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SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL WORK IN THE WRITING CENTER: HARNESSING SHARED INVESTMENTS BETWEEN CONSULTANTS AND THERAPEUTIC COUNSELORS

by

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SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL WORK IN THE WRITING CENTER: HARNESSING SHARED INVESTMENTS BETWEEN CONSULTANTS AND THERAPEUTIC COUNSELORS

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University of Nebraska, 2021

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Because of the affective nature of writing pedagogy, writing center consultants regularly perform emotional labor to navigate writers' emotions as well as their own. This labor is deeply generative in writers' development. But it also takes an intellectual and emotional toll on writing consultants that often goes unnoticed and therefore undervalued and unsupported. The first step toward properly valuing consultants' emotional labor is to name the ways it manifests in writing center work. In this thesis, I present a study in which I analyze writing consultants' narratives of their emotional labor and start to map out the emotional dimensions of their work. With that knowledge, we can begin to craft more comprehensive training and ongoing support for consultant emotional labor and look to fields like counseling psychology, for which emotion is explicitly fundamental, for guidance. I begin to leverage the connection between these two fields by interviewing counselors-in-training about their practice of emotional labor and reviewing literature in counseling psychology on work with emotion.

I begin by reviewing literature in both of these fields that addresses the role emotion plays in their work. Then, I present theories of emotional labor and the working definition of that concept that guides my study. My interviews with writing consultants and training psychological counselors will then illustrate the forms consultant emotional

labor takes and highlight the possibilities that counseling psychology offers for further training to support consultants' work with emotion.

Supporting Emotion Work in the Writing Center: Harnessing Shared Investments Between Consultants and Therapeutic Counselors

After our first year of consulting, my director invited consultants in our writing center to attend interviews with prospective consultants. I remember feeling stunned — more stunned than, in retrospect, was reasonable — that my knowledge of the work would be valuable to my boss and to my institution. She insisted that we ask questions alongside her to get at aspects of the job that we thought should be a priority. In the first interview I sat in on, there were just four of us: two prospective consultants, my director, and me. We sat at a circular table that was just big enough to fit us, in the small room in the library that was our writing center space. There was a tissue box and a jack-o-lantern full of candy on the table between us. We left the overhead lights off; the afternoon sunlight through the windows was plenty, not as exposing as the fluorescents. It felt like a strangely intimate space for a job interview.

I was still intent on maintaining the "professionalism" of the meeting, though. I asked exclusively intellectual questions about how the prospective consultants thought about writing, how they would describe their strengths, etc. And then I wondered why I couldn't get a sense for the *vibe* they would bring to their consultations. Did I know what I meant by *vibe*? Not in any way that I could articulate. In hindsight, I think I was trying to get the new consultants to talk about how they would work with emotion — without ever saying the word "emotion." I'd convinced myself that acknowledging emotion explicitly was off-limits, even if I knew it was at the core of how I did my job.

So when my director asked the candidates outright how they would respond to a writer who was in distress about their work or even crying, I was both shocked and

relieved; I felt seen. Not only had she acknowledged the role emotion played in writing center work but she had also pointed to work with emotion as a necessary skill to do the job. That small moment where emotion and emotional labor in the writing center became explicit made me feel validated and gave me permission to lean into my curiosity about how to navigate emotion in my consulting practice. This simple acknowledgement of the role emotion played in the work I was doing was enough to make me think more deeply about emotional labor and its value in writing center work.

But openly acknowledging emotional labor as a common part of writing center practice is only the first step. Scholars in Composition, and Writing Center Studies more recently, have delved into the relationship between emotion and writing pedagogy. Despite the fact that emotion is largely dismissed and discredited as a way of knowing, compositionists find that it is an essential part of how scholars construct arguments, relate to each other, and craft institutional and personal identities (Micciche 2007). Building off of Sarah Ahmed's theory of emotions as socially and culturally-constructed (rather than internal and personal) experiences, scholars in composition have begun to explore how those emotional dynamics influence writing and writing pedagogy (*Composition Forum* summer 2016; *Pedagogy* October 2019). Writing Center Studies has also recently turned towards emotion as an urgent component of the writing process and of writing tutoring. Authors in this field have started to address the ways in which emotional concerns, both for writers and consultants, influence writing center consultations (*WLN* May/June 2018).

These investigations into emotion and writing lead naturally into a conversation about the emotional labor that comes with facilitating an emotion-infused process like the teaching of writing. Emotional labor can take a variety of forms for writing consultants. At its core, emotional labor involves consultants or teachers working with their emotions to

display a range of affect, authentic or not, that facilitates writers' learning and process (Hochschild 1979). Scholars in Composition and Writing Center Studies have addressed WPA, graduate student, and writing center administrators' emotional labor, but have not as thoroughly studied consultant emotional labor (Jackson et al; Madden and Tarabochia; Micciche). Though writing center scholars often acknowledge writing consultants' emotional labor (Perry), there are few existing studies seeking to capture consultants' experiences of emotional labor.

This project, which presents interviews with writing consultants employed at a large public university begins to fill that gap. Because of the affective nature of writing pedagogy, writing consultants regularly perform emotional labor to navigate writers' emotions as well as their own. This labor is deeply generative in writers' development, and in my experience as a writing consultant is part of what makes the job so fulfilling. But it also takes an intellectual and emotional toll on writing consultants that often goes unnoticed and therefore undervalued and unsupported. The first step toward properly valuing consultants' emotional labor is to name the ways it manifests in writing center work. So in this study, I analyze writing consultants' narratives of their emotional labor and start to map out the emotional dimensions of their work. With that knowledge, we can begin to craft more comprehensive training and ongoing support for consultant emotional labor and look to fields like counseling psychology, for which emotion is explicitly fundamental, for guidance. I begin to leverage the connection between these two fields by interviewing counselors-in-training about their practice of emotional labor and reviewing literature in counseling psychology on work with emotion.

To see the urgency of developing a deeper understanding of consultant emotional labor and crafting ongoing support and training for that work, we first need to understand

how scholars in Composition and Writing Center Studies approach emotion and emotional labor. I begin by reviewing literature in both of these fields that addresses the role emotion plays in their work. Then, I present theories of emotional labor and the working definition of that concept that guides my study. My interviews with writing consultants and training psychological counselors will then illustrate the forms consultant emotional labor takes and highlight the possibilities that counseling psychology offers for further training and ongoing professional development to support consultants' work with emotion.

Emotion in Writing Pedagogy

Composition as a field has long understood that emotion is intertwined with the writing process and thus part of writing pedagogy. In 2004, Sarah Ahmed theorized that emotions circulate within "affective economies" (8). She argued that "emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others" (10). This concept of emotion contradicts the idea that emotions reside only within individuals and suggests instead that feelings are at once shaped by and shaping human interaction at both interpersonal and societal or political levels. Ahmed's theory of emotional experiences as at once personal and political helped legitimize emotion as a way of knowing in a scholarly context. Compositionists have since used this theory as a starting point for investigating emotion in writing and teaching, starting with Laura R. Micciche's 2007 book *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, and Teaching*. More recently, *Composition Forum* released a special

issue on emotion in the summer of 2016 and *Pedagogy* dedicated its October 2019 issue to “Anxious Pedagogies.” This progression toward more explicit discussion of emotion within composition suggests that scholars in the field recognize that emotion is inextricably linked to both writing and writing pedagogy.

