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The Unpromising Present of Writing Center Studies: Author and Citation Patterns in *The Writing Center Journal*, 1980 to 2009

Abstract

This article traces authorship and citation patterns in *The Writing Center Journal* (*WCJ*) from 1980 to 2009, a data set that consists of 241 *WCJ* articles containing 4,095 total citations. What these data demonstrate is that *WCJ* has been dominated by single-authored articles that are citing sources that largely appear just once—except for Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center," which appears in nearly every third article's list of works cited—and that the most frequent source for citations is *WCJ* itself. This inward gaze is an indication of a tight-knit genealogy, an unpromising present that does not quite seem healthy for the biodiversity of future generations, as well as a missed opportunity to offer writing centers as sites of intellectual engagement to composition studies as whole.

Consider an academic field in which the flagship journal—over the course of its 30-year history—has by and large featured single-authored articles despite an ethos of collaborative work. Also consider that these articles either rely on citations that are not taken up by subsequent authors or refer to a set of "insider" readings that function largely to affirm established beliefs and run the risk of casting the field as largely talking to itself, not to be taken seriously by related and affiliated fields. Finally, consider that in that same flagship journal, over 80% of its contributing authors over those 30 years make just a single appearance, a mark, perhaps, that publication in this field is a one-time occurrence, a quick stop on the way to publishing in more venerable venues or that those authors are "one-hit wonders," unlikely to continue research and publication in a field dominated by practitioner knowledge. That field, of course, is writing center studies; the publication, *The Writing Center Journal.*

In this article, I trace authorship and citation patterns in *The Writing Center Journal* (*WCJ*), from its inception in 1980 (issue 1.1) to its 57th issue in 2009 (29.2).[1] My data set consists of 241 *WCJ* articles containing 4,095 total citations over that 30-year time period. What these data demonstrate is that *WCJ* has been dominated by single-authored articles that are citing sources that largely appear just once—except for Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center," which appears in nearly every third article's list of works cited—and the most frequent source for citations is *WCJ* itself. That articles previously appearing in *WCJ* are by far the articles most likely to be cited in *WCJ* is one indication of an inward gaze or a tight-knit genealogy that does not quite seem healthy for the biodiversity of future generations. Another is the relative scarcity of *WCJ* articles in the works cited lists of more general composition

1 Rather than include a separate methodology section, I describe my methods in this footnote, mostly because what I did, though labor intensive, is quite straightforward: I created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the author(s), title, volume, and date of articles appearing in *WCJ* from vol. 1.1 (1980) to 29.2 (2009). I included only articles that contained citations, 241 total. In contrast, the database CompPile.org contains 325 individual pieces appearing in *WCJ* from 1980 to 2009. For this study, I excluded articles that did not include a list of works cited, whether articles, book reviews, letters to the editor, or editors' introductions. In addition, I recorded in that spreadsheet every citation listed in each article's works cited section, and that information included author(s) of cited work, title of cited work, collection or journal that the cited work appeared in (if applicable), and the year of publication of the cited work. To do the counting that is at the heart of my analysis, I primarily relied on the Pivot Table function of Excel. Charts were similarly created via Excel.

journals such as *College English* and *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC*) (Boquet & Lerner, 2008, p. 181).

Perhaps this situation is what Terrance Riley had in mind in his 1994 *WCJ* article, "The Unpromising Future of Writing Centers," when he warned about the quest for "permanence and respect, which could only be had by way of conventional scholarship—a scholarship, that is, which would establish a professional in-group, close the intellectual borders, and develop a rhetoric designed at once to distinguish and exclude" (1994, p. 27). Twenty years since Riley issued that bleak vision of an insider-view, I am afraid that it has largely come to pass, yet unfortunately without the "permanence and respect" if measured in terms of the prevalence for *WCJ* articles—as well as any literature set in writing centers—to be taken up by composition studies writ large. Dana Driscoll & Sherry Wynn Perdue (2012) have also shown that the "conventional" scholarship that has appeared in *WCJ* over 30 years is on the whole lacking in what Richard Haswell (2005) labels RAD research: empirical research that is replicable, aggregable, and data-supported. The result of the disconnect between writing center studies and the larger world outside of writing centers is also evidenced by Emily Isaacs & Melinda Knight's recent finding that writing center websites largely depict centers as "helpmates rather than initiators of inquiry" (2014, p. 58), a missed opportunity to offer writing centers as sites of intellectual engagement and another sign of the unpromising present.

I want to emphasize that the analysis I offer here is by no means intended to impugn the quality of scholarship that has appeared in *WCJ*. Indeed, what is perhaps most frustrating about this trend is the wide range of important topics written about so well in the journal, including language (Blau & Hall, 2002), authority (Trimbur, 1987), sexuality (Denny, 2005), race and racism (Condon, 2007), gender (Tipper, 1999), professionalization (Hughes, Gillespie, & Kail, 2010), and literacy (Grimm, 1996). Rather than a sort of "purified space" (Petit, 1997) marked by a straightforward encounter between tutor and student over a piece of student writing, writing centers are complex spaces, marked by the complications that teaching and learning always hold and that literacy education is particularly known for, and which makes writing centers rich sites for pedagogical and theoretical research. However, I am reminded of Elizabeth Boquet's (1999) notion of writing centers and their possibilities for intellectual inquiry as "our little secret," exciting places to be part of but on the whole shut off from the rest of the academic world.

Some readers might wonder if these patterns of author and citation in *WCJ* are consistent with other journals in rhetoric and composition

(as did two reviewers of an earlier version of this article). In other words, maybe it is not necessarily a problem that in *WCJ* a relatively small group of scholars are writing to a relatively small group of readers and, on the whole, are invoking a body of knowledge that is either relatively obscure or intimately familiar. Indeed, some of the patterns of authorship, such as the prevalence of single-authored articles and the citation of a relatively small group of authors are not radically different from studies of *CCC*, for example (Phillips, Greenberg, & Gibson, 1993; Goggin, 2000; Mueller, 2012).[2] However, the stakes for writing center work strike me as far greater than for composition studies, a much more established academic field. While the first 30 years of *WCJ* represent a period of tremendous growth for writing centers, whether as physical and virtual presences in high schools (Kent, 2006; Fels & Wells, 2011) and post-secondary institutions, or as a professional field complete with international and regional conferences, peer reviewed publications, and a professional organization, this growth masks the limited influences of writing center scholarship or the larger contributions to what we know about learning and teaching writing. In other words, at this moment in time, writing center scholarship can no longer afford primarily to be read by writing center scholars; we can no longer afford to embrace marginality.

Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2013) critiques the embrace of marginality as part of the "grand narrative" of writing center work: the assumption of writing centers as cozy, safe spaces, somewhat at odds with their institutions, where students come for one-to-one writing instruction. For Grutsch McKinney, the attraction of marginality has real consequences for envisioning writing centers as sites for literacy research, including a lack of tenure-track faculty positions for writing center directors and little access to the resources needed to elevate writing centers as intellectual sites (p. 47).

Perhaps even more disturbing is the reluctance on the part of many of those involved with writing centers to even pursue scholarship. Few of the 14 participants in Anne Ellen Geller & Harry Denny's (2013) study of the career trajectories and aspirations of a wide range of writing center professionals (WCPs) have the exigency to contribute to the scholarly conversation; most locate any such contribution as separate from their day-to-day administrative and pedagogical lives:

2 As I point out in Part 3, however, cited-author patterns in *WCJ* do differ in significant ways from patterns in *CCC* as shown by Derek Mueller (2012).

