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Sparking a Transition, Unmasking Confusion: An Empirical Study of the Benefits of a Writing Center Workshop about Patchwriting

Abstract

Students' misunderstanding of faculty expectations for paraphrase has been empirically demonstrated, and many writing centers conduct workshops to help students adopt better strategies for work with sources. However, little empirical research supports the effectiveness of such efforts. For this study, researchers examined students' attempts to paraphrase before and after a 45-minute workshop presented by an undergraduate peer tutor in several sections of an introductory political science course. Our findings demonstrate that the workshop did help students improve both their understanding of what is expected of them and their attempts to paraphrase. The average score for language increased from 3.11 in the pretest to 3.86 on a 5-point scale in the posttest (n=107, p≤.001). However, as many students improved at avoiding patchwriting, the quality of their representation of an idea from a source appeared to decline; ideas scores dropped after the workshop from 3.36 to 3.03 (n=107, p≤.01). The drop

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in scores for ideas supports concerns that students' practice of patchwriting may serve to mask problems with their reading comprehension. These findings suggest that writing centers can effectively partner with faculty to help students read and work more thoughtfully with source material and therefore engage more fully with course material.

Introduction

In studying her students' work with sources, Rebecca Moore Howard (1992) discovered that their failure to meet faculty expectations for work with sources was often unintentional. She coined the term *patchwriting*, "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging one-for-one synonym substitutes," to describe one of the most common patterns she saw (p. 233). We see the widespread practice of patchwriting on our own campus. Students arrive believing that patchwriting represents appropriate paraphrase, and without explicit instruction, they continue to believe this even at the graduate level and possibly into their professional careers.

Howard distinguishes patchwriting from plagiarism, which, she argues, more accurately describes intentional acts. The Council of Writing Program Administrators (2003) agrees, saying students are not plagiarizing when they "try in good faith to acknowledge others' work but fail to do so accurately or fully." So, although many faculty believe punitive approaches will lead students to avoid patchwriting, Howard argues instead that, because patchwriting results from a lack of knowledge on the part of students, it is a sign more education is needed. She and others have noted that writing centers can help fill this knowledge gap. For example, Elizabeth Kleinfeld (2011) has argued that writing centers have a responsibility to treat students' approaches to finding, reading, and incorporating source material as higher order concerns. The writing center she directs at the Metropolitan State College of Denver has adapted its approaches to sessions in order to more effectively seek and recognize opportunities to help students improve their work with source material (Kleinfeld, 2011). However, she acknowledges that one significant limitation that may keep writing centers from effectively helping students improve how they use sources is insufficient opportunity: Students don't often come to us for help with research (Kleinfeld, 2011).

We share the view of Kleinfeld (2016), Howard and Tracy Carrick (2006), and others that writing centers have an obligation to help students learn how to write from sources. For our center, a primary strategy for creating opportunities to offer such help is our 45-minute Writing with Sources (WWS) workshop. This workshop creates opportunities to work

with students on writing from sources by allowing us to first meet them in their classrooms and initiate a conversation about how they read and then incorporate sources into their work and how their current practices may not meet faculty expectations, especially for paraphrase. We then invite them to continue the conversation by coming to our center for help with reading and incorporating sources into their written work. Demand for our workshop has grown steadily[1] because faculty feel as though we are effective in helping their students understand critical concepts related to writing from sources, especially faculty concern about what they call "accidental plagiarism"—in other words, patchwriting and other unintentional misuse of sources. Of course, believing in our workshop's value is not the same as empirically verifying its effectiveness. To do that, we conducted an experimental study.

Our effort to measure the effectiveness of our WWS workshop had three phases. In phase one, conducted in 2010-2011, we measured student learning from our workshop by administering paper surveys to students immediately following each workshop. Later, in phase two, conducted from 2014 to 2016, we narrowed our focus to the specific problem of patchwriting and used anonymous student-response devices to measure students' self-reported learning. Finally, in phase three, conducted from 2015 to 2016, we used a combination of students' clicker responses during the workshop and pre/post writing samples to measure its effect on student writing and writing processes. Our findings demonstrate that patchwriting is widespread and occurs at all levels unless students experience an effective intervention. Our workshop was effective in helping students improve both their understanding of what is expected of them and their attempts to paraphrase. The average score for language increased from 3.11 in the pretest to 3.86 on a 5-point scale in the posttest ($n=107$, $p \leq .001$). However, while many students improved at avoiding patchwriting, the quality of their representation of an idea from a source appeared to decline; ideas scores dropped after the workshop from 3.36 to 3.03 ($n=107$, $p \leq .01$). This decline in ideas scores supports concerns that students' practice of patchwriting may serve to mask problems with their reading comprehension. These findings suggest writing centers can effectively partner with faculty to help students read and work more thoughtfully with source material and therefore engage more fully with course material.

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1   We conducted nine classroom WWS workshops in Fall 2012; 18 workshops in Fall 2014; 28 workshops in Fall 2016; and 39 workshops in Fall 2017.

The Problem of What Students Know and Do with Source Material.

Rebecca Moore Howard, Sandra Jamieson, and others working on the Citation Project, have done much to study and measure students' frequently problematic practices when they write from sources. For that work, they define patchwriting as "restating a phrase, clause, or one or more sentences while staying close to the language or syntax of the source" (Jamieson & Howard, 2011). In a preliminary study of 18 research papers, Howard, with Tanya K. Rodrigue and Tricia Serviss, found patchwriting in 16 papers, direct copying without quotation in 13, "non-common-knowledge information for which no source was cited" in 17, and misattribution of information to a source that either "did not contain that information or said something different from what the student was attributing to it" in 14 (2010, p. 182). They also found that students did not summarize at all and that their work with source material was often superficial at best. They concluded that because "it is consistently the sentences, not the sources, that are being written from," it is difficult to determine to what extent students actually engaged with or understood their sources (p. 189). Jamieson and Howard (2011) later reported similar findings in their expansion of data collection when the Citation Project looked at data from 174 student papers from 16 participating universities.