While the field of Writing Center Studies has also recently turned towards emotion as a legitimate and urgent component of the writing process and of writing tutoring, it has a slightly less robust history of study in this area which leaves room for further research. Historically, Writing Center literature has often approached emotion in restrictive or reductive ways that obscure its importance. Traditional writing center guidebooks and training manuals contain very few pieces with explicit discussion of emotion or strategies for responding to it (Lape). When writing center scholars have discussed emotion, they’ve often painted it as something to neutralize so that writers and consultants can return focus to the writing as swiftly as possible (McBride et al.). Until recently, then, writing center scholars appear to have either ignored the presence of emotion during consultations or framed it as a distraction that jeopardizes students’ learning, rather than an inevitable part of writing and teaching that can enhance learning and connection. However, in the last ten years, writing center scholars have started to more openly address the ways in which emotional concerns, both for writers and consultants, influence writing center consultations. The May/June 2018 issue of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship* focused exclusively on how emotions manifested in writing center work and how consultants and writing center professionals could navigate and honor them. Because of this work and other work like it, writing center scholars have also begun to talk about emotion’s generative potential for writers during

consultations (Yoon and Stutelberg). These forays into emotion in writing center work pave the way for even more research in this area, including into emotional labor.

Investigations into emotion in Composition and Writing Center Studies have led to a discourse on the emotional labor that writers, teachers, and administrators perform in multiple contexts. In “More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work,” Laura Micciche draws attention to the emotional labor that writing program administrators regularly perform. Micciche describes how the narrowing job market in the humanities, the feminization of composition and the exploitation of non-tenured compositionists creates a “climate of disappointment” among writing program administrators (432). Even in the face of these emotional conditions, WPAs still conjure affective products that fulfill the nurturing, patient role ascribed to them. Micciche’s work suggests that emotional laborers in Composition may often do this double work of suppressing feelings in response to exploitative work conditions and simultaneously displaying optimistic or caring affect that facilitates their work. More recently, scholars have begun to explore emotional labor for graduate students (Madden and Tarabochia) and for writing center administrators (Jackson et al.), but writing consultants’ experience of emotional labor has not yet received the same attention. Some writing center professionals recognize the emotional labor required in writing consultation and attempt to create a workplace that supports consultants through practical means such as blocking consultants’ schedules after difficult sessions or allow consultants to share their experiences with one another (Perry). Still, there are few studies that attempt to capture the range of forms writing consultants’ emotional labor takes, which could yield data to guide administrators’ development of training models and support for writing consultants’ work with emotion.

My hope is that this study can serve as a pilot for future investigation into consultants' emotional labor and suggest possible avenues for how to support it.

Theories of Emotional Labor

To understand consultants' experience of emotional labor, we first need a working definition for the concept of emotional labor itself. Scholars in Composition like Micciche often draw on Arlie Russell Hochschild's theory of emotional labor, which she presented in her 1979 book *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. This theory provides a useful foundation for understanding writing consultants' emotional labor as well. Hochschild's study focused on the emotional labor that flight attendants perform, a job which, like the position of writing consultant, is held overwhelmingly by women. Hochschild describes the way that the flight attendants' smiles and other affective displays are indispensable for their work, to the point that their emotions become commodified. From these trends, Hochschild concludes that flight attendants are required to perform emotional labor as part of the job, which she defines as the effort "to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (7). By applying this theory to the writing center context, we can see that writing consultants take on similar work to promote a "proper state of mind" for writers to engage with their work. Consultants are often charged with cultivating writers' feelings of motivation, capability, and investment in their work, which is not only technically difficult but also involves prioritizing writers' feelings and needs over their own, even if for a limited period of time. Hochschild explains that "this kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it

sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (7). Emotional labor has a practical purpose during consultations, but it is still more tangled with consultants' identities than the labor they perform while taking notes about the writers' essays or thinking critically about the sentence structures presented in the piece. Because emotional labor means working with personal emotions and often appropriating consultants' organic affective displays to fit the consultation, it is also tied to consultants' identities. Emotional labor can feel like an essential part not only of the job that is also entangled with the consultant's sense of self independent of the writing center. Without comprehensive training, the prevalence of emotional labor in writing center work can lead consultants to suspend their needs and authentic emotions in favor of supporting others. From Hochschild, we understand that emotional labor for consultants involves working with personal emotions to create an affective display for their writers.

However, Hochschild's definition does not cover the full range of emotional labor that takes place in the writing center. Consultants not only craft emotional displays, but also engage in a complicated set of emotional processes, including byproduct emotions, new or excess emotions they must process later, or containing writers' emotions. Shiloh Whitney presents these forms of emotional labor in "Byproductive labor: A feminist theory of affective labor beyond the productive–reproductive distinction." She argues that emotional labor is always byproductive, that it creates waste products, and that emotional laborers often become receptacles for unwanted emotions, such as anger, grief, or anxiety. For consultants, this byproductivity means that they must take on after-hours work to process "byproduct" emotions like frustration, resentment, or stress triggered by sessions

with writers. Writing consultants may also be tasked with processing leftover affect that writers did not respond to in their sessions or disposing of writers' negative or unwanted emotions. These two theories of emotional labor taken together suggest that consultants work with emotion may require them to display particular affects, attend to unintended emotional outcomes, process excess emotions outside of sessions and act as receptacles for writers' own feelings.

The behaviors and psychological moves that make up emotional labor may also be more burdensome for people of color who work as writing consultants. These consultants may often experience microagressions against them during sessions and feel obligated to respond "professionally," a word which has traditionally meant suppressing negative emotions in the workplace, no matter how justified those feelings may be. For people of color working as consultants, more research into their experiences of emotional labor and how we can better support them is especially urgent.

Indeed, emotional labor can easily take a toll on consultants' mental health outside of the writing center. Hochschild suggests that emotion work "affects the degree to which we listen to feeling and sometimes our very capacity to feel" (21). Emotions are a powerful asset in part because they are often the first indication of how we are processing a particular context and whether it feels supportive and valuable or, in the extreme, unsafe and unjust. Even more than consultants need to be able to work with emotions during writing center sessions, they need to honor their own emotions. In addition to their work with writers, consultants are also students at their institutions who can experience personal instability. They take classes, often work other part-time jobs, and may struggle to study or write their own papers, which are all emotionally draining

activities. Hochschild points out that emotional labor can lead workers to detach from their emotions and lose “the signal function of feeling” (21). This loss would leave consultants primed to to serve others and ill-equipped to care for themselves. If consultants habitually suppress their authentic emotional responses during sessions, they may be prone to ignoring those feelings altogether. Emotions can alert us to our needs, to key details about the context we are in, or to personal or societal injustices. If consultants’ emotions can no longer perform that function for them, consultants become vulnerable to exploitation because they have lost a vital component of their critical self and social awareness.

Emotional labor is a fundamental part of writing consultation that allows consultants to connect with writers and facilitate their learning and so it can be rewarding for consultants. But emotional labor is also a complex skill that can be difficult and draining. There is no way to remove emotional labor from writing consultation — and doing so would remove a valuable part of the support writers receive from consultants and a potentially rewarding part of the job. What consultants need is not training to help them eschew work with emotion, but comprehensive training so that they can perform emotional labor adeptly and sustainably. Because emotion is an explicit factor in counseling psychologists’ work, scholars in the field devise strategies and theories that may complement training and support for writing center consultants.

