SERVICE LEARNING IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM: THE ROLE

INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PLAY IN

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY WRITERS

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Betty Lou Boeker, with my love and gratitude for her constant support throughout my studies and my life.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Throughout my adult life, I have always done volunteer work. Giving back where it is needed most, helping others, doing volunteer work with friends – those were the types of things I loved doing because they instilled in me a sense of purpose and drive. It reinforced the will to "do good" in my community from a very young age. When I was attending Blinn College, my neighbor (he and his wife lived next to us our entire lives) asked me to become a part-time caregiver for his wife, Catherine, who had late stages of dementia. While he would step out and do everyday tasks and errands like run to the store, go to the pharmacy, and pick up the dry cleaners, I would walk over and sit with his wife. I went from being a part-time "lookout" to being a part-time caregiver invested in my elder neighbor's well being. When I first started caring for her, we had little conversations. They were never long as she could not say much and tired easily. I watched her slowly regress and decline over that year I went and sat with her. But, as I would sit there and do my homework on the computer, I would look over to see her smiling at me. This terrible cognitive disease may have taken over her mind, but I know she still had some recollection of me. I sat with Catherine over the span of a year while I did the remainder of my studies at Blinn. I hold this experience close because there was such a deep-seeded appreciation for this woman and her husband. Even though they had known me since I was an infant, I felt like I bonded with them more in that one year than I did during the previous twenty years of my life.

I tell this specific story from my life to stress how my first-hand experience with an elder who was very dear to me and a couple who led to a sentimental experience that I appreciate and cherish. Although spending time with Catherine was not directly correlated to service- learning done in *school*, I took more away from it than I probably

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had any class assignment. I developed immense appreciation and understanding for what my neighbors were going through. I saw the raw struggle that he had to endure as this cognitive disease took over his wife. My presence in their life and in their home meant so much to Mr. Bob and his family.

When I started the MA Rhetoric and Composition program at Texas State, I found myself revisiting these experiences with my neighbors. As an undergraduate, I took classes on Death and Dying in the Sociology department. Most of what I experienced with Mrs. Catherine came up in the classroom, but I knew I had a passion for teaching writing so when I moved onto graduate school I feared I would have no room to incorporate my experiences with her. During a Research Methods course, however, one of our assignments was to take field notes and observe a group of people for a study. The prompt was to "write a proposal of a study that you are interested in researching" and part of the research methodology was to gather qualitative research. For the study, I chose a retirement home in San Marcos, Texas by the name of Brookdale Senior Living. I reached out to the Memory Care Activities director, who allowed me to visit and contribute my time at the unit. While there, again I was reminded of Mrs. Catherine and my experiences with her. Carrie – the Activities Director and Master Student in the Aging and Dementia program at Texas State – introduced me to all of the residents in memory care, gave me a tour, allowed me to help facilitate activities, talk with the residents, and offered helpful information about memory care, Alzheimers, and the residents' day-to-day routines and activities. After some deep reflection, I decided I could combine these two areas of interest— working with the elder community and writing studies—and bring them to my own students in a first-year English class.

I began to speculate: If college writers were afforded the same opportunity to work with elders through service learning and share their experiences in writing, couldn't they contribute to a worthwhile cause while simultaneously exploring and practicing the strategies and tools of how to write *well*? They could also explore *why* they write and what they really want to write about.

In this thesis, I argue for the value of a first-year service-learning curriculum in the writing classroom. The goal of the semester is pairing students with their elders and asking students to write about the benefits of their conversations, activities, and overall experiences. With these tasks in mind, students will develop rhetorical knowledge; gain critical thinking, reading, and composition skills; and acquire knowledge of different writing processes and conventions.

The purpose of this thesis is to 1) Detail the benefits, complications, and history of service learning in higher education and the field of composition by breaking down the secondary sources; and 2) Take basic college writing to a different level by providing a course that integrates an important community's voice into the writing curriculum; develops students' writing and research abilities; and helps them experience writing as socially valuable. Creating a curriculum that pairs students with their elders addresses the need for students to have a reason to write, actual people to write *for*, and a drive to write *about* important social issues. Their writing will have substantial meaning behind it as they detail their experiences of service with a particular group in the community.

For example, there will be a collaboration between these students in a first-year writing course and the residents at the facility. Students can choose from various retirement homes in the area. From there, conversations and interviews will emerge with the residents to help inform these students' writing. The students will be given tasks to do

with the residents at the site, prompts administered by me, and will be documenting conversations and activities had with the residents during service hours. What the students do at the center may differ day-to-day. The student will not only have different conversations and activities to write about, but they will learn new information about the residents, and the senior citizen will get to spend time with college students who are interested in being around them and learning about their lives. This is where the intergenerational relationships are formed. To preface my course I will design for this thesis, I will detail the history of service learning, talk about the larger conversation surrounding service learning in Higher Education, the role of the professor, and then focus on service learning as it has been discussed specifically in writing courses.

My curriculum will be of value to this field because it specifies and lays out *how* students can write *with* and *about* their elders – a somewhat stigmatized and marginalized community in their society. A writing class focused around service learning molds students into more purposeful writers and gives them a reason to make meaningful writing on behalf of a community of people they visit often.

My method for this thesis is to develop a curriculum that consists of volunteer hours, weekly blog posts, reflections, term papers, and weekly readings. This course will function differently than a first-year composition course because it will incorporate service hours and assignments tailored around those hours and texts read. However, the outcomes are similar if not identical to other writing courses as they are from the WPA Outcomes list. This course will have the added features of volunteering in retirement homes, documentation/reflection of activities, a term paper focused on elder issues, and students' perceptions and takeaway from their service.

The layout of this thesis will contain the meaning of service learning, a detailed history of service learning, how service learning functions in higher education, the pedagogical limitations of service learning, the values of service learning in the composition classroom, as well as the role the professor will play in executing this type of curriculum.

The Meaning of Service Learning

In chapter 2, I will thoroughly detail the history of service learning. Here, however, it is important to distinguish between volunteering and service learning in the college classroom. Drawing upon Thomas Deans' definition of service learning, Candace Spigelman says that service-learning derives from a combination of active civic participation, the application of skills to "real-life" situations, and written and reflection on the experience itself (1-2). In addition to Spigelman's definition, many first year composition teachers see service learning as opportunities for students to engage in "social critique and to use their writing skills to promote social change" (Spigelman 97). While service learning is definitely attached to volunteerism, service learning is more of a "course-based internship and the critical classroom-based practice of service" while volunteering is viewed as a "traditional charitable project" in the community (100). It is important that students understand what purpose this course serves. It is more than just community volunteering they can put on their resume without putting in any real effort. The service students do in this course will show character, an aptitude for learning, and a willingness to go above and beyond the minimal amount expected in a writing course. Since the actions, experiences, and conversations experienced with their elders will ultimately translate to their writing, this service-learning course makes it different from a traditional charitable project.

The term "service learning" was actually coined in the 1970's, but the concept dates back to the early 1900's (Brookhaven College). The *American Association of Community Colleges* website says that "service learning combines service with academic instruction, focusing on critical and reflective thinking, and personal and civic responsibility to understand *how* service-learning affects students, there is a critical need to define it. According to Heiselt and Wolverton, authors of *Libraries: Partners in Linking College Students and Their Communities Through Service Learning*, service learning is a teaching and learning method that combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking, and civic responsibility" (84).

A Brief Overview of Service Learning in Higher Education and Rhetoric and Composition

Within the last ten years, we have seen a substantial increase in research on service learning (Billig and Waterman). In the 1980's, researchers mainly studied outcomes from community service with pre-college students and most of the student responses were anecdotal evidence of civic experience from students, teachers, administrators, and the community members. Shelley Billig, Vice President of RMC Research Corporation, and Dr. Alan Waterman, Professor in the Department of Psychology at the College of New Jersey, say that this type of evidence is clearly subjective and subject to "severe threats to validity and reliability" (3). Regardless, these anecdotes suggested that students emerged from the course with greater racial tolerance, understanding of the value the role of service in the community, and the perception that communities had capacity for solving problems.

As the multitude of benefits rooted in service learning started to be acknowledged, a number of schools and associations started implementing service in the community. An organization that is dedicated to fulfilling public service is Campus Compact. Campus Compact is a group of universities who help advance students' civic and social responsibility while in school. It is a non-profit organization strictly designed to improve community life and to "educate students on responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life" (campuscompact.org). This organization, founded in 1985, develops service learning in colleges and universities nationwide. The spotlight on some of the major initiatives are College Student Philanthropy and College Positive Volunteerism. The former is a compilation of cutting-edge tools, information, and resources for campuses interested in experiential philanthropy; the latter is a curriculum guiding volunteers to encourage K-12 students to attend college.

