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Crossing the Moat around the Ivory Tower:

Community Engagement in a Face-to-Face

and Online First-Year Writing Course

by

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To the Graduate Faculty:

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Dissertation Abstract—Idaho State University (2020):

Research exploring the efficacy of Service-Learning hasn't fully investigated potential implications for online modalities and transfer of learning. Therefore, during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters I taught two second-semester composition courses built around essays that required students to engage with communities outside the classroom. Because these classes were at two separate institutions (Idaho State University and College of Western Idaho) using two separate modalities (face-to-face and online), this dissertation is able to assess Service-Learning in relation to online writing instruction and transfer of learning in a broader context. This project indicates that Service-Learning projects in online settings can succeed without the teacher acting as moderator between student and community partner; additionally, class design features that enhance transfer of learning can be successfully adopted in f2f/online and university/community college courses that use Service-Learning.

Chapter One: Introduction

With the recession of the first decades of the 21st century hitting institutions of higher education hard in enrollment numbers, a new banking model of education has taken a prominent role. This is not Paulo Freire's reviled banking model, where teachers deposit discreet sums of knowledge into their pupils' mental bank accounts. Rather, this new bank account, which has become the focus of students, teachers, and administrators alike, is the students' future bank accounts. Programs, classes, and assignments often face the benchmark of "how will this help our students become more marketable and profitable in an increasingly competitive job marketplace?" Luckily, though, this doesn't mean there are two camps, incapable of agreement—those whose focus is providing marketable graduates and those who are more concerned with the personal growth of students and their ability to thrive intellectually and emotionally. The premise on which this project relies is that these positions are not mutually exclusive, that there is a way to focus on the personal growth of students while still emphasizing a greater number of more qualified graduates. A helpful analogy in understanding this premise is the title of this dissertation: "Crossing the Moat Around the Ivory Tower."

The concept of "ivory tower" isn't against structures that use ivory or that are constructed into a tower shape; rather, it is a metaphorical shorthand for "privileged" or "elitist," (Reynolds 135; Parks 128), implying that those in the university believe they are and should be separate and above others. Ellen Cushman adds a "moat" to the metaphor, acknowledging that there is a barrier to admittance into the benefits of university. Others have described the concept of the moat as being "largely removed from the workaday world of business and industry in a postindustrial society. We are characterized as 'privileged' or 'ivory tower' " (Adler Kassner, et al. 19). the need to find connection to the world outside the university, with Deans describing it as avoiding "the extremes of both 'ivory tower' and utilitarian concepts of education in favor of an

integrative perspective that puts liberal education in service to democracy" (7). This connection between "liberal education" and "democracy" can be described as a bridge crossing the moat that separates the university and the "workaday world."

This dissertation analyzes a possible way of crossing that metaphorical moat and pushing the university towards a more accessible, useful, and student-focused pedagogy while still accomplishing the course and departmental objectives. This project does this by analyzing the complexities involved in teaching through community engagement in second-semester English composition (English 102) courses, face-to-face at Idaho State University and online at College of Western Idaho. I gather data through interviews, video conferences, questionnaires, notes, emails, and cover letters, as well as received permission through ISU and CWI's IRB boards as I taught three separate assignments that require students to become involved in three separate local groups: firstly, an unfamiliar club/organization/business of their choosing which they've wanted to become involved with; secondly, professionals, educators, and students involved in their major or future field; lastly, their state government and those involved in local political issues. By teaching these assignments in these ways, I'm able to pull at three strands of research that will provide a clearer understanding of what it might take to build a bridge across the moat. The strands of research are Service-Learning, Online Writing Instruction, and Transfer of Learning.

While there has been significant critical attention paid to Service-Learning, Online Writing Instruction, and Transfer of Learning as academic and pedagogical circles, this project seeks to elucidate dilemmas, strengths, and concerns that reveal themselves when these three topics are brought into relief with each other against the backdrop of three particular essay types. The questions I wanted to answer include the following:

- Can service learning be used without teachers sponsoring community partners?

- Can SL be used in an online modality, and if so, what are its affordances?

- Where does Service-Learning end and Community-Engaged pedagogy begin?

- In what ways does this pedagogical approach align with principles of transfer?

- How well do the three essay types test student engagement in community writing?

Put another way, these questions focus on each of the three strands of research and each of the individual essays. In the following pages I will focus on answering the specific questions listed above in order to argue that these kinds of community-engaged assignments connect higher education to interests outside the walls of its influence, which, in turn, demonstrates that we can better engage and strengthen students while also preparing them for profitability when they graduate.

Background

Bridge building is a theme in literature about Service-Learning and pedagogy that connects with communities outside the university. Sandy points out that both university and community partners must work together to "bridge their 'different worlds,' and enhance learning, reciprocity, and sustainability" (30). The need to focus on learning outcomes while also keeping in mind a fair, reciprocal relationship that is sustainable over time implies some of the complex thinking and planning that must be done to build this bridge. Dubinsky portrays Service-Learning as "a bridge between a practical, 'market-driven' focus and a humanistic, service-oriented one when teaching a practical course" (257). The emphasis on "a practical course" implies that such efforts to build a bridge should not get in the way of the practical considerations that would exclude any pedagogical approach that would prove to be too burdensome and sluggish.

All too often a boundary divides universities and the communities in which they reside—this "moat around the ivory tower" (Cushman 249) is a gulf between higher education and the local environment, often dividing those with valuable information, understanding, and skill from those who could benefit from their expertise. I argue that university professors, their students, and the local community could increase the value of university courses, both in terms of student growth and marketability, if educators changed their pedagogical approach to assign projects that require students to build and manage relationships with community partners, even in online contexts.

The last few decades have seen an increased interest in turning outside the university borders for material, audiences, and partners to help students achieve a higher-quality higher education. In particular, service-learning has received praise for its ability to get students outside their (and the university's) comfort zone—it "helps students develop…critical thinking skills" and it also "prepares students for the work-place in a more comprehensive way than many other pedagogical strategies" (Dubinsky 259). Service-learning (SL) programs "appear to have an impact on students' attitudes, values, and skills, as well as on the way they think about social issues, even over the relatively brief period of a semester" (Deans 98). Many others have given similarly complimentary appraisals of service-learning (Coogan, 2010; Cushman, 2010; Barton, 2005). However, for the hesitant educator or those who believe in its potential but are stretched in their energy and time, some of the programs can seem overwhelming. For example, David Coogan analyzes an unsuccessful SL project that attempted to increase parental involvement in seven public schools in Illinois whose failure was due to organizational issues and ideographic misframing. Many teachers believe in the underpinning concepts behind such a project, but wouldn't even begin to muster the motivation or know how to tackle such an undertaking.

Still, even with the challenges, the potential benefits to first year composition are significant enough to merit attention. Ellen Cushman points to SL's ability to "[offer] rhetoricians a unique opportunity to discover, analyze, produce, and assess" (211). Deans echoes this list, claiming that SL "is at heart a pedagogy of action and reflection, one that centers on a dialectic between community outreach and academic inquiry" (98). Beginning composition strives to create inquiry-driven rhetoricians, regardless of whether their questions are about personal perspective, research, or anything else. The question for implementation in FYC, then, isn't as much about if it's a good idea, but about how to do it effectively. Deans argues that successful SL implementation balances both sides of the hyphen: service shouldn't come at the expense of learning, and vice versa. The rich experiences of SL theorists helped me know what to avoid and what to adopt as I designed assignments for my composition classes. By extending their work, I'm able to extend the boundaries of the field while drawing on the existent strengths.

Assignment Design Considerations

I taught a Service-Learning course over five years ago through Boise State University. The university had a great support system; teachers were connected with community partners, students had clear university-wide guidelines on what they needed to do, and much of the difficulty in getting started was alleviated. That said, it was a lot of extra work, and there were a number of problems that became clear as the semester went along. The most troublesome for me was student acceptance. A number of students didn't have a clear idea about why we were helping local communities and organizations, and what that had to do with English, despite a number of discussions and readings. The idea behind this study is that there is a way to gain similar benefits as the SL course I taught before, with less teacher anxiety, more student

acceptance, and similar benefits to local communities. Before even starting, though, it is important to understand what options and implications there are with different SL formulations.

Many theorists have attempted to categorize component parts of SL to better understand it and how it works in the classroom. While I handle this topic more extensively in Chapter Two, some of the basic concepts are helpful to understand the underlying values and challenges of my design. For example, James Dubinsky talks about the three axes of SL: Learning, serving, and reflecting (261). While I had a fairly clear understanding of the importance of the learning and serving, the significance of reflecting afterwards became clearer. As I started the semester, I noticed that students dragged their feet a bit about writing cover letters for their essays, but as I supported and emphasized the letters, nearer the end of the semester I started to see higher-quality cover letters where students really started to dig into their process and experiences more. Without taking time to reflect on their experiences, the students would have missed out on reinforcing lessons that they had mostly already learned. Dubinsky says, "students must build a bridge between service and learning, one that they may have to cross many times before actually reaching knowledge" (270). He wasn't necessarily talking about reflection, but I believe students solidified their conceptions of effective and ineffective rhetoric through the repeated service-based assignments, then magnified them by writing reflective cover letters about their work.

Another key concept to successful SL projects was theorized by Thomas Deans, one of the pioneering figures in SL. He describes three pillars of SL: writing *for*, writing *with*, and writing *about* community partners. He describes "writing for" as performing service where the writing is the final product that will be delivered to the partner. "Writing about" is the act of using the service experience as the subject matter for writing—perhaps it's an analysis of a problem that the group is working towards solving, or maybe it's simply a creative or personal

response based on the experience of being in a unique place doing a unique thing. "Writing with" is where students write from the perspective of the organization rather than provide writing as service or write using the group/experience as material. In my class I noticed that students didn't get the chance to write for community partners; mostly students were torn between writing about and writing with. The ethnography and field work essays in particular, since they required interviews, encouraged students to inhabit the perspective of the group or field, internalizing voice and ideas in a powerful way. One student wrote his field work essay in the format of a professional newsletter in his field; he said he actually enjoyed writing it that way more than typical essay format.

Other theorists defining the function of SL also help hone my project. For example, Joan Schine lists five things that every SL project should have: it should "apply to life, be carefully conducted, be directed toward school, be more than career prep, serve/reflect" (qtd in Dubinsky). I defend my project as fitting these five criteria. The fact that students got to choose their organization to research for the ethnography, their major for the field work essay, and the bill for their senator essay makes them more likely to be applicable to their lives. Additionally, concerning Schine's two items—"be directed toward school" and "be more than career prep"— the ethnography essay resulted in an essay, which directs it towards school learning, though it was primarily conducted out of the university borders. Similarly, the field work essay could be argued as being a form of career preparation; however, since it requires the students to practice writing, interviewing, primary research, and other compositional techniques it definitely is school work that's more than career prep. In Chapter Two I explore these and other ways theorists have thought about Service Learning in an effort to move my project from a high/low-binary-focused position to a community/education focus. As I designed the assignments to take

advantage of SL definitions and requirements as described in research, I learned about what kinds of projects to avoid.

In addition to glowing success stories and helpful theories, SL literature includes cautionary tales about what kinds of pitfalls unsuspecting teachers can accidentally fall into if they're not careful. Fred Barton writes about a few attempts to create community-engaged writing projects at the high school level that backfired. His first was a project where he would have students observe flaws in the school cafeteria and make a professional recommendation to the board on how it might be improved. Those involved—school authorities, parents, cafeteria workers, and students—caused such an uproar that he didn't try that kind of project again. Reading about the school administration's unsupportive reaction and the cafeteria's defensiveness honestly intimidated me, thinking that I might be starting an innocent-seeming project that would quickly become problematic. There were a number of differences, though, that gave me confidence. Firstly, students in my class 1) were older, 2) had the freedom to choose the projects they would be involved in, and 3) were invested in the subject material from the beginning. Barton's second project drew on local veterinary resources to critique greyhound racing's practice of putting slow dogs to sleep; however, when a greyhound racing club (albeit a state away) found out about Barton's project they bombarded his school with emails and phone calls. This account made me worry that I might have to face similar pushback, though I believe there are reasons why my projects didn't pose the same danger. Barton's projects were critical of established organizations—trying to get to the bottom of some problem in society and encourage the students to recognize problems and solutions directly. These are certainly praiseworthy goals, but since my projects encourage students to align themselves *with* already-present groups in the community *against* problems the organization competes against, they require the same critical

thinking as Barton's projects without posing the same risk of angering or misunderstanding a group. However, the impact this project made implies that there are meaningful interactions on either side of the bridge, even if they resulted in strongly negative outcomes.

Another cautionary piece of advice in a number of arguments in the field is that teachers should be careful about politicizing their classrooms (Ball; Sirc). Since one of my essays intentionally was about politics, I was careful to see if my approach fell into the difficulties they warned against. Ellen Cushman warns that "Some critical theorists believe that the primary means of affecting social change is to translate activism into liberatory classroom pedagogies." Instead, her article "seeks to address other ways in which we can affect social change, something more along the lines of civic participation." Encouragingly, my letter to the state senator essay I believe more closely could be described as "civic participation" than "liberatory classroom pedagogy." She continues by quoting Edward Schiappa "We should not allow ourselves the easy out of believing that being 'political' in the classroom is a substitute for our direct civic participation" (235). Because the 2016 presidential election was going on during the first class I taught, I wanted to be careful to keep the focus of the class and assignment on participation, not on debating political figures and topics just for the sake of politics or any agenda.

A final warning piece of advice was to not assume that students are in a position to complete the work. Deans writes about how some students might not be motivated or skilled (112). While this sounds a little blunt, I think it's an important factor to keep in mind. Student motivation is always an issue. I tried to have multiple drafts due so students wouldn't simply wait until the night before or throw it all together quickly. One of the essays with the highest rating on the final questionnaire was the field work essay (see the methodology section for a full description of all three essays—the ethnography, the field work, and the letter to the state senator

essays). One of the reasons why I think this was the case was that there were a number of smaller posts students had to complete in order to finish the final essay. In fact, they would end up turning in over eight pages of material that they could copy/paste into their essay, add transitions, and introduction/conclusion to, and trim down to seven pages. As far as student skills, one of the biggest difficulties I thought I'd have was that students would need to interview people for two of the three papers. Although there were some interviews that seemed less than effective, students worked on it and improved over the semester. Even the introverted students seemed to appreciate the assignment. Students struggled with motivation and skills to a degree, but overall I felt like student motivation and ability level were good enough for success.

As I further researched SL, I learned that theorists have proposed various ways of thinking about its structure and goals that I would need to apply to my work to ensure avoiding pitfalls. See chapter two for a more complete list of definitions, categories, and cautionary tales involving SL.

While there have been similar projects studying community engagement, this dissertation adds new angles—especially online writing instruction and transfer—that will add to the existing field of research. By teaching these assignments in both online and face-to-face mediums, I'm in a unique position to compare differences and similarities between the two. Similarly, I've added a "transfer" component to my reading, so I'll be better prepared to assess how encouraging students to engage personally with extra-university entities might strengthen their transfer of skills, information, and techniques. My hypothesis is that by encouraging students to interact with the community in ways that make them good citizens, university professors can accomplish educational goals, improve student growth, and help local communities reach their goals, whether through online or face-to-face instruction.

Online Writing Instruction

The unique focus of this dissertation on non-teacher-sponsored community engagement in online and f2f settings calls for the addition of two research topics—online writing instruction pedagogy and transfer of learning. There is a significant amount of overlap between what's already been discussed and these two topics. For example, when SL theorists talk about the importance of reflection, they dovetail nicely with research done on transfer, which argues for the importance of having students consciously assess the learning they've done. Also, Deans' point about not assuming that students have the motivation and skills is equally applicable to the online mode of delivery. Triangulating these concepts could help me ascertain what assumptions I make about what students are capable of performing in an online class. Put another way, I've designed my assignments in line with SL research and theories, which I then will need to recalibrate my f2f course to fit the online modality and the Online Writing Instruction research and theories, and I double check all of this work with literature about what makes education most likely to transfer to other domains for students. Triangulating these three fields isn't just for students, either; online education and transfer of learning requires a different understanding for teachers and administrators as well.

A key concept in OWI is not assuming that it works the same as face-to-face instruction. In her landmark CCCCs address, Chair Kathy Yancey points out that the difference between education's use of digital and print isn't clear cut. Since the composition of printed documents almost exclusively takes place in word processors, "we are digital already, at least in process" (307). Course management systems are a further step into the connection between online and face-to-face. She points out that pedagogical moves towards digital tools aren't going away but

provide us a moment to develop a new curriculum and approach to teaching that takes advantage of the digital. DePew et al. agree that online tools, especially course management systems and distance learning tools, have unique properties: they "lend themselves to specific pedagogical choices while suppressing others and, as a result, articulate certain epistemological philosophies and power relationships between instructors and students" (175). As such, trying to make online writing instruction look like face-to-face instruction is like trying to put a square peg into a round hole (174). While there are near countless online programs and functionalities I could assess before getting into this project, the most important realization is that I can't assume that course management systems, video chatting, or other digital tools will accomplish similar pedagogical goals as their in-person counterparts.

Transfer

If OWI researchers contend that educators must be careful not to assume online tools function the same as face-to-face tools, those researching transfer must carefully avoid another assumption—that students carry knowledge, skills, and habits of mind from the material we're teaching to other contexts. This is, after all, the goal of teaching anything…that it will be useful later to students. However, research indicates that this isn't automatically the case. David Russell compares trying to teach students "writing" skills and expecting them to be able to write in a variety of contexts to teaching potential athletes "ball handling" skills and expecting them to be able to play any game that uses a ball (qtd. In Wardle 765). One reason for the discrepancy between first-year composition's goal and its results is the difference in how it views writing as the end goal, rather than as a means to a specific end:

> The activity system of FYC is radically different from other academic activity systems in
> its use of writing as the object of primary attention rather than as a tool for acting on

other objects of attention. Because of this difference in primary focus, the rhetorical

situations of FYC courses around the country do not mirror the multiple, diverse, and

complex rhetorical situations found across the university in even the most basic ways.

(765)

Wardle concludes that expecting instructors to teach students "to write" in a variety of rhetorical

situations and to different audiences isn't as realistic as teaching students "about writing" in that

way. Especially in a teaching project like mine that involves almost as many different writing

situations as there are students, it's important to recognize that I can't take responsibility to teach

every student how to write in every situation. However, I can create rhetorical contexts with

objects of attention other than just the writing itself and with encouragement and scaffolding for

students to discover their own answers to how to meet audience expectations.

A key concept with transfer studies is that of Threshold Concepts. Linda Adler-Kassner,

John Majewski, and Damian Koshnick approached transfer through the lens of Threshold

Concepts in a linked set of classes—a lower division writing course and a survey history course.

Threshold concepts are significant ideas within a field that are key to progression—the idea of

"threshold" invokes the idea that these concepts act as both a benchmark and a barrier to the

future learning that is built on these ideas. The researchers found similar threshold concepts in

both fields, such as understanding writing and history as both context-centric endeavors not

governed by universal rules. They then attempted to emphasize these concepts to the students

that were taking both courses, noting how a unified approach synergistically helped students

understand concepts and how it was blocked by the courses' respective thematic elements. Their

conclusion is that both history and English instructors need to be familiar with and make clear

connections to other fields' threshold concepts. Relying on tacit or vague reliance on "general

skills" doesn't produce transfer of skills, knowledge, and habits of mind in students (Yancey, Bacon). Identifying threshold concepts, especially those that apply in online settings and to some of the other disciplines my students will be a part of, will be an important step in successfully helping my students transfer the learning they achieve in this project to other domains of their lives.

This dissertation joins a vast body of research about service-learning and how it differs from community engagement pedagogy, about online writing instruction and navigating digital tools, and about the transfer of knowledge from one context to another. This unique combination will answer questions about the value of encouraging students to make and maintain their own connections with community partners, about how doing so is affected in an online medium, and about how such projects assist or hinder attempts to increase student transfer.

In Chapter Two, I more thoroughly establish the theory and studies defining the three areas of focus: Service-Learning, Online Writing Instruction, and Transfer of Learning. Chapter Three clarifies my methodology in this project, including an account of the data I collected and a rationale for what I included through coding. Chapter Four contains the results and analysis of the two classes I taught. And finally, Chapter Five concludes this study with a return to the big picture of how the findings of the previous chapter fit into the field and even how they could lead to more questions and potential studies.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

With the possible exception of Service Learning, the origins of my theoretical foundation are relatively recent developments. Online Writing Instruction draws on rhetorical analysis, visual rhetoric, and other areas of study with rich histories, but because computers haven't existed with their current capabilities for more than a few decades, this field has only blossomed and fought to establish its legitimacy in that time. Similarly, Transfer of Learning draws on cognitive sciences, the psychology of learning, and other fields that have been around in some form for centuries. But the term "Transfer" hasn't been widely used in its current form and the debate around how people learn and apply that learning hasn't been popular in its current form for more than one or two decades. Even Service-Learning can be argued is a young discipline, with some arguing that it originates in the educational arm of the land grant movement of the 1860s (Worrall 23), but at the very latest could be said to begin in the first coined use of the term "Service-Learning" in 1965 (Stanton 64). In either case, recent adoption of SL on a broad scale in higher education and a movement to critically analyze and theoretically support it has been a relatively recent development.

Because these fields have made dramatic or at least significant shifts in the last few decades, literature about them follows an arc: first, theorists debated viability of these forms, including questions of whether online education could even function as an acceptable alternative to face-to-face education, whether students can internalize and apply school learning at all, and whether Service-Learning can serve the needs of both the university and the community partners at the same time. Later, once it became clear that each of these questions could be answered in the affirmative, theorists worked to refine the field, establishing best practices, dangers, and borders. As each of these movements gained in popularity and usefulness, research adjusted

towards how best these fields could be shifted towards institutionalization and mainstream adoption. The following pages trace a more complete account of these arcs, within Service-Learning, Online Writing Instruction, and Transfer of Learning. Each step of these arcs—viability, refinement, and mainstreaming—have implications for my project.

Introduction to Service-Learning (SL)

As I claimed in my introduction, SL as a pedagogical approach (along with online writing instruction and transfer) has undergone a shift from questions of legitimacy to acceptance and questions of how it can best become a part of academic institutions. This shift has not been an accident. Studies have established SL as "a viable model" (Wurr 432), on the modest side, to the other side of the spectrum as "a microrevolution" that yields "radical transformations of [student] experiences and understanding of education and its relation to communities outside the campus" (Adler-Kassner, et al. 1). The most thorough and broad-reaching collection of research is penned in a 122-page survey by Eyler, Giles, and Braxon of hundreds of studies from 1993-2000 about Service Learning: "service-learning programs appear to have an impact on students' attitudes, values, and skills, as well as on the way they think about social issues, even over the relatively brief period of a semester" (98). Their survey, based on empirically sound evidence, reports overwhelmingly positive findings for students, educators, communities, and educational institutions generally. These studies "trumpeted encouraging findings" (Deans et al. 3). While there have been studies that have echoed this report since then, the fact that such a broad-reaching compilation of studies exists and was possible speaks to the moment in history when SL was questioned yet supportable. The lack of a more recent follow-up compilation is because the question of whether SL is a viable pedagogical form appears to be broadly accepted as answered in the affirmative.

However, while SL is rightfully touted as a potentially game-changing pedagogical approach, there are still many questions about where, when, and how institutions in higher education can adopt the most effective aspects of SL. Insights into these complications can come from understanding the social and historical underpinnings of the movement. Upon this complex situation rests the rationale and approach to SL that I've used and described in the rest of this dissertation. The extensive work SL theorists have put into testing the viability of service and community-oriented pedagogy has significant implications for my project.

Viability of Service Learning

Service Learning can be applied in a surprisingly wide variety of circumstances, yet, "like any other undertaking, SL is neither automatically successful nor inevitably beneficial" (Adler-Kassner 6). Many researchers, through trial and error, have written concerning many complications that must be addressed before SL can be successful and beneficial.

Many view SL's premise as inherently conflicted—students internalize service, caring, and interest in individuals and groups other than themselves…but "the starting point is, nevertheless, a requirement imposed by an authority; that is, students have to go to get course credit" (231). A common method for teachers to ensure that students go is to create a mandatory hour requirement that the service partner is responsible for. However,

> Overall, community partners expressed a high level of frustration with mandatory hour
> requirements and did not feel that this was a particularly useful indication of student
> achievement or impact on the community partner site. Many felt that the designated hour
> requirement sends the wrong message to students and were sometimes distressed by the
> amount of paperwork this requirement generates" (39).

In addition to questions about how time is used during the Service project, other researchers

question whether one semester is enough time to make a difficult design like SL worth it.: "an academic semester limits the scope of many projects and can overwhelm students by the amount of classroom and community work required" (Juergensmeyer 162; see also Cooper and Julier).

Student attitude is an important but a nearly uncontrollable factor in the success of a Service-learning project. An otherwise fantastic concept might fail miserably with unhealthy student attitudes. For example, Brock Haussaman advocates students visiting elderly residents at nursing homes to elicit oral histories that they incorporate into writing projects (xi). While there are many praiseworthy reasons to do this, it is essentially monetizing stories, just as hour requirements monetized presence but not attitude or work. Students may not see the value of interacting with nursing home residents (or spending time helping other partners), instead seeing them as a means to an end.

One factor influencing student buy-in is whether or not they understand the reasons for the service. If students only see physical service as the purpose, they miss some of the greatest learning opportunities. One of Service Learning's biggest limitations is that "it induces students to ask only, 'How can we help these people?' instead of the harder question, 'Why are conditions this way?'" (Bickford and Reynolds 231) It's a harder question because students must see themselves in relation to the situation. John McKnight describes this attitude through invoking the hypothetical words such a student might use: "As you are the problem, the assumption is that I, the professional servicer, am the answer. You are not the answer. Your peers are not the answer. The political, social, and economic environment is not the answer" (98). The shift from empowering community partners to assuming that service providers can and should do the work for them is highly problematic, partly because, as Linda Flower points out, solutions that don't originate from communities themselves don't have a very good track record of effectiveness.

Additionally, Flower points out that "the logic of technical expertise can reinforce the power structures and social assumptions that perpetuate problems" (99).

It's an assumption that students will understand and connect with service partners over time: "creating physical proximity does not automatically undo ideological divisions; it may in fact reinforce and strengthen them" (7). Bruce Herzberg argues for the need to teach students—through classroom discussions and readings—the underlying cultural and critical reasons behind such divisions. He would doubtlessly agree that "schools can't be held responsible for prior economic discrimination,…but they must be held accountable for reinforcing it" (316).

There are more potential problems between students and community partners. One may be a lack of connection or understanding: "there is considerable room for misunderstanding between higher education and community partners, a divide that is evident in the language higher education practitioners often use" (31). Another issue is the difficulty of communicating expectations out of a fear of rocking the boat. In particular, community partners may want help bad enough to give overly optimistic feedback: "they may not have wanted to jeopardize the working relationship with the University, and therefore assigned extremely high ratings of students to help ensure a continued partnership" (38). Finally, even with healthy, open communication, some students just might not be interested: "Some students are not sufficiently interested in their locale to find local content learning provocative." (Ball 271). And even when they do create material, it often isn't in the form of an essay. How does one go about grading unusual products? "By what criteria does one judge a press release? How do you grade a brochure?" (48) The lack of clear guidelines or experience with these kinds of assignments isn't a signal to abandon them; rather, these assignments require flexibility and new thinking about grading and educational goals.

In addition to theories around SL, even the name of Service Learning is contested. Stillman-Webb lists alternate names for Service Learning as "Project-based learning (Dubinsky)," "client-based learning (Hansen)," "experiential learning (Cooke and Williams)," "classroom-workplace collaborations (Blakeslee)," or "workplace activity network (Spinuzzi)" (290). Thomas Deans has a different list: "experiential learning, field work, literacy outreach, action research, and certain kinds of critical pedagogy" (6). Paula Mathieu criticizes the ways some researchers talk about community partners. She claims that Joseph Harris' use of "community" flattens the complex, conflictual nature of groups; Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zone" isn't specific, sounds like jargon, and is uncomfortably similar to "combat zone"; "non-academic," "outreach," and "extracurricular" are described for what they aren't, and "site of service" implies an up-to-down, help-the-poor approach. Other terms preferred by people include "community-based writing" for those who don't want to use the word "service" (Duffy 403-4), "public writing" (Weisser), and "authentic education" (Strimel). The struggle to even coalesce around a name for the movement signals the presence of divergent forces within SL trying to define and steer it. To a degree, this project also stands as a force within the field trying to define and steer.