Possibilities in Counseling Psychology

Some writing center scholars have leveraged this interdisciplinary connection between consultation and counseling psychology. But these applications tend to focus on

improving consultants' tutoring skills, leaving their ability to cope with emotional labor unaddressed (McBride et al.). In an article in *The Peer Review*, Robert Mundy and Rachel Sugerman shift that focus somewhat toward consultants' well-being. Mundy, a Writing Program Director, and Sugerman, a doctoral student in Counseling, collaborate to identify practices from counseling psychology that can help writing consultants contend with the emotional concerns that writers come in with and those that consultants bring to the session as well. Mundy and Sugerman argue that borrowing from the clinical supervision model could be helpful in moving consultants toward greater facility with emotion, both from writers and within themselves. More research like this into the overlap between these fields could help identify tools, like the clinical supervision model, that can support consultants' work with emotion.

Though scholars in Writing Center Studies have yet to investigate how elements of clinical supervision could help support consultants' emotional labor, it could be useful as a guide for offering consultants support in that work as well. Scholarship in counseling psychology often refers to the relationship between a training counselor and their clinical supervisor, which offers a comprehensive model for supporting emotion work. The clinical supervisor models, supports, teaches, coaches, directs, and evaluates their supervisee's development. The supervisor can also guide supervisees through role playing activities and Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), which involves watching video recordings of sessions together and discussing the supervisee and supervisor's perspectives on the session (McBride et al.). This kind of support could offer writing consultants both spaces to process their emotional labor as well as develop their skills in that work. Given the wide breadth of forms consultant emotional labor can take,

investigating clinical supervision and other strategies for emotional labor from Counseling Psychology warrants further research.

However, we can't know the tools consultants need most without first understanding their practice of emotional labor. Writing center scholars have not yet thoroughly investigated consultants' practice of emotional labor, nor have they exhausted the connections between counseling psychology and writing consultation. In this study, I attempt to start filling both of these gaps by interviewing writing center consultants and training psychological counselors and demonstrating the rich possibilities this line of research offers.

Methodology

To offer a clearer picture of consultants' emotional labor, we need to first hear their felt sense of the emotional aspects of their jobs and how they name their emotional labor. Semi-structured interviews with writing consultants provide an opportunity to do just that. My approach, inspired by narrative analysis, focused on participants' stories and reflections on their work to inform my understanding of how those fields function as a whole and how individual consultants and counselors see themselves acting within them. I first interviewed writing center consultants to get a sense for their experience of emotional labor, then I interviewed counselors-in-training at a large public university in the midwest. Interviewing both counselors and consultants allowed me to compare and contrast their experiences of emotion and emotional labor in their roles. Interviewing both groups also allowed me to identify what consultants are already doing in their work with emotion as well as the gaps between their practice and that of counselors. My goals

in these interviews were not only to gather counselor experiences of emotional labor but also to look for cognitive and emotional strategies they used to help them navigate work with emotion. These strategies could point to opportunities for further research into how institutions and administrators can support. the emotional component of writing consultants' practice.

I interviewed three consultants and three counselors-in-training, each with different levels of experience in their jobs. Though this is a small sample size from both consultants and counselors, their reflections offer compelling evidence of the need for further research into emotion in consultation work and the value it could add to the practice. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes, after which I transcribed the interviews without the use of transcription software. I did my best to maintain participants' speech patterns, including repetition and "filler" words like "um," "like," "you know," etc. to capture their stories and statements in their own voices as much as possible.

I designed open-ended questions for the interviews to invite participants to first consider the emotional aspects of their work more broadly, including how writers or clients have expressed emotions in sessions. Then, the interview questions transitioned toward inviting participants to reflect on their experiences of emotional labor. These questions also prompted participants to talk about the strategies they use to navigate personal and client emotions during sessions. I also included questions about specific issues that might come up in their work, especially for writing consultants.These included asking about experiences with multilingual writers/clients and writers' or clients' expression of academic anxiety. I did this for two reasons: 1) to get a sense for how my participants thought about common issues that might come up in either of their fields and

2) to encourage them to think about concrete ways emotion in their work might manifest, even if those didn't pertain to the themes I introduced. After each interview, I randomly assigned the participant a pseudonym unless they requested to choose their own.

I also emailed participants after their interviews to ask how they would describe their gender and racial/ethnic identities, as well as their level of experience. My consultant participants were Joanna, Kennedy, and Monica. Joanna identified as White and female; at the time of our interview she was a writing center administrator with four years' experience in writing consultation. Kennedy identified as White and female; at the time of our interview she was an undergraduate writing consultant with a few months of experience consulting. Monica identified as White and female; at the time of our interview, she was a graduate writing consultant with two years' experience consulting. My counselor participants were Melissa, Aaron, and Chris. Melissa identified as White and female; at the time of our interview she was a training counselor with five and half years of counseling experience. Aaron identified as White and male; at the time of our interview, he was a training counselor with six years of counseling practice. Though Chris did not respond to my email about how they identify, from publicly available data I was able to confirm that they use both they/them and she/her/hers pronouns. At the time of our interview, Chris was a training counselor working toward a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

In my first pass of coding the transcripts of my interviews with the participants, I used a mixture of in vivo and latent codes. I wanted to note not only the keywords participants used but also the concepts they pointed to, albeit couched in different language. After this first look, I saw my participants' responses falling into four

categories: writing consultants' concepts of their work with emotion; counselors' concepts of their work with emotion; writing consultants' strategies and coping mechanisms for emotional labor; counselors' strategies and coping mechanisms for emotional labor?

The first two categories consist of roles or general practices consultants and counselors either subscribe to or aspire to when performing emotional labor or navigating clients'/writers' emotions. The second two categories consist of participants' narratives of what happens or has happened in practice and the tools they use to manage the stress of the job.

However, when I returned to the data for a second pass of coding, I adopted an approach inspired by grounded theory. In my participants' responses, I looked for moments when they named aspects of their work with emotion and of their emotional labor and used those moments to create a map of consultant emotional labor. As I analyzed the interview data, in the spirit of grounded theory, I wanted to first give space to my participants' experiences. Since emotional labor can often be invisible or go unnoticed, it was important to me that I first hear consultants' narratives on their own terms. Based on my participants' responses, I drew from existing theories of emotional labor that respond to their experience to help me name the specific types of emotional labor that consultants take on. In the next section, I share the narratives consultants gave of the different forms their emotional labor took on and present data from my interviews with counselors' that responds to consultants' practices.

Results and Discussion

All of my participants, consultants and counselors alike, were aware of the emotional dimension of their work. Where they differed was in their approach to that dimension and the feelings they harbored about the work themselves. In both counseling and writing consultation, the client or writers' needs shape the session in ways that counselors and consultants can never fully predict. Perhaps this is why flexibility was one of the most common skills participants told me they relied upon in their work. Chris, a training counselor, told me that they "try to tailor [their] sessions as specific and unique to every person as possible. I really don't like the– the concept of one size fits all." This was a common sentiment among both sets of participants.