> Most troubling for the field is that, for the WCPs of our study, effective program administration and leadership did not require making a case for the importance of published scholarship. So, still lurking unchallenged is the protocol for becoming a part of and growing a discipline: If advancing a field and oneself within it involves the consumption, production, and dissemination of new knowledge, whether the through conference proposals and presentations, or, more importantly, vetted publication, what might it mean to exempt oneself or for significant parts of a community of professionals not to participate in its own collective/social construction of knowledge? (p. 118)

Thus, the picture I am drawing here is of an academic field in which the flagship, peer-reviewed journal has little influence outside of its limited readership, and potential contributors to that journal—and to scholarship more generally—do not find the exigency to make those contributions. Based on that picture, writing center studies as an academic discipline, as an engine of knowledge making, would seem to have the unpromising future that Riley predicted in 1994.

In what follows, I first describe the precedent for research on citation practices, and then offer a disciplinary map or a family tree based on those 241 *WCJ* articles and the four thousand plus entries in their works cited pages. From patterns of authorship, to most frequently cited authors, articles, and sources, the scholarly discourse community of writing centers seems characterized by closeness of proximity and brings to mind growing up in a small town, where there is safety and comfort in knowing just about everyone and every road and path, but there's also claustrophobia, a limit of possibilities and, for some, a yearning to get out at all costs.

Background: Sites of Citation

Studies of citation practices or "bibliometrics" are a growing area of inquiry (White, 2004, p. 91; for a review of much of this work, see Bornmann & Daniel, 2008). While Lutz Bornmann & Hans-Dieter Daniel (2008) trace early citation studies as far back as 1927, the ascendancy of electronic databases has offered researchers powerful methods to cull citation information from journals listed in those databases. As a result, scholars in a variety of fields have studied citation patterns as a way to characterize the impact of a published work or to trace, in Howard D. White's words, "the evolution of scientific and scholarly ideas" (2004, p. 89). Previous researchers using citation data have attempted to categorize knowledge making in particular fields, for example, business

communication (Reinsch & Lewis, 1993; Reinsch & Reinsch, 1996), technical communication (Smith, 2000), communication studies (Case & Higgins, 2000), computing and sociology (Harwood, 2009), and agricultural botany and agricultural economics (Thompson & Tribble, 2001). A few studies have looked at citation histories in individual journals, such as the *Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences* (Boyack, 2004) and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (Allen, Qin, & Lancaster, 1994), or related to particular works: Rose (1999) specifically compares how Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* and Geneva Smitherman's *Talking and Testifyin': The Language of Black America*, both published in 1977, are cited in the major composition and rhetoric journals between 1978 and 1992. Finally, Theresa Lillis, Ann Hewings, Dimitra Vladimirou, & Mary Jane Curry (2010) examine how citations function across international contexts, in particular how multilingual authors invoke (or, more likely, do not invoke) multilingual citations, which Lillis and colleagues describe as "a tension between the politics of knowledge building and knowledge measuring" (p. 129).

Taken as a whole, these studies demonstrate the high stakes involved with citation practices, whether as a way to characterize the knowledge domains of a particular field or journal or to ensure that the intellectual work of particular scholars gets an opportunity to join the larger conversation. Further, as Lillis, Hewings, Vladimirou, & Curry (2010) note in addressing the "geopolitics of citation," our institutions are increasingly interested in the "impact factor" of published work—or the metrics used to judge a publication's value for promotion, tenure, merit review—and overall measure of a faculty member's or an academic department's productivity. Decisions based on impact factor play "a crucial role in global research evaluation, making each apparently micro-decision to include or exclude a particular citation in a particular text a highly consequential act" (p. 117). Thus, examining citation patterns in the life of *WCJ*—particularly in terms of which authors and what citations occur most frequently—can shed light on the potential effects of those "consequential acts."

Part 1: The Sound of One Hand Clapping

In Part 1, I address patterns and trends in authorship of *WCJ* articles, focusing on the number of contributing authors, the prevalence of articles with multiple authors, and the names of the most prevalent authors. The topic of multiple authorship is important to investigate for at least two reasons: (1) The writing center field's ethos is built on

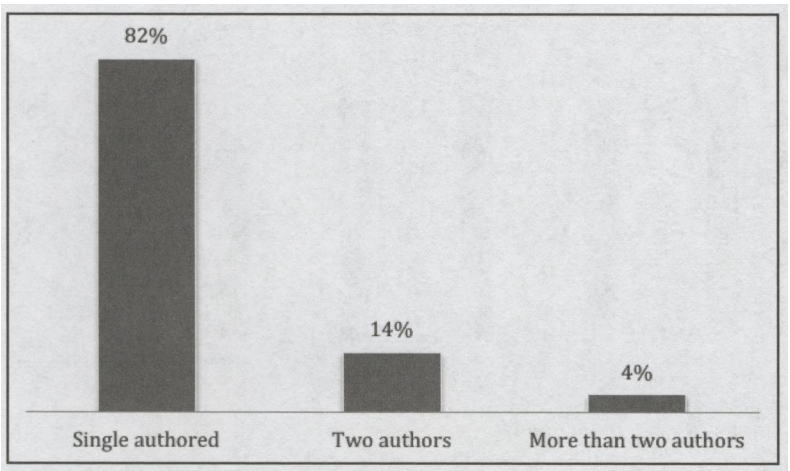


Figure 1. Percentage of *WCJ* articles authored by one or more than one writer.

collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1984) and collaborative knowledge building, and (2) the notion of single authors pursuing work alone seems anathema to writing center notions of the social construction of knowledge (Lunsford, 1991) and to composition studies as a whole after making its "social turn." It is surprising, then, that 82% of all articles appearing in *WCJ* have been single authored as shown in Figure 1.

This finding, however, when examined over time, does show some variation. As seen in Figure 2, when separated into five-year periods, the percentage of articles with multiple authors reached a relative heyday from 2000-2004 with nearly a third of all articles multiple-authored. However, progress on this front is belied by the fact that this figure falls in the most recent time period, to 21% of all articles having multiple authors. One way to read this strong prevalence of solo authorship is that it is the result of the politics of academic publishing and tenure and promotion decisions in the humanities, which often strongly favor single-authored works or simply do not take into account collaboratively written scholarship, despite long-standing examples of such collaboration (e.g., Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Day & Eodice, 2001). *WCJ* can only publish what it receives in submissions, and if authors are writing alone, whether motivated by tenure and promotion decisions or by the structure of inquiry in the field (in contrast to the sciences where research groups are most common), then single-authored articles will be what gets published.

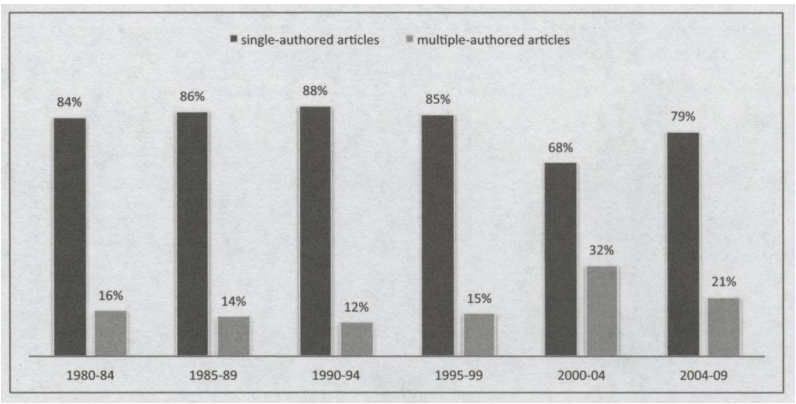


Figure 2: Percentage of multiple-authored versus single-authored *WCJ* articles, 1980–2009.