Refinement of Service-Learning

A groundswell of support for higher education's involvement in preparing students to meet and understand their civic duties provides a direction for the movement; however, there are questions about the specifics. There are even questions about what Service Learning is. Many have defined it in various ways: "a pedagogy of action and reflection, one that centers on a dialectic between community outreach and academic inquiry" (Deans 98). Or as "the use of voluntary community service as an integral part of an academic course. In a cycle of experience

and reflection, students apply their skills and knowledge to help people, and in the classroom, they reflect on the people, social agencies, and communities they have encountered and on the nature of service" (Haussaman 414). Others, though, have resisted such straightforward definitions. Dan Butin claims that "there is no one thing called service-learning." Rather, "the theory of service-learning is actually a set of theories contingent on the embodied and experiential character of the service-learning experience" (xiii). Even those who believe in a singular Service Learning admit that there are "tensions at the hyphen" (Dubinsky 258) between Service and Learning, disagreement on what the appropriate balance between the two are.

Service Learning appears to have been a difficult theory to understand and support for many in higher education. Here is a list of sixteen approaches theorists have taken to understanding what Service Learning is and how it works:

Two SL orientations: Paula Mathieu discusses SL in terms of tactical and strategic orientations

Three SL attributes: Melody Bowden and J. Blake Scott theorize SL as relating directly to course goals, addresses a need in the community, and developing reciprocal community relationships

Three SL axes: James Dubinsky graphs SL on axes of learning, serving, and reflecting,

Three SL paradigms: Keith Morton suggests that three distinct paradigms exists—charity, project development, and social change—with "thin" and "thick" versions of each

Three SL dimensions: Melinda Clark describes three dimensions in an SL project evaluation model: Initiator, Initiative, and Impact

Three SL formulations: Thomas Deans talks about writing for, writing with, and writing

about SL partners

Three SL principles: Robert Sigmon outlines three basic principles—that those served control the services and become better able to serve/be served, and that those who serve have control over their learning

Four SL conceptualizations: Dan Butin offers four conceptualizations for thinking about SL—technical, cultural, political, and antifoundational

Four SL typologies: Robert Sigmon highlights four different emphases for Service Learning through capitalization—service-LEARNING (learning is primary); SERVICE-learning (service is primary); service learning (both are separate goals); SERVICE-LEARNING (both are of equal weight) (25)

Four SL design principles: Cheryl Duffy formulates four principles useful in designing SL approaches—integration, critical pedagogy/academic rigor, mutuality/reciprocity, and diverse discourses (411)

Four SL considerations: in an effort to mitigate or avoid SL complications, Fred Barton recommends considering four factors—the local "temperature" of underlying issues, the degree of organized opposition, available resources, and relevance to teaching goals (77)

Five SL characteristics: Marie Sandy and Barbara Holland rank important characteristics of SL from a community partner perspective—communication among partners, understanding partner perspectives, personal connections, planning/training/orienting together, and providing accountability and leadership (34)

Five SL NOTs: Bowden and Scott respond to complaints in their SL project by recommending five things that should not count towards SL requirements—original research, clerical work, tech training (though students could develop training documents),

client services (childcare/transportation), or custodial duties (7)

Five SL goals: Joan Schine lists five ideals for SL projects—they should apply to life, be carefully conducted, be directed toward school, be more than career preparation, and should serve/reflect (qtd. in Dubinsky)

Five SL preconditions: Dan Butin characterizes SL as historically needing to fit these preconditions—(1) volunteer service by (2) students with cultural capital for (3) individuals with low cultural capital (4) within the context of an academic class (5) with positive results

Twenty-two SL strands: Timothy Stanton, Dwight Giles, and Nadinne Cruz outline twenty-two sub-categories of SL—Action research/community studies; Campus ministry; Career development; Civil rights movement; Community development (as represented by the Community Development Society); Community organization (or organizers; not campus based); Community psychology; Cooperative education; Education reform; Education research; Ethnic studies; Experiential education; Field study/field education; International and cross-cultural education; Internship education; National service (for example, VISTA and the Peace Corps); Peace and justice work (off campus) and studies (on campus); Service corps; Service-learning (person's first and primary affiliation); Volunteerism/student activism; Work experience; Youth development/leadership/ participation

These substantial lists of categories, aspects, and adjacent topics discussed in the work of SL theorists imply that there is a need to understand what Service Learning is and how it works. They varied from advice for how to make projects be their most successful, to theorizing for how best to make sense of SL, to defining for how best to draw boundaries around SL.

Boundaries of SL

Similar to disagreements about terminology is exactly what kinds of students should be involved in SL. If Service Learning is considered a model that can only be used for certain students, then communities such as basic writers, community college students, and English language learners would not be included. However, researchers have pushed the boundaries of what some might consider mainstream SL for application in these less common situations.

SL with Basic Writers

Rosemary Arca argues that Service Learning is a valuable approach for those basic writers who struggle with their writing. She claims that while some educators might argue that writing for public audiences "requires a strong grasp of grammar fundamentals and unified and coherent prose," she argues that "basic writers especially need to recognize the immediate connection with readers, the purposeful intent, the clear communication of ideas that service writing requires" (135). Far from failing in real-world environments and situations, basic writers in community service composition situations gain a sense of authority they may not have had when they arrived. If anything, she claims SL is more important for basic writers.

SL with Community College Students

The challenge of incorporating SL into classes in a community college isn't based primarily in shortcomings of the students' abilities, as it was with basic writers, but instead in their life situation. Michelle Navarre Cleary talks about the expectations or hopes of administration that SL will improve retention: "How can service-learning significantly increase retention when our students are struggling with inadequate housing, health care, child care, and transportation while working in dead-end service sector jobs with little control over their schedules?" (58). She doesn't portray this as a deal-breaker for SL in community colleges, but

rather for an opportunity and responsibility to create SL projects that meet students' needs and while still accomplishing course outcomes.

Brock Haussaman goes even further than Cleary to claim that SL can be even more beneficial in a community college—it "has a special impact at community colleges, where students come from the local community and, to a large extent, will remain in it. Community service is integral to the notion of the community college" (420).

SL with English Language Learners

Surely if there would be any reason to disqualify a group to benefit from SL it would be a combination of struggle with English and difficult/unfamiliar life situation, as is the case with international students or those whose first language isn't English. However, Richard Selzer claims that even this group can benefit from Service Learning projects in classes, calling it a "golden opportunity" to get students to connect with those in the community: "students can get a real picture of what life is like for some Americans, without the sugar coating of a video or a glossy textbook about American culture. Most importantly, human contacts develop far beyond the period of service for which student receives credit" (qtd in 164-5). Service Learning provides a contextualized, long-term benefit, even when students struggle with their ability to communicate in English, in a foreign country.

Mainstream Adoption of SL

While the first program specifically called "service-learning" didn't appear until 1965 (surprisingly, at the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies in Tennessee) (Stanton 64), with definitions of SL from the Southern Regional Education Board in 1969 (Worrall 23), SL as a concept had been under development over at least 100 years before that:

Service-Learning is seen by some as grounded in 'the philosophy and practice of

extension education programs spawned by the land grant movement of the 1860s,...the

progressive education and settlement house activities early in' the 20th century, 'work

programs of the New Deal, [and]...immigrant education and civil rights organizations

efforts' of the 1960s (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999)" (Worrall 23).

At the beginning of the 20th century, John Dewey's arguments that education involves social

processes especially were influential in shifting thought about the purpose of higher education.

Strides in the official structure of SL came in 1985, when presidents from three colleges formed

what came to be known as "Campus Compact" and committed to improving the civic mission of

higher education in their institutions. Within 30 years, membership in the Campus Compact had

grown to over 1,100 campuses, or a quarter of higher education institutions (Butin). The growth

of this compact has been fueled by two conferences (in 1998 and 1999, collectively known as the

Wingspread Conferences) that were convened to "formulate strategies for renewing the civic

mission of the research university, both by preparing students for responsible citizenship in a

diverse democracy, and also by engaging faculty members to develop and utilize knowledge for

the improvement of society" (Parks 93). These conferences developed a declaration entitled The

Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University.

These conferences and this document was a response to complaints that those in higher education

were fulfilling their civic mission of preparing citizens to become productive and engaged in

their communities. They have influenced countless proclamations, mission statements, and

general thought processes about SL.

According to Campus Compact's website, in 2015 for the thirty-year anniversary of the

original signing, the Board of Directors for Campus Compact challenged all members to sign an

action statement and develop and submit a customized action plan for their respective

institutions. Since then more than 450 presidents and chancellors have done so—the map of locations that offer Service-Learning includes 463 schools currently, though it's unclear how many institutions there are that provide SL courses or programs but who haven't joined in Campus Compact's revival efforts. There are undoubtedly a percentage of schools who are working on joining and developing their plans, but it's difficult to say how many. In any case, there is active recent activity in the SL field.

Conclusion of Service-Learning

Service Learning has expanded rapidly in the past few decades as educators have recognized the value of a community-engaged, service-oriented pedagogical approach. In fact, Dan Butin claims that this expansion has been so fast that it "has overtaken the field's ability to examine and account for the implication of its success" (Butin xvi). Adrian Wurr extends this to say that those who do service learning must learn to "become far more comfortable seeing enhanced learning as the horse pulling the cart of moral and civic values, and not vice versa, [or else] service-learning will continue to remain less visible and less important to the higher education community as a whole than is good for its own survival (Zlotkowski 24-25)" (422). If SL is to continue its success, projects like this must seek to not only push enhanced learning as a primary agenda, but also work to develop a more nuanced understanding of how SL can best enhance learning in the first place.

Introduction to Online Writing Instruction

Computer-mediated technologies have impacted writing and the teaching of writing in fundamental ways, including providing a new perspective on the relatively old discussion about community-engaged education. As new technology has done in the past, social media, video chat, etc. have worked their ways into the educational sphere, influencing course management

systems, online education, and composition education in key ways. Before investigating how these influences might apply to community engaged education (including if it's even possible to effectively teach a community-focused class when different class members might be in different communities), let's look at the history of online technologies and their influences on education in general and writing education in specific. The complications, including designing courses to be as universally accessible as possible, apply equally to any kind of class meant to go online.

Online Writing Instruction Viability

The technologies at work in today's civilization are unprecedented in human history, but people's reaction to them are not. To those who fear that texting is ruining teens' writing abilities (Lenhart 1), that images are replacing written text (Kress 5), or that novices tend to use Wikipedia and Google superficially (Hewett 29), it's important to acknowledge that these aren't new kinds of fears. Plato, famous for his role in Greek history, quoted Socrates' skepticism about a new technology that was expanding during his time. That "technology" (which Dennis Barron defines as "a way of engineering materials in order to accomplish an end" (16)) was writing: "If men learn [writing], it will implant forgetfulness in their souls: they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks…and as men filled, not with wisdom, but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows" (157). The anxiety from today's teachers about the proliferation of the body of information available in an average student's hand via the internet is basically a continuation of this fear of writing. Most teacher's negative feelings about Wikipedia stem from the fact that it comes too easily…in other words that the students don't have the wisdom from understanding the concepts, only the "conceit of wisdom."

This isn't to say that either Plato or those against a lazy use of Wikipedia are completely right or wrong. However, there is something we miss when we adopt a new technology without being conscious of what we are losing. For example, some claiming that the author of one of the most famous texts of all time was illiterate would probably be met with ridicule. But Walter Ong points out that Homer, author of *The Odyssey* and *The Illiad*, was illiterate. Not only that, but "virtually every distinctive feature of Homeric poetry is due to the economy enforced on it by oral methods of composition" (21). As we look at new technologies and the affordances they allow or require, it's important that we don't assume that they're inherently better, just as some would assume that Homer's composition abilities were based on the newer technology of writing. Just as his economy of language and reliance on rhyme, cadence, and memorable language aided the oral nature of his work, we need to ask ourselves what benefits of a pre-computer pedagogical era might we miss if we rush too quickly into adopting Online Writing Instruction? And can both of these coexist synergistically? The CCCC position statement on Teaching Learning and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments implies that they can: "the curriculum of composition is widening to include not one but two literacies: a literacy of print and a literacy of the screen. In addition, work in one medium is used to enhance learning in the other" (16). The effort to apply an established pedagogy—Service-Learning—to an online modality is a move to create this kind of synergistic coexistence.

The Nature of Online Educational Environments

In order to understand how SL could work in online settings, we first must understand the differences between face to face (f2f) teaching and online writing instruction (OWI). Beth Hewett claims that the main difference isn't one of kind but of degree. Early in her book, Hewett is quick to point out OWI is "traditional writing instruction on steroids" (iii). She even goes so

far as to say that the "most crucial" difference between face-to-face teaching and online teaching is the "increased literacy load." The logical result, she concludes, is that customizing and enhancing literacy education will result in successful online education:

> The key to success in OWI is traditional literacy instruction with a digital twist that acknowledges the various challenges of reading and writing online. Students especially must read better to understand what they are being taught while teachers must write better--with semantic integrity--to convey clearly what they are teaching about writing. (2)

Her book details specific reading techniques to teach students that will help with the increased reading load that's a result of the lack of verbal cues: Using metacognition, schema, inference, and questioning, finding relevance, visualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing texts. These aren't new techniques, but applied to online settings can give new meaning and purpose to them.

Several researchers are quick to point out, though, that it's a mistake to simply import material from a f2f course into an OWI course and expect it to be successful. A saying in the field indicate that there's an inherent shift in role between the two approaches: in the classroom, the teacher is the "sage on the stage," whereas in the online classroom, teachers are a "guide on the side" (Coppola, qtd. in Cargile Cook 91). "additional efforts at engaging students are necessary in the online environment compared to the F2F classroom" (Selfe 60). F2F vs Online: "'Sage on the Stage' to the 'Guide on the Side' [11]" (Coppola 91). just as the gap between a subway train and a platform shouldn't be bridged—we simply need to "mind the gap"—educators of online classes can't and shouldn't try to bridge the difference between their f2f and online classes--they simply need to mind the gaps. (Carter and Rickly)

Another difference between OWI and f2f teaching is the rate at which OWI technologies are changing. In 1997, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum said of educational technology, "It's a full-time job (and more) not only to keep pace with the inevitable changes in hardware and software, but also to stay current with the exponentially increasing body of theoretical and critical literature" (qtd. in Hawisher and Selfe 1). In the over 20 years since then, it's still a full-time job, but the role of the "exponentially increasing body" of literature has changed. In 2005, Kelli Cargile Cook and Keith Grant-Davie published their anthology entitled *Online Education: Global Questions, Local Answers*. Of its role they stated "We believe online education in the early 21st century is at a theory-building stage, a stage at which we need not only to take stock of what we are doing with the new technologies, and what we might do with them, but also to examine and discuss our rationales for those practices" (2). When they published the second anthology in 2013, aptly titled *Online Education 2.0: Evolving, Adapting, and Reinventing Online Technical Communication*, they noted a change in the purpose of the collection: "Unlike the first collection, this one begins with two assumptions about online education: it is a viable medium of instruction, different from but not inferior to face-to-face instruction; and most of us will, at some point, teach online" (2). While there are numerous studies that confirm the hazards of online teaching, such as increased rates of attrition (e.g. Sapp and Simon; Snart), it's clear that "computers in varying forms are here to stay in instructional contexts," (Selber 8) and "online education is here to stay (Boyd 224). We simply need to "mind the gap" between the two.

Although modern educational technology, conflicted as it is, has clear benefits, that doesn't mean that it is easier or less time-intensive to integrate than face-to-face teaching. DeVoss et al. describe this as an irony: "for anyone who imagined that computers would make writing easier, the irony is that by making a host of individual tasks easier, computers have

dramatically expanded options for writers and have probably made writing, and learning to write, more complex" (21). Word processing software, for example, which enable enhanced capabilities in text manipulation, also allow students to do (and teachers to expect) more sophisticated composition in shorter amounts of time. This technology is already accepted and common, but networked technologies allow similar affordances for students to do more sophisticated—though more challenging—work, if teachers will recognize and take advantage of them.

So, f2f education and OWI education are inherently different, with a necessary-to-navigate gap between the two. Online writing instruction's increasingly popular and transdisciplinary status means that educators can't ignore it, even as some would argue its increased affordances come at a greater cost in time, effort, and understanding than face-to-face teaching. Some portray the changes necessary in teaching as one of degree as much as of kind, and that a focus on traditional teaching techniques, especially reading and writing, will help lead to a successful online transition.

I now shift in this chapter to two significant ways in which OWI affect student learning that instructors need to be aware of in all educational formulations, including community engaged pedagogies and how epistemological philosophies inherent in digital tools of OWI may minimize or exacerbate student alienation, especially those who are typically labelled "disabled." The sensitivity towards marginalized communities is hugely important for my project, and stands as a refinement in OWI's arc towards mainstream adoption and successful implementation.

OWI Refinement

Because they are expressed in a complex system of 1s and 0s, digital networks and other educational software seems like it is both unchangeable and neutral. However, OWI theorists

maintain that they are neither, and that embedded assumptions about how students learn in online courses affect students at a software, infrastructural level. For example, Adam Pope argues that course management systems (CMSs) should change fundamentally depending on what kind of course is being taught. Explaining the claim from Staggers, Zoetewey, and Pennell that "A change in technology, especially in the form of a CMS, is a change in pedagogy" (n.p.) he maintains that "Often, a single CMS will be implemented to all programs and disciplines within a given school. This level of uniformity is itself problematic because if the history of composition studies has taught us anything, it is that teaching is not a universal process but contextual and specific to a given subject-area, a given course, even to a given group of students" (n.p.). He continues by describing how he spent a year teaching himself enough coding to put together a custom CMS that encourages multiple drafts and student process work, which might not be built into a CMS built with a lecture-based course in mind. Pope's argument isn't for his CMS, but that teachers need to be aware that "The choice of what CMS or CMS(s) a university chooses to implement and how they are implemented has a very real impact on teachers and students and how they interact" and that teachers have choices and power, even at the level of software and code.

Another way that poorly implemented software can negatively impact student learning is when teachers and programmers make ableist assumptions. Sean Zdenek puts it this way: "When we design for the web, for example, we may unconsciously activate a set of normative beliefs about how well or how poorly people move, see, hear, think, learn, know, act, and use specific technologies" (qtd. in Meloncon, 10). "Universal design" is the term for crafting educational material that's accessible to anyone, regardless of their capacities. Rather than thinking about this as catering to the few who "can't" or "aren't," though, Sushil Oswal and Beth Hewett prefer

to think of accessibility for sight-impaired students this way: "[it is] not special treatment, but tailored access to the same treatment. Put another way, don't just give special treatment to fully-sighted users" (139). Being aware of ableist assumptions is a big part of every educator shifting their thinking towards not giving special treatment to "average" or "normal" students. Making such changes benefit all students, according to Patricia Dunn and Kathleen Dunn De Mers: "As teachers and students put elements of their writing classrooms and studies online, everyone benefits from the site owner's understanding and application of the principles of universal design" (n.p.). Additionally, Zdenek pointed out this is a legal issue as well as an ethical and pedagogical one—he sites a number of laws to show it's actually illegal to make accessible material on an "as-needed" basis. All projects need to be accessible from the beginning (16).

In contexts broader than just online (but which are especially applicable in digital settings), Stephanie Kerschbaum maintains that talking and thinking about those with disabilities in specific, concrete categories is problematic. "This overemphasis on categories, I argue, leads to the problem of fixing difference in order to study it." Her use of the phrase "fixing difference" is multifaceted. Not only does she refer to "the process of treating difference as a stable thing or property that can be identified and fixed in place," but also to "attempts to fix, that is, improve, the way difference is understood" (618-9). Her argument is towards the necessity to consider each individual student not solely as their individual attributes (i.e. white, or deaf, or Asian American), but as a complex combination of them all:

> as the embodiment of a complex set of identifications that must be considered together, rather than independent from one another. The strength of such approaches is that they broaden the range of interpretive possibilities. Rather than allowing any given

classification to determine a teacher's assessment of a student, the rich confluence of

multiple factors holds open more potential directions for an interaction. (619)

When such interactions happen online, teachers need to be particularly aware of the human

tendency to want to "fix differences" and think of students as reified beings. In my online

classes, I've noticed a tendency to judge students by their name or by their writing style or

ability; instead, I need to recognize the complex individual behind such writing or name.

A practical outcome of being aware of assumptions and categorizations we make for

students is the words we use to describe them. Margaret Gutsell and Kathleen Hulgin, in their

chapter, "Supercrips Don't Fly: Technical Communication to Support Ordinary Lives of People

with Disabilities" argue that simple descriptive words often carry hurtful or uninformed

assumptions that can alienate students. For example, they point out that the word "invalid"

carries with it a meaning of "can't walk" as well as "not valid." Other examples include referring

to someone in a wheelchair as "wheelchair bound," which connotes being tied and forced—they

contrast this term with someone calling their wheelchair a "freedom machine" (qtd. in Meloncon

86). They also use the term "supercrip" to refer to the common mistake of overly-normalizing a

person with a disability through some compensating ability, such as a blind man having super-

sensitive hearing. Educators should take to heart the double meaning in their title—both that

over-normalizing is inaccurate (there is no such thing as a "supercrip"), but also that such

portrayal is not acceptable (it "doesn't fly"). Rather than viewing or talking about people with

disabilities in such negative or overly positive ways, they, like Kerschbaum, emphasize the

importance of looking at and talking to each student as an individual. I argue that each student

who comes into our class is an individual with their own interests and desires. Respecting their

identity means assigning essays and work that enable them to excel in their personal

development, such as in expanding their social, professional, and political sphere of influence as my project requires. At the heart of this project is identity and the respect of individuality.

OWI Mainstream Adoption

This inherent difference in medium has been difficult for educational administrators to understand. Looking at course offerings, it's easy to assume digital media and online or blended modes of education are a sub-disciplinary category. Much like a faculty specialist would teach British Modernism, another would teach an Online Pedagogy training course. However, Collin Gifford Brooke argues in *Lingua Fracta* that this isn't the case: "Our tendency has been to treat discursive technologies as if they were simply another specialty among many in our discipline, the province of a handful of experts, one of whom could be hired into a department thereby satisfying that particular 'area.'" Rather, he claims "technology is transdisciplinary, cutting across the full range of activities we engage in as professionals, rather than subdisciplinary" (5). The question of whether to include technology and how we address technology use in our classes is not equivalent to whether we include a certain author or essay type—the technology is already imposing decisions, constraints, and affordances on teachers, and it's our responsibility to understand and capitalize on those differences.

The number of institutions offering online courses, programs, degrees, and certifications has skyrocketed in recent years. To the point where it's tempting to just ask, "how many schools *aren't* doing online education?" However, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2017, of the 19,765,598 students enrolled in post-secondary education, 6,651,536 of those were taking at least one online course, which is 33.7%. Those students can be broken down into 18.0% who are taking at least one class but not all, and 15.7% who are taking only online courses. This number was certainly lower than I was expecting, but the trajectory is

clear that this number is and will only get higher. The importance of addressing the questions around best tools to use in online educational settings is an important one.

OWI Conclusion

The myriad of problems emerging from a racially divided culture is hard to overcome through actionable classroom practices. Michelle Sidler says it this way:

> Access and literacy are very much tied to cultural markers, and minorities have found that they must either learn to accept the culture and conditions of digital access and literacy or risk being left out. Consequently, when minority students come into our computer-netted composition classrooms, they may well bring along the baggage of the culturally dispossessed. It is important for teachers to understand what such students face and what teachers can do to make the digital environment welcoming and productive for them. (181)

It's important the teachers not misinterpret students who are culturally dispossessed as students who are disrespectful, resistant, or lacking intelligence or motivation.

OWI is teaching. In many ways it's the same as any other kind of teaching, but there are key differences in how students learn online and the power dynamics they bring and have to negotiate in online settings that require teachers to make pedagogical decisions. Teachers who acknowledge ways in which they tend to "fix difference" and reify students who are on the margins can make decisions to include more inclusive communication in their online classes. Teachers who recognize unequal power structures and institutionalized forms of discrimination can rely on assignment types (e.g. service-learning) and technologies (e.g. wikis) that share authority with students and encourage their autonomy. Teachers can recognize course management systems and other digital tools need to be used in ways that facilitate the specific

kind of learning required in writing classes. And finally, teachers can change the focus on their classes to emphasize the increased literacy load inherent in online classes and teach reading more intentionally.

Introduction to Transfer of Learning

Education provides opportunities for countless approaches, among which are online vs face to face or community-engaged assignments. However, there remains an even more fundamental question about the nature of learning in college environments: does the material covered in a course become internalized and usable to students over the period of the semester? This may seem like an obvious question—why else are students in school if not to internalize and use information?—but researchers have questioned the inevitability of the transfer of learning over the last few decades. Several concepts have emerged as significant factors, two of which are student dispositions and troublesome knowledge or "threshold concepts," which are transdisciplinary counter-intuitive ideas that are keys to the learning process. The irony in this situation is that threshold concepts, and to a lesser degree dispositions and transfer itself, exhibit features of complexity of paradox that, arguably, mark them as threshold concepts themselves. For example, research shows that students who view themselves as writing novices are more likely to move towards expertise than those who already view themselves as experts (Driscoll and Wells; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak). In this section I contextualize the pessimistic and optimistic debate of transfer to provide a foundation for an exploration of how threshold concepts and student disposition can provide pragmatic pedagogical techniques that can be applied to a specific teaching situation, in this case my community-focused Service-Learning approach I used in two first-year composition courses.

Viability of Transfer of Learning

The question "can students transfer learning from one class to another?" is hotly debated—in fact, Doug Brent, "not unkindly" (564) categorizes studies as glass-half-empty and glass-half-full. He acknowledges, though, the difficulty in getting concrete answers to this question: "Many studies of transfer reveal a disturbingly uneven pattern of results. Frequently, learning acquired in one context seemingly evaporates when the learner is asked to apply it in another, even when the contexts seem relatively similar" (562). He describes other studies that find other instances of "evaporated" learning, such as Patrick Dias, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway, and Anthony Paré's work *Worlds Apart,* which indicates that students' education and eventual workplace often "have surprisingly little to do with each other. Each is a valid activity system in its own right, but without much transfer between them" (564).

Other discouraging findings from "glass-half-empty" studies stem from issues such as the dissimilarity between current and target skills. According to David Smit, transfer of learning from one context to another is difficult to detect or predict: "If such transfer occurs at all, it is largely unpredictable and depends on the learners' background and experience, factors over which teachers have little control…The only way teachers can help students with the process of transfer is to help them see the similarities between what they have learned before and what they need to do in new contexts" (119). While he doesn't rule out transfer as a goal or possibility, Smit advocates teachers focus on meta-awareness in highly-scaffolded assignments.

One of the most persuasive negative views of transfer comes from David Russell, who, as mentioned previously, compared transferring knowledge and skills from a composition context to a hypothetical ball-handling class. If students were to practice general ball handling skills with a basketball, the analogy goes, it would be unreasonable to expect them to be proficient at golf

just because it also uses a ball. There is no single skill that could not transfer between the two because they're two entirely different things. Similarly, a general writing skills class cannot be expected to teach students how to write in a variety of contexts. He continues by giving an example: "A Nobel Laureate who wrote a world-changing scientific paper might fail miserably at writing a straight news account of the discovery for the front page of the local newspaper, although the scientist reads the newspaper every day." Russell attributes this kind of failure not to a lack of skill or knowledge, but that learning writing is learning how certain groups in certain contexts (activity systems) use customized writing for specific purposes (genres). Russell continues, "[His failure] is because scientists do not ordinarily participate in the activity system of journalism and have not learned its genres" (58-9).

