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It Can Be Acquired and Learned: Building a Writer-Centered Pedagogical Approach to Creative Writing

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IT *CAN* BE ACQUIRED AND LEARNED: BUILDING A WRITER-CENTERED PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO CREATIVE WRITING

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Because creative writing studies is a developing discipline and research shows that many creative writing faculty are underrepresented in scholarship, this dissertation study aims to explore current pedagogical approaches in American undergraduate creative writing classrooms. To achieve this goal, the researcher collected nearly 70 course syllabi, along with survey data to situate the syllabi, and conducted discourse analyses on the data utilizing NVivo software. As part of the analysis, the software searched for a predetermined list of codes (terms identified as appropriate in the dissertation's pilot study). Additionally, the software identified trends in the data (terms and activities that were commonly used by creative writing faculty).

The hypotheses and analysis were based on a dual theoretical framework of (1) acquisition and learning-based pedagogical approaches, and (2) writer-centered teaching. According to the hypothesis, pedagogical approaches that implement both acquisition (practice-based knowledge construction) and learning (theoretical analysis of the process of knowledge construction) should be the preferred approaches among creative writing faculty. Additionally, creative writing pedagogy should focus on students' unique goals and interests with both reading and writing. Based on the data collected and the initial hypothesis, the researcher called for changes in approaches to creative writing studies research and presented several ideal teaching practices and theoretical foundations for these practices.

Dedication

For my husband, Domenick

and my children, Frank and Clara.

Of all the inspirations in my life, you are, by far, my greatest.

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The days of paper and pencil surveys are far, far gone, and I am no computer whiz, I assure you. My thanks to Christoph Maier at Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Applied Research Lab for assistance with survey procedure, Qualtrics and sending mass requests via email. Also, this dissertation study would have been nearly impossible without the programming and technical efforts of Dan Domski from Advanced Communications. Thanks, Dan.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivating Concern #1: Student-Writer Identity Development

Narrative 1

The nondescript hotel banquet room in New York City was packed from wall to wall with aspiring authors, waiting eagerly for a panel of literary agents to be seated. Agents filed in, filled their water glasses, and began to speak. They gave insight into query letters, synopses, and publishing trends. They fielded questions. They agreed and disagreed. Their disagreements did not go unnoticed by the writers in the room, particularly an older gentleman toward the front. He had attended the conference in the hopes of publishing a book he had been planning to write for most of his life and finally drafted in retirement. He was in attendance to gain the magical answers to publishing, the answers that do not exist. He questioned the agents incessantly. His face reddened when they could not agree, when they could not tell him exactly what he needed to do to see his dream become reality. He vocalized his frustration until I shifted in my chair and watched several others around me do the same. (Girardi, 2010, p. 1)

Stephen King (2000) calls the secret ingredient aspiring authors seek "Dumbo's magic feather" (p. 231). It is the holy grail of creative writers. They read books on the craft, enroll in creative writing classes, and travel to expensive conferences all in the hopes of finding that feather, the key that will unlock the publishing world to them. But as King also says, it cannot "be found in classrooms or at writing retreats, no matter how enticing the brochures may be" (p. 231). If King is correct, his message has not fully reached its audience. I have witnessed the quest for the magic feather many times, writers attempting to navigate the "rules" of writing and publishing in search of a perfect formula. When the "rules" fail to lead them to the outcome they desire, they are disappointed and even angry. As a bystander, and occasionally a participant, I have often thought, "Some writers are going about it all wrong." After all, what if there is *not* a magical key to be found? What does such a reality mean for the writers who seek it? I'm fearful the only plausible answer is failure.

My concern for writers searching in vain for rules that will unlock the publishing world was sparked by an experience at a writing conference four years ago (although I had long been questing for the magic feather myself without realizing the futility of my efforts). Narrative 1 above describes one of the sessions I attended in which a writer asked questions about the keys to publishing as if the presenters, a panel of literary agents, were purposefully refusing non-published writers access. After peppering the panel with questions to which he received what he deemed unsatisfactory responses, he became irate and told the presenters their information was useless; they had taught him nothing. The experience was my first opportunity to see so clearly and objectively the quest for the feather, the failure and disappointment that results, and the aftermath of anger and frustration.

The workshop inspired me to write an essay for a doctoral composition course on how writers learn and write differently. I also created a workshop for a writers' conference in which I presented this theory and encouraged writers in the room to look within themselves for the independence required to succeed in publishing; the workshop was mostly well-received. The theory I presented that day may support those who argue that creative writing cannot be taught; for me the key term here is "taught." Because of the subjectivity of writing, I believe the real answer to that much-debated question is: creative writing can be *learned*. The focus is on the individual writer, and that is why that day I presented my workshop to a roomful of creative writers, I met my own irate attendee who believed I had taught *her* nothing. *She* wanted the answers from *me*; I believe she can only find them in herself. The experience served as yet another opportunity to witness the misguided quest.

One reason duplicating another writer's path to success is impossible is due to the subjectivity of writing. As writing professors, we often cite such subjectivity in evaluations of

our field and when speaking to our students, but I wonder how often we, as writers and instructors, consider the intensity of such subjectivity, especially for our student-writers. A sentence of ten words offers ten factors that may change the meaning or quality of the sentence. Consider then a paragraph of ten sentences or a story composed of ten paragraphs. With each word we add to our writing, writers create more subjectivity. We look at how eliminating a single adverb improves the quality of a sentence. We consider the effect of separating a line of poetry into two lines. And these are just the details.

Creative writing is worlds bigger than adverbs and line breaks. It represents an amalgam of decisions writers make when crafting a poem, story, or novel. Turner (1980) illustrates the power of such subjectivity by saying "studying writing, therefore, becomes a process of sharpening perception" not just for the writer regarding his or her work but also for an "awareness of all the connotations of a word, of all the rhythms of an emotion, of all the possible clashes among images, awareness of clichés and how to avoid them or use them so that they become effective allusion..." (p. 1). Pope (2006) refers to the same concept as critical-creative. "[I]n education, especially self-consciously 'higher education', evidence of critical understanding is as important as a demonstration of creative capacity" (p. 130). Miller (1982) argues for the need of a "post-writing" meta-cognition or reflection on the draft itself, which may prove to be the path to the critical understanding Pope references. In other words, these scholars are placing the utmost importance for creative writers on awareness. Such awareness may illuminate which techniques work for student-writers and which do not, their goals in writing and publishing and how to reach them, and how to apply learning to future creative practice. Yet, such awareness is a bit intimidating. Miller found in a study of how writers evaluate their own writing that 70% of the writers surveyed “did not want to evaluate themselves” (p. 178). She further concludes “self-

evaluation—experiencing the quality of one's writing in relation to subjective standards—is crucial to the development of an individual's perception of writing as an important and 'natural' way to investigate problems and represent ideas" (p. 182). Other scholars (Murray, 1982; Sommers, 1982) have argued similar points, adding that such self-evaluation is key to improving writing. However, to achieve self-evaluation, writers, student-writers included, must overcome creativity's sink hole. In other words, they must abandon the search to borrow other writers' successes and instead dedicate themselves to personal journeys that may be long, difficult, unrelenting, and quite possibly unsuccessful. To be clear, I am not suggesting, as the inclusion of narratives throughout this dissertation illustrates, that writers should ignore the knowledge other writers may share. On the contrary, student-writers should explore several styles and opportunities but always with the goal of developing their own writer identity.

Narrative 2

> *When I got the rejection slip from [Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine], I pounded a nail into the wall…, wrote 'Happy Stamps' on the rejection slip, and poked it onto the nail. Then I sat on my bed and listened to Fats sing 'I'm Ready.' I felt pretty good, actually. When you're still too young to shave, optimism is a perfectly legitimate response to failure.*
>
> *By the time I was fourteen (and shaving twice a week whether I needed to or not) the nail in my wall would no longer support the weight of the rejection slips impaled upon it. I replaced the nail with a spike and went on writing. By the time I was sixteen I'd begun to get rejection slips with handwritten notes a little more encouraging than the advice to stop using staples and start using paperclips. The first of these hopeful notes was from Algis Budrys, then the editor of* Fantasy and Science Fiction, *who read a story of mine called 'The Night of the Tiger' (the inspiration was, I think, an episode of* The Fugitive *in which Dr. Richard Kimble worked as an attendant cleaning out cages in a zoo or a circus) and wrote: 'This is good. Not for us, but good. You have talent. Submit again.'*
>
> *Those four brief sentences, scribbled by a fountain pen that left big ragged blotches in its wake, brightened the dismal winter of my sixteenth year. Ten years or so later, after I'd sold a couple of novels, I discovered 'The Night of the Tiger' in a box of old manuscripts and thought it was still a perfectly respectable tale, albeit one obviously written by a guy who had only begun to learn his chops. I rewrote it and on a whim*

> *resubmitted it to* F&SF. *This time they bought it. One thing I've noticed is that when you've had a little success, magazines are a lot less apt to use that phrase, 'Not for us.' (King, 2000, pp. 40-41)*

The question of how student-writers can best develop their confidence and subsequently, their writer identity is a valid one, especially amidst academic and publishing worlds of subjectivity, rejection, and strong opinions. I appreciate claims such as those made by Brooke (1991) regarding writing's relationship to and influence from social interaction. Social interaction, for me, includes the feedback and criticism writers receive as a result of sharing their work and the knowledge they gain from reading the work of and interacting with other writers. Bly (2001) fears that writers who share their work too early may allow critique and feedback to inappropriately influence their work. Bizzaro's (1993) work, *Responding to Student Poems,* further illustrates this eventuality and counters it by theorizing how instructors might offer students feedback without appropriating their texts. Bly argues students must "protect their own inspirations" (p. 43), and I agree. But in addition to protecting their inspirations, they must learn to trust them. There must be a balance between the individual inspiration and social influences. As Justice (1980) wrote in his *Writer's Chronicle* article that argued writing classrooms followed a community model:

> [N]o writer, I think, can long thrive as merely one among many; nor is the hermit, clad in his rough skins, ever likely to take the measure of his vision except somehow in relation to society…There is in the lives of many writers, of course, a fruitful going back and forth between the two states and conditions. The great temptation of the community-minded must be to please his friends and editors; of the solitary—an even more dizzying temptation, I would think—to please, only himself. (para. 1)

Justice's illustration of polar opposites serves as evidence of the need for balance. And that balance may prove a different recipe for each writer as the brief discussion of authors' processes below further illustrates.

For example, Newbery Medal-winner Jerry Spinelli insists the faster he writes, the better he writes, and he gives himself permission to be imperfect (Bakkum, 2008). Mystery author Gillian Roberts limits her writing to five pages each day amidst a schedule of exercising, making tea, cooking, checking email, and reading (Bashman, 2009). As a "binge writer," National Book Award Winner Charles Johnson couldn't possibly interrupt his writing for email or reading. He only stops to eat and sleep, and never censors himself in his first draft (Hawkins, 2008). Ann Packer, on the other hand, revises constantly beginning each work day with an hour of revisiting and reworking the pages from the day before (Pohl, 2008). Ernest Hemingway complicated the task of revision more, arguing that writers should read their work in its entirety each day before writing new material (Phillips, 1984). Spinelli writes for two hours a day; historical novelist Tracy Chevalier writes from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. while her son is in school (Librie, 2010). Stephen King (2010) advises writers to paint vivid pictures with their words, which some have criticized as leading to his many movie deals (and according to those critics film is a major diversion from true literary art). Ranier Maria Rilke cautions writers to avoid critique from others at all costs and to instead rely on their own instincts (Mitchell, 1984). The popularity of the modern writing workshop directly contradicts such advice, at least from the perspectives of instructors who implement the workshops. As is evident here the contradictory opinions on exactly how to write are unavoidable, and it is even clearer how an aspiring author sifting through such opinions for the secret ingredient may feel frustration and anger.

To be fair, aspiring authors (and I am one of them) often find published authors' advice

and writing processes fascinating for good reason. The craft tips can prove helpful and enlightening. Yet, there are two issues with such writers' self-reports. Creative writing pedagogy in many cases has traditionally relied not on "theoretical considerations of 'best practices' in the classroom but [on] the personal experiences and highly respected 'testimony' of the successful novelist or poet who has entered the classroom to profess his or her views of craft and the profession" (Ritter, 2011, p. 92). One flaw with this approach is that such testimony often represents an idealized version the writer holds for him or herself. Another flaw is that ultimate reliance on "star" authors who "teach very little [but] attract attention" (Vanderslice, 2008, p. 70) and as a result whose "public presence...often takes away from their classroom time in ways that the university gladly accommodates" (Ritter, p. 88). The point here is not that teacher-writers' success outside of academia should be shunned within university halls; rather an appreciation for their work and experience must be fair and balanced. And ultimately, student-writers should realize that what works for a "star" writer may not necessarily work for them.