To put some perspective on the prevalence of single-authored manuscripts in *WCJ*, I examined authorship trends in the journal *WPA: Writing Program Administration (WPA)* from 2000-2009, the time period for which complete *WPA* data were available. As shown in Table 1, articles in *WPA* were still largely single-authored; however, collaboratively-authored articles were 27% more likely to appear in *WPA* than in *WCJ*. In the realm of technical communication journals, N. Lamar Reinsch & Phillip V. Lewis (1993) found that in *The Journal of Business Communication* co-authorship, starting in 1972, gradually increased and, by 1988-1992, constituted 61% of all articles (p. 440). However, in a study of frequently cited articles in five technical communication journals from 1988-1997, Elizabeth Overman Smith (2000) found that the prevalence of single-authored texts increased greatly over time, a phenomenon that she attributes to "tenure and promotion boards . . . [that] place more value on single-authored works than on collaboratively written texts" (p. 443). Smith does call for "a better balance . . . between single-authored and team-authored texts to better complement the close ties between workplace practice and theory in technical communication" (p. 444).

Table 1: Authorship Patterns in *WCJ* Compared to *WPA*, 2000-2009

	WPA 2000-2009 (23.3-33.1-2)	*WCJ* 2000-2009 (20.2-29.2)
# articles	127	76
# issues	20	18
# authors	117	92
# multi-authored articles	42 (33%)	20 (26%)

Another aspect of authorship I examined was which individuals have published most frequently in *WCJ*. From 1980 to 2009, a total of 234 unique authors have published within that time period. What I was surprised to find, however, is that of those 234 authors, 195 or 83% appeared only one time. Put another way, 8 out of 10 *WCJ* authors over 30 years contributed only once.[3] Perhaps, on the positive side, this finding speaks to the opportunities that *WCJ* offers a wide variety of authors, whether new or established. More negatively, it speaks to *WCJ* as a brief stopover for authors as they pursue publication outside of writing centers or in more generalized composition journals. Or perhaps it speaks to the lack of exigency for writing center professionals to pursue scholarship (Geller & Denny, 2013) outside of that one *WCJ* publication. Once again, for writing center scholars in faculty positions, tenure and promotion decisions might play a prominent role. In short, will a publication in *WCJ* get you promoted and tenured? If not, probably best to pursue those projects that will be attractive to more high-profile composition journals.

Another area of inquiry in academic publishing is contribution by gender. In writing center studies, the question of authorship and gender is particularly salient as the day-to-day work of writing centers (and composition teaching more generally; see Crowley, 1998) is often seen as "women's work" (Tipper, 1999), while publication across all fields and over time has been dominated by males (Wilson, 2012). However, authorship in *WCJ* belies the latter trend: Of the 234 authors whose work has appeared, 152, or 65%, have been female while 82, or 35%, have been male. Thus, female authors have outnumbered male authors by nearly 2 to 1.[4]

Still, a closer look at these numbers does reveal gender differences, particularly when broken down by single-authored versus multiple-authored articles. More specifically, single-authored articles written by females constitute 60% of the total; for multiple-authored articles, those with at least one female contributor account for 56% of the total, an indication that the gender division is fairly even for collaboratively written articles (see Table 2). However, the number of multiple-authored articles written by a completely male team is just 4 out of 43

3 Reinsch & Lewis (1993) similarly found that most authors of articles in *The Journal of Business Communication* from 1978 to 1992 published only a single article (p. 439).

4 My method for determining an author's gender is admittedly crude: I made that determination based on the author's name and whether or not that name seemed to be male or female. In many cases, I knew authors personally or have met them at some point, but clearly my gender assignment might not reflect the reality of these authors' self-perception.

or 9% of all multiple authored articles. In sum, females are more likely than males to have articles appearing in *WCJ*, but, even more likely, to have contributed to collaboratively written articles.

Table 2. Gender Distribution for Single-authored vs. Multiple-authored Articles

Type of authorship	Male contributor(s)	Female contributor(s)
Single authored	79/198 (40%)	118/198 (60%)
Multiple authored	19/43 (44%)	24/43 (56%)

Patterns and trends in authorship offer one way of mapping the terrain of *WCJ* over its first 30 years. Based on what I have presented above, that map includes a trend toward articles that are written by females working alone and who will likely only publish once in *WCJ*. Another way of reading the intellectual terrain of writing center work is to examine patterns in citations or lists of works cited in *WCJ*. As I show next, those patterns demonstrate some disturbing trends in terms of the knowledge base *WCJ* authors draw from and the implications for writing center studies as an aspiring academic field.

Part 2: From the Obscure and Non-Repeatable to the Established and Familiar

As I noted at the start of this article, my data set consists of 4,095 total citations occurring in 241 articles that appeared in *WCJ* from 1980 to 2009. As I began to try to make sense of this large data set, I was most interested in what was repeating: Who and what is cited most often? How do the numbers of citations per article change over time? What sources (e.g., articles, edited collections, books) for citations occur most frequently? What I found in response to these questions is a kind of bifurcation in citations that appear in *WCJ* articles' works cited lists, between the great majority that appear only once and the repeated references that rely on a fairly narrow and inward looking set of references.

Overall, a total of 2,723 unique sources were cited in *WCJ* over the 30-year time period, and, of that total, 2,217 or 81% occur only once. Let me repeat that in another way: In the 241 *WCJ* articles published over 30 years, over 8 out of 10 citations appear just once or are a kind of knowledge orphan not to be adopted by any other *WCJ* author. This finding is also consistent over time as shown in Figure 3. The percentage of orphan citations appearing in the 1980-84 period was pretty much the same as the percentage in the 2000-04 time frame,

despite what one would assume to be a much larger body of common knowledge to draw from.

One generous way to read that finding is that *WCJ* authors roam far and wide to support or augment their articles, drawing on an interdisciplinary and eclectic body of scholarship, one that is hard to repeat. On the other hand, this finding might indicate the lack of an established research base for writing center scholars, who are more likely to cite the obscure and non-repeatable than the established and familiar. It is, of course, difficult to establish a research base when writing center professionals do not have the exigency to create scholarship in the first place (Geller & Denny, 2013). Robert Connors (1998) tells us that citing sources is guided by a scholar's feelings of "debt and ownership" (p. 7). Perhaps *WCJ* authors have few common feelings or connections to the work that has been previously published, and, thus, only tenuous connections to each other as an academic discourse community.

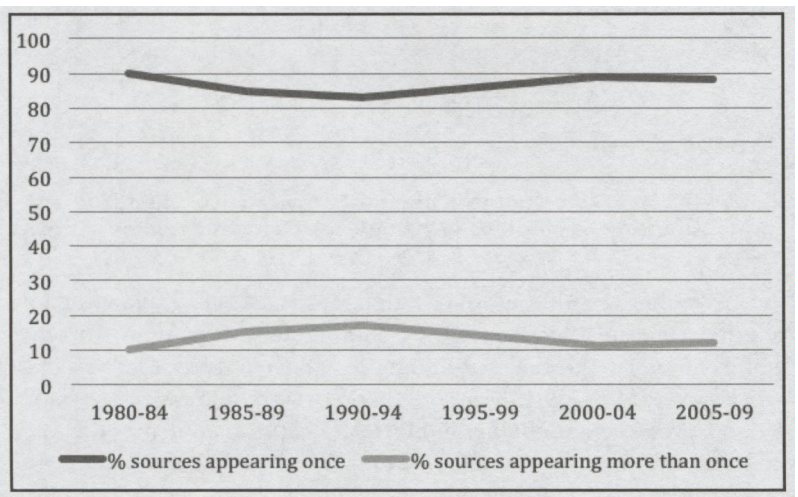


Figure 3. Percentage of sources appearing once versus appearing multiple times, 1980–2009.