While many theorists quote and appreciate Russell's analogy, those optimistic about transfer have explanations about why learning appears to evaporate in new settings. Rebecca Nowacek, specifically addressing the value of Russell's work—"The analogy is a powerful one"—but she also points out that Russell never said transfer wasn't possible, just that it was difficult: "Ultimately, to the extent that scholars like Russell argue against transfer, it is to challenge limited understandings of transfer--not to argue against its existence" (13). Nowacek, firmly in the "glass-half-full" camp, admits that one of the reasons transfer is so hard to detect is because it's hard to accomplish. "There are significant obstacles to transfer, certainly. Many students do not make connections when they ought or make them visible when they might—true" (10). Nevertheless, for her the main problem isn't necessarily the teaching or the students, but what is measured. By focusing on a yes-or-no application of specific skills, often in laboratory settings, "previous scholarship takes too limited a view of transfer. Transfer is both more common and more complex than research currently recognizes" (18). Elizabeth Wardle

puts it this way: "I suggest that focusing on a limited search for 'skills' is the reason we do not recognize more evidence of 'transfer'; we are looking for apples when those apples are now part of an apple pie" (69). According to Wardle, it's not that the learning (the "apples") evaporates, it's that it gets transformed into another form—one that isn't easily recognizable.

Doug Brent also uses the term "transform" when referring to transfer. After admitting students in his study "could articulate only sporadic instances of what might be called classical transfer," focused on writing skills, he detected "writers drawing on a large repertoire of mental schema and applying them in a variety of situations…they were readily able to transform knowledge if not to transfer it" (588-9). Applying writing from one context to another clearly isn't a short-term, easy process. Still, rather than dismiss transfer as impossible or undetectable, researchers believe we should focus on different aspects of what is transferred and how. To return to Russell's scientist example, rather than focusing on the lack of skill—the failed news story—we should look at how quickly and easily the scientist would learn journalistic activity systems and genre writing given motivation and a longer timeframe. The apple (a single item, present or not like a skill) is actually an apple pie (a complex compilation of items transformed over time).

Refinement of Transfer of Learning

There are many models and theories of transfer that have received attention—"high road" and "low road" transfer, "near" and "far" transfer, (Perkins and Saloman; Baird and Dilger; Nowacek), transition (Beach), repurposing (Roozen), and negotiation (Reiff and Bawarshi), among many others. However, two of the most important recent developments are how student dispositions and threshold concepts affect transfer.

One of the first difficulties with teaching transfer to students is that, by its very nature, it is not intuitive. Telling students, or even other teachers, that there is a body of knowledge— threshold concepts—which can be defined as "'alien', or counter-intuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value" will not be the easiest pedagogical approach. This description comes from the seminal transdisciplinary piece, "Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: Linkages to Ways of Thinking and Practicing within the Disciplines," in which Jan H.F. Meyer and Ray Land describe threshold concepts with concepts from three fields. Besides describing the math concept of *complex numbers* and the economic concept of *opportunity costs*, they describe literary and culture studies concepts, including *signification* and *deconstruction*. They break down the common features of all these and other examples of threshold concepts into five categories: Threshold concepts are 1) Transformative, 2) Irreversible, 3) Integrative, in that "it exposes the previously hidden interrelatedness of something" (7), 4) Often Bounded, in that "any conceptual space will have terminal frontiers, bordering with thresholds into new conceptual areas" (8), and 5) Potentially Troublesome. By "troublesome" they draw on work by Perkins to describe six possible reasons for why a concept might be difficult for students: it might be knowledge that is ritual, inert, conceptually difficult, alien, tacit, or linguistically challenging. While these categories proved not to be convincing or distinguishable enough to catch on with many other theorists, they provided a conceptual framework to think about threshold concepts that others built on.

Continuing Meyer and Land's transdisciplinary work, Linda Adler-Kassner, John Majewski, and Damian Koshnick conducted a study where students concurrently enrolled in an English and a History class that were taught with attention to threshold concepts shared in both classes. They were able to choose from a variety of threshold concepts, including "the idea that

all writing is situated within genre and that genre itself constitutes a form of social action

(Miller). From this perspective, genres are not just forms of writing. They are the mediating tools

(Vygotsky) that bind academic and disciplinary communities" (2). However, due to unevenness

in the way threshold concepts were taught between the two classes, "the data also indicate that

the extent to which these shared concepts are enacted through instruction is somewhat

inconsistent," but that "threshold concepts might prove a productive frame through which to

consider questions related to writing and transfer, and also to general education more broadly"

(1). Although the implementation of threshold concepts into a classroom project proved to be

troublesome, they were able to document how three students "provide glimpses of learners

moving, in places, from a tacit to a discursive consciousness about these concepts and the

complexities involved in putting them into practice" (6).

    While Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnick address briefly how their work with

threshold concepts relate more generally to transfer, the work of Liane Robertson, Kara Taczak,

and Kathleen Blake Yancey more directly take up ways in which students' prior knowledge

supports or complicates their learning, including how they learn threshold concepts. They begin

by theorizing that students create new knowledge in one of three ways with relation to their prior

knowledge:

> by drawing on both knowledge and practice and employing it in ways almost identical to
>
> the ways they have used it in the past; by reworking such knowledge and practice as they
>
> address new tasks; and by creating new knowledge and practices for themselves when
>
> students encounter what we call a setback or critical incident, which is a failed effort to
>
> address a new task that prompts new ways of thinking about how to write and about what
>
> writing is. (1)

So students employed similar knowledge, reworked slightly similar knowledge, or ran into setbacks that required them to create new knowledge. The setback, or "critical incident" may be due to the troublesome knowledge connected with a threshold concept, but they often noticed that lack of prior knowledge was due in large part to the mismatch between high school and college curricula: "as students enter college writing classes, there's not only prior knowledge, but also an absence of prior knowledge, and in two important areas: (1) key writing concepts and (2) nonfiction texts that serve as models. In part, that's because the "writing" curricula at the two sites—high school and college—don't align well" (3).

Dispositions in Transfer

Prior knowledge and how student used or didn't use it is a closely related issue to the attitude and emotional response students have to current and prior knowledge. Looking at transfer from an institutional angle rather than an individualistic one, Elizabeth Wardle claims that student dispositions that can be described as "problem-exploring" rather than "answer-getting" should be encouraged by administrators and lawmakers because they are more likely to lead to transfer of learning. In addition to her work on disposition, Wardle also critiques the use of the term "transfer" as problematic: "it forces us back to a simplistic "carry and unload" model that we have generally rejected" (n.p.). She prefers "expansive learning," but acknowledges that it might be important to use the term "transfer" when talking to administrators or policymakers about it. She expands her discussion to include the cognitive psychology principle of well-defined or ill-defined problems. Despite the fact that "ill-defined" problems sound like they would be the worse of these two, she reassures that because they are less clear-cut and answer-oriented like the well-defined problems, ill-defined problems help students question and inhabit a problem-exploring disposition.

Dana Driscoll and Jennifer Wells take a more concrete approach to defining and theorizing about dispositions in order to see how they help or hinder transfer. They begin by describing the general attributes of dispositions, after which they describe four. The five attributes of dispositions are as follows:

1. Dispositions are a critical part of a larger system that includes the person, the context, the process through which learning happens, and time.

2. Dispositions are not intellectual traits like knowledge, skills, or aptitude, but rather determine how those intellectual traits are used or applied.

3. Dispositions determine students' sensitivity toward and willingness to engage in transfer.

4. Dispositions can positively or negatively impact the learning environment; they can be generative or disruptive

5. Dispositions are dynamic and may be context-specific or broadly generalized. (n.p.)

In addition to most of these attributes implying that dispositions may have either a positive or negative effect on learning, number three directly contends that they are fundamentally important to the transfer of knowledge. Driscoll and Wells choose to describe their dispositions with a representative question as well as a title: "What do I value? Expectancy-value theory of motivation," "Am I capable? Self-efficacy theory," "Was this my fault or yours? Attribution theory," and "Am I doing OK? Self-regulation" (n.p.). They review literature, including Elizabeth Wardle and Anne Beaufort's influential *College Writing and Beyond* to show how instances of failed transfer were in some cases directly due to these kinds of dispositions.

Driscoll and Wells' analysis of disposition has broad application, including to work on transfer that had previously been done. They could have also included later studies by Kara

Taczak (her dissertation about how student reflection affects transfer) and Liane Robertson (her dissertation about whether the content of classes affect transfer) as evidence of student dispositions affecting their willingness to form new knowledge paradigms from negative critical incidents. Taczak described one student, whose "resistant attitude and dearth of motivation to write might have kept him from successfully transferring his theory of writing and his understanding of genre, which was reinforced by the fact that the courses he took in the spring did not involve much--if any--writing" (90). Robertson found students who "demonstrated a respect for the course content…which allowed them to understand how to apply the content they learned to new situations" (162).

Mainstream Adoption of Transfer of Learning

Since the concept of Transfer of Learning is fairly new, and since there doesn't appear to be an organized movement built around it, tracking the progress of how this concept is being adopted by mainstream educational circles is difficult. A quick search of articles published from January through February of 2020 show a result of 45,779 journal articles with the word "Threshold" in the title through Idaho State University's library. There are about 52,000 through Google Scholar. This would imply that the term is still a somewhat hot topic in educational forums.

Transfer Conclusion

Both Robertson and Taczak developed helpful concepts for encouraging positive student dispositions that could help them turn negative critical incidents (stemming from misapplied or incomplete prior knowledge failing to internalize new troublesome knowledge) into successful learning experiences more likely to transfer to other situations. Taczak and then Robertson both taught the same Teaching for Transfer (TFT) class, and had similar main takeaways. Robertson

claimed that curriculum that will successfully encourage transfer must "(1) include both writing theory and practice, (2) encourage reflection as an ongoing writing practice, and (3) offer reiterated assignments that help students connect contexts. It is not enough to create content that is about writing; the content must connect writing between contexts" (171-2). Taczak also emphasized reflection: "As the data suggests, transfer can be fostered in a composition classroom when framed by three reflective components: reflective theory, reflective assignments, and reflective activities" (196). Reflecting on their work and progress in these ways can help reinforce the reality of what students have accomplished, potentially strengthening the connections they've made while improving their dispositions.

The debate around whether transfer is even possible should alert every educator to the necessity to question their practices and not assume student transfer of learning. Attending to factors of transfer, such as student dispositions, threshold concepts, the role of prior knowledge, and the importance of reflection should help teachers effectively create curriculum that fosters student abilities to transform challenging or counter-intuitive concepts that cause them to fail into new forms of knowledge. Though they might be troublesome to implement into the classroom, threshold concepts and student dispositions are important principles in successfully teaching students to navigate their college and future writing. They're worth understanding and using, because, in the words of David Smit, "we get what we teach for" (134).

Literature Review Conclusion

Throughout the progression of these three fields, theorists have worked to establish, refine, and mainstream these movements. As part of that process, I argue that using Service-Learning in online settings draws on the strengths of this research: both SL and transfer insist on the importance of reflection in the learning process. Online Writing Instruction and SL support my argument that students' individuality and connections with others is a vital concern for higher

education. All three claim that the classroom, digital or physical, can be a place where learning happens and changes a student's life for the better. That's the classroom this project aims to provide.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Since each of the topics of the previous chapter—community-based education, online education, and even transfer of learning—have been discussed, explored, and tested in a number of ways, I wanted to design a small-scale qualitative study that would look at them in a different light: in relationship with each other. Studying how educational approaches in online settings that focus on community-based assignments affect transfer is something that, to my knowledge, hasn't been studied. I wanted assignments that could meet the university's requirements for the research composition course I was teaching, while still using community-centered environments for the basis for the research. Based on these considerations, I designed the following essays to assess my hypothesis that community assignments are viable in online settings: the Ethnography Essay, the Field Work Essay, and the Letter to the State Senator Essay. The Ethnography Essay required students to come into contact with a local club, business, or organization and write about their experiences in an ethnographical sketch of the entity. The requirements were that the students not be involved with the group beforehand, that they visit an actual location and contrast that with an online description/presence of the group, and that they interview at least one person involved with the group. The Field Work essay required students to learn about their major or field (or one of their choosing, if they didn't have an official one yet). Similar to the Ethnography essay, they would visit a physical location (either a business, a university department, etc.) and contrast that with an online presence. They would interview two people this time—one novice, either a student or someone only slightly ahead of them; and one professor or professional. Finally, students would write up an analysis of a piece of writing (either by or for those in the field), and weave all these individual pieces of data into a final essay with transitions and conclusions. Lastly, the Letter to the State Senator essay required students to

research a current bill in their state legislature and write an essay to their state senator arguing for or against it. This essay didn't require any interviews or interaction, though it was highly encouraged; rather, it was designed to be more of a typical research essay with a real-world audience and current subject matter.

The assumption under which I operate in collecting data for this project is that since my questions revolve around student behavior and reactions, the best way to assemble reliable data is from students themselves who have gone through the assignments. The perspectives of students, though, come from a number of sources. In my face-to-face course taught at ISU during the Fall of 2016, I conducted several interviews, collected questionnaires and essay cover letters, and wrote personal journal entries/reflections about the process. In the online class taught at CWI during the Spring 2017 semester, I used the same sources of data collection, except instead of interviews I recorded four video conferences throughout the semester with a handful of students.

The theory and research support for the methodology of this project is primarily taken from Johnny Saldaña's *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers.* In it, he proposes and guides researchers through "First Cycle Coding Methods" (divided into categories: Grammatical, Elemental, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, Procedural, and Themeing the data), "Second Cycle Coding Methods" (involving "classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building" (45)), Post-Coding and Pre-Writing. Saldaña's work was highly recommended to me, and I decided that relying on a unified, coherent perspective about qualitative research would be better than splitting my focus across a number of researchers' advice.

Course Design

For my Fall 2016 face-to-face course at ISU, I designed the course with the following specifics to explore my hypotheses. I will describe how I changed my online course in light of these concerns during the Spring 2017 semester in a later section in this chapter.

One of the first difficulties in the premise of this assignment is the very nature of the essays I would need to use. Some researchers maintain that letting students choose their own topics is inherently problematic. As a concept, having students find their own community partners revolves around student choice, and, together with that, instructors not being able to be an expert in the fields they might select to work with. According to Anne Beaufort, a significant figure in the Service Learning academic community, argues that teachers letting their students choose their own topics is a bad idea because "the teacher can only sit on the intellectual sidelines of the subject matter the student is exploring, asking questions a generalist would ask" (12). According to this thinking, teachers are wasting their expert knowledge by not assigning specific assignments that take advantage of their specialist training.

However, not all experts agree that teacher-as-expert is necessarily the most effective approach. Karen Osterman et al. argue that while letting students choose their own subjects does shift the teacher's role, that's not necessarily a bad thing: "the instructor's role shifts from expert to facilitator. The main task is no longer to provide answers but to raise questions and guide personal inquiry and professional growth, providing support and resources. Reflective practice is a collaborative search for answers rather than an effort to teach a predetermined response to a problem" (17). Those of us who espouse this kind of a pedagogy argue that ceding authority and academic space with students encourages student buy-in and engagement, excitement, and inquisitiveness. These are essential traits for the lifelong learning we hope to inspire in students.

Elizabeth Wardle describes the difference between the two as one of disposition: the "problem-exploring" disposition and the "answer-getting" disposition. She says that the answer-getting disposition is inherently easier and more appealing than the problem-exploring disposition, but that's no reason to push in that direction. Positioning myself as a teacher-as-guide for this project encourages students to explore problems rather than simply give me, the expert, the answers I'm looking for. My methods for positioning myself as teacher-as-guide vary depending on the essay we would work on.

The Ethnography Essay

The ethnography was one of the two assignments for this class that I had taught once before. I knew from previous experience that designing essays with adequate scaffolding was essential, so I planned in two class periods for introducing the essay, looking at example student essays (which I still had from a peer who helped me do my first ethnography essay), and brainstorming as a class what their possible organizations that they would research could be. In addition, I planned to discuss Daniel Wolf's "Ethnography of Outlaw Bikers," not because I felt like they would experience anything similar, but because I wanted to introduce students to the potential dangers of this assignment, potential cultural shock, and the need for ethical and sensitivity when interacting with different organizations. I admit, I left out some of the graphic details of Wolf's piece involving illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, violence, and sexual behavior. I also posted a link to Seth Kahn's "Putting Ethnographic Writing in Context," for a more theoretical discussion to complement the concrete experience in Wolf's piece. Guiding students in a certain direction involves a certain degree of curating, cutting, and pushing for information and ideas.

In addition to in-class discussions and explanations, I planned for the students to submit a brainstorm post, two drafts (a three-page and a five-page draft), and a descriptive writing activity that would help with their essay. The second draft that was due would be accompanied by an in-class peer review for students to see what other students were doing, help others improve their work, and improve their own perceptiveness and resiliency in revision. Devoss describes the tightrope between teachers using their expertise while still leveraging student experience in these terms: "Although the instructor is still clearly the content expert, students have the opportunity with this pedagogical model to make the knowledge their own and help each other find avenues into this new information that instructors may not consider" (176). Students still have valuable perspectives that can enrich instruction. Tsui and Ng argue that peer review is invaluable because it can "enhance a sense of audience, raise learners' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, encourage collaborative learning, and foster ownership" (qtd in Chang 63).

During class I changed my normal order to accommodate my changed assignments. Specifically, I made sure to discuss interview ethics, safety, and best practices early in the process so students would feel comfortable starting out with interviews, which they would need to do throughout the semester. I also scheduled in time for two peer reviews, one for each essay. This was to ensure that I had the chance to give feedback on each student's project early in the drafting stage, as well as for other students to get a chance to see later drafts.

In addition to certain kinds of projects and assumptions I would need to avoid, I also learned that the terminology I used revealed unhelpful beliefs and biases. One term in particular was what to call the community entities the students interact with. Many researchers have a problem with creating a high/low binary: Deans recommends avoiding the "'server/served' dialectic" (111). Dubinsky dislikes the term "client," preferring instead "partner," a term I also

use. I appreciate the push to keep students from thinking in terms of privilege and us/them. Students, when thinking of those they are writing about as someone they choose to work with because they're interested in similar issues and desirous to accomplish similar goals, I believe were more likely to see themselves in those they worked with. In my final questionnaire I asked students to list how likely they would be to change their future behavior; more than half of those who filled out that section indicated they would be "slightly likely" (four students) or "very likely" (five students) to do so (see Chapter Four for a more thorough handling of these findings). The fact that more students put very likely than slightly likely, combined with the fact that no student put "not likely" as an answer is encouraging.

As I began teaching the class I noticed problems with the terminology that I used. On the second day of class the students and I had begun talking about groups they could work with. In an email to a mentor, I described it as follows: "I use a lot of different descriptors for the entities that the students could write about—'entities,' 'groups,' 'organizations,' 'franchises,' 'programs,' and 'clubs.' I basically concluded that with the exception of certain programs, 'groups' could be used universally." While there is value in specificity and nuance, the gains that can be made by using gradations of terms isn't as valuable as a clear, understandable category and term.

I also ran into other problems in that early discussion. One was concerning the content of students' essays, which I wasn't as clear about. "Should students write about the subject matter? So, should a student analyzing the women's Rugby club write about the rules of rugby? I concluded that probably not...only insofar as is necessary to understand the group. That wording should appear in the next assignment sheet." This comment reveals the messiness of the process in more ways than one—not only did I need to figure out a specific aspect of the assignment, but

I also needed to tweak my delivery of the instructions. This was also applicable to the idea of terminology, which would make for a stronger delivery the next semester.

Another problem was about what groups would work for the ethnography and how specific they needed to be: "Could students use generic groups/jobs? So, could students interview two employees of Walmart and talk about Walmart as a community? Or English 1102? I think there are a few imperatives that should dictate the answer to those questions--is it an interesting group? Are they tight-knit with rich interactions and organization? Or is it generic and obvious/known to the audience." I didn't reach a conclusion about this question, but I would eventually settle on trying to steer students away from vague groups for their own success. These and other experiences solidified a methodology that I didn't know I was using until these experiences brought them into focus.

The Field Work Essay

The main idea for this essay was that students would conduct primary research—interviews of a student and a professional, observations of a location, and/or a survey—to explore their future field and their path towards it. In the assignment sheet I point out that the name of the essay is two-fold: that they are researching the work in their field, but it will also require quite a bit of work and getting their hands dirty, like in an actual field. The Field Work essay is the essay I've used the most in my teaching career. In fact, the success of this assignment was my initial impetus for this whole project. I have taught this assignment since the Spring semester of 2013 and have taught it in second-year writing ever since because of the positive reception it had with students.

For example, one student said: "I would like to thank you for assigning this paper. In the beginning, I was worried about the interviews and how this essay would turn out. However, I

have learned a lot about myself through this process. Specifically, I don't think genetics is for me…" At first this might not seem like a positive review of the assignment; however, I count this as one, since this student decided not to pursue their major that they wouldn't have otherwise. They are saving themselves time in the long run, which seems like a strength to this assignment to me. On the other hand, another student had this to say: "This paper came at a perfect time; it really was the deciding factor that convinced me to commit 100% to my major. I have made a few connections with professionals in the industry that I will able [sic] to call upon for advice as I progress through college and my career." This was the same question—is this the right major for me—but this student was able to answer it in the affirmative. Not only that, but they were able to gain a contact that will help them as they proceed in their career path.

Another benefit has similar conflicted-sounding reviews. One student said, "If I had to choose my least favorite essay it would be the [Field Work essay], mainly because of the interviews. It was hard going out of my comfort zone but I am glad that I did because it allowed me to learn new things. For some reason when I was writing [it] I was having trouble putting it all together. In the end a pushed through it and now I know more about my field." Similarly, this sounds like a negative thing, though the student eventually decides that they learned more about their field. However, I maintain that even though this was their "least favorite essay," that was a good thing because of them getting out of their comfort zone, which they doubtlessly will have to do as they move towards getting a long-term job. Another student had this to say: "Honestly, at first I really didn't want to talk or interview anyone but after doing it I really saw what it was like being a registered nurse and honestly made me really excited to pursue this career."

Other students claimed that this was "by far [their] favorite to write throughout [their] entire academic career." Another said that because of this essay "the course really answered the

question that students always like to ask of 'when am I going to use this?' I felt like the course and the way you taught allowed me to learn the skills I needed to take out and use in a profession." Yet another student cited this essay as "one of the most interesting and exciting units of my entire English education."

As with the Ethnography, I planned time early in the unit to discuss a number of student examples, I planned a class period to review interview techniques, and I had the essay due in segments, the last of which was a full draft for peer review. The assignments that I collected were two-page write-ups of the following: a location observation, a student interview, a professional interview, and a writing sample analysis. Each of these assignments were to be written as though part of the essay, so they could be copy-pasted directly into the final essay with some transition work to make it flow. Also, rather than two peer reviews, this time I cancelled a class and met with students individually to check in with them about their project and how class was going for them in general.

As with the previous unit, I included some components that don't relate to this analysis directly—another mini assignment about job application materials, a reading from Gitanjali Dasbender about critical thinking in college, and a reading from Beth Johnson about using specifics in our writing.

The Letter to the Senator Essay

The final essay for the class was a bit different than the others in some key ways. Firstly, it was the only assignment I had never taught before. Secondly, it was the only essay where interviews were only encouraged, not explicitly required. Still, it was similar in some of the same key ways: its focus was on local issues, since students would research a bill from their home state that was currently being discussed or had recently been voted on. The essay was structured

as an essay that would be turned into a letter that the students could actually send to their senator or a state representative of some kind. This was less a community contact that students would use as a compositional resource and more of a community audience that the students would be writing for. Thomas Deans describes Service Learning in three formulations: writing for, with, or about community partners. The first two essays fit into the writing about category, but this might fit a fourth category: writing to.

During this unit student again did a brainstorm post, three drafts (since Thanksgiving Break interrupted the ending of the essay and I wanted them going into the break with a significant amount of the writing already done), previews of bill-finding resources, and readings about logic and authorship.

Differences between The F2F and Online Sections

Because I didn't teach these two courses at the same time, I had the benefit of being able to tweak some things that obviously didn't work well for my online class the next semester. Also, there were certain things that I couldn't do the same, like cancelling class for in-person conferences, since I was located more than 200 miles from where the College of Western Idaho is centered. One of the things I wanted to test was the use of video conferences with students, so I planned having four video conferences throughout the semester that students would attend and that I would record and post to the course management system. I sent out surveys for all the students to indicate when they would be available to meet, got permission from video participants to record and post the video to the class Blackboard site (and only there), and planned extra credit incentives for students to come.

In addition, I needed to use an approved book for CWI, so the readings and other assignments were online and all digital. The surveys, questionnaires, and every other

communication was digital as well, which required more work to attain clarity and focus in the communications, since no in-person questions could be asked other than through the video conferences.

Study Design

My research revealed some ethical and logistical pitfalls that I needed to avoid. Miller discusses the danger of conducting research with one's own students: "a teacher should not conduct usability testing with his/her own students due to the potential conflict of interests" (96). The waivers I had students complete before starting made it clear that they would not be required to or benefit from giving the feedback I needed. See Appendix X for the study waiver.

My goal for this study was to collect thorough, meaningful, consistent data from both of the classes. I had examples of other studies where massive amounts of data were collected. For example, Nancy Sommers studied a group of 400 students at Harvard and collected "more than 600 pounds of student writing, 520 hours of transcribed interviews, and countless megabytes of survey data" (126). While I wouldn't be able to collect that much information, my research benefitted from the powerful example of other researchers I have read.

Sources of Information

I would gather information before the semester, during, and up to the conclusion of the semester. The sources of data I would use were similar to those of Sommers and her team—student writing, interviews, and surveys. It would also include video conferences, personal observation journal entries, and even faculty mentor course review. Hawisher writes that, "teaching and research are inherently social and political activities, and that the human exchanges resting at the heart of our work take place not only among faculty members and

students, but among faculty members themselves" (2-3), indicating the value of faculty perspectives.

Note: All student names have been changed to comply with IRB standards. When a student name appears, they took part in a face-to-face interview or the online video chats. Other references to students came from their cover letters, questionnaire results, etc.

Interviews

It seems like the best person to ask about their experience in a given class would be the person who experienced it. However, researchers have come to question whether their version of events is entirely accurate. "Warning that researchers can trust the truthfulness of neither professionals' nor student writers' accounts of their practice, she notes flaws, inaccuracies, exaggeration, forgetting, and even deception" (Jarratt 49). While my interviews were fairly limited in scope, I think this is a valid concern that even applies to the video conference and the cover letters that I collected. When a student is recounting their history, perspective, or practice, I can't assume that it will be free of bias, manipulation to look better than they feel they are, and/or errors. The questions I ask in the interviews need to be as free as possible of leading questions and need to be well scaffolded beforehand to alleviate pressures to perform in a certain way. See Appendix X to see interview questions.

Cover Letters

With each essay submission I also include a 1 ½ page cover letter where students reflect on their learning and their experiences during the essay writing process. I decided this practice would be helpful for the data collection of this project as well. The literature on transfer is rife with discussions about how reflection is essential for learning. Kara Taczak claims that "reflection and transfer [are] interlocking rhetorical concepts. The two together encourage

students to identify themselves as writers and reflective writing practitioners and suggests that by developing a theory of writing, students have a frame which they can use in other academic writing situations" (201). In a more quantitative study, Robinson found that students who reviewed previous work and reflected on it "42% reported having made significant progress toward their writing goals, while only 14% of non-reviewers reported significant progress." And because "Reflective thinking...is both process and product" (Cooper 52), including these reflective cover letters provide evidence for my study and a resource for improving their compositional processes.

One of the questions I still explore about this project, though, is the nature of the reflective work I have students do. Taczak points out that the most common form of reflection teachers use is asking students "to provide an account of process or to compose a 'reflective argument' in which they cite their own work as evidence that they have met program outcomes." She points out that there is another kind of reflection that is deeper and more productive, though: what could be called "big-picture thinking, in which they consider how writing in one setting is both different from and similar to the writing in another, or where they theorize writing so as to create a framework for future writing situations" (4). This kind of contextualized and rhetorically inquisitive reflection is something that I could have used more effectively in my project, since the cover letters fit into her description of the more surface-level reflection. See Appendix X to see Cover Letter instructions.