As Bizzaro (2011a) points out, "to *not* pay attention to writers' self-reports is to deny the contributions of many of our most important writers" (p. 132). However, the harm in this fascination occurs when, as Burroway, Stuckey-French, and Stuckey-French (2011) suggest, fledgling writers are looking at one author's process as if it holds all the answers. The authors dispel the myth when they conclude, "The variety of authors' habits suggests that there is no magic to be found in any particular one" (p. 2). The inspirational, motivational, theoretical, and practical advice authors offer is all valuable. That is one of the reasons I have chosen to include narratives from writers and teachers of writing throughout this dissertation. But how might student-writers negotiate these various perspectives? From a teaching perspective, what if all of the aforementioned writers, with their varying opinions and writing processes, were in the same

classroom? How might one teacher facilitate learning for each one of them? The writing processes of Stephen King, Ernest Hemingway, and other authors do not represent the magic feather for creative writing students. Brookfield (1995) illustrates what such a claim means for the classroom when he says "students perceive the same actions and experience the same activities in vastly different ways" (p. 92). Therefore, student-writers must gain an understanding for the diversity among successful approaches to creative writing; and so, too, must their instructors. Furthermore, both parties must realize the sheer volume of literature on *how* to write well alone suggests a world of contradictory advice where a single process cannot possibly stand as *the* process to follow.

Motivating Concern #2: What Do Student-Writers Want/Need?

Narrative 3

> *I majored in English as an undergraduate because I wanted to become a better writer. I wanted, eventually, to write poetry and fiction well enough to get published and perhaps to write persuasive nonfiction well enough that people would want to read it. I must have realized as I moved through the curriculum that it was not particularly designed to facilitate these things; instead, it was aimed at the 'coverage' of major writers and time periods in English and American literature. The writing I did in my required English classes (and most of the electives) was treated almost exclusively as a vehicle for communicating interpretations of literary works. There was only one notable exception I can remember: the assignment in my 'English Inquiry' course—a required first-semester course for all majors—to write a parody of a well-known poem. I chose to parody T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' and the professor liked my parody so much that she submitted it on my behalf to the campus literary magazine, where it was later published. I also took a course in poetry writing (the only creative writing course then available at the university) and was fortunate enough to convince the faculty's lone creative writer to work with me on a directed poetry-writing tutorial. But the vast majority of my courses required me to interpret literary works and present my interpretations in five-, ten-, or fifteen-page papers. On my own time, I filled journals with fragments of poetry and fiction, occasionally imitating some of the works I had read for my classes. Although I would have preferred to have the opportunity to write more poetry and fiction for my classes, I largely accepted what the curriculum implicitly told me—that writing poetry and fiction was not really what being an English major was all about. (Mayers, 2005, p. ix.)*

Whether student-writers realize it or not (though in my experience, they often do), their goals and expectations in creative writing classrooms may sadly not be aligned with the educations they receive. One reason for this lack may be, as Vandermeulen (2005) notes, that students possess such high expectations for creative writing instructors. Vandermeulen's finding may suggest a valid hypothesis to addressing students' discontent; however, it also represents the implication that many student-writers expect something in creative writing classrooms that is not made available by the curriculum. For example, Vandermeulen (2011) conducted a survey of creative writing instructors primarily in mid-western universities that asked the instructors, among other things, to rate the importance of six different goals for creative writing courses. The goal receiving the lowest importance was "students should want to publish and master the craft of the genre well enough to become more likely to be published" (p. 14). Of the 150 instructors who responded to the survey, only 11 marked this goal as "highly important." When following up with his participants, Vandermeulen found the instructors chose not to stress the importance of publication because the courses were primarily introductory. Better to focus on the elements of writing rather than publication at that point, they argued. While that is a valid point, I would love to see the same question asked of the student-writers enrolled in the instructors' classes. Students, like their professors, may not be particularly interested in publication, but on the other hand, they may. Donald Hall (1987/1983) argues in his seminal work "Poetry and Ambition" that ambition to publish is misdirected ambition. For him, "true ambition" lies in the desire to write words that will "live forever" (5. Section, para. 1); such an achievement, it should be noted, may certainly result from publication. Still, one fact remains – instructors cannot possibly attest to students' ambitions if their pedagogy does not include asking students. Certainly, a negotiation between the instructor's expertise and the student-writers' expectations should occur. In some

situations, the student-writers' expectations might be relevant to the course, and in others, the instructors might be forced to decide what is best for student-writers' writing growth and development. Nevertheless, a conversation between the instructor and the student-writers should be encouraged.

Since the demand for creative writing programs has been steadily increasing, and these programs often financially bolster university English departments, the reality that student-writers' goals—and not just in the case of their publication goal—may not be aligned with their educators' objectives for them may serve as a recipe for disaster. Perhaps the notion is outlandish considering the boom in creative writing programs: "Like pioneer towns that have filled up a once-empty map with dots, Creative Writing programs have been established at most reputable colleges and universities across the U.S." (Healey, 2009, para. 1). Or, the implication that some students are not finding what they desire in creative writing classrooms, a conclusion from personal interactions with creative writing students over the last few years, may be worthy of attention. As Ritter and Vanderslice (2009) point out in introducing a *College English* special issue on creative writing, "The stakes are high, as they always are with a generation of students at the center of a growing enterprise, both in economic and intellectual terms" (p. 213). Due to the growing demand, Shelnutt (1989) believes "the relevant questions seem…to be, *what* are we teaching students who come to us wanting to learn how to write fiction, poetry, and nonfiction? And how does what we teach or fail to teach affect contemporary literature" (pp. 7-8)? These scholars are speaking to the responsibility such an increasing demand poses for the academy.

For example, one of my professional writing affiliations is with the Pittsburgh chapter of the Sisters in Crime. Contrary to the name's suggestion, we do not commit crimes; we write about them. Most of the members write thriller or mystery novels. Recently, one of the members

mentioned she had been considering enrolling in creative writing classes at a local university, so that she could better learn the craft and how to publish her work. My initial thought was what she is looking for is not necessarily what she will find in the classroom. She writes commercial or genre fiction, which is not always welcomed in academic environments. In other words, she may experience one of the reasons this dissertation exists – the disconnect between what student-writers in creative writing courses want or need and what they experience. As Wendy Bishop (1997) wrote, she "suspects she is not alone among those who are in 'creative writing classes a lot but do not feel supported there. Some of us had internalized a destructive self-doubt'" (as cited in Vanderslice, 2011, p. 101).

Narrative 4

> *I read Bishop's stories, then, of her experiences in higher education, and with creative writing in particular, with a palpable sense of relief. For the first time, I understood that I was not alone, that my experiences had not been the result of my own inadequacies or even those of my teachers, but of a failed system that honored the product and its star creators in an economy of scarcity, rather than creating an empowering economy of process and, subsequently, wealth. For the first time, I broke my silence and began to speak out, to slide creative writing classrooms and their traditions under a microscope and study them for ways to make them better. (Vanderslice, 2011, p. 102)*

But the discussion about what student-writers may want and/or need from the classroom raises questions on the purpose of creative writing in the academy. Bizzaro (1993) writes that "our ultimate goal" as instructors "from this perspective on reading and writing is to help students become more capable and knowledgeable critics of poems, both their own and others" (p. xiv). For me, the primary word in Bizzaro's explication is "capable." Our task is to help student-writers become more capable. But how exactly do we do that? And what does such a goal mean for student-writers? Should aspiring writers take creative writing classes for art's sake? Or should classes prepare students for the (dare I say it) commercial world of publishing?

What about a combination of the two as Miners' 1989 essay "The Book in the World" suggests? Must all creative writing produced in academia be high literary? Or should genre fiction be welcomed? In passing, one creative writing master's student told me that although she wants to write young adult fiction, her professors insist she write literary fiction as a student. She can write whatever she wants when she leaves their blessed halls. If a student wants to write science fiction but is forced to write a literary short story, how can that student possibly graduate and suddenly become a science fiction writer? To be fair, there are skills to be obtained by ignoring barriers (as Bishop's example shows) and writing in other genres. By engaging other genres, writers can better understand the uniqueness of their own genre. To compound the issue even further, instructors of creative writing might feel uncomfortable welcoming a variety of genres in one classroom because they are not familiar with the conventions of the different genres; such apprehension is reasonable. Yet, student-writers should be given agency when it comes to the work they wish to create, and it is the responsibility of the academy offering student-writers classroom opportunities to determine a logical solution to ensure such agency is possible.

Motivating Concern #3: What and How Student-Writers Read

One aspect of course syllabi that can easily be analyzed for instances of student agency is the required reading list. An area of frustration for me as a former creative writing student was the course reading list, which served as another way for professors and/or administrators to force *approved* content on the student-writers. Again, I will use the example of the science fiction writer I encountered in my graduate program. It makes sense that, if he intends to write in that genre post graduation, he should be reading contemporary work in that genre during his academic years, although not exclusively in that genre. In discussing the importance of a certain kind of reading, Haake (2007) suggests that we, as instructors, should "train [student-writers], as

we trained ourselves, in developing their own reading strategies that work to enrich and challenge their writing proclivities and interests" (p. 21). It should be noted, however, that reading outside of a student-writer's particular genre of interest is still beneficial. As Bishop (1992) points out, "you want to keep your developing adherence to genre conventions in productive tension with your explorations outside of and beyond convention; that way you learn the most you can about your language" (p. 229).

To be fair, some undergraduate and graduate creative writing courses and programs do focus on particular genres; still those numbers are limited. For instance, the AWP lists only six popular or genre fiction graduate programs among the 346 programs listed in its database. Furthermore, the search engine for the database allows viewers to click on "Popular/Genre Fiction," but there is no option for literary fiction. The implication, then is graduate creative writing programs *are* literary. For instance, the required reading in my creative writing classes primarily illustrated the conventions of academia, not exploration beyond them into student preferences; the reading list included Hemingway, Capote, Fitzgerald, Carver, O'Connor, and contemporary authors of, again, literary fiction. The issue is not with these specific texts, which I personally enjoyed reading. However there are viable objections to requiring only these texts, and other canonical works, in the creative writing classroom.

Bizzaro (1993, 1994) connects the classification of canonical texts to the wide adoption of New Criticism, which "[f]or nearly forty years…has had a place of unquestioned authority in its relationship to the reading and evaluation not only of canonical literature, but of student texts as well" (1994, p. 236) and "[a]pproaches literary texts as finished products, products that can be analyzed for the relationship among their parts without regard to the author's intentions, the reader's responses, or the biographical and historical backdrop" (1993, p. 40). This approach is

flawed in the creative writing classroom where writing is a process, and the author's intentions and potential readers' responses are inextricably linked to that process. Furthermore, as Bizzaro illustrates, New Critical readings ultimately lead to appropriating students' texts. Bizzaro explains: "If the New Criticism expects stories to have certain features, then the works that get taught by New Critics are most likely the texts that have those features. That's why the New Criticism had such an influence on the teaching of literature but also on what gets taught in a fiction class" (P. Bizzaro, personal communication, May 15, 2012).

Although there are many arguments to be made in opposition of a canonical reading list influenced by New Criticism, I will illustrate a few that are applicable to the purposes of this dissertation. First and most importantly, students in the academic environment Bizzaro describes above are being forced to read certain texts based on a dominant theoretical approach to literature, not based on their personal interests or academic needs. Secondly, instructors who teach creative writing may unknowingly perpetuate New Criticism's influence in their classes, and in doing so are focusing their pedagogy on English studies' conventions not the student-writers they are instructing. When the instructor's required reading materials do not align with the students' writing aspirations, the situation may unfairly "silence" some writers as Haake (2007, p. 20) points out. I would have loved the freedom, for even a few weeks of the term, to indulge young adult fiction and would have even welcomed an in-depth assignment that required extensive analysis of the genre in which I intended to write. While the experience I'm referring to occurred in a graduate classroom, I believe some variation of such assignments could be beneficial for undergraduates as well.

