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WRITE THE COMMUNITY: THE EFFECTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING PARTICIPATION
ON SEVEN UNIVERSITY CREATIVE WRITING STUDENTS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the College of Education
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term
2011

Major Professor: Jeffrey S. Kaplan

ABSTRACT

Research in higher education service-learning suggests that there is a positive relationship between service-learning and student learning outcomes as well as a positive relationship between students' interactions with the "real world" through service-learning and the effects of these experiences on deepening students' knowledge in their disciplines. Recent studies have established this positive relationship between service-learning and university composition and literature students. However, aside from the existing literature on service-learning and composition and writing, there has been virtually no examination of the relationship between service-learning and creative writing. The purpose of this study was to investigate how seven creative writing students experienced the process of creative writing differently after engaging in service-learning in a creative writing course at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States and to determine if students experienced a transformative learning experience as indicated by Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning theory. This research study employed an instrumental narrative case study design to determine how seven university creative writing students experienced the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with an optional service-learning component. The results of the study indicated that service-learning invoked a transformative learning experience in these seven higher education creative writing students, each in different ways—some in their writing processes and writing content, some in how they reflected upon themselves and their writing in relation to the "outside world," and some in their sense of civic duty.

This study is dedicated to my husband and my family—without their guidance and support (and childcare), I would not have completed this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to acknowledge the vital role my committee played in the completion of this thesis. Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan, the committee chair, was a source of invariable support. His insight and commitment to my idea is much appreciated. I am forever indebted to Dr. Carolyn Hopp for her role as a steady source of calm and positive energy, as well as her expertise in qualitative research and the strengthening of the review of literature. Dr. David Boote is thanked for his critical eye, and mostly for putting up with me during my time in the doctoral program. Without his regular advisement and suggestions over the years, I would not have gotten to this point. Terry Thaxton is thanked for her heart—Ms. Thaxton's love of community service, writing, literacy, and teaching generated the idea for this thesis. UCF and Central Florida would be lost without her work in service-learning and her role as an instructor of creative writing. And finally, Dr. Michele Gill is not a part of my thesis committee however I would like to thank her for her guidance and knowledge during the early part of my doctoral studies. Along with Dr. Hopp and Ms. Thaxton, Dr. Gill is a brilliant and strong female figure in academia; all three of these women will remain sources of inspiration on my journey after graduation.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Knowing is doing is being."

-   Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kepler (2000)

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter will begin with a description of the background of the study and the purpose of the study. It will continue with a statement of the problem and an introduction to the conceptual framework guiding the research. The research question and a brief introduction to the research methods, including limitations, follow. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the importance of the study and the organization of the report.

Background of the Problem

In a lecture style undergraduate course titled "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States, novice creative writing students enroll with the intention of learning about the field of creative writing, including an introduction to the life of a writer, possible careers involving creative writing, and the importance of fostering a love of reading and the writing life. By the end of the semester, students are additionally expected to be able to analyze contemporary writing, become more fluent in writing terminology and concepts, and create a "writing life plan." One major project in the course is the "GoodReads" project in which students are required to join an online book sharing forum and subsequently read and formally review two books from a list selected by the course instructor.

However, students are also given the option to forego the GoodReads project in lieu of a service-learning component. The service-learning students choose from a selection of community organizations or at-risk schools to teach some aspect of creative writing to

community members. After these students complete the course "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" and begin their traditional undergraduate creative writing course work, they are introduced to the traditional creative writing classroom teaching method: the workshop. The workshop is an instructional method where students read and evaluate each other's work in an intimate, conversational setting (Ketzle, 2007). Workshop is currently the standard means of instruction and feedback for novice writers in the creative writing classroom. Likewise, looking to the self and past personal experiences is often the traditional means of finding "material" to write about for a novice writer (Gerard, 2006). Though the workshop seems to be the most effective method of creative writing instruction in the university today, little pedagogy exists which asks a writer to actively connect to her community to enable her to see writing as a function and product of her surrounding community.

Purpose of the Study

Too many creative writing students go through their undergraduate years with predominantly or even solely creative writing workshops and literature courses on their transcripts. Further, many creative writing students graduate and move into the world around them without ever having had the opportunity to apply their knowledge of the craft of creative writing in the very world in which they were thrown post-graduation. When a creative writer learns her craft within the confines of a classroom and is never given the chance to see poetry, stories, or essays live and breathe outside of those walls, the writing she produces remains a product of classroom practices and pedagogy. Suppose, however, that she, the novice creative writing student, was given the chance to become the teacher. Suppose she was asked to teach her craft to members of the community who were in need of an outlet through which to share their

experiences and hardships. Imagine the potential learning experience embedded in such a partnership. Service-learning has shown in other disciplines to provide such a reciprocal learning experience (Furco, 1996; Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000). However, little research has examined the possible reciprocal benefits of service-learning in the field of creative writing. The purpose of this study is to investigate how seven creative writing students experience the process of creative writing differently after engaging in service-learning in a creative writing course at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States.

Statement of the Problem

It is my opinion that the traditional creative writing student is lacking an outlet through which to connect with his or her community and simultaneously engage in critical reflection of writing as a process through active application of creative writing practices. Service-learning could perhaps serve as the vehicle for this connection. After an exhaustive search of the literature on this subject and numerous conversations with creative writing instructors in the field, I feel that the current creative writing pedagogical structure at the university level lacks a sufficient outlet through which students can view writing in the world outside of the university. As much as the workshop is praised for the usefulness of its hands-on approach to learning the craft of creative writing, students face the potential risk of the workshop method being one of the only means of learning about and understanding the craft of creative writing. Some students are often not able to transfer and apply the craft of writing to the "real" world and envision how writing exists outside of the walls of academia. Their writing, therefore, risks becoming enclosed and isolated. It is my opinion that service-learning could be an effective tool to change the way a novice writer approaches his or her writing processes.

Conceptual Framework.

Though I was not following one particular theoretical model, I chose to use two conceptual frameworks to guide the study. First, this study is grounded in Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophies on civic engagement and the arts. John Dewey was the most pervasive educational philosopher of the twentieth century. Dewey believed that education should be interactive and that educators should incorporate real life experiences in students' educations, which students can then apply to the world outside of their classrooms (Carter, 1999). In *Democracy and Education* (1944), Dewey posited that an education focused on community service and action fosters an educated citizenry in support of democracy. He also said in "My Pedagogic Creed" (1897) that "ideas result from action." Many service-learning researchers agree that the conceptual framework behind service-learning most closely resembles Dewey's philosophy on community action (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Cooper & Julier, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Further, Dewey saw a connection between civic engagement and the arts. In *Art as Experience* (1935), Dewey wrote that experience with the arts unite people and strengthen communities. Given that this study involves a relationship between creative writing, one of the pioneer art forms, and community involvement, Dewey's philosophies seemed a natural fit for this research.

In addition, Zlotkowski (2007) wrote that connecting literature and life through service-learning can ensure that educators and scholars do not undermine their disciplines but allow those disciplines to not only "inform" but also "transform." This leads to the second theoretical construct guiding the study. Mezirow's (2000) theory on transformational learning posits that a learner becomes critically aware of his or her own assumptions and expectations after a transformational learning experience and subsequently re-evaluates his or her own past

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experiences and beliefs to form new beliefs and assumptions. In other words, the learner "transforms" his or her own beliefs and assumptions following a transformational learning experience. In this case, the learning experience being studied is service-learning. One important element in transformational learning, Mezirow said, is that the learner must "critically reflect" upon the learning experience and must consciously make and implement plans to re-define his or her worldview. Mezirow's transformational theory is often used in service-learning research (Kiely, 2005; Simons, et. al., 2009), and also in the field of composition and rhetoric (Johnson, 2003; Whitman, et. al., 2008). Again, Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory also seemed a natural fit for research in the relationship between service-learning and creative writing. Because I am looking at how these two educational endeavors interact, and how students might experience transformation through community action, Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophy and Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory seem the best possible conceptual frameworks to guide this research.

This study is organized around Dewey's (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) philosophies—the research sub-questions specifically address if and how students experience transformation after their service-learning experiences. Further, the analysis of the data is structured around theories which emerged from the data using both an emic and etic approach to data analysis; applying Dewey's philosophies (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) theory directly to the data collected yielded interesting results. The study is organized based around these two educational theorists—the literature review examines service-learning's theoretical constructs which were formulated based on Dewey's (1897; 1935) ideas about education and action. Mezirow's (2000) theory is discussed within the context of service-learning, composition, and creative writing. Further, the methods section and data analysis are both organized based

upon these two theorists' philosophies. The data analysis procedures were conducted partially using an etic approach to analysis, applying transformational theory and Dewey's (1897; 1935) ideas about education and action directly to the data.

Research Question

How do seven university creative writing students experience the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with a service-learning component?

Sub-question 1: Is there evidence of "transformation" in students' creative writing processes as suggested by Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory?

Sub-question 2: How does that evidence manifest itself?

Scope of the Study

This study focused on university creative writing students at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. Specifically, this study involved seven students in one particular course titled "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" who were engaged in an optional service-learning experience. The sample was drawn using a quasi-purposive sampling method. For the purposes of this study, I tried not to select any senior level creative writing students with significant workshop experience or anyone who had previously engaged in service-learning at the university level prior to enrollment in this course.

Definition of Terms

1. Service-learning—The Learn and Serve America website (2006) defines service-learning as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic

responsibility, and strengthen communities." For the purposes of this study, I will use this definition when referring to service-learning.

2. Service-learning and Community-Based Learning—For the purposes of this study, I will use the term "service-learning" synonymously with "community-based learning."

3. Workshop— For the purposes of this study, the term "workshop" is defined as a pedagogical practice in the creative writing classroom in which students read and respond to each others' work in a peer review setting. This is the traditional method of instruction in the field of creative writing (Ketzle, 2007).

4. Creative writing—For clarification, creative writing is a *separate* discipline from composition and other writing fields and/or degrees in higher education. At this particular university, creative writing is its own major and/or minor.

Case Description, Population, and Sample

Case Description

The course "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" is a 16 week long, mixed-mode (both face-to-face and online) undergraduate course at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. The course details the basic concepts of creative writing practices and introduces students to the life of a writer, including day to day experiences as well as career opportunities in the field of creative writing and beyond. In the spring 2011 semester, approximately 170 students were enrolled in the course. This course was mandatory for all creative writing majors.

Population and Sample

This study used a quasi-purposive sampling method to select the study sample. Of the 170 students enrolled in the course, there were 69 males and 101 females—59% of the students were female, and 41% were male. Of the approximately 170 students, 10 volunteered for the service-learning option. Of those 10, 7 agreed to participate in this study. Participants were selected based on the sheer fact that they volunteered for the service-learning option in the course. I did not have any power over the selection of this group of students. Therefore, I would consider this sampling method quasi-purposive.

Study Design

Because this study focuses on the change (i.e. transformation) in thinking about and understanding of the process of creative writing as a result of a service-learning experience and the open-ended nature of the research questions, an instrumental narrative case study research design (Stake, 1995) was selected. Instrumental case study design was also selected due to its frequent use in qualitative research and in studies regarding experiential education and service-learning (Astin, 1998; Bacon, 1997; Eyler, et. al., 1998), all of which provide a fair rationale for the selection.

Assumptions

A guiding assumption of this study is that creative writing students already have some preconceived notion or experience with creative writing to begin with. To validate these assumptions, all participants in the study were involved in a focus group at the start of the semester in which I attempted to establish participants' preconceived notions of creative writing

along with their experiences with creative writing and the process of writing prior to their service-learning experiences.

<div align="center">Researcher Bias</div>

One limitation, or risk, to the study is my own personal bias to the research. I have a vested interest in service-learning and a hope for the integration of service-learning with creative writing at the university level. I have previously enrolled in a service-learning course taught by the same instructor used in this study (which brought about the idea for this study). I am an avid supporter of service-learning as a vehicle for deeper understanding of one's discipline in higher education. In order to account for this bias, I strived to maintain a neutral, open-ended approach to data collection, followed meticulous data analysis procedures, and enlisted three faculty members at my university to maintain a close and neutral eye on all data collection and analysis procedures.

One other notable risk to the study pertained to one particular type of data collected. Students submitted structured reflections bi-weekly, documenting their service experiences. The instructor of the course typically gave students writing prompts to generate thoughtful reflection in other versions of this course. For this study, the instructor requested that I, the researcher, select the structured reflection prompts students used to complete their journal entries. The instructor gave me a list of approximately twenty different structured reflection prompts, some of which overlapped in context. I chose seven, which students used throughout the semester. This presents a challenge to the integrity of the study. Some readers could interpret this as "baiting" the participants. However, the prompts I was given would have been those that the instructor would have addressed and posted regardless of my involvement in the study. With that in mind, I

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strive to maintain neutrality while getting as close to answering the research questions as possible.

Significance of the Study

Service-learning researchers have established a positive relationship between service-learning and student learning outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998; Vogelsegang & Astin, 2000) as well as students' abilities to apply knowledge in the "real world" (Bacon, 1997; Balazedah, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray, et al., 1998; Zlotkowski, 2000). Further, there is a large amount of research involving service-learning, composition, and writing (Cooper & Juliet, 1995; Deans, 2000; Deans & Meyer-Goncalves, 1998; Ogburn & Wallace, 1998). However to date, there is very little research on the relationship between creative writing and service-learning. It is my supposition that service-learning can act as a medium through which creative writing students might gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of their creative writing processes. Establishing a positive relationship between service-learning and creative writing could provide creative writing students with the means to connect with their writing on a deeper level, transforming the way in which students could view creative writing outside of the university. This, in turn, would ultimately help creative writing instructors cultivate stronger writers who were better able to apply their chosen crafts in the community after graduation. It is my opinion that, until creative writing students understand how creative writing lives and functions outside of the classroom in, with, and through the world around them, and how creative writing can become a powerful tool through which to connect to community members in need, creative writing students cannot truly deepen and strengthen their craft.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized around the central concepts of both Dewey's (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) ideas about student "transformation" through engagement with a transformative learning experience in the world outside of the classroom. The literature review documents the past and recent research on service-learning history and theoretical foundations, namely Dewey's (1897) exceptional influence on service-learning's theoretical base, and Mezirow's (2000) influence on the fields of both service-learning and composition, a similar but separate discipline than creative writing, before establishing the clear lack of research on the relationship between service-learning and creative writing. The methodology section details the reasoning behind the selection of an instrumental narrative case study design and the sample selection criteria, as well as reviews the case, or creative writing course, on which this study was based and from which the sample was pulled. Further, the methods section details each source of data collected and the reasons for which each source of data helped to answer the research question. The data analysis section is organized based upon three central themes which emerged from the data, both with and without Dewey's (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) central concepts influencing the data analysis procedures (an emic and etic approach). I purposely tried to allow the data to both speak for itself and speak within the confines of Dewey's (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) influence. The final section of the study, the discussion, first addresses how the results of the data confirmed Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory and affirmed Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophies, then moves into the ways in which the data both confirmed and disconfirmed past and current research in the fields of service-learning, composition, and creative writing. Implications for practice, discussions for future research, and final thoughts complete the discussion.

Summary

This introduction provided background information for the study, a statement of the problem from which the research builds, the conceptual framework on which the research was grounded, the specific research question which guided the study, a description of the course being studied, as well as the study's scope and a list of terms used in the study. In the following chapter, I will provide an examination of the literature surrounding service-learning and creative writing in higher education.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This study focused on how creative writing students experienced the process of creative writing differently after enrolling in a creative writing course with an optional service-learning component. This chapter provides evidence of a systematic review of the literature surrounding service-learning and creative writing and the conceptual frameworks behind each. The purpose of this review of literature is to bring to light the lack of adequate research on the relationship between creative writing and service-learning. As stated in the introduction, after an exhaustive search I was unable to find a formal, non-editorial study measuring the effects of service-learning on creative writing students' perceptions of the process of creative writing or anything related to creative writing and student learning. It is critical that some light is brought to this gap in research.

Organization of the Review of Literature

First, I will remind the reader of the conceptual framework which guides this study, in order to provide a lens through which readers can review the literature on the subject of service-learning and creative writing. I will then discuss the inclusion and exclusion criteria of this review of literature. Next, I will define service-learning and review its history in higher education as well as its theoretical constructs. Following a review of service-learning history and theoretical foundations, I will assess the connection between service-learning and writing, namely the research surrounding service-learning and composition which is a variant writing field separate but similar to the field of creative writing. I will then discuss creative writing history and pedagogy, and move into a discussion of current practices in the field of creative

writing. Finally, I will provide rationale for service-learning to act as a possible supplement to creative writing pedagogy today.

Conceptual Framework Revisited

In order to provide the rationale behind this study, it is sensible to keep the conceptual framework of the study in mind throughout the review of literature. More specifically, it is sensible to keep in mind first the work of one of the greatest and most influential educational philosophers of the twentieth century, John Dewey. Dewey believed that education should be interactive. He believed that educators assumed the responsibility of incorporating real life experiences into students' educations. Those experiences, he believed, would aid in connecting students with the outside world, which in turn would help deepen and strengthen students' knowledge in their own disciplines as well as foster an educated citizenry with community involvement and civic duty at the forefront of their own personal philosophies (Carter, 1999). In *Democracy and Education* (1944), Dewey posited that an education focused on community service and action fostered an educated citizenry in support of democracy.