This approach to both counseling and consulting can enhance the emotional and pedagogical rewards that clients and writers reap from their sessions. It also greatly expands the range of emotional labor that counselors and consultants perform. In this study, I focused on naming the ways that work manifested for writing consultants so that we can research them more deeply and seek out strategies for supporting consultants in their labor. In my participants' responses, I identified several common forms of consultants emotional labor. Below, I offer examples of these forms, connect them to theories of emotional labor, and present counselors' narratives of their work with emotion that suggest productive paths for future research and training.

Motivational Affect

Perhaps the most common kind of emotional labor writing consultants do involves conjuring motivational affect for their writers to present themselves as compassionate listeners should emotions arise and to encourage writers to persevere

through their struggles. Jo Mackiewicz and Isabelle Thompson emphasize the value of this motivational work for writers in their research into "motivational scaffolding." Mackiewicz and Thompson also identify motivational work in consultation as tied to affect, but focus more on the linguistic choices consultants make to create rapport and solidarity with writers. In an article in *The Writing Center Journal*, they present a discourse analysis of two consultations and apply the lens of politeness theory. Mackiewicz and Thompson highlight how consultants' motivational scaffolding cultivates writers' engagement and supports their development toward writing goals. My study on the other hand focused on how consultants experience that emotional labor and so I use the term motivational affect to refer to the work consultants do to display the emotions writers need to feel encouraged and capable. Monica told me about a consultation that called for this kind of emotional labor:

> There was somebody who came into the writing center this semester and I really just provided her with encouragement. … I kinda told her, it's like "Ok, is there anything on this rubric that you don't think you have?" And she's like "No, I know I have all of it. And like here's this and here's this." And it's like "Ok honey, I know you wanted to like read your full draft aloud, but a) we have 25 minutes and it's due in two hours and b) you have everything!" … I really identified that moment as: Here's a writer who has some sort of insecurity, some sort of doubt, here's this new assignment, it was probably challenging and somebody clearly felt some sort of need to talk to somebody else about it. And so I would say that was definitely, definitely emotional, in that I sensed in that moment, here's somebody searching for a connection.

Monica describes this consultation as one where she was able to quickly identify the writer's needs and adopt a tutoring strategy, encouragement, to meet them. This approach is a hallmark of motivational affect. For Monica, the writer's impetus for seeking a writing consultation was fundamentally emotional and Monica intuited that she needed someone to display confidence in her ability to meet the challenges the assignment posed for her. While Monica met part of the writer's needs using traditional writing center techniques, such as referring to the assignment rubric, her emotional labor allowed her to address the writer's underlying emotional needs, which might otherwise have gone unnoticed. In this session and in many others, as my participants discuss, motivational affect is invaluable in helping writers develop skills and navigate the emotions that come with writing challenges.

Joanna, another consultant I spoke with, identified this type of moment as essential to her role as a consultant, which suggests that this kind of emotional labor is a regular part of the job rather than an occasional one. She explained that she saw her role as a consultant as "being a kind of a cheerleader of sorts. I see my role as, I guess kind of like making things seem — making really big things seem manageable or that they can be broken down. … to kind of normalize not knowing what to do." This is an important aspect of motivational affect. Monica's writer needed her to encourage and affirm the work that the writer had already done. But writers still in the middle of the process often need consultants to project confidence in their ability to keep going and engage with work that is difficult, the way Joanna talks about here. Conjuring affect that communicates confidence and engagement in writers' work and ideas requires complex emotional labor. Displaying those emotions means that, as Hochschild writes, "seeming

to 'love the job' becomes part of the job; and actually trying to love it, and to enjoy the customers, helps the worker in this effort" (6). The ethos of the writing center includes a passion for and a certain amount of optimism about writing and for helping people deal with the formidable challenges of writing. Consultants may or may not naturally or sincerely feel these things — though in the case of my participants, those emotions seemed to be authentic more often than not. Either way, displaying them can require significant effort from a consultant and is all but obligatory.

The consultants I spoke with talked about tailoring their motivational affect to the specific needs of their writers. Kennedy explained, "I think my role is just to kind of be whatever the writer — whatever the writer needs to have in order to improve their writing or to feel more confident in their writing." Rather than name particular strategies for or instances of how she approaches motivational affect, Kennedy framed her work with emotion in terms of an end goal, leaving the behaviors leading to that goal flexible. For Kennedy, presenting motivational affect would involve first tuning in to the writer's specific context and demeanor before ultimately determining the kind of affect to which the writer is most likely to respond. And Kennedy is not alone in this; Monica expressed a similar openness about how to facilitate writers' learning and confidence-building. She reflected, "I, so as a consultant, consider my job really to help a writer get to the point where they can feel confident in their assignment and that looks really different for different people." Here, Monica makes what Kennedy implied above explicit. Consultants in my study offer writers motivational affect to facilitate a particular outcome for their writers, but they know that they must do that in flexible ways that suit each writer individually. The fact that both Monica and Kennedy emphasize the importance of

flexibility and tailoring their motivational affect to writers' needs suggests that other consultants may approach that work in similar ways. Because motivational affect requires such a versatile approach, deciding on and implementing the specific affective tools needed in a given consultation is an intricate effort for which consultants need more support, not less.

Consultants expressed feeling tension between displaying motivational affect and incorporating feedback into a session, especially when writers bring in work that is personal to them. Joanna recounted a session she had with a student working on a personal statement for an application to graduate school that illustrated this tension. She reflected that personal writing

> is kind of like your whole life on a page up to that point. And it's very hard to plunk that in front of someone for quote, air-quotes "feedback" because you don't want the feedback to be on their life, you know, it's on how they're spinning it, … It's very difficult to give feedback without making it sound like "Hey this experience isn't worth anything."

Writers often come to the writing center to receive honest feedback on their writing, but they are often also emotionally invested in the work or in their writing process. This is part of the complexity of motivational affect; consultants must often demonstrate confidence in the writer and empathy for the difficulties they're experiencing at the same time as they discuss imperfections in writers' work, which could discourage the writer. Joanna is conscious of this in her consultations, especially with genres like personal statements in which the content is explicitly personal. However, the question of how to both motivate a writer and give feedback is still live for her.

My counselor participants reflected on similar situations in their work. Despite the difference in context, counselors do often need to provide clients with feedback, for example, through negotiating a treatment plan. Chris explained that when they build treatment plans with clients, “I want to incorporate what they’re wanting to work on and then I also kind of internally cringe when they say ‘No, I don’t need to work on boundaries,’ ‘No, my communication is fine.’ … I wish for clients that they could also know what I know and see what I see.” Chris and Joanna have in common a desire to approach these moments with sensitivity, flexibility, and confidence in the client or writer. They also share an awareness of the emotional labor it takes to maintain that stance while also sharing their perspective in a way that helps the writer or client move toward their goals.

Another counselor, Aaron, shared that he also navigates that tension in his work. He saw this manifesting in sessions when a client avoids a certain topic in a way that signals to him there may be emotionally or psychologically relevant experiences the client isn’t ready to share. He mused:

> I think the basic premise of “take the client where they are and meet them there” is a pretty solid rule for most sessions. I think if it’s three or five sessions down the road and we’ve got a solid rapport and I’m noticing that same trend I might say “Ok, I put a pin in this a couple of weeks ago and I’ve noticed that each time we’ve met since, every time we get near this topic, it gets shut down and you move away.”

