

How Was Your Session at the Writing Center? Pre- and Post-Grade Student Evaluations

by Julie Bauer Morrison and Jean-Paul Nadeau

At many writing labs and centers, students offer feedback about sessions on some type of post-session evaluation form. In many cases, this feedback is overwhelmingly positive. What has become somewhat more interesting and, perhaps, revealing for our center, and others, are the ways that students feel about their writing center sessions weeks, months, and paper grades later.

The effect of the passage of time on students' perceptions of their writing center experiences has been explored by writing center researcher James Bell. Bell conducted a study that involved follow-up telephone calls to writing center visitors to determine whether their level of satisfaction with writing center services had remained the same over time. He explains, "I wanted to know whether the positive evaluations students gave us when they finished conferences lasted. I wanted to know whether students learned something during conferences, were able to use that knowledge of writing independently, and thought they had gained something of long-term value" (18). Although what occurs during a session clearly affects students' initial perceptions of that session, what we wonder is, as students think back over time, what other factors might alter these perceptions?

The catalyst for our research was just such a change in perception, specifically what was perceived to be a barrage of student complaints involving the writing center. These com-

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plaints were made by several students to one of us, a professor of psychology, who had just returned a set of graded papers in an undergraduate psychology class. In the writing assignment, students were asked to read two opposing articles on a controversial issue within psychology from Slife's *Taking Sides* text, to defend one side, and to use the evidence in the articles to support their position in a two-to-three page paper.

There was concern about the seriousness and extensiveness of the complaints because roughly ninety percent of the class had visited the writing center, likely a result of the five-day due date extension given as incentive. The complaints seemed to focus on students' disappointment that visiting the writing center had not resulted in their earning higher grades.

Although we both know that the goal of a writing center session is not simply to increase a student's paper grade, we are grudgingly aware of the hold grades have over students. Still, writing center administrators know better than to try to predict the grade a paper might earn when working with an extremely anxious and inquisitive tutee. Writing center research tends to resist focusing on grades as a measure of a center's effectiveness, referring to North's "Idea of a Writing Center" to explain that we focus on the writer, not the writing, that our mission is to work (ideally) with students who are writing to learn, writers who "come looking for us because, more often than not, they are genuinely, deeply engaged with their material, anxious to wrestle it in to the best form they can: they are really motivated to write" (10).

The fact is, however, that if students weren't so worried about the grades they would earn on their papers, we might be talking amongst ourselves instead of with our students. Students often want to focus on making changes that will improve their grade, while writing center staff typically do their best to avoid the subject. North, years after writing "Idea of a Writing Center," admits that writing center visitors aren't always motivated to seek a writing tutor for the ideal reason, namely, the desire to be a better writer and an engaged intellectual. In "Revisiting the 'Idea of a Writing Center,'" North suggests that students who come to the writing center are motivated, but in more complicated ways: "They will, rather, be motivated to (say) finish writing; to be finished with writing; to have their writing be finished. They will be motivated to have the writing they submit for a class win them a good grade, whatever they imagine that will take: for it to be mechanically correct, or thoroughly documented, or to follow the instructor's directions to the letter" (10). In our case, after we learned of students' post-grade reactions to their writing center sessions, we began to suspect that grades did influence students' level of satisfaction with the writing center.

We—the writing center administrator and the professor of psychology—decided to explore the relationship between the grades students earned and their perceptions of writing center sessions. Our first exchange regarding the aforementioned complaints took place via an e-mail message from professor to writing center administrator. In it, the professor explained:

I have been hearing a lot of negative comments from students about their experience with the consultants at the writing center. I am sure part of this was due to a misunderstanding of the assignment (e.g., I overheard one student today complaining to another that his tutor told him it was OK to base his argument on personal opinion; therefore, he was upset when he did not do well on the paper). (Morrison)

At the time this e-mail message was sent, we already had open lines of communication. Professor Morrison's course was registered with the writing center, so syllabi and assignments had been shared, and class visits conducted.¹ The negative vibe felt from these students prompted us to examine students' expectations in an attempt to diminish future misunderstanding. After briefly discussing the student complaints, we decided to scrutinize students' perceptions of the writing center, and, more specifically, perceptions surrounding their visits for these particular papers. Such scrutiny seemed necessary, given that the same students' immediate post-session evaluations were overwhelmingly positive.