When it comes to patchwriting specifically, researchers have demonstrated that students have a limited understanding. For example, Miguel Roig (1997) found that most students (76%) can identify correct paraphrase, but 50% also misidentify incorrect work as correct. Even when students try to follow accepted practice, their misunderstandings may lead them astray. In Alastair Pennycook's (1996) study, a representative student reported he had plagiarized because "to him, it seemed almost more honest to keep the language the same and leave the ideas" (p. 223). Overall, these findings support what those who teach writing often know from experience: Students frequently arrive on campuses poorly prepared to meet faculty expectations for college-level work with sources, especially for paraphrase.

Unfortunately, students' confusion often continues after they arrive on our campuses. In many cases, what we teach may directly contradict what students have been taught in the past. On our own campus, many students have reported in discussions during or after our workshop that they had been taught "techniques" that basically constitute patchwriting. For example, some report having been taught to construct paraphrase by replacing at least every fourth word from an author's original language. Misinformation may also come from well-meaning textbooks or hand-

books attempting to explain appropriate practice. *Successful College Writing*, a first-year composition textbook, offers mixed advice for working with sources. While it gives helpful suggestions like reading a passage twice before attempting to paraphrase, it also advises students to "work sentence by sentence" (McWhorter, 2012, p. 612), which Jamieson and Howard (2011) describe as an underlying problem in how students work with source material. The textbook also advises students to "choose synonyms" and goes on to claim, "As a rule of thumb, no more than two or three consecutive words should be the same as in the original" (McWhorter, 2012, p. 612).

Another problematic source of information many students typically encounter later in their curriculum is the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Kimberly K. Bennett, Linda S. Behrendt, & Jennifer L. Boothby (2011) studied perceptions of plagiarism among faculty in psychology and found general agreement that "acknowledging a source but changing very few words from a quote" constitutes plagiarism (p. 31). The authors argue that "instilling in students professional standards and academic integrity, akin to the policies provided in the *Publication Manual*, is paramount to training psychology students at the undergraduate and graduate levels" (30). However, the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual* (2009) offers the following parenthetical definition of paraphrase: To "summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words is paraphrasing" (p. 15). The 5th edition (2002, p. 349) and 4th edition (1994, p. 292) carry nearly identical language; thus, the definition has been in the manual since it started to include information about paraphrase. The 3rd edition (1983) does not mention paraphrase, focusing instead exclusively on quotation, which offers an interesting glimpse into a key rhetorical change in the discipline over the last 30-some years.

We can expect, then, that some students will have outright false beliefs about paraphrase, and misinformation from multiple sources may hinder their ability to take in new information and adopt new strategies (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman 2010, p. 14). Given these problems of confusion and misinformation, it is perhaps unsurprising that both students and faculty disparage the common practice of referring students to university conduct handbooks because they consider it insufficient to address plagiarism (Schwabl, Rossiter, & Abbot 2013, p. 411). A more effective practice argued for by Howard and Carrick (2006) is for writing center directors to prepare peer tutors to deliver workshops that "define plagiarism, discuss school policies, and teach students to work effectively with sources" (p. 254). Though our workshop focuses foremost on helping students understand patchwriting, we also discuss plagiarism

and school policies as a way to reinforce that our purpose is to help make clear what is being asked of them and to provide concrete strategies they can use to paraphrase well.

Faculty Perceptions of and Responses to Plagiarism

Because the word *plagiarism* encompasses many complex literacy practices and is too often addressed punitively, many scholars find the term itself not particularly helpful and eschew discussions of writing center involvement for that reason (Howard, 2000; Valentine, 2006; Zwagerman, 2008). Howard and Carrick (2006) write that to "train peer-tutors to teach writing from sources is to enter the academic minefield. One should enter it only if equipped with a map that shows the mines' locations" (p. 254). A significant problem is that many faculty believe the best way to ensure students work appropriately with sources is to send the message "if you plagiarize, you'll fail" (Hu, 2015, p. 101). However, because only those students who have a high level of preparation and strong understanding of plagiarism are able to adjust their practices in the face of such threats, rather than preventing potential misbehavior, such approaches are at best unhelpful and at worst disenfranchising for many students. And since this lack of preparation is most widespread among underprivileged students and students from cultures and subcultures that view attribution and ownership of ideas differently from the way U.S. academics do, a punitive approach to plagiarism serves—whether intentionally or not—to limit these students' access to educational success (Howard, 1995). Some writing center directors may worry that becoming involved in plagiarism instruction implies an endorsement of such punitive approaches.

For our center, however, offering a workshop is a way to offer a visible alternative to punitive approaches to plagiarism. Our workshop gives us the opportunity to broach the topic of patchwriting as something not well understood or well taught. In this way, the workshop helps students understand what is expected of them when they are writing from sources and then extend to them an invitation to come to our center and work with us while they're doing research or drafting.