Video Conferences

For my online class I planned to have four video conferences during the semester—one after each essay and one at the end of the semester. I would give a survey about what time would work best for students before each one and try to vary the time of day and the day of the week I

gave each one so I could maximize the number of students who could attend. I have used a number of video conferencing software, but I decided to use Zoom because it's flexible in the number of platforms it's available on, it's easy to use, and it's free.

Questionnaire

After submitting my questionnaire questions to IRB committees, I revised and put them in digital for so they could be more convenient for students to take. One thing I didn't consider was the readability. Brizee et al worked to ensure a high readability score, using the Flesch-Kincaid readability gauge and the Flesch Reading Ease score (31). They found that they needed multiple revisions to meet their goal scores and to receive positive feedback from their usability group. I would probably get this or some other kind of feedback on my questions if I were to do this again rather than only relying on IRB approval. Without feedback from a number of audiences, I don't have the highest confidence that my questions are giving the responses I think they are. See Appendix X to see specific questionnaire material.

The questions differed in only two instances. The online class received a question about how the online nature of the course affected their experience. The face-to-face received one less question—four about their knowledge and attitudes coming into the study, and five (compared to six for the online) about their interpretation of the semester. Their responses provide insights into future design considerations, explanations for reactions students had to certain assignments, etc. The face-to-face students were about 17 that answered any given question, whereas the online class was fewer—around 11 per question.

Observations and Notes

Throughout the semester I would write or record audio journal entries reflecting on my experiences at any given stage of the process. These would include thoughts about how and why

things were or weren't going according to plan. I would record any hypotheses or plans about how I could improve outcomes in the online version. I follow the same concept that informs my pedagogy around cover letters and student reflective writing—only I assume that writing about my *teaching* will improve my learning, outcomes, and understanding.

Coding Methodology

Once I've collected all the previous data, the important question is, how do I distill reliable and accurate meaning from the individual materials? Defined at its most broad, coding research data is, "according to Grant-Davie,…anything the researcher does to the data and any meaning the researcher constructs from the data (273)" (50). Arguably, decisions I make about how to collect and transcribe the data could count as coding. I need to be aware that my "level of personal involvement as a participant observer—as a peripheral, active, or complete member during fieldwork—filters how you perceive, document, and thus code your data" (Saldana 7). Sipe and Ghiso: "All coding is a judgement call' since we bring 'our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks' to the process (pp.482-3)" (Saldana 7).

According to Johnny Saldana, a code (in qualitative inquiry) "is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (3). This is most often what we mean by coding, and there are many ways to label and sort in this way. Saldana compares a code to the title of a book, film, or poem: it "represents and captures [their] primary content and essence" (3). Saldana describes 29 separate coding methods that represent strategies to represent and capture the data's primary content and essence.

Once I was done with coding, though, there was still another step. Coding is only a "transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis" (4). While I can

do what I find most effective, I should keep my major themes and coding terms to a minimum to keep my analysis sharp and coherent (21).

Conclusion

My research plan included collecting first-hand accounts from students through interviews, questionnaires, cover letters, and video conferences. I planned to record my perspective in observations, journal entries, and notes. I designed my essay assignments to be as accessible and focused on the community as I could make them. Reviewing my methodology reveals my initial mistakes and misconceptions, some of which I was able to improve upon for the second, online class, and all of which I would have changed if I had recognized them at the time. Still, sharpening my methodology is part of the purpose of this project, and doesn't nullify the results and conclusions. According to X, there will never be a point where a work will be flawless or when we will know enough. However, "as much as it is impertinent to draw conclusions about the schools from my small sample, it is irresponsible to hold my tongue just because I will never know enough" (75). Likewise, I submit that my conclusions are important for me to share, even with the flaws and weaknesses they contain.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

Being able to teach the same three main essays at two different schools, with two different modalities—Idaho State University face-to-face during the Fall semester of 2016 and The College of Western Idaho online during the Spring semester of 2017—offers interesting opportunities to understand my topics of study. The difference between student body (with CWI skewing more towards older and non-traditional), the limited sample sizes, and differences in academic culture dictate a focus on qualitative possibilities rather than quantitative statistical significance. In this chapter I assess differences and similarities between the two courses, analyzing for possible connections to the research presented in chapter two and experience that might explain the relationships between the datasets. There are meaningful overlaps between the students' experiences in both sections, while there are also clear differences separating the modality implementations. The data in this chapter indicate the complex benefits and challenges of community-focused essays in online and face-to-face composition classes.

Two organizational rationales guide the order in which I present the data and analysis in this chapter. Firstly, chronological order helps maintain the rough progression in which students experienced these sections of English 102. Discussion of shifts in student thinking, progression in student ability, and eventual outcomes make most sense when discussed chronologically. Secondly, thematic and coding patterns guide parts of this chapter where a clear chronological structure is absent. Questionnaire items, journal entries, cover letters, video conferences, and end-of-semester interviews contain interesting patterns that cut across modalities, institution, and data source of origin. After starting with information that reveals nuances in the pre-semester findings, I will elaborate on themes within the essays during the middle of the semester. Finally, I will conclude by assessing general and forward-looking statements students made.

Pre-semester Findings

Before the semester began, students signed up for the class with their own opinions, histories, and preconceptions. In an effort to determine what these were and establish a baseline to contrast with the outcomes I was attempting to measure, I gathered information about student attitudes coming into the semester.

Initial Feelings of Anxiety

Near the end of the semester, both of my classes class took a questionnaire which addressed different aspects of their experience (See Appendix X). The first four questions asked students about their feelings and knowledge coming into the class. The first question related to their anxiety when they first discovered the social nature of the course:

1.   When you were introduced to the essays in the first week of class, or reading the syllabus, how anxious were you about interacting with community groups and organizations? (choose the most representative one)

As this question represents their recollection of the attitude with which they entered the class, it's worth analyzing it first. Here are the results from the online class at College of Western Idaho and then the f2f class at Idaho State University:
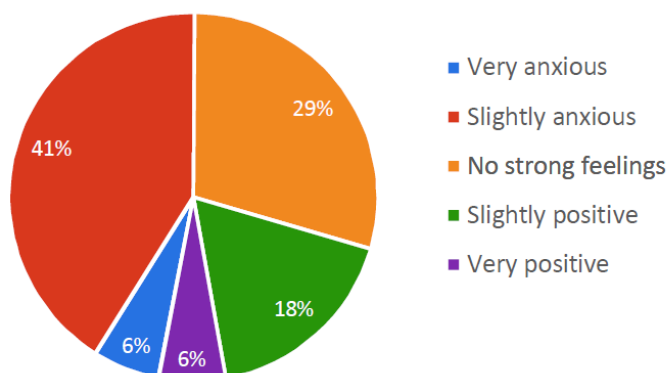
11 responses
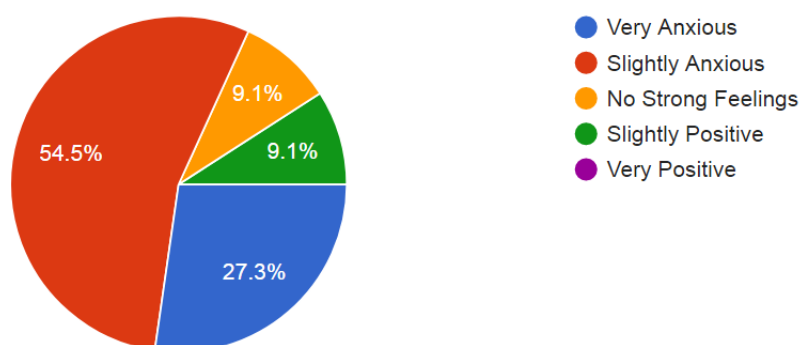
Figure 1: CWI Response to Question 1

17 responses

Figure 2: ISU Response to Question 1

The fact that so many of the online class answered "slightly anxious" and "very anxious" (a full 81.8% of the class) and that not a single student felt "very positive" about the community-focused assignments is a sign that either students felt trepidation or their level of positivity and confidence afterwards increased so much that comparatively they remember feeling this much anxiety. It's quite probable that their expectations coming into an online class was that they would have less social pressure than in a face-to-face class.

For the face-to-face class, who already knew they were going to have to interact with people on a regular basis, the very anxious or slightly anxious is a much lower 47%. The "slightly positive" and "very positive" were similarly higher—more than double—that of the online class at a full 24%. The data collected from students bears this out. While both classes expressed initial intimidation and fear turning into confidence and positivity about the first essay (the ethnography), the CWI accounts were much drearier. One online student went so far as to say that they were "really dreading this essay." They explained that they were afraid of being avoided by people and not being able to do the interview. But, they reported that "reluctantly, it was quite the opposite." I'm not entirely clear on why they said "reluctantly," but I assume it was in a "I have to admit" tone, incredulous that their experience could turn out as positive as it did.

Another online student also used the word "dreading" to describe their thoughts going into the first essay. Their concern was less the people they were going to interview, though, and more about their lack of time (since they had a full-time job and family). "Now that it is done though, I did find it was much more enjoyable than I thought it was going to be and it was a great learning experience about Pheasants Forever." In addition to the fear of interviewing and a lack of time, one online student admitted to failing English 102 four times "and I wish I was joking when I said that." This student later reported that they felt these assignments made it easier for them "to be invested in." Bucking the pattern of following negative first impressions with a positive outcome, one student simply described their first essay experience as "nerve-wracking," without any clarification of why or any confident report of that feeling going away.

In the f2f class, students were much more positive when representing their fears at the beginning of the semester. Two students specifically said that they were introverted and knew they would struggle in the social nature of these assignments. One even said that "this essay was everything I feared would come from an English class." However, then she went on to say "As we discussed the essay more in class, I started to get more comfortable with it…. and I could see myself volunteering for their special events/outings in the future." It's significant that she mentioned talking about it in class as a form of comfort. That implies that students in the online class who felt initial intimidation wouldn't have the confidence-building experience of talking with other students in class without a forum for venting or reassuring.

Another f2f student wrote in their first cover letter that they had a hard time interviewing people because they came into the class from an introverted position. But just like the student who became more comfortable after talking with classmates, there was a "however" following that observation: "However, I feel that after this first essay, I will do better for future essays that

involve talking to people." I think it's significant that these students not only point out their introverted natures as something that is something they dealt with in this essay and class, but that this essay helped them to be able to deal with their shy nature in the future.

During the f2f interviews student also expressed feelings of trepidation about aspects of the course. For example, Melody said one of her favorite things about the semester was the interviews because she was used to writing just about herself, "It was nice to at least get out there…it made me get out there out of my comfort zone." Colin also expressed this shift in attitude, though he said it in slightly different terms: "I think this class helped me kind of get out of a bubble." The phrasing of "comfort zone" or "bubble" implies a contested space—a space that in order to enter one must feel uncomfortable or unprotected, but that enables direct connection.

The fact that so many students reported these feelings of fear in both classes, mostly with positive reassurances that they overcame them, indicates that there's something to these reports. An individual student or two might be sharing a positive story based on what they think I want to hear, but so many in so different ways suggests something closer to reality. The theme of anxiety or fear continues throughout the class, but it's not something that originated during the class— it's a component of these students' attitudes before the class even started. There may be factors that influenced these developments, like perhaps the student body at either institution is inherently different. Also, it's important to acknowledge that asking students at the end of the semester about their thoughts and reactions at the beginning of the semester might not yield the most accurate responses. However, it does tell us about their memory and perception comparatively. And in either case, these results indicate that students in the online class felt more

anxious about the social nature of these assignments and needed extra reassurance and means of overcoming their trepidation.

Initial Knowledge of Local Organizations

The next three questions on the questionnaire were also about the student's initial state when beginning the class, but rather than feelings they have to do with knowledge about the three essay topics: local organizations, their major, and state-level politics. The second question about organizations was phrased like this:

2. *How much did you know about local organizations?*

The questions differed between the two institutions by specifying "local" as respectively "Nampa/CWI" or "Pocatello/ISU." Here were the results for CWI, then ISU:

11 responses
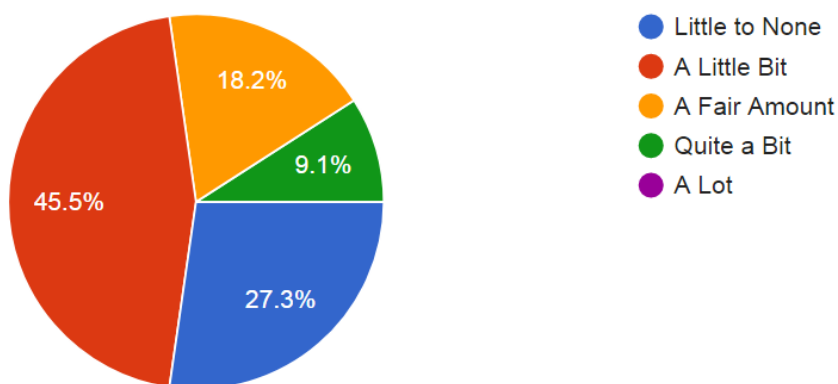
Figure 3: CWI Response to Question Two

18 responses

Figure 4: ISU Response to Question Two

Though the individual amounts skew at ISU towards the "Little to none" knowledge of local institutions, there are striking similarities between the two. Not a single student at either institution felt like they knew "a lot" about local groups, and the combined amoun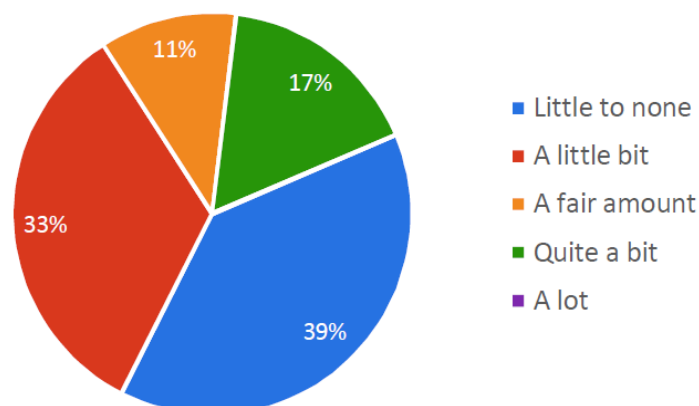ts for the bottom two and top two categories differed by less than one percent between the two schools. So, the results of "little-to-none" and "a little bit" were 72.8% at CWI and 72% at ISU. Also, the "A fair amount" and "Quite a bit" were just as close: 27.3% at CWI and 28% at ISU. Breaking it down further doesn't seem to yield much—the ISU range was more spread out with both a lower low and a higher high. CWI was more focused in the middle of the range. Still, at both institutions there clearly seems to be a huge percentage of students who are unaware of the institutions and groups around them, including those that are specifically designed to help students. It's interesting that these relatively similar results of knowledge translated into clearly different numbers when it came to anxiety levels as reported in question one. I might have suspected that students knowing about the same amount would lead to about the same amount of anxiety towards researching them, but apparently not.

The relatively similar results of this initial lack of knowledge about local groups showed up in both course data as student enthusiasm around discovering new things. During the first week of my f2f class, I conducted an in-class brainstorm around what local groups, clubs, non-profits, etc. the students were aware of. I was amazed at how knowledgeable some students were about local groups. When students came up to write the names of groups on the board, I was impressed with how many we were able to put on the board and talk about (see figure 5). I wasn't the only one who shared this feeling—in an email to my course mentor I mentioned how impressed I was at how many organizations there were in the area that I didn't know about, then I wrote, "The students also seemed to share this opinion."

Figure 5: ISU Whiteboard Ethnography Brainstorm

The online class experienced a similar positive reaction to learning about local groups they were initially unaware of. The main benefit one student wrote about having to research by getting directly involved with the community was "learning about things that I had little to no knowledge of." Another wrote that it "makes you feel connected to where you live." A side benefit another student pointed out was that in addition to feeling closer to their community from the group they chose to research, they also learned about several local groups that they were interested in that didn't show up in their essay because they didn't end up researching them. Who

can quantify the benefit of this kind of an assignment when some piece of information, like a local group they researched but didn't write about, ends up being a later part of their life? In any case, the relatively even lack of knowledge between the students at the two institutions seemed to result in enthusiasm for exploring local groups.

***Initial Knowledge about their Field of Study***

While students at both institutions seemed to know about the same amount about local groups, they differed widely about their knowledge about their own majors and fields of study. The third question was phrased as follows:

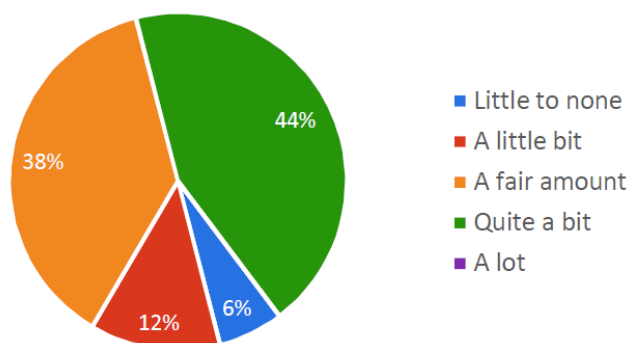3. *How much did you know about your major and those involved with it?*

The responses for both institutions were as follows, starting with CWI, then ISU:

11 responses
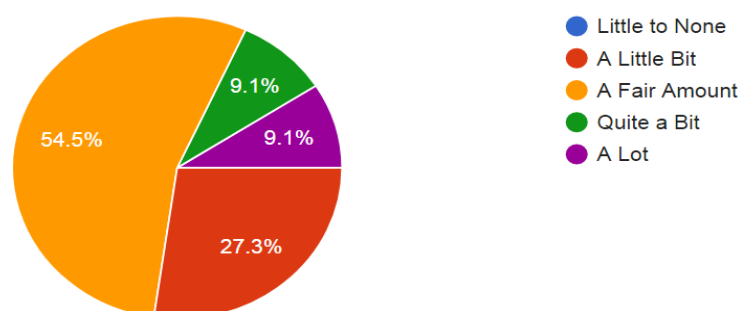
Figure 6: CWI Response to Question Three

16 responses

Figure 7: ISU Response to Question Three

As with the knowledge about local organizations, ISU students had a lower low (the only "Little to none" answer) as well as a much higher percentage of "Quite a bit" answers (though they had no "A lot" answers). Still, the overall percentages aren't as even as in the results about local group knowledge—the bottom two responses yield 18% at ISU and 27.3% at CWI, while the top two answers are 44% at ISU and 18.2% at CWI. One of the factors at play is the difference in average age; students at CWI have a significantly higher average age, with a higher percentage of returning, non-traditional students. It would be interesting to gain more information about non-traditional student processes for returning to school, choosing a major, and relating with their community. I would have anticipated a much higher knowledge of community and major with more life experience, though maybe the opposite is true—maybe student perceptions of how much they know become more realistic and shifted towards ignorance as they gain more experience. That would resonate with the results of the final question about knowledge coming into the semester.

There wasn't much in data to support an interpretation on why students knew differing amounts about local organization at each of these institutions. By the end of the semester slightly more students reported planning or wanting to change their majors/minors at CWI than ISU,

implying that a decreased initial level of knowledge about one's major correlates with an increased future likelihood of changing one's major. Other indicators of satisfaction, learning experience, and perception of value weren't noticeably different at one institution or another.

Initial Knowledge of State Political Systems

The final question about student's initial state of mind when entering the course concerned their knowledge of the state political system:

"4. How much did you know about your state political system?"
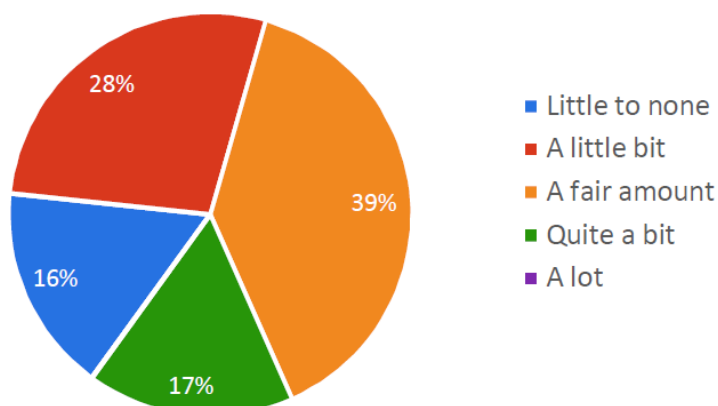
It's worth noting that for both classes, students had the option of researching Idaho or their home state if they weren't from Idaho. Here were the results, first from CWI, then for ISU:

11 responses
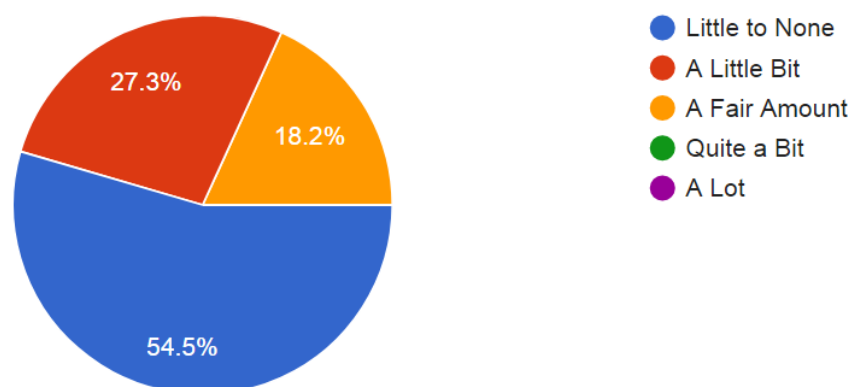
Figure 8: CWI Response to Question Four

Figure 9: ISU Response to Question Four

This mirrors the f2f students' claim to know more about their majors. Is it just that because the students were younger and less familiar with college life and Pocatello that they answered the way they did about the second question (about their knowledge about local organizations)? Perhaps the online class had a higher percentage of students who were actually from the area and so had a better idea about what the school and area had to offer. While it's true that a higher percentage of students at CWI were from Idaho, it's not fair to say that they would know more about the political system since I allowed students to write about the political systems in their home state. Perhaps Idaho students are simply less knowledgeable about politics than students from other states. Similarly, perhaps students who are older had a more accurate view of how little they knew…although since this questionnaire was at the end of the semester would suggest that the experience of writing the essay would reveal how much or how little knowledge the students actually have. Still, even writing this essay might not give students an accurate view of how little they knew if they weren't accustomed to the idea.

There were students who reacted the same as those who were ignorant of local groups and really enjoyed learning more about it. One online student wrote about which essay they liked

the most: "I enjoyed looking into things that are happening right now in our state that I can be a part of or learn more about. Normally I don't do much in political areas." It's noteworthy that this isn't normal for this student to feel this way about politics, and they express interest to be involved in political issues. Similarly, a student in the f2f class enjoyed this essay the most because he had a business that would be affected by legislation. Besides these and a few others, though, the majority of students were not interested in learning more about politics, which I write about in the next section.

Semester Findings

Students entered the class with their own histories, interests, misgivings, and personalities. I attempted to track how some of that background set the stage for the assignments during the semester, acknowledging that such personal factors were out of my control. Throughout the semester certain themes emerge, patterns of behavior and outcomes that indicated a unity of reaction despite differences in individual identity. The order for discussing these patterns is roughly chronological, talking about topics related to each of the essays in the order they appeared in the class—the Ethnography, the Field Work, and the Letter to the State Senator. However, certain themes don't neatly fit into that chronological pattern. For example, I start by discussing a major theme throughout the semester: student agency and comfort. Other themes don't fit as nicely in any given spot. For example, the discussion of student networking fits mostly after the Field Work essay, but there were students who made observations about how the Ethnography or Letter to the State Senator Essay could work similarly. Or the discussion about interviews could go after either the Ethnography or the Field Work essay, but I opted to put it after the Ethnography to highlight the issue between the two most applicable essays. I chose to put the discussion about issues unique to online education after the themes related to the

individual essays but before the future-looking and overviewing themes. Additionally, I strive to give the students a voice in the following pages, and so include direct quotes wherever possible and reasonable. By merging student voices and accounts from the two different modalities and institutions, I argue that community-focused courses are viable in both modalities without teacher as moderator, and that the unique challenges presented by this pedagogical approach are able to be overcome and are worth it.

"'Forced' to step out of my comfort zone": Student Agency and Comfort

Students seemed to grapple with mixed feelings about the essays requiring them to do things that were outside their comfort zone. They reported struggling with the discomfort of unfamiliar social interactions, but they also expressed pride and gratitude at having done so. Two words that came up repeatedly were "comfort zone" and "forced." For example, two students in the online class referred to their experience as being "forced," though the context of their remarks was less negative than a charged word like that might imply. One student said, "Writing this paper really helped me to take the next step in my hobby of homebrewing beer. It forced me into the social side that for some reason I avoided for so long." This "force" was not something put on him against his will…indeed the phrase "against his will" implies that there is a unified, singular will a person has. The reality described here is more nuanced and messy. This student both wanted to be involved in the social aspect of homebrewing beer and did not want that. It wasn't until an assignment created an environment where the cost of not doing it became less than the cost of doing it that they were able to follow that part of themselves that wanted to be involved with fellow beer brewers.

Another student used both the word "forced" and "comfort zone": "I really enjoyed the experience of finding something new to be a part of and being 'forced' to step out of my comfort

zone and put myself out into the world." Similar to the beer brewer, this student wanted to "put themselves out into the world," but also didn't. They recognized that the assignments weren't really forcing them, since they put the word in quotes…but they still used the word, which implies that they felt like some level of pressure was needed to accomplish that outcome. This phrasing is interesting, though, because it implies a breach of agency—"forced me"—while still maintaining their own choice in the matter—"to step out of." They were the one doing the stepping out of their comfort zone, but the assignment forced them to make that choice.

Melody, a student in the f2f class, illustrates how students reaching outside their comfort zones to interview people outside the classroom not only has long-term and personal external results, but also helps connect students with others in the classroom. Melody expressed anxiety around trying to decide what group to choose for the Ethnography Essay, where she admitted to self-dialogue like "What am I going to do?" and "I don't know anything about this." But after talking to classmates she had a different attitude: "once I talked to some of my classmates and kinda put myself out there it gave me an idea and from that idea I was able to start writing for my ethnography essay and then went to the Diversity Resource Center." At the end of the interview she commented that she felt comfortable enough to use the DRC or recommend it to other students who could use its services in the future.

Benefits of getting outside their comfort zone were more varied than I anticipated. One student who said that the Ethnography brought her out of her comfort zone followed that up by stating that "with your help I got a new job as waitressing for a very fun and laid back sports bar and restaurant." In a way this is emblematic of the goal for this assignment—by having students get out of their comfort zones, I want them to have opportunities to empower themselves. Getting a job is a very concrete result, but even other outcomes, such as the students who felt

anxious about the interviews then more confident afterwards, are empowered in a less visible way.

Another outcome that students connected with getting outside their comfort zone was a feeling of pride or confidence or growth. One student said reaching outside their comfort zone and communicating with their community is one of "the things I am most proud about myself." Another student "genuinely felt" that the assignments got them out of their comfort zone, which "ultimately allowed me to grow." Finally, a student who throughout the semester was "pushed to go outside my walls" felt that was important "to my own character growth as well as my writing." All three of these examples link the experiences of connecting with community to a larger-scale personal development. The pride that first student felt about their accomplishments in stretching themselves socially seems to be the same kind of personal growth the other students talked about. The last student referring to their social misgivings as "walls" that they had to be "pushed to go outside" supports the concept of teachers needing to assign a certain kind of project to get these benefits. Teachers can feel pressured by students to protect the class's comfort zones, but if teacher do, the students won't be able to realize this kind of personal growth.