Dewey also said in "My Pedagogic Creed" (1897) that "ideas result from action." Many service-learning researchers would agree that the conceptual framework behind service-learning most closely resembles Dewey's philosophy on community action (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Cooper & Julier, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). In fact, most researchers would agree that the theories behind service-learning were built upon Dewey's philosophies on civic engagement and learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Giles and Eyler (1994) discussed the theoretical roots of service-learning as most closely aligned with Dewey's beliefs in learning from experience, engaging in reflection, and the importance of developing a sense of community, citizenship, and

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democracy. All of these capstones of service-learning are, to Giles and Eyler, grounded in Dewey's work. Reflecting this alignment, myriad of service-learning research is grounded in, based on, or references Dewey's work in some form or another (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Cooper, 1999; Cooper & Julier 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Further, Dewey saw a connection between civic engagement and the arts. In *Art as Experience* (1935), Dewey wrote that experience with the arts unites people and strengthens communities. Given that this study involves a relationship between creative writing and community involvement, Dewey's philosophies seemed a natural fit for this research.

Dewey's (1897; 1935) proclamation that "ideas result from action" is one of the primary motivations behind this study. The frequent reference to Dewey's work in service-learning literature (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Cooper & Julier, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000) which I review further in this chapter provides the impetus for the educational theory guiding this study, which is Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory. Mezirow posited that a transformational learner becomes critically aware of his or her own assumptions and expectations after a learning experience and re-evaluates his or her own past experiences and beliefs to form new beliefs and assumptions. The learner's ability to critically reflect upon a learning experience can re-define his or her worldview. Because Mezirow's transformational theory is often cited in service-learning research (Kiely, 2005; Simons, et. al., 2009) and also in the field of composition and rhetoric (Johnson, 2003; Whitman, et. al., 2008), it is prudent to keep Mezirow's (2000) theory along with Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophies in mind while reviewing the literature in creative writing and service-learning.

Inclusions

For the purposes of this study, I chose to include first service-learning history and general theoretical constructs behind service-learning. I moved then into a discussion on the connections between service-learning and writing in general and then moved into focusing more specifically on service-learning in composition, a similar but separate field from creative writing. I felt it was important to establish a positive relationship between service-learning and composition as evidence of the possibility of a positive relationship between service-learning and creative writing. Then, I reviewed the literature in the field of creative writing, including the history of creative writing pedagogy and the workshop method. Because of the lack of literature in the field of creative writing, a more focused lens was given to the workshop method and its critics and defenders in order to emphasize the gap in research in the field of creative writing, and further, a gap in research on the relationship between creative writing and service-learning.

Exclusions

In the latter part of this review of literature, I will discuss the criticisms and acclaims for the workshop method in higher education creative writing instruction. Although research exists on the positive connection between creative writing and the workshop in K-12 literature (Atwell, 1998; Carter, 2001), I chose not to include literature at the K-12 level because it is not applicable to the research question of how these *university* level creative writing students perceive the writing process differently after engaging in service-learning. However, it would be prudent to briefly mention a seminal piece of literature (Atwell, 1998) on the positive relationship between the creative writing workshop and student writing success at the middle school level. In her book

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In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents, Atwell (1998) stressed the use of the workshop and creative writing to engage middle school students. Her work using this pedagogical method had positive impacts on middle school student writing skills and student learning. However, this does not directly relate to how university level creative writing workshops impact university level students' writing processes, so I did not include literature of this kind in the review.

Likewise, I did not include literature on service-learning at the K-12 level. In working with higher education creative writing students, it is assumed that students of this age group are better able to think abstractly and think reflectively about their writing processes than those at the K-12 level. Though research has evidenced a positive link between service-learning and K-12 student learning outcomes (Kraft & Wheeler, 2003), civic engagement (Brown, Kim, & Pinhas, 2005), and attitudes toward school (Billig & Klute, 2003; Davila & Mora, 2007), I have included very little research of this nature in the review. Because Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory states that in order to experience transformation, a student must critically reflect on the learning experience, I felt that the K-12 literature on service-learning would not be applicable to the conceptual framework guiding this study.

Defining "Service-Learning"

Stanton (1990) said that attempting to find a single agreed-upon, operational definition of service-learning was like "navigating through fog" (p. 65). Researchers in service-learning have a number of varying but similar definitions of service-learning. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) define service-learning as a form of experiential education in which students participate in service and reflect on that service in such a way as to gain deeper understanding of their

discipline and its relationship to community needs and civic responsibility. Furco (2003) offers that service-learning is simply the integration of community service into the academic curriculum. Jacoby and Associates (1996) offer that service-learning is, as a pedagogy, "education that is grounded in experience as the basis for learning and on the centrality and intentionality of reflection designed to enable learning to occur" (p. 9).

Despite the ongoing revision and discussion on how to best define the term "service-learning," I will use one of the more popular definitions found on the Learn and Serve America website (2006), which defines service-learning as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (p. 1). For the purposes of this study, I will use the term "service-learning" synonymously with "community-based learning."

Service-Learning History

Service-learning in education truly dates back to Thomas Jefferson and his belief that every person has an ethical duty to give back to society through service (Carter, 1999). Jefferson believed that children should serve the community in the hope that the values they obtain from serving others stay with them into their adult lives and citizenship. However, it was John Dewey and his philosophies on community action which underpinned service-learning's roots (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Carter, 1999). Dewey believed that education should be interactive and that critical reflection on serving others had the potential to lead to true learning experiences (Carter, 1999).

Sigmon and Ramsey (1979) coined the term "service-learning" in the 1960s when the Civil Rights Movement, the formation of the Peace Corps, and the formation of the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) brought back popularity to serve in the community ("History of Service-learning," 2005; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Stanton, 1999). Sigmon (1979) conceptualized an emerging theory behind service-learning while at the same time providing a set of guidelines for practitioners to follow. Those were that (a) those being served controlled the services, (b) those being served become better able to serve themselves and others, and (c) those who serve learn and have certain control over what is to be learned. Sigmon's three principles serve as a set of guidelines and functional theory of service-learning which researchers often use today.

The 1980s educational reform movement emphasized the national collaboration between schools, businesses, and local communities (Carter, 1999). Joining this reformation of the educational system, a resurgence of interest in service-learning was evidenced by the formation of Campus Compact, a national organization based out of Brown University which has to date recruited over 1,100 colleges and universities. Campus Compact's goal was to encourage community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education. Although it has seen a rise and fall in popularity over the last century, service-learning has gained particular esteem within the past decade (Campus Compact, 2007). This is in part due to President Bush Sr.'s signing of the National and Community Service Act in 1990, which allocated funding to each state for service-learning. President Clinton furthered this advancement in service-learning in 1993 by re-signing the act and continuing state funding for service-learning as well as encouraging partnerships between schools and community organization (Carter, 1999).

Service-learning continues to thrive and advance today. According to Campus Compact's 2007 national survey of member colleges and universities, nearly one-third of member campuses

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participated in service-learning projects during the 2006/2007 academic year—an all-time high. Following the lead of Campus Compact, organizations such as the American Association of Higher Education, the National Information Center for Service-Learning, the National Society for Experiential Education, and Learn and Serve America are currently working to connect university curriculum with community service.

<div align="center">Service-Learning Theoretical Foundations</div>

Though researchers have applied and developed many theories regarding and defining service-learning, one particular scholar is repeatedly referenced in most service-learning research: John Dewey (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Cooper & Julier, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). In order to understand service-learning as pedagogy, one must look to the scholars who shaped experiential education, specifically to the work of Dewey (1897; 1935; 1944) and his view on the function and responsibility of education. As stated previously, John Dewey was the most pervasive educational philosopher of the twentieth century. Dewey believed that education should be interactive and that students could apply these interactive experiences outside of the classroom to their own course content or disciplines (Carter, 1999; Dewey, 1897). The theoretical underpinnings of service-learning were founded on Dewey's belief that educators should engage students in active assignments and community service which become life experience for students. In *Democracy and Education* (1944), Dewey posited that an education focused on community service and action fostered an educated citizenry in support of democracy.

Many service-learning researchers would agree that the theories behind service-learning most closely resemble Dewey's theory on community action. Bringle and Hatcher (2000)

<div align="center">20</div>

confirmed this resemblance by comparing the theory behind service-learning to Dewey's educational theory. Giles and Eyler (1994) wrote an essay specifically addressing the close relationship between Dewey's educational philosophies and service-learning's philosophies, positing that service-learning should move toward a theory based upon Dewey's ideals. Giles and Eyler emphasized the development of a theory which stressed the importance of fostering a sense of community, citizenship, and democracy in the classroom—all of which are engrained in Dewey's earlier manuscripts (Dewey, 1897; Dewey, 1935). To reflect this alignment, myriad of service-learning research is grounded, based on, or references Dewey's work in some form or another (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Cooper, 1999; Cooper & Julier, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000).

Many service-learning researchers apply Dewey's position on community service to the field of higher education (Cooper & Julier, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Because of this strong connection between Dewey's research and the research question in this study regarding service-learning's affect on university students' writing processes, I chose to use Dewey's philosophies on civic engagement to guide this research.

<p style="text-align:center;">Service-Learning, Student Learning, and Writing</p>

Research has shown that service-learning has a positive impact on student academic learning outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998; Vogelsegang & Astin, 2000). Further, research also suggests that service-learning has a positive impact on students' abilities to apply knowledge in the "real world" (Bacon, 1997; Balazedah, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray, et al., 1998; Zlotkowski, 2000).

However, there is little research which examines the impact of service-learning in these ways in creative writing courses (Danielson & Fallon, 2007). In order to provide a framework through which to view the current relationship between creative writing and service-learning, it is necessary to expand this review of literature to include service-learning's involvement with composition and writing, two similar fields.

There is a fairly prolific amount of research involving service-learning, composition, and writing (Cooper & Juliet, 1995; Deans, 2000; Deans & Meyer-Goncalves, 1998; Ogburn & Wallace, 1998). In the 1995 issue of *The Michigan Journal for Community Service-Learning*, Conniff and Youngkin (1995) evaluated the Dayton Literacy Project, a project developed by the University of Dayton to bring together one of its composition courses with local GED student community members, concluding that the project provided not only benefit to the community members involved but also brought forth more opportunity for the students involved in the project as well as opened up more opportunity for grant money for the English department offering the composition course. In a later issue of *The Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning,* Cooper and Julier (2000) discussed the elements of the Service-Learning Writing Project (SLWP), a project whose founders saw the writing classroom as "a place where rhetorical processes and democratic practices naturally converge[d]" (p. 72). This project had a large impact on the students involved, as the authors concluded that students' senses of obligation, community, and service changed significantly. Cooper and Julier (2000) went on to write a curriculum guide based on their findings at Michigan State University and the SLWP.

One noteworthy publication regarding service-learning, composition, and writing is *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997), which contains a series of essays and articles investigating various service projects in higher

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education institutions around the country, as well as discussing the theoretical constructs of service-learning in the university. Further, the entire 1997 collection of *The Writing Instructor* is devoted to service-learning and composition. Recently, Danielson and Fallon (2007) published *Community-Based Learning and the Work of Literature,* a collection of essays which examined the ways in which community engagement re-invented pedagogy in the humanities. Contributing author Malachuk (2007) hoped that he could use community-based learning to teach compassion through literature. In the same collection, Daigre, et. al (2007), sought to reinforce the powerful relationship between service-learning and literary studies.

<div align="center">

Creative Writing History of Pedagogy

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Poets and essayists have existed for ages both within and outside of the university; indeed, poetry and fiction writing workshops existed within the mandatory and traditional curriculum in universities dating back to the 1890s (Moxley, 1989). The academic term "creative writing" was coined in the 1920s with the formation of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in Middlebury, Vermont where poet Robert Frost served as its first writer-in-residence (Menand, 2009). The first official creative writing workshop was founded by Paul Engle at the University of Iowa in 1936. Since then, creative writing as a discipline has grown and prospered. Currently, there are 822 creative writing programs in the United States, 37 of which award the Ph.D. (Menand, 2009). Creative writing programs typically teach three genres: fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry, though some focus on screenwriting, playwriting, literary journalism, and other subgenres. Students can earn a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a Master of Fine Arts degree (the terminal degree in the field), or a Ph.D. in creative writing.

The most common teaching method in creative writing programs is the workshop. In a workshop, students are typically required to produce and share their writing with one another, constructively criticizing each other's work with their peers and their writer-teacher whose authority and involvement ranges in scale from authoritative to relatively hands-off (Ketzle, 2007). Students and instructors simultaneously discuss the core elements of successful writing and facets of their chosen craft. Instructors primarily use the workshop method for creative writing instruction though often supplement the method with short lecture, alternative writing assignments, writing prompts, and other methods of instruction, often including different forms of experiential education (Gerard, 2009; Ketzle, 2007).

The "Problem" of the Workshop

Though the workshop has been the standard means of creative writing instruction since its inception at Iowa, the creative writing discipline has been under critical reflection in the past couple of decades. Moxley (1989) forecasted this change by positing that creative writing as a discipline was preparing for a paradigm shift, what he termed a period of self reflection where scholars would question their own theories and practices. Though today it remains the standard means of creative writing instruction and arguably the most appropriate method of creative writing instruction, the workshop method has indeed been criticized by writers and practicing creative writing faculty themselves.

Creative writing and the workshop method have been charged, for example, with being too easy for students. Miller (2005) said that creative writing is perceived by both students and intellectuals inside and outside of the discipline as being more instinctual than intellectual. Ketzle (2007) succinctly summed up his opinion of the current state of creative writing as a

discipline in higher education: "Unlike literary studies, with its long-established critical pedigree within English departments, and composition studies, which has spent much of the past thirty years mapping out its own theoretical landscape, creative writing pedagogy has been often absent, rarely intellectually rigorous, and occasionally even hostile to its own prospects as an academic discipline" (p. 127).

Most important to this discussion, however, is the criticism that the current pedagogical structure creates students who are self-absorbed and self-contained (Fenza, 2000; Radavich, 1999). While specific lesson plans and pedagogical style might ebb and flow with the changing culture of the writing world, typically, instructors of creative writing educate students to begin writing about themselves and their own lives and memories as an access point to their creativity. This focus and attention to the self fixates new writers, whom critics charge do not often evolve from this vantage point. Fenza (2000) explained that some critics accused creative writing as being a tactless, exploitative industry whereby students seem to be part of a factory line producing mediocre writers who happen to have writing degrees. He went on to cite critic Disch (1995) of *The Hudson Review* who charged poetry workshops as exercises in self-indulgence and group therapy, and nonfiction writers as exhibitionists.

Radavich (1999) harshly criticized current creative writing program structures, claiming that they are solipsistic and produce commercialized writing. Radavich claimed that creative writing programs erred in their overemphasis on self-expression, which he charged as a spillover of the 1960's "Me Generation." This "Me Generation" has been accused of resurfacing in the university today. It is currently known as the "Millennial Generation," which refers to individuals born in the 1980s and 1990s who are most notably known as an "active and impatient" group (Edmond & Tiggeman, 2009). Interestingly enough, the new "Millennial

Generation" is said to respond well to learning methods such as service-learning across various disciplines in higher education because of service-learning's "hands-on" approach to learning and its immediate gratification in helping others (Stanton, 2007). Further, Radavich (1999) suggested that writing instructors take the next step and communicate with a non-university-trained audience. Radavich offered a simple solution: encourage creative writing students to remain active participants in the community—the arts, he suggested, only succeed when they build, nurture, and operate within the community.

Others argue still that the workshop itself has been rife with criticism because of its lack of a clear, distinct pedagogical structure. Ketzle (2007) believed the workshop structure was criticized as weak because of a lack of authority in the classroom. According to Ketzle, because creative writing instructors' facilitations of the workshop method varied widely from active involvement and structure to little or no instruction during the workshop itself, some argue not for the dismantling of the workshop but rather for its re-evaluation and re-structuring. Vandermeulen (2005) emphasized that authority should be stressed and used to create a "safe but challenging place for becoming a writer" (p. 60). Others disagreed. Haake (2005) suggested that the writing instructor risked becoming less effective and dynamic when authority was imposed on the workshop method. She also pointed out, however, that the issues surrounding the creative writing pedagogical structure are prevalent because of creative writing's adamant separation from the rest of academia, particularly literature and composition studies (p. 131). Haake suggested that perhaps it was this "defensiveness" and lashing out against structure and prescribed pedagogy in the creative writing classroom which created a perceived weakness in the creative writing program structure as a whole.

These accusations do not seem to be shared by the majority of practitioners in the field of creative writing. For all of the creative writing pedagogy's critics, there is almost equal defense in response. Fenza (2000) adamantly defended the creative writing program structure in the university today. He posited that creative writing programs "enable students to study and appreciate literature as a *living* body of knowledge—one growing and still evolving—one to which they, too, may contribute" (p. 54). There is very little verifiable evidence documenting even the existence of the debate over the value of the creative writing program or its pedagogical methods. Most information about the subject is published as commentaries in various trade publications.

In a personal conversation with several creative writing instructors in the field, ranging in experience from five years to over thirty and across several universities around the nation, I found they unanimously agreed that the workshop is the best and only effective primary method of creative writing instruction. One professor of creative writing, Lisa Roney of the University of Central Florida, eloquently emphasized that creative writing workshops provide a unique environment for university students:

> Creative writing workshops are beloved because they are one of very few places in university education where students can forge a relationship between a set of skills and knowledge, on one hand, and, on the other, their own personal experiences, where they can do so consciously and with acknowledgment of the fact. Although there is some content mastery in our field, the focus is on training our students to be individuals and to examine and analyze their own experiences by a method that renders them into art. There is no large-scale way to do this (L. Roney, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

Roney touched on an important element in this study—creating art out of personal experience. Though creative writing workshops often use some form of experiential education, such as rummaging through old photographs or walking through one's home town, or even taking a walk in the woods, to foster the production of this type of work of art, service-learning

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offers potential for a different type of experiential education with a vastly larger and deeper complexity and expansion outward from the self, including fostering a new or renewed sense of civic duty.