In an effort to help students experience the power of language or engage in civic life and strengthen their writing skills, service learning pedagogy has become widespread. According to Heiselt and Wolverton, a number of researchers have shown that service learning "is beneficial for college students both in short term and in long-term (82). Students who participate in service learning may acquire many positive skills such as "enhanced personal skills, increased awareness to global issues, and motivation to learn" (83).

Service learning has been a way to increase civic engagement, yes, but in higher education it is viewed as a "credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course

content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996). Bringle and Hatcher, both professors at Purdue University, tell us that service learning "provides additional means for reaching educational objectives, and academic credit is appropriate for service activities when learning objectives associated with the service are identified and evaluated" (2-3). Faculty claim it brings new life to the classroom, enhances performance, increases student interest in the subject, teaches new problem-solving and social skills, and makes teaching more enjoyable. In writing studies, service learning has been heralded as "community service writing, community-based learning, literate social action, activist research, or academic outreach. It can be viewed as the fruition of some of the most important contemporary theoretical claims of rhetoric and composition studies" (Deans, 19). Writing teachers are using service learning as a "promising pedagogical approach" as they receive feedback from schools and community partners" (20). Service learning across the field of rhetoric and composition has found allies in "community leaders, government agencies, professional association, and the general public. Those students new to service learning and first time instructors can benefit from the growing connections and educators can learn from their collective experience" (Deans 20).

Having students read on what civic engagement is and how it can help them grow as students and citizens of the community is important. Luckily, one of the required texts for the students in this course—*Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities*—delves into how civic capacity is developed in service learning, stating that "the development of civic capacity occurs when we explore the connection between academic knowledge and experience-derived insight into the breadth and depth of

societal and political issues" (Cress et al, 12). The text covers independent and collaborative learning and is structured as a self-guide for college students working on a service-learning project. A large portion of the text guides students in connecting back what they learned to the course objectives and the framework of their discipline.

Statement of the Problem

My argument is that a first-year writing course with a service learning component with elders in retirement homes will give students a purpose and an audience for their writing and enable them to experience the power of civic engagement. I will explore the arguments from numerous experts in the field of rhetoric and composition that have written about the values and benefits, as well as areas where service-learning has encountered problems the downfalls. However, they have not necessarily centered their studies around service learning specifically with the elderly community. That is where my research will come in.

Absent from the scholarly conversation about service learning is research, theory, and practice that focuses on service learning in first-year writing courses that pairs writers with the elders and uses these partnerships to create intergenerational relationships. This thesis and the argument I make here is grounded in the following research questions:

- What might a course designed around community partnership with residents and staff in a retirement home look like?

- What would assignments look like in a writing class with an intergenerational component?

- How will this course enhance students' writing?

Sub Questions

- What resources and materials will I assign?

- What are the potential benefits?

- How will the students be graded?

- How soon will I as the instructor need to contact/start establishing a relationship with the sites of service?

- What will be the assignments? When will they be due? How will students document volunteer hours and conversations had?

To address these questions and build my case, I will detail in Chapter 2 the benefits and challenges of service learning in higher education and the field of composition as well as what the role of the instructor is. In Chapter 3, I will take detail a course that integrates an important community's voice into the writing curriculum; develops students' writing and research abilities; and helps them experience writing as socially valuable. I argue that a first-year writing course with a service learning component with elders will give students a purpose and an audience for their writing. That is, a college writing curriculum designed around outside contact in their own community will give these students opportunities to reflect on their values, their service practice, conversations had with their elders, and new outlooks on the elder community and themselves as a writer. Hopefully, my students develop social awareness for others, make for more purposeful writing, and write *with* and *about* this community – thus helping to give others a voice.

To this end, I will provide a syllabus that encompasses course goals and objectives. I will also include essay prompts, a breakdown of assignments, as well as a breakdown of class expectations, volunteer hours, weekly reflections, and blog posts.

II. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF SERVICE LEARNING

Since I am delving into the customs and qualities of service- learning, I will first operationalize "service-learning." Some of the specific goals of my writing course aligns with what the WPA Outcomes list suggests for a first-year composition course— Rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; awareness of different writing processes; and knowledge of writing conventions. Since I will have a service-learning component in the college classroom, it is essential to first educate myself with the background of service learning in the writing classroom and delve into the conversations surrounding service learning before designing the course.

According to the *National Service Learning Clearinghouse,* service learning is "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" (Center for Teaching). The students, faculty, and the educational institution as a whole can all benefit from the outcomes of service learning. Community engagement is incorporated into a course by way of assigning certain writing tasks with a community organization. Specifically, service-learning asks students to "write with" and "write for" organizations and the people in them. Writing *with* organizations means that students will use their writing to tell elder people's stories so that the larger community will care. Writing *for* these organizations means that these students, in turn, will share their writing with the retirement community about their intergenerational experience (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse).

In service learning, students actively and physically go out of the classroom to seek out meaningful issues to write about and have a purpose for their writing. Using myself as a reference point, currently in my first-year writing courses (English 1310 and

English 1320), I teach my students to write purposeful essays, no doubt. Students write about social issues that affect them as young American citizens and craft argumentative essays based on scholarly essays and outside texts they have read. Then, when they move on to College Writing II, they start the research process to make their essays even stronger with facts, statistics, and scholarly sources. These writers sharpen the points for their arguments learning how to sharpen their research and rhetorical skills. These all make for worthwhile products. Simultaneously, students engage in healthy debate and argument through grounded evidence and experience.

I however, want my students to recognize the value of doing one's civic duty and giving back to society also. In the case of the curriculum I am designing, the students will take part in services such as going with residents to the public library, reading with them at the center, doing daily activities with the residents, helping staff members with day-to-day activities and just hearing about the residents' families and spending quality time with their elder peers.

Students can work with elder family members who are in long-term care units, as well. The student will already have a level of comfort established with the person which makes for even more personal writing they can share with their families and loved ones. These students will still need to complete a set number of hours at their site. They will need to show me documentation from their chosen retirement home that proves they are still doing their service hours.

This kind of communicative environment will bring elder voices and experiences into the university setting. Instructors who believe in a service learning pedagogy and choose to center their curriculum around writing for the late age elder community will in turn have students who will appreciate the effect that a community-based writing practice

has on them. A writing program that has a vital community engagement component can be exciting for both teacher and student because it invests the whole course with an identifiable purpose. It gives every student experiences to detail in their writing. Through service learning, most shelters, public libraries, long term care units, or organizations ask that the tutors/students work with the client long term to establish a trusting relationship that is worthwhile and more purposeful for writing.

As the instructor of the course, I will spend weeks before the term starts visiting the centers, getting to know the staff, and learning how their services operate. The first few days of class, during class hours, we will go on site visits to each retirement home that is available for our course. This will take communication and planning on my part as the professor. These site visits are not required but are encouraged for students so they can see where they will be volunteering their time and meet some of the staff-members. Staff can familiarize themselves with the students, and this gives the residents a chance to get acquainted and look forward to the students coming.

Service Learning in the Composition Class

After researching service learning on a broad spectrum in higher education, I will now transition into the approaches taken specifically in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Benefits from written-reflections are a recurring theme for service learning in this section. In this section, I will focus on other professors' models of service learning and what the best approaches are when implementing these in the writing classroom.

Much of the scholarship written about service-learning emphasizes that the service-learning has been rewarding and advantageous for students while also resulting in personal gain and a broader scope for writing.

Linda Adler-Kassner, past president of the Writing Program Administrators, and Duane Roen, current president of the Writing Program Administrators, write that "service is an important practice that involves working from a set of principles" (20). These principles are reflected in the CWPA mission that states that we "believe in writing and writers" and "advocate for effective writing programs" (20). Adler-Kassner and Roen are saying that composition courses provide a type of "service" to students, which I would have never thought of before, such as helping them get a job, receive an internship, and teaching writers particular types of skills they will uses elsewhere after academia. Adler-Kassner and Roen work outside the community on their own time conducting workshops on writing family history for community groups and drafting policies and position papers that speak to the work of K-16 English Language Arts teachers (20).

To sum up their article, Adler-Kassner and Roen are drawing on these roles they have outside the community as professors. Their advocacy for writing and writers has "informed their approach to other activities that blended research, teaching, and service, such as a long-term assessment project that brought together instructors, community members, students, faculty from other departments, and staff to discuss and evaluate features for "good writing" as they were reflected in student work" (22).