Not all students recognized getting outside their comfort zone as a positive thing. During the final questionnaire, question 8 asked students to point out any drawbacks from the social nature of the course. Two students, one from the f2f class and one from the online, said that stepping outside their comfort zone was a drawback. I'm not convinced by the claim that "stepping out of my comfort zone" is an inherent drawback. In fact, I feel like getting the students to question their comfort zone and get more comfortable advocating for themselves in

professional circumstances to be a powerful benefit of these assignments. The fact that at least one student in both modalities felt this way is a factor to recognize.

One online student had a different experience around his comfort zone. He began his cover letter for the Ethnography Essay by saying, "My initial thoughts on this assignment were at first pleasant and I was some what excited but my opinion quickly changed as the class and assignments quickly progressed and I was rapidly overwhelmed." He admitted to having a negative history with English classes, spending "more time staring at a blank paper or computer screen trying to figure out what to write than I do actually writing it." During the essay, and later in the class, he reached a breaking point where he "decided receiving a poor score or even a zero was easier than reaching out for the extra (much needed) help." This student talked about their social anxiety in the video conference as well, and how they took all online classes. It's possible that this student was caught off guard by the strong social aspect of this class and failed because of it. There might have been more that could have helped this student navigate the social pressures of this class, but it's a cautionary tale worth acknowledging.

"Closer to my community": The Ethnography Essay

For the Ethnography Essay, students generally recognized that getting out of their comfort zone lead to being more knowledgeable and connected with communities around them. Connecting with individuals in their communities can provide a valuable shift in perspective for the students. Colin appreciated the interviews because they were able to provide "a real-world perspective." It wasn't that the perspective of secondary research or just from the classroom weren't "real," but creating an interface between their lived experience and an entity outside the classroom enabled a different kind of connection. For example, Colin sites his experience in the Ethnography essay as particularly influential. As he was talking with his parents about his

situation, he was able to get contact with the founder of a charity foundation. Colin commented, "I think it made it more meaningful because…he already knows who my step father is, he knows who he's getting, and I know who I'm going to talk to. And the fact that my step father got involved made it more meaningful rather than just someone that I didn't know." The chances that Colin would have reached out to the founder of this kind of organization without a personal contact seems unlikely. And likewise, the chances that Colin would reach out to this founder without this essay to provide the push may not have happened either. Even though he didn't change his long-term goals or plans, he still made it clear he appreciated the perspective, which he pointed out was different than what he found in his research: "the website only talked about projects they did…when I was able to talk to him he gave me a different perspective on the whole idea of the foundation I researched."

Students cued into the reference to community in Question 8 on the questionnaire, which asked the students how interacting with "communities…(your ethnography group, people within your field, or your state/senator)," provided benefits and drawbacks. Students interpreted this question with varying degrees of shifting focus. Some answered citing a general "community" rather than specific communities as phrased in the question. One student said that "it made me come a little closer to my community," another that "Understanding your community is important," and yet another that "it gets you out into the community in ways that my class mates and I probably wouldn't have otherwise." Shifting the question from the plural to the singular perpetuates an illusion of unity and solidarity that isn't necessarily true. Still, there were some who acknowledged the complex nature of social structures. One student pointed out that "even though I just chose one of many communities…the research made me explore many communities available."

Also, some students focused on different benefits from different essays. Some, such as those focused on a general "community" as mentioned above, might be referring to any of the three. Others, though, specifically mention ones that stood out to them. One student remarked that they "learned a ton of information. Especially the state/senator one." Another referenced "local spending, educated voters, and community involvement," while yet another "different careers available…and many bills I did not know of before." One summed up the benefits nicely: "if you want to have a voice you need to get involved." I can't remember a single instance where I brought up in my discussions with the student the terminology of giving them a "voice," so it was exciting to have a student make that connection on their own. That's exactly what I feel these assignments have in common, even as I hadn't really designed them in those terms. Interacting with a local club/business/etc., a major/field, and political issues not only affects the students in healthy ways, but, as this student points out, allows the students to affect those institutions. This is the very definition of empowering.

"A nice, smooth conversation": Interviews

While students talked about community and communities in fairly positive ways, they were more conflicted when talking about interviews. One student started out our interview by making clear that she didn't like the interviews: "The reason why I disliked interviewing was because it required me to step out of my comfort zone. I am usually the type of person to stick to myself." She continues by pointing out the Field Work essay as a difficult project. Unlike other students, she didn't launch into a portrayal of before-and-after attitude, but just pointed out how difficult it was for her. Her not seeing getting out of her comfort zone as a good thing could be seen as a failure, though other students didn't view it that way. For example, one student felt very differently about the interviews: "I started off by thinking this would be a boring English

class…The fact that we actually had to get involved in the community in order to write our paper made it so much more personal." One student traced her development in attitude from writing the first cover letter until the end of the semester, pointing out that in the first cover letter she had written about how afraid she was about the interviews, but "I mostly overcame my fear… After I realized that interviewing someone is more about having a nice, smooth conversation." This view recognizes that it wasn't a clear-cut change, but a partial change where she was "mostly" over her fear. She even extends this to changing her thinking about taking part in future job interviews, with her as the interviewee. She anticipates feeling "much more comfortable than I would have been without doing these essays."

An online student, Carrie, had the unique experience of having conducted many interviews in her past classes. She pointed out a difficulty that I hadn't prepared my students for, which is a long interview. While it wasn't in this class, she said that she previously had interviewed a person who loved talking. They ended up talking for around three hours because she didn't know how to end the interview. Not only did the interview take a long time, but "then going back through those three hours is another three hours." I realized that most of the discussions around interviews has revolved around asking good questions, and very little has addressed how to effectively close an interview. Future instruction should involve more thorough instructions, especially since interviewing is such an important part of these assignments.

Finally, a student wrote about how they "have been incredible busy… Setting up multiple interviews with very busy college students was very difficult." Students seemed to have the most difficulty with this assignment by having to balance all the things they had to do with the social and schedule pressures required to contact and interview complete strangers. The scheduling difficulty of the interviews is compelling: one student said they were difficult assignments for

people "with many classes and a job." For students needing or expecting to fit their school work into any nook and cranny of their schedule, being forced to meet with people on their time tables necessarily adds stress and complications. Even with my willingness to let student rely on phone, video conference, email or other electronic means of communication, there was still pressure on their schedules. Another student phrased it as "you are depended [sic] on others for the meat of your essay." Even if they had time, involving others, sometimes without a powerful incentive, could feel precarious. Perhaps increased flexibility with students around their interviews would result in less stress and pressure to fit it into a prescribed timetable.

Students felt strongly enough about the interviews to continue to comment about how they reacted to them throughout the semester. One student admitted to fearing that they would "get negative feedbacks from those I was to interview or be treated with negative attitudes from these people. However, the whole process was smooth and successful." The question is, were these fears of judgement and negative attitudes something that they wouldn't have had to deal with later, or were they something that these students would have had to overcome if they were to succeed in their field at some point.

"I'd actually use something from an English class as a science major": The Field Work Essay

The reflective essay in the portfolio took a broader look at the students' experiences over the semester, and the themes from the class exhibited that broadness. One thing that students would do, which wasn't mentioned in the instructions, was to comment on which essay they liked the most. The Field Work essay in particular was one that students went out of their way to point out as meaningful. One student directly compared it to the other essays: "I really think that this Field Work Essay is a step above all the other essays I have done in this class." Another student, who was studying to be a doctor, admitted that she didn't like English classes because

she felt like "science and math was all [she] needed." However, she changed her mind over the course of the semester: "The field work essay was especially helpful for me…I discovered that there was quite a bit of writing ahead of me. That was a big wake up call for me. Because of this assignment, alone, I have a better understanding of my education and future career." Another student tied her change of major to the Field Work essay. "I'd say the best thing I learned from this class was that I did not want to keep pursuing the major I had declared. Writing the Field Work essay gave me that boost I needed…So basically if I stick with my new major, I owe my career to this class!" The results from the questionnaire bore out this positivity about the Field Work Essay.

The questionnaire results for questions six and seven provide a painfully clear and revealing contradiction that at first was extremely confusing. Question number six was phrased like this:

6. Which of the essays did you enjoy the most?

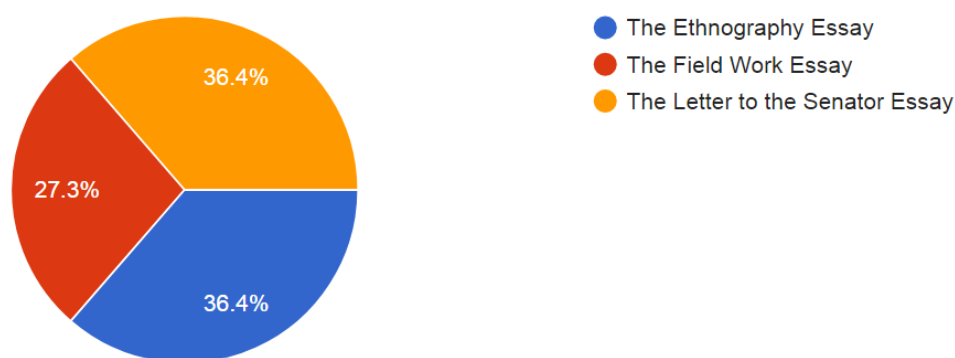Here are the results, first from CWI, then from ISU:

11 responses

Figure 10: CWI Result to Question 6

17 responses

- The Ethnography Essay
- The Field Work Essay
- The Letter to the Senator Essay
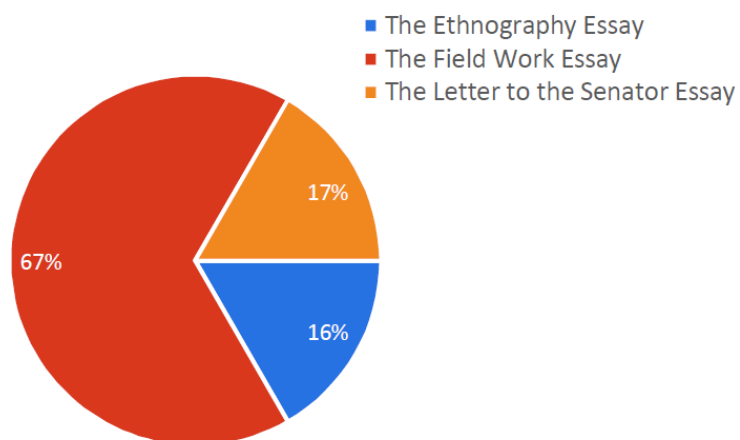

67%

17%

16%

Figure 11: ISU Result to Question 6

The next question seems pretty similar, but resulted in drastically different results. Question seven was

phrased:

    7. Which essay did you think was the most beneficial?

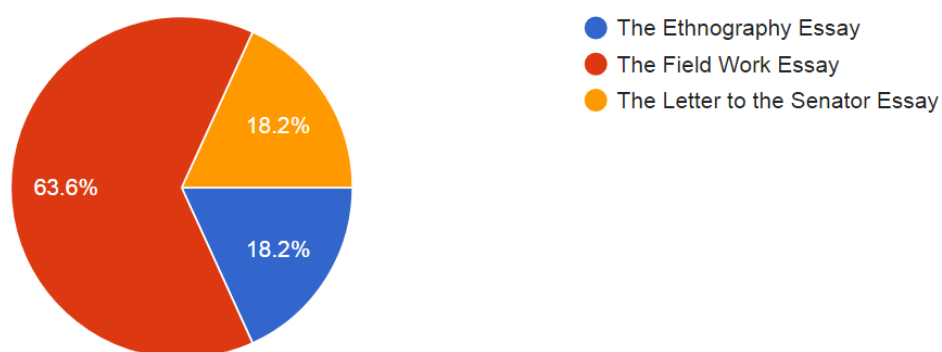Here are the results, first from CWI, then from ISU:

11 responses

- The Ethnography Essay
- The Field Work Essay
- The Letter to the Senator Essay

63.6%

18.2%

18.2%

Figure 12: CWI Result to Question 7

17 responses

- The Ethnography Essay
- The Field Work Essay
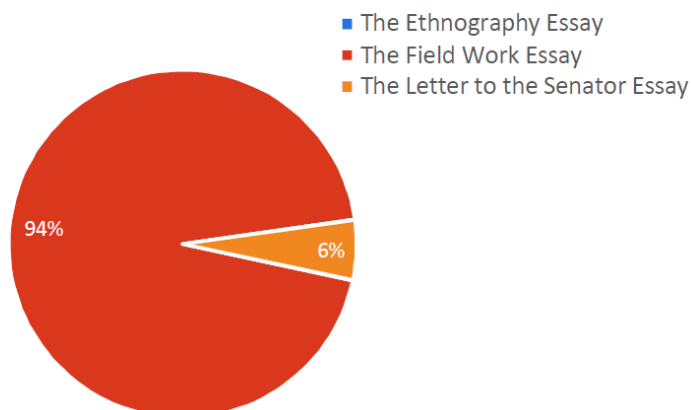- The Letter to the Senator Essay

94%

6%

Figure 13: ISU Result to Question 7

The questions both hinge on how students perceive the essays. The difference between them only being that six has to do with enjoyment and seven has to do with perceived benefit. The difference between students' perceptions of which essay they enjoyed vs which they benefitted from is striking. The Field Work essay was the most enjoyable to little over quarter of all the students; however, it was perceived as the most beneficial by almost two thirds of the students. Since the data is anonymous, it's impossible to tell how many of the students who enjoyed the Field Work essay also thought it was the most beneficial—it's possible that the 27% of students who enjoyed it didn't actually think it was beneficial, but that those who enjoyed the other essays thought it was beneficial. In any case, the 36.3% difference in students who felt that they benefitted from the Field Work essay even if they didn't enjoy the process of doing it indicate that a student might enjoy an essay they don't benefit from or not enjoy an essay with huge benefits for them. A follow-up question would be to assess student priorities—whether they would rather enjoy an essay or benefit from an essay. I would assume that students would rather benefit from an essay, but that's not clear from the data.

The similarity between the ISU results to question six about enjoyment (60-something-% for Field Work, with equal amounts for the other two) is very similar to the CWI results for the

question seven. However, the ISU results for question seven about how beneficial the essays were was overwhelmingly in favor of the Field Work essay, indicating that the field work essay is similarly preferred as beneficial at both institutions…it's just that the starting point for ISU when it comes to enjoyment is the ending point for CWI when it comes to perception of benefits. There are trends in the same direction for both classes, only they were at different starting points.

Although the chart makes it look like the Field Work essay was the favorite by an overwhelming margin, the comments on the questionnaire tell a different story. Students appear to have been quite conflicted about which essay they thought was the most beneficial. For example, one student wrote that the Ethnography helped them open their mind to the unknown; however, while they felt the essay "benefitted [them] emotionally and spiritually," it didn't benefit them academically. Another student admitting that they were "between the 'Field work' essay and the 'Letter to the Senator essay'." Another student left a comment about how "It's good to know your community and what is there to offer," even though they didn't vote for the Ethnography Essay. These conflicted reviews indicate it wasn't as clear-cut as it may seem. One student went so far as to say

> I think all three essays offered should be a requirement for English's classes, at some point. The assignments were directive; establishing a stronger concept based on one's own opinion, factual findings through research, and the opportunity to delve into others' experiences within a subject.

This student felt strongly enough about the value of the essays to recommend them to be required for all students taking English classes.

And, again, it's important to acknowledge that students answer both of these questions at the end of the semester, when their perspective is potentially skewed. The fact that when they

answered these questions the Letter to the State Senator Essay was only a few weeks old and the Ethnography was months old may have influenced their feelings about it. They could have been burned out and unenthusiastic about the third essay, where, given enough time, their feelings may have softened. In an ideal study configuration, asking these questions right after each essay might have given a more accurate result, though there will inevitably be comparison unless I was able to conduct a large enough study to have randomized essay order to see if that affected scores.

Additionally, how each student defines the words "enjoy" or "beneficial" could change from student to student. One student might feel that in an academic setting, only quantifiable results could count as "beneficial." The Field Work essay has more opportunities for such results, including future contacts/mentors, long-term useful information about their future jobs, etc. They may have benefited as much from the other essays but simply not recognized it because of the way they think about what a benefit is. Similarly, both enjoy and benefit might be caught up in the grade the student got. It might be possible that a student might report enjoying an essay more if they got an overall better grade.

"They can help me out": Networking

One reason why the Field Work essay was so influential was because of the of the potential benefits that it has for the students. Benjamin talked about it in a f2f interview as "networking." The Field Work Essay in particular enabled students to make connections that could potentially be helpful for years to come: "I met older students who were further along…they can help me out, like with coursework I have questions with… it will definitely affect my future endeavors." English provides a unique opportunity for students and teachers. Because composition can be taught focused on a broad spectrum of subject matter (as long as it

requires and affords the critical and analytical moves for writing for English), educators have a special chance to connect students with people who are further along than they are in their professional path. While there is definitely a value to pedagogical approaches such as Writing about Writing (WAW), such pedagogies miss out on the opportunity to motivate students to make valuable social connections.

It wasn't just general "growth" that students recognized as a benefit of these kinds of assignments. One student talked about their changing their major and how the second essay "helped me to educate myself further on [my] new career field." They continued by talking about how they came in contact "with individuals that would help me later on." The networking aspect of essay two is perhaps one of the most unlikely benefit to come out of an English class, but a potent one nevertheless. Similarly, the student who got a job during her Ethnography research wrote in her portfolio that "I could not be happier with the waitressing job I had gained out of doing a homework assignment." The phrase "a homework assignment" rather than "the Ethnography Location Analysis" emphasizes how unexpected getting a job was to happen in any assignment, especially one in an English class. Certainly, if the assignments we give in a class can result in these kinds of long-term benefits while still accomplishing the goals of the course, it's our responsibility to design assignments that have the greatest benefits for students.

"Waiting for inspiration to hit me in the head": Changing Majors

Another common element discussed by students were changes in their attitudes towards their majors. One student, who had changed her major six times over five years, experienced this essay as "a great use of resources to ensure that the subject, Art Majors, is in fact the job field I wish to join. I wish in a way that I would have had an assignment like this three years ago when I first changed from my original major." She talked about how people she interviewed really

helped her analyze her decision. Another student wasn't quite as positive in her analysis of the essay: "this essay made me reconsider my pre-health emphasis, but at the end of the day, I cannot see myself doing anything, but attending medical school." While she didn't have the same positive reaction, she ended up deciding the same thing—that her best course of action would be to stay with her major. This was similar to the third student, who admitted that his future as a music major isn't "set in stone," but "[I] can't sit around idly waiting for inspiration to hit me in the head, so I'll keep with the music major until I find something truly fitting for me." A final student, though, ended up changing his major, even as he admitted that he "had a blast researching the material." Part of the problem was that he had "certain quarrels" with the doctor's practice… "(specifics upon request)." These last two may indicate that the students weren't altogether successful in figuring out how to express their shifting feelings towards their majors, and/or that I wasn't as helpful in facilitating such expressions.

Sometimes students didn't know exactly what to make of the complicated outcomes of their interviews. For example, Lewis was originally really excited about his plan to become a chiropractor. However, when he interviewed and job-shadowed a professional chiropractor, his views started to change. Originally, he just left out the material with this individual from his essay (though part of that was due to time constraints), but eventually he admitted that what he saw made him start to question whether he even wanted to be a chiropractor any more. The interesting part of that experience, though, is that he wasn't sure if the experience with that interview was a positive or a negative thing for him. Lewis said of his experience: "I think that was a little bit of a drawback for me. Honestly. I mean during the essay I was all about, I was like 'this is what I want to do I'm super jived about it,' but is it really what I want to do?" He

eventually concludes that it was a good thing to find out sooner rather than later that he wanted to change his plans.

Benjamin had a similarly conflicted view of the interviews and his long-term professional goals. He was still committed to being an engineer, but researching and conducting an interview complicated his view of the field: "for me engineering was a very broad field…it made me reevaluate a lot of like what I deemed important for what specific field I wanted to go into. It actually kind of made me…not know what I wanted to do anymore." He didn't seem as upset or conflicted as Lewis, though, since he knew that the adjustment he was mostly going to do from one sub-field of engineering to another wouldn't affect his course schedule very significantly. Still, he summed it up in this way: "I think it's definitely a good thing cuz… you know the indecisiveness isn't good, but I think it's a good thing to know what you're getting into a lot more."

Many of the same themes as in the f2f cover letters showed up in the online course as well, including dropping or reaffirming major choices, gratitude about connecting with their career choice, and struggle with the interviews. For example, one student wrote that "I would have to say this has been the hardest assignment let alone essay that I have ever had the pleasure to write. It absolutely made me question what I really wanted to do and if my decision of carriers [sic] was right for me and my family." The combination of hardest assignment ever with "the pleasure" to write sums up the contrast many students felt about this essay. It was both intimidating and satisfying, making a more meaningful experience for them. Another student wrote with the opposite outcome as it relates to their choice of major. "it was a great assignment and now that it is done I am glad that it got me out of my box to investigate more about nursing." They felt more confident in their choice after getting out of their "box" to investigate.

"I definitely hated that assignment": Criticism for The Letter to the State Senator Essay

The final full essay was probably the most polarizing—the two most common beginnings to this essay were either "this was the most difficult/unpleasant essay," or "this was my favorite/easiest essay." The negative responses almost always followed it up with an expression of their feelings towards politics. One student wrote "I am not interested at all in law or politics, so coming up with a strong argument on legislation, I found is not my strong suit." Another wrote, "I have no real reason to write to senator or even choose a topic to write about. I have had a distane [sic] for government." This student apparently didn't connect with the rationale for this essay as I expressed it in class; I had tried to introduce this essay as a chance for them to learn how their interests and voice matter in our political system. She didn't agree with that perspective, though, and it might be asking a bit much for someone with a distain for government to change their attitude towards it because of one assignment.

Another point that came up in a few places was about how difficult it was to read the language of the bills. One student wrote that "There were times when I had problems understanding my bill. Bills are tough to read." I feel like I could have done more to help students figure out how to break down difficult legal language or recognize where the most important parts of the bill are. Still, even with that, asking students to dive straight into the language of government without much preparation is perhaps why it was so polarizing—some students, due to experience or personal preference, really connect with it and some don't.

The f2f students I interviewed were pretty unified in their dislike of the Letter to the State Senator Essay. Melody and Colin were less condemning, saying it was "such a difficult one to write" and "I didn't get it." Lewis and Benjamin weren't quite as positive, saying "I definitely know that politics isn't the route for me. I hate it." And "I definitely hated that assignment. Just

to be honest with you." All of their negative opinions appeared to stem from personal dislike of politics in general. Lewis said that he knew before the assignment that he didn't like politics, and even researching and getting more involved in it didn't change that attitude. Benjamin was frustrated with the lack of choices: "Because, I mean, it's Idaho. It's like what do we have interesting to write about? For me it's really difficult to write about topics that I have no interest in." Melody struggled with the language of the bills. Only Colin admitted that all three of the essays were relevant "in their own unique ways."

The Letter to the State Senator Essay was similarly difficult for Carrie. Like other students, she cited the difficult language of the bills as one of the main reasons she struggled with it. "you're reading through the first page and it's almost like 'oh, they're just saying the same thing but not even in English'." The fact that she would compare her experience trying to read the bill to reading a different language is a helpful comparison. It may be English, but it is definitely a different kind of English than she has come across. One of the things that helped her break into understanding it was when she did searches for it on news and found a number of articles that broke it down and gave an outside view of it. It would have been a better idea for me to be more forceful in encouraging students to do that with any bill they researched.

"That essay was a wonderful experience": Praise for The Letter to the State Senator Essay

The other common perspective on this essay was an extremely positive one. One student wrote that, "I really enjoyed this paper, it was very informative and I learned a lot about a topic that many people don't know about or don't want to know about." This student seemed to appreciate it as a learning experience. Another couple appreciated it as a chance to express their beliefs: "My favorite thing about this essay was that I could argue for something I personally cared about very much. I feel that this connection I had with the issue really helped get the length

of my essay." And "I love writing about topics that have the potential to be controversial so I'm happy we did this essay last." This last idea isn't completely clear about why they felt like it being last was good—perhaps because they felt like making an argumentative essay was easier and an easier essay at the end of the semester was a good idea. Or perhaps they felt opposite from another student, who said that "I'm glad that you gave us a challenge here at the end of the semester, but I feel as if we had a better system going for the first two essays." Maybe this second student who felt the last essay was more of a challenge than the first two essays just didn't react the same was as the first student who appeared to appreciate it more. Student learning styles and preferences make a difference in delivery and performance.

One final outcome, which seems by far the exception rather than the rule, was a student who was going to write and actually send his letter to his senator about an e-cigarette business that he owned about policies around e-cigarettes. "I was able to discuss a topic that will directly affect my business transactions for the future….Being able to persuade a lawmaker to continue their efforts in making my industries e-cigarette standards safer will only be beneficial for everyone." Given, most students don't find themselves in this kind of a situation, but it's worth considering that students might be able to feel like they have a voice on issues that directly affect their lives in the future.

The results of the online class's final essay cover letters were much less polarized than in the f2f class. While several of the cover letters in the f2f class talked about why this essay was their least favorite or was particularly difficult, nearly none of the ones online made these kinds of claims. In fact, many of the essays made a point of talking about how positive this experience was for them. "This essay was a wonderful experience," one student says, comparing it to similar projects they've done past classes. Another student, though they admit to not being political, say

that they have strong opinions, and "thank you for this assignment." Yet another student goes so far as to say that "This may have been my favorite project of the semester."

The divergence between the f2f and the online class's opinion towards the Letter to the State Senator Essay weren't entirely clear. One of the things these students point out was about their strong opinions and passions for certain topics that they were able to research about. The overall demographic in the online class being skewed towards older students might lend itself to more established opinions and less feelings of alienation because of political issues. Also, the in-person class might lend itself to more pre-class discussions of negative experiences that might have colored all the students' attitudes about the assignment in a way that the online students didn't get.

"Another reason for the online.": Online Complications

The video conferences brought to light the many different challenges the online class had to contend with that were different than the f2f class. One of the first thing we talked about was their experience with online classes. I was surprised by the number of students who were taking only online classes. In the first conference, of the five attendees, Cami, Anne, and Graham were all only taking online classes. Graham was positive about it, saying that it "works a little better with the work schedule," and Anne said that she prefers online to f2f, but Candace admitted that it was "tricky."

Part of the reason why Anne said she preferred online was demonstrated by her three-year-old son, who came onto the screen to say something to her. She turned to him to redirect him and then said "Another reason for the online. I still have kids at home." This few-second interaction had far-reaching implications for my project. Just as her son wasn't easy to redirect, so might there be many situational barriers to the assignments I'm asking students to do. The

students who were taking only online classes appreciated the flexibility of being able to do assignments whenever they could fit it into their busy schedule, whether due to work, family, or something else. When I ask students to meet with groups and individuals, all of a sudden that flexibility of the online modality goes away. And working interviews into a busy schedule probably feels like trying to redirect a three-year-old who wants something.

Jennika portrays the reason for online classes in a different light; she says she would have never wanted to interact with people in a f2f class, but is willing to do so in an online setting, where she apparently feels safer: "Yes, [online] stretches me already, because I probably wouldn't have talked with anyone. I definitely wouldn't have video conferenced or had a face to face interaction, so yeah." When I asked if anyone felt terror when I described the nature of the assignments and needing to interview people, Jennika was the first to say that she did. Even still, she was willing to do these assignments and to come to the video conference. Her claim that she wouldn't want to do face-to-face interactions or video conferences without the pressure of school in an online setting indicates that we can't assume online will be as difficult socially as f2f.

The last video conference of the semester was poorly attended. Partly because I scheduled it for 3:00 hoping to catch some students who weren't able to attend previous ones, and partly because posting previous videos on the website might have provided students with the impression that it was ok if they didn't attend because they could simply watch the video later when they had more time. In any case, only Carrie came.

Carrie also weighed in about online courses, sharing an interesting insight about the workload difference between online and f2f classes. She maintains that the lack of in-person class time means that online courses can feel like a lot more work. "It's a lot more work when

you don't realize it because you're doing it in class…so it takes a lot more self-discipline." She says that online English classes in particular can feel like more work.