It is already known that service-learning strengthens students' senses of civic duty in many disciplines in higher education (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gray, et. al., 1998; Gray, Ondaatje, & Zakaras, 1990). Malachuk (2009) reminded us further that literature teaches us what it means to be human. He believed that community-based learning (a similar form of service-learning) can teach compassion through literature, both to students and to those receiving the service. Service-learning, then, has the potential to spark a young writer's sense of civic duty, further connecting that student to his or her immediate surroundings. By applying content knowledge in the field of creative writing in an act of service, students can perhaps deepen their understanding of themselves, their community, and, therefore, their writing.

Bardin (2008) also suggested that the current creative writing program structure says little about the world that creative writing instructors send their students into—there is no relationship, or meaningful interaction, between a student and his/her community. This is where the need for change in the current creative writing program structure exists. Creative writing students would benefit not from the dismantling of the workshop structure—indeed, the creative writing workshop has proven a successful means through which to teach the craft. But rather, creative writing students might gain from the use another learning vehicle or supplement to the workshop through which to view their craft, in order to better understand how it functions outside the creative writing classroom.

<u>Service-Learning and Creative Writing: A Possible Solution?</u>

Carducci and Eddy (1997) stated that writing was like a system, which could be "self-enclosed and isolated." In a study on student perceptions of creative writing, Light (2002) verified students' perceptions of their craft as self-enclosed. Carducci and Eddy (1997) went on to say that students can learn to change communities through their writing courses. It is here where I posit that service-learning could bridge the gap between the creative writing student and her craft.

Gere and Sinor (1997) postulated that there is a natural affinity between service-learning and composition because writing lends itself to a larger community and its social issues. Dewey (1935) valued the arts for this very reason. Further, Menand (2009) offered that creative writing courses naturally follow the "learning by doing" theories in education today, allowing for hands-on experience in addition to traditional learning structures. Creative writing programs do often incorporate experiential learning writing exercises that include "hands-on" experience, such as visiting a gravesite and researching the deceased, or interviewing an interesting person in the community, and these experiences often include the essential element to fostering a truly transformational experience: critical reflection of the experience. Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory implies that learners must take action in a learning experience by critically reflecting upon a new learning experience in order to achieve transformation. Sharing these essential elements of hands-on experience and critical reflection, and perhaps deepening the transformational learning experience even further by having students provide a service to members of the community, it is sensible to posit that the service-learning and creative writing should work together successfully to foster a deeper knowledge and transformation in the students engaged in service-learning as part of their academic experience.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature surrounding service-learning and creative writing, first by providing a review of service-learning's history and theoretical foundations along with creative writing's history of pedagogy and common practices, and then by reviewing the research in composition and writing, a similar but separate field than creative writing. The purpose of reviewing the history behind service-learning and creative writing and reviewing the research in composition was to offer a lens through which to view the positive relationship between composition and service-learning, expose the current gap in research in creative writing and service-learning, and to provide impetus for examining the potential positive effects of service-learning on creative writing students and their writing practices, all within the context of both Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophies on education and action and Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning theory.

The following chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology upon which the study was built, including description of the course, selection of the participants, data source descriptions, data analysis plans, and organization of the findings.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

"The ability of writers to imagine what is not the self,

to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar,

is the test of their power."

– Toni Morrison

Organization of the Chapter

The purpose of this study was to investigate how seven creative writing students experienced the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with an optional service-learning component. First, I will remind the reader of the conceptual framework guiding the study, a framework which also guides the methodology of the study. I will also review the assumptions of the study. Then I will outline the justification for the selection of an instrumental narrative case study design. Next, I will discuss the data collection procedures. Following this design overview, I will review the data analysis procedures and the standards of quality and verification. Finally, I will discuss researcher biases.

Conceptual Framework

Defining "Transformation"

The research question guiding this study asks how these seven creative writing students experience their writing processes differently as a result of a service-learning experience. Though determining the growth of a writer using workshop and writing assessments is a common pedagogical strategy, detecting change in creative writing students' *perceptions* on writing or how they find inspiration to write is a difficult concept to articulate. Therefore, the guiding theory behind this research inquiry is Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory, which

states that a learner experiences "transformation" of his or her own beliefs and assumptions after critical reflection upon a particular learning experience (in this case, service-learning). Because "change" in a student's writing and writing perceptions is a complex concept, I am looking specifically for evidence of a *transformation* in a student's writing content or perception of creative writing after a service-learning experience. More specifically, I am looking for *how* a student's writing or perceptions change, if they change at all. Using Mezirow's (2000) theory, I seek to understand how a creative writing student's writing process changes, either in writing content or how they find inspiration or ideas to write, after a service-learning experience. I am purposely leaving the scope of this change relatively open-ended to allow for richer, more complex data results. Because this change, or transformation, could potentially manifest itself in multiple ways or layers, it is important to leave the measurement criteria relatively unrestricted.

Assumptions

A guiding assumption of this study is that creative writing students already have some preconceived notion or experience with creative writing to begin with. Because the students involved in this study are undergraduate students enrolled in a mandatory (for creative writing majors) creative writing course, albeit an introductory creative writing course, students are assumed to be at least somewhat familiar with the field of creative writing. The course "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" is an entry level creative writing course, therefore all students involved are also assumed to be "novice" writers—in other words, those who have not experienced publication, do not have experience working in the field, and have not spent significant time practicing creative writing up to the point of enrollment in the course. To validate these assumptions, all participants in the study were involved in a focus group at the

start of the semester in which I attempted to establish participants' preconceived notions of creative writing, along with their experiences with creative writing and the process of writing, prior to their service-learning experiences.

<u>Design</u>

The focus of this investigation is students' experiences with the process of creative writing after engaging in service-learning. Because this study focuses on the change (i.e. transformation) in thinking about and understanding of the process of creative writing as a result of a service-learning experience and the open-ended nature of the research questions, an instrumental narrative case study research design (Stake, 1995) was selected. Instrumental case study design was also selected due to its frequent use in qualitative research and in studies regarding experiential education and service-learning (Astin, 1998; Bacon, 1997; Eyler, et. al., 1998), all of which provide a fair rationale for the selection.

Creswell (2007) offered that case study by definition is a methodology which involves the examination of an issue through one or more cases, as opposed to an examination of a cultural phenomenon (which would warrant the use of ethnography, for example). Case studies are often used in service-learning research due to the benefits of examining smaller sample sizes in a more in-depth fashion. Further, in the creative writing discipline, the concept of "student learning" is difficult to measure and assess. For this reason, a case study design was chosen because it allows a researcher to approach his or her study with a more open and holistic lens than qualitative research methods.

More specifically, I chose the use of an instrumental case study design because, according to Stake (1995), when seeking understanding about a particular process or experience,

oftentimes the examination of one particular related case can serve to inform the larger inquiry. In this study, the case is the course itself—more specifically, the case in this study is the service-learning portion of the course. The participants' individual experiences with service-learning served to provide insight into the larger research question of how service-learning affects (or does not) these creative writing students' experiences with the process of creative writing.

Perl's (1979) seminal case study on writers' experiences in the classroom provides an excellent rationale for the choice of a case study as well. Perl was one of the first researchers to provide insight into *how* a basic writer writes. Perl's use of case study methodology is widely accepted as the most accurate, and arguably only, way to assess research in writing—it seems that research grounded in observation and holistic assessment of the complexity of the writing experience is the best practice. For this reason, I chose an instrumental case study design that was *narrative* in nature. All of the data collected was qualitative and involved students' own words, thoughts, and writing.

<u>Case Explanation</u>

Description of the Course

The course "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" is a 16 week long, mixed-mode (both face-to-face and online) undergraduate course at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. The course details the basic concepts of creative writing practices and introduces students to the life of a writer, including day to day experiences as well as career opportunities in the field of creative writing and beyond. In the spring 2011 semester, approximately 170 students were enrolled in the course. This course was mandatory for all creative writing majors.

The major assignments for this course included journal entries on a bi-weekly frequency for the service-learning students, online forum discussions for the non-service-learning students (which were the majority of the students), quizzes and tests based on required readings for the course, in-class discussion participation, the creation of a "writing life plan," and the completion of either the "GoodReads" project or a service-learning component. The GoodReads project required students to sign up for an online book review website (GoodReads.com) in private groups, and to write two formal reviews on two books selected from a group chosen by the course instructor via the GoodReads website. Students were also required to engage in meaningful conversations about genre, craft, and other creative writing related topics on the GoodReads discussion forums within smaller groups.

The course instructor also offered an optional service-learning component to the course in lieu of the GoodReads project. This service-learning component required students to complete several weeks of service at a location of their choice in the surrounding community. The intention of the project, according to the instructor, was to give students "hands-on" experience in teaching creative writing while at the same time providing a service to the surrounding community in some capacity (see Appendix B for a description of the service project as provided to the students by the instructor). In lieu of the GoodReads forum discussions required for the course, service-learning students were required to submit bi-weekly journal entries labeled "structured reflections." These structured reflections were written responses to certain prompts administered by the instructor. During the semester in which this study took place, the structured reflection prompts were administered by myself, the researcher, and were chosen from a list of prompts provided by the instructor.

Population

Course Demographics

Of the 170 students enrolled in the course, there were 69 males and 101 females—59% of the students were female, and 41% were male. Students in the course were required to have had previously enrolled in English Composition I and II but were not required to be creative writing majors or minors. However, the course was required if a student was a creative writing major. The course was designed specifically for creative writing majors. The breakdown of grade levels in the course is as follows: 5 freshmen, 27 sophomores, 86 juniors, and 50 seniors. Two students were second degree students. Most of the students in the course were of junior standing—approximately half the class.

Location

This study focused on undergraduate university creative writing students at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. Specifically, this study involved 7 students from the course titled "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing." The course was held both online and face to face. Students met weekly in a large lecture hall with a total capacity of approximately 300 students. This lecture hall was technologically up to date and equipped with a microphone, projector, Internet access, cameras, and the use of an "I-clicker," an interactive tool in which students can instantaneously respond to instructors' questions with the click of a button. Additionally, students were required to interact online on a university web community for the course, as well as interact on the GoodReads website discussion forums in small groups, or on the course's web community site to post service-learning structured reflection assignments.

Service-learning students and non service-learning students alike submitted assignments through this online course tool, posted journal entries, as well as engaged in online discussions.

<center>Sample</center>

<center>Sampling Method</center>

This study used a quasi-purposive sampling method to select participants. Qualitative research involves in-depth investigation within a small population. Because the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity in case study research, the objective of this study was not to maximize sample size but rather to "saturate" the study with quality data (Padgett, 1998, p. 52). A small sample size was ideal therefore purposive sampling was justifiable. Further, the enrollment size for this course was limited to 170 students and participation in a service-learning component was optional.

<center>Sample Selection Criteria</center>

Of the approximately 170 students, 10 volunteered for the service-learning option. Of those 10, 7 agreed to participate in this study, heretofore collectively known as the "SL Group." The SL Group was selected based on the sheer fact that they volunteered for the service-learning option in the course. I did not have any power over the selection of this group of students, however I did ensure that the majority of the group was of junior standing or lower with little workshop experience. Therefore, I would consider this sampling method quasi-purposive.

Demographic Characteristics Sample

As stated previously, 7 students volunteered for the study from the service-learning group. Of those 7 students, 2 dropped out at the beginning of the semester. Of those two who dropped out, 1 provided limited data to work with.

Of the seven service-learning students involved in the study, there was one male participant and 6 female participants. One participant, a female, was of Hispanic origin. The remaining students were of white, non-Hispanic origin. All of the students were of junior standing at the university with the exception of one female of sophomore standing. The students' ages ranged from 20 – 45 years old. Four of the seven students had previously taken one introductory creative writing course. Five of the students were simultaneously enrolled in a traditional creative writing workshop course, most their first workshop at the university. All of them were creative writing majors or minors and all of the students would be considered novice writers. None of the participants had experience with service-learning prior to this course, however some had volunteer experience. In the beginning of the semester, two of the service-learning participants dropped out of the course—their pseudonyms were Mary and Jennifer.

Table 1 below provides participant demographic information. Pseudonyms were created to protect anonymity as Mary, Alicia, and so on.

Table 1: Student Demographics

Name	Age	Race	Grade Level	Genre
Mary	20	W	J	Scriptwriting and fiction
Alicia	38	W	J	Creative Nonfiction
Ryan	45	W	J	Unsure/All
Courtney	20	W	J	Unsure/All
Tara	20	W	So	Unsure/All
Laura	21	W	J	Script/Playwriting, Fiction
Jennifer	20	H	J	Poetry/Fiction/Playwriting

Note: *Information* b*ased on focus group responses. Pseudonyms were created to protect anonymity.*

None of the students had taken any higher level creative writing courses at the time.

<u>Description of the Participants</u>

In this section, a detailed description of each participant is provided along with his or her service-learning site description. Additionally, I included what they hoped to gain from choosing the service-learning option of the course. The answers provided below were gathered from the first structured reflection and from the focus group transactions.

Mary

Mary was a 20 year old white female of junior standing. She was a creative writing major with a fiction focus. Mary dropped out of the course prior to the first focus group. She did not provide any reflections, student samples, but did provide her demographic information on the first day, and expressed interest in serving a homeless shelter for battered women and children.

Alicia

Alicia was a 38 year old white female of junior standing. She was a creative writing major with a creative nonfiction focus. Alicia chose to work at Emeritus, a local memory loss institute. She worked specifically with senior patients living with dementia, Alzheimer's, and other memory-affecting diseases. Alicia helped these patients write stories by showing them picture prompts, or providing trigger words and helping to transcribe responses. Alicia had experience volunteering at an assisted living facility in the past, but never through service-learning. Alicia hoped her service experience would help her to learn "the value of academia/community partnership" (Structured Reflections, p. 14). She also expected her writing would be enriched through the experience, along with the quality of life for the Emeritus patients.

Ryan

Ryan was a 45 year old male of junior standing. He was a creative writing major and did not have a specified genre focus. Ryan chose to serve at Emeritus as well, in the regular assisted living facility. Ryan worked with Courtney in teaching the facility members elements of creative writing storytelling and assisting members in writing fictional stories. Ryan had previously worked in advertising, marketing, and as a musician. He hoped to have a unique experience working with the elderly, to learn something from them, and to hear their stories and help them "share that voice" (Structured Reflections, p. 31).

Courtney

Courtney was a 20 year old white female of junior standing. She was one of the youngest of the group (Tara was 20 as well). Courtney was an expository writing major with a creative

writing minor but did not have a specified genre focus. Courtney chose to work at the same

assisted living facility, Emeritus, and worked with Ryan in teaching elements of storytelling to

the assisted living members. Courtney had perhaps the most idealistic expectation of the service

experience. She imagined herself as a prototypical teacher in a classroom setting with desks in a

row and a white board in the center (Structured Reflections, p. 36). Courtney hoped to learn

about creative writing and how to work with others on developing their creative minds.

Tara

Tara was a 20 year old white female of sophomore standing. She was a creative writing

major and did not have a specified genre of choice. Tara worked at a local elementary school in a

lower middle class urban district. The class she taught comprised of predominantly minority

students. She taught the basic elements of creative writing to the students and gave them prompts

to write different types of creative works such as a short story, a limerick, a "tongue-twister"

poem, and other writing exercises. Tara did not turn in any structured reflection assignments and

turned in only a post-semester sample of writing, but did participate in both focus groups. Tara's

expectation with her service-learning experience was that she hoped to make an impact on the

students. She was apprehensive and scared, and felt pressure to make a difference in the

children's lives (Structured Reflections, p. 42).

Laura

Laura was a 21 year old white female of junior standing. She was a creative writing

major with a screenwriting and playwriting focus. Laura chose to work at Boys Town, a local

treatment facility, shelter, and educational facility for at-risk youth, and those young adults who

suffered from broken homes, abuse, or a history of criminal activity. Laura hoped that her

students' writing would help them through their life struggles. She also hoped to grow in her own writing by learning about different points of view. Finally, she hoped to become more aware of her community and see what her world was like outside of her "safe bubble" (Structured Reflections, p. 49).

Jennifer

Jennifer was a 21 year old Hispanic female of junior standing. She was a creative writing major with a focus in poetry, fiction, and playwriting. Jennifer was planning to work at a local elementary school in an at-risk community however she dropped the course after the first focus group. Jennifer provided a pre-semester sample of writing prior to dropping out of the course. She did not provide any structured reflections.

Strategy to Protect Anonymity

Pseudonyms

Pseudonyms were created to protect identities. Any documents collected during the study had student names removed and replaced with the appropriate corresponding pseudonyms.

Confidentiality Procedure

Informed consent was obtained prior to the start of data collection. Each participant signed a form which provided a description of the study, an explanation of the purpose of the study, the expected duration of the study, the procedures to be followed, a statement of what I as the researcher hoped to learn, an explanation of how I intended to keep participant information anonymous, contacts for further information about the study, a statement of their research rights,

and a statement that participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were given a copy of the informed consent form prior to the start of the study. A copy of the informed consent is provided in Appendix A.

