that there are serious consequences to this outsider status, in that first generation college students are retained by universities at significantly lower levels than non-first generation peers.

For generation 1.5 students, the management of two cultures can be compounded by their multilingualism and by "spoken" English which is not yet fully academic or fluent. Specifically, faculty may view their language as "deficient and inadequate" for the undertaking of college work required in their courses (Zamel, 1998, p.250). While multilingualism is seen as a positive goal for native speakers of English to attain by studying a foreign language, multilingual speakers are seen in a different light. Their multilingualism might carry only negative associations because the English they speak is seen as less than standard. The consequences can be even more damning for the student: teachers may conflate language and intelligence so that errors in language are interpreted as errors in cognitive tasks or signs of lesser intelligence.

Generation 1.5 students need writing classes that address their specific needs and experiences. ESL classes may not develop the academic skills these students so desperately need if they are going to succeed. On the other hand, monolingual basic writing classrooms often do not address the students' real language needs in a productive way. Zamel (1998) argues that language should not be viewed as "static and fixed" and that students need to develop experience in interacting with texts in ways that are meaningful and significant (p. 251). Multicultural theory contends that students do better when they see their lives and experiences reflected in the curriculum and when they are not seen as culturally deficient. Teachers interested in helping generation 1.5 students navigate their education are met with challenges to create classrooms and meaningful projects that respect students and their families. Educators can play a critical role in creating curriculum in which collaborative knowledge within students' families can be integrated into the learning experience; elders, therefore, become important sources of knowledge.

Using life histories in the college writing classroom can address student language needs, honor families and cultures, and provide generation 1.5 (both immigrant and refugee) students with a way to connect the college experience to their family experience. It creates a writing context in which the students use their expertise as multilingual and multicultural specialists, and it moves away from a deficit view of second language writing. Students also interact with academic texts and create writing that uses multiple sources. By using a life history assignment, the writing classroom can be transformed from a place which potentially alienates the students from their families to a place where their identities and cultures are given importance in the curriculum. Students' abilities to speak multiple languages become a tool they need to complete the assignment; thus, their language is no longer an obstacle to overcome as they write. They learn not only about writing at the university level but also about their cultures, their families, and themselves.

Method

In this study, a life histories approach in a research writing course was initially created in 2002 to address the need for developing extensive academic writing skills and linguistic fluency, as well as the important goal of developing a voice in writing. This course was created in collaboration between a freshman program for second language college students and the Department of Family Social Science; it was funded by a grant for studies of writing. This course was part of a first year curriculum offered only to multilingual students (international students were served elsewhere on campus) four times in the last six years. Unlike most traditional college ESL programs, students in this freshman program were enrolled in credit-bearing courses during their freshman year. When students entered this program, they had completed two required semesters of basic writing courses. Their first basic writing class introduced them to source-based writing and investigated the topic of education. The second semester course developed more focused research skills and writing. Students were expected to become proficient researchers; they were required to complete a series of assignments using both the internet and library to build a lengthier research paper incorporating a variety of sources. Further, students were expected to become more proficient editors of their own writing; they completed editing drafts guided by their writing instructor, with an emphasis on identifying patterns of error.

In the spring of 2008, this program was expanded to include one research writing section offered to students with a focus on writing the life history of an elder in their community. Students selected this course based on their interest in the topic. Students had choices of two other topics, and a parallel section of the course was offered at the same time to ensure that students selected the course based on a desire to write life histories rather than a time preference. A total of 21 students registered for and completed the course. Student backgrounds were diverse, with students from Vietnam, Laos, Oromia (Ethiopia), Eritrea, Taiwan, and Somalia. The majority of students were Somali, 15 of 21, reflecting current demographics in the program. Despite their varied backgrounds, students shared some common experiences; many had spent considerable time in refugee camps and had had their educations disrupted and delayed. Almost all had graduated from high schools in the United States.