Another factor she brought up that the other students didn't was about the effect of weather on students' ability to get work done. This particular semester had been particularly rainy, which she said "isn't super normal for us." She claimed that the weather made it more difficult to maintain motivation, but that it also worked to her advantage because when she went into a medical center to see if she could interview someone, the workers seemed laid-back and willing. I'm not sure this account really makes sense because I could just as easily see that lack of motivation because of weather could lead to people being grouchy and unwilling to be interviewed; perhaps this was her trying to make sense of a specific situation that wasn't generalizable.

"My feelings about the 'modality'…is neutral": Student Opinions of Online

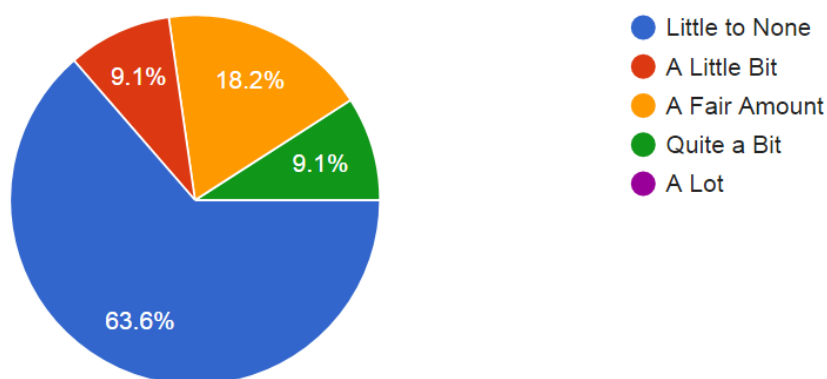## 5. Did the online modality of the course affect your opinion of the essays?

11 responses

Figure 14: CWI-only Question 5 Results

This question was only for the online course, and the results may tell more about my assumptions than about the students'. Of the written responses to this question, a fairly high percentage of them indicated that students didn't understand what the question was asking, probably due to not knowing what the word "modality" means. For example, one student wrote "I think you were easy to get a hold of and assignments were post clearly with ample instruction," which could have been equally true of a face-to-face class. The amount of contact I have with them and the nature of the instructions doesn't necessarily reflect on the online nature of the course. Another student is more direct about the word "modality": "Maybe my understanding of the definition modality isn't exactly what this question is asking, but I would have felt the same about these essays whether I took this course online or in person, so my feelings about the 'modality' of the course being online is neutral." Though this student seems to actually understand what the question was asking, their insecurity about it, even putting it in quote marks, indicates that I was assuming an understanding that they may or may not actually have had.

Other observations the students made were that the benefit of the online modality was getting more immediate feedback and connection. Sometimes the narrative around online courses are that they don't have as good of opportunity for communication because students who need things explained in a verbal back and forth don't have that option. However, this student indicates that being able to ask and get questions answered when they are actually working on the project—via email and "descriptively written instructions that were easy to follow"—made the online course better for communication. Another student felt that the online made it "less daunting than an in-class delivery." As another student put it, "online allows people to say what they want to say." Though a student can say whatever they want in a f2f course, perhaps they

meant it was less daunting to write and think and read instructions before communicating exactly what they wanted to say.

"Life Changing": Big-Picture Outcomes

One of the issues students brought up were about how these interactions with local groups influenced them personally. One student went so far as to call them "life changing" because he was able to learn so much at the Pocatello Animal Shelter. This is vague enough phrasing to not know from the text that this argument is real, but another student claimed that his experience was unforgettable…then he goes on to talk about how he's going to change his minor to be what this group does. Also, he goes on to say that doing what this group did for a living sounds like a dream come true, which strikes me as authentic because it's so strongly worded (for this student). There may have been other students who felt this way, but these were the only two who pointed out the big picture direction of their lives in relation to this essay.

Another related theme is students saying that they would be likely to be involved with this group in their free time. While there was a question on the questionnaire about this ("how likely are you to be involved with this group in the future"), the questionnaire was administered at the end of the semester, long before the students wrote this cover letter. One student pointed out that the group wasn't necessarily new, but it "forced me to dive a little a deeper and make new friends…I'll for sure check [it] out in my free time." There's something interesting about them describing this group not only as them "for sure" checking it out in the future, but that they viewed it as a source of friendship. Another student phrased this idea more strongly, that "I could see myself volunteering for their special events/outing in the future," and another phrased it more strongly still: "I am sure [this] will be something I do every year from now on."

"Already started, actually": Student Accounts of their Future Behavior

The second-to-last question on the questionnaire related to future student behavior. It was

phrased as follows:

9. Based off your experiences this semester, how likely are you to change your future

behavior (like changing your major, getting involved in local groups/issues, etc.)?

Here are CWI's results, followed by ISU's:
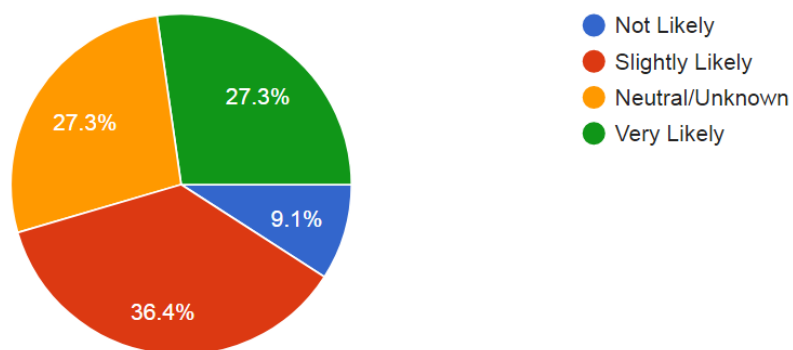
11 responses

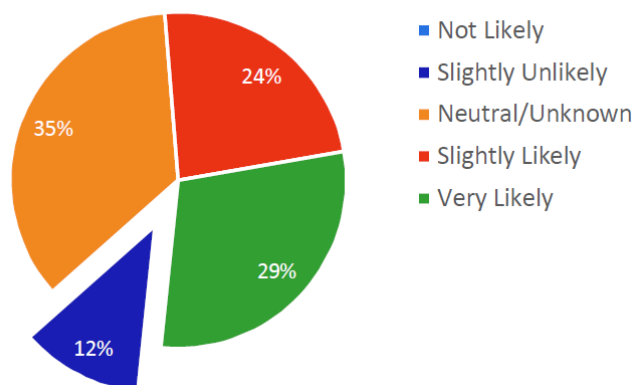*Figure 15: CWI Result to Question 9*

17 responses

Figure 16: ISU Result to Question 9

Over 63.7% of students anticipated changing their behavior based off the experiences this

semester—with 27.3% "very likely" to do so. At ISU it was slightly less, with at least 53% likely

to change their behavior, 29% very likely to do so. One student remarked that they already had

become involved in an ongoing basis with the non-profit organization they had researched.

Another student said, "It made me go into a world I've never been. Mostly likely I would now

write a letter to my senator if I felt strongly about a bill." Several other students pointed out that

they would be involved in groups or politics or their major in a more direct way, but one

comment stood out as interesting: "I would like to get more involved in local issues!" It's not

that they were planning on being involved with a group—they said they wanted to be involved in

issues.

Final Impressions: Questionnaire question #10

The final response in the questionnaire was a big-picture question about their semester

experience. It was phrased as follows:

10. What other comments or impressions could you share about your experience this

semester?

The responses here were fairly similar to the attitudes expressed in the portfolio cover letter,

probably because this came after or as the students wrote their final reflective cover letter. Still,

the anonymous nature of these responses yielded some interesting results. For example, one

student admitted that they "have never really been a fan of English and have always struggled,"

though they changed their attitude this semester. Another student critiqued the length of the

essays, saying they were too long and led to fluff. This and the more positive responses

expressed were not traceable to individual student responses, making them more trustworthily

authentic.

Many students recognized the changes they made during the semester. One student even

acknowledged how brief the time was for how much they changed: "I have learned so much

about writing and feel my writing has improved years, in just 16 weeks." Another student

summed up the class in the following six words: "It was intense, but very rewarding." Similarly, a student put it this way: "The work was difficult, yes. The work was also worth what we put into it."

Although much of the feedback through the semester focused on how the students were pushed out of their comfort zone, one student's feedback kind of contradicts that. They wrote that "I was given enough freedom as a writer to enjoy the essays we worked on and never felt overwhelmingly outside of my comfort zone." It's hard from the context to know how much emphasis they put on the word "overwhelmingly." They could be using it emphatically, as if to say that they were definitely out of their comfort zone, but not to the point of feeling like giving up. Or they could be using it to say that they were only slightly out of their comfort zone.

Another point students brought up in their final question response was to make it clear how much they enjoyed themselves this semester. One student wrote "This class has been very enjoyable," citing my humor and the lack of busy work. The assignment focus on community may have helped this student feel like it wasn't busy work. Another student qualified their enjoyment as "I really enjoyed this class once I was able to get organized and into the groove of it," putting their lack of enjoyment initially on themselves. Finally, a student wrote that "this was a wonderful semester, the essays were very interesting to me and I enjoyed writing them and getting to dive into things that I wouldn't normally. Despite all of the hiccups I had this semester this class made me put myself out there." This student also referred to their personal struggles to perform as a student—their "hiccups"—but thoroughly enjoyed the class. There is a contradiction in what they wrote. Initially they phrased it as "getting to," and later they wrote it as "made me." Does this class allow them to do the things that they really wanted to, or does it

make them do it? This student doesn't provide a clear answer, though it's clear they really enjoyed whatever it was that happened.

Conclusion

No two classes are going to provide reliable, generalizable proof about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a pedagogical approach. However, they can provide evidence of possibility. In this class a student got a job from interviewing a business owner for the Ethnography essay, several students changed or became more committed to their majors/minors, other students became connected to local groups or professional contacts that they intended to keep interacting with, many students felt like they improved in writing/interviewing/social interactions, and many students succeeded academically more than they had in the past. The online course provided unique challenges and benefits, but ultimately appeared to be a viable modality to accomplish these community-focused assignments. If these things were possible in these classes and environments, the potential value of this assignment approach—for face-to-face and online teaching situations—means it's worth further study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Education is a changing, dynamic practice, reliant on the innovation of new approaches using established theories and developing technology. The expansion of the internet and digital communication tools demands that teachers expand their repertoire of educational techniques. This project stands as an attempt to do exactly that: by triangulating the intersections of Service-Learning, Online Writing Instruction, and Transfer of Learning, I've been able to better answer questions about implications for SL in online settings.

Service Learning

In the beginning stages of this project I hesitated even calling what I was doing Service Learning because it was so different from the typical model of SL. For example, much of the literature talks about the importance of making SL sustainable, with long-term, reciprocal relationships between the teacher and community partners. One researcher even went so far as to say that "in the absence of community-campus partnerships, it is difficult to imagine how service-learning might even exist" (Sandy 30). I don't know that she would consider the work I'm doing as a "partnership," or as a legitimate version of Service Learning. Rather than just treating each student as possessing a singular identity as "student," this approach recognizes and leverages the complex multifaceted identities, interests, and needs that students have.

Most Service-Learning programs encourage long-term teacher-partner relationships, including dedicated institutional connections or paid, dedicated faculty to maintain the relationship beyond the scope of a single semester or project. There are many studies and well-argued publications that indicate the importance of working to support the community partner's needs as well as the intellectual needs of the students. If there is a constant turnover of students, teachers, and volunteers, how can an organization benefit when they're constantly re-training and

re-orienting an academic partner? And even intellectually, Anne Beaufort argues that teachers who let students choose their own individualized topics run the risk of sitting "on the intellectual sidelines of the subject matter the student is exploring, asking questions a generalist would ask" (12). The key difference in my approach to SL in these essays is that students aren't asked to research for an expert's understanding of the group, major, or political issue. Because they are assigned to perform a critically sound assessment from a beginner's point of view, the teacher isn't so much a generalist in the subject matter as they are an expert researcher and analyst, asking the right kinds of questions. Indeed, the teacher not knowing all the topics, groups, and information the students are researching is actually a strength.

I do strongly agree that campus-community relationships defined as sustainable and reciprocal are important for almost all SL approaches. However, I believe that there are instances, such as this project, where a different relationship is much preferred. For example, the student who got a job as a waitress during the ethnography. She needed a job. The place she looked at needed a waitress. She looked with a critical eye at the work environment and analyzed what it would be like to work there. The bosses noticed her efforts and were impressed. She may have gotten a job there regardless of this assignment, but it's also possible that she wouldn't have made as good an impression if she didn't approach the employers in the way she did. Is this service, reciprocal and sustainable or otherwise? I would argue that if the students are helping meet a community need because of this assignment, then yes.

Another example was Melody, who wrote about the Diversity Resource Center at ISU. The DRC is an organization that actively wants to find students who can help with their work and be involved in their activities. I could definitely be in contact with them as a teacher, funneling my students towards them. That would help their mission and be service. However,

there are still other students, like Melody, who are interested in being involved with them and find their way there on their own. Isn't it still service if an assignment helps push students into doing it themselves rather than organizing it for them? Melody and many other students indicated that doing it themselves made it more meaningful.

The results from the interviews, cover letters, questionnaires, and video conferences all provide evidence of students benefitting from finding their own contacts without teacher moderation. Lewis decided to change his minor after discovering the Outdoor Recreation Center for his Ethnography; J decided gained greater insight into his engineering major, rethinking what his focus will be after his work on the Field Work essay; A student named Aaron was able to write a letter to his Senator about vaping legislation, a topic that was important to him because of a business he owned. There would doubtless have been stories of personal success in a study where the teacher moderated student relationships with community partners, but the fact that there were so many and so profound personal student successes here speaks volume to the potential and possibilities of this kind of an approach.

Online Writing Instruction

Teachers who adapt their face-to-face teaching material for an online class quickly realize that it's not as straightforward as it may seem. It's not simply a matter of transferring paper to digital; it's not even a matter of finding equivalent digital delivery methods. Often, it's necessary to entirely rethink or replace entire assignments. That's why the question of whether or not these essays would be feasible in an online setting isn't an easy or a simple one.

There are a number of differences between online and f2f teaching. There is a need to compensate for the lack of visual stimulus in an online setting. In a physical classroom, teachers can use visual cues, their expressions, body language, props, display technology, etc. to get

across ideas. Online systems have ways of communicating nuances of meaning, but they aren't the same. Online educators must rely on video conferences, recorded videos, presentation software, links, podcasts, and other delivery options.

Since Service-Learning is traditionally depicted as a pedagogy that requires strong scaffolding and teacher involvement, it's a legitimate question of whether my approach to Service-Learning (which is not the traditionally scaffolded method) translates into the online modality, which is also depicted as a less personally interactive modality. Could students not only succeed in finding, connecting with, and personalizing their community connection, but also write about it in a forum where they don't interact often face-to-face? Is the strong face-to-face requirements of the community engagement compatible with the non-face-to-face online writing environment? The evidence from this project suggests that yes, a relatively unscaffolded approach that puts the onus on the student to find and connect with a community partner can indeed succeed for almost all students in online settings.

One of the difficulties—the reliance on text and written communication—actually turns out to be a strength for online classes in general and this project in particular. Beth Hewett claims that "[Online Writing Instruction's] intense focus on using writing to teach writing renders OWI as traditional writing instruction on steroids" (iii). The danger of a f2f SL approach is that the focus can shift away from the purpose of a composition class: writing. Instead it can center on interviewing, choosing topics/groups, and figuring out the complicated logistics required with interacting with others. However, in online settings, students have the added benefit of an extra measure of reading and writing. Given, my online class had video conferences (which most students didn't take part in), and my f2f class had to submit written analyses of their work, but

the lack of verbal explanation in the online setting seemed to help students connect more with writing.

Another affordance provided through the online modality was flexibility for students whose life situation doesn't lend itself to a f2f handling of this kind of class. There were a number of students who reported choosing the online class because it "fit better with [their] schedule." A number of students had small children at home and couldn't have attended a f2f class without taking on unreasonable extra costs.

There were certainly difficulties, though, with some students being left behind or not served well with the execution of this class in an online setting. C, for example, struggled with the social pressures of the interviews and connecting with community partners. He admitted to feeling anxious about the social nature of these assignments, even as he voluntarily came to the first video conference. He wasn't able to complete the course, dropping off midway into the second essay. There may not be a solution in these kinds of situations, where students come to an online course expecting a lack of social pressure, yet finding that the course contains more-than-usual social interactions. There are steps teachers can take to reassure students, connect them with university resources helping anxiety, and even customize assignments to help students, but each of these, as well as announcing to students the social nature of the class, does not solve the heart of the issue—it merely avoids it. This study shows that this approach doesn't work well for some students who don't deal well with social anxiety.

Transfer of Learning

A key stage in any educator's goals to improve is to recognize faulty or oversimplified assumptions and figure out a more detailed or correct explanation; the question driving Transfer of Learning—(how) do students internalize and apply learning in one setting to another?—is

perhaps the most important and significant assumption an educator can make. While it's such a central question the answer seems like it would be easy and straightforward, the literature on is surprisingly mixed. As detailed in Chapter Two, there are researchers who are more pessimistic or skeptical around issues of transfer, those who are more optimistic, and those who have practical recommendations on how to maximize student transfer of learning. Since it can be argued that the most important pedagogical consideration is how students change as a result of the course, the question most important to this project is how well and in what ways does the pedagogical approach I'm using align with principles of transfer?

One of the benefits of Service Learning for the transfer of learning is the inherent focus on context and audience. In one of the early studies on transfer and Threshold Concepts by Adler-Kassner et al., one of the disappointments they had was the lack of shifting in thinking towards writing a class of students experienced. They described the students near the end of the semester as still thinking about writing "as a set of rules to be followed, rather than as an activity situated in and growing out of context" (5). In each of the three essays at the core of this project, students are asked to analyze writing done by a community partner, whether that be a local organization writing about their area of interest, a professional trade journal writing about their field, or a politician writing legislation for a specific district. It can be argued that the writing that students do is all for a classroom environment, which doesn't necessarily need to cater to the same contextual nuances that the community writing does. In this case, teachers can assign writing that fulfills the same purpose but is writing "for" the community rather than "about" (see Deans). Another response could be that even classrooms are rhetorical contexts with real audiences, though that line of thinking applies to non-SL courses as well.

There are a number of concepts that relate to Transfer of Learning that seem almost independent of whether a project is online or f2f, or whether or not it involves Service Learning. Kara Taczak describes the importance of using key terms to teach transfer: "knowledge of a key term…can give students a frame for other writing tasks--one that they carry with them into different writing situations" (90). While I certainly could have focused on key terms more in this project, so could teachers in any other class. Similarly, research shows that reflection is a key element of successful transfer. While I did have students write reflective cover letters to accompany each of their essays, that isn't something that is inherently unique to this course.

The personal connections students form during their research and interviews acts as a form of self-contextualizing that blurs the line between their daily life and educational settings, which is a valuable component of successful transfer. According to Donahue, "in some sense, transfer occurs constantly and naturally…We would not learn to speak or be able to navigate daily life without it. In educational settings, however, studies suggest that transfer is far less natural" (146). Responses from students in their cover letters, interviews, and questionnaires indicate that they were impacted by their personal lives and interests becoming the subject of academic research. Students reported feeling a connection with their writing because of their personal interest and knowledge in it, which mirrors the kind of every-day transfer Donahue talked about.

The Ethnography, Field Work, and Letter to the State Senator Essays

Studies provide evidence that can support conclusions, though it's important to know how much the results are influenced by the actual study design. The question "does a test measure knowledge or does it measure how well people take tests?" applies to this project. Does this project answer questions about students being able to engage with community partners in University English classes in f2f and online settings, or does it only address how students react to

these three specific essays? I side with the teachers and administrators who still give tests, even as they try to mitigate biases and unfounded conclusions. Still, there are questions worth considering about how well the conclusions we reach in this project should be taken with a broader perspective. Here I consider conclusions and factors surrounding each of the three essays at the heart of this study.

Ethnography

With this essay, especially coming at the beginning of the semester, student buy-in appeared to be high. While there were some students who admitted to not knowing anything about local groups and even to not wanting to know anything, the fact they got to choose what group they approached, researched, and interacted with seemed to counteract any shyness or other misgivings they may have had about getting out of their "comfort zone." Students generally reported being excited about volunteering with their Ethnography groups even after the semester ended, implying that the instruction to choose a group that they could see themselves being a part of regardless of this assignment was successful.

However, this essay ranked fairly low on the scale of whether it was the most valuable essay students wrote this semester. Some students mentioned that it was because they simply thought the Field Work essay was more valuable, even though they appreciated the Ethnography. Another factor may have been the position as first in the semester. Students may have struggled with getting used to the class, their other classes, or college life in general at the beginning of the semester, which negatively influenced their experience. Other essays may have benefitted from the skills with interviewing, writing, and researching that the students worked through in this first essay. Despite the negative ranking on that questionnaire response, there were very few reports of dissatisfaction in student cover letters, emails, or verbal exchanges with me.

Field Work

The evidence for the success of this essay is everywhere: student cover letters reporting things like "this essay has by far been my favorite to write throughout my entire academic career"; the questionnaire reporting that this was students viewed this as their favorite and most valuable essay; students reporting in interviews and video conferences that this essay changed their life in significant ways. Multiple students changed or recommitted to their majors because of this essay. Others gained professional contacts that they reported they would turn to during the journey towards their occupation.

Some students struggled with this essay for a variety of reasons, though that's not to say that this struggle was a negative thing. When they weren't entirely sure what they wanted to major in, some students felt lack of motivation or a sense of intimidation having pressure put on them to figure out what they needed to do but not wanting to face that difficult question. Again, I would argue that that's actually a positive to this assignment. Also, there were some students who struggled because their major was very narrow or was not represented nearby. These students needed to do extra work to find long-distance connections or extrapolation to find answers about the questions they had about their field. In any case, all these struggles were something students would need to face at some point anyways, and this essay provided incentive to do it sooner than they probably otherwise would have. Perhaps that's why it was ranked so highly by the students.

Letter to the Senator

This essay was clearly not as appreciated as the Field Work essay. Many students disliked the political aspect of it, even though it wasn't directly related to the 2016 election that was going on during this time. Others disliked the legalistic language and difficulties

understanding the political structures behind it. There may have also been factors such as student burn-out near the end of the semester or personal beliefs or biases that were a negative influence on this essay. That said, it ranked the lowest on the questionnaire questions about favorite or most beneficial essay.

One factor that might help explain what the difference was between this and the previous two essays was the lack of interview. In the f2f class there were no interview requirements, and in the online class there were only significant reward points for completing an interview. Perhaps the students would have gotten a more personal connection with this essay had they been required to actually talk with someone about it. Another reason students may not have connected with this topic was the relatively narrow choices they had to choose from. While there were many pieces of legislation for the students to choose from, they weren't able to come up with topic themselves—they had to choose from a list…a list that many students described as daunting and overwhelming.

Future Studies

This project covered two separate semesters at two distinct institutions through two dissimilar teaching modalities. However, even with that much data, the results were not nearly enough to qualify for reliable quantitative analyses. Future studies could be able to provide results that were statistically significant, not simply an indication of possibility. Also, even with the variety in the two institutions—Idaho State University versus The College of Western Idaho—there are still many more types of institutions that could provide a better range of results. How would these essays work in a more rural location than CWI or at a trade school? How would they work at a more populous location than ISU? How would they work at an online-only institution with students all over the country and even world? I would propose that because of the

community-and-student-focused design, this project would be viable and interesting if scaled up and broadened out.

Another way that this approach to Service Learning could be broadened out would be to design new essay types that fit the basic concepts that these ones do. For example, having students research and write about student grants, scholarships, and awards would fit many of the same features of the three essays described here: it would be something that the students could choose, that could potentially make a bit difference in their lives, that could help community partners (who want as many applicants as possible), and that requires research/thinking about audience. Any project that could meet these kinds of possibilities in connecting students with community members and writing about their findings could work just as well and fit into this modified Service-Learning category.

Takeaways

I came into this project with questions I wanted to answer. The results were nuanced, multi-faceted, and based in a specific context; however, I was able to gain insight or solid implications for my initial questions, as follows:

- Can Service-Learning be used without teachers sponsoring community partners?

Designing assignments that require students to contact local entities that are already interested in student involvement can empower students to mediate their own contacts with community partners. Whether this is technically defined as Service-Learning or whether it would be more accurate to call it community-engaged pedagogy or some variant name doesn't negate the successful results of this approach.

- Can SL be used in an online modality, and if so, what are its affordances?

Assuming this approach is counted as SL, it can clearly be used in online settings. In fact, students participating from a variety of locations can strengthen the perspectives students share in class, can help students who are more prone to introversion to interact with others, and improve student networking and social connections. However, it also runs the risk of alienating students who struggle with anxiety.

- Where does Service-Learning end and Community-Engaged pedagogy begin?

I would argue that there is more overlap than other researchers in the field might. While the name Service-Learning implies that students will engage in behavior that will be described as "service," I argue that engaging with communities that want students to engage with them counts as a form of service, even if it doesn't necessarily involve helping the economically or socially disadvantaged.

- In what ways does this pedagogical approach align with principles of transfer?

In certain respects, practically any pedagogical approach can be adapted to better align with transfer concepts. In particular, reflection exercises can help students learning in a variety of ways. This approach helps especially well, though, since the assignments—students writing about research they've personally done—is reflective in nature. Additionally, threshold concepts and student disposition can be successfully addressed in SL and online settings.

- How well do the three essay types test student engagement in community writing?

The Ethnography and Field Work essays appear to be most universally successful in helping students engage in local communities. The State Senator essay seemed to be more uneven in its success, with some students really connecting with it, yet other students really disliking it.

Conclusion

Learning is a personal, unique event that happens in individuals on specific occasions; teaching, however, is the art of generalizing and optimizing those personal events to be as effective as possible. This dissertation clarifies some of the opportunities and complications behind generalizing learning—in face-to-face and online settings through engaging with communities, with an eye towards helping students transfer it to other domains of knowledge and practice. The preceding pages assess the effectiveness of two second-semester composition classes: to the students who experienced them, the process of developing/tweaking those experiences, and finally accurately recording those experiences. They also provide insights into the difficulties, successes, and dilemmas faced in these classes and in teaching in general. I was able to fill a gap in current research about SL, Online Writing Instruction, and transfer studies by contrasting f2f and online modalities of a SL-based pedagogy, assessing the potential application of principles of transfer, and testing three specific essay types in two separate educational environments. My findings emphasize the importance of involving students as multifaceted, complicated individuals with their own aims, goals, and abilities that can coincide synergistically with any given assignment. This project shows how a university classroom can be more than an isolated room, interested only in the narrow requirements of its part of the university; rather, it can act as a strong bridge, reaching far into the communities that the student wants to be involved in.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Material

IRB #: IRB-FY2017-90
Title: Community Engagement in First Year Composition Creation Date: 11-2-2016
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Richard Samuelson
Review Board: Human Subjects Committee

Study History
Submission Type Initial Submission Type Modification

Key Study Contacts

Review Type Review Type

Exempt Unassigned

Exempt

samurich@isu.edu watkrobe@isu.edu

Richard Samuelson Robert Watkins Robert Watkins

Role Principal Investigator Role Primary Contact Role Investigator

Initial Submission

Use this form for new submissions of research projects to the Human Subjects Committee (HSC, also known as the Institutional Review Board or IRB). This form is used for studies eligible for a Certificate of Exemption or for expedited review, and for those requiring full-board review.

Office location: 1651 Alvin Ricken Dr., Pocatello, ID 83201 | Mailing: Stop 8046

To obtain IRB Review of a research project with human participants, submit this completed form with all of the indicated attachments. Allow sufficient time for review before starting the project.

Please consult the IRB website and contact irb@cayuse.edu or (208) 282-2714 with any questions before submitting an application.

Research as used here means a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. This includes research, development, testing, and evaluation. This does not typically include classroom exercises, demonstrations, or other course requirements that receive grades. Research does not include customer satisfaction surveys or similar data collections designed to improve the operations of a single institution.