Our goal in conducting this study was to determine the extent to which perceptions were changing: what proportion of students changed their evaluation of their writing center conferences after receiving paper grades? In what ways did the pre- and post-grade evaluations of writing center conferences differ? We were interested in one variable in particular, namely the letter grade earned, and the relationship between this variable and student satisfaction. In other words, we sought to answer the question, what is the correlation between the grade earned on a paper and the change in satisfaction with a student's writing center conference?

In order to assess the relationship between student grades and changes in writing center evaluation from pre- to post-grade, we divided the students into four categories: those who received A's, B's, C's, and D's on their papers. We suspected that A students would not change their satisfaction ratings because they ought to be satisfied with receiving the highest letter grade. B, C, and D students should be less satisfied, and we expected that their ratings would decrease in relation to the grade they received. For example, we thought the D students would be the least satisfied, and lower their ratings the most. As we will reveal, we were only partially correct in our hypotheses.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. We collected data in a number of ways to answer our primary research question: Did students' satisfaction regarding their visit to the writing center change from pre- to post-grade? And if satisfaction changed, what was the direction of that change? We tabulated satisfaction ratings for this set of students using the evaluations they completed immediately after their writing center visit. This pre-grade data was compared to information gathered through a post-grade survey and a long-term satisfaction survey.

For simplicity, the questionnaire students completed immediately after their writing center visit will be referred to as the WC (for writing center) survey, the post-grade questionnaire will be referred to as the M (for Professor Morrison) survey, and the long-term satisfaction survey will be referred to as the LTS (for long-term satisfaction) survey. (The WC, M, and LTS surveys can be found in Appendices A, B, and C, respectively.)

For each participant, we had two initial sources of data: the WC survey and the M survey. Not all students visited the writing center, and not all those who visited completed both the WC and M surveys. The primary data we report here comes from fifty-three students for whom we had both WC and M survey data. Of these fifty-three students, sixteen completed the LTS survey. This small sample size, of course, means that we must take care not to generalize based on our findings; these data serve more exploratory purposes.

WC Survey. The initial evaluation was completed by all students at the conclusion of their writing center session. Students, at times, complete this evaluation in sight of the writing center staff person with whom they worked, but the student is asked to turn the survey in to a third party. The purpose of this evaluation is to monitor whether students were satisfied with their visit as well as whether their writing center visit helped them develop their skills as writers (see Appendix A). The questions on the WC survey, for the most part, come from the questionnaire used in Bell's previously mentioned study. These questions were designed to evaluate "whether students learned something during conferences, were able to use that knowledge writing independently, and thought they had gained something of long-term value" (18).

M Survey. Soon after hearing the student complaints, we conducted a post-grade survey of student perceptions of their writing center visits, which asked students the same types of questions as were asked in the original survey and probed them for additional information about their experiences (see Appendix B). After we gained written student consent, we distributed the questionnaire to students during psychology class. Students responded to

these questions approximately one week after learning of their paper grades, and three weeks after their writing center visit and completion of the WC survey.

We developed the M survey in stages. First, we looked at the WC survey and incorporated three of the five questions, all dealing with satisfaction, changing the wording slightly to make their incorporation less obvious. Second, we added questions to test other potential variables in students' satisfaction with their writing center consultations. These variables included, among others: the duration of the consultation, how far in advance of the due date the consultation occurred, how prepared the student was for the consultation, and whether the student made an appointment or visited the writing center during walk-in hours. Third, we made final revisions after the survey was evaluated by a student writing center consultant. This consultant had not only worked with many of the students in the psychology class on their papers, but was herself a student in the psychology class.

LTS Survey. As we shared our results with colleagues, we realized that there were several questions not included on the M survey that may have clarified our results. To remedy this situation, we e-mailed the original survey participants approximately a year after they had completed the M survey and asked them to complete a long-term satisfaction survey (see Appendix C). Sixteen of the 53 students returned the survey.