The life history project provided the foundation of the course and required extensive writing and research. Some of the objectives specifically addressed in the life history project include the following:

- Reinforcing multilingualism as an asset at University: students use multilingual knowledge to complete the work of interviewing in their home language and recording results in English.
- Reinforcing acculturation to college while maintaining cultural identity: students' cultures, including community elders, become valuable source for completing academic study.
- Emphasizing Academic Standards in Research and Writing: students use "Life History" as a lens to narrow sources as part of proficient researching (reading academic texts and using them to support work) and have a meaningful exposure to academic standard writing conventions.

Course Design

The University of Minnesota limited the use of all writing produced through its human subjects review process and required informed consent from all subjects. In addition to the primary interview research, students were required to find library research to support the information they were gathering in their life history interviews. A number of "prewriting" assignments helped students not only to divide the work of the life history project but also to get writing feedback throughout the semester. These included a paper that asked students to define what an elder is based on their individual and cultural definitions; they also received a material culture assignment in which students were asked to identify and bring a meaningful object from their lives and write about it. These assignments developed both interviewing and descriptive writing skills. Some students shared powerful stories from their own experiences as others asked important questions about the objects they brought from their own lives.

Specifically, students were asked to select and interview an elder their community. They were required to interview their subject at least 3 times, with interviews ranging from 1 to 3 hours each. Other sections of the research writing course required students to write 8 to 10 page research papers; however, students completing the life history project were asked to develop a 14 to 17 page paper. Students were required to draft three lengthy summaries of their interviews for the project, broken down by chronological life stages: early life, middle age, and later years; Table 1 provides highlights of the writing assignment, the writing prompt, and some interview questions students used on particular assignments. Students then used these pre-writings and the earlier writing to develop their life history projects. In students were asked to reflect on the life history project as a final paper. Throughout the course, students read about the aging process and about life histories. They met twice a week with their instructor in a computer classroom. Finally, the writing students produced was evaluated to track specific learning outcomes and student achievement.

Table 1

Writing assignments and directions

Writing Assignment	Writing Prompt	Sample interview questions
Defining Elder	Explain and define what an elder means in your community.	—*no interview*
Biographical Object	Choose one object important in your life, tell the story of the object, and explain the meaning.	—*no interview*
Pre-writing 1	Focus on the early life of the person you are interviewing. Interview the person about his/her early life, and write a 3-5 page paper telling about the subject's early life. Contextualize the life with library research.	Who lived with you? Describe your home, house, village, city, block, etc. What rules did your family have? What consequences were there for breaking the rules? Were the rules different for boys and girls? What responsibilities did different family members have? What responsibilities did you have? Did you go to school? What was it like? Describe the school? Did you play any games? What kind of celebrations did you have?
Pre-writing 2	Focus on the middle life of the person you are interviewing. Interview the person about his/her middle life, and write a 3-5 page paper telling about the subject's early life. Contextualize the life with library research.	Select a biographical object from your middle years or an important photograph from that period of your life and describe where you were living (the place or places you lived) and what was going on in your village, region, or country at that time. What were some of the important events or experiences of your middle years? Did you face any serious difficulties, obstacles, or barriers at this time in your life? How did you overcome those barriers? Who was in your family during these years? How did you get married? What about children? What was the work you did?
Pre-writing 3	Focus on later life to present. Interview the person about his/her later life, and write a 3-5 page paper telling about the subject's later life. Contextualize the life with library research.	What does it mean to be an elder in their culture and family? How is it different from the old world to the new? What do you miss the most about the old world, and what do you like the most about the new world? What are your hopes for the next generation? What have you learned that you want future generations to know? What values do you believe are most important for the children to remember and practice in the future? What does it mean to be a strong family?
Life History Project	Prompt: Your major project for this course is to write the life history of an elder. This lengthy paper will include information about the entire life of an individual and also research that supplements and adds context to the elder's life story. You will create a document that not only teaches you about writing and research, but that also is a gift to the elder and his or her family.	—*no interview*
Reflection paper	Prompt: Your paper should purposefully examine these two questions: What did studying the life of this elder teach me? And what did I learn about writing, revision, and research as I put together my final life history paper?	—*no interview*