Aaron’s instinct to “take the client where they are” sounds remarkably similar to the non-directive approach endemic to writing center pedagogy. Consultant participants in

this study talk about taking a non-directive approach in their sessions, but consultants also often need to combine that with some directive methods to help writers meet externally-set standards and deadlines for their work. Aaron strikes a similar balance in his counseling, albeit over a longer period of time, by relying on relational work. He describes allowing the client to move away from topics that make them uncomfortable in the moment, and taking time to build a relationship with them so that he can eventually return to the topic in another moment.

Emotion Isolation

Another difficulty that consultants may experience is the feeling that displaying motivational affect convincingly involves concealing the labor that performance requires, which can leave that work invisible, unacknowledged, and unsupported. Consultants in this study expressed that they feel they cannot reveal their emotional fatigue to writers without compromising their goals for the session, and described sessions in which they struggled to isolate their reactions. Kennedy recalled a session with a distressed writer and reflected that "it kind of takes a bit more effort for me. Obviously, like I did, of course I felt for her and stuff, but it's just how do you kind of show that in a way where it's not like you're stressing out with them. Or like adding to the stress." Kennedy describes struggling to decide what the appropriate affect was for the situation. The crux of her problem became deciding how much of her authentic emotional reaction to the situation she could or should share. Kennedy's thoughts illustrate what Hochschild might call a Writing Center "feeling rule," to which many other consultants may also conform. Hochschild describes "feeling rules" as "standards used in emotional conversation to

determine what is rightly owed and owing in the currency of feeling" (18). Kennedy felt that she should not "display" any emotion, even when it is genuine, that could divert attention from the writer's feelings. While each consultant operates with their own understanding of writing center-related "feeling rules," many of the consultants in this study expressed feeling similarly obligated to hide their emotional reactions from writers.

Kennedy was not the only consultant I spoke with who saw themselves following this feeling rule during their consultations, which suggests that this type of emotional labor may be a consistent part of consultants' work with emotion. Monica reflected on a similar difficulty in her consulting practice, saying "I've kind of worked on not overly engaging with my clients … and that's been really hard for me." Here Monica admits to following the same feeling rule that Kennedy identified and to experiencing personal difficulty in carrying it out. The danger of this rule is that without training and support to help them process the labor of repressing personal emotions, consultants may lose the signal function of feeling discussed earlier. As Kennedy and Monica's experiences illustrate, consultants may feel that keeping the consultation on track and supporting the writer means suppressing, not "adding," personal feelings of frustration or fatigue to the conversation.

Counselors also express thinking strategically about how and when to share their emotional reactions to sessions, but they approach that work with a different habit of mind. Counselors hold a similar principle of prioritizing clients' needs to avoid making clients feel responsible for their emotions. However, as Chris explains, "even talking about the here in the moment, about what's coming up for the client, what's coming up for me — that can be therapeutic in itself." Counselors emphasized the therapeutic and

generative aspects of sharing their emotional reactions with clients just as often as they talked about censoring their reactions to support clients.

This may be a disciplinary trend in counseling psychology, as Chris was not alone in working to complicate, or even undo, the practice of emotion isolation. Melissa, another counselor in this study, described actively moving away from the practice of emotion isolation. She shared that she's "worked really hard to actually display more of my emotions. I think I have a good ability to kind of manage my emotions. And so I've actually worked to be more expressive with clients." Rather than seeking to separate themselves — their thoughts, values, feelings — from the session, counselors in this study discussed the therapeutic value of their emotional responses. They emphasized striking a balance between sequestering their emotions from clients and integrating their emotional reactions into sessions, even embracing them as an enhancement of the work they do.

Though the counselors I spoke with described different habits of mind around their personal emotions during sessions than those of consultants, there may still be some overlap between them. Monica, for example, described working toward a balance between sharing her emotional reactions and isolating them. She explained that "in the writing center, I've been really working on kind of like sometimes strategically revealing like 'well as a reader,' you know, and 'thank you for sharing that' and but in other moments it's like, you know, this is, – I, – I need to make this session less about me and more about the writer who's coming in, and their feelings, and their emotions." Listening to Monica, I was struck by the way that she reflected on and seemed to intervene in her beliefs and practices around emotion in her work. Monica is starting to think about how

to strategically deviate from the emotion isolation feeling rule she's internalized in her work as a consultant. When I think about the differences between the two groups' framing of this form of emotional labor, it seems that the counselors felt more settled in their belief that their emotions can be valuable in their work than did the consultants. For Monica, her effort to include more of her emotional responses in her consulting practice is still a work in progress and she still often returns to the ingrained habit of suppressing her thoughts and feelings to make space for the writer's emotions.

Wasted Affect

Consultants in this study also admitted that even when they produce motivational affect, and conceal the effort, there is no guarantee that the writer will respond to it in the desired way. Consultants often act as the energy source, or coach, in a consultation to keep writers focused and motivated. They produce motivational affect with the hopes of cultivating the writer's sense of agency and confidence. But despite their efforts, they may not achieve the intended reaction in the writer, who may react with apathy and distance themselves from the paper because of their own anxieties surrounding their writing or school work.

Or, as Kennedy recounted in her interview, consultants' motivational affect can seem to go to waste because of time constraints or other external factors that can limit the depth of the work consultants can do with writers. Kennedy described a walk-in session she had with a writer who brought in an essay on racism. She recalled, "it was like, you know, like "racism is bad" kind of thing, you know, it wasn't like — But, it was just very like half-baked. … It wasn't necessarily like, offensive or anything, it was just like 'ok we

need to like break this down.'" Kennedy could tell the writer needed to work on the scope and argument of his piece, and she was prepared to conjure the motivational affect needed to encourage the writer to take on the work of "break[ing] [it] down." But they had only half the regular appointment time, about fifteen minutes, to work together. Kennedy reflected on her thoughts during this session and said, "I wasn't sure how to like go over the complexities of like something so, like a topic that broad. I think it was kind of an issue where he really needed to narrow down the topic, but we just didn't have time." Kennedy was faced with two major challenges all in a short span of time. As Kennedy described, she had to decide how to work with the student on a complicated intellectual problem: how to narrow "racism" down to a manageable topic that he could responsibly and effectively address in a single essay. But, she also had to determine the affective approach that could facilitate the writer's thinking into that difficult writing decision.

This consultation was even more complicated because of the writer's expectations for the session. Kennedy remembered sensing that the writer "just wanted someone to read over it so it was a– it was a lot of weird things I had to balance and prioritize." As Kennedy assessed how to approach both the intellectual and the affective aspects of this consultation, she tried to understand what the writer wanted and how that might affect his willingness to engage with the questions she had about his piece. Kennedy's sense that the writer "just" wanted someone to read over his paper suggests that he was expecting or hoping to be in the final stages of the writing process and wouldn't necessarily be excited to work on structural issues. Because of the combination of the time constraint and the writer's disposition, Kennedy's motivational affect in this session was likely

underutilized. This consultation presents another example of the compressed relational as well as intellectual work consultants are called to do to facilitate writers' learning.