<div align="center">Service-Learning Project</div>

For the optional service component to the course, the instructor provided a list of possible service locations including service opportunities at an elementary school in an economically depressed area of town, a homeless shelter, a shelter for battered and abused women and children, an assisted living facility, or a memory loss institute for seniors. The common thread between these service-learning location options was that each provided an opportunity to serve a marginal or at-risk population in the community. Students were required to create lesson plans tailored to their audience's needs and to teach some aspect of creative writing to members of those participating organizations. Students were additionally required to submit bi-weekly journal entries (labeled "structured reflections") to chronicle their experiences. In the final classes of the semester, students presented their service projects to each other and discussed their experiences. Twenty-five percent of the course grade was based on this project. The handout provided to students by the instructor describing the service-learning project is provided in Appendix B.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

<div align="center">Data Sources</div>

Data sources for this investigation included (a) journal entries (labeled "structured reflections"), (b) pre-and post-semester student writing samples from all participants, and (c) pre-and post-semester focus groups. My primary data collection method was the use of regular, semi-

structured reflections throughout the semester. The objective of each type of data collected was to detect a change in students' writing processes, as suggested by Mezirow's (2000) theory on transformation in learning. A description of each data source along with the data collection procedures for each data source is provided in the following section.

Data Collection Procedures and Data Source Descriptions

Structured Reflections

John Dewey emphasized the vital need for students to reflect on their learning experiences in order to strengthen the learning process (Carter, 1999). Mezirow (2000) dictated that critical reflection is the key element in a transformational learning experience. Even further, Hatcher and Bringle (1997) emphasized that effective reflections link experience to learning, are guided, are frequent, and allow for feedback. The instructor for this course incorporated each of these criteria into her reflection assignments already, allowing for easier data collection. Students were required to post bi-weekly journal entries (labeled "structured reflections") to their private, online course website. Only the service-learning students could see each other's postings. Students were given general prompts pertaining to their service experiences throughout the semester. The purpose of these journal entries was to generate conversation about how they perceived themselves as creative writers and how they were experiencing service-learning. Each week, the prompts for the journal entries were different.

One example of a question used as a prompt for conversation is, "How would you describe yourself as a creative writer?" Again, Mezirow (2000) stated that critical reflection is a key element of transformation in learning. He also stated that journaling is one way to document this critical reflection. The aim of collecting these structured reflections was full circle in leading

back to the research question guiding this research: How do seven creative writing students experience the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with a service-learning component? Further, if transformation does occur, how does it manifest itself? It is important to note that I, as the researcher, chose the structured reflection prompts from a list of approximately 20 prompts provided by the course instructor. This is discussed further in the section on researcher bias. A list of the structured reflection prompts is provided in Appendix C. Also, a sample journal entry response is provided in the table below.

Table 2: Sample Structured Reflection

Question	Prior to your first "class" at your site, describe the people you will be working with; i.e. what is their gender, race, life experience? Discuss how you think their life experiences have influenced their current situation. Discuss what you hope to learn this semester about creative writing, yourself, and your community. Also discuss the satisfactions you expect to experience in doing this project.
Response	Tomorrow will be my first day of service-learning at Emeritus, an assisted living facility. My classmate, [removed by researcher], and I will be working together with the memory loss residents, helping them with creative writing. Since many of these people have lost the ability to read and write and think in logical sequence, our stories will likely be very creative.
	I have an idea of what to expect, since I cared for my grandfather, who lost his memory during his last years. I also had volunteer experience at an assisted living facility, assisting with activities.
	In my creative writing class, we have been experimenting with writing "mood" rather than coherent thoughts, using random words and thoughts and purposely NOT adhering to any conventional writing techniques. It occurred to me that what we are struggling to do, contrary to our own nature, these people are doing easily and naturally. Their disability is actually an advantage in this particular writing venture.
	I expect that the residents will be both male and female, from various ethnic backgrounds, and having a wide variety of life experiences. This life experience should bring color and texture to our stories, as each resident shares snippets of random thought that have been stored away for such a time as this. For example, if a person with construction work experience might contribute a "how to" feel to the stories, while a person with homemaker experience may contribute a "practical" feel to the stories. An artist may come up with interesting adjectives, while a school teacher may use terminology suited for a classroom environment. I could be wrong about this, but I expect that there will not be many wealthy residents, as they likely have home health care takers.
	This semester I hope to learn the value of academia/community partnership. I expect that my own writing will be enriched through this experience, just as the quality of life for the Emeritus residents will be enriched. I expect to be pleasantly surprised by the genuine artistic contribution these people give to those who take the time to appreciate their unique way of seeing the world.
	My satisfaction will likely be complete, fulfilling the need to contribute, the need to earn some brownie points with the English department at UCF, and the need to gain valuable experience for future employment. I am very excited to begin!

Note: Response from Alicia to Structured Reflection Question 1

Student Writing Samples

The research question for this study assumes that creative writing students have some

previous notion of or experience with creative writing prior to the start of this study, though

remain novices in the field of creative writing prior to the start of the semester. Because of this, there is a need to establish each participant's level of experience with creative writing both before and after the course. The strategy for establishing this level of student experience with creative writing is two-fold: one, by conducting a focus group for both groups of students, and two, by collecting a sample of each student's writing both before the start of the semester and at the end of the semester.

The purpose of collecting a sample of student writing prior to the start of the semester is to establish a baseline by which to compare any changes or growth in the student over the course of the semester above and beyond the estimated traditional growth of the student that is natural and germane to the course's purposes alone. The purpose in collecting a second sample of student writing at the end of the semester is to note any changes in student writing. I am looking for *how* a student's writing processes or perceptions of writing change. Using Mezirow's (2000) theory on transformational learning, I seek to understand how a creative writing student's writing changes, either in content or how they find inspiration or ideas to write about after a service-learning experience, or in any other way, in order to discern a transformation of some sort. It is important to note that I am not looking for growth as a writer in talent or writing skills.

<u>Focus Groups</u>

I conducted two focus groups, one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end of the semester. The first focus group was conducted in the second week of classes prior to the start of students' service-learning projects. The focus groups were led by me, the primary researcher. The focus groups were semi-structured in nature, using a set of guiding questions to promote engaging conversation within the group while ensuring that the conversation didn't veer too far

from the more important elements of the research question. Rubin and Babbie (2001) provide rationale for the use of a semi-structured focus group protocol by suggesting that the completely unstructured interview is flexible, however does not provide as much structure as is needed for better organization of the group and better use of the time. A semi-structured interview style also allows for better organization of data during analysis and helps the researcher to judge the quality of the interview methods.

The decision to use focus groups as opposed to one-on-one interviews was made in the hope that students would feed off of one another in a friendly, open, and engaging environment. The objective of the focus group at the beginning of the semester was similar to that of the collection of sample writing: to gain understanding of students' base experiences with creative writing and its processes prior to the start of the service-learning component to the course, as well as to gain insight into students' service-learning expectations. At the end of the semester, a second focus group was conducted with both groups. The same general questions were used again, in order to note any changes in students' experiences. The focus groups were recorded using an audio recorder; however, extensive notes were taken as well. A copy of the focus group prompts is provided in Appendix D.

Time Schedule

Data was collected over the course of the sixteen week spring 2011 semester. Two focus groups were held during the semester—one at the start of the semester prior to the start of the service-learning component and one at the end of the semester prior to the end of classes. Journal entries were collected bi-weekly starting the third week of classes, totaling 7 journal entries

collected per student. Further, sample writings were collected at the start of the semester and at the end of the semester.

Data Analysis

Data Preparation for Analysis

At the close of the data collection period, I had a total of two audio tapes full of focus group proceedings, a large database of structured reflections, a large database of sample writing, and a smaller database of focus group notes and other randomly collected notes. Each type of data required a change in form in order to consolidate and eventually reduce the data to a form which allowed me to better analyze the data. After listening to and transcribing the audio taped focus group proceedings, re-reading the notes taken, and reviewing sample writings, I consolidated the data into one large database ready for qualitative analysis.

Thematic Coding

In the first stage of the analysis process, I chose to use an inductive, or emic, approach geared toward identifying thematic patterns. Inductive analysis implies that themes emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1980, p. 306). In an effort to identify thematic patterns more efficiently, I sought to code data thematically. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) posit that it is important to qualitatively code data in a meaningful way, which allows for deep reflection and insight. Therefore, I coded data according to emerging themes or patterns, further cross-coding data sources. From an anthropological perspective, Lett (1990) explains that an emic approach allows rich narrative descriptions to provide meaningful cultural implications or patterns to emerge naturally from the data, allowing the data to "speak" for itself.

However, I did not want to restrict the potential depth of the study by using one approach. Therefore, I also used a deductive, or etic, approach as well. Because the conceptual framework through which I am observing data was constantly in mind, I could not disallow the thematic underpinnings of such constructs as Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory and Dewey's philosophies on civic engagement and the arts (1897; 1935; 1944) to affect the data analysis. Taking a deductive approach to data analysis allowed for comparison of data across contexts and populations (Morris, et. al., 1999). When using an etic approach to the data, I looked for specific speech in focus groups and reflections which indicated that a transformation in perceptions on writing processes had occurred. Rather than focusing on semantics, I searched for phrases or contextual clues which implied that critical reflection upon the service experiences had occurred.

Further, the combination of using both an inductive and deductive approach together helped to prevent the risk of new and groundbreaking concepts going unnoticed, while allowing for previously constructed concepts and theories to be applied to the data (Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990). Navigating through the data using both approaches allowed for a richer analysis.

<center>Standards of Quality and Verification</center>

Qualitative researchers tend to use holistic, interpretative processes to analyze and present their data. As such, qualitative researchers are inclined to establish trustworthiness as opposed to using traditional quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998). Yin (1994) suggested that construct validity and internal validity (i.e. trustworthiness) are established by using multiple sources of evidence, identifying pattern matching, and addressing "rival explanations" (p. 41) in the analysis procedures, which I refer to as "negative cases." In order to

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achieve this trustworthiness and validity, I chose first to code data according to emerging themes and then further cross examine data using multiple methods of analysis as suggested by Padgett's (1998) six strategies for enhancing the rigor of research. I also frequently referenced the holistic, interpretive analytic and coding procedures of Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) for further guidance in the analytic process.

Padgett's Six Strategies

In an effort to uphold the highest level of credibility and trustworthiness in this study, I chose to apply four of Padgett's (1998) six strategies for enhancing the rigor of research. Padgett's six strategies are: (1) triangulation, (2) prolonged engagement, (3) negative case analysis, (4) auditing, (5) member checking, and (6) peer debriefing. For the purposes of this study, I chose to employ the methods of triangulation, prolonged engagement, negative case analysis, and auditing. These four strategies and how I employed them are described below.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a common analytical method in qualitative research which employs the use of cross examination of multiple sources of data in order to verify data results (Padgett, 1998; Yin, 1994). By using multiple methods of analysis, Stake (1995) claimed that validity and reliability can be ensured in qualitative research. Further, Yin (1994) insisted that "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of data" (p. 115). Therefore, I cross-examined the focus group transcriptions (after coding the transcriptions), structured reflections, and sample writings for both sample groups.

Prolonged Engagement

Practicing prolonged engagement implies that a researcher will spend sufficient time in the field of study in order to saturate his or herself in the case and his or her research interests within that case as well as to establish a trusting relationship between the researcher and her participants (Padgett, 1998). By taking ample notes during the focus groups, delving into participants' writing samples, analyzing focus group transcripts, and poring over journal entries throughout the 16 week course, I hope and expect that prolonged engagement was achieved.

Negative Case Analysis

Padgett (1998) described negative case analysis as a popular analytical strategy in which researchers refine and re-refine an analysis of various data collection methods until it can account for a majority of cases. In other words, the researcher is actively searching for disconfirming evidence in his or her study. I utilized this strategy by reexamining each sub case (i.e. student) multiple times after the initial analysis was complete in an effort to discern if emergent themes found in the coding procedures were applicable to all sub cases. When it was determined that all negative cases were accounted for, the analysis was considered complete.

Auditing

Lincoln and Guba (1985) likened the process of auditing to leaving a "trail" of raw data in an analysis, in an effort to enhance reproducibility (rather than exact replication). By using the audit strategy, I wanted to ensure that my study was transferable. In qualitative research, transferability implies that other researchers can apply the findings of the study to their own (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that to provide for transferability, an investigator should pose questions about neutrality. As

such, I sought to provide as in-depth a narrative as possible for participants' experiences over the course of the semester, while repeatedly questioning and re-questioning my own role as a researcher in the process of data collection and analysis.

I also aimed to frequently consider my own biases, motivations, and perspectives not only as the primary researcher but also as a former student of service-learning and consequently an avid supporter of the practice of service-learning. Creswell (1998) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that by recognizing a certain subjectivity to case study research, a researcher is able to further employ the process of triangulation mentioned previously—a process which utilizes multiple sources, methods, and theories to ensure credibility of the study.

Member Checking and Peer Debriefing

I purposely chose not to employ Padgett's (1998) remaining two strategies for enhancing the rigor of research. Neither was appropriate for this study and its purposes. The strategy of member checking involves asking research participants to confirm or disconfirm the precision of the research findings. Because the participants of this study were enrolled in a 16 week long semester course, I did not have access to the students following the completion of the semester. Further, peer debriefing, a strategy by which researchers meet regularly for emotional support and to compare data collection and research problems, was not an appropriate strategy for this study. I did not have access to a group of like-minded researchers in the field of writing. Most of my peers are unfamiliar with the literature in service-learning and creative writing.

<u>Organization of the Data to be Analyzed</u>

In an effort to organize the four analytical methods used in the analysis process, I also chose to employ Marshall and Rossman's (1999) six phase analytic procedure. During the analysis process, I realized that my use of this procedure was germane to the analysis process in the first place. This procedure involves:

1. Organizing the data;

2. Generating patterns, themes, and categories;

3. Coding the data;

4. Testing the emergent understandings (in this case, using negative case analysis);

5. Searching for alternative explanations; and

6. Writing the report.

It is important to note that analysis was not linear. Because qualitative research, particularly case study, lends itself to interpretive perspectives, analysis between these steps overlapped constantly during the analytical process. Because I am employing a triangulation method of analysis which involves examining and re-examining data using multiple lenses and cross examining data against itself, as well as coding data according to emerging themes, the analysis process could not be linear or rigid.

Further, Stake (1995) suggested that case study researchers should provide vicarious experiences to readers by providing naturalistic generalizations of research results. He insisted that accounts should be "personal, describing the things of our sensory experiences" (p. 86-87). Merriam (1998) affirmed that case study research, because of its complexity, lends itself to artistic expression. The students in this study, particularly the service-learning students, were engaged in life altering experiences at times throughout the semester. These experiences were

chronicled in a very personal tone both in the focus group conversations and structured reflections. Given the nature of the research, I will present findings using first person at times, and will also apply a conversation tone at times in the results and discussion sections of this report.

Reporting of the Data

Yin (1989) noted that case study reports can be presented in a number of different formats, none of which are the "correct" method. Because case study, in particular narrative case studies, can often contain large and complex data sets as opposed to more clear-cut data collection methods such as survey or quantitative sampling methods, presenting the results of a case study requires much more effort to ensure that the data is presented meaningfully and clearly. Careful consideration was taken to ensure that the case study results were reported as clearly and accurately as possible, without taking away from the importance of the rich descriptions provided by the focus group transcriptions and structured reflections provided by the students involved. Therefore, data analysis was presented in two formats—first, data was presented according to the three overarching themes which emerged from the data. Then, I documented specific instances which reflected participants' transformations (Mezirow, 2000) as well as accounted for the disconfirming, or negative, cases which emerged from the data.

Researcher Bias

Qualitative research assumes that the researcher is an integral part of the research process (Yin, 2009). My role is as the primary researcher in the study. As the primary researcher in this study, I conducted the focus groups as well as collected all documents related to the study. It was

my responsibility to obtain informed consent of all participants, as well as to ensure the security of all data collected.

In order to understand the lens through which I am viewing this study, I offer that I am a white, middle class, female doctoral student at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. My background is in creative writing. My undergraduate degree is in English with a focus in creative writing, and my master's degree is a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing, with a creative nonfiction focus. My doctoral research, therefore, focuses in this area.

I bring a personal bias to the research, as I have a vested interest in service-learning and a hope for the integration of service-learning with creative writing at the university level. I have previously enrolled in a service-learning course taught by the same instructor used in this study (which brought about the idea for this study). I am an avid supporter of service-learning as a vehicle for deeper understanding of one's discipline in higher education.

In order to account for this researcher bias, I strived to maintain a neutral, open-ended approach to data collection. I also enlisted three faculty members at my university, all of whom have avid experience in educational research, to maintain a close and neutral eye on all data collection and analysis procedures, including my primary dissertation chair member. His background in English education provides ample expertise in a similar field without the bias toward service-learning as a viable pedagogical method in creative writing.

One other notable risk in the study is my own selection of which structured reflection prompts students used to complete their journal entries. The instructor gave me a list of approximately twenty different structured reflection prompts, some of which overlapped in

context. I chose seven, which students used throughout the semester. This presents a challenge to the integrity of the study. For example, the sixth structured reflection question leads students to critically reflect almost directly upon this study's research question (students have to think about their own writing processes in regards to their service-learning experiences). Some readers could interpret this as "baiting" the participants. However, this type of question is one that the instructor of the course would have addressed regardless of my involvement in the study. With that in mind, I strive to maintain neutrality while getting as close to answering the research questions as possible.