Other concerns for writing centers in attempting to help students meet and understand faculty expectations for working with sources are that faculty may not distinguish intentional plagiarism from misuse of sources or patchwriting (Roy 1999), or that faculty do not share a uniform understanding of what constitutes ethical paraphrase. Some argue faculty are "not sure" about whether or not patchwriting constitutes acceptable paraphrase (Schwabl, Rossiter, & Abbot, 2013, p. 410). For example, Roig (2001) studied faculty responses to six sample paragraphs that involved

varying degrees of patchwriting and plagiarism to "explore the hypothesis that professors from different disciplines have different criteria for paraphrasing and plagiarism" (p. 310). Although differences between disciplines were not found, and though there were high levels of agreement for five of the six paragraphs, Roig did find that for a paragraph including at least one sentence copied verbatim from the original, 44% of faculty did not consider it a case of plagiarism.

On our campus, however, we have found greater consistency among faculty from many disciplines than has been documented in the existing literature. A key difference between our experience and the findings of Alice M. Roy (1999) is that her conversations with faculty were through telephone interviews and not connected to a specific example. Our conversations with faculty during our workshop center on an example text, and our surveys followed the workshop in which faculty observed the examples we showed their students. During the workshop, we show a PowerPoint slide with the original paragraph above a patchwritten paragraph and make it a point to ask the faculty member in the classroom whether or not the patchwritten text is acceptable, and, if not, what they would call the patchwritten paragraph. When looking at the same example paragraph, faculty across our campus from multiple disciplines universally identify it as problematic and not up to their expectations. What they call it does vary; some call it *plagiarism*, some, *accidental plagiarism*, and those who have been inviting us to their classrooms for several semesters often come to call it *patchwriting*. Of course, these faculty are alike in that they have requested that our writing center deliver the workshop. Although our workshop ostensibly aims to educate students, faculty who have seen our workshop develop a much keener understanding of what their students do or do not understand when writing from sources. In this way, the workshops are accomplishing professional development for faculty in addition to educating students.

But What Works?

While the scholars working with the Citation Project and others have done much to empirically study students' practices when writing from sources, little empirical research examines effective educational interventions conducted by writing centers to address patchwriting. Also, as Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2013) has noted, while writing centers have responded to calls for RAD research for one-on-one sessions, little research has focused on writing center workshops like ours although the majority of centers (84%) offer such workshops (p. 77).

When writing center scholars have examined workshops, their results have been promising. One study conducted by Chinny Nzekwe-Excel (2014) examined the effect of five writing workshops delivered through a writing center to first-year math students, one of which covered citing sources and also plagiarism and how to avoid it (p. 13). The study revealed a significant correlation between the number of workshops students attended and their performance on a writing assignment as determined by assignment grades, providing evidence that writing center workshops can help students. However, this study did not specifically pinpoint the effect of the workshop on patchwriting, something we examined in our assessment.

Outside of writing centers, when research on instruction in work with sources has been attempted, it has typically involved indirect methods of writing assessment. For example, Michelle DeGeeter et al. (2014) quizzed students electronically on their ability to recognize plagiarism in the semester following a presentation on the topic. This assessment was indirect because it only measured how well students were able to recognize plagiarism on the quiz, with no assessment of how well students could apply these lessons to their own writing.

Ronald W. Belter and Athena du Pré (2009) directly assessed student writing to determine the effectiveness of plagiarism instruction by looking directly at student writing in two sections of the same course, one that experienced an intervention and one that did not. Their study showed that a mandatory online lesson, including a quiz on which students had to score 100%, was tied to a significant reduction in the percentage of students who plagiarized in their essays for the course. But in analyzing the phenomenon we call *patchwriting*, researchers counted only "passages of at least several words each that were identical to the original source or nearly identical with only minor changes of articles, adjectives, or pronouns, without appropriate quotation marks and citation" (Belter & du Pré 2009, p. 259). Unfortunately, this threshold did not include common forms of patchwriting such as the extensive substitution of synonyms, changing of verb tenses, and reproduction of the structure or order of the original. Therefore, it is not possible to tell whether students began paraphrasing per faculty expectations after the lesson or whether they adopted forms of patchwriting not examined by the study. Additionally, because the researchers looked at students' actual papers for the course, they could not determine whether factors other than student knowledge, such as procrastination or other complications, affected their performance of patchwriting. Our study looked at ungraded student writing samples produced in class immediately before and after instruction in patchwriting, allowing us to measure students' abilities in the absence of these potential

confounds. After all, while it is true that patchwriting is not plagiarism when students lack knowledge or awareness of what is actually expected of them, it is also possible for students who do understand the difference between paraphrase and patchwriting to make the decision to patchwrite because they face a deadline or don't feel obligated to adhere to expectations.

Methodology

The Workshop

The intervention we employed was our writing center's 45-minute Writing with Sources (WWS) workshop.[2] The WWS workshop contains a variety of examples of quotation and paraphrase that do not meet faculty expectations. Students are asked to assess whether each example is "accurate and ethical" or whether it exemplifies one of several potential problems: misrepresenting the source, giving insufficient credit for ideas (failing to cite), or giving insufficient credit for language (patchwriting). After students respond to each example, the presenter devotes several minutes to analyzing it with the class and, when appropriate, explaining why it is problematic and how it might be improved. The workshop is scaffolded: We begin by covering quotation, which is familiar to many students, and then contrast that to paraphrase, which is typically less familiar.

First Phase: Paper Surveys (2010–2011)

During our initial 2010–11 study of the workshop's effectiveness, our writing center director, Ted Roggenbuck, delivered the workshop and administered paper surveys to students and faculty immediately afterward. A total of 735 students participated in the paper survey.