Not only is the traditional creative writing reading list potentially restrictive; it may minimize time that could be spent learning to write, an issue that speaks to the necessity for

acquisition theory as this dissertation will suggest. It is problematic when"three quarters of the class time is spent discussing a *published author's* story. Student writing itself is cursorily covered in the last fifteen minutes, with a few general comments about what 'works' and what does not" (Haake, 2007, p. 17). Reading is imperative for good writing, but a balance between reading and writing must be honored in creative writing courses. Furthermore, student-writers should be taught *how* to read – not in the elementary sense, but in a way that facilitates reading from a writerly perspective (Andrews, 2009; Prose, 2006; Rubin, 1983). "[F]ew of the writing students – however much they have read – know how to read. And none of them knows how to read for craft" (Harlow as cited in Uppal, 2007, p. 47). For example, Moxley (1989b), in echoing the New Critical influences discussed above, argues "writing students need to become active readers – to study the point of view, the tone, the plotting and other techniques that the authors employ" (p. 259). Furthermore, student-writers may benefit, as Haake points out, from the challenge of making decisions on what texts to read and how to read them in the hopes they may develop "their own reading strategies that work to enrich and challenge their writing proclivities and interests" (p. 21). As Emerson noted in *The American Scholar*, "There is then creative reading as well as creative writing" (as cited in Richardson, 2009, p. 7). If student-writers will learn much of their craft from reading—and not only reading while enrolled in creative writing programs, but also long after graduation—learning *how* to read like a writer is a highly beneficial skill.

Narrative 5

It's been said that we're training a nation of writers who do not read. I've said it myself. I've wrung my hands and felt bad about it and wondered how, exactly, it is that we've come to this state of affairs in only a few generations. For I...was a reader, one of those bookish kids who hoped for rain so I could stay inside and read all day. Therefore,

received lore would have it, I should have come into my writing practice fully prepared to extend what I'd learned from a lifelong immersion in the page.

But it didn't take me long (well, long enough) to understand that a steady diet of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British novels, American masters, and contemporary American minimalism, then very high in regard, was really not that useful to me from my own writerly perspective. I don't mean to suggest that reading itself was unimportant—that would *be heresy. It was for me, as it is for many others, the single most vital thing I did as a writer. But I didn't know how to think about what I was reading. I took it in and what came out was a strangely inchoate blend of styles, traditions, forms, and intents—a failed textual melting pot of my own. (Haake, 2007, p. 18)*

Motivating Concern #4: What Student-Writers Learn From Each Other

Perhaps the most interesting memory from my masters program and a revelation that could prove terrifying for administrators of creative writing programs is "the best teaching that goes on in a college writing class is done by members of the class, upon one another" (Stegner, 2002, p. 35). This teaching occurs during writing workshops, but it continues long after class is over during those late nights of talking and, often, drinking. During my master's work, the writing chatter that occurred *after* class in the pub was the best teaching I experienced. I do not recall many lessons about the craft itself, but I learned a lot about writers, including myself. The pub discussions offered greater context than the classroom discussions, potentially due to the candid nature of the environment. I am unsure if the candor was due to the professors' absence. I do know the focus was not on grades, assignments, or instructors' interpretations of our works. To draw from critical approaches to literature, the pub interactions, in a way, offered the biographical and even psychoanalytic lenses through which to understand my classmates. I learned the strengths and weaknesses they possessed. I admired them. I received compliments about the growth of my work and gained confidence. The focus was on the individuals around us and, more specifically, their goals and hopes with writing. What I experienced is one of the greatest advantages of the writing workshop as Bishop (1990) points out:

> The creative writing workshop provides a student writer with a community, and the community also contributes to the writer's developing sense of audience. A writing community helps writers discover readers' tastes and explore the effects of stylistic experimentation. A writing community also provides the student writer with a forum for trying on the *personality* of a writer. The creative writing workshop provides an important, primary, peer community, but that community disbands quickly at the end of most class meetings. (pp. 7-8)

Although my community remained intact at the Castle Pub on North Street in St. Andrews, Scotland, following nearly every class period, the sad reality is that at the end of our coursework, the 17 students who were from all over the United Kingdom and the United States were forced to disband. It took time, but that is when I found writing communities elsewhere—the Mary Roberts Rinehart Chapter of the Sisters in Crime, PennWriters, and Backspace, for instance.

With organizations such as these and others (Romance Writers of America, Mystery Writers of America, the Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators) which also offer workshops and critique groups, creative writing programs must offer student-writers more than the opportunity to engage a community of writers and workshop their work occasionally. In other words, the organizations offer those benefits and for significantly less money. In fact, a professor from a local graduate program in creative writing once hosted a workshop for Sisters in Crime during which he candidly told the group not to enroll in an MFA program, but to continue with groups "like this." Creative writing classrooms and programs have the potential to benefit student-writers in ways writing organizations cannot match, but academia cannot be stagnant when it comes to creative writing pedagogy. There is a need for creative writing studies research, open-mindedness in the field, and vibrant exploration.

Addressing Motivating Concerns

The solution to such concerns as student-writer identity development, reading skills, writing development, and interaction with other writers is to design programs that focus on student-writers' interests and goals and to illustrate routes to publication and other ambitions that do not include a magic feather. In other words, individualized awareness and reflection for both instructors and students is key. Many writing instructors are often quick to critique student-writers, but they must also critique themselves, specifically how they interact with their students and how they approach response to student writing. Brookfield (2006) posits "the most important knowledge we need to do good work as teachers is a consistent awareness of how students are experiencing their learning and perceiving our teaching" (p. 35). North (1987) argues "practice is largely a matter of routine" (p. 33), and the challenge for instructors is employing a reflective practice rather than allowing an unchecked routine to become a permanent pedagogy, as many of the teacher-writers cited throughout this dissertation argue. But as Brookfield also points out, "[o]f all the pedagogic tasks teachers face, getting inside students' heads is one of the trickiest. It is also one of the most crucial" (p. 92). What I am suggesting here is a learner-centered approach to creative writing; such an approach would require major changes in current creative writing pedagogy, which often relies on instructors' previous learning experiences.

Creative writing instructors' pedagogies are often grandfathered, or passed down, from generation to generation as a sort of "lore," or, as Stephen North (1987) defines it, "the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs…that influence how writing is done, learned and taught" (p. 22). The issue here is that this lore has become "so deeply embedded" in our creative writing classrooms, it is difficult to see any other way of teaching (Ritter & Vanderslice, 2007b, p. xviii). In other words, our pedagogies have traditionally not been

challenged, critiqued, or reconstructed. Scholars (Bizzaro, 1993; Donnelly, 2010, 2011; Mayers, 2005; Moxley, 1989a; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2007a) in creative writing studies have called for such challenges, critiques and reconstruction. These scholars have initiated change in the discipline, but I believe they would agree with the claim that there is much more work to do. The grandfathering of pedagogy leads to classroom procedures that do not focus on the student-writers. How could they? The pedagogies are three to four times older than the students. When Katharine Haake presented with Wendy Bishop at AWP in 2002, she was approached by audience members who said they want more than the criticism and the call for change. "It was ok, we get that, now let's finally go beyond critique and look at where we have gotten to and where we might be headed from here," they insisted (Haake, 2007, p. 15). Bishop seconded Haake's observation and suggested instructors "begin to institute more productive practices" (as cited in Bizzaro, 1993, p. xi). But the question becomes: what might those productive practices be? Harper argues the "primary epistemological ammunition...for Creative Writing in the academy *must* be the declaration of a viable and systemic pedagogy" (as cited in Vanderslice, 2008, p. 66). My hope is that a learner-centered approach to creative writing studies developed in this dissertation may become part of the "systemic pedagogy" Harper calls for.

Relevant Terminology Defined

Creative Writing

The first term to question in this dissertation is creative writing itself. Creative writing often falls under the English department umbrella at most American universities. The term receives criticism as somewhat of a misnomer; writers in all fields are, or should be, creative with language, as McVey discusses here:

> My chief concern here is with the distinction between 'Creative Writing' and 'other' writing at the university, which might suggest that there are some forms of writing that are creative and some that are not…any writing, from the published instructions for using a power drill to the most esoteric literary poetry, uses the raw materials of language, experience, knowledge, textual sources and the author's own ideas and imaginings to bring something into existence that did not exist before. In other words, all writing is creative writing. (2008, p. 289)

I will gladly grant that concession: all writing should be executed from a creative perspective. My concession can be clarified by Bizzaro's (2011b) distinction between poetry and the poetic function of language, as identified by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975). In other words, just because writing is creative or artistic, it does not necessarily classify as poetry. Perhaps that is one of the reasons the term creative writing, as McVey passionately points out above, is flawed. At its most extreme connotation, creative writing "seems to imply precious writing, useless writing, flowery writing, writing that is a luxury rather than a necessity, something that is produced under the influence of drugs or leisure, a hobby" (Murray as cited in Bishop, 1990, p. 1).

The term has been historically used to differentiate the type of writing that occurs in a creative writing classroom. Another historical point to consider is that when the term "creative writing" was first used in the early 20th century by Emerson and Mearns (Myers, 1996), the intention was to encourage students to abandon the philological foundations for opportunities to be more creative; many believed aestheticism was the flame that burned within literature, and philology doused the flame.

Still, contemporary definitions of creative writing vary as the following examples demonstrate. Creative writing is "written to produce in its reader the pleasure of an aesthetic experience, to offer him [sic] an imaginative recreation or reflection or imitation of action, thought, and feeling" (Stegner, 2002, p. 12). Creative writing is "an action, affected by the dispositions, intentions, feelings, reasons and behavior patterns of writers, most often individually, and by the cultural, social and economic factors of society, most often as a whole with limited address to the individual" (Harper, 2006b, p. 6). Creative writing "refers to two things: (1) a classroom subject, the teaching of fiction- and verse-writing at colleges and universities across the country; and (2) a national system for the employment of fiction writers and poets to teach the subject" (Myers, 1996, p. xi). At the University of Iowa's distinguished writing workshop, the creative writing course is described in the general catalog as:

> Guidance in the process of writing fiction and poetry; writing as exploration; development of students' critical skills as readers; application of new knowledge and skills to students' own writing. English majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Nonfiction and Creative Writing. (Creative Writing, 2012, General Catalog Section, para. 1)

The more in-depth description that follows the above catalog description expects student-writers to approach the course with "the belief, if only for a few hours a week, that nothing matters more than the powers of language and imagination" (Creative Writing, 2012, Description Section, para. 1). For me, one of the most accurate definitions of the current climate in creative writing studies comes from Ritter and Vanderslice (2007b), who note that creative writing is "a cluster of rarely articulated assumptions about what writing is, whether or not it can be taught, and what kinds of people qualify as writers" (p. 3). While I agree with this definition, I also understand the

convention and perhaps necessity of defining terminology as I intend to use it here. When I use the term "creative writing" in this dissertation, I will be referring to specifically to poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, both literary and genre, created in university classrooms designated as creative writing courses.

Creative Writing Studies

Narrative 6

> *Not long ago, a nationally-recognized author and faculty member at a well-known undergraduate Creative Writing program (where he'd also had a turn as director), came to visit our campus and work with our students. When I discussed with him some of the work I do promoting Creative Writing pedagogy, he admitted, rather ingenuously, that he had never heard of any 'alternative's to the workshop and wondered if I might share some with him. That there might be an emerging field concerning the teaching of Creative Writing was a revelation to him—a teacher of Creative Writing. (Vanderslice, 2008, p. 71)*

As Donnelly (2012) points out, "Creative writing and *creative writing studies* are two distinct enterprises" (p. 2). Therefore, a brief distinction is necessary between creative writing and creative writing studies. Although many creative writing professors and students have discouraged researching and analyzing the creative process, as earlier discussion of lore illustrates, scholars such as Wendy Bishop, Patrick Bizzaro, Katharine Haake, Tim Mayers , Joseph Moxley, Hans Ostrum, Kelly Ritter, and Stephanie Vanderslice have advocated for exactly that. It is the kind of investigation these scholars have initiated that led to the addition of "one simple word" (Mayers, 2009,p. 217). "Although some might wonder why there would be so much fuss about adding one simple word to the mix, others would argue that the addition of that single word makes a great deal of difference. And perhaps it does" (p. 217). Creative writing studies differs from creative writing in that the former "is a still-emerging enterprise" with the

purpose of developing sound pedagogy for creative writing instructors. In their collection of essays entitled *Creative Writing Studies: Practice, Research and* Pedagogy, Harper and Kroll (2008b) identify practice, research, and pedagogy as the three areas that comprise creative writing studies and argue "[a]lthough such terms are treated separately, for convenience, they in fact interpenetrate" (p. 9). Therefore, creative writing studies includes theory, scholarship, intellectual analysis, the need for pedagogical training for those teaching creative writing courses, and advocacy for the need of all of the above. Although I will be looking at creative writing classes in this dissertation, the project itself serves as an exercise in creative writing studies.

Theoretical Influences

Theoretical Influence One: Acquisition and Learning

Narrative 7

This was in the 1970s, during my brief career as a graduate student in medieval English literature, when I was allowed the indulgence of taking one fiction class. Its generous teacher showed me, among other things, how to line edit my work. For any writer, the ability to look at a sentence and see what's superfluous, what can be altered, revised, expanded, and, especially, cut, is essential. It's satisfying to see that sentence shrink, snap into place, and ultimately emerge in a more polished form: clear, economical, sharp.