The purpose of the LTS survey was twofold. First, we wished to gather additional quantitative data. For example, we assume students receiving lower grades expected higher grades, but was this the case? If a student did expect a higher grade, how much higher? We also wondered whether students had visited the writing center prior to their psychology visit, and whether they returned afterward. Second, we wished to gather qualitative data regarding whether students became less satisfied with their visit to the center after learning their grade, as well as, if they were, why they think their level of satisfaction lessened. We hoped that students' responses would reveal the extent and target(s) of their negativity.

A Focus on Perception. Much of the data reported below relates to students' perceptions, inherently subjective in nature. In this study it is these perceptions that interest us; after all, students (not to mention professors and writing center administrators) act on their perceptions. In a similar study, Peter Carino and Doug Enders note the difficulty of drawing conclusions about perceptions. In trying to determine whether student visits to the writing center improved their writing, Carino and Enders emphasize that their data indicate "students' perceptions of improvement." They explain that additional variables must be considered, such as "What do students believe constitutes improvement? How do they measure it?" (99).

Though learning is often a struggle, and writing center sessions can be disappointing, stressful, and/or challenging, it would be ideal if students could see the value in such experiences. In other words, we would like to think that students could be "satisfied" with a session in which they discovered just one thing about themselves as a student, author, and/or person. We believe that it is crucial to consider students' perceptions.

In addition to the subjective nature of the data, the analyses we conducted looked at relationships among variables. These relationships do not tell us which factor is the cause and which is the effect, or whether some other third factor affects the first two. We hypothesize the relationship, but cannot make conclusions with absolute certainty. We would agree with Carino and Enders, though, that, "quantitative research does enable us to take more informed positions in our arguments, to add information to the intuitions, observations, hunches, suspicions, and guesses of daily experience that empower our lore" (101). Below, we suggest possible interpretations of the results, realizing that we must be cautious in drawing firm conclusions.

Results

All the results reported here have met statistical criteria for significance at the $p < .05$ level, which indicates that there is only a 1 in 20 chance that any one result is in error. This is not to say that significant results are meaningful, or that results that fail to meet statistical significance are not informative. For example, a few millisecond difference in completing a task in a particular way may be significant, yet may not have any practical implications for how the task should be completed. On the other hand, small increases in the severity of side effects with one medication instead of another ought to be considered carefully even if the increases are not statistically significant. For the most part, the analyzed data are ordinal, for example, a number on a Likert scale, which requires special statistical tests.²

What proportion of students changed their evaluation of their writing center conferences after receiving paper grades? The students' WC surveys revealed overwhelmingly positive responses to their writing center experience (see Figure 1), with most reporting high levels of satisfaction (e.g., nearly 5 on a 1-5 scale) on all five scales, including overall conference satisfaction (Satisfied), satisfaction with the topics covered (Topics), ability to apply what was learned to school work (Apply), ability to use what was learned in the future (Future), and rating of consultant friendliness (Friendly). This degree of positivity is fairly representative of our writing center's evaluations: regardless of semester, staff member, or month, students usually respond favorably via these initial

assessments. And so it was for our set of students. Before they had learned the grade they would earn on their papers, these students seemed, for the most part, highly satisfied.

These same students didn't seem as happy with the writing center after they had learned of their grades. We found that students' sat-

isfaction ratings were lower post-grade than pre-grade, and the drop was significant, with the average rating decreasing from a 4.81 to a 3.74 out of 5. When evaluating the session after learning of their grades, students with higher paper grades displayed greater satisfaction than those with lower grades, although all satisfaction ratings were lower than the initial ratings. Essentially, the rating dropped from a "strongly satisfied" to a "satisfied" rating. These results are similar to those from Bell's study: "The Immediate Group results were enthusiastic and dramatically positive; the Two Week and Two Month groups seemed slightly less enthused and one in ten expressed some dissatisfaction, yet the overall results were still strongly positive" (22). Overall, students' satisfaction levels declined slightly over time.