Second Phase: Clickers (2014–2016)

In 2012, we wrote an internal grant to purchase student-response devices (clickers) for use in the WWS workshop. Clickers enabled us to make the workshop more interactive. Rather than ask students to raise their hands to respond to each example, the anonymity that clickers provided made it possible to ask every student to indicate their responses without fear that they might be exposing their misconceptions to peers and faculty. Whereas without clickers our attempts to train undergraduate peer tutors to deliver the workshops were mostly unsuccessful because students hesitated to respond in front of their peers, the clickers also made it possible for undergraduate writing consultants to successfully deliver the

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2   Our workshop's PowerPoint slides are available upon request.

workshop, enabling us to expand our workshop offerings and reach many more students. Since 2012, we have been able to deliver our workshop in more than 230 classrooms and to hundreds of students each semester.

The introduction of clickers also provided a new opportunity for internal assessment of the workshop's effectiveness. In addition to collecting students' responses to each example during the workshop, we were able to record responses to specific prompts in real time. Thus, rather than rely on students' memories of particular slides when they completed surveys, we were able to pose questions related to specific examples we had shown them. In the clicker version of our WWS workshop, which we still use, we ask students their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale to the prompt "The replacing of synonyms and changing of words similar to the previous slides [showing patchwriting] basically represents what I previously understood to be paraphrase." In general, students at all levels have reported through clickers that our workshop helps them learn how to avoid patchwriting. The clicker responses we share here come from the 134 students who also participated in the third phase of our study whose data we have consent and IRB approval to share. These students' responses reflected what we had come to expect based on hundreds of students' responses in phase two. Clicker responses from this phase also helped to confirm results from the paper-based surveys from the first phase of the study, so we were confident many students felt themselves to be learning from our workshop that they had previously been patchwriting. What we didn't yet know was whether or not the workshop helped them actually improve how they write from sources.

Third Phase: In-Depth Analysis in a Political Science Class (2015–2016)

A partnership with Peter Doerschler, a faculty member in political science, enabled us to complete our most in-depth analysis of our workshop to date. Jessa Wood, an undergraduate tutor at the time, delivered the workshop in four sections of Pete's introductory political science course. In addition to asking our regular questions with clickers during the workshop, we also had students produce pre- and postworkshop writing samples. Specifically, students were asked immediately before and after the workshop to paraphrase the same paragraph from a *Newsweek* article about healthcare (How Health Care, 2010), the topic they were studying at that point in the course. The collection of pre- and postworkshop paraphrases of the same paragraph enabled us to capture changes in their ability to paraphrase. As a control for practice effect, the posttest asked students to paraphrase an additional, unfamiliar paragraph related to the same topic. Its

inclusion enabled us to detect any effect of students' familiarity with the original paragraph on their success in paraphrasing.

Sample paraphrases were scored on two criteria. The first criterion, quality of representation of ideas, concerned the degree to which the student represented the author's ideas accurately, without distortion of meaning. The second criterion, quality of work with language, concerned the student's appropriation of the author's original language—that is, whether the student used language from the original without quoting. Each criterion was scored on a 5-point scale where 1 was assigned to the most problematic paragraphs and 5 was assigned to the most successful paragraphs (see scoring rubric in Appendix A and sample paragraphs in Appendix B). Two scorers not involved with the class first normed with the instructor and then scored the writing samples separately. Where scores differed, they discussed the disparity and came to a consensus. Scoring was blind; the scorers, Ted Roggenbuck and Megan Hicks, an undergraduate tutor at the time, had not interacted with the students and did not know whether writing samples came from the pre- or posttest, though para-phrases of the unfamiliar paragraph were clearly from the posttest. Scores on the pre- and posttests were subsequently compared using t-tests.

In total, 107 of the 134 students from all sections of the political science course who experienced the workshop also provided writing samples. Table 1 below compares demographic information for the 107 study participants who provided writing samples to our university-wide student population.

Table 1

Demographics for Introductory Political Science Sections and University Population

Population	Study	University (Fall 2015)
First–Year Students (%)	45.8	34.3 [b]
High–School GPA (average)	3.16	3.27 [b]
Political Science Majors (%)	7.5	1.1 [a]
Liberal Art Majors (%)	79.4	37.5 [a]
Female (%)	47.7	56.8 [b]
Students of Color (%)	20.6	20.3 [b]
Pell Grant recipients (%)	37.4	32.7 [c]

[a] Data from Bloomsburg University "Enrollment"

[b] Data from Bloomsburg University Common Data Set

[c] Data for freshmen cohort only; Bloomsburg University "Retention and Graduation Rates"

Postworkshop survey. To further evaluate the effectiveness of our intervention, students in one section of the course (*n*=17) were given an open-ended paper survey on the workshop. This section was composed of at-risk students, an important target population for our workshop. Students were surveyed after writing but before receiving feedback on an essay[3] for which they were required to write from a minimum of three outside sources. Students were asked to report on the WWS workshop's similarity to their previous instruction, the effect of the workshop on their writing and research process for their essay, and their confidence in their ability to apply what they learned in the workshop to future college writing assignments. A copy of the survey questions is included in Appendix C. Students' responses were analyzed to identify themes.

Results

First Phase: Paper Surveys

Our 2010–11 paper surveys revealed that 38% of students (*n*=735) mostly or strongly agreed that they had "accidentally plagiariz[ed]," i.e., unintentionally misused sources, prior to the workshop, and 91% at least somewhat agreed. And 58% mostly or strongly agreed that they did "not really understand" how to work with sources before participating in the workshop. A large majority of students also felt they needed more instruction to help them avoid unintentionally misusing sources (see Table 2).