Human Participants The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews all research projects at Idaho State University involving human participants. This means living individuals about whom and investigator obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual or obtains identifiable private information from a separate source such as medical or school records or other individuals such as relatives.

✔ New Submission

Revision/Resubmission

Select this only if you have previously submitted this study to the Human Subjects Committee and have been asked to make changes before it can be approved.
If you are revising a study that has already been approved, use the Modifications form.

Name of Study 1.

Do not exceed 150 characters including spaces

Community Engagement in First Year Composition

Principal Investigator

2.

Please identify the PI for this project.
Name: Richard Samuelson
Organization: English and Philosophy
Address: 921 S 8th Ave MS 8056, Pocatello, ID 83209 Phone: (208) 282-2478

3. Is the Principal Investigator a current student?

✔ Yes

Student Principal Investigators are required to include an endorsement from their faculty advisor. The signature below certifies that the faculty advisor has reviewed

4.

and approved this complete Application and its attachments and accepts responsibility to supervise the work described herein in accordance with applicable institutional policies.

Name: Robert Watkins
Organization: English and Philosophy
Address: 921 S 8th Ave MS 8056, Pocatello, ID 83209 Phone: (208) 282-5612

No unknown

Are there Co-Investigators on this project?

Yes ✔ No

Other Research Staff 5.

Identify any others who will be involved as research personnel for this study.

For any research staff not available on the drop-down list above, please provide names (and institutional affiliation, if other than ISU).

Please identify a primary administrative point of contact for this submission (note: for

some submissions, it may be appropriate for the Principal Investigator and Primary

Contact to be the same person) 6.

Name: Robert Watkins
Organization: English and Philosophy

Address: 921 S 8th Ave MS 8056, Pocatello, ID 83209 Phone: (208) 282-5612

Lay Language Summary

Briefly describe the purpose of the proposed research so that someone outside your field would readily understand it. Avoid abbreviations and technical language.
English is a unique subject because its goals can be reached in a variety of ways; alternatively, in Math or History the subject matter has to be the math concepts or the historical events. In English, where critical thinking, research methods, and communication skills are the goals, the subject matter could be nearly anything. In recent years, research has strongly indicated the

benefits of having students perform service for outside institutions and use it as material for their writing. While much of this literature emphasizes the importance of having the teacher serve as a mediator between the students and the service partners, in this study I propose that creating assignments that require the students to interact with community partners without the direct mediation of the instructor is enabling and empowering for the students. I conduct interviews with students, surveys of impressions, and observations of student behavior to better understand ways in which this approach is promising or potentially flawed.

8. Has this project requested or received external funding?

Yes, external funding has been confirmed

If your proposal has been submitted in Cayuse SP, please enter the proposal identification in the box below.

External funding has been requested, but it's uncertain at this point whether it will be received ✔
No

Check here if this study is funded by an industry sponsor (e.g, pharmaceutical company, marketing firm, manufacturer, etc.).

7.Do any of the researchers (principal investigator, co-principal investigators, or

associated researchers) have any financial, non-financial, or commercial interest in the

research? 9.

Research team members must submit an updated Conflict of Interest disclosure within 30 days of discovering or acquiring a new significant conflict of interest (financial or non-financial).

Yes ✔ No

Study site(s) 10.

Where will study procedures be carried out?

✔ Idaho State University (including the Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Meridian campuses) Internet research
Other

11. Are you applying for a Certificate of Exemption or for expedited review? Or does your study require review by the full board?

✔ I am applying for a Certificate of Exemption.

Select the category of exemption requested.

Certificate of Exemption is not available for any study involving more than minimal risk. Studies of FDA-regulated drugs, biologics, or devices are not eligible for Certificate of Exemption.

✔ Category 1: Normal educational practices & settings

Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Category 2: Anonymous educational tests, surveys, interviews, or observations

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior, unless:

information is obtained or recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation.

Studies involving sensitive information do not qualify for a Certificate of Exemption.

Category 3: Identifiable subjects in special circumstances

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under Category 2 (above) if:

the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office, or the federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiably information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

Category 4: Collection or study of existing data

Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological samples, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Category 5: Public benefit or service programs

Research and demonstration programs that are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine:

public benefit or service programs;
procedures for obtaining benefits under those programs; possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; and
possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

Category 6: Taste and food evaluation and acceptance studies

Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I am applying for expedited review. This study requires full board review.

Please identify the types of participants for this study 12.

Please check all that apply

Adults aged 90 or older

- ✔ Minors (less than 18 years)

  Are any of these minors wards of the state?

  Yes ✔ No

  Medical or other clinical patients/clients

  Patients receiving emergency medical care

  Terminally Ill Patients

  Mentally or Developmentally Disabled or Impared

  Non-English Speaking or Limited English Proficiency

  Prisoners, Parolees, or Incarcerated Persons (including people in court-mandated treatment programs)

  Pregnant Women

- ✔ Students (including university students) to be recruited by teachers or school administrators/staff

  Residents of nursing homes or other "total institutions"
  Employees of the investigator (or sub-investigator) or of the study's research site or sponsor Military personnel to be recruited by military personnel
  Others vulnerable to coercion or undue influence
  None of the above

13. Are any of the participants in this study people over whom the investigator has some sort of authority? (E.g., the investigator's students, patients, clients, employees, supervisees, etc.)

✔ Yes

14. Explain how participants will be identified and recruited for this study.

If posters, billboards, radio or TV ads, internet ads, or other recruiting materials will be used, include an explanation of where these will be placed. Also, contact ISU Marketing & Communications for guidance about how to format your material. 208-282-4407

Enrollment and attendance in English 1102: section 06 is the identification method, since all student in this class are doing the community engagement assignments, regardless of inclusion or exclusion in this study. The official recruitment script is the consent form, which I will read to them before handing out the form to those who are 18 years or older.

Attach any recruiting posters, email messages, letters, advertisements, etc. to be used. Include any recordings or videos to be used for radio, television, or internet.
(This is NOT the place for attaching consent forms; that comes later.)

Will you use any posters, radio or TV advertisements, billboards, etc. for recruiting patients outside of the ISU campuses?

No

Explain the relationship between participants and the investigator.

Students in the investigator's English 1102 course.

In the consent document and process, make very clear that participation in this study is completely separate from the investigator's evaluations, services, etc. E.g., A teacher doing research on his/her students should make clear that participation in the study is completely separate from course requirements and that declining to participate will have no negative effect on a student's grade or standing in the program.

14(a)

15.

Yes ✔ No

Will subjects be paid or given anything of value in return for their participation?

16.

Will participants in this study have to pay for anything (e.g., parking, medical services).

Yes ✔ No

✔ Participants will

Participants will

Participants will

Participants will

Participants will

Participants will SONA system).

NOT receive anything of value in return for their participation. be paid (cash, check, or gift card)
receive a non-monetary item or service
be entered into a drawing for something of value.

only be reimbursed for the costs of participation.
receive research participation credits as part of an ISU course (e.g., using the

Study population

A.
Describe what sorts of subjects will be involved in the proposed study. Explain your

inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Students who registered in English 1102:06 and who are 18 years or older will be approached for inclusion in the study.

Number of subjects

B.

How many people do you intend to recruit for your study? If you do not have a specific number in mind, provide a reasonable estimate or range. If research subjects will be divided into 2 or more groups, specify numbers (or estimates) for each group.
18 students.

C. Will this study use existing data, documents, records, and/or biological specimens?

✔ Yes

Describe the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. to be used.

C.1
Explain how the data (or records, specimens, etc.) were collected.

Written observations of classroom discussions (recorded using pseudonyms), reflective journal entries created by the teacher, and cover letters collected from students as part of their course work.

Who is the owner or steward of the data, documents, records, specimens, C.2 etc. to be used?

The instructor.

C.3

Were the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. originally collected solely for research purposes?

Yes ✔ No

Are these data, documents, records, specimens, etc. publicly available?

C.4

In this context, "publicly available" means that the general public can obtain the data, documents, etc. Sources should NOT be considered publicly available if access is restricted to special groups (e.g., clinicians, researchers).

Yes ✔ No

How are the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. identified when they are made available to your research team?

✔ Direct identifier (Subject's name, address, social security number, medical record number, email address, telephone number, etc.)

Not sure what counts as an identifier?

C.5

When the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. are received:

Any and all identifiers will be destroyed immediately, leaving a completely de-identified set of data, documents, etc.

✔ At least one identifier will be kept
Not sure what counts as an identifier?

Indirect identifier (An assigned code which could be used by the investigator or the source providing the data, document, etc. to identify a specific subject)

No identifier

C.5.i

No

C.6

Will any additional data, documents, records, specimens, etc. be added to the set once you begin your research?

✔ Yes No

■■■

D.

Study description

Describe what participants in your study will do. If participants will be divided into 2 or more groups, be sure to make clear the procedures for each group.
If you will be using questionnaires, tests, or other data collection instruments, describe them here

and attach them below. Explain how long it will take to complete each one. Also explain the setting in which they will be administered (e.g., classroom, mailed questionnaire, internet).

If you will be conducting interviews, focus groups, etc., include the specific questions to be asked. If an open-ended approach is used, indicate the kinds of issues likely to be discussed.

Students will complete the community-engagement focused essays for the English 1102 course. This will involve researching and interviewing members of a local organization and the student's major, in addition to the usual conducting online research and writing performed in an English 1102 course. 5-6 students will hopefully volunteer for an interview near the end of the semester where the following questions will be asked:--What benefits or drawbacks do you think came from the essays being focused on specific communities that you needed to interact with (your ethnography group, people within your field, or your state/senator)? --Based off your experiences this semester, how likely are you to change your future behavior (like changing your major, getting involved in local groups/issues, etc.)?Afterwards, the instructor will ask follow-up questions, attempting to get the interviewees to relate specific experiences, positive or negative, that illustrate these two questions. Other issues that might come up will be comparisons to other classes the students have taken and other assignments or essays they've written.I will change all participants names and leave out identifiable information (about classes, sources, etc.) when writing about them afterwards.

E.

Attach any questionnaires or other data collection instruments to be used in this study. (Do NOT attach consent forms here.)

Samuelson ENGL1102 Questionnaire.docx

Will participants be identifiable (names, photo or video images, recordings of voices, addresses, email addresses, etc.)?

Yes ✔ No

Will you make audio or video recordings of any participants?

F.

G.

✔ Yes

Explain what photos/videos/recordings will be made, and any steps you plan to take to conceal participants' identities.

I will make audio recordings of the interviews. As mentioned previously, I will change student names when working with the information afterwards and not include their names on the audio recording itself.

No

Explain how you will obtain the INFORMED CONSENT of participants.

H.
This might involve a consent form, information sheet, survey cover letter, script for verbal consent, letter (or email) to participants, etc.
A consent form.

Attach any consent form, information sheet, survey cover letter, verbal consent script, etc. that you plan to use.

Samuelson ENGL1102Consent Form.docxSample documents: SampleParentalConsentForm.doc , SampleMinorAssentForm.doc , SampleAdultConsentForm.doc

Are you requesting a waiver of documentation of informed consent? (I.e., Participants will provide verbal consent but will not sign a consent form)

Yes ✔ No

Are you requesting a waiver of informed consent? (I.e., the study will be conducted without obtaining even the verbal consent of participants)

Yes ✔ No

Risks

I.
What risks will participants be exposed to? What protections are in place to minimize those risks?
Anxiety about privacy--I will inform the participants about the security beforehand.

H.1

H.2

Benefits

How will participants benefit directly from participation in this study?

J.

Don't assume that the study intervention will work if the purpose of the study is to test its efficacy.
Don't include payments made to subjects; describe only benefits arising from the study procedures themselves.

If there are no direct benefits to participants, then say so.

What benefits will there be to others (society, your field of study, etc.)? (Be realistic)

The students will be more aware of the learning they have done after talking and thinking about it. Upon completion of my study, the composition community will benefit from a more complete view of approaches to service learning teaching that don't include teacher mediation with service partners.

Data Storage & Final Disposition

Be sure to address all of the following:

K.

How will the data you collect be stored?
What steps will be taken to protect it?
Who will have access to it?
What will be done with it at the end of the storage period?

I will store the information I collect digitally, except the consent forms, which will be kept in a private, locked office space for five years. I will transcribe the audio recorded interviews (using only pseudonyms) and erase the original sound files once complete. After the five years, I will destroy all digital files and physical documents. No one except the instructor will have access to either the digital files or the physical documents.

By signing below, the Principal Investigator and co-Principal Investigators (if any) assure the IRB that all procedures performed during this project will be conducted by individuals legally and responsibly entitled to do so, and that any significant systematic deviation from the submitted protocol (for example, a change in principal investigator, sponsorship[. research

purposes, participant recruitment procedures, research methodology , risks and benefits, or consent procedures) will be submitted to the IRB for approval prior to its implementation

By signing below, the Principal Investigator and co-Principal Investigators (if any) certify the following:

1. The information in this application is accurate and complete
2. I/we will comply with all federal, state, and institutional policies and procedures to

    protect human subjects in research

3. I/we understand the ethical responsibilities of research investigators and have received

    the required training in human research participant protection as specified at the IRB

    Website

4. I/we will assure that the consent process and research procedures as described herein are followed with every participant in the research
5. I/we will promptly report any deviations or adverse events to the IRB.
6. If a faculty advisor is required (see below), then I/we agree to meet regularly with the

    faculty advisor listed below to discuss the progress of the study and to address research issues as they arise.

✔ I, and all others identified herein as members of the research team, have read and understand the above statement.

Faculty Advisor

Applicable only when the Principal Investigator is not an assistant professor, associate professor, or professor (or their clinical counterparts) at Idaho State University.

As faculty advisor for this study, I certify that I have read this application and that the information contained in it is complete and accurate. I will ensure that the principal investigator(s) listed above is/are competent to perform the procedures described. I agree to meet regularly with the principal investigator(s) to discuss the progress of the research and to address research issues as they arise. I will ensure that the research is carried out as described (including storage and destruction of data as described in the protocol), and that all applicable laws and policies will be followed.

✔ I, as faculty advisor, have read and understand the above statement.

Modification Submission

1. Please describe each proposed change to the protocol and/or consent documents.

   Please attach any new or revised consent documents, recruiting materials, etc. Make clear which parts are added, removed, or changed. (Note: please do not highlight the changes using track changes or bold text).

2. Will there be any changes in the research personnel working on this study?

   No Yes

Search for additional researchers using this box:

Specify other people to be ADDED to the research team if they do not show up in the drop-down box above

Explain the roles to be played by each of the people to be ADDED to the study. If anyone is DROPPED from the research team, explain here.

3. Does this Modification/Amendment involve a change in research-related activities that will increase risks and/or decrease benefits to research participants?

4. Yes No Do you plan to re-consent any participants already enrolled in the study, or change the consent process (or document) for any subsequent participants?

Yes No

Would the proposed modification create a conflict of interest for any investigator, or alter an existing conflict for any investigator?

Yes No

5.

Use this form for new submissions of research projects to the Human Subjects Committee (HSC, also known as the Institutional Review Board or IRB). This form is used for studies eligible for a Certificate of Exemption or for expedited review, and for those requiring full-board review.

Office location: 1651 Alvin Ricken Dr., Pocatello, ID 83201 | Mailing: Stop 8046

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✔ New Submission

Revision/Resubmission

Select this only if you have previously submitted this study to the Human Subjects Committee and have been asked to make changes before it can be approved.
If you are revising a study that has already been approved, use the Modifications form.

Name of Study 1.

Do not exceed 150 characters including spaces

Community Engagement in First Year Composition

Principal Investigator

2.

Please identify the PI for this project.
Name: Richard Samuelson
Organization: English and Philosophy
Address: 921 S 8th Ave MS 8056, Pocatello, ID 83209 Phone: (208) 282-2478

3. Is the Principal Investigator a current student?

✔ Yes

Student Principal Investigators are required to include an endorsement from their faculty advisor. The signature below certifies that the faculty advisor has reviewed and approved this complete Application and its attachments and accepts responsibility to supervise the work described herein in accordance with applicable institutional policies.

4.

Name: Robert Watkins
Organization: English and Philosophy
Address: 921 S 8th Ave MS 8056, Pocatello, ID 83209 Phone: (208) 282-5612

No unknown

Are there Co-Investigators on this project?

Yes ✔ No

Other Research Staff 5.

Identify any others who will be involved as research personnel for this study.

For any research staff not available on the drop-down list above, please provide names (and institutional affiliation, if other than ISU).

Please identify a primary administrative point of contact for this submission (note: for

some submissions, it may be appropriate for the Principal Investigator and Primary

Contact to be the same person) 6.

Name: Robert Watkins
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8. Has this project requested or received external funding?

Yes, external funding has been confirmed

If your proposal has been submitted in Cayuse SP, please enter the proposal identification in the box below.

External funding has been requested, but it's uncertain at this point whether it will be received ✔
No

Check here if this study is funded by an industry sponsor (e.g, pharmaceutical company, marketing firm, manufacturer, etc.).

7.

Do any of the researchers (principal investigator, co-principal investigators, or associated researchers) have any financial, non-financial, or commercial interest in the research?

Research team members must submit an updated Conflict of Interest disclosure within 30 days of discovering or acquiring a new significant conflict of interest (financial or non-financial).

Yes ✔ No

Study site(s) 10.

Where will study procedures be carried out?

✔ Idaho State University (including the Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Meridian campuses) Internet research
Other

9.

11.

Are you applying for a Certificate of Exemption or for expedited review? Or does your study require review by the full board?

✔ I am applying for a Certificate of Exemption.

Select the category of exemption requested.

Certificate of Exemption is not available for any study involving more than minimal risk. Studies of FDA-regulated drugs, biologics, or devices are not eligible for Certificate of Exemption.

✔ Category 1: Normal educational practices & settings

Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Category 2: Anonymous educational tests, surveys, interviews, or observations

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior, unless:

information is obtained or recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation.

Studies involving sensitive information do not qualify for a Certificate of Exemption. Category 3: Identifiable subjects in special circumstances

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under Category 2 (above) if:

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possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

Category 6: Taste and food evaluation and acceptance studies

Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I am applying for expedited review. This study requires full board review.

Please identify the types of participants for this study 12.

Please check all that apply

Adults aged 90 or older

- ✔ Minors (less than 18 years)

  Are any of these minors wards of the state?

  Yes ✔ No

  Medical or other clinical patients/clients

  Patients receiving emergency medical care

  Terminally Ill Patients

  Mentally or Developmentally Disabled or Impared

Non-English Speaking or Limited English Proficiency

Prisoners, Parolees, or Incarcerated Persons (including people in court-mandated treatment programs)

Pregnant Women

- ✔ Students (including university students) to be recruited by teachers or school administrators/staff

Residents of nursing homes or other "total institutions"
Employees of the investigator (or sub-investigator) or of the study's research site or sponsor Military personnel to be recruited by military personnel
Others vulnerable to coercion or undue influence
None of the above

13.

Are any of the participants in this study people over whom the investigator has some sort of authority? (E.g., the investigator's students, patients, clients, employees, supervisees, etc.)

✔ Yes

14.

Explain how participants will be identified and recruited for this study.

If posters, billboards, radio or TV ads, internet ads, or other recruiting materials will be used, include an explanation of where these will be placed. Also, contact ISU Marketing & Communications for guidance about how to format your material. 208-282-4407

Enrollment and attendance in English 1102: section 06 is the identification method, since all student in this class are doing the community engagement assignments, regardless of inclusion or exclusion in this study. The official recruitment script is the consent form, which I will read to them before handing out the form to those who are 18 years or older.

Attach any recruiting posters, email messages, letters, advertisements, etc. to be used. Include any recordings or videos to be used for radio, television, or internet.
(This is NOT the place for attaching consent forms; that comes later.)

Will you use any posters, radio or TV advertisements, billboards, etc. for recruiting patients outside of the ISU campuses?

No

Explain the relationship between participants and the investigator.

Students in the investigator's English 1102 course.

In the consent document and process, make very clear that participation in this study is completely separate from the investigator's evaluations, services, etc. E.g., A teacher doing research on his/her students should make clear that participation in the study is completely separate from course requirements and that declining to participate will have no negative effect on a student's grade or standing in the program.

14(a)

15.

Yes ✔ No

Will subjects be paid or given anything of value in return for their participation?

16.

Will participants in this study have to pay for anything (e.g., parking, medical services).

Yes ✔ No

✔ Participants will

Participants will

Participants will

Participants will

Participants will

Participants will SONA system).

NOT receive anything of value in return for their participation. be paid (cash, check, or gift card)
receive a non-monetary item or service
be entered into a drawing for something of value.

only be reimbursed for the costs of participation.
receive research participation credits as part of an ISU course (e.g., using the

Study population

A.
Describe what sorts of subjects will be involved in the proposed study. Explain your

inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Students who registered in English 1102:06 and who are 18 years or older will be approached for inclusion in the study.

Number of subjects

B.

How many people do you intend to recruit for your study? If you do not have a specific number in mind, provide a reasonable estimate or range. If research subjects will be divided into 2 or more groups, specify numbers (or estimates) for each group.
18 students.

C. Will this study use existing data, documents, records, and/or biological specimens?

✔ Yes

Describe the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. to be used.

C.1
Explain how the data (or records, specimens, etc.) were collected.

Written observations of classroom discussions (recorded using pseudonyms), reflective journal entries created by the teacher, and cover letters collected from students as part of their course work.

Who is the owner or steward of the data, documents, records, specimens, C.2 etc. to be used?

The instructor.

C.3

Were the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. originally collected solely for research purposes?

Yes ✔ No

Are these data, documents, records, specimens, etc. publicly available?

C.4

In this context, "publicly available" means that the general public can obtain the data, documents, etc. Sources should NOT be considered publicly available if access is restricted to special groups (e.g., clinicians, researchers).

Yes ✔ No

How are the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. identified when they are made available to your research team?

✔ Direct identifier (Subject's name, address, social security number, medical record number, email address, telephone number, etc.)

Not sure what counts as an identifier?

C.5

When the data, documents, records, specimens, etc. are received:

Any and all identifiers will be destroyed immediately, leaving a completely de-identified set of data, documents, etc.

✔ At least one identifier will be kept
Not sure what counts as an identifier?

Indirect identifier (An assigned code which could be used by the investigator or the source providing the data, document, etc. to identify a specific subject)

No identifier

C.5.i

No

C.6

Will any additional data, documents, records, specimens, etc. be added to the set once you begin your research?

✔ Yes No

∎∎∎

D.

Study description

Describe what participants in your study will do. If participants will be divided into 2 or more groups, be sure to make clear the procedures for each group.
If you will be using questionnaires, tests, or other data collection instruments, describe them here and attach them below. Explain how long it will take to complete each one. Also explain the setting in which they will be administered (e.g., classroom, mailed questionnaire, internet).

If you will be conducting interviews, focus groups, etc., include the specific questions to be asked. If an open-ended approach is used, indicate the kinds of issues likely to be discussed.

Students will complete the community-engagement focused essays for the English 1102 course. This will involve researching and interviewing members of a local organization and the student's major, in addition to the usual conducting online research and writing performed in an English 1102 course. 5-6 students will hopefully volunteer for an interview near the end of the semester where the following questions will be asked:--What benefits or drawbacks do you think came from the essays being focused on specific communities that you needed to interact with (your ethnography group, people within your field, or your state/senator)? --Based off your experiences this semester, how likely are you to change your future behavior (like changing your major, getting involved in local groups/issues, etc.)?Afterwards, the instructor will ask follow-up questions, attempting to get the interviewees to relate specific experiences, positive or negative, that illustrate these two questions. Other issues that might come up will be comparisons to other classes the students have taken and other assignments or essays they've written.I will change all participants names and leave out identifiable information (about classes, sources, etc.) when writing about them afterwards.

E.

Attach any questionnaires or other data collection instruments to be used in this study. (Do NOT attach consent forms here.)

Samuelson ENGL1102 Questionnaire.docx

Will participants be identifiable (names, photo or video images, recordings of voices, addresses, email addresses, etc.)?

Yes ✔ No

Will you make audio or video recordings of any participants?

F.

G.

✔ Yes

Explain what photos/videos/recordings will be made, and any steps you plan to take to conceal participants' identities.

I will make audio recordings of the interviews. As mentioned previously, I will change student names when working with the information afterwards and not include their names on the audio recording itself.

No

Explain how you will obtain the INFORMED CONSENT of participants.

H.
This might involve a consent form, information sheet, survey cover letter, script for verbal consent, letter (or email) to participants, etc.
A consent form.

Attach any consent form, information sheet, survey cover letter, verbal consent script, etc. that you plan to use.

Samuelson ENGL1102Consent Form.docxSample documents: SampleParentalConsentForm.doc , SampleMinorAssentForm.doc , SampleAdultConsentForm.doc

Are you requesting a waiver of documentation of informed consent? (I.e., Participants will provide verbal consent but will not sign a consent form)

Yes ✔ No

Are you requesting a waiver of informed consent? (I.e., the study will be conducted without obtaining even the verbal consent of participants)

Yes ✔ No

Risks

I.
What risks will participants be exposed to? What protections are in place to minimize those risks?
Anxiety about privacy--I will inform the participants about the security beforehand.

H.1

H.2

Benefits

How will participants benefit directly from participation in this study?

J.

•

Don't assume that the study intervention will work if the purpose of the study is to test its efficacy.
Don't include payments made to subjects; describe only benefits arising from the study procedures themselves.

If there are no direct benefits to participants, then say so.

What benefits will there be to others (society, your field of study, etc.)? (Be realistic)

The students will be more aware of the learning they have done after talking and thinking about it. Upon completion of my study, the composition community will benefit from a more complete view of approaches to service learning teaching that don't include teacher mediation with service partners.

Data Storage & Final Disposition

Be sure to address all of the following:

K.

How will the data you collect be stored?
What steps will be taken to protect it?

Who will have access to it?
What will be done with it at the end of the storage period?

I will store the information I collect digitally, except the consent forms, which will be kept in a private, locked office space for five years. I will transcribe the audio recorded interviews (using only pseudonyms) and erase the original sound files once complete. After the five years, I will destroy all digital files and physical documents. No one except the instructor will have access to either the digital files or the physical documents.

By signing below, the Principal Investigator and co-Principal Investigators (if any) assure the IRB that all procedures performed during this project will be conducted by individuals legally and responsibly entitled to do so, and that any significant systematic deviation from the submitted protocol (for example, a change in principal investigator, sponsorship[. research purposes, participant recruitment procedures, research methodology , risks and benefits, or consent procedures) will be submitted to the IRB for approval prior to its implementation

By signing below, the Principal Investigator and co-Principal Investigators (if any) certify the following:

1. The information in this application is accurate and complete
2. I/we will comply with all federal, state, and institutional policies and procedures to

    protect human subjects in research

3. I/we understand the ethical responsibilities of research investigators and have received

    the required training in human research participant protection as specified at the IRB

    Website

4. I/we will assure that the consent process and research procedures as described herein are followed with every participant in the research
5. I/we will promptly report any deviations or adverse events to the IRB.
6. If a faculty advisor is required (see below), then I/we agree to meet regularly with the

    faculty advisor listed below to discuss the progress of the study and to address research issues as they arise.

✔ I, and all others identified herein as members of the research team, have read and understand the above statement.

Faculty Advisor

Applicable only when the Principal Investigator is not an assistant professor, associate professor, or professor (or their clinical counterparts) at Idaho State University.

As faculty advisor for this study, I certify that I have read this application and that the information contained in it is complete and accurate. I will ensure that the principal investigator(s) listed above is/are competent to perform the procedures described. I agree to meet regularly with the principal investigator(s) to discuss the progress of the research and to address research issues as they arise. I will ensure that the research is carried out as described (including storage and destruction of data as described in the protocol), and that all applicable laws and policies will be followed.

✔ I, as faculty advisor, have read and understand the above statement.

CWI IRB Amendment:

Submission Type: Modification Date: 1-27-2017
IRB #: IRB-FY2017-90
Title: Community Engagement in First Year Composition
Creation Date: 1-11-2017
Status: Review Complete
Principal Investigator: Richard Samuelson
Request for modification/amendment
1.Please describe each proposed change to the protocol and/or consent documents.