Nevertheless, patterns of citation use in *WCJ* do change over time. What might have motivated a scholar to use particular sources in 1982 may not be the same factors motivating a scholar to cite particular sources in 2002. As shown in Figure 4, one clear trend is that the number of citations per article increased greatly from 1980 until about 1995

and has dropped a bit since then.[5] Nevertheless, the average number of citations per article in 2009 (21.3) was nearly double the average in 1980 (11.6), and the single article with the greatest number of citations has fluctuated somewhat over 30 year but has seen an overall increase as well.[6]

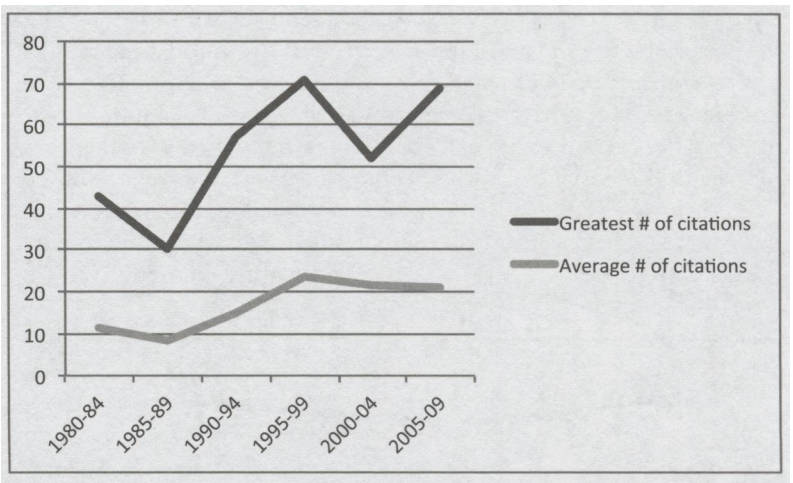


Figure 4. The average number of citations per article and the greatest number of citations in a single article, compared over time.

Another way to examine citation frequency is to explore the role of editorial teams on contributing authors' use of citations. In other words, different editorial teams might have encouraged certain kinds of articles over others, whether more theoretical, more research based, or more likely to contain higher numbers of citations, no matter the topic or focus. While what gets published in *WCJ* is largely a function of what gets submitted to *WCJ* (after rounds of editorial and peer review), it is still possible that editors tended to invite or pass along for review certain kinds of articles over others. In terms of citations, Figure 5 shows the average number of citations per article under each editorial team.

5 Donna Burns Phillips, Ruth Greenberg, & Sharon Gibson (1993) showed a similar trend in increasing numbers of citations per article in their study of *CCC* from 1950 to 1993, and Mueller (2012) further demonstrates this trend in articles published in *CCC* from 1986 to 2012.

6 The single *WCJ* article over 30 years that cited the most number of sources is Kristin Walker's "The Debate over Generalist and Specialist Tutors: Genre Theory's Contribution" (1998), which contains 71 citations.

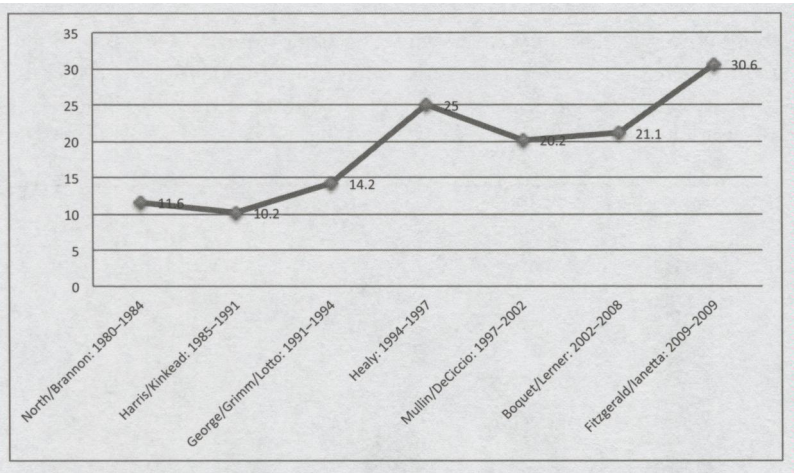


Figure 5. Average number of citations per article for each editorial team.

The average number of citations per article underwent a large jump when Dave Healy took over as editor, dipped by about 20% with the next team, and then grew slightly more under Boquet & Lerner. The numbers for Lauren Fitzgerald & Melissa Ianetta only represent two issues, but show a large increase in citations per article. Once again, the trend is for articles to contain far more citations in current issues than in early issues.

As the number of citations per article has increased over time, one might think that the range of sources for those citations—whether journal, edited collection, or book—might similarly increase. Figures 6-8 offer counts of the most frequently cited sources for those citations appearing in *WCJ*. As shown in Figure 6, *WCJ* itself is by far the most frequent journal source. One way to read that prevalence is to see *WCJ* as a rich resource for contributing authors. Another way to look at it is once again to see knowledge building that largely is looking internally for its theories and evidence, rather than consistently tying arguments to issues outside of writing centers. More evidence of the prevalence of this "internal view" is that the journal *WPA* constitutes less than 1% of all citations in *WCJ*, despite the many administrative, theoretical, and pedagogical issues covered in that journal, ones often shared by

those who write about writing centers.[7] That "internal view" is present again in that all three of the most cited edited collections are specific to writing center work, as are three out of four of the most frequently cited books.

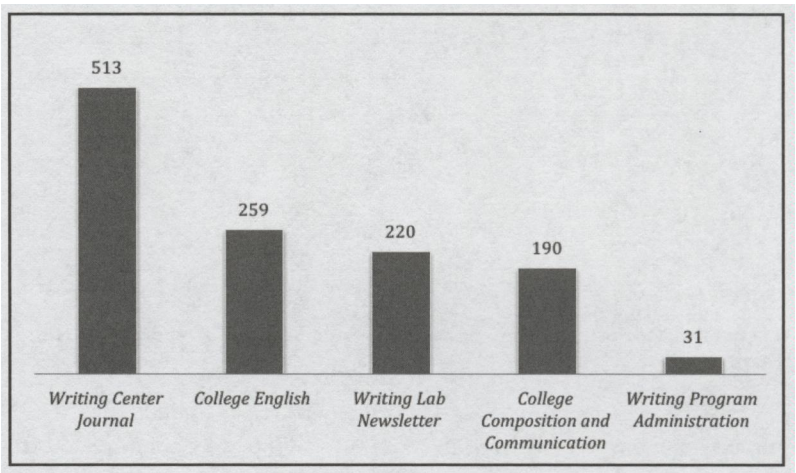


Figure 6. The most frequently cited journal source, 1980–2009.

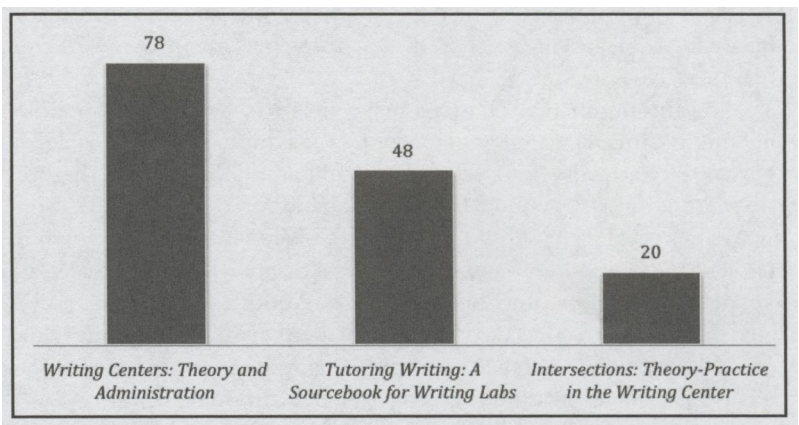


Figure 7. The most frequently cited edited collection, 1980–2009.

7 I need also to note that citations to articles that appeared in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (*TETYC*), the primary research journal for community college issues and ideas, total nine or 0.2% of all citations despite the prevalence of writing centers in two-year college settings. This lack of attention to literature from two-year college scholars is consistent with what Howard Tinberg (2006) describes as a larger phenomenon in composition and rhetoric scholarship.