Stephanie Bower, a professor of composition at the University of Southern California, details an upper-level composition course she developed with colleague, John Murray. The course collaborated with community groups and created digital storytelling from stereotyped groups in the community (461). Bower gives her feedback on "giving these organizations time to grow and get comfortable with the students" and pairing them with students immediately at the start of the semester. In order to avoid student skepticism on how a video fit in with a composition course, the instructors actually

embedded the skills into the course needed to complete the final project like reflection, metacognition, critical thinking, rhetorical knowledge, and the writing *process.* Students were "often able to understand more clearly the moves involved in their writing when they were exposed to them in another genre" and how exactly their community service correlates to what they're doing in the writing class. (Bower 463). A short workshop on creating cohesion and order for images in a documentary actually mirrored a similar strategy of linking ideas together in an essay.

Pedagogical Benefits in the Composition Class

Making Meaning and Reflection

In *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition,* Thomas Deans poses the question: "What kind of person do we hope that our curricula will encourage?" In respect to composition studies specifically, I am bridging the gap to ask: What kind of *writer* do we hope to encourage? Deans draws on service-learning writing initiatives by referencing Peter Elbow, saying that most writing that students will do in their academic discourse will be different in their lives and careers (27). Deans draws on Peter Elbow's view of service learning as a form of fruitful discourse when he says he "… [values] writing that renders the experience and not just discourse that analyzes and explains concepts" (Deans, 27). Elbow is adamant that writing needs to render experience first and foremost and always consider the audience. Deans is on board with service learning in the classroom, saying that he advocates students making meaning for themselves, thinking out their own identities in society, and figuring out their own goals.

Alongside Thomas Deans and Peter Elbow, in the book *Coming of Age: The Advanced Writing Curriculum,* Bruce Herzberg draws on the relevance of public engagement when he says "… those who teach service learning courses, as I have been

doing, are naturally impelled toward public discourse for the obvious reason that we are engaging in community issues and Community Action" (Shamoon, Moore Howard, Jameson, and Schwegler 123). Herzberg relates his reasoning and support of service learning back to rhetoric. He explains that the persuasiveness that rhetoric is centered around is close to research. He claims, "The persuasiveness of written or oral reports depends on your ability to find and evaluate information and ideas, to organize what you find around a pertinent central thesis, to argue effectively for your interpretation of the material, and to present it clearly and convincingly" (123).

Herzberg goes on to discuss his design of an Advanced Expository Writing course demonstrating a service learning project requirement at the end of the course. This specific book is a compilation of curricula that scholars have developed that offer innovative ways to transform students' writing into impactful products while forming personal relationships. By acknowledging the landscape of the issues and positive aspects of service learning, then only can I build my curriculum with these strands of conversation being taken into account.

What students retain from service learning is a common topic of discussion in all of the research I have done thus far. Sturgill and Motely of Elon University claim that reflection is absolutely a key component of service learning, but research "shows that in order to maximize learning, the reflection must be of high quality" (81). They investigate the affordances of different types of reflection along three dimensions—guided versus free response, dialogic versus expressive reflection, and public versus private reflection. Cases are drawn from the same group of students all doing the same project, but they are doing different modes of reflection.

The type of reflection required of the students varied by instructor. In the first group, students individually contributed to a group, public blog. Almost all of the students participated, but the number of posts per student varied. Alpha students engaged in public, expressive, free reflection. Although a blog could be dialogic, in this case no one commented on the posts (86).

We saw this same type of blogging reflection earlier in the proposal with Heiselt and Wolverton when their students were volunteering at the public library. Although this study was from a graduate international service-learning course in interactive media, all students were descriptive in their blog responses writing lengthy paragraphs and describing if their experience was different from what was expected. Sturgill and Motley do state that students may be hesitant to find the "right" answer if a letter or numerical grade is involved.

<u>The Transfer of Learning</u>

Anne Beaufort summarizes the role of reflection in writing studies in her chapter "REFLECTION: The Metacognitive Move towards Transfer of Learning" in Kathleen Blake Yancey's book *A Rhetoric of Reflection* by saying that the transfer of learning should be at the heart of education and thus at the heart of writing studies (24). When looking at this service-learning curriculum in a writing class, it can "lead to greater benefits for writers beyond a given writing course" (24). This transfer of learning occurs when students take knowledge they learned in one setting and apply it to writing or a different experience. Students are gaining knowledge whether they're aware of it or not. These students have the ability to take what they learned in this service learning composition course and use that knowledge in a social setting like the workplace. Valuable social skills, the ability to converse with people of different ages, community

relationships, respect for public service, exploring career opportunities, and acquiring college credit are all transferable skills students will learn in this course. A student may discover that he or she has a passion for nursing, social work, or geriatric medicine through their services with a retirement home. Beaufort has drawn from her own classroom experiments. She suggests some pedagogical tactics that could further other teachers' efforts at teaching writing for transfer and a reflective practice. Her suggestion is to "broadly frame the course content as knowledge to go, that is, make explicit references to broad applications for the course content in other arenas of life (31).

In this course, I can convey what this type of service writing can do for self-expression, self-esteem, success in school, and success in the workplace (31). Volunteering in a retirement home and just being around a community of people who look forward to communication with young people can "illustrate for students the efficacy of becoming a better writer and the value of a writing course beyond just a grade on a transcript" (32). Beaufort has "intellectual touchstones" in her course that she circles around throughout the semester to achieve "course content and cohesion" (32). This pedagogical strategy in a service-learning course can enact that transfer from classroom to retirement facility. These intellectual touchstones in my writing course will be the transfer and reflection of writing, alongside the WPA outcomes.

Service Learning in Higher Education

Now that I have given a preview on how rewarding and even essential service learning is for students, I will delve into a thorough literature review on how service learning creates moral growth, shows compassion in students, and encourages personal responsibility for the community. While service learning in a course does all of those things, it also faces some limitations specifically in higher education. Alongside some of

the complications in service learning, the professor plays an active part in the execution of the course. In the following section, I will examine the value of service learning for students, the role of the professor in service learning, and the pedagogical limitations of service learning in higher education.

Values of Service Learning

In an article calling for the strengthening of moral foundations and moral and personal growth in service learning, Zhuran You and A.G. Rud validate this view, drawing on John Dewey's ideas on moral growth that "has been widely credited as the essential theoretical underpinning of service-learning… and his concept of moral imagination regarding its immense potentials in nurturing college students' moral growth in service learning" (36). They argue that moral education at the post-secondary level is an under-researched field but just as essential to college students' retention in community-service. Academic progress, personal development, communication, and leadership skills are most of the skills accounted for in service-learning, but rarely moral development. You and Rud recommend advocating for "incorporating artistic components into their service learning components, stressing the roles of emotion, reflection on tasks, sensitivity, and imagination" (37). If there are no ethics involved in the service/mentorship students are engaging in then excluding ethics leaves moral learning in service learning disconnected, superficial, and a lifeless process (37). This emotional understanding is the key factor and the indication that students can be truly responsive to the community's needs. According to the Texas Core Curriculum Components, social and personal responsibility are two of the six core objectives that a curriculum must include. Social responsibility is described as "intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional,

national, and global communities while personal responsibility is the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making" (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 5). The service-learning course I am designing will help students gain knowledge of civic responsibility and awareness of the human experience. If they live and work in a community, it is part of their "personal responsibility" to make connections with the people in that community. This type of community appreciation will help develop key personal and social skills that are essential for the workforce after college.

To grasp the values and positive aspects of service-learning in the classroom. I draw on Butin and his focus on Andy Furco's work. Furco directs the International Center for Research and Community Engagement. Butin's goal is to create a civic-minded institution and re-create higher education to genuinely engage students. Butin refers to Furco's research and references service learning as the "skeleton key" for unlocking the power and potential of postsecondary education as a force of democracy and social justice (25). Furco has developed a rubric for viewing service learning and using this as a road map that may be followed by institutions and the faculty, staff, and students who are committed to incorporating service-learning into their classroom and making it a long-term success for students. This works as a formal assessment mechanism to gauge the process along the institutionalization's path (Butin 25). Five categories/dimensions that help make up this rubric are as followed.

i. Philosophy and mission

    1. The course must have a mission and central goals that comprise it. This will demonstrate what is expected of the students and what the outcome of this course will be.

ii. Faculty support and involvement

1. Instructors should offer resources, help students make connections, teach research skills, encourage students to challenge themselves, and to engage in conversation when connecting with their community.

iii. Student support and involvement

1. Students will need to follow the directions required for the course, document and complete service learning hours, schedule a conference period with me (the instructor), and meet all deadlines stated in the course syllabus.

iv. Community participation and partnership

1. Integrating new knowledge into the schema of the old voice and vice versa is what the focus of a community partnership is. Students read about these disparities in society and that translates over to their writing.

v. Institutional support

The advantage of a service-learning rubric in a college writing course is to ensure that there is upward mobility for the teacher, student, and the organization and people involved. What Furco and Butin are saying is that recruiting new voices to speak for change and engagement are all doable, but there is a process to go through before making students volunteer and take action in the community. "Courage, new models, serious funding, new links between academic work and critical public issues, flexibility and willingness to experiment and fail are all action steps needed to be taken into consideration and followed through with before embarking on an adventure for social change" (Butin 27).