Summary

This chapter outlined the case upon which the study was based, and then detailed the study design and the methods used to select a sample. It also introduced and described each of the participants in detail and explained the types of data used in the study. The data analysis methods were outlined and the ways in which data was to be presented was also explained. This chapter served to provide a detailed description of how the study was built, implemented, organized, and presented. The following chapter details the findings of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

<u>Overall Findings</u>

The purpose of this study was to investigate how seven creative writing students experienced the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with an optional service-learning component. After completion of the data analysis, I found that three larger themes emerged from the data, reflecting varying transformational experiences: (1) service-learning impacted students' writing processes, (2) service-learning generated reflection about the impact of creative writing on the self and the community, and (3) service-learning generated reflection about service-learning's impact on the self and the community. Therefore, I was able to confirm that all of these seven participants experienced some type of transformation in their writing processes, though each in different ways: some in content, some in how they found inspiration to write, and some by reflection on their teaching experiences and the impact of those experiences on their writing. I also found that service-learning impacted these students in ways that I did not anticipate. Service-learning impacted their abilities to self-reflect and reflect on their surrounding communities and also increased or awakened their senses of civic duty. In the focus group proceedings, when asked directly, some students claimed to experience no transformation, though their dialogue in structured reflections and focus group transcriptions suggested otherwise. Based on the data collected, I found that my findings generally confirm the positive link between service-learning and creative writing for these particular students, however sometimes not in the way I expected.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter will detail the findings in the data which both confirm and disconfirm Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory. First, I will remind the reader of the research questions for this study. Then, I will remind the reader of the data analysis strategies used in the analysis process. Next, the three central themes which emerged from the analysis are presented, documenting specific evidence of the transformation which took place. Following these three thematic patterns, this chapter will then move into more specific language used by the students which evidenced Mezirow's transformational theory as well as evidenced the voice of Dewey's philosophies on education, civic action, and the arts. The chapter will be completed with three vignettes of three of the students from the course, in order to provide the reader with a glimpse of their experiences with service-learning.

Failure to Complete Course: Mary and Jennifer

It is important to note that Jennifer and Mary dropped out of the course prior to their service experiences. Jennifer provided a first sample of writing, a poem, and also participated in the first focus group proceeding. She also wrote a first reflection, however dropped out of the course prior to her first service-learning meeting. Mary showed up to the first class where we discussed participating in the study, however dropped the course before the first focus group proceeding and did not turn in any student writing samples, nor any structured reflections.

Research Questions

The research question for this study asks: How do seven university creative writing students experience the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with a service-learning component?

The first sub-question to this research question asks: Is there evidence of "transformation" in these students' perceptions of the process of creative writing, as suggested by Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory?

And the second sub-question asks: How does that evidence manifest itself?

More specifically, I was looking at how creative writing students' writing processes changed in terms of either content, how students found inspiration to write, or in any other way. Students' talents and/or abilities to write were not considered for the purposes of this study.

Analysis Approach

As stated in the methods section, I used both an inductive (emic) and deductive (etic) approach to the data analysis. Therefore, I searched the data initially looking for themes or patterns which emerged from the data naturally, then cross-coded across data types. Then, after initial analysis, I returned to the data and applied the two conceptual frameworks which guide this study—Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory and Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophies on the relationship between civic action, literature, and the arts, searching for specific speech or dialogue which evidenced some form of transformation. These two approaches to data analysis will be referenced in the following analysis.

Description of the Data

Three larger themes emerged from the data, reflecting these varying transformational experiences for these students: (1) service-learning impacted students' writing processes, (2) service-learning generated reflection about the impact of creative writing on the self and the community, and (3) service-learning generated reflection about service-learning's impact on the self and the community. Therefore, based on the data collected in comparison with the literature,

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I found that my findings confirm the positive link between service-learning and creative writing for these seven creative writing students, however sometimes not in the way I expected. The following sections review the three central themes which emerged from the data.

<u>Central Theme One: Service-Learning Generates Reflection on Writing Processes</u>

Service-learning had a direct impact on most of the students' writing processes, though the way service-learning impacted their writing processes varied. When asked directly during the focus group proceedings whether or not the service experience impacted their writing processes, three of the students claimed that the experience did not impact their writing processes significantly, though one student, Ryan, retracted from the statement and claimed that he was affected differently than he thought he would have been prior to the start of the service-learning experience. One student, Alicia, asserted that the experience significantly affected her writing processes. Upon the initial view of the data, it appeared that students' writing processes were relatively unaffected. However, when reading through the structured reflection entries and poring over the student writing samples, it became apparent that most students' writing processes were impacted even though they did not necessarily realize or consider it during the focus group proceedings. After delving deeper into the data, I discerned three distinct ways in which students' writing processes were affected: one, in writing technique, two, in the way in which students found inspirations or ideas, and three, in students' reasons or motivations for writing.

Writing Technique

Alicia was the most adamant about her writing processes being affected by her service-learning experience. Alicia worked with memory loss patients at Emeritus, a local assisted living facility with a memory loss division. Prior to the start of the semester, Alicia said that she

typically sat at her computer and wrote a quick paragraph about an idea she had, and returned to that paragraph later to write more about it. Following her service experience, in her post-semester focus group session, Alicia asserted that she was more able to incorporate logic, clarity, and creativity into her writing, and also unearthed a new love of poetry and odd-word combinations (Focus Group Transcriptions, p.36). Prior to the start of the semester, Alicia hoped that by working with memory loss patients she would be able to learn from those residents how to shut down the logical part of her brain and get in touch with "basic emotion" (p.5). After the semester ended, she claimed that she learned to do this over the course of the semester.

Alicia's writing samples evidenced an application of her new interest in "odd-word combinations" and abstract language (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 36). Her first piece was a short fiction story about a young man tripping on acid and encountering an experience with Jesus who changed him and his perceptions on religion. Her second piece was another short fiction piece about a teenage boy who was on his way to a Star Wars convention with his girlfriend when he was taken hostage by two bank robbers in a bank. The protagonist, normally a meek and shy young man, personified the Klingon warrior he was dressed like, and ended up taking out both bank robbers in a blind fury. Alicia used a different style of writing in this short story, emphasizing more stylistic methods such as alliteration and placed more emphasis on imagery in her second piece. Though her growth as a writer could be attributed to a typical growth experienced after taking two creative writing courses that semester and learning about craft, style, and use of language, it is plausible that Alicia's experience working with the elderly and her assertion that her service experience helped deepen her clarity and creativity are evidence of her service experiencing transforming her writing processes.

One interesting analogy Alicia used to describe her service experience and its impact on her use of odd-word combinations was in the case of June, one of her residents who suffered from dementia. June was either socially withdrawn or was "blissfully ignorant" (Structured Reflections, p. 9) of her surroundings on other days. Some days, June contributed and spoke often, and other days, she would not speak at all. During one session, June was "the life of the party" (p. 10), repeating phrases rhythmically, like a chant, and made everyone laugh. She exclaimed, "So black today! So white today!" (p.10). Alicia interpreted this to mean that she was aware and present and knew it was one of her more lucid days when, Alicia describes, " the darkness and haze retreated long enough for her to really participate in a meaningful way" (p. 10). Alicia reflected on this moment: "In these moments, when I understand her seemingly pointless banter, it cuts to the core of me in a way that no ordinary words can…June is teaching me how to write through my own creative 'dark days'. In many ways, she is the teacher, and I am the student" (p. 10). In this way, Alicia is perhaps the most assertive of the participants that the service-learning experience impacted her writing.

Others felt similarly about the service experience's impact on writing technique. Courtney maintained in the focus group that the service-learning experience at the same assisted-living facility, Emeritus, did not impact her writing process. However, earlier in the focus group proceedings, Courtney said that she didn't really feel any different, "except I learned different ways to get past, like, writer's block" (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 33). Further, in one of her structured reflections Courtney wrote, "I realized that when writing about my own memories, I can use the same techniques to access different areas of my brain and find all the stored away stories I have" (p. 33). She continued that, "by helping them open their minds and think creatively, it also helped me do the same" (p. 33). This further confirmed that Courtney

experienced a change in her writing technique, as she was acquiring new tools to access memories or enhance her writing and critically reflecting on this realization.

Courtney's writing samples verify this change in her perception of her writing technique. Courtney turned in a piece of short nonfiction in her pre-semester sample detailing the memories of her final years in high school with her best friend, whom she remained close with into her first years in college. The second piece of writing was a short nonfiction piece which creatively reflected on her writing processes. It is unclear whether or not Courtney was prompted to write the short nonfiction piece about her writing process by another instructor, or if this was her own idea. This self-reflection, which varied significantly from her more personal and "lighter" piece on friendship, seemed to confirm her change in self-perception and self-awareness. It is possible, but not clearly stated, that Courtney could have experienced a growth in her means of viewing the world from a larger lens.

Inspirations

In addition to writing techniques, some participants experienced a change in how they found ideas to write. Prior to the start of their service experiences, students almost unanimously insisted that they used observations, notebooks, reading books, conversations with people, and general personal life experiences to find ideas to write (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 7, 8, 9). After their service experiences, students had the same general strategies for coming up with ideas to write about, however some students found that their service experiences helped generate ideas for their writing, which for some confirmed their hopes at the start of the semester.

Laura was a good example of this change. Laura visited Boys Town and worked with at-risk teens struggling with various home and social challenges. In her structured reflections, Laura

admitted to hoping that her service experience would help her write from different points of view and would help her to generate more realistic dialogue (Structured Reflections, p. 49). Toward the end of her service experience, Laura realized this change, noting also that the experience "made [her] think more about why a story works" (p. 49). She also said in the focus group session that although she experienced no significant change, her teaching experience did in fact generate more ideas for characters (p.33). Another participant, Tara, found ideas for characters as well. Tara taught at a local elementary school in a lower middle class urban school district. In the focus group, she said that her students helped trigger ideas and characters that she could write about (p. 33). However, during the focus group, when asked if she thought her writing processes changed after her service experience, she said no (p. 36). The remaining participant, Ryan, saw no change in his writing processes (p.36), except to say that he appreciated his ability to write more after this experience.

Impact of Teaching Experience on Student Writing

All of the participants were required to teach some aspect of creative writing at their service sites. The teaching element of the service experience impacted the participants, some in their writing itself and others in the way they perceived writing after the experience of teaching. Courtney reflected that her teaching experience helped her to gain a more realistic and raw sense of what teaching was about. She said at the start of the semester that she had an unrealistic vision of what her service experience would be. Prior to walking into the assisted living facility, Courtney imagined she would be teaching in a classroom with a whiteboard, tables and chairs all in a row, and that the teaching and learning would happen smoothly (Structured Reflections, p. 36.). She quickly realized her experience would be drastically different as the elderly residents

filed in on the first day, some openly talking but some quiet, and some unable to write or interact at all. Further into the semester, Courtney realized that the experience was "pushing [her] to be a better leader and more innovative thinker" (p. 34).

Alicia had a similar experience. Alicia stated in her reflection later in the semester that "the student learns through teaching" (p. 3). During one of Alicia's visits one of the residents, Betsy, was upset and not sure where she was. She was panicking because she was confused. Alicia tended to avoid Betsy when she acted this way. On this particular day another resident, Barbara, who was typically mean and negative, sat with Betsy and held her hand. Betsy calmed and even became happy and smiling. Alicia reflected on this moment, observing that it was a learning experience for her as a teacher. She learned that perhaps she should try new teaching approaches when something didn't work the first time (p. 8). This type of deeper reflection is evidence of Alicia's service experience's impact on her teaching methods. She verifies this self-reflection by saying that "…it has been said that a writer learns to write by writing. If we take that a step further we can say that the writer is taught how to write by teaching others how to write" (p. 3). Alicia's reflection on teaching and writing is the perfect analogy for Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory.

More important to this study though is how students' teaching experiences impacted the participants' writing. As stated previously, Courtney's experience in teaching at Emeritus helped her to realize that when writing about her memories, she could use the same techniques she was teaching to access her own memories and stories (p. 33). She said that "by helping them open their minds and think creatively, it also helped me do the same" (p. 33). It is clear that Courtney's teaching experience positively impacted her writing in the way she utilized her own teaching tools for her own writing. Further, Tara and Laura, as stated earlier, found that their

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teaching experiences also helped them take away tools to better their own writing (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 33; Structured Reflections, p. 39).

<u>Central Theme Two: Service-Learning Generates Reflection on Perceptions of the Impact of</u>

<u>Creative Writing on the Self and the Community</u>

Another theme which emerged from the data centered around a larger reflection on creative writing, and more specifically, how the participants perceived creative writing both in and outside of the university before and after their service experiences.

Appreciation of Creative Writing and Communication

Prior to the start of the semester, most of the participants agreed that creative writing existed everywhere, both inside and outside of the university. More specifically, the participants tended to agree that creative writing at its most basic element was a form of communication. Alicia said that "writing is everywhere" (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 22), and Laura said that creative writing underlies everything, and that "everyone wants to be creative in their own ways" (p.11). Courtney and Laura were excited to hear "people's stories" because that was creative writing (p. 13).

After their service experiences, some students discovered a new appreciation of this observation that creative writing and "people's stories" exist everywhere. Though Ryan maintained in the focus group that he saw no direct changes in his writing processes, he found that his writing had been affected in a different way and was fascinated by this realization (Structured Reflections, p. 20). He said that his experience working with the elderly at Emeritus helped him to deepen his appreciation of writing, his ability to write, and his ability to express and communicate, especially in the sense of his personal well-being and emotional stability

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(Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 30). Rather than noticing a change in *how* he wrote, Ryan noticed more a change in how he saw writing as a basic and vital form of communication (Structured Reflections, p. 41). He said, "It has affected my writing because I can. It has affected my writing because I am still capable of going and coming as I please" (p. 19). Ryan realized that the inability to write and or express themselves creatively can affect people significantly (p. 25). Alicia agreed with this, saying that without creative writing, the world would be a "bad, boring, sorry place" (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 34).

Early in the semester, Courtney wrote in her structured reflection that "words define what we know around us and connect us with each other. Writing is what brings those words together in such a way that it can reveal, touch, or motivate someone" (Structured Reflections, p. 36). Courtney worked with Ryan at the assisted living facility Emeritus and verified Ryan's observation that writing creatively is a vital form of communication. She also confirmed her own earlier observation about creative writing impacting others, saying that she could see "how their stories were still there, their writing was still there" (p. 25), when reflecting on her elderly "students." After working at Boys Town, Laura confirmed these observations as well, noting that creative writing has a "great impact on the world" (Structured Reflections, p. 48).

<center>Creative Writing as Therapy</center>

Along with a deeper appreciation of creative writing as an important form of communication, some students noticed that creative writing could be used as a form of therapy for those in need. The students agreed for the most part that they used creative writing as a form of self-therapy. At the start of the semester, Tara five admitted that creative writing was cathartic (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 13) and Jennifer agreed that it is "the ultimate therapist" (p. 13).

Laura said that she wrote to "get it all out" (p. 14), as well as to share ideas. Laura continued with the hope that she would be able to help her students "release their creativity" (p. 13) and that students would use writing to "work out whatever they are going through" (Structured Reflections, p. 49) . After her service experience, Laura realized this hope. She said that her students, at-risk youth, had "so much heart smiling up at [her] from their text" (Structured Reflections, p. 45). On one occasion, Laura encountered an internal struggle after asking one of her students how her weekend went. The student replied that she tried to get in contact with her mother who hadn't responded to her in two weeks. The student then brushed it off, saying, "I have to worry about myself right now" (p. 46). Laura was unable to respond and reacted emotionally to the situation. She directed the student back to her desk and her writing. In Laura's reflection on the moment, Laura pondered, "After all, what better therapy could I offer than writing?" (p. 47). It seems as though Laura realized that creative writing can be therapeutic both inside and out of the university.

Central Theme Three: Service-Learning Generates Reflection on Perceptions of the Impact of Service-Learning on the Self and the Community

Perhaps one of the most interesting developments of this study was the impact service-learning had on students' sense of civic duty and ability to look outwardly at the effect of their services on the community. After reviewing the data a second time, it became evident that Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophy on civic engagement and the positive link between literature, service, and the arts, existed within the confines of this study, although not with every participant.

Prior to the start of their service experiences, there was an overarching sense of hope amongst the participants. Laura said that she hoped to become more aware of other people in her community and see what the world was like outside of her "safe bubble" (Structured Reflections, p. 49). Alicia hoped to learn the value of academia/community partnership (p. 14). Ryan hoped to be able to better understand the difficulties of the elderly. It is important to note the particular sense of uncertainty and idealism within these participants prior to the start of their service experiences. These hopes are an important element in the transformation which some of these students experienced in terms of their increased sense of civic duty.

Civic Duty and Civic Action

Toward the end of the semester, some of the students' hopes for the semester were realized; Ryan encountered perhaps the most impactful increase in civic duty in his service experience. Ryan was upset at the state of the environment in which the assisted living facility residents lived. He claimed that the facility reminded him of a funeral home and that he and others felt uncomfortable there, because it reminded him of death (Structured Reflections, p. 24). Further, the administration repeatedly failed to add his creative writing class to the facility's activity newsletter. Ryan said that all of the negative feelings he had toward the service project revolved around the administration of the building. This sparked an emotional response from him and a desire to help those residents (p. 25). In one instance, his reasons for disliking the administration of the facility were, to him, summed up succinctly when one of his residents said "The people in charge should be nicer to you because you might stop coming to visit us" (p. 25). He called the residents "voiceless" and "powerless" (p. 26). Ryan knew that he was helping his residents by simply spending time with them. He said, "They come [to his class] because they

want to know that someone cares about what they have to say. They come because they want to be listened to…This project is about compassion" (p. 26).