We also found that inexperience with appropriate paraphrase occurs at all levels; it is not unique to freshmen. It is perhaps unsurprising that 93% of freshman (*n*=290) strongly, mostly, or somewhat agreed with the statement, "I have been accidentally plagiarizing to this point in my career." We were more concerned that 90% of seniors and 83% of graduate students also endorsed this statement (*n*=87 and *n*=109, respectively). Ninety-two percent of seniors and 90% of graduate students also at least somewhat agreed with the statement "I do not think enough attention has been paid to helping me understand the difference between plagiarism and paraphrase." In fact, 72% of each group strongly agreed, compared to only 66% of freshman. This result suggests that students do not move beyond patchwriting independently. Without explicit instruction to counter it, the problem lingers even as students progress through their college and postgraduate careers.

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3   The prompt for the essay: "Using the Toulmin Model, advance an argument about which health care policy is best for the United States. Should the U.S. stick with Obamacare, adopt aspects of other countries' health care systems, or repeal Obamacare in favor of a proposal from opponents?"

Table 2

Paper Survey Results by Level

Accidentally Plagiarized (%)	All Students	Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Grad Students
Strongly Agree	12.2	14.4	5.7	14.7	16.1	6.4
Mostly Agree	26.8	25.9	31.1	26.6	25.3	26.6
Somewhat Agree	51.8	53.1	54.7	50.3	48.3	50.5
Disagree	9.1	6.5	8.5	8.4	10.3	16.5
Total	100★	100★	100	100	100	100
n	735	290	106	143	87	109
Was Taught but Misunderstood (%)	**All Students**	**Freshmen**	**Sophomores**	**Juniors**	**Seniors**	**Grad Students**
Strongly Agree	17.6	20.2	12.3	14.0	25.3	14.7
Mostly Agree	40.4	41.1	41.5	45.5	34.5	35.8
Somewhat Agree	33.1	32.5	38.7	31.5	28.7	34.9
Disagree	8.8	6.2	7.6	9.1	11.5	14.7
Total	100★	100	100	100★	100	100★
n	737	292	106	143	87	109
More Should Be Done to Teach Paraphrase (%)	**All Students**	**Freshmen**	**Sophomores**	**Juniors**	**Seniors**	**Grad Students**
Strongly Agree	31.8	31.3	29.3	26.4	37.2	38.5
Mostly Agree	36.7	35.1	36.8	43.8	34.9	33.0
Somewhat Agree	22.2	24.1	24.5	20.8	19.8	18.4
Disagree	9.4	9.6	9.4	9.0	8.1	10.1
Total	100★	100★	100	100	100	100
n	736	291	106	144	86	109

★Rounding of each response percentage produces totals that do not always equal exactly 100%.

Second Phase: Clicker Responses

Since 2012, our center has offered the clicker workshop dozens of times with classes from diverse disciplines and levels, and we have consistently found that students report having patchwritten at rates similar to those we found in the paper survey. In one representative sample of

workshop participants (*n*=134), 51.5% agreed that, prior to the workshop, they would not have been able to avoid patchwriting.

Third Phase: Scored Writing Samples

Scores for language. In our study with students in introductory political science classes, this workshop was effective in improving students' performance of paraphrase. The average score for language increased from 3.11 in the pretest to 3.86 on a 5-point scale in the posttest (*n*=107, $p \leq .001$). Figure 1 demonstrates changes in distribution of student scores brought on by the workshop. Scores of 5 occurred much more frequently in the posttest than in the pretest. In fact, over half of students achieved a language score of 5 in the posttest, and 47% of students improved their language score from the pre- to the posttest. In comparison, only 12% decreased their language score between the pre- and posttest.

Figure 1. Comparison of pre- and posttest language score distributions
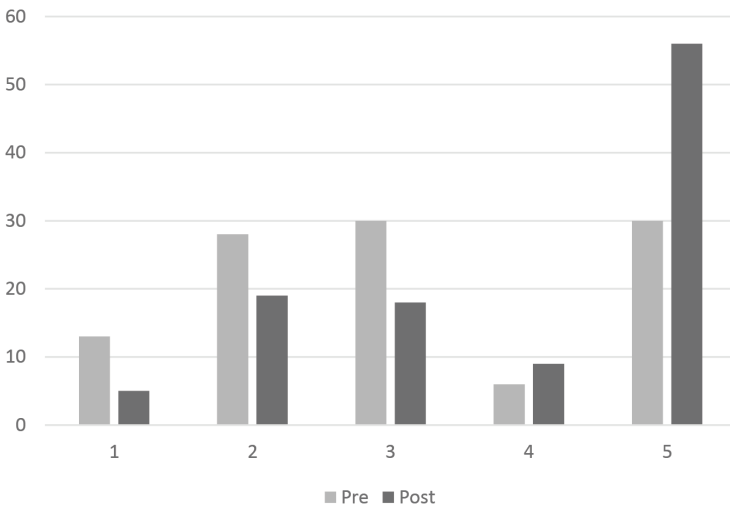
These improvements in language scores occurred consistently even in populations writing centers sometimes struggle to reach with educational interventions, including first-year students; those in the lower half of our sample in high-school GPAs, SAT critical reading, or SAT writing; students of color; Pell Grant recipients; and first-generation students (see Table 3). These scores demonstrate significant improvements in language

scores for diverse students as a result of the workshop and were consistent with our hypotheses about the workshop's effectiveness.

Table 3

Language Score Improvements by Population

| Population	*n*	Mean Language Score	
		Pretest	**Posttest**
First-year students	49	3.00	3.63★
Lower half of high-school GPAs	53	3.04	3.68★
Lower half of SAT critical reading	53	2.85	3.75★★
Lower half of SAT writing	53	2.85	3.75★★
Students of color	22	3.00	3.77★★
Pell Grant recipients	40	2.98	3.70★
First-generation students	34	3.24	4.06★

★p≤.01. ★★p≤.001

Although it is possible that exposure to this *particular* paragraph via the pretest could artificially inflate later scores, we controlled for this by introducing an additional unfamiliar paragraph in the posttest. The improvement in language scores seen in the posttest was mirrored in analysis of scores for the alternate paragraph, indicating that familiarity with a particular paragraph was not responsible for the change in student scores (m_{post}=3.73, *n*=88, *p*≤.001).