In what ways did the pre- and post-grade evaluations of writing center conferences differ? What is the correlation between the grade earned and the change in satisfaction with a student's writing center conference? Although we suspected a drop in ratings based on the student comments following the return of the graded papers, we anticipated that the pattern would vary by letter grade received. Therefore, we grouped the students according to their letter grade, A, B, C, or D. There were approximately equal numbers of students in the four grade categories, with 17 A's, 12 B's, 15 C's, and 9 D's. We found that students receiving all letter grades lowered their ratings. Students earning A's lowered their ratings less than those receiving B's, C's, or D's (see Figure 2). In addition, the B, C, and D students lowered their ratings equally. These findings seem contrary to our

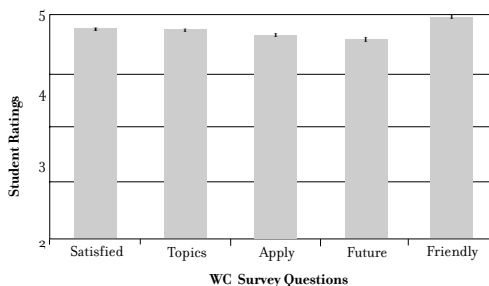


Figure 1: WC Survey Responses³

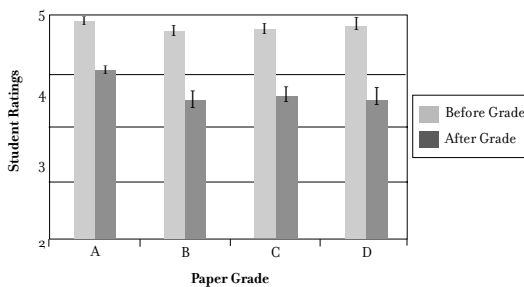


Figure 2: Pre- and Post-Grade Satisfaction Ratings

hypotheses. We expected that the students receiving the higher grades would not alter their ratings, and the lower the grade, the lower the subsequent rating.

Another situation in which we see the same pattern of data as above, with B's, C's, and D's equal, and different from A's, is when we look at students' reports of their own effort expended on the paper. When asked whether they could have done more to improve their papers, students with the lower grades reported that they could have worked harder, while those with the higher grades thought that there was less they could have done.

Factors that we thought might affect student's level of satisfaction had little or no effect at all. Students who had appointments instead of visiting the center during walk-in hours, who had longer sessions rather than shorter ones, or who visited the writing center more in advance of the paper due date rather than right before the paper was due, all had similar paper grades, satisfaction ratings, and initial perceptions of what they learned. In addition, we found no difference between students who indicated that they expressed to the writing center staff member what they wanted help with vs. those who did not, or between those who said their consultant explained the focus of the session vs. those who did not. Finally, a student's year in school was not related to their grade, their satisfaction, or what they learned from their experience at the writing center, although the large proportion of students were in their first or second year of college.

Do these changed perceptions hold up over time? When asked on the LTS survey to indicate what grade they received, and what grade they expected, four of our sixteen students could not recall exact grades. Of the 12 who could, seven recalled them correctly (while five recalled them incorrectly), with eight indicating that the grade they received was the grade they expected. We had hoped to analyze the satisfaction rating data based on whether students expected higher or lower grades, but there was insufficient data.

The most important results from the LTS survey come from the students' re-ratings of satisfaction with that psychology paper writing center session, and their explanations of those ratings. Overall, time appeared to heal most wounds, with ratings returning roughly to the level they were initially on the WC survey. Of the sixteen respondents to the LTS survey, ten indicated a higher satisfaction rating than they had on the M survey. Nine of these ratings were identical to the ratings students provided on the WC survey. Only a single student decreased her satisfaction rating from M survey to LTS survey.

Despite this increase in ratings to close to pre-grade levels, students openly acknowledged that their grade directly influenced their satisfaction. Five of the sixteen students expressly stated that their satisfaction rating was directly related to their grade. One student had this to say in response to the satisfaction-rating-criteria question: "The grade I

received after I went there... which was high if I remember correctly... however the reason I did not choose 5 ["very much agree" that he was satisfied with his session] is because the suggestions were very general and I had to put in some work. In all honesty I thought they would fix my paper for me..." Another student wrote, "I really cannot remember my grade therefore having nothing to judge the success of the center on!" These responses suggest that at least some students are using paper grades to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing center.