Meanwhile, my classmates were providing me with my first real audience. In that prehistory, before mass photocopying enabled students to distribute manuscripts in advance, we read our work aloud. That year, I was beginning what would become my first novel. And what made an important difference to me was the attention I felt in the room as the others listened. I was encouraged by their eagerness to hear more.

That's the experience I describe, the answer I give to people who ask about teaching creative writing: A workshop can be useful. A good teacher can show you how to edit your work. The right class can form the basis of a community that will help and sustain you.

But that class, as helpful as it was, was not where I learned to write.

Like most—maybe all—writers, I learned to write by writing and, by example, by reading books. (Prose, 2006, p. 2)

Over the years, many of my creative writing professors have urged me to write every day. One said I wasn't a writer if I didn't. Another said I should be writing six to eight hours a day. Of course the adage is writers write. My teachers were encouraging me to engage in the act of writing because they believed it was the best way to develop the craft. However, out of the instructors I encountered, only one set aside time in class to actually write. I will pursue this issue when analyzing my data later in this dissertation, but, first, it is important to consider the root of the sentiment my teachers so readily shared. Writers learn through doing, or by what scholars refer to as acquisition, defined as:

> A process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models and a process of trial and error, without a process of formal teaching. It happens in natural settings which are meaningful and functional in the sense that the acquirers know that they need to acquire something in order to function and they in fact want to so function. (Gee, 1987/2006, p. 32)

Related to this dissertation, acquisition, then, refers to the practices student-writers engage, both inside and outside of the classroom, that allow them to acquire skills through personal exploration; furthermore this definition includes an aspect of subconscious knowledge construction. Vandermeulen (2011) likens this experience to "negotiating the personal" with his students. He references Tom C. Hunley's (2007) critique of creative writing courses in that the popular peer critique element of the workshop approach "leaves too little class time for the experiences that help writers develop skills, find ideas, gain confidence and work out a process that suits the genre" (p. x). Vandermeulen responds that "introductory courses need to focus on fundamental – and personal – kinds of growth that enable the process of writing and of becoming a writer...to really *teach* creative writing is to negotiate the personal" (p. x).

On the other hand, the term *learning* refers to:

> [A] process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching, though not necessarily from someone officially designated as a teacher. This teaching involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter. (Gee, p. 32)

Learning in this dissertation will refer to the knowledge student-writers gain through explanation and analysis and the breaking down of creative writing to its analytic parts.

Gee's theory of acquisition and learning as it applies to literacy was adapted from an earlier theory of acquisition and learning as it applies to language learning. Krashen (1981) believed "adults have two independent systems for developing ability in second languages, subconscious language acquisition and conscious language learning, and that these systems are interrelated in a definite way" (p. 1). For Krashen, acquisition "appears to be far more important" (p. 1). In other words, *acquisition* serves as a necessary foundation for *learning* to be successful; formal learning can solidify what has previously been acquired.

In the spirit of Wendy Bishop, who advocated what "composition and creative writing teachers may have...to learn from each other" (Young, 2011, p. vii.), I am crossing the boundaries and borrowing theory from literacy studies and second language learning to look at creative writing studies in a new way. Krashen's (1981) work may be specific to language learning, but his beliefs, and by extension Gee's (1987/2006), when properly adapted and applied, could revolutionize creative writing studies. However, in borrowing from these scholars, it is necessary to further discuss their views of acquisition and learning and how my application in this research differs from them. Specifically, Gee explains acquisition as that knowledge

attainment that occurs in an individual's "primary discourse" or the "primary process of enculturation" (p. 34). In other words, acquisition in Gee's and Krashen's interpretations refers to knowledge construction that occurs outside of academia. Therefore, that definition is contrary to my theoretical framework, which discusses acquisition as it occurs within academic courses. For Gee and Krashen, the classroom is a secondary discourse. Although I understand the appropriateness of primary and secondary discourses when discussing second language learning and new literacy studies, I find that the definitions of acquisition (as practice) and learning (as theory) apply to the classroom, as well. It is in that capacity I am using the terms acquisition and learning in this dissertation.

The reason this distinction between acquisition and learning is so pertinent to creative writing studies is because "acquirers usually beat learners at performance" (Gee, 1987/2006, p. 33). If the goal of students is to become better writers, great writers, published writers, then this aspect of acquisition is imperative. In fact, the feelings that have sparked the "can it be taught?" debate may spawn from our innate understanding that first and foremost, writing abilities must be acquired. Yet, writing development is more complex than acquisition. "[L]earners usually beat acquirers at talking about it...explication, explanation, analysis, and criticism" (p. 33). If the goal of student-writers is to become teachers of writing, then this aspect of learning is imperative; however, that analytic aspect is also imperative for writers in the revision process. To be successful, writers must possess the ability to analyze what they have written and brainstorm ways to improve and correct any shortcomings.

Theoretical Influence Two: Learner-Centered Education, A Writer-Centered Classroom

The field of composition has been influenced by scholars (Bartholomae, 1985; hooks, 1994; Bishop, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999; Bizzaro, 1993; Bizzell, 1991; Brannon & Knoblauch,

1982; Bruffee, 1986; Dewey, 1916; Elbow, 1973; Friere, 1970; Gale, 1996; Giroux, 1988; Matsuda, 1999; Murray, 1972; Rose, 1985; Shaughnessy, 1977; Shor, 1996; Sommers, 1982; Wallace & Ewald, 2000) who encourage educators to transform classrooms so that the focus is on the student-writers and their knowledge construction, not on the text, the product, the curriculum, the professors' expertise or opinion, administrators' expectations and so on. For example, Wallace and Ewald suggest a classroom environment honoring the "alternative pedagogy" of mutuality, which "can be understood as teachers and students sharing the potential to adopt a range of subject positions and to establish reciprocal discourse relations as they negotiate meaning in the classroom" (p. 3). As a form of student-centeredness, mutuality accurately reflects my goals in developing a ideal creative writing pedagogy in this dissertation. As Wallace and Ewald further note, "[m]utuality is invoked in that knowledge is not a prepackaged commodity to be delivered by the teacher but is an 'outcome' constituted in the classroom through the dialogic interaction among teachers and students alike" (p. 4). My philosophy is that mutuality, while admirable across university disciplines, should be, without question, pursued in writing classrooms, and particularly in creative writing classrooms.

Brooke (1991) argues the importance of student-writers' identity development in writing classrooms, thus the need for student-centered teaching. "Learning seems less important when it is linked to roles an individual rejects or merely complies with" (p. 27). While she supports the concept of student responsibility and empowerment in the classroom, Weimer (2002) prefers the term "learner-centered."

> Being learner-centered focuses attention squarely on learning: what the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning,

> whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and how current learning positions the student for future learning. (Weimer, 2002, p. xvi.)

Thomas and Thomas (1989) describe the need for such developments in education by saying "we need to concentrate on the teacher's role as audience and remember that communication is two-directional" (p. 115). Similarly, Brookfield (1995) writes "putting ourselves regularly in the role of learner has the greatest long-term effects" (p. 50) of all pedagogical tools. Since student-writers may be writing in any of the genres mentioned earlier (literary, mainstream, mystery, suspense, science fiction, romance) and in various forms such as short story, poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction, creative writing instructors could face an overwhelming amalgam of student interests and expectations. As Minot (1976) explains, “When we fail [to consider students’ motives,] we begin to reward those whose approach to writing mirrors our own and unconsciously punish the rest” (as cited in Royster, 2005, p. 35). Therefore, an individualized pedagogical approach grounded in learner-centeredness in the creative writing classroom is imperative.

Yet it is unwise, or perhaps impossible, to discuss issues of student agency without explicit debate regarding instructor authority or power. Bizzaro (1994) notes a goal of creative writing instructors should be to show:

> students not how to change individual texts, but introduce[e] students to the many selves writers might become. To do so, however, teachers must relinquish power in the classroom, abdicate authority granted them through tradition and privilege. The liberation of students begins with the teacher’s willingness to undermine his or her authority in the classroom by using that very authority to do so. (p. 235)

In fairness, relinquishing power is not synonymous with removing oneself from the classroom community. As Royster (2005) explains it, “A way to revitalize the art is to give back to the creative writing student what is most desired: an individual perspective” (p. 37). Similarly, Vandermeulen’s (2005) refers to the concept of placing instructor author in check as authority-conscious pedagogy. Therefore, in the context of this dissertation, I define a writer-centered pedagogical approach as one that supports student-writers’ rights, passions, and unique development of their writing abilities, present and future.

Conclusion

I aim to be among the teachers Vandermeulen (2011) refers to as "those who continue to revise their approach just as they ask students to revise work they care about" (p. xvii.). To revise my approach, I intend to discover what is currently working in creative writing classrooms and what may benefit from improved theory and pedagogy. By disputing any scholars and/or instructors referenced in this dissertation, my intention is to strive toward the potential creative writing studies holds as a discipline for current and future instructors and student-writers. I know many writers struggling at different stages in the process (studying writing in school, gaining knowledge of craft independently or through local writing groups, drafting, revising, searching for agents, searching for publishers, publishing and marketing their work, trying to stay afloat in the industry), and I want nothing more than to hand them Dumbo’s magic feather. But I know it does not exist. The knowledge I can offer them is slightly more complex, and I want that knowledge to be grounded in research. I want to be able to tell them about the history of creative writing studies, about how it has grown and developed, about what has worked for others and how they might discover what works for them.

To achieve such knowledge, there remains a great need for more scholarly discussion in

creative writing studies. I hope to contribute to that conversation not only with this dissertation but throughout my career. This first chapter has illustrated many examples of personal frustrations I have experienced with creative writing as a student and a writer outside of the academy. For example, my experiences have sparked concern regarding the identity development of student-writers in cases when the identity of the instructor or canonical expectations overshadow student-writers own wants and needs in the classroom. Furthermore, student-writers are often expected to read a certain type of work with an implicit suggestion their work should mirror such work; additionally, these readings are often more literary than writerly in that student-writers may not be attaining knowledge of *how* to read like a writer. Finally, student-writers may learn, using the term in the traditional sense, best from each other, but such learning opportunities are often limited to writing workshops. The concern of collaborative learning connects to student-writer identity development because the stronger the identities within the classroom, I believe the greater the opportunity to learn from others will become. As Lauer and Asher (1988) suggested such frustrations may motivate desires for change. These desires represent the seed for a lifelong exploration of the craft and pedagogy of creative writing, but that exploration has to start somewhere. It starts here.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORY OF THE ZOO

Narrative 8

> *I sometimes ask a new group of writing students to make sounds that express how they feel about being in a writing workshop. 'Be honest,' I coax. Their responses usually include such noises as 'ugh' and 'yech.' It's a start. I ask the class to translate these guttural sounds into spoken words, then into writing—a quick journey through the evolution of language. One high school student wrote, 'When I hear I have to write for school an anger builds up in me,' and she traced her anger to frustration: 'My mind is like a vault containing scattered thoughts waiting to break out but just can't. Time passes and I just stare at the blank sheet of paper, hoping a sudden splurge will occur and my writer's hand will write away.' Even when the 'splurge' occurs, as another student pointed out, there are still problems: 'It usually comes out like a mess.'*
>
> *Our task as writing teachers is to help students open those 'vaults,' then to grasp and shape that 'splurge' so that even if it does come out like a mess, it doesn't end up as one. (Zielger, 1981, p. 3)*

Current scholarly discussions in creative writing pedagogy may be limited, but the history of the field has addressed many other concerns, including connections with other disciplines in English departments, lore of creative writing, and the often-challenged writing workshop. Wendy Bishop (1990) wrote "it often seems that creative writers have moved into the mainstream of English departments without understanding or reviewing their own history" (p. xi). In creative writing, such a convention contributes to the acceptance of lore in our pedagogy and unawareness to current innovations in the field. To meet Mayers' (2009) challenge of advocating for creative writing studies, it is likewise imperative to understand the "problematic" history of creative writing, which has often stemmed "from prejudice from those in other disciplines who do not consider creative writing serious and scholarly" (Ritter & Vanderslice, 2007b p. xiii.). With the goal of understanding the rich history of the discipline, I will start by

looking at the most well-read and influential text chronicling the history of creative writing (as far back as 1880), *The Elephants Teach* by D.G. Myers. According to Myers (1996):

> creative writing emerged over the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth as a means for unifying the [then] two main functions of English departments – the teaching of writing and the teaching of literature. (p. xii)

While on the subject of departmental history, however, it is helpful to point out the main functions of English departments have since been refigured, contested, and theorized by several scholars, many of which are cited throughout this dissertation. Creative writing, on the other hand, is in the midst of refiguring, contesting, and theorizing, as the discussion in this chapter illustrates.