As Kennedy's reflections demonstrate, this is intricate and difficult work that can affect consultants even after the session is over. Kennedy described feeling a sense of "unreasonable inadequacy" after this session, a feeling that she had to process on her own. Whitney writes that the affect emotional laborers display "may not be used at all … efforts may frequently be useless in the sense that they do not have the intended effect" (647). When consultants display confidence in their writers' abilities and excitement about their projects, as Kennedy was prepared to do, writers often do not or cannot respond to those affects, leaving consultants feeling as though their motivational affect was wasted. In sessions like the one Kennedy recalled, the motivational affect and any other displays of emotion consultants produce becomes what Whitney calls a "waste product." According to Whitney, "the metabolization of these waste or excess affects is part of the after-hours cost of affective labor for the worker" (646). This means that any leftover empathy or motivational affect that the consultant conjured for a writer during their session remains for the consultant to feel and "metabolize" out of their system after the session is completed. In this way, consultants must perform emotional labor not only during their shifts at the writing center but also afterwards to personally process the lingering effects of their work. Consultants need more training in how to navigate inevitable sessions where their affect can't or won't be used. But also, perhaps more importantly, they need training and support to help them "metabolize" the emotions that come with those sessions to protect their mental and emotional health.

Consultants can also contend with wasted affect when they feel authentic excitement about writers' work that writers do not respond to. Monica told me about a consultation like this with a writer who brought in a research paper on LGBT people in rural areas. Monica recalled:

> I told him, like you know, like even kind of before we started talking about his specific paper, "Like I think what you're doing is really valuable, and that– that really resonates with me." And I– that kind of one of those like in the moment decisions, and in part it's like, well that feels really true to me, and I would maybe be remiss if I didn't say that. But at the same time I worried, kind of like upon reflection, it's like was that too much?

In this session, Monica's motivational affect came naturally to her because of personal connection with the topic the writer was discussing. Monica explained that the writer's topic reminded her of a high school friend who identified as gay and was bullied for his sexuality, which led her to respond emotionally during the session. Monica genuinely did feel excited about the writer's work and wanted to encourage him to keep going. At the same time, her question — "was that too much?" — suggests that she was also holding herself to isolating the emotions that came up for her in this session, and not feeling them openly.

This instinct to isolate her true feelings may have been influenced by her reading of the writer's attitude. Monica described "getting the like 'I don't need to know that about you' vibe from him, where it's like– I'm like 'This is so personal! This is so good!' And I could kind of sense for him that it's like he didn't really want or need that." Even though Monica had authentic motivational affect to offer this writer, he didn't respond to

it the way she expected or intended. Contrary to what we might think, writers not displaying emotion can often compound the emotional labor consultants like Monica must perform. Part of why this form of emotional labor needs attention is that it can happen even if the writer does not openly express any emotion to the consultant. In fact, if the writer is apathetic or has little to say, either about their feelings or their writing, the consultant may be obliged to engage in even more emotional labor, in an effort to motivate the writer. This, in turn, produces even more motivational affect that the writer may not use or respond to in the session. In this session, Monica's labor involved struggling to recalibrate her affective approach and hold back her personal emotions. Because this kind of emotional labor may not involve writers displaying affect, consultants could engage in it often, but may have no way of pinpointing what made the session so draining since the writer was not overtly emotional.

Counselors talked about similar moments when they sensed apathy from their clients. Chris explained that they use their own engagement in the session as a barometer for how present their clients are in the session. At moments when they notice their mind wandering, they would think "if this is what I'm feeling, I wonder if this might be something similar to what they're feel– feeling." In contrast to the emotion isolation rule Monica was trying to follow, Chris's approach honors their emotions as an integral part of how they conduct a session. Chris's self-awareness and acceptance of their emotions allows them to see an opportunity to check in with their client's experience. Chris talked about their own feelings of disengagement prompting them to ask clients "'what's going on for you as you're talking about these things?' Just to kind of bring it down a little bit deeper instead of it being surface-level or, or, or really logic-based. So kind of bringing it

more into the– the emotions and the affective realm." In this way, Chris acknowledges their felt sense for the situation, using personal emotions to catalyze relationship building with their clients. This strategy allows Chris to make space for and directly address client emotions, even when those emotions include apathy or boredom, and ultimately better understand client experiences.

Unintended Products

Kennedy and Monica's stories of how they've experienced wasted affect also suggests that they feel unintended emotional products in the aftermath of their sessions. Writing center sessions can catalyze other emotions for consultants that add to their labor as they must process those feelings on their own time. And, because that processing happens outside of the session, it often evades recognition, which allows the labor to remain undervalued and unsupported.

These unintended products are not always negative, as Kennedy points out. When I asked if she ever experienced after effects from her sessions, she explained that,

> sometimes it's like positive. It's not always like bad, like stress. Like I remember one guy came in and he was talking about like he was applying for a conference, a really cool conference. So we went through his application essay and then he was talking about like all his qualifications and his past experiences and he was just this super cool like person to meet and like talk to. And we like chatted a lot about like all the stuff that we wanted to do. So I think, after that, you know, I was like to my friends "Oh, I just had such a great consultation today!"

Similar to Monica in her consultation with the writer researching LGTB people in rural

areas, Kennedy's motivational affect for this writer was organic. She was not only confident in the writer's ability to take on the challenge they were working on, but excited about the writer's work and also for the writer themself. And that enthusiasm, a byproduct of her motivational affect, stuck with her even after the session ended.

These positive, energizing after effects of writing consultations are part of what can make writing center work so rewarding. In fact, they may be a regular part of the job as Joanna described them. She recalled feeling invigorated after her consultations often:

> I mean, usually, it's that I'm amazed by a writer. Like, that happens a lot, where I'll just be overwhelmingly amazed by the work someone is doing or the thoughts that they have or just like so amazed by something they wrote and that's kind of a fun emotion to have. Just like, being really impressed and, and inspired, honestly, to, to keep doing it again.

Joanna names many positive emotions that stay with her after consultations that go well, such as amazement, inspiration, and feeling impressed. These emotions are related to the motivational affect and can even make it easier for consultants to conjure it for writers. But they also go beyond the affect it takes to encourage writers. Invigorating emotions like these are one of the greatest benefits of writing center work for consultants.

But many consultants in this study also told me about unintended products of their emotional labor that were more distressing, like frustration, grief, and feelings of failure. Often these feelings were attached to sessions in which they felt confused about how to proceed or sessions they wished they could have handled differently. Joanna described a consultation like this that she had with a particularly emotional writer. She recalled,

> I did have a writer who came in one time with an essay about a parent who had died and I almost didn't give any feedback because the writer was so sad. … It was hard to know whether to get the writer to talk more about that or would that have been painful, or? I tried to make it focus on the writing, but of course, you can't when the emotion is present.

In a session like this, consultants navigate not only their pedagogical strategies, but also their own emotions, which can include either feelings independent of the consultation or feelings in response to the writer's distress. Joanna's writer had composed a piece about the death of his parent and brought it to Joanna for feedback, not knowing that she had lost a parent as well. Joanna recalls, "my mom died and so that consultation was very hard." This detail adds another dimension to a consultation that was already saturated with emotion. Whitney's theory of byproductivity in emotional labor only emphasizes the significance of the emotional dynamics at play. She explains that "often circulation is taking place in the other direction: from consumer to worker instead of the other way around" (647). By engaging in this kind of emotional labor, consultants risk the possibility that the writers' negative affects, like frustration, or anxiety, may transfer to them. Consultants working with writers feeling stress about looming deadlines and difficult writing projects may find that the writers' feelings trigger a stress response about their own responsibilities and academic struggles. For Joanna, the risk was that the writer's grief might reawaken her own. Even so, a consultant in Joanna's position may need to produce a calm and positive affect for the writer, just as the writer's distress compounds the consultant's own emotions.