Discussion

Our results indicate that, when students learned of their grades, they altered their previous perceptions of their writing center sessions. As would be expected, students' paper grades are not related to initial WC ratings of satisfaction (see Figure 2).

Why do students become less satisfied? Two possible explanations are the different contexts in which the surveys were conducted and the unwillingness of students to accept full responsibility for their grades. The M survey was conducted by a faculty member not associated with the writing center. Students may have been more hesitant to tell a writing center representative that they were not fully satisfied. Second, the professor told students the M survey was in response to student complaints about the writing center. Students who had good experiences may have been influenced by hearing about others' negative experiences.

It might also be that students are unwilling, or unable, to accept full responsibility for a grade that was lower than expected. In the context of our study, it is understandable how the writing center could become a scapegoat for students who felt they had little choice but to have a consultation. The writing center becomes another source for ascribing blame outside of the student-faculty relationship. In other words, students likely blame themselves, at least partially, for any failings, as well as their professor. The writing center allows them to distance themselves even further from the grade on the paper. After all, there were numerous parties involved. What may appear to contradict this assumption that students blame the writing center is the finding that the B, C, and D students were the ones who reported that they could have worked harder to succeed on their paper. However, there is a psychological explanation for this entire pattern of results.

This explanation is based on the idea of a self-serving bias, a psychological phenomenon whereby people attribute their successes to their own abilities and their failures to sources outside their control (Myers 55). Writing center folk have considered the significance of this phenomenon as well. Explains Dave Healy, "To the extent that students see themselves as acted upon rather than as agents of their own destiny, as subject to the authority of oth-

ers rather than subjects of their own academic journey, they do not develop the independence and initiative necessary for intellectual growth” (180).

The exact psychological mechanism behind the self-serving bias is debated, but includes motivation to maintain self-esteem as well as expectations based on past success (Larson 430). Non-motivational explanations, such as expectations based on past success, require both that people take more personal responsibility for success, and take less responsibility for failure. This requirement has to do with the finding that people expect success and rarely expect failure. The decline in A student satisfaction ratings from WC survey to M survey indicates that these students are taking more responsibility for their success, and decreasing the responsibility they are attributing to the writing center. The more substantial decline in the B, C, and D student ratings suggests that they are denying full responsibility for their lack of success and are, at least in part, blaming the writing center.

If students are in fact blaming the writing center for not earning an A grade, why do these students admit they could have worked harder on their papers? A consideration of the motivational explanation, self-esteem, is appropriate here (see Rosenfeld). It might be the case that students are trying to protect their self-esteem in two ways, by convincing themselves: 1) that they received a less-than-perfect grade because of a failure of the writing center to service their needs and 2) that if they had only worked harder themselves, they would have been successful.

One, as yet, unanswered question concerns the similarity among the ratings of the B, C, and D students. Why do the D ratings not decrease more than the B ratings? Why do all three groups indicate the same amount of need to have worked harder themselves? One explanation focuses on students' expectations. Our initial hypothesis was based on the idea that all students would expect an A. This may not be the case. It may be that each group only expected to receive one letter grade higher than they did receive. If this was the expectation, then the ratings should have decreased equally. In fact, research on the self-serving bias shows that the bias is even more evident when subjective measures of success and failure are used, instead of objective measures like paper grades (Reifenberg 627). We had hoped to address this with the data from the long-term survey; however, we had insufficient data. A future study should investigate the link between grade expectations, actual grades, and satisfaction.

Implications

What this study suggests to us is that a seemingly positive tutoring session can result in a student deciding that it is not worth the time to visit the writing center again. Why?

Because the positive experience was not confirmed by the grade earned on a piece of writing.

Knowing that grades are an inevitable reality for much of the writing that students bring to the writing center, how can we better prepare students to have more realistic expectations of a writing center session, and, consequently, ensure higher and longer-lasting levels of satisfaction? How can we help students see the benefits of becoming a writing center regular? Can we convince students to worry less about grades? The results of our study lead us toward some possibilities.