Scores for ideas. Unlike language scores, ideas scores dropped after the workshop. Specifically, the mean ideas score fell from 3.36 to 3.03 (*n*=107, *p*≤.01). In fact, 37% of students received a lower ideas score in the posttest than in the pretest, while only 21% received a higher score. This is true despite the fact that the paragraph was the same in both tests, meaning students had greater exposure to the paragraph's ideas in the posttest than in the pretest and so might be expected to score higher for ideas when paraphrasing the same paragraph for a second time.

Additional analysis revealed that scores of 4 and 5 were more common in the pretest than in the posttest, as shown in Figure 2. Further, a pattern underlying score changes emerged: increases in language scores (i.e. reduced patchwriting) were correlated with decreases in ideas scores (p=.610). We believe this correlation is due to an "unmasking" effect, which we examine further in the Discussion section.

Figure 2. Comparison of pre- and posttest idea score distributions
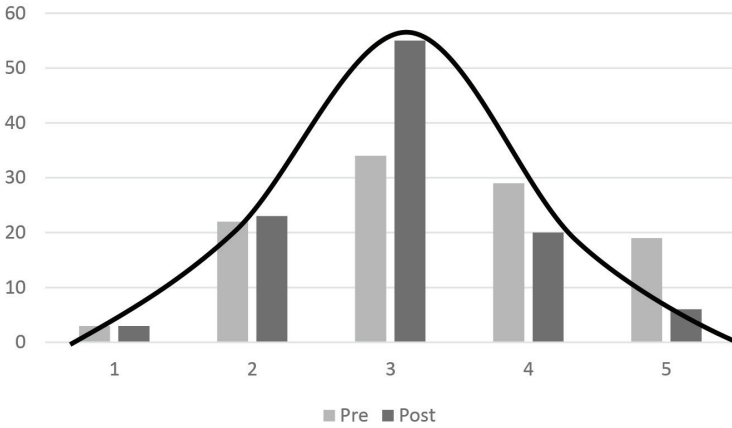
Postworkshop survey. Our postworkshop survey of a section of the class (*n*=17) populated by students considered at risk by our university revealed the WWS workshop had important effects, not just on students' posttest performance but also on their writing process for a subsequent paper. One promising finding is the impact of the workshop on help-seeking. Students were asked whether the workshop encouraged them to seek additional help from the writing center, their instructor, or their course-embedded tutor. Eight of the 16 respondents (50%) reported they had sought additional help because of the workshop, and a further three (19%) reported it made them want to seek help but that other factors prevented them from doing so. This self-reporting is consistent with the course-embedded tutor's records, which show a jump in overall help-seeking and specifically in requests for help with writing and work with sources after the presentation. One student, explaining his behavior change, said, "[The workshop] show[ed] me that I need to seek help. . . . I have a lot of room for improvement."

Another benefit of the workshop was revealed when we asked students about changes in their writing and research processes that resulted from the workshop. Nine of 16 students (56%) reported that the workshop impacted their writing process, and seven (44%) reported that it had impacted their research process for the paper. Some spoke of explicitly integrating strategies from the workshop while paraphrasing. For example, one student said, "I wr[o]te things in my own words by reading the material, putting it away and writing it down in my own words."

Others noted broader impacts on their process of finding and integrating sources, even when they were not paraphrasing or citing. For example, some students reported they selected more credible sources, with a few noting that the process of searching for citation details like an author's name and publication date triggered this change.

Discussion

Interpreting Results

Workshop effectiveness. Fifty-two percent of students from the third phase of our study reported that, prior to the workshop, they believed patchwriting basically constituted paraphrase. These data provide strong support for the conclusion that experiencing the workshop helps students recognize flaws in their understanding of faculty expectations for paraphrase. Even more significantly, the workshop also bolsters students' ability to paraphrase, as indicated by our analysis of their pre- and post-writing samples: Almost half of students earned a higher language score in the pretest than in the posttest, and the average language score rose from 3.11 to 3.86 on a 5-point scale, indicating the workshop generated significant improvements in that skill. Further, significant improvements were seen independent of race, gender, economic status, first-generation status, and level of preparation for college. This finding indicates that a lack of preparation for college expectations about work with sources is widespread but also that the workshop is an effective intervention for a variety of students.

Sparking a transition. Explicit instruction on patchwriting is needed for all types of students, not just those considered at risk. In an interview with Michele Eodice (2002) and elsewhere, Howard has made the important argument that rather than an ethical violation, patchwriting "is a valuable and hence laudatory transitional stage" in a writer's development. On our campus, however, students' self-reported data show that over half of students continually patchwrite, probably because they have never fully understood any attempts faculty may have made to signal that patchwriting is unacceptable. In short, without an intervention like our WWS workshop that explicitly addresses problems with students' current practices, many students remain unaware that they should transition to improved practices. For these students, patchwriting persists even as they move through college and into graduate school or into their professional careers. We believe our WWS workshop is an important step in students' transition to more effective practices because of its role in helping students move forward from a place of stagnation. As evidenced by the change in their language scores between the pre- and posttests, students who experience our workshop *do* move beyond patchwriting.