After completing each interview, students were required to find library research that supported or explained the information gained in their interviews. For example, if the student found out in the interview that the subject had lived a nomadic lifestyle, s/he might find library research about nomads and incorporate that into the paper. Student research included varied topics such as the Somali Civil War and the Vietnam War, colonial education experiences in Africa, post-colonial nationalism, and immigration to the United States and the United Kingdom. Students also visited the Immigration History Research Center on campus, where they could see primary sources from earlier and current immigrants, as well as records and books documenting the immigrant experience. While students were motivated and excited by the collection of documents about immigrants from the past, they were also impressed by the lack of information available about their own communities, which gave new importance to the research they were conducting. At the end of the semester, students participated in a public reading of their work hosted by the Immigration History Research Center.

In addition, student learning outcomes were evaluated during the 2008 semester, specifically the course goals and student ability to achieve those goals. Course goals were stated on the syllabus as the following:

- Developing independence in editing and revision
- Exploring different kinds of writing in academia
- Finding, analyzing, synthesizing and documenting information from various sources, including the university's library system and the World Wide Web, and especially from interviews with an elder from student's community
- Developing longer, focused, informative, and meaningful academic writing
- Constructing a major research paper
- Gathering primary and secondary data and informational resources
- Analyzing those data and resources
- Organizing findings in an interesting and scholarly way
- Writing an in-depth major paper

Students' work was evaluated based on holistic evaluation theory presented by Charles Cooper and Lee Odell (1977), which describes tensions between looking only at writing as a finished product and respecting the writing process. They believe that the writing process is a valuable part of writing and that evaluation should not interfere with that process. On the other hand, evaluation of writing must be fair to students and must measure what students can do (p. 11). Cooper and Odell suggest a holistic approach to evaluating student writing, arguing that such an approach can mitigate tensions in evaluation of student writing. They write, "We constantly struggle with two problems, making judgments that are reliable, that we can reasonably assume are not idiosyncratic; and making judgments that are valid, that provide significant information about the writing we are dealing with" (p. 14). In an academic setting, readers and writers expect certain features of academic writing to be present. Students acquire these conventions as they become more proficient writers, and these features can be evaluated in a holistic way. Cooper and Odell suggest that "Holistic evaluation is usually guided by a holistic scoring guide which describes each feature and identifies high, middle and low quality levels for each feature" (p. 14).

A rubric was developed for each student that focused on the writing goals for the class: creating meaningful and extended content, organizing ideas, using quality research, and editing. Language was evaluated not for perfection of use and grammar, but for quality of editing and clarity, a more reasonable goal reflecting the non-static nature of language learning described by Zamel (1995). Each student was evaluated using a number ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating below academic standard and a 4 indicating full use of academic standard. Mid-level assessment of 2 or 3 was given to those approaching standard and demonstrating understanding of standard, but not full use. The evaluation criteria represented by these numbers was selected to represent different ways that students take on new understandings of academic writing in their own papers and to track that development.

Results

The study indicated that all the students met the course goals and developed an academic voice. All students produced relevant, extended, and descriptive life histories. All students either demonstrated understanding of or full use of academic expectations in creating an extended and meaningful text that was organized logically. This project built significantly on skills gained through their first writing class. Moreover, Table 2 demonstrates the average student success from the beginning of the course to the end, with at least one ranking increase in each category.

Table 2

Student Learning Outcomes Data (21 students)

Selected Criteria	Beginning Course Average	End of Course Average
Extended and relevant content	3	4
Quality of research	3	3.9
Integration of research	2	3.8
Organization	1.68	3.8
Language: use of edited English	2.18	3.2

Grade scale (1=below Academic Standard, 2= approaching academic standard, 3=Some use of academic standard, 4= full use of academic standard)

Further Table 3 demonstrates the total student breakdown in each category. Clearly, students who were evaluated as below standard at the beginning of the course made significant gains in the areas of extending ideas and organization. At the beginning of the semester, most students' abilities were at the expected level after completing their fall writing classes: most received 2 or 3 for the writing categories of content and organization. Most understood the ideas of extended content, were able to produce relevant answers to essay questions, used paragraphs, and did some editing. Since the first two papers did not require library research, this skill was not evaluated at the beginning of the class. However, it did become clear in their first "prewriting" assignment that most of the students were not finding strong sources or using them in relevant and meaningful ways in their writing. Students were still not clear about citing sources, integration was awkward, and, in many cases, minimal. Additionally, a change to a more independent editing process also presented challenges to students who were used to a more teacher-directed editing process in their previous writing course. By the final project, the majority of students were writing with some or full use of standard academic conventions.