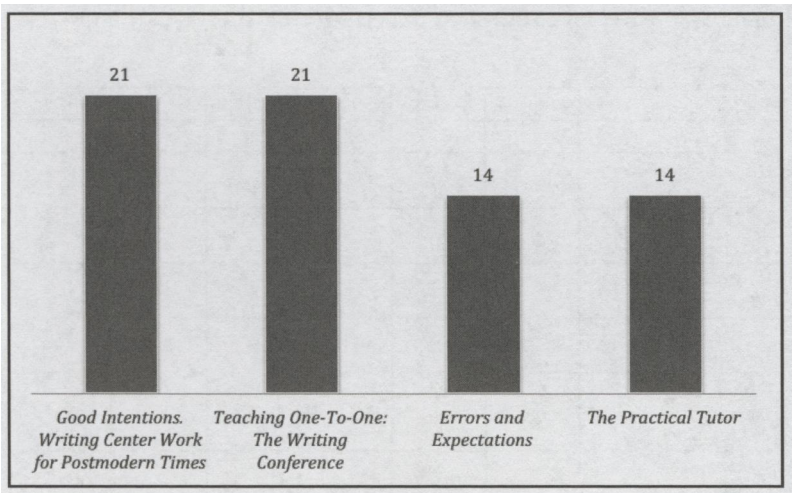


Figure 8. The most frequently cited book, 1980–2009.

Figures 6–8 represent total counts over 30 years. A more nuanced way to understand these findings is to look at how they changed over five-year time periods from 1980 to 2009. Table 3 shows the variations in the top eight sources for *WCJ* citations, whether journals, edited collections, or monographs, for each time period. Note that in the earliest period *CCC* was the most frequently cited source, constituting nearly half of all citations. Perhaps that's not a surprise given the absence of a venue for writing-center-related publications before that time. But also note that reliance on *CCC* relative to other sources drops significantly in the next time period and pretty much stays at that level until the present time. That drop is taken up by *WCJ* itself, growing from 16% of the citations from this group of sources in 1985–1989 to nearly half of all citations in 2005–2009.

Table 3. Most Frequently Cited Sources for Each Five-year Time Period

Source	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09
College English	18%	33%	19%	20%	13%	17%
College Composition and Communication	41%	15%	10%	12%	10%	15%
Research in the Teaching of English	12%	9%	3%	2%	0%	1%
Writing Program Administration	0%	1%	2%	3%	4%	2%
Writing Lab Newsletter	14%	13%	8%	15%	28%	16%
Writing Centers: Theory and Administration	0%	9%	11%	5%	3%	2%
The Writing Center Journal	0%	16%	39%	43%	40%	46%
Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook	14%	5%	8%	0%	2%	0%

Another way to understand these trends is by focusing on sources that are representative of composition studies as an academic field (the first four listed in Table 3) versus those that are more specific to writing center studies (the latter four listed in Table 3). As shown in Figure 9, over 30 years the prevalence of composition studies sources versus writing center studies sources has essentially flipped. In 2009, it was far more likely for *WCJ* authors to cite references that appeared in writing center-related sources, with *WCJ* itself constituting nearly half of those references.

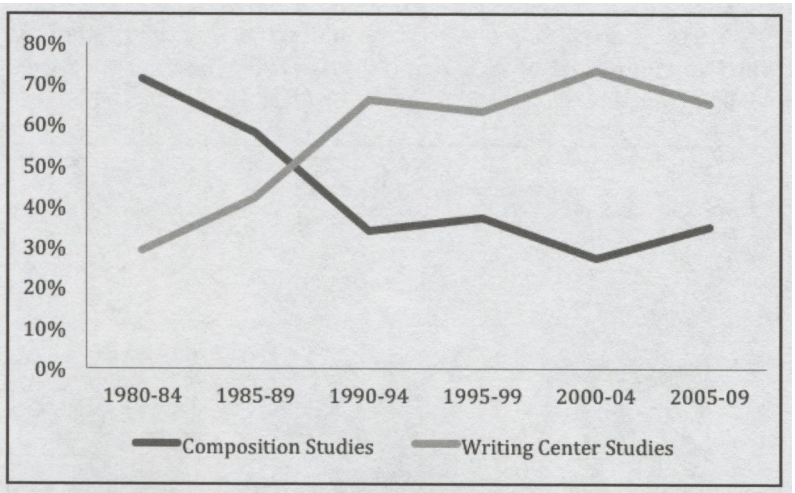


Figure 9. Composition studies sources versus writing center studies sources as a percentage of all sources cited, 1980–2009.

It is important to note that other related journals largely rely on self-citation. For example, in their study of *The Journal of Business Communication* (*JBC*) from 1978 to 1992, Reinsch & Lewis (1993) found that articles that had appeared in *JBC* were cited four times more frequently than the second-most cited journal (p. 449). Perhaps the issue lies with the specialization of subfields within writing studies, a phenomenon that Jeanne Gunner (1999) explains as follows: "In any field, the existence of a field-dedicated journal can lead to an evolving identification with an exclusive specialization—to, in short, professional exclusivity" (p. 47). As I noted earlier, however, the costs of such exclusivity are potentially quite great.

Part 3: Whose Ideas Count the Most?

Questions of citation can sometimes feel like popularity contests. Determining who and what gets cited might likely be mostly a function of who and what article is most recognized. In other words, authors might feel an obligation of sorts to cite a particular article, a required ethos-establishing move because of the feeling that by omitting those particular references, readers (or, more likely, reviewers) might conclude, "What a newb!" Still, in *WCJ*, the patterns of who and what gets cited most often, particularly when examined over time, do indicate a certain kind of evolution in writing center scholarship.

First is the question of who is the most frequently cited author: As shown in Figure 10, Muriel Harris is the hands-down winner, followed closely by Stephen North and Kenneth Bruffee.

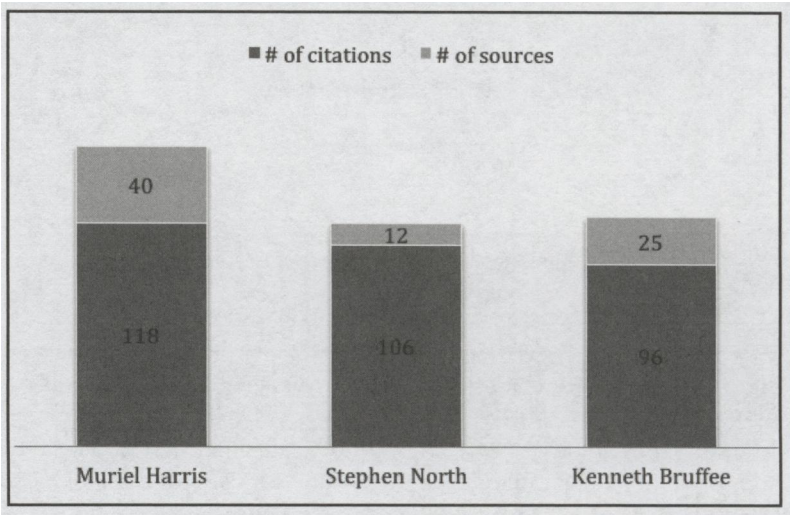


Figure 10. The most frequently cited author.

As can be seen in Figure 10, one notable aspect of Harris' appearances in the works cited list of *WCJ* is how many different sources (books, articles, book chapters) she has authored or co-authored, a remarkable record of productivity.

When examined over five-year time periods, however, these numbers do change. As shown in Table 4, some authors made appearances in the first five years and then do not appear again among the top five most frequently cited. Some authors simply had not yet published the work that was cited (e.g., Thonus, Grimm) and thus do not show up until the later periods. And even the venerable North drops off of the list of the top five most frequently cited in the most recent time period. Throughout all time periods, however, Harris continues as a steady presence.