Nancy Pine, Assistant Professor of English and Composition at Mount Union College draws on Linda Adler-Kassner's belief on service learning and argues that "service learning composition courses for underprepared students should provide students opportunities for critical and cultural analysis, but they should do so while practicing academic discourse, especially as they include exploring the role of writing in different contexts" (30). Pine poses the question of "whether or not service-learning pedagogy better enables basic writers or does it further complicate students' acquisition of academic literacies?" (30). Fueled by her curiosity of the true effects of service-learning, she conducted an ethnography of a basic writing class with a service-learning component. Pine visited Elm Elementary where the class convened to tutor first-graders in reading and writing every Thursday for an hour and twenty minutes. The course instructor, Mary, made it known to Pine that these young college students needed to be "shaken up somehow" and disrupted from the rudimentary five-paragraph theme the students were so used to in their writing courses. Pine states that all in all, Mary viewed her writing course as disrupting students' formulaic ways of writing, reading, and thinking (32). This portion of the class was designed to change students' perspective on the traditional writing class, show that the classroom is not the only place where learning occurs, and that literacy criteria definitely shift depending on the context. Pine learned that "students who still have a less than ideal service experience, even a negative one, can still academize this work in their research writing for class" (48). These students are perhaps even better positioned to achieve critical distance from their service work and are better prepared to use the "personal" experience in support of an academic argument, even if that argument is a critique of service" (51). Outreach experiences can prompt compelling and personal narratives like I experienced with my neighbor. We should not avoid using

the personal in our writing and my students will learn that personal writing can actually be a way to bridge the analytical writing. The back and forth of reflection and responses from me is a form of structured writing.

 One of the most pertinent things I learned from Pine is that instructors who want to employ service-learning pedagogy into their class should engage with students and detail to them the ethics and social meaning while "candidly exposing the benefits and consequences" of the course. Being upfront with my students about what civic engagement is and being straightforward about the work they will be doing and the things they will be exposed to help them make meaning from their service. This is where the analytical practice of reflection in writing comes in.

Paulo Freire, advocate of critical pedagogy, defines his key term "praxis" as action-reflection. He explains how the connections made through human interaction "motivates further inquiry and action". In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire locates learning in one's creative response to a situation that is in relation to the individual and the material problem. Deans references Freire to further reinforce the positive aspect of service learning when Deans insists that "we must expect college curricula to stimulate curiosity, a critical spirit, and democratic participation" (Deans et al 69). Freire essentially says through praxis that marginalized and oppressed people can liberate themselves through the action of the students' engagements with them, thus making the experience all about transformative action. For Freire, knowledge leads to action and the actual "lived experience" is what's important.

Service learning has been introduced in classrooms to students as young as sophomores in high school. Branching off of Nancy Pine's ethnography and observations, Michael L. Umphrey, high school principal and director of the Heritage

Project for the Library of Congress in Montana, exemplifies the value and sheer importance for community engagement as well—especially in high school. He explains how Marcella Sherfy, who had served as the state's historic preservation officer, spent an afternoon with sophomores and juniors in high school at the Montana Historical Society archives (xii). Sherfy's husband and one of Montana's premiere research historians said "he took [genuine] pleasure in the way the project linked the two things he cared about deeply: young people and Montana's history" (Umphrey xii). These students not only gathered the history of Chester's buildings, they skillfully told the stories that put real people in those buildings. So here, even though it is high school, we can still see service learning or service to the community in particular can make an impact on the people who are outside of the classroom.

Often the class instructor or the students partaking in the course give their opinions on what works with service learning and what does not. April Heiselt and Robert Wolverton give us the viewpoint of service learning from a public library's perspective. Using Mississippi State's "Day One Leadership Community" as a case study, Heiselt and Wolverton conclude that establishing library partnerships proved beneficial for student learning, helpful in accomplishing projects in a local library, and through the resulting publicity provided greater interest in and access to library materials for the local community (83). Heiselt and Wolverton have an interesting take on service learning because they liken higher education institutions to ivory towers that exist separately from everyday society and the local environment. If this is the case, students may graduate from higher education never having gained knowledge of the greater area that surrounds them or an appreciation of the local community. Luckily, some students are become more civically involved than the students who proceeded them. The two

professors give us some statistics to chew on, and it actually is painting service learning in a very positive light:

- "The Corporation for National and Community Service found that the number of college students volunteering grew by nearly 600,000 from 2.7 million in 2002 to 3.3 million in 2005 (83).

- 2005 Survey data from the Corporation for National and Community Service indicates that the creation for service-learning projects is on the rise. At least 25% of all higher education institutions and more than half of all community colleges have adopted service learning programs" (83).

- Astin, Sax, and Avalos discovered that service-learning benefits college students both short term and long term and can continue to benefit students as much as nine years (Astin et al, 1999).

- A study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institution in 2000 confirmed these findings and added that service-learning particularly benefits students when conducted as part of an academic course that includes a reflective component of some type (Astin et al, 2000)

- During the 2016-17 academic year, the Service Learning Academy supported 175 service learning courses. The majority of the courses and projects occurred in the Arts & Sciences College at 34% and the College of Public Affairs and Community Service at 22.75% (University of Nebraska Omaha, 2017)

The fourth statistic sticks out to me because there is a definite need for a reflective component after the project is over. The personal takeaway happens afterwards and the student "may not have exhibited increases in psychosocial development because some faculty members may have only included the community service experience within their

syllabus and not truly incorporated it into the course with reflection…" (84). Breaking this observation down, it is obvious that a critical reflection portion for virtually any assignment allows students to relate back and make connections to the content of their course objectives. Heiselt and Wolverton reaffirm that the public library creating a partnership with the MSU students proved to help future library patrons. The students made "measurable progress in organizing much of the information in the Stark Annex during their service-learning hours. The information in the Stark Annex was better organized through the use of databases and spreadsheets made by the students" (88). The students illustrated what they learned during their time of service and documented their takeaways through an online journal and blog. The blogs were then commented on by other Day One students, faculty, employees, and staff members as way for others to review and reflect on their work.

A form of reflection seems to not only be beneficial but absolutely essential in making the project worthwhile for the MSU students. Each week the students posted two reflections on the blog where they noted their work done at the library, the project, and any other aspects of this experience that they wanted to document. Carolyn Reed, a woman who helped train the students at the Starkville Public Library, noted that the students learned how to become valuable employees because they had to follow directions, complete work to the full capacity, and behave in a professional manner. She was very impressed by the way students were able to sacrifice for the good of the whole rather than just their own benefit. A number of students even mentioned that they would love to volunteer their time to the public library in the future to further the work they had started (89).

Understanding service learning as a pedagogy is also an essential part of teaching it. Tom Ehrlich, Senior Lecturer at Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, was teaching a service learning course on ethics and profession in San Fransisco. He let the Campus Compact organization guide and propel the movement for his course. In teaching this course, he believed that service learning should service three functions:

- the disciplinary and other dimensions of liberal and professional learning

- democratic participation, including individual civic responsibility

- Systemic political engagement at the local, state, national and international levels.

Unless it is used to strengthen all three of these important dimensions of undergraduate learning, we are not fully exploiting the potential of this powerful pedagogy. Although the WPA Outcomes are not tailored to a service learning course and these specific outcomes, I firmly believe the students will gain an admiration for civic engagement while also learning how it correlates with the writing they do.

The Role of the Professor in a Service-Learning Classroom

Boise State University has an impressive service learning program that connects their classes with the community and has offered service learning courses to over 33,000 students. Service learning Program Coordinator, Kara Brascia, has designated roles and responsibilities for the faculty professor in charge of the service learning course. Her roles for the faculty partner include:

- Set learning objectives for the service experience that relate to course objectives

- Identify community issues or service that relates to the class

- Contact screened agencies to clarify course goals and service expectations

- Adapt syllabus, class assignments, lecture examples, and class discussion to include links between the course and service experience. Structure and schedule reflection assignments or activities

- Discuss the service-learning expectations and requirements, agency orientation dates, deadlines for starting service, and evaluation guidelines with students.