Table 3

Use of standard academic conventions comparison frequency of student ranking between Biographical Object and Life History Assignment

	Below standard		Approaching standard		Some standard		Full use	
Extended and relevant content	0	**0**	3	**0**	12	**0**	6	**21**
Quality of research	1	**0**	8	**0**	8	**4**	4	**17**
Integration of research	4	**0**	14	**6**	3	**6**	0	**9**
Organization	2	**0**	5	**0**	8	**4**	6	**17**
Language: use of edited English	4	**0**	8	**3**	6	**11**	3	**7**

Key	
Biographical Object Assignment	Not shaded
Life History Assignment	Shaded

Discussion

The life history project was by all measures a successful one, as evaluated by students and instructors. It worked to meet the goals of the writing course and to meet curricular goals of inclusion and multicultural education. Students developed a sense of community as the course progressed, supporting each other in their work and forging bonds as a cohesive group. The project, itself, gave students a real audience and purpose as they wrote because a requirement of the course was to give the interviewee a copy of their final drafts. As such, students were aware that they were creating documents that not only captured their interviewees' life but also provided their written family history. Because they perceived the outcomes of the assignment as real and important, students became concerned with making the paper accurate and finished products. Students said their motivation was the idea that generations to come might read their papers; therefore, they said, they made a sincere effort in developing, organizing, and editing the life stories.

In addition to student writing, in-class activities were designed around these goals. Direct instruction took place in research skills and integration of research. Students were exposed to different libraries on campus. Students practiced strategies for using source material and avoiding plagiarism. Students were directly instructed in class about academic writing conventions such as organization, support, explanation, and analysis. There was significant discussion about using academic language and about using in-class editing.

The life history interviews were used as a starting point for many of the course goals. In addition to writing an extended life story gained from the interviews, students were exposed to research in multiple disciplines and seemed motivated by the project to do appropriate research. They developed interviewing skills and learned to ask more focused and open-ended questions as they conducted their interviews with elders. In their prewriting assignments, their developing skills as interviewers became apparent. By their third prewriting, they were getting far more detailed and focused information. By using the life history project as a starting point for research, students were able to evaluate the available research and to have a narrow focus as well as a criterion by which to select the most appropriate sources.

Moreover, the approach of the course proved to be an innovative way to teach students to conduct quality research in an academic setting. Beginning writers often have difficulties in all dimensions of research, but especially in making connections between sources and analyzing their sources. In early writing assignments, students' beginning research was evaluated, and they were encouraged to find better, more academic sources. A strength of using the life history as a starting point for research is that students must read the sources carefully to find a source that contextualizes the life. In addition, students were exposed to many sources of research, including different collections on campus, academic web sites, and even county libraries.

Most students made strong gains in the area of research. Based on the final project evaluation, it was clear that all students found relevant sources that demonstrated an understanding of the quality expected by academic research. Students also made progress in integrating their research. This proved to be a difficult process for many students. In the beginning of the course, many students' use of sources was limited to adding a quote, often a long quote, into the life history. The life history project itself and feedback from the instructor encouraged other strategies such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and analyzing sources. The final life history projects showed significant gains made by most students in this area, with all but two students out of twenty demonstrating understanding of the expectation of higher quality integration of secondary sources, with most students showing significant gains and mastery of these skills. In addition, students struggled with use of MLA style throughout the semester, but by the end all showed familiarity with the correct use of citations, and most demonstrated full understanding and mastery of this skill.