This sense of civic duty was not present in any of Ryan's data at the start of the semester. In the following reflection, he said, "It is not about me, it is not about her. It is about the state of our country and the future of our children" (p. 21). Ryan spent much time pondering this observation, and further related this sense of civic action to creative writing and his own reasons and ability to write:

> One thing I know for certain is that the pen will always be mightier than the sword…I hope that I will have something meaningful to say. I hope that I will have the strength and the ability if necessary to write what needs to be written, whatever that may be. This service-learning project has affected me this semester because I have figured out that sometimes it is not about writing, it is about righting (p. 21).

This outward view away from the self about why Ryan writes and for whom he writes is dramatically different than his perceptions about writing from the beginning of the semester, where he said in the focus group proceedings that he wrote "for fun" sometimes, or wrote because he was fascinated with language (p. 13).

Courtney, who worked with Ryan at the same assisted living facility, said she experienced a sense of "renewed idealism" (Structured Reflections, p. 33) after her service experience, claiming it made her realize that "we can only do our parts in life and let the bigger painting be enhanced by our small brush strokes" (p 33). Courtney believed that her elderly participants were emotionally impacted by their experiences with creative writing, as she was. She said that she'd been telling her participants, "…you guys don't think that you are writers, but you are" (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 30). At the end of the semester focus group, Courtney was excited to create a compilation of the assisted living members' writings.

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Tara reflected on her service experience in the post-semester focus group saying that, although she did not experience a significant change in her writing, she felt that the instructor wanted her to experience volunteering and knowing that she could have an impact on people (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 31).

Alicia experienced the same outward view away from the self and civic responsibility as Ryan after his service experience at Emeritus, though Alicia expressed this outward view of the world prior to the service experience as well. In the first focus group proceedings, Alicia said that she found ideas for inspiration from current social and political issues as well as about a problem or conflict (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 18). Following her service experience, Alicia, when asked the same question about what she liked to write about, said again that she liked to write about current issues. She also said that what made her "stay up until 2 am writing" (p. 32) was when she felt she had to get a point across about something people wanted to hear. Judging from her responses earlier in the semester, I would venture to say that Alicia had a strong sense of civic duty prior to the service experience, and that it was only enhanced by the service experience.

Though the student writing samples collected showed little evidence of change in students' writing processes overall, they did verify some of the assertions that participants made about their service experiences, particularly in themes which emerged from the writing itself, or writing content. For example, Ryan seemed to evolve to thinking in a more outward fashion, away from the self and toward larger social and global issues in his structured reflection entries (p. 37), but not in his focus group transcriptions. In fact, he said in the focus group that he believed the instructor wanted them to participate in service-learning to help the image of UCF and to "save the residents" (p. 37). His tone was rather sarcastic. However, in his structured

reflections Ryan used phrases such as "this is indicative of our society as a whole" (p. 23) and "this is why I view Emeritus as a microcosm" (p. 23) when reflecting on the poor conditions of the facility. His evolving sense of civic duty seems to be reflected in his post-semester sample writing as well. In the beginning of the semester, Ryan turned in a short, comedic fiction piece written from the perspective of a dog chasing two squirrels who have "taken over" his territory. At the end of the semester, Ryan turned in a long poem titled "The Book and the Gun" which pondered the necessity to lay down guns and promote peace through words. Judging from the context of these two pieces, it is safe to say that Ryan, with regard to these individual pieces, is consistent in his post-semester outward interest in civic action, promoting peace and "changing the world."

The following table provides a clear visual summary of the various themes emanating from the data and how each participant relates to each theme.

Table 3: Thematic Patterns

Central Theme One: Service-Learning Generate Reflection on Writing Processes

      Writing Technique   Alicia, Courtney

      Inspirations   Laura

      Impact of Teaching Experience on Student Writing   Alicia, Courtney, Tara, Laura

Central Theme Two: Service-Learning Generates Reflection on Perceptions of the Impact of

Creative Writing on the Self and the Community

      Appreciation of Creative Writing   Alicia, Ryan, Laura

      Creative Writing as Therapy   Courtney, Laura

Central Theme Three: Service-Learning Generates Reflection on Perceptions of the Impact of

Service-Learning on the Self and the Community

      Civic Duty and Civic Action   Alicia, Ryan, Courtney

<u>Evidence of Mezirow's (2000) "Transformation"</u>

All but one participant saw their service-learning experience as transformative in some capacity and as more valuable than traditional classroom work. Alicia was perhaps the most adamant about this connection between service-learning and transfer of knowledge in the creative writing classroom. Prior to the start of the semester, Alicia said she was excited to help her memory loss residents to tell their stories (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 15). At the start of the post-semester focus group, Alicia was the only participant who stated directly that she benefited more from the service-learning than from the course itself (p. 31). She said that the instructor of the course was "smart" (p. 37) to offer students a service experience and should

continue to do so in future courses. She even went on to say, "I feel like all creative writers, at some point in their experiences, should be required to work with memory loss patients. Period, end of story. Required. They have to" (p. 37).

Returning to Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory, however, when Alicia reflected on her service-learning experience, her language evidenced a transformative experience. She said in her final reflection that service-learning was a "wonderful, dynamic, educational endeavor" (Structured Reflections, p. 2) and continued to connect service-learning, creative writing, and student learning by saying that it is one thing for an instructor to teach how to overcome an issue, and another thing for a student "actually struggle" (p. 3) through that same difficulty. She went on to say that "service-learning is a teacher like no other" (p. 5). Her critical reflection upon this moment and transference of the "struggle" to application to her own writing processes evidences the transformation which Mezirow (2000) states is possible during this type of critical reflection.

Ryan succinctly affirmed Mezirow's (2000) theory on transformation when he said "Nothing can replace experience" (Structured Reflections, p. 16). He went on to say that "transference of skills marks the culmination of true knowledge" (p. 16). He explained that he perceived his service experience to cultivate this type of transference of skills.

Courtney confirmed this observation in an interesting way when she discussed her role as a teacher of creative writing to a different, older generation. In her final structured reflection, Courtney said that she liked how she was teaching the elderly creative writing even though she was showing them skills they already had but didn't realize they had. Then she said, "It's a new form of education. Rather than being told what [creative writing] is, let the students be prompted to find it within themselves" (p. 31). Ironically, Courtney touches upon Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory without realizing it when discussing her residents' learning experiences.

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<u>Student Sample Writing</u>

Though Alicia, Ryan, and Courtney provided interesting and engaging student writing samples which reflected the transformations evident in their structured reflections and focus group transcriptions, the remaining participants failed to provide both the pre and post-semester writing samples. Laura did not turn in a post-semester sample of writing to compare to her pre-semester sample and Tara did not turn in a pre-semester sample of writing. Therefore, I was unable to use either's writing to verify or disconfirm their focus group transactions or structured reflection entries.

<u>Evidence of Disconfirming Evidence or Negative Cases</u>

Writing Processes—No Change

When asked directly whether or not service-learning impacted their writing processes, Ryan, Courtney, and Tara all promptly said no (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 33). Although their structured reflections implied otherwise (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 7, 33, 36; Structured Reflections, p. 10, 33, 34, 39), these three participants did not believe during the focus group proceedings that the service experiences impacted or transformed their writing processes. Laura hoped for a change in her writing processes at the start of the semester (Structured Reflections, p. 49) but in the post-semester focus group claimed she felt no change (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 35). However, her language in the focus group suggested otherwise. She said, when asked what she learned about herself, if anything: "This has made me think more about why a story works" (p. 45). Evidently, there is an inconsistency in Laura's perceptions of how her writing processes were affected by the service experience. The same inconsistency existed for Ryan, Courtney, and Tara when commenting on their writing processes in the focus group.

Although Ryan, Courtney, and Tara showed evidence of critical reflection and therefore transformation in their structured reflections (p. 10, 33, 34, 39), it is my belief that Laura's writing processes were indirectly affected by the service experience but perhaps not enough for her to "critically reflect" upon the learning experience as Mezirow's (2000) transformation would require.

The following table provides a comparison of some of the confirming and disconfirming evidence of transformation in students' service-learning experiences, specifically in students' language in both the focus group transcriptions and structured reflections. This table is presented to provide a visual example of the language students used when exhibiting "transformative" language, as well as when exhibiting language which disconfirms the research query.

Table 4: Confirming and Disconfirming Evidence

Theme	Validation of Research Question	Negative Cases
Writing Process (Overall)	Alicia: "I would say yes. I've used odd examples in my writing and I would have never used them before. And they work." Alicia:"It has been said that a writer learns to write by writing. If we take that a step further we can say that the writer is taught how to write by teaching others how to write."	Courtney: "Not significantly." Ryan: "Not really significantly." Tara: "No, not really."
Process, con't. (Inspiration)	Tara, [found ideas for characters] Laura: "Made me think more about why a story works."	Laura: "No, no real impact" Ryan: "Not in any significant way. Just changing my own personal process with being grateful of my ability that I can communicate."
Teaching and Writing	Courtney: "By helping them open their minds and think creatively, it also helped me do the same."	
Appreciation of Writing	Ryan: "It has affected my writing because I can." Alicia: "… [without writing] the world would be a 'bad, boring, sorry place'" Laura: "…great impact on the world"	
Writing as Therapy	Laura: "…so much heart smiling up at me from their text" Laura: "After all, what better therapy could I offer than writing?"	
Civic Duty /Action	Ryan: "This project is about compassion" Courtney: "We can only do our parts in life and let the bigger painting be enhanced by our small brush strokes"	

Alicia, Courtney, and Laura: Three Vignettes

The following section attempts to provide the experiences of three of the participants in the study from varying backgrounds and who had varying experiences with their service sites. It is my hope that these vignettes provide a vicarious glimpse into these three participants' experiences prior to, during, and following their service experiences.

Alicia

Alicia had a deep appreciation of creative writing as early as middle school, when she won a poetry contest after writing nearly twenty drafts of the same poem. Her love of creative

writing was truly realized in college, when Alicia decided to return to school to sharpen her skills as an aspiring writer. Alicia was 38 years old when she enrolled in "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing" and immediately jumped upon the service-learning option in the course. She decided to work at an assisted living facility called Emeritus. She had done some volunteer work with assisted living patients in the past but never in the context of teaching the residents the basics of creative writing. She chose this site and particularly the memory loss ward because she had cared for her grandfather, who suffered from memory loss in the later years of his life. Alicia hoped that the memory loss patients could teach her a thing or two about writing, as much as she hoped to bring "color and texture" to their life stories (Structured Reflection, p. 14).

Alicia met two women at Emeritus who will likely never leave her: June and Barbara. June was, in the final season of her life, quite withdrawn and often depressed, which Alicia guessed was from a feeling of worthlessness on the days that June was more lucid and aware of her own inabilities to communicate. Alicia was hopeful to get through to June, who had a "radiantly aimless" smile (p. 9). During her first creative writing session, June was quite involved, but on her second session, did not speak at all. Alicia felt defeated at the moment, but encouraged June with a "maybe next time" (p. 9). In the third session, June came to life, repeating her ideas for a story until they became like a rhythmic chant or song. She clucked her tongue, blew kisses, and laughed uncontrollably, causing the other residents to laugh and sing with her. At this point, June said "So black today! So white today!" (p. 10), which Alicia interpreted to mean that today was a good, lucid day for June. Alicia reflected that she could get through her own creative "dark days" the same way June did.

Barbara, whom Alicia called "Mrs. Internal Censor" (p. 8), was often a rather sullen and cranky resident, though talkative nonetheless. Barbara often argued with Alicia, herself, and the other residents, claiming that stories were false and "evidence" was needed to "prove" the picture-stories were real (p. 8). Alicia believed that Barbara was not allowing herself to grapple with imagination because of the loss of her own reality—hence the title "Mrs. Internal Censor." One day, Alicia showed Barbara a picture with a house in it. The residents began talking about the house, coming up with a story about the house, when suddenly Barbara yelled "That's a bunch of horse shit, that house is not 100 miles away! This is stupid!" (p. 8). Barbara began ranting about the reasons that the story won't work, unknowingly telling her own story as she went, making up her own characters: "She stays up with children all night, that's why she's tired. That mind is not normal. Her mind is not normal. Something is setting her off. The young people have a better line of reasoning than this. Maybe we should ask the young people who are interested in this kind of thing. They have problems, but they are making the most of it, trying to help each other because they have quite a mess there. They want to pick it up and put it together again" (p. 8). Alicia reflects on this outburst of beautiful and unguided poetry in language, and is stunned by her own realization of how poetry can surface in the oddest ways. She said, "There is no way that a moment like this can be captured or explained to a student and have as much impact as living in the moment itself. As a writer, I am inspired" (p. 8).

Following her service experience, Alicia reflected on learning about her chosen craft through interaction with these residents:

> There is something special about the touch of someone's hand, the light in someone's eyes, the sad or regretful tone of voice, the excitement of a new environment - these things are the stuff of "guess you had to be there" - they bring sincerity and believability to writing that might not be there otherwise. I feel inspired to put together a nice

collection of stories from the memory loss patients and publish it as flash fiction or poetry. Perhaps the proceeds could be used to benefit Alzheimer's memory loss research or provide funding for life enriching activities for those with memory loss. My concept of creative writing has become more inclusive than it was. I have experienced firsthand that there are ways that creative writing can be a tool to promote community and a sense of worth among forgotten or misunderstood people groups (p. 5).

Alicia looked forward to putting together a small chapbook of the work the residents at Emeritus had done that semester. She also planned to return to Emeritus on her own in the future. She participated in her university's Service-Learning Showcase that year and became a quite avid supporter toward the end of her experiences. She said that she would never forget her experiences at Emeritus.

Courtney

Courtney was 20 years old at the start of the spring semester when she enrolled in "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing." Courtney had a love for telling stories from the times of her early childhood growing up in Montego Bay, Jamaica. She would spend hours sitting in a patch of banana trees, conjuring up various adventures. In fourth grade, she wrote her first book about a monster who ate children. Her love for writing followed her into her early adult years, and she knew she had to pursue a degree in creative writing. Courtney signed up for the service-learning option so that she could learn a little more about herself and others. She purposely selected a group of elderly assisted living residents so that she could experience working with another generation. She hoped to learn from them what she could not learn on her own.

Courtney realized her own idealism almost immediately, on the first day to her service site. She had imagined a whiteboard and tables and chairs neatly arranged, and a group of seniors eager to learn how to write. What she got on the first day was a small activity room and six

women who shuffled in, smiling or staring expectantly. She quickly realized this would be a challenge for her.

Grace was one of Courtney's "students." She rarely spoke, was hunched over from ninety-three years of life, and had "sweet, sparkling" eyes (p. 34). She was small and fragile and her few words carried a "thick, Spanish accent" from her years in Puerto Rico (p. 34). Grace's mind was not damaged by memory loss, but she still remained withdrawn and quiet during their creative writing sessions. At one point, Courtney asked Grace to talk about her husband, who had passed away years before. All she said was that she missed him. Courtney tried again, and asked Grace to write about the water. Instead, Grace wrote her and her service partner, Ryan, a sweet letter thanking them for their time and for being her friend. Courtney tried again, asking Grace to write about fire. Grace wrote an exact replica of the first letter. So, Courtney simply smiled and gave Grace a hug. Courtney realized at this moment that Grace was simply ready to die and be with her husband (p. 34).

Her experiences continued to be more and more challenging, but Courtney enjoyed each setback. Anna, one of her residents, had Down's syndrome, and could not write. Courtney had her draw pictures and helped Anna by transcribing her words. Louise couldn't write either, so Courtney transcribed her work and realized that Louise was one of the best writers there. Some of the ladies had dementia and Courtney had to get creative to find their stories.

Courtney found her time at Emeritus to be invaluable. Some of the residents brought in old pictures of themselves as children and she saw firsthand the long lives these women lived. The stories become real. She said, "I can see so much youth in them despite their old age. I realize that they are just like me yet more experienced" (p. 33). Her idealism, the same that

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brought her to expect neat rows of tables and chairs and a whiteboard, was renewed by the six women she met at Emeritus. She reflected on this by saying, "My renewed idealism was found when I began listening and reading the stories they tell us each week we go. It made me realize that we can only do our parts in life and let the bigger painting be enhanced by our small brush strokes" (p. 33). Courtney saw that the techniques she was using with her residents could also aid her in her own writing. She realized that she had to be a more innovative thinker and teacher, but also a more innovative writer (p. 33).

<center>Laura</center>

Laura was 21 years old when she enrolled in "Theory and Practice of Creative Writing." Laura grew up with a love of writing which she kept relatively to herself, until she read *The Hobbit* by Tolkien and was inspired to write more and more. Her mother discovered her notes and stories and encouraged her to pursue her love of writing in school. When Laura's teachers showed an interest and support of her endeavors, she decided to go to college and major in creative writing and screenwriting. She was a bit more quiet and introverted than the other participants and only spoke during lulls in the conversation, or when I specifically asked her a question. Laura was sweet and planned to get out of her comfort zone, what she referred to as her "safe bubble" (p. 47) by serving Boys' Town, a local treatment facility, shelter, and educational facility for at-risk youth, and those young adults who suffered from broken homes, abuse, or a history of criminal activity. Laura hoped to gain from her experiences at Boys' Town, particularly to gain experience in developing characters and generating more realistic dialogue. She was cautioned not to expect to see the same children at each meeting, because the children

were highly mobile and rarely stayed long. She did, however, hope to reach out to them and help them with their life struggles.