Table 4. The Five Most Frequently Cited Authors For Each Time Period

Author	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09
Muriel Harris	9	14	21	32	20	22
Thom Hawkins	7					
Nancy Sommers	7					
Donald A. Daiker	6					
Mina Shaughnessy	6					
Kenneth Bruffee		19	19	21	9	23
Stephen North		12	27	31	20	
Donald Murray		11				
Linda Flower		6				
Lisa Ede			14			
Irene Clark			11	16	12	
Peter Elbow				13		
Nancy Grimm					16	
Terese Thonus						19
Elizabeth Boquet						15
John Trimbur						14

Note: *Values indicate total number of citations for that author in each time period.*

Counts of cited authors also offer a way to compare *WCJ* trends to studies of other journals. For example, in their study of citations or footnotes in the journal *Critical Inquiry* from 1974 to 2004, Anne H. Stevens & Jay Williams (2006) found that the most frequently cited authors (8 out of 144 or 6%) account for 25% of all authors cited (p. 215). Mueller (2012), in an analysis of citations in *CCC* from 1987 to 2011, found that just 16% of those cited appeared three or more times and that 72% appear just once (p. 209). In *WCJ*, similarly, 72% of authors are cited only once and 12% are cited twice; thus, 16% appear three or more times. However, in *WCJ* the top 20 authors cited (see Table 5), while making up 0.9% of all authors, make up 39% of all citations, a domination by the (near) 1% that belies a field with an egalitarian ethos.

Table 5. Top 20 *WCJ* Authors Cited, 1980-2009

Author	# of citations
Muriel Harris	118
Stephen M. North	111
Keneth A. Bruffee	96
John Trimbur	51
Nancy Maloney Grimm	47
Irene L. Clark	44
Andrea Lunsford	41
Peter Elbow	40
Lisa Ede	35
Peter Carino	31
Terese Thonus	31
Elizabeth H. Boquet	28
Lil Brannon	28
Neal Lerner	28
Christina Murphy	28
Thom Hawkins	27
Donald M. Murray	27
Harvey Kail	26
Dave Healy	24
Thomas J. Reigstad	24

While percentages of authors cited once or multiple times in *WCJ* is similar to *CCC*, one key difference attests to the relatively unstable knowledge base upon which *WCJ* authors rely. In his analysis of *CCC*, Mueller (2012) presents data on changes to the "long tail" or the frequency of those authors cited only once or twice in five-year periods from 1987 to 2011. Drawing from studies of consumer behavior, Mueller is interested in how changes in the long tail over time might indicate "how broad-based the conversations (in a given journal) have grown—and just how much the centered, coherent, and familiar locus of conversation, based on citation practices, has slid" (p. 211). Mueller shows the steady growth of *CCC*'s long tail from 1987 to 2011, indicating a gradual broadening of the authors cited and shrinkage of those cited most frequently or those in the "head" (pp. 211–213). Replicating this analysis for *WCJ*, however, yields a much less certain picture. As shown in Figure 11, there is no clear trend for head

or tail in frequency of authors cited. Instead of a gradual broadening of those cited less frequently and a lessening of those cited most often as in *CCC*, in *WCJ* the lack of pattern might indicate a field without a core knowledge base or one that continues to rely on an unpredictable and non-replicable set of references without the evolution that Mueller attributes to *CCC*.

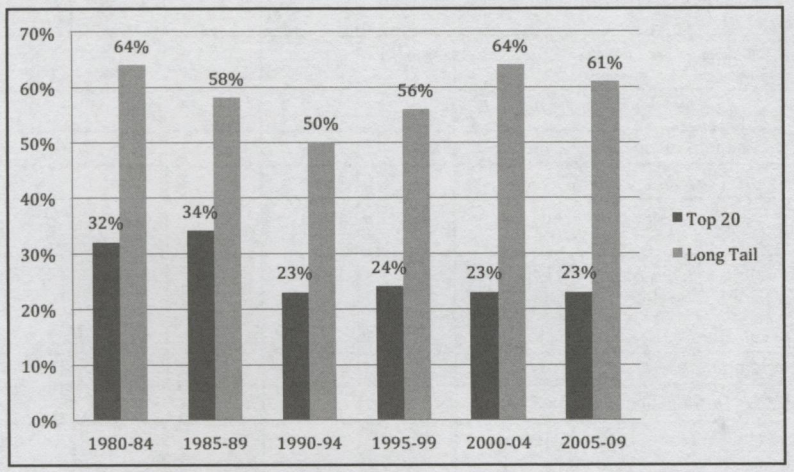


Figure 11. Cited authors in the "head" (top 20 authors cited) and "tail" (all other authors) in *WCJ* for five-year periods, 1980–2009.

In terms of the most frequently cited article, the winner is clear (and was noted previously—see Boquet & Lerner, 2008): North's "The Idea of a Writing Center," originally published in *College English* in 1984, has been cited 69 times over 30 years. For the 241 articles in this data set, that amounts to nearly once for every three articles. The second most frequently cited article, Bruffee's "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" originally published in the 1984 collection *Writing Centers: Theory and Administration*, was a distant second, garnering 27 citations. Two more works are tightly clustered next: Nancy Grimm's book *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Time* (1999) with 21 citations and Harris's *Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference* (1986) also with 21 citations.

More revealing than totals over thirty years, however, is once again to look at successive five-year periods (see Table 6). As was true for the author counts, some articles make an initial appearance on the top five lists, never to appear again. Some are popular over two consecutive time periods, and one, North's "Idea," is constant. However, Grimm's *Good Intentions* has made a strong showing in the last two time periods and perhaps will challenge North's "Idea" for citation supremacy in the years ahead.

Table 6. The Five Most Frequently Cited Works for Each Time Period

TITLE	1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99	2000–04	2005–09
Errors and Expectations	6					
"Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers"	4					
Writing without Teachers	4					
Conferencing Practices of Professional Writers: Ten Case Studies	3					
The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders	3					
The Development of Writing Abilities	3					
"The Idea of a Writing Center"		9	18	18	14	10
A Writer Teaches Writing		5				
"Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'"		5	8			
"Intimacy and Audience: The Relationship Between Revision and the Social Dimension of Peer Tutoring"		4				
The Writing Laboratory		4				
"Writing as a Social Process"			10			
"Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center"			8	8		
Training Tutors for Writing Conferences			8			
"Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'"				9		
"Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center'"				9		
Writing Centers in Context				8		
Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times					11	10
"Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Students Do All the Work"					5	
The Practical Tutor					5	
Noise from the Writing Center						9
The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring						7

Note: *For 2000–2004, eight different sources were cited four times; thus, just the top four sources are shown. Similarly, for 2005–2009, three different sources were cited six times, so I have just shown the top four sources for that time period.*

One limitation to the kind of counting I have shown so far is that it penalizes an article that has come out more recently than another. In other words, if something was published in 2000, it would not have been cited in the previous 20 years and likely would not get picked up by subsequent authors for a year or two after initial publication. To correct for that factor, for each citation I calculated a "longevity score,"[8] which takes into account the publication date of the citation and the publication date of the subsequent *WCJ* articles that cite that source.

As shown in Table 7, North's "Idea" and Bruffee's "Peer Tutoring and the Conversation of Mankind" have had the greatest longevity. Following closely behind those two is Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*, which only makes the top five for the first five-year period, and John Trimbur's "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?", which does not make the top cited lists for any five-year period. Close behind those is Trimbur & Harvey Kail's "The Politics of Peer Tutoring." Thus, articles which have the longest "life," or that might be cited repeatedly and consistently over time, are not necessarily those that rise to the top of aggregate lists. This metric is perhaps most useful in light of publication "impact factor" in promotion, tenure, and review decisions. One would think that impact of one's publication over time would trump a crude count in any given year or time period.

