Diversity in the Writing Center: The Impact of Reflection on Inclusive Practices

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Abstract
Diversity is one of the buzzwords of the early 21st century. However, its true meaning and implications for writing center work are not thoroughly understood by consultants, writers, or administrators. This study aims to explore the effects of consultants' personal understandings and experiences with diversity and turn these into actionable strategies to improve the inclusivity felt by both writers and consultants in writing centers. Short interviews and examinations of asynchronous appointments were conducted to identify the attitudes and practices commonly found in some consultations. Through this research, it is clear that diversity is a process that can take many different forms and have distinct applications. To become more inclusive and accessible, writing centers must continually encourage reflection throughout all stages of the consulting process for consultants and writers alike. In doing so, writing centers can evolve to best support a variety of populations throughout different experiences and processes.
Writing centers are spaces where individuals come together to collaboratively work on their writing. In the BSU Writing Center, consultants take a mandatory preparatory course that presents different consulting practices and social situations to better prepare them for writing center work.

**INTRODUCTION**

Writing centers are spaces where individuals come together to collaboratively work on their writing. In the BSU Writing Center, consultants take a mandatory preparatory course that presents different consulting practices and social situations to better prepare them for writing center work.

**CONTEXTUALIZING DIVERSITY**

Centers need to move beyond superficial adjustments and work to give meaningful access to different processes to their staff, students, and faculty in order to allow for true change to occur. Additionally, all individuals in writing centers need to be willing to accept the uncertainty that comes with diversity work and acknowledge the risk of public failure.

**THE WRITING CENTER CURRENTLY**

- We value diversity and being inclusive
- We focus on challenging personal beliefs and practices in ENGL 303/503
- We have a wide variety of majors, ethnicities, and backgrounds in the WC right now

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

How can we continue to encourage consultants to consider diversity and inclusive consulting practices in their appointments?

**METHODS**

To see how personal and shared definitions of diversity affected accessibility and inclusivity practices in the BSU Writing Center, I conducted several rounds of short interviews with consultants and analyzed their asynchronous appointments. I created a semi-structured survey to ask six consultants about their thoughts on diversity in general, as well as the WC's current practices related to inclusion.

Then, I reviewed 2-3 of each consultant's asynchronous consultations to better understand their motives and biases as they worked with different writers. I discussed these choices with each consultant to better understand their actions and to gauge their perspectives about ways to alter WC mindsets, practices, and training sessions.

**RESULTS**

1. Diversity is a process, not a noun
   a. Diversity can be both good and bad
      i. Can’t just be “diverse,” though, only a group can
      b. Being "diverse" isn’t doing anything, it’s a band-aid fix
   2. Marginalization has many forms
      a. Writers, topics, and the way people write can be marginalized
   3. Content vs. writing
      a. Comments are recommendations and phrasing is key
      b. Balance as a consultant = educating vs. editing
   4. Consultants stop challenging themselves
      a. 303 gives consultants the opportunity to engage with their work and learn
      b. Be vulnerable, honest, reflective, comfortable with discomfort

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