Negotiating a goal for the session. Negotiating a goal(or goals) for each writing center session is one way to help students toward a more realistic expectation. This conclusion was illustrated through responses to the WC survey, where students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the objectives or topics covered during the visit. Those students who had high levels of satisfaction with the focus of their sessions received higher grades, rated the consultant as friendlier, showed higher levels of satisfaction with the writing center, and felt they learned more from the experience. This finding suggests that negotiating a reasonable goal for the session may help students feel confident about the session and their tutor, which may, in turn, leave them with a more positive and sustainable perception of the writing center.

Reconsidering efforts to encourage usage. In addition to helping students identify a beneficial goal for the session, we should also carefully consider the ways in which we encourage students to come to the writing center. Harvey Kail and John Trimbur identify two models for situating writing centers in relation to a curriculum: the writing center-based model and the curriculum-based model (204). These models correspond to different methods of encouraging student usage. One difference between the writing center-based and curriculum-based models is the way the writing center is situated in relation to the authoritative environment of the classroom. The writing center-based model focuses on the collaborative learning that takes place amongst peers, while the curriculum-based model involves more rigidly integrating the writing center within a curriculum, requiring students to visit the center. The writing center-based model supports the belief that students must volunteer, must want to learn about themselves as writers. North seems to support this model, as he writes, "It would be nice if in writing, as in so many things, people would do what we tell them because it's good for them, but they don't. If and when they are ready, we will be here" ("Idea" 79). We suspect that many, if not most, centers contain elements of both models.

Bryant's writing center is, for the most part, a writing center-based center. Students visit the center voluntarily, with some notable exceptions. We have been admittedly tantalized by the notion of guaranteeing that students visit the writing center. Such a system seems particularly appealing during the spring warm-up on campus; while students brave fifty-degree weather to play volleyball outdoors, we brainstorm ways to get them to think about writing. As a result, we've given in, a bit, to more forcefully encouraging (but not exactly requiring) students to bring us their writing.

In the last couple of years, the writing center staff has encouraged faculty to promote student usage by offering students an extended due date if they visit the center. This was the case with the students in our study; they didn't come to the center voluntarily, with most reporting in the LTS survey that they would not have visited the writing center had it not been for the due date extension. The way in which their professor recommended students visit the center meets the criteria of a curriculum-based method, as it was "written into the plan of instruction" and "operate[d] through official channels" (Kail and Trimbur 2004). This factor is likely significant in terms of students' attitudes and perceptions upon entering and leaving the center.

Our study suggests that certain combinations of the two models, curriculum-based and writing center-based, might have a negative impact on students visiting the writing center on an ongoing basis. A study that would further investigate this hypothesis could track student usage of the center after learning the grade earned on a piece of writing worked on in the center. Such research might help us to determine whether the way we are encouraging students to come to the center initially is, indeed, having a negative effect on whether they'll return afterward. Does our prodding result in students getting the wrong idea about the writing center?

Continued faculty-writing center communication. Professors and writing center administrators can also work together to help students develop more reasonable expectations of the writing center. Certainly one implication of our study is that faculty and writing center administrators should attempt to probe more deeply upon hearing a student complaint about a visit to the writing center. The goal of such action should not be vindication of the accused parties, but an education as to the process of learning itself. Negative comments, then, should be seen as an opportunity 1) to confirm that, yes, the experience of getting feedback on writing can be frustrating, and 2) to talk about what made it so. These conversations would help students see that attacking/blaming their professors and/or their writing center are not actions that will benefit them in the long run.

Changing perceptions isn't easy (as if you didn't know). Our research confirms the difficulty of effectively conveying to students what to expect from a visit to the writing center. Students are unsure about what to expect: will the tutor tell their professors if they have not done enough work? Will the tutoring session result in an acceptable paper? Will the tutor give advice comparable to their professors? Will tutors know what their professors are looking for?

The problem is how to work toward such an understanding. In our situation, before the student complaints occurred, the writing center administrator visited the classroom to explain that improving one's writing takes time. In addition, students had access to writing center brochures and flyers outlining the center's philosophy. This philosophy is also mentioned at the start of each tutoring session. Finally, the professor explained this philosophy to students in the classroom. While we may tell students, then, that a trip to the writing center does not mean an automatic A, our admonishments go generally unheeded until students learn this for themselves. And, despite these same admonishments, students can reason that such an experience means that visiting the writing center is less than a useful experience.