Laura did not describe her experiences at Boys' Town with the same fervor and energy as Alicia and Courtney, even from the beginning. In contrast to Courtney's idealistic and hopeful vigor going in to Emeritus, Laura said that she "did not have time for that nonsense" (p. 46). But she was not pessimistic either. She was hopeful to reach out to some children but Laura was often met with "brick wall attitudes" (p. 46) and even berating comments. The children were keenly aware of their social positions and were cautious not to appear interested or scholarly to each other. When she asked if anyone had any questions, she was always met with silence. Most of the children were far behind in their reading and writing abilities, but Laura said their stories were equally as interesting and creative as the other nonetheless (p. 44). Though she was typically met with silence when addressing the class, when she would approach the children one-on-one, they did ask questions. They asked how to make their stories better, what college was like, or what other types of writing were out there (p. 44). For the most part, though, Laura's students were given an assignment and sat quietly to write. And Laura knew that these children enjoyed the assignments. It was a break for them, a break from their lives and from their other classes (p. 44). Laura saw "so much heart smiling up from their texts" (p. 47). Laura realized that the children were writing for themselves, not for an audience. This made her think about her own writing, and how she needed to make sure she was writing for herself and enjoying her stories before she thought about her audience. She also found that she enjoyed working with children, and began looking into careers like writing for animated television shows. Her desire to generate new ideas for characters and more realistic dialogue was realized.

When reflecting on her time at Boys' Town, Laura maintained her realist approach to her service experience. Laura knew she didn't change the lives of her students. She knew that most of them would continue to walk down the path of resistance both in life and in their academic endeavors, though she hoped otherwise. She said in her final reflection that, "Most of the resistance seems to be against knowledge than for it. I can only hope that my help in coordinating their creative writing will eventually help them inquire about themselves and the world around thing by using a fun constructive method" (p. 43). Laura would leave her service experience not necessarily hopeful or dramatically inspired, but changed nonetheless.

<u>Summary</u>

This chapter first addressed the three central themes which emerged from the data both on their own and within the context of Dewey's (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) educational philosophies. Each source of data, particularly the structured reflections and focus group transcriptions, was addressed during analysis procedures. The chapter then moved into documenting specific evidence of transformation according to Mezirow's (2000) theory and addressed both the confirming and disconfirming evidence found in the analysis. The chapter concluded with three vignettes of three of the participants of the study, in order to provide the reader with a firsthand look at the service experiences of the participants. The following chapter provides a more in-depth discussion of the findings, the ways in which the findings both confirm and disconfirm prior research in the fields of service-learning, composition, and creative writing, as well as addresses implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

- Hsun Tzu

Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter I will revisit the findings of the study and how the results of the study address the research question and confirm both Dewey's (1897; 1935) philosophies on civic action and the arts and Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory in these participants. Next, I will show how the results help to confirm the existing literature on the connection between service-learning and composition. Then, the chapter will move into how the study both confirms and contradicts some of the literature on creative writing and the workshop. Next, the chapter will detail how the study helped to fill a gap in the literature on service-learning in relation to creative writing. I will then move into implications for practice and suggestions for future research. The chapter will conclude with some final reflections.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how seven creative writing students experienced the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with a service-learning component. As stated in the data analysis, three larger themes emerged from the data, reflecting varying transformational experiences: (1) service-learning impacted students' writing processes, (2) service-learning generated reflection about the impact of creative writing on the self and the community, and (3) service-learning generated reflection about service-learning's impact on the self and the community. I was able to confirm that participants experienced transformation in their writing processes, though each in different ways: some in

content, some in how they found inspiration to write, and some by reflection on their teaching experience's impact on their writing. I also found that service-learning impacted the students in ways that I did not anticipate. Service-learning impacted students' abilities to self-reflect and reflect on their surrounding communities and also increased or renewed some students' senses of civic duty. Although when asked directly in the focus group some students claimed to experience no transformation in their writing processes, some of their conversation in structured reflections and focus group transcriptions suggested otherwise. Based on the data collected in comparison with the literature, I found that my findings generally confirm the positive link between service-learning and creative writing for these students, however sometimes not in the way I expected.

Service-learning seemed to have a generally positive impact on the participants, however not always in their writing processes or writing content. For some, service-learning impacted their sense of civic duty. Further, Mezirow's (2000) theory on transformation was confirmed by some of the participants' experiences with service-learning as evidenced through the language used when reflecting on their service experiences both in their structured reflections and focus group transcriptions. Given that each of the students in the study was impacted positively in some way, it is my opinion that this study adds to the existing literature on the positive impact of service-learning on university writing and composition students (Cooper & Juliet, 1995; Deans, 2000; Deans & Meyer-Goncalves, 1998; Ogburn & Wallace, 1998), as well as helps to fill the gap in research on the relationship between service-learning and creative writing.

Revisiting the Conceptual Framework and Research Question

As stated in earlier chapters, the research question for this study is as follows: How do seven university creative writing students experience the process of creative writing differently

after taking a creative writing course with a service-learning component? The first sub-question to this research question asks: Is there evidence of "transformation" in these students' perceptions of the process of creative writing, as suggested by Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory? And the second sub-question asks: How does that evidence manifest itself? It is my opinion that the results of this study verify the research question and the data provides sufficient evidence of a transformation which occurred in all of the participants in terms of their writing processes, though in different ways. Despite the fact that students Ryan, Courtney, and Tara said in the focus group that they did not believe their writing processes were affected (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 33), student structured reflections and writing samples, and some of the focus group language, all seem to contradict their statements (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 7, 33, 36; Structured Reflections, p. 10, 33, 34, 39). Each participant experienced transformation differently, which was evident in their stories, reflections, and conversations during the process of data collection. Each student learned something different, and all agreed the experience was worthwhile. Though some students did not have as positive an experience as others (Tara), and though some students were more articulate and excited about about the ways in which the service experience impacted their writing processes (Alicia), I believe there is ample support in the data for a positive connection between creative writing and service-learning across various contexts for these participants.

<p align="center">Creative Writing and Service-Learning: A Positive Connection</p>

As stated in the review of literature, research has shown that service-learning has a positive impact on student academic learning outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998; Vogelsegang & Astin, 2000) and on a student's ability to

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apply knowledge in the "real world" (Bacon, 1997; Balazedah, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray, et al., 1998; Zlotkowski, 2000). Further, there is a positive relationship between service-learning, composition, and writing (Cooper & Juliet, 1995; Deans, 2000; Deans & Meyer-Goncalves, 1998; Ogburn & Wallace, 1998). The data from this study suggests that there might also be a positive relationship between service-learning and creative writing, perhaps not just in writing processes, but also in student writing content or simply affirmation of a transformation of knowledge about creative writing style and craft to "real world" applications.

Creative Writing Literature

Verification of the Creative Writing Literature

Radavich (1999) suggested that writing instructors take the next step and communicate with a non-university trained audience in order to combat the criticisms that the creative writing workshop generates self-absorbed students (Fenza, 2000; Ketzle, 2007; Radavich, 1999). It can be suggested that this study verifies the suggestion to connect writers to a non-university trained audience. The participants in this study indeed interacted with and subsequently learned from their experiences with their non-university audiences. Malachuk (2009) would likely agree, as he believed that community-based learning could teach compassion through literature, a similar field. He believed that service-learning could spark a student's sense of civic duty. Participant Ryan's experience with the assisted living facility's poor living conditions and his reflection on these injustices verifies Malachuk's presumption (Structured Reflections, p. 23).

Conflict with Creative Writing Literature

As discussed in the literature review, some creative writing critics accuse creative writing programs as producing self-absorbed, solipsistic writers. However, I didn't find that to be true

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with this particular group of participants. At the beginning of the semester, the participants

claimed that, for the most part, they found ideas to write using everyday observations, as

opposed to looking to the self and past memories for writing topics. These particular students

could have been different from the norm solely based on their willingness to participate in

service-learning (they could possess different personality traits that would render them more

selfless or observational in nature). However, given that the majority of creative writing

instructors tended to disagree with this accusation (Fenza, 2000; L. Roney, personal

communication), it is plausible that the accusations are infrequent and therefore not applicable to

this group of participants. A good example of this lack of selfishness came from Courtney's early

reflection on her expectations for service-learning, prior to the start of the project. She mused

that "sometimes you can learn more about yourself through other people than just having

personal 'you' time" (Structured Reflections, p. 37). This awareness of the need to look outside

of the self was evident prior to the project's start. It could serve as one disconfirmation of the

accusations that creative writing students are fixated on the self.

Filling the Gap

It is possible that this study could help to combat the lack of adequate research in the

relationship between service-learning and creative writing. The research question, which asks

how seven creative writing students' writing processes change or do not change as a result of

service-learning, was adequately addressed in that every student experienced a change, or

transformation, in either how they found inspiration to write, what they wrote about, or how they

used the experience to better their writing. Further, all of the students but one found they

possessed a renewed sense of civic duty and felt their service had a reciprocal impact on the

community. And even further, for two students in particular (Alicia and Ryan), Mezirow's (2000) theory on transformation was evidenced in the students' structured reflections on their service experiences. It is safe to say that there is indeed a positive connection between service-learning and creative writing on multiple levels for these students. Further research should be done to continue exploring this connection.

Implications for Practice

After reviewing the data for this study, I believe my original assumptions about the positive benefits of service-learning to creative writing students are verified, particularly for these students. As stated previously, the workshop method, in my opinion, is a vital and necessary part of a student's growth as a writer. However, I do believe that a creative writing student's writing processes could be enhanced by a service-learning experience. Further, due to the potentially life-changing impact of the service experience on certain students, such as Alicia with her memory loss residents, and even in the case of Tara and her seemingly uneventful service experience, I believe even more now that some creative writing students can realize growth as writers regardless of whether or not their service-learning times are positive or negative, while reciprocating newfound knowledge with a service to someone in need.

Should a creative writing instructor implement service-learning in his or her classroom, I believe it is essential to require students to choose a service site where they will work with marginal or at-risk members of the community. Likewise, I believe that instructors should pay particular attention to *how* students relate their writing processes and perceptions to their service experiences, rather than allowing the experience of performing a service to be the sole method of instruction in service-learning. Just as the workshop method requires active instructor facilitation

in order to be successful, I believe facilitating the service as the instructor by remaining an active participant would help to enhance the learning experience and foster transformation. Mezirow's (2000) transformational theory cannot, in my opinion, be realized unless students, as Mezirow states, critically reflect upon their experiences with their craft in mind. It is one thing for a service-learning teaching experience to have an impact on a student personally; it is another thing to have a student reflect and apply their service experiences to their craft and be required to critically reflect on how their teaching experiences impact their own writing or writing processes.

Finally, I believe that service-learning students should be required to provide weekly reflections on their service experiences as well as a final essay or presentation about their service experiences. The participants in this study were required to do both (though bi-weekly reflections were required as opposed to weekly), and the frequent communication about their service experiences seemed to help students critically reflect. However, I believe that students should be further required to respond to each other's journal entries. This was left optional to the students, and I believe it would have been helpful for them to have been required to read each other's weekly journal entries in order to see how the service-learning experiences and teaching practices were impacting them similarly and differently. This could also provide a positive and welcoming environment for those students in need of troubleshooting, and also those students experiencing emotional reactions to the service. For example, Laura experienced feeling helpless when her young, at-risk youth revealed her trouble with her mother. Laura could have felt more positive about the experience had she communicated with and was able to troubleshoot openly with her peers, learning about their own struggles with their service sites.

<u>Suggestions for Future Research</u>

Should a researcher choose to further explore the relationship between service-learning and creative writing, several suggestions for how to better address the research inquiry are as follows. First, I would suggest that the researcher collect student writing samples in the same genre if possible, in order to better compare the stylistic choices and content of the writers. Some of my students provided a sample of writing in one genre at the beginning of the semester and then in another genre at the end of the semester. This made it more difficult to assess change in the writer's content. It would be an easier and more accurate analysis if the genres were consistent, so that the researcher did not have to vacillate between the elements of two differing genres while generating assumptions about context and style difference. Further, the researcher should verify the context of the writing sample (if the student wrote it for fun or if the student was required to write the piece—and if so, to describe the assignment).

Another suggestion for future research would be to, if time and funds permitted, visit the service sites with the participants and perform more in-depth interviews with the participants immediately following the service experiences. This way, the researcher could possibly glean a richer, deeper reflection of the experience while it was fresh in the participant's mind. Additionally, the researcher could use the power of observation to note the emotional and physical environment in which the participant was working.

A third suggestion for future research would be to attempt to discern whether or not creative writing students' writing improves as a direct result of service-learning, outside of the natural growth of a writer after a semester of writing courses. It would be interesting, albeit difficult, to discern whether or not service-learning had a direct impact on student learning outcomes in the creative writing classroom.

A final suggestion for future research would be to pay particular attention to the structured reflection prompts or journal entry prompts. The instructor for this course gave me approximately 20 different reflection prompts, and I chose the seven I thought would best address the research. There is risk here of appearing to "bait" participants into responding favorably to the research question. Though I strived to maintain a neutral stance throughout the study, more careful consideration could have been taken in selecting the reflection prompts to avoid the risk of appearing to persuade research participants to respond favorably to the questions.

Summary

This chapter revisited the findings of the data collection procedures as well as revisited the conceptual framework guiding the study: Dewey's (1897; 1935) and Mezirow's (2000) educational philosophies on community engagement and transformational learning, respectively. Then, the chapter connected the findings of the study back to the existing literature on the relationship between service-learning and composition, documented the conflict between the data results and the criticisms of the workshop method in creative writing literature, as well as presented the findings of the study as a possible connection in the gap in research between service-learning and creative writing. Implications for practice as well as suggestions for future research completed the discussion.

Final Reflections

Positive vs. Negative Impacts

Toward the end of the semester, Laura said that the service-learning experience only impacted her in a small way. She expected a heart-warming experience but did not realize that

expectation. Rather, she said, she was just more aware of the trials that children have to go through sometimes to grow up. Laura seemed the most discontented with her experience. Perhaps this was because she also was dealing with the most emotionally trying situation of teaching children with broken families, children without families, and children in troubled situations, either criminally, socially, or emotionally. Though the others were working with seniors who were, according to Ryan, "drastically aware of their own mortality" (Focus Group Transcriptions, p. 23), the students working with seniors (Alicia, Ryan, and Courtney) also clearly saw how their presence in the assisted living facility positively impacted the residents, as the residents openly enjoyed their company. Laura noted in some of her early structured reflection entries that her students would often come and go, and that she would rarely see the same students, as they were highly transitional between facilities and their homes (p. 49). It was more difficult for Laura to see how she was helping the students, though she did have glimpses of hope (p. 47). Regardless of the positive or negative impact of the service experiences on the students, all of the students changed in some way because of the project which, in my opinion, suggests that service-learning positively impacts creative writing students—even if their experiences are emotionally negative.

<div align="center">Transformational Theory Analogy: Baking a Cake</div>

When attempting to articulate how I believed service-learning could impact student writing better than workshop and classroom practice alone, I struggled with an explanation and hoped that this study would serve to document the positive relationship between service-learning and creative writing, which I believed to exist. During the data analysis procedures, I read a structured reflection by Ryan which I believe perfectly reflects Mezirow's (2000)

transformational theory, and succinctly sums up the results of this study. Ryan used an analogy

about baking a cake to describe his learning experience, which I've provided below:

> Now let's say that two students took the class [on baking a cake] together. One learned the recipe from memorization without thought as to why and the other learned why the recipe worked. After the class was over both students started baking cakes. The student that memorized the recipe made the same recipe over and over again. Sure it tasted great, but it was always the same. The other student however was able to make cakes in rectangle pans, and square pans. That student knew the ratio of eggs and flour made a difference and was able to compensate. That student realized the flavor could be enhanced or diminished by changing things slightly, or perhaps by subtracting a tablespoon of cocoa and adding a tablespoon of flour and two teaspoons of raspberry extract. The second student learned the mechanics of the recipe, not just the recipe. The first student always made perfect cakes, but only one type of cake. The second student might not of been able to make perfect cakes all the time, but was able to transfer the knowledge of the process of cake baking to encompass other types of cakes. At this point you might ask who made better use of the class? Who is the more capable cake baker? Who is more versatile? Obviously the answer is the second cake baker. He or she was able to transfer the knowledge and use it in new ways. In creative ways. The second cake baker subtracted some of the flour and made brownies!! All the first cake baker had to say was, "We never did it like that!" The second cake baker didn't say anything and neither did anyone else because they were too busy chewing on the delicious brownies. It's not polite to talk with your mouth full. Basically, the experience at Emeritus has given me a new way of looking at baking cakes. That may seem a little abstract but it is the easiest way I can relate the experience (p. 16-17).

This analogy about baking cakes serves to represent how service-learning can potentially impact

a creative writing student in such a way that the student learns not just about creative writing, but

how creative writing functions outside of the university, how to apply to craft, how to teach its

elements, and how to use the service experience to better their own writing—in other words, how

to transform the knowledge.