- Use written agreements, time logs, evaluation instruments

- Maintain regular contact with agency partners (recommended: beginning, middle, and end of semester)

- Evaluate student service-learning students' experience

This list shows that not only will the students be actively participating in the local service, so will the professor. Along with grading, the course will demand much-needed attention and planning months in advance.

Ellen Cushman, Shirley Brice Heath, and Susan Cipolle look at the role of the professor in service learning, as well. To ensure the long-term success of a community project, Cushman states that "when the professor enters into service-learning as the researcher *and* teacher, the program can have an increased likelihood of succeeding in meeting students' needs and legitimize itself as a serious, rigorous line of inquiry" (43). When the professor is an active coordinator and probing researcher alongside the students then the experience can truly form a personal network that generates into the class after volunteering. Making course materials known, asking questions, holding discussions, workshops and volunteer hours all encompass the professor's duties to help execute a successful project.

Brice-Heath and Flowers put another spin on service learning regarding the professor and her role as the facilitator. If the instructor has experts across a variety of fields such as a physician, a mental health counselor, health clinician, or in the case of this curriculum- the director or a member of the management team from the retirement

home, then "these experts could give their knowledge and expect these young people to give as well: to pass on this information to others and to lead sensitive, insightful discussions with the groups for whom they perform" (50). When the professor has already gained the trust and respect of one group of residents and staff members, the staff will know that if the professor is willing to give his or her time beforehand when it isn't all just *take*; there is a want and a need to *give* back. The following section details Cushman, Brice-Heath, and Cipolle's findings.

Cushman introduces a new angle for service-learning in Rhetoric and Composition that focuses on what the professor can do to ensure the long-term success of the project. Cushman does not debunk service-learning as a whole but she does critique the ways in professors' role in the long-term project can be more substantial. If "they viewed the community site as a place where their research, teaching, and service contribute to a community's self-defined needs and students' learning" then they can actually have a genuine role in the whole project instead of just a facilitator (40). Cushman draws attention to relations that university scholars have had with community members. Situating service-learning with the community as a "hit-it-and-quit-it" type of relationship with the university does not paint service-learning in higher education in a good light. This kind of mentality of service-learning makes it seem like the university is only at the site of service for one thing—a grade for the students. Some questions posed by Cushman help to guide her research:

- How do we create programs with the community that are consistent, flexibly structured, and rewarding for all stakeholders? (i.e., community members, teachers, students, and scholars)

- How do we ensure a tight integration of research, teaching, and service?

- How do we ensure that the class curriculum addresses the needs of the stakeholders?

    o When it comes to the needs of the stakeholders, St. Joseph's Health listed benefits that stem from elder integration with young people. The benefits were a boost of the immune system, a reduced risk for cardiovascular problems, lower blood pressure, reduced mental health, and a reduced risk of Alzheimer's. There are benefits that the elders will get from this project and it's human interaction and communication with young people. I have seen, on countless occasions, how helpful and uplifting stimulation and conversation can be for elders' psyche. Students will be lifting these people's spirits every day. There could even be a computer room that most of the residents don't use but if young college kids come in and offer to help them use the technology, it may be something the residents start to enjoy.

Shirley Brice Heath seems to agree with Cushman on the professor's role in service learning. Heath teamed up with Linda Flower and wrote an essay entitled "Drawing on the Local: Collaboration and Community Expertise," which points out that the "service" part of the process is not a done-deal with "good intentions" but it calls for "reciprocity on multiple forms while in a community dialogue" (43). People partaking in service or volunteer work must "recognize the history and contributions of community institutions, in commitment to a relationship not defined by a one-semester project, and in a respect for community expertise that is expressed in the active practice of dialogue" (43). After taking in Heath, Flower, and Cushman's research findings. I think it is inevitable that the professor *has* to understand how these organizations work,

communicate with staff members involved, and establish and maintain a relationship with these people much earlier than the start date of the semester.

Susan Cipolle, author of "Service-Learning and Social Justice: Engaging Students in Social Change," speaks to the role of the professor being one of the most important functions that help make connections with the outside community. Cipolle says her primary mission as a teacher in higher education is to prepare students for democratic and civic engagements. Their advocacy for community does not end there, and reflections on real-world experience help reinforce positive social change we need in the world. Cipolle emphasizes the importance of real-world experiences by explaining that the pre-service preparation, the actual service, and reflection connect the class material to the real world experiences that ultimately result in increased student understanding of self, others, social issues, and their *potential* to make a difference (87). If we are looking at this realistically, the likelihood of a young college student making some extraordinary and dramatic impact on the group they are participating with is unlikely unless both parties are invested from the very start of the study. The pre-service is key to a functioning partnership. The professor needs to be actively engaged with the organization before their students even start to volunteer. Students' interpersonal skills, gained alongside their *potential* and *wanting* to make a difference, is the driving force behind their partnership with another person in the community. As educators, we cannot unveil the world for others. What we can do is "help invite the process of unveiling by posing problems, sparking discussion, and providing factual info" (Cipolle 85).

Pedagogical Limitations

Dan Butin, full professor and founding dean of the School of Education at Merrimack College explores in-depth the unacknowledged and unanticipated problems

with service-learning in higher education. He poses the question of whether or not service learning can become deeply embedded within the academy, and if so, what exactly becomes "embedded" (23)? He quotes a 2009 report from Saltmarch, Hartley, and Clayton that reads, "the civic engagement movement has stalled, due, in part, to its being inadequately conceptualized and highly fragmented. It verges on standing for everything and therefore nothing" (24). For example, Butin argues some students may or may not have enough time and transportation compared to other students. A full-time student might have more than enough time and energy to volunteer their services outside of class. If a student is a single mother and works a part-time job, it may not even be feasible for her to do the service-learning portion.

Butin goes on to argue that there are also pedagogical limitations to service learning. Although I see service learning as helping students better understand themselves and become aware of social and cultural differences, Butin counters my initial ideal, saying that "the overarching presumption is that the students doing the service learning are sheltered, middle-class, single, without children, unindebted, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three but this is not the demographics of higher education today" (25). Butin is making the claim that not every student in first-year composition is in a position to volunteer out in the community nor even have the time to complete the project if it involves physically going to a site outside of the classroom. He is bringing up the problem of service learning favoring a type of "privileged" student who has the resources and the flexibility for service learning. To avoid these conflicts, the service-learning course I am designing will only be reserved for students who feel they have the time to put into the course. Ultimately, service learning may in fact be a luxury that many students cannot afford, be it in terms of time, finances, or job future. Nonetheless,

students will know what they are signing up for when they register for a course involving community participation. The commitment this course requires will be made very clear from the description on the syllabus. Although there are negative connotations surrounding service learning like my curriculum design in the second half of this thesis debunks those negative claims about service learning. Producing a body of work that is both valuable to the community group and the students is what I want my service-learning curriculum to do.

It is expected that a new writing program administrator or any college writing instructor planning to conduct a service-learning course will "examine obstacles they may anticipate when trying to implement this type of course (Morin 43). Emily Morin, now working as an administrator at Texas A&M University in Kingsville, examined a semester-long service learning course and even she found that the literature surrounding the "downside" to service learning is very scarce. After shadowing a veteran service learning course instructor who implemented service learning into a Business Communication class, she interviewed some of the students. Morin gathered feedback from them about how the course worked for them and how it didn't. Some of the issues reported by the students were:

1. Schedule conflicts due to jobs

2. Partners who did not fulfill their part of the work

3. Issues dealing with contacting and/or meeting with the clients for volunteer scheduling

4. Communication issues with the professor about how to approach assignments

5. Communication issues with fellow classmates

Morin substantiated her findings by observing that most of the "non-profit organizations were often understaffed or made up of volunteers" (2001). The students may find themselves unable to contact a representative or face employees at the center who may have other obligations that are of higher priority than a student volunteer.

Students are the other factor that must be considered when looking at the potential limitations of a service-learning course. Considering this community partnership will be implemented into a first-year writing course that is predominately freshmen but mostly sophomores in college, some of these students will come into class expecting to do "volunteer work" and looking to put these hours into their resume without wanting to actually *commit* to the assignments and follow through with what is expected of them (Jones 2002). Students' maturity-level will determine whether or not the student will follow through and actively engage during volunteer hours. Not only will these students have to volunteer, but they will have to produce daily writings, reflections, and essays in which they talk about their interactions with the residents and serious issues like the struggles elders face in society today. Students' maturity and aptitude to complete assignments is absolutely essential to executing a smooth course where the student will actually leave with valuable writing.