Is it possible to avoid this problem? It might be diminished, perhaps, through some of the suggestions we've made here regarding consistently negotiating a goal for a session, examining methods of encouraging writing center usage, and staying in contact with faculty. Additionally, we need to encourage students to take responsibility for their work, good or bad. Finally, we need to make sure our students know that a single grade does not determine their self-worth.

Another way to think about this issue is to consider that some dissatisfaction isn't necessarily a bad thing. Maybe feeling less than fully satisfied helps to motivate some students to achieve. There would have to be a limit, however, on the level of dissatisfaction, as too much could likely prevent students from seeking feedback and/or opening themselves up to critique, as constructive as it may be.

We'd like to be able to be more persuasive when imploring students to work on their writing often, to take risks, and to have faith that better grades will come—eventually. We both see the value in students bringing their writing to the writing center, and we are interested in discovering new ways to convince students of the benefits of doing so. While we both know that there is more to learning than letter grades, we also believe that these grades are of substantial, if not primary, interest to most students. Instead of denying their significance, we hope to better understand the way students perceive the relationship between the writing center and the grades they earn.

This understanding may be enhanced by seeking answers to questions raised by this study. For example, are such changing perceptions a typical occurrence for students visiting our writing center? Is this decrease in satisfaction common to all students who visit? How do specific grade expectations alter students' post-grade writing center satisfaction ratings? Do students' satisfaction ratings correlate to their likelihood of returning to the center in the future? With continued research, we believe we can create a more effective relationship amongst writing center, professor, and student.

NOTES

¹ Our course registration system is based on that employed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Writing Center. At the start of each semester, all full- and part-time faculty are sent a writing center course registration form. With this form, they can request services such as ten-minute class visits and customized writing workshops. They are also asked to check off boxes relating to what they are willing to do for the writing center, such as submitting copies of their writing assignments and attending a writing consultant training meeting.

² The correlational test was the Spearman's rho. All other tests were either the Mann-Whitney test, when two variables were being compared, or the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test, for more than two variables.

³ The error bars indicate the standard error of the mean. When the means are significantly different from one another, the error bars do not overlap. For example, the non-overlapping error bars on the after-grade ratings in Figure 2 reinforce that the A ratings were higher than the B, C, and D ratings, and that they all differed from the before-grade ratings.

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Appendix A: The WC Survey
WRITING CONSULTATION EVALUATION FORM

Please take a moment to let us know how well we have served you. Once you've finished, please return this form to the reception desk as you leave the Center. Thank you!

1. The Consultant/Specialist I worked with is: _____

For the following questions, please circle the most appropriate response:

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neutral or does not apply D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

2. I am satisfied with my conference at the Writing Center.

SA A N D SD

3. I am satisfied with the objectives or topics focused on during my conference.

SA A N D SD

4. I can immediately apply what I have learned during my conference to my school work.

SA A N D SD

5. What I have learned during my conference will help me in the future as a student.

SA A N D SD

6. My Consultant/Specialist was friendly.

SA A N D SD

7. Comments?

8. May we contact you in the future? If so, please sign and date below.

Student's signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix B: The M Survey
WRITING CENTER QUESTIONNAIRE

What did you think about your experience at the Writing Center? Circle your selection.

1	2	3	4	5
The consultant did not help, or made things worse.		Neutral		The consultant really helped. I will definitely go back.

How many times did you go to the Writing Center for Paper 1? _____

When did you go? Check any that apply.

The day the paper was due <input type="checkbox"/>	The weekend before <input type="checkbox"/>
The day before <input type="checkbox"/>	The week before <input type="checkbox"/>

Did you make an appointment?

Yes No

Were there any problems with your appointment? _____

How prepared were you when you went? Check any that apply.

I had read the assignment sheet <input type="checkbox"/>	I had read the sample paper <input type="checkbox"/>
I had read the assigned papers <input type="checkbox"/>	I had notes about the essay <input type="checkbox"/>
I had an outline of the essay <input type="checkbox"/>	I had a first draft of my essay <input type="checkbox"/>
I had a second draft of my essay <input type="checkbox"/>	I had a third draft of my essay <input type="checkbox"/>

Whom did you meet with? (If you don't know, leave blank.)