Table 7. Citations with the Greatest Longevity

Source (year of publication)	Longevity score
"Idea of a Writing Center" (1984)	12.6
"Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" (1984)	12.6
Errors and Expectations (1977)	12.4
"Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" (1987)	12.3
"The Politics of Peer Tutoring" (1987)	11.8

8 I calculated longevity scores as follows:
Longevity score = ((sum of year of citation - sum of year of publication)/# of citations)
For example, Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* has been cited 14 times since its initial publication in 1977. The dates of articles containing citations to Shaughnessy's book range from 1982 to 2009. Plugging those individual dates into the formula produces the following:
LS = ((1982+1982+1982+1983+1983+1984+1986+1990+1991+1991+1994+1996+1999+2009 – (14 x 1977))/14)
LS = (27,852 – 27,678)/14 = 12.4

Part 4: All in the Family

A mapping metaphor to understand citation practices has certain limitations, primarily in that it doesn't necessarily show relationships between sources, particularly relationships over time. A genealogical metaphor or a family tree is another way to look at the relationships between references, whether it is those cited or subsequent familial relatives.

To explore this area, I focused on the 69 *WCJ* articles that cited North's "Idea of a Writing Center," looking for familial relationships between three sets: (1) North's original sources; (2) *WCJ* articles that cite "The Idea"; and (3) subsequent *WCJ* articles that cite the citing—"The Idea" group. More specifically, I was interested in several questions: How many of those 69 articles cited the references appearing in North's original *College English* article? In other words, did North's "roots" get taken up by those who cited North? After looking back, I then look forward: How many of the 69 "Idea" citers were cited themselves in subsequent *WCJ* articles? And were they cited more frequently than all references, i.e., was there a North "bump" (with apologies to Stephen Colbert)?

First, in terms of the references appearing in "The Idea," as shown in Table 8, North referred to 12 citations in that article. Of those 12, eight appear at least once alongside "The Idea" in a subsequent *WCJ* works cited list, but only two of those make three appearances: Maxine Hairston's "The Winds of Change" and Malcolm Hayward's "Assessing Attitudes Towards the Writing Center." Thus, it seems the familial relationships between North's knowledge base and the subsequent knowledge bases that include "The Idea" are relatively distant. Perhaps this finding is another indication—along with the overwhelming numbers of citations or those "knowledge orphans" that appear only once—that the knowledge base for writing center scholarship is not particularly well established and not particularly repeatable.

Table 8. Works Cited in "The Idea of a Writing Center" and Occurrences of Those Citations in *WCJ* Articles that Cite "The Idea"

Works Cited	Occurrences
Brooks, Phyllis, and Thom Hawkins, eds. *New Directions for College Learning Assistance: Improving Writing Skills.* SF: Jossey-Bass, 1981.	2
Cooper, Charles. "What College Writers Need to Know." Unpublished paper, 1979.	0
Diesing, Paul. *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences.* Hawthorne, NY: Aldine, 1971.	0
Hairston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." *CCC* 33 (1982): 76-88.	3
Harris, Muriel. "Modeling: A Process Method of Teaching." *College English* 45 (1983): 74-84.	1
Harris, Muriel, ed. *Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs.* Glenview, IL: Scott-Foresman, 1982.	1
Hayward, Malcolm. "Assessing Attitudes Toward the Writing Center." *WCJ* 3.2 (1983): 1-11.	3
Moffett, James. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.	0
Moore, Robert. "The Writing Clinic and the Writing Laboratory." *College English* 7 (1950): 388-93.	2
North, Stephen. "Training Tutors to Talk about Writing." *CCC* 33 (1982): 434-41.	0
North, Stephen. "Writing Centers: A Sourcebook." Diss. SUNY at Albany, 1978.	1
Walvoord, Barbara E. *Helping Students Write Well: A Guide for Teachers in All Disciplines.* NY: MLA, 1981.	1

I was also curious about this genealogy moving forward in terms of how frequently those who cite North get taken up in subsequent *WCJ* articles. In other words, would those "Idea" citers be related to the next generation of *WCJ* articles? And how does this relationship compare to the group who did not cite "The Idea"? In terms of subsequent citation, 47 out of the 69 (68%) "The Idea" citers were cited in subsequent *WCJ* articles, and on average were cited 2.4 times. That compares to 1.5 appearances on average for all other citations in the data set. In other words, familial relations are strong between those who cite "The Idea" and those who cite those who cite "The Idea" (yes, that is difficult to follow). Put another way, citing "The Idea" seems to increase one's

chances of being cited in a subsequent *WCJ* article by 60%. "The Idea" bump is alive and well![9]

Another common area of inquiry in studies of citation practices is co-citation or tracking the prevalence of citations that occur together (for an explanation, see Weingart, 2013). Given how relatively rare it was for citations to appear more than once in the overall data set, I restricted co-citation analysis to the 69 articles that cited "The Idea" and the 10 most-frequently occurring citations other than "The Idea." Overall, I found few patterns in these data. The articles "Liberatory Writing Centers" and "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" appear together five times, more than any pair. In terms of sets of three, only one appears three times, the combination of "Liberatory Writing Centers," "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center," and "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" No pattern of four or more citations appears more than once.[10] This relative lack of pattern is consistent with the data set as a whole. In this case, even the most highly cited articles do not necessarily get taken up as a whole set. Instead, *WCJ* authors choose one or two or three from this set, staking their knowledge claims to a small number of articles familiar to *WCJ* readers and to a much larger number of unfamiliar articles. Perhaps this lack of pattern is simply evidence of a field still growing and developing, even after 30 years. However, the lack of co-citation might also indicate a field in which scholarship does not have a shared knowledge base, and the accumulation of knowledge is limited.

Finally, a close examination of the familial relations in this set offers more evidence of close-cousin relationships. From the set of 69 "Idea" citers, the publication that is cited most frequently in subsequent *WCJ* articles is another North article, his 1995 "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center'" (see Table 9). Perhaps it's not a surprise that *WCJ* authors would cite both "The Idea" and "Revisiting 'The Idea,'" given the mutual topic and concerns (Boquet & Lerner, 2008). However, the gaze is set firmly inward in such a move, an appeal to an insider reader, once again limiting the appeal of this scholarship to an audience outside

9 Of course, citing "The Idea" is no guarantee that your *WCJ* article will get picked up in a subsequent *WCJ* publication. While a content analysis is beyond the scope of this article, this relationship is likely due to the alignment between the topics covered by "The Idea" and the content of those articles that cite it, as well as further content alignment with those articles in subsequent generations.

10 For an example of co-citation analysis of *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, and *Rhetoric Review*, see Jonathan Goodwin's "Co-citation Network Graph of Journals in Rhetoric and Composition" at http://jgoodwin.net/rhet-network/cites-slider.html.

of writing center studies. Perhaps North himself created the genealogical pattern. After all, "The Idea of a Writing Center" originally appeared in *College English*, the NCTE-published journal with likely the broadest audience. "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center'" was published in *WCJ*. North, thus, offered his revision of his original plea for an understanding of writing centers' mission and potential to a writing-center-focused audience, an audience that does not need to be persuaded that writing centers are vital and have great potential.

Table 9. Of the 69 *WCJ* articles that cite "The Idea," which are most frequently cited in subsequent *WCJ* articles?

Title	# of citations
"Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center'"	13
"A Critique of Pure Tutoring"	11
"The Regulatory Role of the Writing Center: Coming to Terms with a Loss of Innocence"	11
"Really Useful Knowledge: A Cultural Studies Agenda for Writing Centers"	10

The Unpromising Future?