Initially, creative writing was instituted to provide literature departments a new lens through which to view poetry and fiction; previously, literary works had been approached linguistically and historically (Myers, 1996). English studies in the late nineteenth century were quite different from our current academic structures. The courses were dedicated to long lectures about literature and did not provide "a satisfactory conception of writing or criticism" (Myers, p. 19). Lectures focused on ancient works like those of Homer and Virgil, according to one Miami University of Ohio student who studied in 1850, and "the general impression among [the students] was that nothing good had been written since" (as cited in Myers p. 19). Literature that was then contemporary was not honored as literature in the academy, and student viewpoints were not welcomed as part of the discussion. Scholars were hired to share *their* interpretations of the literature via lengthy lectures. In fact, students were not even required to read the literature on their own. Instead they listened to the lectures and gained knowledge about the works with their lecturing professors serving as lenses (Myers). "There was no discussion, no question

period" and student involvement in the class was limited to recitation of various readings by the "teacher's demand" (Brereton, 1995b, p. 3).

Although students desired to study literature, an enigma of what studying literature may look like prevailed. Literary study had been strictly philological, "reducing the whole of literature to manageable proportions" (Myers, 1996, p. 27). Philologists "could be identified by [their] attention to words and facts at the expense of ideas" (p. 29). The philological approach was restrictive and selective; on the other hand, "the first lesson of creative learning is freedom of mind and the independence from received opinion" (p. 31). English studies could be defined as "a fastidious and hypercritical scholarship on the one hand and a rhetoric that was distant from the genuine creation of literature on the other" (p. 35). Professors were criticized as literary critics who failed to contribute to the body of literature and writing teachers who possessed the audacity to tell students how to write when they themselves have not written anything worth reading (Myers).

The shift from students sitting quietly and listening to what others think about reading to actually writing on their own was on the horizon. In the late 19th century, Harvard led a movement toward the teaching of writing in the academy (Brereton, 1995b; Myers, 1996). Despite the criticism mentioned above, the introduction of composition courses at the very least provided students with the opportunity to create and to contribute to a body of literature, rather than simply scientifically studying ancient literature. In fact, the creator of the first Harvard program, Adams Sherman Hill, wrote a text entitled *Principles of Rhetoric* that equated rhetoric to an art rather than a science. Brereton surmised "To argue that rhetoric was not a science, not a way of knowing, was to consign it to training, to an introductory level of college, to pedagogy" (p. 10). Equating rhetoric to an art rather than a science moved the Harvard course, which was

taught by Barrett Wendell, closer to the art of creative writing. In fact, Wendell began using the term “creative writer” “as early as 1886 to distinguish one type of writer from another” (p. 46). Although creative writing was far from its current form, “[i]t was the invention of advanced composition [at Harvard] that marks the true beginning of creative writing” (Myers, 1996, p. 46). Furthermore, Donnelly (2012) argues that Harvard presented composition and creative writing as “one and the same…[but] their bifurcated tracts since then are one indication why their intersection remains incomplete today” (p. 141).

Progressive Education

A second major marker of the creative writing movement came in the 1920s. A progressive junior high school educator, Hughes Mearns, was the first to teach creative writing under that name. His goal was “to replace traditional English – grammar, spelling, penmanship, even literature classes – with something more appealing to young people” (Myers, 1996, p. 101). Mearns' (1925) students wrote poetry that was, to his surprise and appreciation, recognized as "good" by William Rose Benét and other authors present at the New York Art Club meeting where his student Tom Prideaux's poem *Circus* was read. Mearns (1929) believed in what he referred to as experience-learning, "the kind that comes to us by being present ourselves at a place where things are done" (p. 242) and creative learning, "known by its signal mark of originality; the genuine creative product is always an expression of one's own inimitable individuality" (p. 244). “Mearns found that ‘creative writing’ was an extremely effective means of motivating students to learn more and to write well. His classes emphasized motivation, active participation, creativity, and self-expression over discipline, historical study, memorization and drills” (Fenza, 2008, p. 166).

Mearns' teachings fell under a larger movement in American education that "*subjects* should not be taught, *students* should" (Myers, 1996, p. 101), a claim that serves as a precursor to the writer-centered approach of this dissertation. "[P]rogressive education espoused schooling as child centered, where creativity, self-expression, critical thinking, and individualism were to be nurtured. These values have become synonymous with American education and the American character" (Berube, 1994, p. 13). Of course the lens through which I view scholarly writings on progressive education, and, in particular as they address creative writing, is influenced by recent scholarship. In other words, my idealistic views of the potential of writer-centeredness in the creative writing classroom paint my readings of the progressive education movement positively. And while the movement can fairly boast some positive outcomes, it also possessed ideals it failed to achieve as Bizzaro's (1997) historical account points out. In criticizing the shortcomings of progressive education, Bizzaro argued that the use of creative writing, during the progressive movement, was meant to encourage students to fit within a socially imposed identity, and when student-writers failed to do so, the teacher's responsibility was to ascertain control over said students and their identity-development. Therefore, Bizzaro would contradict the claim that the progressive approach served as "attempt[s] by educational reformers, psychologists, and philosophers to develop a school experience that would benefit the whole child's intellectual, social, artistic, and moral development" (Berube, p. 14). "Progressive" during Mearns' time referred more so to experiential learning than student-centered learning, as we view it today (P. Bizzaro, personal communication, July 13, 2013).

As the recommendations of this dissertation are progressive in nature, it is imperative to note, even if only minimally, the goals and shortcomings of the progressive education movement for several reasons. First of all, the idea of progressive education that has been supported by the

writings of renowned philosopher of education John Dewey lays the foundation for writer-centeredness as it is discussed in this dissertation. Furthermore, the logical connection between creative writing and progressive education is clear in Myers' (1996) work. He writes that in the 1920s and 1930s, creative writing "was perhaps the most widely adopted of the curricular reforms instituted by progressive education; in many ways it was the model progressive subject" (p. 101). In addition, if the goals of progressive education were muddled by social expectations, as Bizzaro (1997) posits, we might learn from such a mistake. For instance, if we, as educators, aim to facilitate environments that empower student-writers, what pitfalls should we anticipate and avoid? Furthermore, Myers credits Mearns' 1932 experiment as leading to the Progressive Education Association publishing an essay of his in *Creative Expression,* "which ratified the place of creative work in American schools" (Myers, p. 103). Shortly after, the National Council of Teachers of English sanctioned creative writing's place in the English classroom of the future. What was unclear was what the new classroom might look like.

Creative Writing Debate One: The Star System

As creative writing studies began to develop, a series of debates on how to teach writing ensued. One point of contention for creative writing was the idea that "instruction ought to be based on a teacher's practical experience" (Myers, 1996, p. 116); in other words, the argument was that those who write should be the ones hired to teach. Roman Jakobson mocked the suggestion by saying perhaps elephants should teach zoology, but other progressive thinkers agreed with the idea that "[t]he teacher should be himself [sic] a writer. He need not have attained fame or even have published his work, but his knowledge of the problems of writers, and his sympathy with them, will proceed out of his own continued endeavor to write" (as cited

in Myers, p. 116). So the idea of having a writer or a "fellow worker" (Myers, p. 116) at the front of the creative writing classroom was adopted.

In recent decades, the expectation, contrary to the quote above, was that writing teachers *have* attained fame. Vanderslice (2008) refers to this as the "star" system, or as Bizzaro and McClanahan (2007) describe it, the "hiring of published poets, novelists, screenwriters, and creative essayists to teach creative writing" (p. 86).

> This [hiring] is a wonderful thing: the opportunity for students to talk with writers actively engaged in finding solutions to the same kinds of problems in writing the students must solve for themselves. But there is a down side: this kind of teaching fosters master-apprentice relationships, the teacher having near dictatorial control over the students' texts. The logic is pretty simple. If students don't make the kinds of changes their teachers, who have appropriated their texts, recommend, they will receive poor grades. (p. 86)

While Bizzaro admits implementation of the "star" system in creative writing programs is potentially problematic, he also offers the concession that just because someone is a star writer or an "expert practitioner" (Bizzaro, 1993, p. xiv) does not mean he or she is a poor teacher (P. Bizzaro, personal communication, March 18, 2012). Mayers (2009), however, takes the opportunity in discussing the star system to classify those programs that utilize it.

> Where creative writing posits unproblematically that the best writers make the best teachers, creative writing studies views teaching as something that requires experience, training, and continual reflection; creative writing studies acknowledges that writers with only marginal success in publishing sometimes make wonderful teachers and that

sometimes well-published, well-recognized, prize-winning writers make awful teachers. (p. 219)

In other words, we have come full circle in the last century from a time when writing teachers were expected to be writers, although not required to be extravagantly successful ones, to a time when the award-winning, top-publishing authors were hired to attract attention for creative writing programs, and finally to an understanding that the best writers do not necessarily make the best teachers, which is, after all, why they are there. As Leahy (2005) points out, "though we may have been hired because we write, [we] are paid *to* teach" (p. ix). In a later publication, Leahy (2009) offers more clarification by writing:

> That the field hires successful creative writing practitioners – poets, novelists, etc. – to teach may be an accurate judgment, but hiring experts in a given field is a convention of the academy as a whole, not a failure of creative writing per se. In addition, many writers in tenure-track jobs are not so-called stars…I support AWP's statement in The Director's Handbook: "As with other arts, the writing teacher will be effective as a teacher only insofar as he or she is active and engaged as a writer." (pp. 199-200)

Former President and Chair of the Professional Standards Committee at AWP, Brady (2009) furthers Leahy's argument in a *College English* response essay to Mayers' (2009) work that differentiates creative writing from creative writing studies and challenges the way English and creative writing departments have traditionally viewed the role of creative writing instructor. Brady writes:

> A record of publication is a minimum expectation for those hired to teach creative writing, an emphasis on accomplishment entirely in keeping with the standards of other academic disciplines. Such an expectation in no way implies that a writer who proves

inept at teaching would simply be kept on by his or her department. (p. 200)

While some highly-reputed graduate creative writing programs may honor the star system when it comes to hiring instructors, the implication that strength of teaching is not also a consideration is faulty. In other words, an excellent "star" writer *can also be* an excellent "star" teacher.

Creative Writing Debate Two: The Writing Workshop

Narrative 10

> *An automobile accident, in April 2000, resulted in the deaths of four promising first-year female students on our campus. The deep grief that descended on Middlebury College led me to design a course in "Writing to Heal." The roots of this course began in the "4 Divas Writing Project," a series of writing workshops that students and I organized to help cope with campus shock and grief. The project culminated in the publication of a commemorative booklet honoring the four students who had died and other losses our group had suffered. We presented our booklet to the families and to the college community at the one-year anniversary of the girls' death. Students who helped create the booklet thought it not only a wonderful tribute to the young women we had lost but a rewarding endeavor on its own. Students who participated in the Divas Project experienced relief both from writing their own narratives and in reading those of others. Reading others' narratives helped students locate their own experience in a larger pattern of grief and recovery. Writing their own narratives helped participants heal the pain of losing friends and lessened, as one student told me, "the hole in my heart." (Bertolini, 2010, p. 160)*

The next major idea to grow out of the progressive movement was that of the writing workshop, which is still in use and still heavily debated today. Conrad (1937) argued the value of the workshop so that student-writers may "develop…the power of objective criticism of [their] own writing and of [themselves] in relation to it" (p. 48). Yet, Mearns (1929) identifies a challenge with teachers and students criticizing another student's work in that "mutual trust" must be present if the criticism is to be successful (p. 245). Furthermore, criticism of a work-in-progress, a piece of writing that a student is presently committed to, or as Mearns says one that "absorbs all our affectionate interest," could mean any criticism "is not to help but possibly to

destroy" (p. 245). Such a result could prove highly detrimental to student-writers in the process of developing their identities as writers and hamper their writing development as Starkey discusses:

> Opponents of the workshop argued that it tended to punish risk-taking and experimentation and reward uniformity...it sometimes provided students with a bewildering array of wildly contradictory advice; by silencing the author during the discussion of her work, it destabilized the necessarily dialogic nature of the writing process; it undercut its own *raison d'être* by ultimately privileging the voice of the instructor over her students. (Starkey, 2010, p.151)

Coles (2006) further illustrates potential punishment of risk-taking in writing workshops, arguing they primarily teach students "to seek praise (from each other and especially from the teacher) and avoid blame, and so to steer clear of the kinds of risks that might result in catastrophe. Shouldn't we rather be teaching them aspiration, courage, and grace?" (p. 10-11). What Coles is referring to is the kind of "sameness" many scholars (Bishop, 1999; Bizzaro, 2004; Dawson, 2005; Ritter, 2011; Shelnutt, 1989; Tate, 1964) have criticized.