Selecting the client with care is the most important action of all to help guarantee the course runs smoothly. In the case of my service-learning curriculum, a certain community of people have been chosen (the elder community). I will have been in contact with each retirement home months ahead of time, as well as already having given them a copy of the syllabus, filled out all of the required documents, and given a thorough overview of what is expected of the students, the times they will be coming in to visit, and what type of writing they will be doing. These "clients have a direct impact

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on the students regarding what they will learn during the course. Becoming under or over-involved and having a lack of serious respect for the projector or what the instructor is trying to accomplish" can hinder the execution and create barriers among the students and client" (Morin 44).

Morin found that the students in this service-learning course had difficulty in three areas:

- Communication issues that impacted the progress of the students the most during the semester

- Scheduling conflicts

- Level of experience that the students held and their expectations regarding the class was also an issue

There really is no preventative method for making students follow through with assignments, arrive to the site on time, and complete the volunteer hours but there is a certain level of tact and maturity that is expected when a student signs up to take a course with this much outside involvement. Students will be instructed to work together on multiple occasions as well when it comes to the drafting, revision, and proof reading process. This course could potentially be reserved for honors students only. Even though this course was not centered around a particular client or community, these obstacles could be similar if not the same in the course I am designing. Considering the students will complete volunteer hours, the course will be a hybrid. The hybrid course will combine our in-class activities with online instruction the other half of the week. This "blended course" gives students time to complete the actual service portion of the course.

III. DESIGNING A SERVICE LEARNING CURRICULUM WITH ELDERS

In the last chapter, I synthesize the value of service learning and the value of service learning in a writing course. In this chapter, I will explain my design for a first-year writing course that pairs first-year college writers with elders from the community and asks the students to document their service learning experiences, activities, strategies, conversations, stories, and interactions with the residents. The course will contain a detailed outline that encompasses six sections: course outcomes, course description (plus a civility section), readings, activities, assignments, and grades. Secondary sources have been a huge part in building this curriculum. Looking at the current conversation surrounding service learning in the field of rhetoric and composition and higher education, as well as my prior experience as a first-year writing instructor, will help me to design a writing course that pairs students with elders in their own community. I want to show my students that we write better when we care about what we are doing. Their writing serves a purpose and will be read by a community of people other than me. It makes us feel less anxious about writing when we understand what is being asked for and why.

<u>Course Outcomes</u>

These points and habits of mind are from the WPA Council's article "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing". The outcomes for this course are tailored to what the WPA outcomes document states about learning outcomes in the field of composition. The Council of Writing Program Administrators released its outcomes statement that was approved in July 2014. It is the most recent statement released. This document "articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research,

and theory" (WPA Council, 2014). As adapted from the WPA outcomes list, first year composition students should:

1. Develop rhetorical knowledge

   a. First year writers will develop this by negotiating and being able to pin point what the thesis, purpose, audience, context, and overall takeaway of a text is. It is important to keep rhetoric at the forefront of what they are doing in this course. Learning to compose different texts in different situations, understanding their purpose for writing, using tone and voice to adapt their message, and implementing the rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) will be ways students compose their essays and create meaning from those assignments.

2. Critical thinking, reading, and composing

   a. The ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts. In the case of this particular curriculum, students will be visiting their retirement facilities and elder at specified times and then documenting the conversations and activities done that day on their blog and class reflection.

   b. When thinking along the lines of rhetoric and composition, this is a huge goal that students need to achieve in this course. Making sound claims; reading a various range of texts; evaluating sources; and collecting, compiling, and archiving interviews and secondary sources are all ways students will develop their critical thinking skills.

I can help my writers develop the following key skills by providing opportunities for them to "write and analyze a variety of types of texts to identify" (ode.state.or.us):

- The audience and purpose for which they are intended.

- The key choices of content, organization, evidence, and language use made by the author.

- The relationships among these key choices and the ways the texts appeal or speak to different audiences.

3. Processes

    a. There are multiple composing processes. The student has a question and an idea they want to research. Then they move on to the drafting and editing stage until eventually they are ready to draft with their classmates in peer review and workshop.

    b. It is important to make the distinction between writing as a "process" and writing as a "product." The beauty of this course being in a composition class is that my students will not only learn what to write but they will learn *how* they write. Invention is what a student does before they even start to compose a paper. Coming up with a research question, brainstorming, volunteering at the site of service, reading the texts for class, and engaging in workshop with peers is all part of the invention process in composition. Invention is the first of the five canons of rhetoric and kickstarts their research and generation of ideas. Next, students will move onto composing where they will start putting their thoughts down on paper and organizing their arguments with a working thesis, drafts, peer review, and reflections. During the composing process, they make decisions about the organization and projection of their ideas. Students start to compose their essay in a way

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they feel will get their message across to the audience. After students read each others' work and give comments to one another while also receiving them from me, they move onto the revision portion of the process. Through revision, they try to understand how readers are interpreting their work and what they can add, restructure, re-word, change the main idea of a paragraph, etc. Finally, they will achieve the "product" stage of their work and turn in meaningful and revised piece they can be proud of. Process gives the class a set of shared experiences because they will be processing their writing together.

4. Knowledge of conventions

   a. Knowledge of basic grammar rules and mechanics such as subject-verb agreement, sentence formation, and vocabulary. Student will be writing every day in class so practicing these conventions become routine. Keeping composition at the forefront of this class is key.

   b. Mechanics, subject-verb agreement, and sentence formation are all basic writing grammar concepts that I will reinforce throughout the semester.

The students' writing in this course will consist of documentation of and reflections on their visits and conversations with their elders at their assigned retirement home, an essay on social concern, an essay about their place of service, and an introductory exploratory essay at the beginning of the semester. Students will also be reading assigned texts from the syllabus and reading articles that discuss different experiences and approaches to take with the elders as well as how their writing can help this community in a substantial way.

The research essay on social concern will specifically help students to see some of the obstacles elderly people face in society such as rising health care costs, illness, manic depression, physical assistance, transportation, loneliness, and change of time. The students will read portions of the required texts listed on the course syllabus, writing in their blog, doing weekly reflections, and documenting conversations and activities done at their center. All of these projects and assignments help students to develop not only rhetorical knowledge (outcome 1), but analyze an audience (their elders, volunteers at the center/home), text (required readings), and comprise their own writing for that audience.

I will now move into the layout of the curriculum starting with the course description then moving to the readings and activities, then an outline of the course assignments, and lastly how the students will be assessed.

<u>Course Description</u>

(adapted from Appendix B in Thomas Deans' book)

In the course description section of the syllabus, I will explain how integrating service learning into the course will help students create meaningful writing for their community and detail how this type of service pairs first year writers with elders from their own community. We will not, in other words, simply just do volunteer hours. We will explore how our writing can benefit and educate others. This section includes what is expected of the students during service hours and how they are expected to document their service each week. Throughout the semester, students will be reading literature surrounding community partnerships, manuals on civic engagement, and essay written about the elderly from the New York Times and the Atlantic. This course aims to challenge the way we think about writing and how a community partnership with elders can produce essays and pieces of writing that reflect human experience and relationships.

<u>Civic Responsibility Section</u>

Civic responsibility is defined as the "responsibility of the citizen" (dictionary.com). This section will explicitly tell students how the assigned service meets the course objectives and fulfills a need in the community. This is a course intended to help students create meaningful writing based on experiences and conversations from their own life. It is important to not only include *why* community experiences are important in this writing course but *how* their actions and attitudes are going to be associated with democratic governance and social participation (Learning to Give). When these students volunteer their time at these retirement homes, they are spending time with someone's mother, father, grandmother, or family member. Dignity, tact, and respect will be the only acceptable and tolerated attitude towards the residents and staff members. This civic responsibility section makes students aware that they have to act like decent adults when they are representing themselves and the university during a civic engagement. A description about workload and success will preface students to know that they will get out of this course what they put into it. If they follow through with their visits to their assigned retirement home, engage with the residents, offer to help if needed and get to know the people who work there, then they will see more impactful and meaningful writing. Some community service scholarships even provide certificates and recognition of accomplishment as well. This can be an incentive to complete course requirements and go above and beyond what I expect of them.

<div align="center"><u>Readings</u></div>

Required Course Texts:

1. Making Civics Count: Citizenship Education for a New Generation David E. Campbell et al.

2. Educating Citizens – Anne Colby et al.

3. Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities – Christine Cresset al.