Perhaps because of her own experience of grief for a parent, Joanna remembers feeling conflicted about how to respond to the writer. She tried to spontaneously determine what kind of affective response her writer needed, which could have ranged from empathetic listening and compassion to motivation and refocusing on the writing. Each writer's needs are unique and each writer may need a different sequence and combination of affects, so Joanna could only make an educated guess, quickly, about what response the writer needed. In reflecting on this session, Joanna explains that "I remember after that consultation being unhappy with the way I had dealt with it." This consultation was so challenging for Joanna that she felt regret about her response even after the consultation ended.

Consultants' emotional labor often creates other emotional "byproducts," such as regret about the way they approached the session. Other unintended emotional products for consultants could include anything from resentment, frustration, and exhaustion, to the excitement, inspiration, and wonder consultants mentioned. Whitney argues that "the worker's own affects are both the means of production and a byproduct of the work" (645). This gives rise to a conflict between consultants' independent emotions or emotional needs and those required for a session, in Joanna's case, with a grieving writer. Consultants engage in emotional labor by using their emotions to create and display the desired affect for their writers, which allows consultants to connect with writers and facilitate their learning. At the same time, this work blurs the boundary between the emotions the consultant feels outside of writing center sessions and the emotions she produces during those appointments. Joanna's emotional labor with this writer created a number of what Whitney would call emotional "byproducts" for her in the form of

sadness, grief, and feelings of failure, which Joanna had to work through outside of the writing center, on her own time.

Other consultants I talked with also recalled sessions about which they had feelings of failure, signalling that this may be a more widespread consequence of consultants' emotional labor. Monica described a series of consultations she had with a writer in her 30s or 40s that left her with feelings similar to Joanna's. This writer was a single mother, originally from Brazil, and a non-native speaker of English who came to Monica to work on writing assignments for a class she needed to pass to get into a nursing program. Monica recalled,

> what I found is she wanted to work on writing and do writing in that space, not necessarily talk about writing and definitely not talk theoretically about writing. And that for me — 'cause I was still thinking like, "no, tutor the writer not the writing, non-directive questions," and she just got frustrated with me and I was frustrated, too.

Monica reflected, in part, on how her adherence to traditional writing center practices created emotional tension in her relationship with the writer and conflicted with the writer's needs. She also noted that following her usual, non-directive approach caused an unintended product for both her and the writer: frustration.

Monica shifted her approach to try to meet her writer's needs and answer her questions about the grammar and mechanics of writing in English. But she recalled, "I don't like that I thought this, but I totally did, I thought like, 'these questions are boring, and they're easy.'" Even when she switched strategies to support the writer, the tension Monica had felt didn't resolve itself. The frustration was still fresh. Monica's admission

that she did not like the thoughts and feelings she had in those sessions suggests they had another unintended emotional product: feelings of failure. Monica went on to say that in unpacking those sessions, she realized “I'm the good-intentioned white lady kind of replicating this really privileged notion of writing that I think the writer's finding pretty inaccessible.” Monica’s statement here demonstrates deep self-awareness. She understands how the writer’s material needs conflicted with Monica’s internalized beliefs about writing and writing centers. Monica was remarkably willing to be vulnerable and take responsibility for not supporting the writer on her own terms. It was clear both that Monica had reflected deeply on the experience and that she still felt guilty about the way she handled those sessions.

Counselors also told me about moments in their sessions that did not go according to plan, though they usually presented them in a different light. The counselors in this study expressed acceptance of those moments as inevitable and confidence in their abilities to work with emotion overall. Aaron, for example, shared about a session that had caught him off guard, and recounted it without judgment for himself or his client. He explained:

> I had a client at one point in the past that was describing a very traumatic experience and she described it because she came in apologizing to me about having lied to me in the previous session. And she said “You know, I’m really sorry for lying to you. You asked if I had ever had any sort of past life trauma and I said no but in reality —” and then she detailed a very explicit trauma that disproportionately affects women and– and I– I had to like pause at the very end of that session like “First off, you never need to apologize for not bringing up

> anything in this room. Like, it's your space, bring in or don't bring in anything you want or don't want. I appreciate your vulnerability in sharing this." And I remember thinking about this, I was thinking about that session for like probably half a week after that, like the next handful of days up to a week, just reflecting on "Wow, that was really brave of that client. And also a– like brave. Like eighty-five percent brave, fifteen percent self-critical."

Aaron could have experienced this moment with his client as a failure by focusing on how his actions could have led his client to feel she needed or wanted to hide her traumatic experience from him. And indeed, the session did have a prolonged influence on him, enough that he thought about it for days afterward and enough that he spoke about it later with me. But Aaron's fixation with this session was not a fixation on his own actions. Instead, Aaron focuses on the client and how this moment can be an opportunity for building a stronger therapeutic relationship between them. This is not to say that the solution to all of writing consultants' or counselors' feelings of failure is to focus on the writer or client. There may be many habits of mind to prevent or assuage feelings of guilt after sessions. But it is telling that Aaron processed this experience with a client without attributing blame to anyone involved, and certainly not to himself.

Chris talks more explicitly about their feelings of failure during therapy sessions but their language was still more generative than many of my writing consultant participants. They explain, "I think the big thing for me is just kind of admitting when something doesn't work right. And that can be to myself or out loud of just like 'Ok, this wasn't the right approach. What would work better?'" Like Monica, Chris demonstrates significant self-awareness. But this approach to moments gone awry in a session leans,

like Aaron, away from meting out blame. Consultants and counselors seem to have self-awareness and an ability to take responsibility for their actions in sessions in common. But counselors may be more practiced at doing so without laying blame to themselves.

Emotion Disposal

Another form of emotional labor consultants in this study spoke about required them to act as receptacles for writers' unwanted emotions. In many consultations, writing consultants have to take on clients' emotions without becoming overwhelmed. For example if a writer is insecure and anxious, the consultant must absorb that emotion without themselves becoming outwardly upset, anxious or beginning to cry during the consultation. Kennedy described a consultation like this:

> someone came in and she had a giant term paper and the professor had just written all over it and a lot of it was about citations and quotes that she had, because she had a lot of quotes, just like chunks of quotes. … And her professor hadn't given her any guidance on how to do that, he just kind of said "fix your citations." So in that case, I could tell she was like really confused and really stressed out about it and she had scheduled an hour-long appointment. So a lot of that was spent like just kind of decompressing and kind of decoding what the professor had said, because there were just very vague comments that were not that helpful so yeah.