Because this project was designed to build students' language proficiency as well as academic writing proficiency, students' language was also evaluated. Lisa Delpit describes the language used in academia as "edited English" or "essentially the English you see in books – English that has been through an editing process" (Miner 1995, p. 139). For students whose English is developing as they complete their college work, a goal of completely error-free English is not realistic. However, students were evaluated on their ability to sustain mostly error-free text or text where language error does not interfere with understanding. They were also evaluated on their ability to use academic language markers including transitions and formal vocabulary. For many students, this life history was the longest piece of their own writing they had ever edited, and editing the paper proved to be a formidable task. Most students did make gains in the area of editing. These gains began early in the course, as students were producing new text almost constantly during the semester. In addition, most of the responsibility for editing was left in the students' hands, pushing them to become more independent editors. Students received feedback about individual language error patterns on each piece of writing they produced. As demonstrated in Table 2, a majority of students made strides in developing academic English, and even students with lower language proficiency were able to demonstrate improvement and a greater understanding of expectations about language in the college environment.

Implications

Students writing and researching becomes purposeful.

Students' reflections show that they believed that the life history project worked well as a research project and as a tool to teach academic writing. As students completed their life history projects, they reported a sense of pride in their work, as well as a general agreement that their abilities to write academically had improved. One student reflected, "When the paper was finished, it left a good feeling in me." Another commented, "I developed confidence when I successfully completed a 16 page paper." Students reported improvement in their writing: "Now I know that I'm capable of writing a paper in which I can fully support my opinions." Students' ability to sustain writing also improved through the experience of doing longer writing: "Writing this paper has enhanced my ability to write long papers," one student said.

Finally, the experience of creating a real and meaningful piece of writing allowed students to take risks in writing that paid off for them. One student reflected on his experience in this class by comparing it to previous writing classes: "I always chose only what I have read in other classes. Without choosing what I know very well, I believed I would fail. However with this course I developed confidence." Another student reflected, "In the beginning of the class, I used to just state facts, I never used to be able to pick sides on issues and write critical papers."

The volume of writing encouraged fluency, and students reported feeling a sense of accomplishment about their writing. The initial anxiety about writing a 15-20 page paper gave way to complaints at the end of the semester that the 20 page limit was too short. The page limit forced writers to focus on telling the story. They had to make writing decisions about what information to include, what information to leave out, and how to present that information in a way that made sense. Their final products were successful and impressive in that they sustained 15-20 pages of interesting and relevant content. Students worked with transitions and subheadings to guide the reader through the life history. The very nature of telling one person's story and the meaningful writing context helped students to organize their papers logically and to connect events and stories. They also had to learn to transition to multiple stories logically. Transitioning from the elder's story to the wider historical material needed to be smooth, and students worked hard to make those transitions.

Students also reported a new understanding of the purpose and scope of doing research. Students commented that researching was difficult because they could not use many broad sources and needed to find focused research. Student comments show the importance of having a real purpose for sifting through written documents. Despite the difficulty, they were motivated to find the best sources. A Vietnamese student stated that ". . . sources were chosen carefully to avoid bias and to find good information which could give strong proof to the personal story." One Somali student wrote, "The most important part is to learn what is acceptable as academic research and what is not." Students reported that they were motivated to seek out the right information.

In written evaluations of the course, student response has been overwhelmingly positive. This, in part, can be explained by the students themselves; they chose the course based on an interest in doing this type of research. But, beyond interest in the topic, students stated that what they learned about writing would help them in their future courses. Student comments show significant learning about college writing from this assignment. A motivated student who wrote a 30-page first draft commented, "As one who took a previous writing course… I had some sense of what writing in college was like and what was expected from me. Even though I was well informed about college life, I did not expect the magnitude of the work load of this course." He concluded his comments, stating, "As a freshman who has a long way to go to finish college, I will look back on this class as one of the best experiential courses I have ever taken."

The Life History Project, then, is a culturally relevant college level assignment that requires students to use their own knowledge as a base to approach the assignment. In this case, students were asked to describe their own and community definitions of "elder," and then to find an elder of their choice to interview. Definitions ranged from age based to having grandchildren, education, or status. They were able to define community as they wished. Students could interview people from a variety of contexts. Most students chose to interview elders from their country of origin - grandparents, neighbors, relatives, or family friends, but one student chose to interview an elder from the United States.