Student Writing Consultant _____ Writing Specialist _____

What kind of advice did you expect the consultant to provide? What advice did your consultant provide? Circle "E" for Expect, and "P" for Provide.

Writing Center Philosophy	_E_ _P_	Sentence Structure/Grammar	_E_ _P_
Development of Ideas	_E_ _P_	Punctuation	_E_ _P_
Thesis Statement	_E_ _P_	Organization of Paragraphs	_E_ _P_
Logic of Argument	_E_ _P_	Organization of Sentences within Paragraphs	_E_ _P_
Understanding the Assignment	_E_ _P_	Clarity	_E_ _P_
Focus of the Paper	_E_ _P_	Documentation/Citing Evidence	_E_ _P_
Transition among Parts of Essay	_E_ _P_	Proofreading Strategies	_E_ _P_
Supporting Details	_E_ _P_		
Other	_E_ _P_		

Did you tell your consultant what you specifically wanted help with?

Yes No

Did your consultant tell you what s/he was going to focus on during your session?

Yes No

What percent of the advice you were offered did you use when revising your paper?

Circle one.

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Did your Writing Center consultant give you any advice that contradicted how Professor Morrison graded the essays?

Yes No

If yes, what was it? _____

For the following, circle the number that best represents your agreement with the statement.

I am satisfied with my grade on my paper.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

I could have done more to improve my paper.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

What could have been done better? _____

Professor Morrison could have done more so that I would have done better on my paper.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

What could have been done better? _____

The Writing Center could have done more so that I would have done better on my paper.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

What could have been done better? _____

I am satisfied with my consultation / the advice I received at the Writing Center (WC).

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

Based on my consultation at the WC, I know how to improve on future papers in this class.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

Based on my consultation at the WC, I know how to improve on future papers in other classes.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

Based on Prof. Morrison's feedback, I know how to improve on future papers in this class.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

Based on Prof. Morrison's feedback, I know how to improve on future papers in other classes.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Very Much Agree

Other Comments: _____

Appendix C: The LTS Survey
LONG-TERM SATISFACTION SURVEY

When you were in PSY260 General Psychology in the Fall of 2001, you wrote reaction papers based on controversial issues in psychology. You read two views on the issue in the Taking Sides book. For the first paper, you wrote on one of the following issues:

Issue 1: Was Stanley Milgram's study of obedience unethical?

Issue 4: Does genetic testing have negative psychological effects?

To encourage you to use the services of the Writing Center (WC), there was a deadline extension on the paper if you went to the WC. After the papers were graded and returned, you completed a survey on your experience at the WC.

I now ask that you answer just a few more questions regarding that experience. Do your best to remember your thoughts and feelings at the time. Please be honest! I will not be judging your answers. In addition, your answers will help improve the WC experience for all students at Bryant.

After your data is processed, your name will be removed to maintain your privacy.

SURVEY

- 1) Do you remember/know what grade you received on that first reaction paper?
- 2) Do you remember/know what grade you thought you would receive (prior to grading) on that first reaction paper?
- 3) Would you have visited the Writing Center for help if there had been no deadline extension?
- 4) Did you take the visit seriously, or did you use it mainly for the extension?
- 5) Had you been to the Writing Center before that visit? If yes, how many times?
- 6) Did you return to the Writing Center for other psychology reaction papers? For other class papers? If yes, how many times?
- 7) If you returned to the Writing Center, why? What do you feel you achieve by visiting the WC?
- 8) What is your view of the Writing Center?
- 9) Place an X by the number that best indicates your answer to the following question:
I was satisfied with my consultation/the advice I received at the Writing Center (WC) in regard to that first psychology reaction paper.
 - 1 Very Much Disagree
 - 2 Disagree
 - 3 Neither Agree or Disagree
 - 4 Agree
 - 5 Very Much Agree
- 10) On what do/did you base the above satisfaction rating? In other words, what criteria do/did you use for determining your satisfaction?