Rather than just applying to English 1102:06 (Fall 2016) at Idaho State University, I propose including English 102:013W (Spring 2017) through the College of Western Idaho in the study. Aside from the latter being an online course necessitating an online version of the questionnaire and consent documents, the essays--which were the main part of the study--will be the same.

The following specific changes are requested:

The Questionnaire and Consent Form have been edited to reflect the specific course name and that CWI is the institution.

The Questionnaire question number five was added, asking "Did the online modality of the course affect your opinion of the essays?" to assess the student's initial reaction in relation to the online nature of the course.

In addition to other forms of information collection, a transcript will be taken from four video conference recordings the instructor will be making and posting to the class Blackboard site. The participants' names will be altered, any participants who haven't signed the consent form will not be included in the transcript, and the consent form has been updated to include the video conference transcript in the list of sources. The video will be erased immediately after the transcription is complete, and the record of the transcription will be under the same storage, protection, and anonymity standards as the other sources of information.
Please attach any new or revised consent documents, recruiting materials, etc. Make clear which parts are added, removed, or changed. (Note: please do not highlight the changes using track changes or bold text).

2. Will there be any changes in the research personnel working on this study?
✔ No
Yes
Search for additional researchers using this box:
Specify other people to be ADDED to the research team if they do not show up in the drop-down box above
Explain the roles to be played by each of the people to be ADDED to the study. If anyone is DROPPED from the research team, explain here.
3. Does this Modification/Amendment involve a change in research-related activities that will increase risks and/or decrease benefits to research participants?

Yes

✔ No

4. Do you plan to re-consent any participants already enrolled in the study, or change the consent process (or document) for any subsequent participants?

Yes

✔ No

5.Would the proposed modification create a conflict of interest for any investigator, or alter an existing conflict for any investigator?

Yes

✔ No

Appendix B: Questionnaire

English 102:013W Questionnaire

Expectations

1. When you were introduced to the essays in the first week of class or reading the syllabus, how anxious were you about interacting with community groups and organizations? (circle the most representative one)

Very anxious Slightly anxious No strong feelings Slightly positive Very positive

2. How much did you know about local Pocatello/ISU organizations?

Little to none A little bit A fair amount Quite a bit A lot

3. How much did you know about your major and those involved with it?

Little to none A little bit A fair amount Quite a bit A lot

4. How much did you know about and your state political system?

Little to none A little bit A fair amount Quite a bit A lot

5. Did the online modality of the course affect your opinion of the essays?

Little to none A little bit A fair amount Quite a bit A lot

Negatively or positively? Explain.

Course Work

6. Which of the essays did you enjoy the most? (Circle one)

The Ethnography Essay The Field Work Essay The Letter to the Senator Essay

Why?

7. Which essay did you think was the most beneficial? (Circle one)

The Ethnography Essay The Field Work Essay The Letter to the Senator Essay

Why?

Results

8. What benefits or drawbacks do you think came from the essays being focused on specific communities that you needed to interact with (your ethnography group, people within your field, or your state/senator)?

Benefits:

Drawbacks:

9. Based off your experiences this semester, how likely are you to change your future behavior (like changing your major, getting involved in local groups/issues, etc.)?

Not Likely Slightly Unlikely Neutral/Unknown Slightly Likely Very Likely

What specifically?

10. What other comments or impressions could you share about your experience this semester?

Appendix C: Questionnaire Full Results
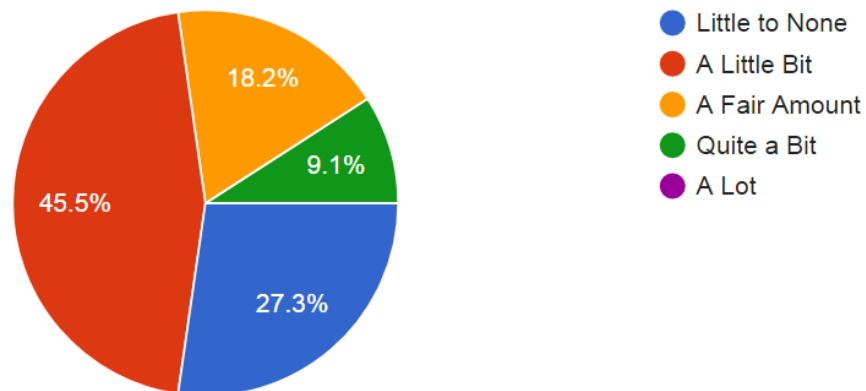
CWI Online Results:

1. When you were introduced to the essays in the first week of class or reading the syllabus, how anxious were you about interacting with community groups and organizations? (choose the most representative one)
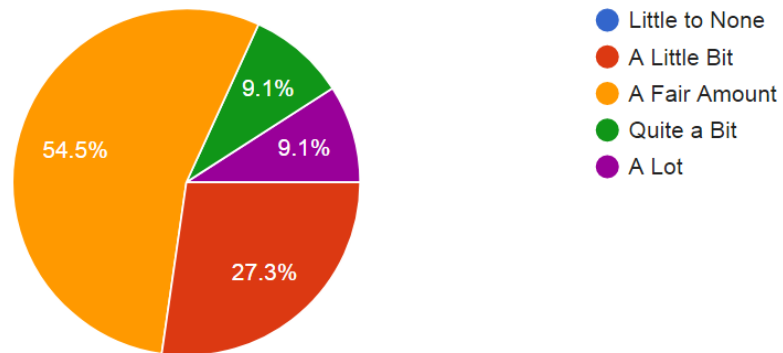
11 responses

- Very Anxious
- Slightly Anxious
- No Strong Feelings
- Slightly Positive
- Very Positive
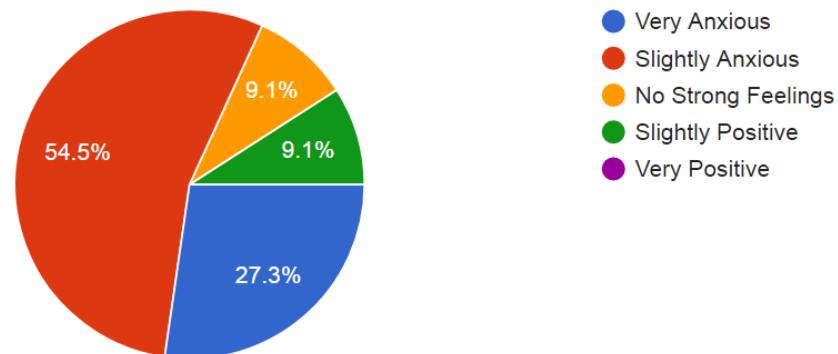
2. How much did you know about local (e.g. Nampa/CWI) organizations?

11 responses

- Little to None
- A Little Bit
- A Fair Amount
- Quite a Bit
- A Lot

3. How much did you know about your major and those involved with it?

11 responses

Legend:
- Little to None
- A Little Bit
- A Fair Amount
- Quite a Bit
- A Lot

54.5%
9.1%
9.1%
27.3%

4. How much did you know about your state political system?

11 responses
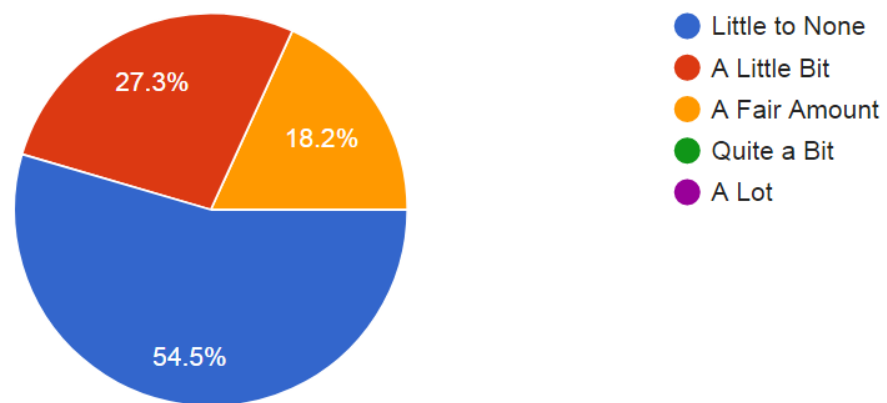
Legend:
- Little to None
- A Little Bit
- A Fair Amount
- Quite a Bit
- A Lot

27.3%
18.2%
54.5%

5. Did the online modality of the course affect your opinion of the essays?

11 responses

Legend:
- Little to None
- A Little Bit
- A Fair Amount
- Quite a Bit
- A Lot

Pie chart values: 9.1% (A Little Bit), 18.2% (A Fair Amount), 9.1% (Quite a Bit), 63.6% (Little to None)
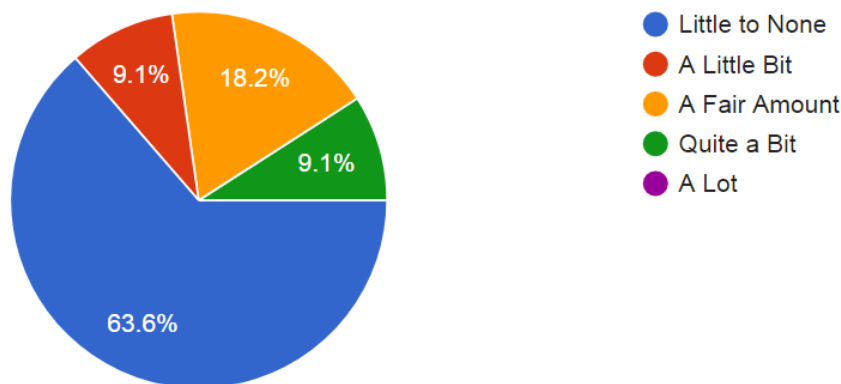
Negatively or Positively? Explain.

10 responses

I think you were easy to get a hold of and assignments were post clearly with ample instruction.

Maybe my understanding of the definition modality isn't exactly what this question is asking, but I would have felt the same about these essays whether I took this course online or in person, so my feelings about the "modality" of the course being online is neutral.

Online allows people to say want they want to say.

Positively. The online modality of this course affected my opinion of the essays positively, because if there were updates to the coursework, it was made immediately available in a timely manner and allowed for descriptively written instructions that were easy to follow.

Positively, it helped me to understand I need to take an active role in my community.

positively,really let me feel like I was free to write about anything that went along with the goal of the essay and it was one of my first full online courses therefore I found it very fun and got new knowledge about online courses/essays.

The online modality of this course didn't affect my opinion of essays at all. I do understand how to write them a bit better now. But I still am not a big fan of essays.
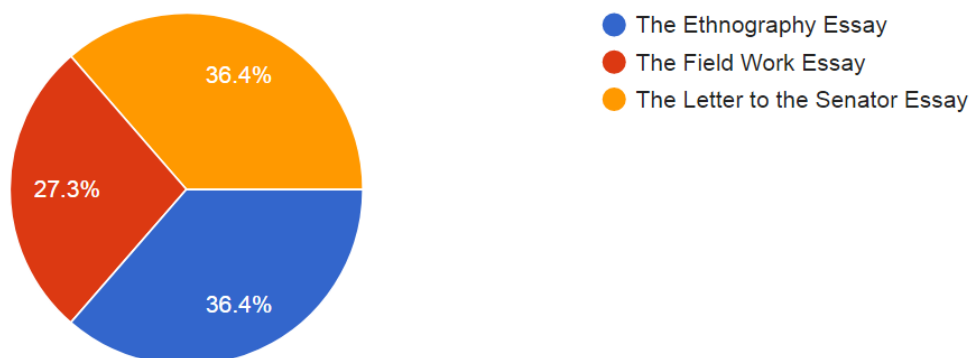
positively.

Pretty Nuetral

positively. The online I think made it a little less daunting than an in-class delivery.

6. Which of the essays did you enjoy the most?

11 responses

- The Ethnography Essay
- The Field Work Essay
- The Letter to the Senator Essay

36.4%

27.3%

36.4%

Why?

10 responses

It was fun to research my intended career.

I enjoyed the research for this essay and expanding my knowledge on a political issue I care quite a bit about.

It was exciting to know people who are working in the field of on your chosen career.

I enjoyed writing the ethnography essay the most. However, the "field work essay" and the "Letter to the Senator essay" presented different challenges. That being, confiding in the systems that we have available to us as students and active involvement in community concerns.

It helped me to better understand the major and line of work I have chosen. It made me realize that I need to change majors.

It involves a topic I am more interested in and enjoy.

I liked this one because I was able to give my view point on it as a person, not just the author of the essay.

Felt like I wasn;t as nervous for this one.

I enjoyed looking into things that are happening right now in our state that I can be a part of or learn more about. Normally I don't do much in political areas.

It was the most interesting to me. I liked the field work essay as well but I it also was scheduled at a busy, midterm time, so was more stressful than enjoyable.

7. Which essay did you think was the most beneficial?

11 responses

- The Ethnography Essay
- The Field Work Essay
- The Letter to the Senator Essay

63.6%

18.2%

18.2%
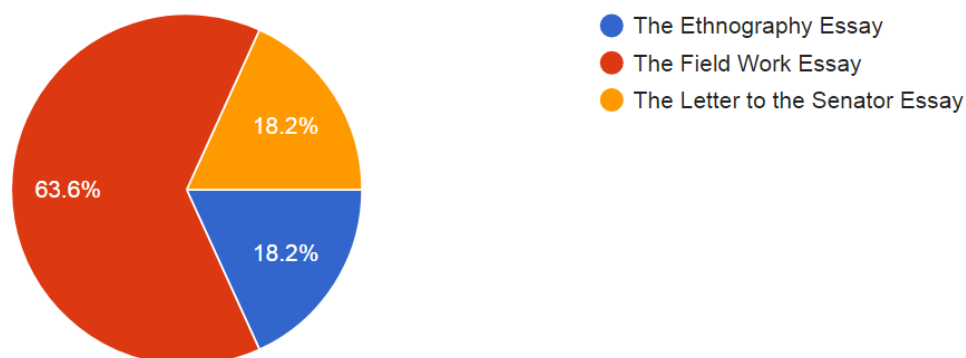
Why?

11 responses

It made me go into a world I've never been. Mostly likely I would now write a letter to my senator if I felt strongly about a bill.

The group I chose to write about for the Ethnography essay really helped me open my mind to something I had little knowledge of, and I feel like researching the content within this essay benefitted me emotionally and spiritually, not just academically.

It's good to know your community and what is there to offer.

I am between the "Field work" essay and the "Letter to the Senator essay" being those that I felt were most beneficial would certainly be the "Field work essay" with this particular assignment having much focus on our particular field of chosen study. Learning more about the kinds of objectives, ethics, and expectations necessary to fulfill course requirements.

Through this essay process I discovered I wasn't going to be happy with my career if I didn't change majors.

Helped me dive in into information I was once anxious to research and also helped me decide whether I really wanted to study for the career I chose.

I forced me to look into some issues of my local government.

This essay gave me some great insight into my major.

It helped give me a wide perspective with the job I am chasing after.

It made me dig deeper into my major and talking with people in the profession I want to pursue was very enjoyable

It forced you to research what your career/degree is entailing. I got a good look at what kind of work it is going to be to go through nursing school.

8. What benefits or drawbacks do you think came from the essays being focused on specific communities that you needed to interact with (your ethnography group, people within your field, or your state/senator)? Benefits:

11 responses

Makes you feel connected to where you live.

Learning about things that I had little to no knowledge of.

No drawbacks. I have learned a lot from each of the essays.

I think all three essays offered should be a requirement for English's classes, at some point. The assignments were directive; establishing a stronger concept based on ones own opinion, factual findings through research, and the opportunity to delve into others experiences within a subject.

Benefits are if you want to have a voice you need to get involved.

A benefit was that it made me come a little closer to my community and even though I just choice one of many communities, field etc. the research made me explore many communities available here in Boise, different careers available that I could be interested in and many bills of which I did not know of before.

Understanding your community is important for many reason. Local spending, educated voters, and community involvement to name a few.

I think the benefits were that I was able to obtain a lot of new and helpful information from researching for these essays. I haven't really found a drawback thus far other than writing the essays :D

I have learned a ton of information especially state/senator one.

I think it gets you out into the community in ways that my class mates and I probably wouldn't have other wise

I think that the benefits is that these essays made you more aware of what is going on around you in your community.
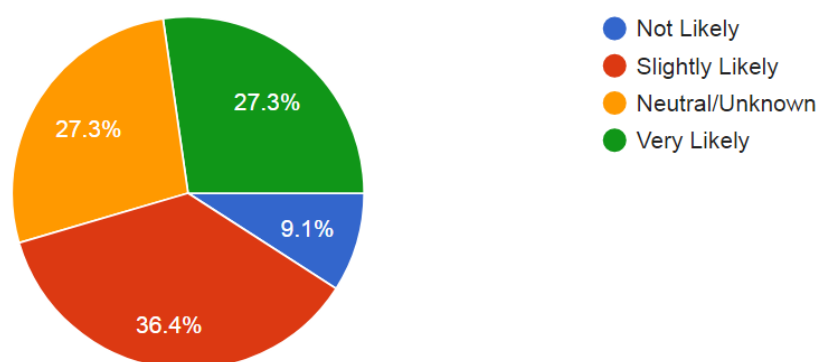
Drawbacks:

10 responses

None.

I found none.

none from me

stepping out of my comfort zone

Interacting with these groups in person for the essays was a little hard especially with those students with many classes and a job but it also probably greatly benefited those who did have the time.

Often times not seeing beyond your surroundings can leave your views and opinions bias.

No drawbacks.

Most of the time I kept feeling anxious and rushed between these essays. Had a tough time and found myself overwhelmed.

There weren't really any for me other than the fact you are dependent on others for the meat of your essay

The drawbacks would be we had to do a lot of interviews that are hard to schedule around everything else going on for many students such as work, family, and other classes.

9. Based off your experiences this semester, how likely are you to change your future behavior (like changing your major, getting involved in local groups/issues, etc.)?

11 responses

- Not Likely
- Slightly Likely
- Neutral/Unknown
- Very Likely

27.3% (Very Likely)
27.3% (Neutral/Unknown)
9.1% (Not Likely)
36.4% (Slightly Likely)

What specifically?

9 responses

I will for sure get involved in the non-profit I researched. Already started, actually.

I will probably be searching for a group I can volunteer for in the future because of my experience with the Ethnography work.

Learn more about what is going on where I live and be part of it.

More involvement in government associations, in regards to, voting and things like maintaining a basic fund of knowledge about current events.

changing my major.

I will most likely change my major after I saw how much I have to invest both time and money wise, also might become part of an Art Club here in Boise.

not sure.

I would like to get more involved in local issues!

Be more involved in a club or organization in my community.

10. What other comments or impressions could you share about your experience this semester?

10 responses

I have learned so much about writing and feel my writing has improved years, in just 16 weeks.

I thought the class was ran very adequately, I was given enough freedom as a writer to enjoy the essays we worked on and never felt overwhelmingly outside of my comfort zone. Good work.

It was intense, but very rewarding.

The work was difficult, yes. The work was also worth what we put into it. Challenge accepted sort of a thing. There was much more than an English102 course going on, my classmates and I were putting the work that was being done into a real life perspective even though we are an online group. The assignments given for this Spring 2017 online course would be great for online achievement and/or classroom setting. Inspiring good things! Way to go teach!

I have never really been a fan of English and have always struggle my first two semesters have been a wonderful experience and I have found a new appreciation for it thanks to my wonderful professors.

Thank you for making my first online class such a well organized and easy to navigate through experience (:

This class has been very enjoyable. Your humor and approach is very refreshing. There was very little busy work, so we were able to focus on what was important.

I really enjoyed this class once I was able to get organized and into the groove of it.

I think this was a wonderful semester, the essays were very interesting to me and I enjoyed writing them and getting to dive into things that I wouldn't normally. Despite all of the hiccups I had this semester this class made me put myself out there.

Looking back on this class I think that the essays were great ways to involve students in the areas around them. I thought that the essays were a little long though - such as the field work essay and the senator essay. I think that for many student's topics the required lengths of the essays are a bit long. I would have rather put all the information in the essay without the padding, and made them shorter so you could focus better on the quality of writing vs. length and getting padding. I understand that this might not be something that can be altered due to course requirements though.

ISU Results:

1. When you were introduced to the essays in the first week of class or reading the syllabus, how anxious were you about interacting with community groups and organizations? (circle the most representative one) 1: Very anxious; 2: Slightly anxious; 3: No strong feelings; 4: Slightly positive; 5: Very positive
Totals--1: 1; 2: 7; 3: 5; 4: 3;5: 1

2.   How much did you know about local Pocatello/ISU organizations? 1: Little to none; 2: A little bit; 3: A fair amount; 4: Quite a bit; 5: A lot
Totals--1: 7; 2: 6; 3: 2; 4: 3; 5: 0

3.   How much did you know about your major and those involved with it? 1: Little to none; 2: A little bit; 3: A fair amount; 4: Quite a bit; 5: A lot
Totals--1: 1; 2: 2; 3: 6; 4: 7; 5:0

4.   How much did you know about and your state political system? 1: Little to none; 2: A little bit; 3: A fair amount; 4: Quite a bit; 5: A lot
Totals--1: 3; 2: 5; 3: 7; 4: 3; 5: 0

5.   Which of the essays did you enjoy the most? (Circle one)   Why?
FW: I felt this taught me the most about my major and brought the most useful information.
Eth: It was more exciting to me learning about groups around the community.
FW: I knew more about what I was writing, so it was reassuring.
FW: I liked the field work essay the most because it was the most relevant to me and it was the topic I was the most interested in.
FW: I felt it was the most helpful for my future. Like, I'd actually use something from an English class as a science major.
LSS: Learned more about an broken system.
FW: Because it was awesome.
FW: It was easy to track my progress.
LSS: Easier I was passionate about it. Field Work essay aren't for me.
FW: It was fun.

FW: I liked seeing other options and talking to old friends.
FW: This essay helped me decide to change my major.
FW: I was able to communicate with the med student and physician I admire most. I also learned more about medical school.
Eth: I liked the Ethnography essay the best because I was able to work with a local Foundation that volunteers their time to making the lives of the community better. It opened my eyes to the service that they do and why it is important.
LSS: I enjoyed voicing my political opinions.
FW:
FW: Because it is related to my major and easy to come up with more ideas.
Eth: I liked going and researching in person rather than just online.

6.   Which essay did you think was the most beneficial? (Circle one) Why?   "
FW
FW: I learned a lot more about what I wanted to do with my major
FW: It helped me learn concepts that I didn't know before any of my research.
FW: Because it gave me an insight into my future major and career.
FW: Same /|\
FW: Learned more about my trade.
FW: I was able to research my career in depth.
FW: The interview.
LSS: I learned more.
FW: I learned a lot.
FW: It helped me think about what I want to do with my life.
FW: Same as #5
FW: For me I learned that getting into and through medical school is going to require much more work than I thought.
FW: The field work essay was the most beneficial because I was able to learn more about what to expect in my college major and what to expect in the actual career field.
FW: It gave more context on my major.
FW: It opens my eyes on a lot on the other major I'm doing. Interviews also were challenging but they helped me a lot.
FW: Because when I went through writing the essay I looked around to get more answer about something I did not even think about it.
FW: This helped me know more about my major.

7.   What benefits or drawbacks do you think came from the essays being focused on specific communities that you needed to interact with (your ethnography group, people within your field, or your state/senator)?
Benefits:
Drawbacks:
Benefits: Getting to know new people and broadening my horizons. Drawbacks:
Benefits: You learn a lot about your community and your own opinion. Drawbacks: You realize that your initial major was not the one you wanted.

Benefits: It made me a stronger writer and helped me use more critical skills. Drawbacks: I had to step out of my comfort zone.

Benefits: It was beneficial to me because I'm no longer nervous about contacting people I don't know to interviewing them. Drawbacks: I really don't think there were drawbacks.

Benefits: I thought they gave me real world applications as opposed to essays about random subjects that I will forget the day after I turn them in. Drawbacks:

Benefits: A lot. Drawbacks:

Benefits: I took a hard look at what I wanted to do in life. Drawbacks: I'm really rethinking Chiropractic.

Benefits: Drawbacks: Harder to find websites to use.

Benefits: Made you more involved. Drawbacks: I have written so many papers about my major it's a joke at this point.

Benefits: It opens your eyes to the needs of that community. Drawbacks: N/A

Benefits: Drawbacks: I didn't like being limited to certain things. I'd much rather it be more broad.

Benefits: Getting out of your comfort zone and interacting. Meet new people/organizations. Drawbacks: None that I can think of.

Benefits: -Learn to interview; -Learn to make valuable observations; -research through experience instead of internet. Drawbacks: -time consuming (interviews)

Benefits: The benefits would have to be getting to experience an anthropologic viewpoint on the world with the true foundation through researching their foundations works. Drawbacks: The drawbacks would have to be not being able to spend a lot of time with them due to having a job and attending college.

Benefits: It's beneficial to learn more about local groups and their purpose. Drawbacks:

Benefits: -Speaking with native American speakers; -knowing more information from people have experience in the major; -transition between the long paragraphs and long essays. Drawbacks:

Benefits: Drawbacks:

Benefits: I know Pocatello really well. Drawbacks: I felt rushed sometimes.

Benefits: Drawbacks:

Benefits: Drawbacks:

Benefits: Drawbacks:

8.   Based off your experiences this semester, how likely are you to change your future behavior (like changing your major, getting involved in local groups/issues, etc.)? 1: Not Likely; 2: Slightly Unlikely; 3: Neutral/Unknown; 4: Slightly Likely; 5:Very Likely; What specifically? Totals--1: 0; 2: 2; 3: 6; 4: 4; 5: 5

3   ; ?
3; Thinking about getting more involved.
3 ; I've always slightly been involved in the community so I don't think I need to participate less or more.

3
3 ; I'm not sure yet. Exercise Phys/Chiropractic.
3

2; I don't know.
4
4 ; I'm going from Biomed to Health Fitness.
5 ; Changed major from Marketing to Civil Engineering.
5 ; Definitely going to start shadowing physicians and maybe volunteering at a hospital not just work and study.
5 ; I want to minor in anthropology now because it would let me access a whole different side of my career through helping other cultures and being culturally relative.
5 ; I will probably change my major but I will plan on being more active in my community.
4; I don't have animal shelters back home to adopt animals. Therefore, I would have to at least be a part of an organization that adopts animals back home.
4
5; I'm more likely to get involved because I'm not scared.

9.   What other comments or impressions could you share about your experience this semester?
There's a lot of writing.
You were my favorite teacher! I'll never forget this class.
One of the best English classes I've taken.
Nice, bro.
Did great job!
Take control of your classes.
:)
I got to physically speak to an Idaho Senator this weekend.
Great last English class I have to take!
I believe that you were a very professional and well thought professor who built a class that fully benefitted your students as a whole class.
It's been fun learning this semester.
I have no comments except saying it was really one of the best classes.
My writing really improved this semester.

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent Form

Dear participant:

You are being asked to participate in a study of community engagement used in an English 102 course at The College of Western Idaho. The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the benefits and challenges posed by assigning major essays that require/encourage students to interact directly with entities outside the university. This study will involve observations and notes taken by the instructor, cover letters to be turned in with the essays, anonymized transcripts from four video conferences, an end-of-semester survey, and possibly an interview with the instructor.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. You will receive no additional points in the course or improved grades for participating. There are also no negative consequences (such as lower scores or removed points) for not participating. Students who don't sign a consent form will still need to complete all required course work, but will not be included in the results of the study.

Your participation will be anonymous in each of the sources—no names will be attached to the surveys, your interview won't contain your name and will be transcribed afterwards, and pseudonyms will be used with any observation and cover letter.

If you have additional questions about the study contact Instructor Richard Samuelson at samurich@isu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant contact the Idaho State University Institutional Review Board at humsubj@isu.edu.

There will be copies of this consent form available for you to take for your own records.

Please indicate your agreement by signing below:

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood the consent form and agree to participate.

Name: _____ (Please print)

Date:_____