The project was successful in achieving its goals of inclusiveness and respect for students' families and cultures. Indeed, students reported that their understanding of elders had changed as a result of taking the course. One student discussed this change in her reflection paper: "When I heard of an elder, I pictured elders in the Somali community…. I doubted their significance since they cannot even drive to the Health Centers or talk to their own doctors, let alone helping others. However, reading articles about them gave me a new perspective and helped me realize their importance." Another student said, "When I started writing about the life history, I asked myself what kind of benefit would I get from the writing and interview. The first interview highlighted the advantages of speaking to an elder."

Other students reported that their respect for the person they interviewed grew greatly as a result of having completed the project: "Even though as a family we share many things, we do not have a habit to ask where we came from. . . .The life history project is a way of knowing these histories that nobody asked about before." Another student described his experience interviewing his mother: "I learned from my mother that she is an experienced person. She is the kind of person who can bring the community together, share ideas, and offer advice to the next generation."

In addition, the life history project answered some of the questions that students have about their own lives. For students who grew up in refugee camps or outside of their countries, there often were gaps in their understanding of their own collective histories, gaps that were filled by completing the interviews and research. In many instances, they learned important information about conflicts in their own countries, their cultures, and the reason for their immigration. One Somali student wrote, "As a Somali boy who feels that the identity of his people is endangered, getting advice and a historical perspective from a Somali elder has great value." Another student said, "I learned about the history of my people, about my family, and about myself."

Surprisingly, one unanticipated effect of the students' work was a new found proficiency in some students' native languages. One student commented at the public reading that for this assignment, he had to "learn Somali" to communicate with the elder. Research shows that many bilingual people use their native language and English in different settings, developing language around use (Laosa 1975). Further research is needed to show if this project is also effective in native language maintenance and development. As one Oromo student said, "The conversations in Oromo were the best thing to do because I rarely speak Oromo. I learned the process of translating and knowing more words of my language. It also reminded me to use it or I might end up forgetting the language soon. Even though I know my language, I am not as good as I used to be and he helped me understand it."

The life history project brings students into the curriculum.

One of the goals of multicultural education is to provide students with opportunities to see themselves in the curriculum (Kutz, Groden and Zamel, 1993). Often times, students from outside of the dominant culture do not find models of their own experience in the college curriculum and lack relevant experience and schemata to use in their analysis and response to college material and assignments (Collins 2001). This can be especially true for immigrant and refugee students for whom the culturally based contexts of readings are often more difficult to understand than the reading itself.

Importantly, the life history project moves away from a deficit model of second language learners. Instead of looking at immigrant students as both linguistically and culturally deficient and thinking of the writing class as a way to "fix" their linguistic errors, the life history project offers students an important context where they are the only people who could successfully accomplish the project because of who they are. Their multilingualism becomes essential as they interview elders in their native language and then become the recorders of their experience in English, the language of future generations. They are culturally appropriate specialists: they know how to approach their subjects in ways that an outsider would not. Students recognized their important roles in the process of recording these stories. Their identities and differences then became important strengths to draw on, rather than markers of difference to be overcome.

Further Study

The project described here is one approach to working with multilingual students. There are many possible approaches to meeting the needs of generation 1.5 students that are meaningful and push fluency and academic skills. As generation 1.5 students enter college in larger numbers, a variety of assignments and approaches need to be developed to support their success. Other topics that have been successful in some of the same ways have included International Human Rights and Race, Class, and Gender. Comparative research is needed to evaluate qualitatively the success of Life Histories as compared with other engaging topics. Also, further research could look at the strategies developed to support the life history project to see whether they transfer to other areas of student research. Another study could be conducted that could compare the results of the life history writing project with the results of one of the regular classes to see if there is a difference in reaching the learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Designing a course around life histories of elders provides not only a meaningful and real writing context, but it also creates a writing course that is inclusive and respectful of student identities and cultures, especially for generation 1.5 students. Students are able to learn real writing tasks that they will need to succeed in their educational goals while at the same time affirming the importance of the elders in their communities and of the knowledge they have. The life history assignment brings the students' communities into the classroom and creates a real and meaningful context for documenting one person's story for future and current generations to read. In doing so, students' multilingualism and ability to move between two cultures becomes a necessary tool to complete the assignment. Their status as second language learners is not a deficit in this context, but an asset. They are exposed to a variety of research contexts and materials as they write their life history projects, meeting the expectations of the writing classroom as they also learn about who they are.