Student-writers may view their creative writing mentors with awe and appreciation so much so "it shouldn't surprise us that some of our own students want to become the writer and person that our performance of self evokes for them. They may even suppose that we possess mysterious powers to effect their transformation" (Vandermeulen, 2011, p. xii). The notion sounds romantic, but it also garners obvious criticism due to the idea that the focus is on the instructor, not on the student-writer. Writing instructors "must respect and have confidence in the students so that they do not make them disciples…or pale imitations of their teachers" (Turner, 1980, p. 2). The criticism goes back as far as Samuel Taylor Coleridge who believed, according

to Dawson (2005), "what activates imagination, is the passion of the individual poet" (p. 32). For Bishop (1999) and others, the workshop should inspire student-writers to take risks with their work; in fact "risk involves experimentation, innovation, play, a sense of potential that far overshadows the possibility of defeat" (Bloom, 2011, p. 61). The alternative could, as Dawson pointed out in referencing Coleridge, kill student-writers' individual passion and personality.

Epps (2006) refers to such a phenomenon as "flawed reasoning" on the student-writers' part and challenges his film students who fail to take risks and rather aim for "formulaic" writing in attempts to "play it safe" (p. 102). To summarize this criticism, creative writing students should understand that "good writing is original, provocative, takes a position, and challenges the reader to take a fresh look at life and the world around them" (Epps, p. 102), and the writing workshop may not facilitate such knowledge construction. Despite such criticism, the University of Iowa relied heavily on the workshop model in the 1930s-1950s, and other universities developing creative writing programs in the twentieth century followed suit. In fact, university programs still rely heavily on the model. Ziegler (1981, 1984) capitalized by publishing a two-part series entitled *The Writing Workshop*. Ziegler's first text provides the theory behind the model and explanations of the writing process (with the workshop model in mind); the second volume features writing assignments for use in the workshop-based classroom. Despite the theorizing described above and the popularity of the model, Bizzaro (2004) argues that workshop writing serves as one of the "many unexamined topics worthy of research in the field of creative writing" (p. 304).

But as Donnelly's (2010) essay collection shows, the workshop model must not be inherited by incoming writing instructors without extensive scrutiny, innovation, and continued re-examination. Nor should it be written off as outdated and ineffective. In Donnelly's collection,

Leahy (2010) calls for instructors to "understand [the workshop's] value and cultivate it" (p. 63). Vanderslice (2010) agrees: "Simply put, the workshop must be modified to respond to the varying populations of students who wish – and deserve – to benefit from it" (p. 33). Only when we recognize the workshop "as a signature pedagogy and as a pedagogical genre" can we move on to "employing the workshop's conventions and options" in ways that benefit student-writers and the discipline as a whole (Leahy, p. 75). To be fair to the debate historically weighted in the model's opposition, the workshop does benefit student-writers in several ways. It places student writing in front of an audience (Mayers, 2010). It helps student-writers gain understanding of their unique writing processes and interests (Royster, 2010; Ziegler, 1981). It creates writerly awareness of how one's work may fit into a larger society or culture (Royster), and it offers opportunities for change and improvement not just for the writer but for the workshop itself (Perry, 2010).

In other words, the debate about the writing workshop should no longer be *whether* it works as a pedagogical tool; in fact, according to Donnelly (2012), the workshop model is creative writing's "signature pedagogy" (p. 1). Vanderslice (2006) points out the workshop model "has nonetheless produced some of the finest writers in the past century that the English-speaking world has ever seen" (p. 150). Therefore, it *can* work. It does not *always* work, but it can. The future debate should not be whether the workshop works but what pedagogical approaches used *within* the workshop model have been successful and *why*. Furthermore, researchers must join scholars (Bishop, 1990; Bizzaro, 1993; Donnelly, 2010; Hunley, 2007; Vandermeulen, 2011) who have offered criticism and alternatives to traditional workshop approaches. Teacher-writers entering creative writing classrooms across the country thirst for such alternatives, as Tobin's (2004) survey of graduate students heading for positions in creative

writing instruction shows. To advance creative writing studies, acceptance of the workshop model must be granted, so that the discussion can move toward the best ways to utilize the model. The same can also be said for another creative writing debate that has caused frustration and anger for generations.

Creative Writing Debate Three: Can It Be Taught?

Narrative 9

> *I first encountered this question [can writing really be taught] at the age of 18, in the stands of a college basketball game, when, in answer to the questions of a well-meaning friend's mother about my collegiate intentions, I said that I might like to study writing. Little did I know at the time that 'Oh, but can that kind of thing really be taught?' was going to be such a constant refrain over the course of my career that I would soon be able to predict when it would rise from someone's lips or in the next sentence of an article simply from a certain slight lift of the eyebrows or foreboding shift in the tone of a phrase. This predictive ability has done little, however, to mitigate the internal wince that commences each time I hear the timeworn phrase* again. *(Vanderslice, 2006, p. 149-150)*

Perhaps a debate even larger than the workshop debate was born when "the doctrine of creativity entailed a rejection of the essentialism inherent in the belief that artistic talent is 'born' or 'hereditary'" (Myers, 1996, p. 120). In other words, the question dreaded by creative writing instructors the world over is *can creative writing be taught*? Even the most renowned creative writing program in the country, the University of Iowa, broadcasts, openly on their web site, a disbelief in the possibility.

> Though we agree in part with the popular insistence that writing cannot be taught, we exist and proceed on the assumption that talent can be developed, and we see our possibilities and limitations as a school in that light. If one can "learn" to play the violin or to paint, one can "learn" to write, though no processes of externally induced training can ensure that one will do it well. (About the Workshop, Philosophy section, para. 1)

The essentialist argument extends to the claim that writers cannot be produced.

> Literature is not a democracy where numbers rule. It is an aristocracy where brains and originality are paramount…[It] is not a trade to be learned by every earnest young person who can read an advertisement, but a holy mystery, demanding a special equipment of hereditary and experience. (McFee as cited in Myers, p. 122)

McFee's writing elevates creative writing to the status of lore, and it should be no surprise, especially with the reference to recent scholarship in the first chapter, that the idea of lore would come under scrutiny. Freedman (1960) writes, "Certainly writing can no more be taught than painting or any skill in any art, but it can be taught as much" (as cited in Ritter & Vanderslice, 2007b, p. xii). Mayers (2007) writes, "creative writers' investment in the notion that writers are born and not made makes the whole issue of pedagogy suspect from the outset" (p. 8). As Bishop (1992) argues, as instructors, we "must believe that [our students] can write. Fiction. Fact. Personal. Scholarly. The Works" (as cited in Bloom, 2011, p. 61). Furthermore, and most notably in terms of this dissertation, Davidson and Fraser (2006) argue for acquisition theory, that creative writing is "a practice as much as it is an art" (p. 21), which places responsibility for developing knowledge and/or improving craft on the writer more so, or at least as much as, the instructor.

For many of these scholars who have built their careers on the belief that writers can learn to be better writers in some way or form, the question is not whether creative writing can be taught but *what* should be taught *and* learned. Leahy concurs when she says "the field has largely moved beyond that question and accepts that creative writing can be learned in an environment that values creativity, establishes a community, and respects the individual" (2010, p. 67). Word of the finality of this debate has not quite spread throughout and beyond university

networks. Additionally, some might refuse to agree that the debate has been settled, but instead rekindle it often. Nevertheless, the acknowledgement creative writing can, in fact, be taught creates opportunities for scholarly efforts to be appropriately placed elsewhere within the discipline; the most notable of these opportunities addressed here is the researching of creative writing studies.

Growth of Creative Writing Programs

According to the President's Commission on Higher Education (1947), American colleges and universities could "no longer consider themselves merely the instrument for producing an intellectual elite. They must become the means by which every citizen, youth and adult, is enabled and encouraged to carry his [sic] education, formal and informal, as far as his native capacities permit" (as cited in Myers p. 160). In addition, colleges and universities assumed the role of cultural center for learned Americans. Part of that cultural contribution included creative writing, and, when creative writing has been discussed, one specific university's program cannot be ignored.

The nation's first graduate creative writing program was founded at the University of Iowa in 1936 and "became the prototype for" programs currently in existence (Grimes, 1999, p. x). And there are many. Degree-conferring creative writing programs grew from 13 in 1967 to 852 in 2010 (Fenza, 2011). One hundred years after the first creative writing course, "Verse-Making," was taught at the University of Iowa in 1897 (Wilbers, 1980), *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the school's graduate program best in the country (Grimes). The prototype the program offered was the workshop model discussed earlier in this chapter. The age of creative writing programs may have sprouted from one major influence, the University of Iowa, but the discipline "remains one of the healthiest and fastest growing branches in the whole constellation

of English studies" (Haake, 2005, p. 44). The programs developed so rapidly that those affiliated with implementing them perhaps found it impossible to evaluate and innovate pedagogy quickly enough to address the growing student interest. But discontent among faculty occurred quickly. As creative writing instructors began challenging the pedagogy adopted from previous generations and the workshop model itself, the question of what should be taught in creative writing programs was raised.

Trio that Started the Discussion

In pursuing answers to questions regarding the types of writers and writing that should be present in creative writing classes, three seminal texts – Joseph Moxley's (1989a) *Creative Writing in America*, Wendy Bishop's (1990) *Released into Language*, and Patrick Bizzaro's (1993) *Responding to Student Poems* – ignited the discussion in different ways. As the first, Moxley's attempts to spark scholarly debate on the teaching of creative writing by inviting several "star" writers to participate in his collection. He suggests "[a]t present, no debate rages in professional journals as to whether creative writing programs are providing students with the necessary writing skills, knowledge of the composing process, or background needed to write well" (p. xi). Bizzaro (1993) reiterates this lack of scholarship four years later in the publication of his text by noting "[a]t one extreme, this dearth of scholarship reflects our profession's lack of curiosity concerning what happens when teachers read and evaluate student poetry. At the other, it reflects simple acceptance of traditional but untested methods of instruction" (Bizzaro, p. xi). Perhaps such methods have gone untested because as Moxley points out, "no one will ever be able to prescribe the precise steps method" (p. xxi).

> Inspiration, talent, originality—these are elusive qualities, qualities that teachers cannot dispense. Yet, to prepare our students to plumb the depths and mysteries of their own

> creative processes and talents, we must establish a supportive environment for experimentation and discovery; we must ensure that we have provided students with knowledge of the composing process, the fundamental techniques of creative writing, literature and critical reading" (p. xxi).

Moxley's collection attempts to provide such knowledge and techniques, featuring pieces addressing relationships among disciplines within English departments, training writers to be good readers, sharing theory on the future of creative writing studies, and offering practical advice for teaching character, point of view, dialogue, workshopping, poetry, editing techniques and other basics. With this work, Moxley is perhaps the first to truly question creative writing programs.

> Rather than growing soft, fat, and sassy with our success and growth, I believed that we needed to examine how well our theories and practices accounted for the demands of composing or for the needs of students who want careers as professional writers. (p. 253)

The importance of Moxley's and other creative writing educators' continued diligence in leading such examinations is evident by the existence of this dissertation. Moxley's call for examining "how well our theories and practices" apply to our students links to several motivating concerns identified in Chapter One.

Shortly following the publication of Moxley's text, Wendy Bishop (1990) published *Released into Language*, a text creative writing studies scholar Stephanie Vanderslice (2006) referred to as "the Dr. Spock of the teaching of creative writing" (p. 153). In reflecting on Bishop's body of scholarly work, Ristow (2011) wrote that this text "seemed to fulfill what Moxley characterized as 'evidence that our discipline [creative writing] is preparing to undergo a

paradigm shift, a period of self-reflexiveness in which we question our theories and practices'" (p. 215). Following one of Bishop's primary efforts during her prolific career, this text aimed to apply pedagogies widely accepted in composition studies to the creative writing classroom. The text argues for putting student-writers "in motion" (Bishop, 1990, p. 14), for student-writers to be released from "writing workshops [that] have often been too static, focusing on published models and then revision of complete student drafts, as opposed to the more active process of showing students how to initiate and develop poems or stories" (Autrey, 2011, p. 20). Primarily, Bishop's passion illustrated her belief that teachers must continue to consider their pedagogy and challenge themselves. They must learn from their student-writers and strive to always improve. In other words, they themselves should be "in motion."