Students will be reading portions from the required course texts periodically throughout the semester. Our class discussions will revolve around what the students have retained from their readings and how that compares to the service they have done so far. Students will also be using ideas in the readings as springboards for conversation. In other words, they will not only be retaining information from the readings; they'll also be invited to apply these readings to new problems they face in the world and in their service hours.

These readings will help students in preparation for their upcoming assignments. They can use these texts as secondary sources when writing their research papers and reflective papers at the end of the semester. Both of these projects will require outside sources so the course texts are a great way to integrate those sources into their essays. During class, I will break students up into groups so they can have brainstorming sessions and talk about the importance and complications they have faced in their service and discuss what the literature says about the outcomes and stakes in service learning. By holding these class brainstorming sessions and referencing these texts, the students are engaging in the *invention* process of writing, which is the first of the five canons of rhetoric.

These readings will help students identify key components of service learning, what the process of writing is, and why reflection is so important, especially when doing service in the community. Most importantly, these class workshops, peer review,

brainstorming sessions, and class discussions will help students see how their service can transfer over to their writing. Transfer is one of the benefits of service learning in the writing classroom that I discussed in the literature review. I plan on holding a small class discussion on how what transfer means in this class.

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

Critical Incident Journals

Reflective journal entries will be in-class writings that focus on an analysis of a particular event that occurred during the week. Students are asked to consider their thoughts and reactions during certain points of their service. What reaction did they have to a particular event that occurred? What action would they plan to take in the future? What was the significant event that occurred during their service learning experience? How was this significant? What underlying issues surfaced as a result of this experience (societal, interpersonal)? What are three other actions may they have taken during this incident? These journal entries may evolve into a broader topic for the students in one of their essays. (adapted from Bringle and Hatcher's *Reflection Activities for the College Classroom*).

Ideas Workshops

We will have ideas workshops on the day that the students receive their writing prompts. This is a way to start the invention process right away. I will allow 10-15 minutes for students to mull over the prompt before splitting them up into groups for brainstorming. Having these workshops on the first day the prompt is assigned will push students towards creativity and exploration while also helping them get ideas of what parts of their service experience they would like to detail in their paper, as well as what

points they want to make. This workshop is a way to detail how they are thinking of approaching the task.

Peer Review

A very large portion of this course is responding to other students' writing and giving feedback to their peers' writing. I conduct peer reviews as a workshop, which means that most class time is spent critiquing and responding to other students' major writing assignments. During the course of a peer review, students will give feedback to other classmates' drafts, and they will return the feedback. They will focus on both global (big picture stuff) and local issues (excessive grammatical errors). Through practice of reading their peers' work critically, students will not only learn from one another but also improve their ability to edit their own work. On peer review days, I will go around and check for complete typed drafts. If they do not have a draft, the student will be asked to leave class and will receive a **zero** for that daily grade. The same standard is held if they are absent. As a member of the writing community, I expect each student to respectfully and truthfully critique a peers' work to the best of their ability. Lack of effort as a peer reviewer may affect their daily work grade.

Reflections: (Adapted from Alex Reid's English 101 syllabus)

On the class blog, the students will participate in an online discussion forum with their classmates and maintain a reflective blog each week. These reflections are in place to help bridge the gap between writing and community experience. I want the students to become aware that when we bridge both of these, we get meaning in our writing. Each week, the students will write twice on the blog. The main posts are what they have learned that week, conversations they had with their elder peer and the staff at the facility, activities done, how they helped out in any way, or documenting anything of

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consequence they did at the site. The second phase of the posting will be a response to

another classmate's blog post about his or her weekly experience. Maybe they can relate

to their areas of conversation or maybe they had a completely different experience or

viewpoint. These reflective posts take an informal nature and must be at least 150 words

each.

Reflection will be a big part of this curriculum. Students will be asked to write

weekly reflective posts in which they think about their experience outside of the

rhetorical situation. Thinking leads to composing and reflection will help these students

to compose meaningful writing. Reflection in presentation has become a common

assessment practice in the writing classroom and is an application that I plan for my

students to use often in this course. Kathleen Blake-Yancey claims that an engaged

learner is likely to respond better and that "an assignment or a final text—requiring a

reflective stance and reflective activities that foster that stance, students are more likely to

become reflective." (146). The assessment and grade breakdown will be included in the

outline of this writing curriculum as well.

It is easy to overlook in the grand scheme of things but ultimately a service-

learning course includes many more components (service hours, documentation, etc.) as

opposed to a writing course without one, making it more complex to grade and create a

rubric for. In this course, reflection will only "enhance the *validity* of the assessment—

that is, the likelihood that the assessment will measure what it purports to measure—

precisely because it *requires* that students narrate, analyze, and evaluate their own

learning and their own texts and thus connect the assessment to their own learning."

When it comes time for students to present their final Reflective Essay, we will go to the

site of service so the students can share their final project with the residents and faculty

(Yancey 146). At the end of this chapter, I will detail how the assessment portion of the course will work and what the grading rubric will entail to grade the students' writing.

<u>Assignments:</u>

The assignments that make up this course include: an introductory essay, a critical incident report, a Research Essay on Social Concern, an Agency Profile, and a final Reflective Essay.

<u>Essay 1- Introductory Essay</u>

The first essay will be a personal manifesto, a declaration of one's values and beliefs. I am asking students to argue a character trait they think is essential when working with people in the real world. Since they will not have completed enough service learning by the time this essay is due, I am asking them to rely on personal experiences or examples from society at large. This is just as an introductory essay to the course and will be worth 15% of their grade. The essay reading that will accompany this assignment are "Why What You Learned in Preschool is Crucial at Work" by Claire Miller and "The Moral Bucket List" by David Brooks, both from *The New York Times.* This essay will meet all four of the WPA Outcomes by having students start their "investigation" process of writing, start the research process, seek out scholarly sources, and reference the essays read in class.

<u>Essay 3- Agency Profile</u> (Adapted from Thomas Dean's *Writing Partnership*)

In order for students to work well with their retirement home, they must get to know the place they will be volunteering. The purpose of this agency profile is to help them better understand the people they are working with and learning how the facility operates, who the residents are, what the day-to-day routines look like, and how the staff manages all of the residents. Some of the guiding questions are as followed:

What is your facility's mission?
What is the nature of the facility?
How old?
When was it opened?
What is its main source of funding?
Staff responsibilities?
Number of residents?
How often does family visit?
How does volunteer work operate?
Who determines whether or not the needs of the people in the facility are being met?

The readings that will accompany this specific assignment will be pages 218- 258 in the section "Moral and Civic Engagement Beyond the Classroom" in the text *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility.* This assignment will meet the needs of the WPA Outcomes list by having students start the research process, look into choices of organization and evidence, while also maintaining knowledge of writing conventions.

Essay 2- Research Essay on Social Concern & Interview with Elder (Adapted from Thomas Deans' *Writing Partnerships)*

This assignment asks students to write an essay that investigates a particular social problem among elders. These will be issues that affect these residents, other elders in the local community, and even their own grandparents. Some obstacles elders may face in society are as follows: rising health care costs, disease, manic depression, physical assistance, transportation, loneliness, lack of family unit, and changing of lifestyle. Students will be required to do extensive research on this topic which involves researching scholarly articles, interviewing an elder, even going to the library and checking out books that discuss obstacles in elder-age. Students will be instructed to structure their writing in the PIE format and required to bring in current research to bear on the topic from the library database as well evidence from their course texts. They are

encouraged to use primary evidence from speaking with the elders, and conversations with different staff members. Students are also encouraged to thread in their own experiences and evidence they have witnessed in their own life—they are the key witness to their writing. If they have had experience working and volunteering in retirement homes in the past, they can draw upon that in their research essays.

For this essay, there will be an interview component, as well. They will interview a resident at their designated site of service and integrate portions of the conversation into their essay. This is where students really work *with* the elder community and give them a voice through their writing. This interview piece allows students to document what elders say about issues surrounding aging and hardships faced when growing older. Students will replace any names with pseudonyms to protect the residents' identities.

Students must include, in this essay, at least 3 outside sources not including their retirement home. Readings that will accompany this assignment will be an essay from *The New York Times* entitled "Why Elders Smile," an essay from *The Atlantic* entitled "Making Aging Positive," and a portion of the course text, "Ch. 3- Becoming Community: moving from I to WE" in *Learning through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning Across the Disciplines.* This assignment will meet the WPA Outcomes by students seeking out their topics and content for their essay through an interview. Students will engage in critical thinking, research skills, and adapt their tone and message to their audience as they portray these issues.