Unmasking effect. Findings from our workshop also seem to demonstrate that when students do not patchwrite, their reading comprehension—or struggle for comprehension—is unmasked. A t-test indicated that an increase in students' language scores by a point or more led to an increase in the amount of change they experienced in their ideas scores from pre- to posttest, although not at a statistically significant level. This finding means the majority of students who stopped patchwriting experienced a change in ideas scores between sample paragraphs; when their level of patchwriting did not change between the pre- and posttests, their ideas scores rarely changed. We believe this demonstrates that students' patchwriting was interfering in our scoring of ideas by masking students' true comprehension, which is consistent with our experience during scoring—we found it difficult to assign ideas scores to patchwritten paragraphs. After all, students' understanding has little to no impact on their performance of patchwriting, and, as Jamieson and Howard (2011) argue, patchwritten work reveals little about how well students comprehend what they have read.

Figure 2 above also demonstrates that scores of 4 and 5 were more common in the pretest than in the posttest, suggesting students' comprehension was masked by patchwriting. Interestingly, scores fell roughly on a bell curve in the posttest, which we believe may help establish expectations for future research.

Although we were unable to test the significance of an unmasking effect because we could only test the effects indirectly given available data, we nevertheless consider the results to be compelling evidence for the existence of an unmasking effect. No variable directly corresponds to students' comprehension of the material; we cannot say precisely what score each student would have received for ideas had no masking occurred. Some might have fully understand the idea but still patchwrote and hence not experienced a substantial ideas score change despite experiencing an unmasking effect.

If we are correct about this unmasking effect, which seems to support what others have theorized, our workshop becomes even more valuable to both students and faculty. Howard, Rodrigue, and Serviss (2010) note that students' flawed strategies for incorporating sources into their written work offer "no assurance that the students did read and understand" (p. 186). Because patchwritten work reveals little about how well students comprehend what they are reading, to reveal what students do comprehend, it is often necessary to first help them learn to avoid patchwriting. Unmasking problems in students' reading will help teachers realize when students need additional support to improve reading comprehension.

Limitations

Limitations of methodology. One limitation of our findings—though not one that undermines our conclusions—is that our scoring mechanism may not capture all changes in students' behavior that indicate learning. It is possible students made *different* mistakes before and after the workshop, leaving their scores unchanged but nevertheless demonstrating improved understanding. After all, as Constance Weaver (1996) observes, error may be helpful in or even necessary for learning (p. 59). An example of this phenomenon is a student who, several weeks after experiencing the workshop, cited sources in a paper for the first time (and eagerly approached the consultant who'd delivered the workshop to report on this success). Although this represented growth for this student, because she still copied language directly from the text without using quotation marks even after the workshop, her writing sample would likely still have received a language score of 1 after the workshop. This growth, in other words, would remain hidden in our analysis.

Limitations of the workshop as an intervention. Although we are confident in the efficacy of the workshop given our findings, it does have some limitations. Perhaps most important, we must be cautious about assuming all students are equally prepared to benefit from the workshop. Our workshop, consistent with findings in the psychology of learning about the importance of connecting new information to prior knowledge for genuine learning, teaches paraphrase in part by comparing it to quotation, a familiar practice for most students (e.g. Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010, p. 15). Although this approach presumably increases learning for students with experience in quotation, the student mentioned above, who had experienced no prior instruction in work with sources, would need more intensive instruction to meet faculty expectations for work with sources. Similarly, students who are English-language learners (ELLs) may face more fundamental challenges than those addressed in the workshop; Demetra Rivard explains that, to ensure comprehension, a workshop for ELLs must begin by defining terms like *citation* that are familiar to most U.S. students (in Rivard, Leslie, & Hansen, 2015). Although the evidence of widespread improvement gives us confidence that the workshop is targeted at an appropriate level for the majority of students at our university, we have also seen students, especially ELLs, struggle with the workshop. To address this, we repeatedly encourage students experiencing confusion during the workshop to visit our center so that students at all levels of preparation receive some guidance; nevertheless, the workshop, especially without follow-up support, will not reach every student.

And overall, we must be cautious in interpreting the improvements demonstrated in students' writing samples as evidence that the WWS workshop is a "quick fix." Although our analysis of writing samples does demonstrate improvement, the average posttest score for work with language was still 3.86, short of the ideal score of 5. This means most students still need consistent support after the workshop, support we offer by inviting them to visit our center. Nevertheless, because for many students the workshop sparks a transition in how they approach writing from sources, it is still a valuable intervention for most students.

Writing center directors hoping to adopt this workshop must also be aware that not all tutors are prepared to help students who visit the center to work on writing from sources, let alone deliver a workshop on the subject. One problem, widely noted in the literature, is that tutors may not know how to communicate their knowledge about work with sources to students (Howard & Carrick 2006, p. 255; Kleinfeld, 2016); many tutor guides respond to this concern with advice for tutors (Fitzgerald & Ianetta 2016, pp. 101–104; Gillespie & Lerner 2007, p. 174; Rafoth, 2005, pp. 127–131; Ryan & Zimmerelli 2016, pp. 107–108). However, we include our WWS workshop as part of a required education class for our tutors, and data collection during our workshop for tutors has revealed a more fundamental problem not seen in the literature: At least on our campus, many tutors are themselves unfamiliar with faculty expectations for work with sources. When our incoming writing consultants experience our WWS workshop in our tutor-education course, they report having previously patchwritten at the same rate as other students on our campus.

However, tutor misconceptions are not the only reason this workshop is valuable for tutors. This instruction benefits even tutors who work ably with sources by offering examples of the problematic work with sources tutors should expect to see in student papers. It also helps us prepare them to recognize that most "incorrect" work with sources is unintentional and to approach problems they see in student papers as opportunities for education rather than transgressions on the part of writers. Finally, the workshop also gives the entire writing center a common language with which to discuss patchwriting and plagiarism with students.