Three years later, Patrick Bizzaro (1993) published *Responding to Student Poems,* which encouraged writing instructors to refrain from appropriating student-writers' poetry by responding to their work through various critical theories. In the way that Bishop (1990) attacked barriers between composition and creative writing, Bizzaro, in this text and throughout his career, focused on applying critical theory often utilized in the literature classroom to the teaching of creative writing. He notes "[p]erhaps no course in writing is more difficult to teach than poetry writing, and no task in that course more challenging than reading and evaluating poems written by student writers" (p. xi). Bizzaro discourages the authority teachers naturally possess; a teacher "devises the plan for teaching the material, offers the authoritative reading of assigned texts, stipulates specific requirements for student writings, suggests revisions, and offers grades and justifications for grades" (p. 5). The theoretical influence of writer-centeredness is reflected in Bizzaro's work. He argues, "Our ultimate goal from this perspective on reading and writing is to help students become more capable and knowledgeable critics of

poems, both their own and others" (p. xiv). His work, along with Moxley's (1989a) collection and Bishop's (1990) instructional text, sparked the contemporary discussion of creative writing studies; and that discussion became richer and richer as the years passed.

State of the Fragmented Union: A Plethora of Pedagogies

Ostrom (1994) noted, “our explanations of what we do in the classroom are driven by our beliefs about what we teach” (p. xi.). As a result, the question becomes: where did our current beliefs originate? Many creative writing students are bound to become creative writing instructors themselves as that has long been the case since Henry Wadsworth Longfellow chose to teach to support his writing career in 1829 (Myers, 1996). Furthermore, Ritter rationalized that those same student-writers “have little recourse but to...‘imitate the teacher in the absence of viable alternatives’” (as cited in Vanderslice, 2008, p. 71). A group of graduate students in creative writing has made a major contribution toward changing this dynamic in the field. Drew, Rein, and Yost (2012) edited a collection of essays written by graduate students on the topic of creative writing pedagogy. The text addresses some challenging issues the student-teachers have faced in their brief, but significant, experience. Wurzbacher (2012) offers a comprehensive discussion on the debate of how creative writing should be evaluated. Wiseman (2012) discusses situations in which students write autobiographical tales about challenging issues, such as violence. Rein (2012) challenges the mantra, "Write what you know," by encouraging creative writing research. Still, though, the contribution of this collection is significant because the graduate students are making strides toward transforming *their* field. And they are achieving this task by talking about incredibly important and relevant issues for teachers of creative writing.

Their contribution represents discussion of the alternatives called for and provided by scholars discussed in these first two chapters, including but not limited to: Wendy Bishop who

believed in the need to allow other disciplines to inform our creative writing pedagogy and to release our student-writers into the motion of *being* writers; Patrick Bizzaro who challenged the conventions of instructor evaluation and response to student-writers' work and called for the discipline of creative writing to feature clearer protocol for research and teacher training; Dianne Donnelly who aimed to settle the debate of writing workshops' value in the creative writing classroom and argued for necessary conditions to establish creative writing studies as an academic discipline; Katharine Haake who, like Bizzaro, challenged instructors' ideological differences and how they unfairly influence students' learning experiences; Graeme Harper who edits *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* and has contributed both practical textbooks and theoretical discussion on creative writing studies; Tim Mayers who called upon scholars to advocate for the very presence of creative writing scholarship in academic discussions; Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice who have both written widely on several debates in the field and illuminated the widespread acceptance of lore in creative writing pedagogy; Ritter who separately called for developments of teacher-training in creative writing graduate programs; Carl Vandermeulen whose empirical research is breaking ground for the future of creative writing studies research. These scholars, and others, have all advocated beyond the need for change. Furthermore, they have offered images of what a transformative creative writing pedagogy might look like. From there, the union of creative writing researchers becomes fragmented; they cannot agree on what "changes" should occur or how they might be implemented. Haake (2005) said it well:

> Mostly, I see creative writing as a still-vexed discipline, where incremental change is more likely than any transformation. Also, I am not convinced transformation is in order

> anymore, since it presumes consensus and, as in many things, our diversities continue to be among our greatest strengths. (p. 42)

Haake's point does not discount the need for pedagogical options in creative writing studies. To discuss pedagogical change, however, we must consider current pedagogies. In her text, *Establishing Creative Writing Studies as an Academic Discipline*, Donnelly (2012) describes the current pedagogies with a taxonomy of four theories: new critical, expressivist, mimetic, and pragmatic. New critical relies on the formalist approach that "can often lead, in the workshopping of student texts, to an editorial orientation directed at technique and, as a result, issues that go beyond the text as an isolated object are not addressed as students are to read only the words on the page" (p. 27). Furthermore, the new critical approach draws student-writers' attention to the formal aspects of a piece of writing, such as dialogue, plot, character development, tone, voice, and so on. As a result, the teacher, with his or her experience, serves within the new critical approach as the "exemplary reader" (Bizzaro, 1993, p. 42). The second pedagogical approach Donnelly discusses is the expressivist theory, a theory in which the catharsis "has moved from the reader, where it properly belongs, to the writer" (p. 42). The pedagogical focus "assigns the highest authority to the writer and her imaginative, psychological, social and spiritual development and how that development influences individual consciousness" (p. 45). Before continuing on to a discussion of the third and final pedagogical approaches Donnelly summarizes, I would like to address the first two in terms of the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

While some instructors may possess deep-rooted preferences for either new critical or expressivist teaching philosophies, the theoretical balance of acquisition and learning suggests both are highly relevant to student-writers' development. Perhaps the comparison here may also

be made between directive and nondirective teaching strategies. The new critical approach represents a directive teaching strategy that is similar to the concept of "learning," as defined in Chapter One. With learning, student-writers are looking to sources outside themselves for knowledge. One of those sources may certainly be the instructor, or the exemplary reader. Instructors are often writers themselves, and they, therefore, have attained knowledge of creative writing through acquisition and learning. Student-writers want to gain knowledge from other writers; therefore, the new critical, directive approach certainly may be valid.

However, the approach is not a singular one. My theoretical framework calls for a balance of acquisition and learning. If the new critical pedagogical approach represents learning, then the expressivist pedagogy represents acquisition. The focus is on the student-writer who possesses the "highest authority." At times in the creative writing classroom, the instructor must minimize his or her influence, so that student-writers can become the highest authority of their writing development. Such a nondirective approach is complementary to a directive, new critical approach and should be embraced in the creative writing classroom.

In further reviewing Donnelly's (2012) taxonomy, mimetic and pragmatic reader-response theories also represent varying forms of acquisition and learning in the creative writing classroom. Mimetic theory, or the modeling of published texts, is obviously popular throughout the creative writing landscape as writing instructors expect that student-writers will take the time to read. Why else would they read but to gain knowledge from such models of writing? Donnelly suggests that "[i]mitation helps our students to identify and comprehend techniques and patterns of writing by experienced writers and that of established genre conventions as starting points from which to launch experimental practices and more autonomous practices" (p. 57). While there is a certain acquiring of knowledge that occurs during reading of such models, the process

is also learning-based in that student-writers are encouraged to read "actively." In that capacity, the goal is for student-writers to be consciously aware of their learning.

The final theory, pragmatic reader-response theory, considers the audience, suggesting that meaning lies not with the writer as expressivist theory suggests but with the reader "or rather the reading community" (Donnelly, 2012, p. 61). A reader-response pedagogy in the creative writing classroom may "invite and open…our classrooms to add more depth to our workshops by varying our reading experiences and approaches" (pp. 63-64). While Donnelly's other three theories represent the current pedagogy in creative writing classrooms, the reader-response theory reads as a call for the future of pedagogy.

Prior to the publication of Donnelly's (2012) taxonomy, Cross (2007) contributed a typology of creative writing pedagogy. She hoped the taxonomy would move instructors to evaluate the pedagogies they employ, as she said, "[u]ntil we are further along in our explorations of creative writing pedagogy" (pp.74-75). Her types are: literary pedagogy (teaching of canonical elements of craft), commercial pedagogy (teaching students with attention to the writing vocation and publishing market), holistic pedagogy (teaching writing as discovery and development for the self), and iconic pedagogy (teaching students what has worked for famous, successful authors). Ultimately, Cross' goal was to evaluate current pedagogy so that creative writing studies researchers might have a sense of direction in considering what improvements could, or should, be made to creative writing pedagogy in the future. Ideally, a combination of Cross' and Donnelly's types would appear in contemporary creative writing classrooms, yet as a whole, their ideas further illustrate the fragmentation of creative writing pedagogies. Instructors may align with one of the theories, dividing them from those instructors whose alliances lie with one of the others. Or, for those instructors, such as myself, who believe

that the types represent a plethora of options to be employed in various instances, the fragmentation may be evident in the support of all over one. Such support may disagree with Harper's (2006a) argument for the need of instructors to unite and form a systemic pedagogy the discipline requires. Yet, I'm not sure consensus and diversity are mutually exclusive. Creative writing instructors will never teach exactly the same ways, but there is potential for pedagogical tools to be borrowed, reworked, developed, shared, and implemented again and again. For that to occur, the instructors the world over must be engaged in the discussion, more so than Vandermeulen's (2011) results suggest they currently are.

Creative Writing Studies: The Path to an Academic Discipline

As I mentioned earlier, although creative writing and composition were considered synonymous in writing's early days at Harvard University, the fields traveled different paths over the last 130 years (Donnelly, 2012). Indicative to this point is the understanding that "[a]s creative writing was defining itself against the research ethos, rhetoric and composition, following literary studies, was buying into it" (Vandenberg as cited in Donnelly, 2012, p. 141). Within the creative writing community today, an aversion to pedagogical research still occurs.

> "Creative writing's long inability to emerge as an academic discipline has more to do with the resistance of the powerful and conservative throng of poets, novelists, and dramatists than with the subject itself and how that subject gets taught. Many writers view creative writing as something that has stumbled, by chance alone, into academe." (Bizzaro, 2004, p. 295).

Perhaps it is due to the aversion to research and the belief that creative writing has stumbled into the halls of colleges and universities that creative writing scholars felt it best to add "one simple word" as Mayers (2009) argues. Donnelly (2012) supports the idea that creative writing and

creative writing studies are "two distinct enterprises" (p. 2). In that case, creative writing scholars aim to develop the latter as an academic discipline; but how might they do that?

Creative writing studies scholarship has exploded in the past two years with such scholars as Donnelly, Harper, and Kroll leading the way. Texts look at the workshop model, creative writing pedagogies, and creative writing research. Together, these publications are developing creative writing studies as an academic discipline, but much work is yet to be done. Donnelly (2012) notes, "[a]s *creative writing studies* is still in its budding phase of development the first step in its field of inquiry requires an exploration of the nature of its existing scholarship and research" (p. 6). Donnelly also argues for advocacy within English departments to place creative writers "in a more visible and comfortable academic home" (p. 9). Creative writing pedagogy has historically relied on lore and tradition "rather than any inquiry or study which has proved its effectiveness," a conclusion Donnelly attributes to Bizzaro (p. 108). Therefore, Donnelly argues "research leads to creative writing as knowledge and, as teachers, we should want, at the least, to be informed about our pedagogy" (p. 124). I agree research into creative writing pedagogy is necessary; that is why I am writing this dissertation. The statement is a challenge for writing instructors who must also possess by AWP standards some credibility as writers and by CCC standards some credibility as instructors. A further challenge for scholars who intend to research creative writing lies in the definition of research itself.

What is Creative Writing Research?

To become successful researchers, creative writing scholars must first consider appropriate methods to inquire into a field that has historically been resistant to any form of research. Furthermore, creative writers still aim to divorce themselves from other disciplines within English departments; and the intention is often mutual. How, then, could creative writers

viably borrow research methods that have been embraced as traditionally literary or compositionist? Furthermore, there is the issue of how some research methods have been supported or discouraged in other English department disciplines. Should creative writing studies embrace methods simply because they worked for literature or composition researchers? Should creative writing studies ignore methods that have been cast aside in other fields? I believe the answer to both questions is no.

Creative writing studies researchers must experiment with methodology openly and flexibly. The question that headlines this section will likely not be answered in any conclusive sense in the near future. However, since creative writing studies is, in fact, a budding discipline, I would argue all forms of research are valid. We must make educated decisions on the methods we, as researchers, would like to explore, but we should also be flexible in attempting varied strategies of inquiry. Furthermore, creative writing researchers should insist on the right to innovate methods.

A recent text edited by Kroll and Harper (2013) explores some such strategies of inquiry in creative writing studies. They write, "[t]he development of creative writing as a research discipline in universities and colleges has not yet been well documented, even though many teachers and students pursue it and many degree programmes incorporate forms of creative writing research" (p. 1). Despite my argument that creative writing research cannot be strictly defined at the present time, the editors aim to offer some clarification on the topic.