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BOOK REVIEW: Handling Complexity in Learning Environments: Theory and Research

Elen, J., & Clark, R. E. (Eds).(2006). *Handling Complexity in Learning Environments: Theory and Research*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Reviewed by Dominic J. Voge, University of California, Berkeley

The unifying theme of this book is complexity. The editors, Jan Elen and Richard Clark, have assembled in the book's 17 chapters "a far-reaching analysis of complexity in learning environments from a cognitive perspective" (back cover). Some of the authors seek out putatively complex settings to investigate (e.g. multimedia learning contexts) while others seek complexity in familiar situations such as classrooms. Collectively, the investigators consider how to conceptualize complexity, how to study it, and how to apply findings about complexity to theory, research, and, to a lesser extent, practice. Individual contributors take up an array of issues in relation to complexity, including cognitive architecture and cognitive load theory, motivation for learning, multimedia and classroom learning as well as model-building, among others.

Not surprisingly, given that this book is the latest volume in the Advances in Learning and Instruction Series published in association with the European Association of Learning and Instruction, the majority of contributors are Europeans who draw extensively upon literature published outside of North America. In addition, most of the authors tend to publish in forums not directly relevant to the learning assistance community. As a result, their perspectives tend to be rooted in theory and research likely to be unfamiliar to most American learning assistance professionals. While a lack of a shared theoretical context poses a challenge to American readers, the collection also provides an opportunity to gain some familiarity with European approaches to complexity and related issues. Readers may, however, be familiar with the research of one of the contributors, Richard Mayer, the University of California, Santa Barbara educational psychologist who has for many years conducted investigations into theoretical and practical aspects of college learning strategies and their instruction.

As the learning assistance community is comprised mostly of practitioners in colleges and universities, this review considers foremost the relevance and applicability of these collected works to practice in post-secondary contexts, with a particular emphasis on teaching and tutoring. However, it should be noted that such an audience does not appear to be the one the editors envisioned. As I review selected chapters (space does not permit a review of

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them all) one of my aims is to highlight aspects of the chapters which would be most pertinent and useful to *TLAR* readers.

This edited volume serves as a tribute to Joost Lowyck and his work on complexity. True to its subtitle, the editors have assembled articles—framed by two synoptic essays—which emphasize theoretical and research issues. Divided into three parts, the groups of chapters address, in turn, complexity in relation to learning and the learner, research on learning environments, and methodological and research design issues.

The book's clearly organized and crisply written introduction, "Setting the scene: Complexity and learning environments" (by Elen & Clark), admirably frames the remainder of the text by articulating an overarching conceptual framework and glossing each of the subsequent contributions. However, to those who identify primarily as instructors who teach students, the nomenclature used in this, and some other chapters, can seem strikingly disembodied and dehumanizing, and thus, may be off-putting. For example, cognitive "architecture," "systems," and "loads" are frequently discussed separately from the learners who possess them. When discussing "The teacher" in their introductory chapter, the editors argue that "The teacher is no longer the unique instructional agent, but has become one of many possible *support delivery systems* [italics added]" (p. 4). Teachers and tutors may justifiably question the premises of theories which conceptualize their roles in such narrow "delivery" terms.