Essay 4- Final Reflective Essay

This final reflective paper will be a genuine look back of the students' experience at the center. Students will have been documenting their experience on the class blog all semester and this essay will be an extended version of that. Is this project something they

particularly enjoyed? Do they believe their services have contributed and been worthwhile? Thus far, has there been any distance between them and the residents? In other words, were there differences in values or outlook on life or any behavioral differences with either party? How have these volunteer services made them a more observant researcher and better writer? They are to include secondary sources as well to inform the reader and substantiate their claims. This will be the last assignment students will complete. Their classmates will not be responding to these, and these will only be turned into me via online and serves as a true update on how the experience treated them. The reading that will help prepare students to write this essay will be "Reflection in Action: The Learning-Doing Relationship" in their *Learning Through Service* text. This essay will meet the WPA Outcomes by drawing on the process of writing through reflection, help students with the evaluation of their experiences, and help students to understand different reasons for writing.

<u>Assessment</u>

In Tennessee State University's *The Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement* are examples of service-learning syllabi divided up my major. In the English and Writing category, it states: "the service work is designed to provide students with a number of practical reference points for their inquiry and to help them test the accuracy and legitimacy of the conclusions provided by the "experts" they encounter in their reading." When it comes to assessing service learning and the assignments the students will be doing, Tennessee State's manual has informed me that assessment can be tricky in a service learning course because it is non-traditional. TSU states that the "assessment of service learning depends on direct contact, indirect contact, research done, and advocacy done." By breaking up the curriculum into difference categories of evaluation, the

students will know what is expected of them in each assignment and how they will be graded

I have designed my own breakdown of the assignments and what percentage each one is worth. Considering a huge portion is service hours, it would be rather complicated to "grade" that so that will be a completion grade, along with their weekly blog posts, class reflections, peer review, and drafts. Essay 1 will be the Introductory Essay, Essay 2 will be the Research Essay on Social Concern, Essay 3 will be the agency Profile, and Essay 4 will be the Final Reflective Essay.

The grade breakdown will look something like this:

Essay 1	15%
Essay 2	15%
Essay 3	20%
Essay 4	10%

60%

Service hours	15%
Class reflections	10%
Blog posts	5%
Peer review	5%
Drafts	5%

40%

Students will be provided comments from me as feedback that is attached to grades on their writing. I will be using an analytic rubric from DePaul University to help me grade their four main essays. It is essential that they include an introduction that engages the audience and prefaces what the argument will be, a thesis statement with points that detail what their body paragraphs will be (Point, Illustration, Example), secondary sources required in the essay prompt, a concluding paragraph that restates what they want their audience to retain from their essay, and a Works Cited.

When it comes to the service learning partner assessing the students' experience, I as the instructor would sit down with the supervisor of the retirement home and several other staff members and ask how they would like to assess the student's experience. The manager or supervisor of the center may be coordinating several other volunteers, so finding time to talk to each student may be difficult. I do, however, want the employees at each facility to know that they have a say in how the assessment is conducted. I would make suggestions to the manager/ staff members on how to measure the impact the students are making at the facility and with the residents. Signing off on volunteer hours, documenting tasks assisted, answering questions the students may have could all be suggestions for the assessment process. I want students to receive feedback and praise for their time when they're on site, and that may look different for each place. This requirement might make some community partners hesitant to sign on to this type of partnership with students. Retirement homes are used to young people volunteering but students visiting on a weekly basis, documenting activities, and interviewing residents may not be something they are not up for. Although the service learning project could be burdensome with students coming in and out of the facility and interrupting some residents' day-to-day routines, I will be correspondence with the site to make sure it is as easy on their end as possible to keep track of students' volunteer hours. A simple sign-in sheet or a signature on their part may be the extent of what is needed on their end. Also, these students volunteering will be students who know what they are signing up for. These students know they are to treat everyone at the facility with the upmost respect,t and the staff members at the retirement home have the authority to ask students to leave.

From my review of the service-learning literature and my experiences as an instructor of first-year English, I have gleaned the essential elements in planning a

service-learning curriculum. I have synthesized what service learning means in higher education, in the writing classroom, the benefits and complications of this kind of curriculum, and what preparation is needed on the professor's end. I have divided the curriculum into the six stages of course outcomes, a course description, class readings, activities done, assignments, and the assessment process. With the use of this course outline, the instructor who implements this into their writing course will have a valuable and well-researched structure and plan to refer back to. This layout is simply an instrument and a means of providing suggestions to what a writing project with elders would look like.

IV. CONCLUSION

This proposed curriculum possesses pedagogical implications as well as implications for further administration looking to implement service learning with elders into their writing course. An inexperienced teacher would probably struggle with this type of course. There is a lot that goes into this course on the instructor's end with prep time, getting to know the site of service, creating the assignments, picking texts for the class—all of these aspects of the course take time and will be tedious. It would be wise for the instructor to even take a semester off of teaching so they can give this course the proper planning that it needs. The curriculum assignments, activities, writing practices, as well as the texts that accompany the course help pull it all together could most definitely be effective and worthwhile for college writers. This curriculum that I have designed will "enable instructors to plan accordingly and conduct a successful course" (Morin, 43). After researching what service learning entails, the history, how it is situated in a writing course, the benefits of it, the pedagogical limitations, and the duties of the instructor, I was able to design a curriculum that meets the needs of the WPA Outcomes and reflect the research.

Pedagogical Implications:

Service Learning Pedagogy is a viable option for writing instructors who want to…

- o Provide course-related learning opportunities that are relevant to the problems of the community (*Journal of Higher Education and Outreach Engagement*- Barnett et al).

- o Require students to apply formally acquired knowledge and skills to community problems and needs.

o Provide students with ongoing and guided reflections on their experiences through a combination of class discussions, writing, and essays.

A service learning pedagogy in the writing classroom will require different kinds of preparation: The professor must make connections with the site of service well before the semester starts, which differs from the preparation for a regular first-year writing course. The professor will need to identify a need of service in the community, including a distinct link between service experience and the writing course; structure class reflections and discussions; discuss expectations and requirements from students; follow through with any legal paperwork; and maintain regular contact with the agency partner throughout the course of the semester. In my course, specifically, I will be visiting the sites regularly and weekly to ensure that the retirement home knows I am informed about what students are doing when they are on site.

When thinking about how writing teachers will build upon what I have offered, it is safe to say the next instructor will have a clear outline and a pathway to follow for preparing for service. Even if they choose not to have students work with elders specifically, they can adapt new readings and different essay prompts to their curriculum. I have tailored students' service around a writing course and have worked to make sure these two components coincide and students are clear about how their service relates to the writing classroom and the real world. It might be possible that service-learning and a community/institutional partnership may not exist at a different university.

Amare and Gaillet say that if a course is going to implement community engagement, it must be "contextualized to the circumstances of the university" and that community projects must differ according to each university because of issues such as "budgeting, the relationship between the institution and community, and student and

faculty availability and commitment." (57). Writing program administrators play a key role in achieving this.

<u>Implications for Administration</u>

When looking at the implications for Administration, service learning requires oversight that writing program administrators might not be familiar with. For example, there is an understanding of legal issues, liability, and experience. Boise State University has detailed risk management guidelines for their service learning courses. Some of the legal risks are…

- o What if a student causes injury/gets injured on the site?

- o What if there is property damage while on the site?

- o What is a student acts beyond the set parameters of the service learning activity?

It is expected that each site of service have its own handbook or protocol to refer to when hosting volunteers, just as a university would.

I have proposed this curriculum on behalf of my experiences working with elders, volunteer work done in the past, teaching experience, and research gathered. The next stage for this thesis would be for someone to pilot this course and put it into action. When sampling this curriculum, the instructor will have to be mindful of what was stated in the literature review of this thesis. Familiarizing themselves with the history of service learning, how it has worked in the past when it has been executed, what their role as the professor will be, and becoming aware of the pedagogical limitations are all important factors when implementing service learning into a first-year writing course.

The instructor needs to begin the planning process early, make course goals clear and defined, determine lesson planning and course scheduling before the first day of class. I have compiled secondary sources detailing multiple angles of a service-learning

course, included a detailed history of what exactly learning *is*, the professor's role, and an outlined curriculum. I have captured the dynamics of students interacting with elders, the WPA Outcomes expected in a first-year writing course, and problems that could be faced with this type of course.

The research I have conducted has the capability to be molded into a beneficial course for writers seeking out a course with a community partnership and a different spin on a composition course. Most importantly, I have provided a multitude of sources from experts in the field of rhetoric and composition. This data will improve the way other educators, administrators, students, and hopefully the community in which we live look at the potential of a composition class

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