> *By allowing us to look at how a text's meaning for the discourse community of composition studies has changed over time, citation analysis helps us understand who we are. By showing us how we construct ourselves as a knowledge-making community, citation analysis helps us understand how we maintain ourselves as a professional community.* (Rose, 1999, p. 200)

While in the quote above, Shirley Rose was referring to composition studies, as a subfield, writing center studies is similarly revealed by its citation practices. By referencing the work of others as we build arguments and extend disciplinary knowledge, we, in short, enter the "Burkean Parlor" (Lunsford, 1991) and engage in conversations with a variety of audiences: authors who have come before us, readers in our present time, and future writers and readers who will potentially take up our work in their efforts to build disciplinary knowledge. In Ken Hyland's (1999) words, citation is "a vital piece in the collaborative construction of new knowledge between writers and readers" (p. 343). Examined in one journal over an extended period of time, those citation patterns represent a particular view of that knowledge making. As I have tried to demonstrate in this article, in *WCJ* knowledge making is marked by the prevalence of single-authored publications, one-time

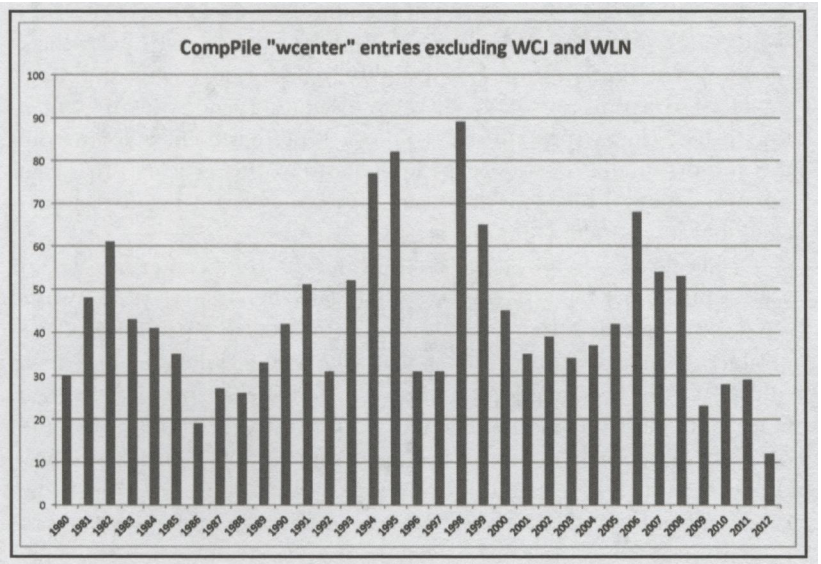
authors, and cited sources that either rely on the obscure, or non-repeatable, or on a small set of self-referential works.

Despite these practices, I want to assert again that the scholarship represented in *WCJ* is consistently high quality (though I admit that this remark might seem self-serving given that I was co-editor of the journal from 2002 to 2008). Still, if the body of work that this scholarship relies on is largely a one-off or inscribed within a narrow range, the potential for that work to have a true impact on the teaching and learning of writing in any setting seems limited. Certainly there is a strong branch of skepticism in the *WCJ* family tree. As shown in Table 9, among the *WCJ* articles most frequently cited are North's "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center,'" Linda K. Shamoon & Deborah Burns' "Critique of Pure Tutoring," Grimm's "Regulatory Role of the Writing Center," and Marilyn Cooper's "Really Useful Knowledge: A Cultural Studies Agenda for Writing Centers." All of these articles speak strongly to a post-"Idea of a Writing Center" generation, one that critiques long-held notions (whether of innocence or purity) and shifts the conception of writing center work quite firmly toward post-structural and culturally complex notions of the enterprise. However, that argument is largely made to writing center colleagues and rarely picked up by the wider field of composition studies. The end result is that composition scholars cast writing centers and the scholarship produced at those sites as odd cousins, the ones you might see at family reunions but don't give much, if any, thought to at any other point in time.

Another indication of this lack of connection between writing center literature and the wider fields outside of writing centers is the shrinking numbers of writing center-related articles that are indexed by Comppile.org. Figure 12 shows the number of articles with the keyword "wcenter," which CompPile uses to code writing center-related articles, books, and book chapters, and I have excluded articles that appeared in *WCJ* or *Writing Lab Newsletter* (*WLN*). The trend over time is troubling. The years 2009-2011 represent some of the lowest numbers over thirty years, and the golden age for the prevalence of writing center scholarship

in venues outside of *WLN* and *WCJ*, including edited collections, seems to be 1998 or 16 years ago.[11]

Figure 12: CompPile entries with keyword "wcenter" excluding *WCJ* and *WLN* articles, 1980–2012.



I do not mean to assert in this article that everyone involved in writing center work should be striving toward publication (though I do think it is an important goal that all involved in the enterprise see it as intellectual work and not merely being the "helpmates" that Isaacs & Knight [2014] describe). As Geller & Denny (2013) point out, there are structural reasons as to why WCPs might see a bifurcation between their scholarship (which they feel they don't have time or motivation

11 Some caveats are important to consider in regard to CompPile data: Glenn Blalock and Rich Haswell, CompPile's creators, report that indexing of possible entries was much more rigorous prior to 1999 than in the 14 years since then and is always largely a function of how much volunteer labor can be recruited to include entries in the database (personal communication, June 19, 2014). Still, one might think that post-1999, the numbers for "wcenter" entries would be uniformly low due to this lack of labor. However, variations in entries over the last 15 years, particularly the trend toward fewer appearances, offer evidence that writing center-related literature is appearing less frequently outside of *WCJ* and *WLN*. Note that "wcenter" refers to CompPile's search term for writing center literature, not to the listserve <wcenter>.

for) and their administrative work (which is all consuming). However, Geller & Denny also observe that writing program administrators have done a much better job of positioning WPA work as an academic field or *as* intellectual work, as well as connecting that work to larger conversations around issues such as literacy, assessment, and core curricula (p. 117).[12] The cost of not making these arguments is dear; in Geller & Denny's words, "when WCPs don't publish, they perpetuate their own marginalization and invisibility by withdrawing, by intent or de facto, from any of the 'larger' disciplinary domains to which they might align" (pp. 118–119). This lack of alignment is clear from the authorship and citation patterns I show in this article. What that disconnection portends for the future of writing centers studies is not as clear, but it is not encouraging.

The stakes involved in establishing writing center studies as a recognized and inter-connected scholarly field are great. While scholarship is indeed currency for research-intensive institutions, the production and dissemination of that scholarship is much more than filling out a *CV* or making an argument for one's share of an annual merit pool. Instead, the intellectual work that WCPs might do—and need to share with others—ultimately can advance what we know about teaching and learning writing in a wide variety of settings. The values, attitudes, and strategies that writing centers and those who work in them have long stood for—collaboration, careful listening, student-centered learning, peer-to-peer interaction—would do well to be the values of our institutions themselves. That is not an uncommon claim—we have been telling ourselves of our "secret" for a very long time. The task of telling others through our scholarship is much more difficult to achieve but also much more essential.

Nevertheless, as I have pointed out earlier in this article, a study of citation patterns offers a limited account. Thus, this study is part of a larger project to analyze how citations function in *WCJ* articles and to interview *WCJ* authors about their motivations for and uses of citations. Returning to my original metaphor, an account of that sort would help fill out the disciplinary map, including the obscure roads and paths that are nonetheless key stopping points and essential connectors. For future

12 In a 1999 analysis of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* (*WPA*), Gunner did note that articles appearing in *WPA* were rarely cited in *CCC* and *College English*. Gunner attributes this phenomenon to the idea that "the self-conscious WPA position . . . is rarely recognized as a perspective relevant to others in the rhetoric-composition community" (p. 49). It is beyond the scope of this article to see if that pattern continued, but the language does seem to speak strongly to writing center administrators as well.

travelers, such a map would offer guidance, an idea of the shortest and fastest travel routes, and the circumlocutions worth exploring. These are all a part of any academic discipline as seen in its knowledge-making practices, a living record of those who came before and a vital connection to those who will follow.

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About the Author

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