Serving as a foundation or backdrop for the largely cognitive analyses which follow, (Chapter 1, "How the human cognitive system deals with complexity"), John Sweller discusses how the human cognitive architecture handles complexity in learning. Bringing to bear cognitive load theory, he considers the implications of various instructional designs in terms of the cognitive demands (loads) placed on learners and how those (especially "extraneous cognitive") loads might be diminished. This latter focus may be illuminating for curriculum developers in learning assistance settings. For example, Sweller marshals experimental evidence to argue against the use of discovery teaching techniques in which learners engage in unguided problem-solving. He asserts that for the purposes of schema acquisition, assigning students to study worked examples rather than attempting to solve problems yields better results. Cognitive load theory suggests that this is due to a decrease in cognitive load when learners are not required to search for and select problem-solving strategies while simultaneously acquiring content knowledge (schema).

In their discussion of complex tasks and motivation for learning, Clark, Keith Howard, and Sean Early (Chapter 2, "Motivational challenges experienced in highly complex learning environments") review a large corpus of research on motivational processes directly relevant to college and university students. Synthesizing this work, they construct an extremely useful hierarchical model (p. 30) of motivation variables. Comprised of five strata, the model represents the inter-relationships among eight motivational factors (both environmental and psychological) and their effects on learners' behavior, strategies, and performance. Although not designed for this purpose, the model could be utilized in direct tutor training aimed at understanding the multifaceted nature of motivation for learning by turning each strata of motivational variables into a topic for training. The model can also be used by instructors or learning skills counselors working directly with students. For instance, when a student's academic difficulty is understood by a tutor or instructor as having a motivational origin, the factors comprising the model can be used to generate diagnostic questions. Are environmental factors such as incentives or attributions negatively affecting motivation? Are psychological factors such as internal attributions and self-efficacy undermining motivation? Once a fuller understanding of a student's motivation is grasped, interventions which target these variables, such as attribution re-training, can be implemented.

"Coping with complexity in multimedia learning" is the title of Mayer's contribution (Chapter 7). Drawing extensively on his previously published work, Mayer enumerates seven "techniques for coping with complexity in multimedia learning" (p. 129) by putting each in relation to a theory of cognition and summarizing empirical evidence in support of it. This brief piece provides study strategy instructors preparing students for on-line or blended courses with a useful set of learner strategies for managing the complexity of these types of learning environments.

Chapter 12 ("Meeting challenges to researching learning from instruction by increasing the complexity of research"), starts from the premise—which may be surprising to some—that "cognition and learning have proven difficult to understand" (p. 221) due to the number of interrelated factors that affect them. Philip Winne asks, "What is it about the complexity of learning from instruction that has prevented a quicker route to a general, powerful, elegant theory?" (p. 221). His answer centers around three common weaknesses in models of learning: misspecification, focus, and granularity. While acknowledging the deep sources of these difficulties, he makes several suggestions for how to create better evidence-based models. If readers seek to conceptualize learning from instruction and wish to avoid some of the apparently all-too-common pitfalls associated with modeling complex learning processes, then Winne's "remedies" could prove useful.

M. David Merrill (Chapter 15) synthesizes five instructional principles (and derives multiple "corollaries" for each) from several prominent instructional theories. While the author, consistent with the purpose of the volume, envisions these principles as comprising a framework of hypotheses to be tested via research, the corollaries can also be conceived, by the more practically-minded, as a set of instructional best practices.

Much of the discussion in these chapters seems far removed from the practical issues with which most learning center administrators, teaching staff, and tutors concern themselves. While there is much application of theory to research and some (very valuable) derivation of implications for practice, as a set the articles do not consistently consider design, teaching, or assessment issues of relevance to post-secondary learning assistance contexts. Nonetheless, TLAR readers can find interesting and useful concepts, frameworks, and questions throughout the text, like those which I have sought to highlight above. Overall, the volume's strength may lie primarily in the elaborated theoretical perspectives its authors bring to conceptualizing complexity.

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The Learning Assistance Review (TLAR), the national peer reviewed official publication of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), publishes scholarly articles and reviews that address issues of interest to learning center professionals (including administrators, teaching staff, faculty, and tutors) who are interested in improving the learning skills of postsecondary students. Primary consideration will be given to articles about program design and evaluation, classroom-based research, the application of theory and research to practice, innovative teaching and tutoring strategies, student assessment, and other topics that bridge gaps within our diverse profession.

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