Conclusion

Howard and Carrick (2006) argue that "to train peer-tutors to teach writing from sources is to enter the academic minefield" and that concerns about entering such a minefield contributed to our field's historical preference for nondirective tutoring (p. 254). But they encourage directors to prepare their centers to do so anyway because within that

minefield there is important work to be done. In our experience, though, our WWS workshop has allowed us to enter not so much a minefield as a field of opportunity. On our campus we are currently in that field working alongside faculty to help students understand what is expected of them rather than castigate them about plagiarism as a transgression. Our faculty partners know that if students paraphrase from sources rather than patchwrite, faculty will be better positioned to see where their students might be losing comprehension.

Our work on this project has also encouraged us to do more to address students' struggles with reading comprehension. We have long known that reading comprehension is at the heart of our WWS workshop. Students can patchwrite from a source they don't comprehend, but they can't effectively paraphrase from it. But it was not until the pilot for the third phase of this study, for which we had outside readers attempt to score entire essays from sections of introductory political science classes, that our work on this project began to influence our center in important ways relating to reading comprehension. Our blind readers, in order to prepare to score the essays, had reviewed the same sources from which students were assigned to write. Although we were aware at the time of the troubling findings from the Citation Project about how students write from sources, seeing students' problems firsthand caused us to seriously reflect upon what students might need that our center was not offering. In other words, as a result of our empirical approach to measure the effectiveness of our workshop, we saw something important we hadn't previously seen: Students in the classes we studied needed additional support for reading. Thus, as other centers have done, we began the process of better preparing ourselves to work with students on reading and integrating sources into their written work (see Adams, 2016; Greenwell, 2017; Kleinfeld, 2016). We made reading and research strategies a focus of our tutor-education classes so our tutors could also act as reading partners, and we modified our outreach orientations to do more to encourage students to come to work with us on their assigned reading. Rather than rely on nondirective approaches to the topic, we have also begun to focus our tutor-education classes on taking more initiative within our sessions and seeking opportunities to address students' work with sources, as Elizabeth Kleinfeld (2016) urges centers to do. Recently we changed our intake forms in order to capture when we work on "reading skills," and we now record "evidence/work with sources" as distinct from "citation." This semester, almost a third of our sessions have involved work on one of these topics. We even changed the name of our center from the Writing Center to the Writing and Literacy Engagement Studio (WALES) to help draw attention to the work we have prepared to do with students, important work we felt being

called a *writing center* did not signify clearly enough. Our center's experience investigating the effectiveness of our WWS workshop therefore not only demonstrates the importance of such an intervention but also provides another example of the value of RAD research.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A: Scoring Rubric for Writing Samples

Score	Ideas	Language
1	Little or no competence in capturing ideas	Clear patchwriting
2	Demonstrates some com– petence in capturing at least part of one of the ideas in the paragraph	Though subtle patchwriting may be evident, extensive editing of the original language results in a slightly similar paraphrase
3	Demonstrates reasonable competence in capturing at least part of two ideas in the paragraph	Evidence of some obvious patchwriting as well as paraphrase[4]
4	Fully captures at least two ideas in the paragraph	Language is distinct from the original, though the structure of the paraphrase follows the structure of the original
5	Demonstrates specific, detailed understanding of core ideas	Both language and structure of the paraphrase differ from the original

Appendix B: Sample Paragraphs

Original Paragraph: "This is the bill's first, and most important, step. Right now, the insurance market's version of competition is pretty brutal. Companies compete to avoid the sickest people and sign up the healthiest people. Offering the best coverage for the lowest cost isn't much of a priority, because most consumers don't know whose coverage is best, and the ones who really do know are probably sick customers who spend their days researching this stuff" (How Health Care, 2010).

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4   The most practiced patchwriters conducted extensive editing but were still exclusively patchwriting. We scored 2 for those writers who were only patchwriting but whose patchwritten texts were not immediately and obviously patchwritten. There was sophistication in the patchwriting, maybe, but no evidence that they could avoid doing so or understood that they should. Note here the distinction from samples scored with a 3, which was for writers who demonstrated they could paraphrase but also patchwrote within the same sample.

Paraphrase scored 2 for Language: This is the bill's primary and mainly significant part. Currently, the insurance market's take on competition is rough. Companies fight not to sign up the illest people and take up the people who are already most well. To give the best coverage for cheap is not important because consumers are oblivious to who has the best, and the ones smart enough to know probably are the people who stay on their laptops all day.

Paraphrase scored 3 for Language: There is one step in the bill that is most important. Citizens in the United States are clueless when it comes to which coverage is the best. The reason they are clueless is because healthy people are not out there wasting there time looking for a better health Insurance. The sick citizens are looking for it but the companies are trying to get the healthiest citizens.

Paraphrase scored 4 for Language: Big business fight over patients with the best health. Providing them with cheap health insurance because they do not usually have the knowledge of the best insurance. Sick people would know the best insurance cause they do the research for themselves.

Appendix C: Postworkshop Survey

Q1	Did the Writing with Sources presentation reflect your previous instruction on plagiarism? If not, what differences did you find?
Q2	Has experiencing the Writing with Sources presentation affected your writing process for this paper? If so, how?
Q3	Has experiencing the Writing with Sources presentation affected your research process for this paper? If so, how?
Q4	Did experiencing the presentation motivate you to seek additional help from the Writing Center, your instructor, or your Supplemental Instruction Leader? If so, how did that experience influence your work on the paper?
Q5	Do you feel that your paper reflects an understanding of the course material? Why or why not?
Q6	Do you feel confident using sources ethically for future writing tasks? Why or why not?

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