In this session, Kennedy had to hold the feelings of confusion, stress, perhaps even anger that the writer was experiencing without reflecting them back to her. This process is

similar to emotion isolation in that it involves suppressing emotions that come up during the session and refraining from displaying them. However, emotion disposal differs in that it involves consultants taking in writers' emotions and quarantining them along with consultants' own feelings. Whitney suggests that emotional laborers like consultants must often make themselves "*available as a receptacle for affect disposal*" (648). Emotion disposal involves absorbing the writer's unwanted emotions, rather than stoking them through empathy, so that the writer can move on from those feelings to more generative ones like confidence, determination, and excitement. This is an intricate process, which is why emotion disposal could be the most draining form of emotional labor writing consultants perform. Kennedy understandably recalled this session as an overwhelming one because of the demands the professor had placed on the writer and the emotions the writer expressed that Kennedy contained.

Monica described disposing of writers' unwanted emotions as a consistent part of her consulting practice, rather than as isolated instances. She explained that "sometimes like, well, somebody's kind of frustrated and if I can say 'Ok' that sometimes that can kind of provide them the space to realize that that intense emotion is not the only option." This more generalized statement about offering writers emotional "space" suggests that this labor may be a regular part of not only Monica's consulting practice, but other consultants' practices as well. Monica's statement also speaks back to Whitney's theory of emotional labor. Whitney suggests that an emotional laborer is obliged "to absorb unwanted affects from others and contain them" (647). What Monica described involves containing writers' frustration, without reflecting it back to them to help writers get distance from those unwanted emotions and replace them with other less "intense"

emotional options. Monica does not cast this part of her work as especially distressing, but that does not mean that it isn't draining.

My purpose in this analysis is not to advocate against emotion disposal or any other form of emotional labor that manifests in writing consultation. Emotional labor is a valuable means for learning and connecting with others. Instead, I argue that consultants need more support for the emotional labor of their work. The first step toward that support is conducting more research into consultants' practice to learn about emotion disposal but all other forms of consultant emotional labor. For example, a different sample of writing consultants could reveal a wider range of experiences with emotion disposal, including more taxing or emotionally fraught ones. It's worth noting that all of the consultants in this study identified as White. Repeating this study with a more racially diverse sample of consultants could help us understand how they process experiences of microaggressions in the writing center and the extent to which they feel they must dispose of writers' emotions in those instances. Seeking insights from consultants from a range of social positions will be a vital part of future research into their emotional labor. With that knowledge, writing center scholars can look to counseling psychology for training and support structures for consultants' work with emotion.

Conclusion

Writing consultants provide an incredibly valuable service both to the individual writers they work with and to the universities that fund them. But this work also requires significant emotional labor and facility with affect in general. As these interviews demonstrate, the emotional labor that consultants perform is rich and complex. There is

still much to learn about how they work with emotion and how best to train towards those skills and support writing consultants in their emotional labor. My hope is that this study can add momentum to the growing discourse on emotion in writing consultation.

Attending to writing consultants' emotional labor is also urgent because if consultants do not get support in learning how to care for themselves and negotiate this role, performing emotional labor could easily compromise their long-term mental health. Writing consultant training does not reliably prioritize or acknowledge the emotional nature of writing center work, and as a result consultants may be positioned to experience more draining emotional labor that they must process even after their sessions in the writing center are over. The first step to intervening in this trend is to further research the kinds of emotional labor consultants do at a larger scale and the lessons from counseling psychology that can transfer to writing center work. Gathering that data will allow writing center professionals to learn more about how to support consultants and not only honor their work but also help them navigate it in healthy ways.

More robust training, along with ongoing support, would set writing consultants up to perform emotional labor sustainably. Concepts and strategies from Counseling Psychology could catalyze writing center training and scholarship around consultant emotional labor and move us closer toward that goal. An example of a useful habit of mind from this discipline could be psychological flexibility, which Meifen Wei et al. describe as "behaving consistently with one's chosen values even in the presence of unwanted internal experiences" (41). Wei et al. argue that "counselors" — or consultants — "with greater psychological flexibility may feel the freedom to accept an unwanted thought, turn it off, or focus their attention on another behavior consistent with their

values—such as effectively helping their clients" (41). Many of the counselors I spoke with demonstrated this habit of mind in the way they described their sessions with clients, especially ones that were emotionally difficult or technically complex. Helping consultants cultivate psychological flexibility as they perform emotional labor could support them as they conjure motivational affect, process unintended emotional products, or navigate other feelings that arise during their sessions.

Part of what will shape that research is assessing what knowledge and coping mechanisms consultants already have for dealing with emotionally taxing work of the kind my participants have described. Consultants mentioned eight concrete coping practices that they use to process the stress of the emotional labor they perform in the writing center. These were: leaving the space, limiting the length of their shifts, confiding in fellow consultants, confiding in family and friends, removing themselves from the schedule or getting a substitute for their next session when they feel particularly drained, compartmentalizing, journaling, and deep breathing or mindfulness. Notably, many of these are behavioral practices that change the logistics of the way they do writing center work, not necessarily habits of mind that help them shift the way they think about their sessions. The fact that they named so many coping mechanisms suggests that they understand explicitly that they need to care for themselves when working with emotions in the writing center and deliberately build a toolbox of coping strategies to help them do that. Of the coping mechanisms mentioned, though, the consultants unanimously mentioned only one strategy: confiding in other consultants. This strategy is among the most therapeutic of the strategies mentioned, as it is perhaps the one most likely to get consultants an infusion of empathy and validation.

Counselors also mentioned eight coping mechanisms including self-care and self-awareness, confiding in family and friends, confiding in other counselors, seeking support from their supervisor, personal therapy, journaling, engaging in outside interests, and bracketing. These coping mechanisms overlap somewhat with the ones that consultants pointed to, such as confiding in fellow consultants or counselors, confiding in friends and family, and journaling. The coping mechanisms that counselors mentioned and that consultants didn't are worth investigating and possibly adding to consultants repertoire through training. For example, Chris talked about the benefits they've reaped from practicing bracketing during their sessions. For Chris, bracketing works like this: "if I'm noticing something coming up, then I will practice my own sense of bracketing. So, I'll make a mental note of it, an emotional note, and I'll say 'Ok, yeah, that's going on the back burner. We're, we're not going to bring this in.'" This habit of mind involves consciously acknowledging their feelings and making an "emotional note" to themselves to tend to them in a future moment when they are able. This approach is similar to compartmentalizing, but differs in that it involves setting an intention to return to the feelings set aside and tend to them. Bracketing allows Chris to honor their emotions, make caring for themselves an explicit priority, and return focus to their client. This technique could offer consultants similar benefits and with more research could be incorporated into writing center training.

Consultants are already benefiting from forms of support that are similar to some of the forms of support counselors receive. But there may still be other supportive structures from counseling practice and literature that could help writing consultants process the emotional aspects of their job and develop their consulting skills. For

example, a comprehensive supervision model like the one counselors work within, could offer consultants not only more training but also more consistent support for the emotional consequences of their work with writers.

To fully tap into the potential of this interdisciplinary connection between Writing Center Studies and Counseling Psychology, we need to understand consultants' emotional labor more fully. Seeking insights from more consultants from multiple institutions could offer a more comprehensive view of their work with emotion and their needs in that work. Future research could also look into how counselors develop the habits of mind that allow them to sustainably process their own emotions during sessions. Continuing research into consultants' experiences of emotional labor will allow us to add onto the map of this work that illustrates the effort and support it requires, as well as its pedagogical and relational value.

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