Conclusion

The findings of this study support the claim that service-learning has a positive

transformational impact on student writing processes (in varying ways), students' connections

with the world outside of the classroom, and students' senses of civic duty. Some of the students

experienced all of these transformations (in writing process, content, or even an increased sense of civic duty, which I did not consider prior to collecting the data), and some only experienced one particular transformation. Nevertheless, all of the students were affected by and critically reflected on service-learning in one way or another. Each claimed to experience a change within them. Given the results of the study, it cannot be ignored that service-learning only serves to enhance some creative writing students' educational experiences. For this reason, creative writing instructors and creative writing program administrators should consider implementing service-learning in creative writing classrooms at the university level.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Title of study: Write the Community: The effects of a service-learning creative writing component on university creative writing students.

Principal investigator: Lauren Hodges, doctoral student

Institute: College of Education, University of Central Florida

Introduction: My name is Lauren Hodges, I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at UCF. The purpose of this study is to investigate how seven creative writing students experience the process of creative writing differently after taking a creative writing course with a service-learning component. Because you are enrolled in a creative writing course which offers a service-learning component, I am interested in your feedback regarding this research interest.

Background information: To date, there is little or no research on the connection between creative writing and service-learning. It is my supposition that service-learning can act as a medium through which creative writing students might gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of their discipline, as well as learn how to better their writing through experience in the "real" world.

Procedures: In this study, your primary role as a participant will be to complete bi-weekly journal entries in which you discuss your experiences with the course (either as a participant in service-learning or not). Secondarily, I will ask you to participate in two focus groups—one in the beginning of the semester, and one in the end. Additionally, I will be observing your classroom conversations as a whole, both in the face-to-face meetings and online meetings. I will also ask to collect a sample of your writing both at the beginning of the semester, and at the end of the semester.

Possible risks or benefits:There is no risk involved in this study except your valuable time. There is no direct benefit to you also, with the exception of the possible benefits gleaned from your participation in service-learning. However, the results of the study may help us to gain better understanding of the potential positive benefits of service-learning in the field of creative writing.

Right of refusal to participate and withdrawal: You are free to choose to participate in the study. You may refuse to participate without any loss of benefit which you are otherwise entitled to. You may also withdraw any time from the study without any adverse effect on your grade in this course or any loss of benefit which you are otherwise entitled to. You may also refuse to answer some or all the questions if you don't feel comfortable with those questions. At any time, you may feel free to ask questions of both myself, the researcher, or your instructor, regarding this study.

Confidentiality: The information provided by you will remain confidential and anonymous. Nobody except principal investigator, myself, will have an access to it, including your instructor. Your name and identity will also not be disclosed at any time, including in the publication of the data results. However, the data may be seen by an ethical review committee and may be published in journal and elsewhere without giving your name or disclosing your identity.

Available Sources of Information: If you have any further questions you may contact primary researcher (Lauren Hodges), at the following email address and phone number: lhodges@knights.ucf.edu, or (407) 963-5854.

AUTHORIZATION

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws.

Participant's Name (Printed or Typed):
Date:

Participant's Signature :
Date:

Principal Investigator's Signature:
Date:

APPENDIX B: SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT DESCRIPTION PROVIDED BY INSTRUCTOR

NOTE: This option will be available to a maximum of 15 students in CRW 3053. If you are interested in this project, please read the Literary Arts Partnership Manual and complete the application/questionnaire located on page 12. Send your answers as a Word doc to Professor Thaxton via Course Mail.

As a creative writing student, you may be prodded by friends and family to explain how a degree in creative writing will prepare you for the "real world." Your engineering friends may ask you what value creative writing has. Yet each semester scores of students change their majors from business or biology or even literature studies to creative writing. Creative writing MFA programs across the country are full to the brim. What you already know is that creative writing--learning to hone the elements of craft--enlivens language, which draws readers into your understanding of the human experience. Therefore, creative writing college students are the ideal leaders for community-based creative writing experiences. Students who have conducted CBL in creative writing are reminded over and over again of the thrill of writing well.

This project connects what we do in the course to the real world. As writers, we often perform our tasks in isolation. Sure, we know the power of language and what writing does for us, but what is the artists' responsibility to her/his community? This assignment will give you an opportunity to learn the elements of craft while showing them to others.

There are two components to this project:

1. On-site service as a creative writer
2. Structured reflection

Additionally, I'm seeking five of you who would be willing to participate in a research study about service-learning and its connection to creative writing in the university. Details will be provided on the second class meeting.

There are several ways to meet the on-site requirements. I have a few opportunities set up for you, which you are encouraged to take advantage of. If you wish to arrange your own site, please talk with me first. Here are some projects I have:

- The Literary Arts Partnership at UCF provides creative writing opportunities at specific locations throughout Central Florida. To see the current workshops visit our wiki
- ArtsBridge is a project sponsored by the Office of Experiential Learning here on campus that matches a student in one of the art disciplines on campus with a "Host Teacher" in a public school. Together the UCF student and teacher design a curriculum that uses the art discipline to teach a core subject area. For example, you might use poetry to teach math or storytelling to teach history.

2. Structured Reflection

Structured reflection is a term used to distinguish what we might consider "warm and fuzzy journaling" from critically thinking about your service as it relates to your academic course work. Every other week, on the odd-numbered module dates, you will be provided a prompt to respond to. You will each have a "Notebook" inside our webcourses account where you will respond to these prompts. You are certainly encouraged to journal as well as reflect on the prompts.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Central Florida defines service-learning (CBL) "as a teaching method that uses community involvement to apply theories or skills taught in a course. Service-learning furthers the learning objectives of the academic course, addresses community needs, and requires students to reflect on their activity in order to gain an appreciation for the relationship between civics and academics. In other words, this project combines civic engagement with curriculum-students serve and learn."

The Office of Experiential Learning at UCF has been recognized for excellence by the National Society for Experiential Education, receiving their "Program of the Year" award for innovation, institutional commitment, quality, and collaboration. The department also contributed to UCF's overall recognition for engagement, winning the "Engaged Campus Award" from Florida Campus Compact and gaining the Carnegie Foundation designations for both "Curricular Engagement" and "Outreach and Partnerships" in 2008. Continuing support and growth for experiential learning is consistent with this overarching emphasis on partnerships and engagement that has been an essential part of the culture of the university since its inception.

We have worked hard to fully integrate academic service-learning into the curriculum at UCF. If you complete 12 credits in courses with the SL designation, you would earn a UCF Service-Learning Certificate upon graduation. Contact Amy Zeh, Director of Service-Learning at UCF for details. <azeh@mail.ucf.edu>

All of the CBL projects that I've arranged can be located at the CRW in Community Wiki.

This project requires a minimum of 15 hours of on-site Service. Fewer hours of service result in the following affectation:

- 12-14 hours: your final grade for the project will be lowered 1 full letter grade
- 10-11 hours: your final grade for the project will be lowered 2 full letter grades
- Fewer than 10: you will not receive credit for this project

If you are taking another Service-Learning course, you must complete 15 hours of CBL for *this* course in addition to what any other instructor is requiring of you.

Professional & Personable: If you are appearing in person at your CBL site, please be

professional.

- Dress appropriately.
- Be safe
  - do not give clients your phone number, your address, a ride in your car, or your email address
  - be sure your gas tank has sufficient amount of gas
  - do not loan or give clients money
  - know exactly where you are going (especially at night)
  - do not carry around your purse/wallet at your site

  For additional information on appropriate behavior and safety on site, visit the UCF Service-Learning site.

Fear

It is very common to be hesitant or even resistant this type of requirement. Every single semester, many students resist this requirement. Some resist so much that they drop the course, and that is unfortunate. Some are so nervous and/or resistant that an "experienced" student accompanies them to the site the first time they go. But, every single semester, I ask at the end if I should eliminate this requirement, and every single semester 99% of the students in my classes tell me that even though they hated the idea at first, and did not want to give up any of their time to meet this requirement, it is the best experience they've had in a college class. They tell me I should always always always require it. Not just because it teaches them about poetry, but because it helps them think about their futures. It helps students think about career possibilities they had never considered. There are so many benefits I can not explain them here. You just have to experience it for yourself.

If you are feeling resistant and considering dropping the course, I hope you'll visit the Blog and read through the experiences of former students first. And then decide. I hope you'll challenge yourself to see how much poetry is out there in your world.

Before Starting: Determine where you want to conduct your CBL Project and request approval

from me.

- After you have approval from me, you and I will determine if you should contact the agency or if I should.
- Gain approval from the agency.
- Determine your schedule with the agency.
- Begin any application process (background check, blood test, orientation, etc.)
- Provide me with the name and contact information of the staff person who will supervise your service.
- Complete any application, orientation, background check, blood test, and other processing.

During Your Work : If circumstances arise that require a change in your schedule or limit your involvement, contact me and your site supervisor immediately. Do not wait until AFTER an emergency to let me and your agency know. I realize that some emergencies make it difficult to contact me immediately, but I will expect you to stay in contact with me at all times.

More Emotions

You may decide to work with homeless children, angry teenagers, or lonely and dying elderly people. If you've never been face to face with these difficult situations, you may feel overwhelmed, exhausted, frustrated, or upset. These emotions are common, and come with the territory. But if your work brings up emotional issues that require professional guidance, please let me know. However, I am not a psychologist. I will refer you to one of the professional therapists on campus (free of charge to students) at 407-823-2381.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME, PLEASE CONTACT ME IMMEDIATELY. I WILL RESPOND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

From Staff/Administration at Site

The staff and administration at your site are very busy. While many for-profit organizations are now feeling the effects of our economy, nonprofit organizations have felt, for a long time, budget crunches and understaffed issues. Most of the organizations experience significant budget cuts year after year with fewer and fewer staff. Thus each staff member usually is doing the job of 4-5 people. And while they are grateful for your volunteer service, they probably do not have time to tell you this. It might even seem that your presence is a burden to them. Do not let this dissuade or discourage you. They are grateful. They simply wish there were a dozen of you. Usually the "volunteer director/coordinator" is perhaps also the human resource person, the intake therapist, the food pantry manager, etc. Do not expect to have your hand held when you arrive. Do not expect them to return your calls or answer your emails. The first priority of each staff person is the client in front of them. Not a college student showing up one to two hours a week.

Being an engaged citizen means that you figure out what you can do and do it. It will be up to you to take initiative at your site; however, be aware of your limitations. The staff has been trained to work where they are working. Take your lead from them, ask what you can do, and do it.

Sometimes, you might show up to read a book to Mr. Taylor, and the nurse on duty needs you to mop the floor. If you can do this, do it.

Depending on where you volunteer, you may experience surprising reactions from the clients at the site. Usually when I begin working somewhere with adults, they can be very suspicious: "Why are you here?" "Are you getting your goody-two-shoes points?" etc. Don't let these types of reactions discourage you. Consider how you would feel in their situation. What if you've lived in a nice house in Winter Park your entire life and suddenly you're living in a dorm room at the Coalition for the Homeless with two other families? What would you think about some college student showing up for a measly one hour each week to tutor your daughter?

APPENDIX C: STRUCTURED RELFECTION PROMPTS

Structured Reflection 1

Here is your first structured reflection assignment. Please answer as openly and honestly as possible. ***Please note that your "journal" is not private; therefore do not write anything in your SLRN that you wish to keep private. If you have something you like to tell the instructor, but not other members of the class, send Terry Thaxton a private Course Mail.***

Assignment: Prior to your first "class" at your site, describe the people you will be working with; i.e. what is their gender, race, life experience? Discuss how you think their life experiences have influenced their current situation. Discuss what you hope to learn this semester about creative writing, yourself, and your community. Also discuss the satisfactions you expect to experience in doing this project. Good luck!

Structured Reflection 2

Consider the first time you realized the thrill of writing, maybe it was a poem, maybe a story, maybe an essay, maybe a note to someone. Who was present? What did you write? How did this realization impact you? What was its value? What if you'd never had the opportunity to recognize this interest/talent?

Finally, what does creative writing have to do with the real world, anyway? What is the point of poetry/fiction/creative nonfiction/etc.?

Structured Reflection 3

The SR assignment for this week is simple: Describe one of the people at your site. Describe that person's clothing, gestures, mannerisms, voice, actions and reactions, etc. Provide as much rich detail as possible. Try to get us (readers) to see, hear, feel, and understand this person.

Structured Reflection 4

Consider your interpersonal skills and respond to one of the following:

1. Think of situations in your group that were challenging for you. How have these situations revealed your own attitudes or biases, how did you deal with them, what did you learn about yourself, what did you learn about working with others?

2. Think of a specific difficult situation you've had either with the class itself, with your site, with your group, or with the people at your site. What personal skills did you draw on in handling the situations; what personal skills would you like to have in order to have

handled it better, and how might you develop those skills?

3. How have your past experiences influenced the manner in which you acted or responded to a difficult situation in your group; are you comfortable with the influence past experience has had on you; how can you use negative past experiences to become more able to deal with difficult situations?

You can answer all three if you want, or blend them, but you see what I'm getting at, right? I want to know how this experience has affected you personally and how you can learn from it as a human being?

Also, you can answer the question without REVEALING the specific situation, possibly. Here

we're getting down to the nitty gritty of group work, which is a challenging thing to do. You

know this from your job, you know this from classes, you know this from life. For most of

us writers, we prefer solitude--not a lot of other people involved in our decisions. Yet the world

operates on a social-interactive model, and so we have to figure out how to do that. That's one of

the things that I hope students take away from THIS class. In workshops you can just sit

quietly and bring your poem or story and then dis everyone who didn't think it was the most

brilliant thing. I want you to examine your attitudes toward the type of work we've been doing;

how it challenged your emotions, your personality, your life.

Structured Reflection 5

Sometimes people who do Field Work (or community service), especially when they first come

face to face with dire poverty (like at Ivey Lane or the CoHo), realize how very big the problems

of poverty and racism are and realize that one person, while certainly making difference in a few

lives, can not "change the entire world" in four months of a semester; all one can do is the piece

she/he is doing at the moment.

There are many studies on service that look at various emotional stages of service. One being

young idealism (I can change the entire world in four months), one being hope (maybe I can

make a little dent in this corner of the world), cynicism (the problem is too huge; the system is so

broken nothing will fix it), futility (what we're doing doesn't matter one bit), despair (total

sadness for the people you work with--there's no hope to fix any of these problems), depression

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(burning out by trying to meet too many of the needs of others without taking care of yourself), satisfaction (you know what this means), renewed idealism (recognition that what you do is part of the larger "struggle" to affect the whole "machine" of democracy). There are others, and every researcher comes up with her/his own stages.

What stages have you experienced in this short time you've been out there? I know that some of you have just started, so you may predict what you might go through.

Structured Reflection 6

This structured reflection has less to do with your experiences on site, and more to do with your own writing. Hopefully, you have had a chance to either write for yourself this semester, or at least think about your writing life and your writing processes. How has this experience with service-learning affected (or not) your writing life, your writing process? Think about things like how you write, how you *perceive* your writing, how you find ideas to write about, why writing is important anyway, what you want to do with your writing, etc. How has your concept of creative writing changed? How has your perception been altered? Or has it not? Has nothing changed because of this experience?

Structured Reflection 7

Paulo Freire is a famous educator and philosopher. He coined the term "banking education," which he described as teacher puts information in students' heads, students churn out that information. Banking education lacks creativity, lacks trust of the students' voices, lacks two-

way communication, puts teacher as the dictator and student as the willing recipient of all information given. He says, "The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students are." He also says, "This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits." (all these quotes are from his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)

What I'd like you to respond to is Freire's quote, "Knowledge [true knowledge] emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, within the world, and with each other."

Relate this quote to what you're doing at your site. You might consider the following questions (or you might not--you can just jump from that quote to your response):

How is what you're doing different from any other form of education? What types of restlessness have you seen? Can you see restlessness as a good thing—as a person struggling to get away from someone else's thinking into his/her own way of thinking? How inquisitive are the kids at your site? Have they been silenced? Does knowledge lead to development of one's own voice?

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

Pre-semester Focus Group Question

Notes	Questions	Prompts
Demographic question**	What is your major?	
Demographic question**	Which creative writing courses have you taken thus far?	
	What kind of experience do you have with creative writing?	Genre, publications, type of books read, courses.
	Why did you take this course?	Expectations? Requirements? Goals?
	***How would you describe your writing process now?	Tools, inspiration, prompts? Where do you get ideas?
	Why do you write?	
	How do you think creative writing functions in the outside world?	
	What do you expect from your field work experience?	Emotional, intellectual, logistical, challenges?

Post-Semester Focus Group Questions

Notes	Questions	Prompts
	Tell me about your experience this semester in this course.	What did you learn? Did this course change you?
	How did this course impact you?	Can you relate this course to your writing journey?
	Why do you write?	Type of writing interested in?
	***What is your writing process now?	Tools, prompts, inspiration? Where do you get ideas?
	What does creative writing have to do with the real world?	How does crw function outside of university?
	Describe your experience in with the field work.	What did you learn? ***Does this impact your writing?
	How does service-learning fit in with yours and others' college education?	University's role in the community? Why do field work?

APPENDIX E: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS PERMISSION LETTER

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**

FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Lauren B. Hodges**

Date: **December 17, 2010**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/17/2010, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination

Project Title: Write the community: The effects of a service-learning creative writing component on university creative writing students.

Investigator: Lauren B Hodges

IRB Number: SBE-10-07325

Funding Agency: Grant Title:

Research ID: 0796984

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual. On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/17/2010 02:04:36 PM EST

Joanne Muratori

IRB Coordinator

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