> Creative writing research is, therefore, concerned with actions as well as outcomes, with the individual as well as the culture and, furthermore, with concepts and theories that illuminate these complex interrelationships.... [C]reative writing research is fundamentally "practice-led"; or, to put it another way, it always has practice at its

> conceptual core, even when it is dealing with issues of critical understanding or with theoretical speculation. As craftspeople, therefore, writers attend to technique, but not in isolation, each establishing their own version of the practice-led research loop that drives any creative project forward. (p. 2)

It is relevant to note that Kroll teaches in Australia, and Harper taught in the United Kingdom for much of his career before recently taking a professor position at Oakland University in Michigan. The reason this information is relevant is that British and Australian graduate creative writing programs have often included a critical or theoretical component not always, nor often, required by their American counterparts. Therefore, Kroll and Harper's text, which includes essays by instructors from American, Australian, British, and South African universities, is representative of creative writing research on a more worldly scale than this dissertation investigates.

An essay by Brien (2013) in Kroll and Harper's (2013) text distinguishes two types of creative writing research for the nonfiction writer. The first is the traditional research discovery achieved by a structured research study such as this one. The second is practice-led research of reflective thinking done by creative writers to explore "their working methodologies – that they use when creating their artworks, and the various and progressive iterations of that thinking" (p. 36). MacRobert (2013) cites the work of composition researchers Flower and Hayes as a viable method "to examine not simply the process of developing a product, but also the interaction of 'the inner processes of the person producing this product'" (p. 57). Furthermore, MacRobert looks to Csikszentmihalyi's approach of studying the creative process of 91 respondents who discussed their personal perceptions as creative individuals. This single collection highlights discussion of several potential creative writing research methods, which is ideal since creative

writing studies is in its infancy; all research approaches should be considered relevant at this time. Some are borrowed from other disciplines, and some are uniquely appropriate to the writing of fiction and/or poetry. Although the text certainly does not serve as an entire viewpoint of creative writing studies methodology, it does spark the open, flexible thinking I argued for previously in this section. In other words, the collection of essays is successful in MacRobert's (2013) goal for creative writing researchers: "The researcher of creative writing, within the constraints of his own world, needs to occasionally map out some of these often unchartered territories in ways that can be meaningfully used by other explorers of the process of creative writing" (p. 73).

Creative Writing Studies History and This Dissertation

A potential flaw within the budding discipline of creative writing studies is the lack of participation among creative writing instructors. Since many instructors have not joined the scholarly discussion, as Vandermeulen's (2011) research discussed below shows, there is a major hole in our understanding. Furthermore, there are essentially two very different "creative writing" discussions occurring simultaneously. One is the writers' chat via the Association of Writers and Writing Programs' *The Writer's Chronicle*, and the other is the *instructors* of writing forum via *College Composition and Communication* and NCTE (Bizzaro, 2011a; Hesse, 2010). In other words, the former, according to Hesse, focuses on craft and technique, the latter on pedagogy and other academic concerns. Hesse argues the two organizations "view writing through lenses so different it's hard to perceive a common object at their focal points" (p. 31). Bizzaro argues that creative writing has been viewed through CCCC as "composition's helper" and through AWP as the "writer's helper." The epistemological divide between these two high profile avenues for creative writing scholarship and discussion may be contingent upon whether

writing instructors self-identify as writer-teachers or teacher-writers. As a result, there are several possibilities that may further complicate the scholarly discussion of creative writing studies. Teachers of creative writing may: (1) read scholarly journals (such as *College Composition and Communication* and *College* English) that focus on pedagogy, but not specifically creative writing pedagogy, (2) read publications (such as *The Writer's Chronicle, The Writer*, or *Writer's Digest*) that focus on writerly craft, (3) read both, or (4) read neither. In considering these options, complications to the discipline become obvious and undeniable.

These complications contribute to a conclusion that has become a foundational principle in this dissertation research. Because of the divide mentioned above and for other reasons, we have no quantifiable evidence of what is occurring in creative writing classrooms at this very moment. Are the majority of instructors relying on the lore of creative writing? Are they teaching the same approaches and content they experienced as student-writers? Are they teaching what they want to learn as writers? Are they innovating with amazing techniques lost to the discussion? How can we, creative writing studies researchers, answer these and other important questions? Vandermeulen's (2011) text offers some possibilities.

In his survey, Vandermeulen (2011) asked instructors what kinds of approaches they use to encourage feedback and critique among students, to encourage reflectivity of students' own writings, and what influences them in making such pedagogical decisions. Regarding this last question, Vandermeulen found that only 9% of instructors look to "books, articles, workshops or courses in creative writing pedagogy" (p. 2). Another disturbing point is only 13% of those same instructors base pedagogical decisions on "conversations with other creative writing teachers about [their] courses and how [they] teach them" (p. 2). Finally, only 5% have conducted "a more formal and multi-faceted study of a class or classes they've taught" (p. 2). Vandermeulen's

findings show the majority of creative writing instructors are not engaged in the scholarly discussion of creative writing studies. If they are not engaged, not only are they not using the discussion to inform their pedagogy, but those instructors who *are* involved are not privy to the reflection, insight and, ultimately, scholarship of 95% of creative writing instructors.

Conclusion

Narrative 10

> *A year later, for the first time as an English student, in an MA course called Teaching Writing, I was asked to read* about *writing – not literary models, or textbooks crammed with advice about constructing forms, or inspiration how-to's from "established writers." My classmates and I read and talked about essays that obligated us to think beyond our own ostensibly private relationships with an ostensibly acontextual literary pattern. We wrote about discourse, audience, collaboration, discipline, rhetoric, literacy, invention, pedagogy,* theory. *Well before defending my thesis, a collection of short stories and poems, I had already submitted applications for doctoral work in rhetoric and composition. It remains true today that I have barely scratched the surface of what there is to learn about poetry and fiction, but I was already then vaguely aware of the expansiveness of writing as an object of study and the possibilities for teaching writing – newly "known unknowns" that seemed at the time unlikely to ever become known in the confines of the workshop. Some of the graduate students I teach these days in a range of nonfiction courses might well argue otherwise, but I believe I am a much better teacher of creative writing for having wandered away from the sphere of lore to encounter academic discourse. (Vandenberg, 2007, p. 106)*

If a diversified approach to researching creative writing studies and to creative writing pedagogy is ideal, the question becomes: how do creative writing instructors achieve such an approach? Ostrom (1994) encouraged instructors to minimize the overwhelming task of evaluating and innovating teaching practices by focusing on re-evaluating only one type of pedagogy at a time. The literature review in this chapter has highlighted several research areas and infinite potential for contributions to the field of creative writing studies and interactions between this field and other disciplines within English studies. However, Ostrom's advice is

wise: start small. Each of the contributions referenced so far in this dissertation serves as a small piece of a puzzle that illustrates the current landscape of creative writing studies. But the puzzle is limited by barriers – imposed by organizations such as AWP and NCTE, university administrations and departments, and instructors themselves – between disciplines within English studies, lack of participation in creative writing studies scholarship, and the trend of incoming creative writing instructors borrowing the pedagogy of their mentors. As these, and other barriers, are addressed, it is wise to consider another of Ostrom's points: "our college courses are hardly the only writing venue in town" (p. xxi). However, they should be the writing venues that best benefit our student-writers, and instructors must look to research, reflection, and innovation to ensure that is the case.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY:

APPROACHES TOWARD A WRITER-CENTERED PEDAGOGY

> To my mind, one of the worst crimes in the contemporary university is a lack of willingness to push the boundaries of human creativity and thought. Not that I'm holding myself up as an exemplar of boundary pushing! But it seems to me the modern university, at its worst, finds itself more concerned with the detailed management of economic and social performance and the accumulation of corporate 'learning resources', and less concerned with the simple but spectacular human act of *thinking and acting creatively*. (Harper, 2006c, p. 38)

Introduction

My goal in this dissertation is to develop writer-centered approaches for student-writers in creative writing classrooms; in order to make such recommendations, I believe I must first understand and gain knowledge from current pedagogies and instruction. The intention in developing a literature review for a major research project such as this one is to gain an understanding of current scholarship and pedagogy. However, in conducting my literature review, I found an overwhelming argument that creative writing studies is still in its infancy and that many instructors in the field are not even aware of current efforts to develop pedagogical alternatives to traditional approaches. According to Harper and Kroll (2008b), "the principles, methodologies and theories underpinning the discipline are still emerging in a variety of cultural and institutional contexts" (p. 2). For this reason, my intention, beyond the literature review, is to ascertain what pedagogical methods and theories are currently in use in creative writing classrooms across the country.

In good faith, I offer this research as a mark of respect and appreciation for the many years of teaching the creative writing instructors invited to participate possess. Not only did I analyze current pedagogical approaches, but I aimed to gauge whether current instructors are amenable to adopting or further developing writer-centered approaches in the classroom. According to results in the pilot study discussed later in this chapter, many creative writing instructors are already observing writer-centered techniques in their teaching. While creative writing instructors possess the power to institute change for current and future student-writers, Vandermeulen (2011) found too few instructors are engaged in the scholarship of creative writing studies. After considering this and other challenges discussed in Chapter Two, I developed the study detailed below to attempt a solution.

Research Design

The research design in this dissertation is a mixed methods approach of both rhetorical and empirical inquiry. Through personal experience, I identified the "motivating dissatisfaction" (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 4) that creative writing pedagogy is not as writer-centered as it could be and that an appropriate balance of acquisition-based and learning-based pedagogical approaches in creative writing courses may be limited, and therefore, unsatisfactory as well. Furthermore, although scholars have successfully argued for the need for pedagogical strategies for the creative writing classroom, few examples exist in contemporary scholarship. As Lauer and Asher identify, "These irritations were motivating because they…were transformed into catalysts for inquiry" (p. 5).

Through exposure to interdisciplinary scholarly readings in my doctoral coursework, I found that theories well-established in other disciplines may benefit the further development of creative writing studies. This rhetorical research, or gaining insight from developments in other

academic fields, as Lauer and Asher (1988) define it, led me to the work Krashen (1981) has done in second language learning, Gee (1987/2006) has done in new literacy studies, and Weimer (2002) has done in education, as discussed in Chapter One. The reasons these scholars' works translate so well to discussions of creative writing is clearer when considering some of the most recent scholarly research in the field. Vandermeulen (2011) has argued that creative writing is both personal and interpersonal; both terms imply a connection to student-writers and their desires and contributions. Yet, Vandermeulen also found that many instructors rely on the pedagogy of their predecessors. His work and the work of others suggests a need for pedagogy inspired by current student-writers, not former teachers. Therefore, the rhetorical inquiry described above has led to a theoretical framework of writer-centeredness in acquisition and learning techniques of today's creative writing classrooms for empirical inquiry. Lauer & Asher argue empirical inquiry is a natural successor to rhetorical inquiry because it "in turn helps verify theory" developed through rhetorical inquiry (p. 7).

Lauer and Asher (1989) further contended "that deliberate and interactive multimodality, especially rhetorical and empirical research, offers a richer opportunity for studying the complex domain of composition studies" (p. 7). Considering Bishop and Mayer's arguments that creative writing studies has much to gain from the research done in composition, I argue Lauer and Asher's claim above regarding the benefits for composition research may also extend to creative writing studies research. Therefore, the empirical study in this dissertation is also a mixed methods approach, relying on discourse analysis of creative writing course syllabi and analysis of a brief survey accompanying the syllabi in an attempt to better situate the documents.

Focus of the Empirical Study

> Research is best conceived as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. It is a most important tool for advancing knowledge, for promoting progress, and for enabling man [sic] to relate more effectively to his environment, to accomplish his purposes, and to resolve his conflicts. (Mouly as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 40).

The field of creative writing studies is ready for solutions. Literature on whether creative writing can be taught and whether the writing workshop works is vast, but options for teaching creative writing are lacking. Other scholars in the field realize the need for pedagogical alternatives; many are addressing the research challenge. With that in mind, the goal of this dissertation is to conduct research that "arriv[es] at dependable solutions" (as Mouly describes it above) for the challenge of teaching something we believe can be taught in an environment that we believe can work.

Vandermeulen's (2011) work shows creative writing instructors have relied on the pedagogy that shaped *their* educations. With that knowledge in mind, my beliefs in pursuing this research were as follows: (1) student creative writers enroll in creative writing classes for different purposes, and a one-size fits all approach to their education is neither fair nor appropriate; (2) student creative writers should strive to become independent thinkers and writers, and a writer-centered approach is the way to achieve such independence; (3) student creative writers should not only be *taught* craft techniques; they should also aim to acquire such knowledge through their own exploration and significant practice. In other words, a writer-centered approach rooted in acquisition and learning techniques in the creative writing classroom may be the pedagogical answer creative writing instructors desire. Furthermore, such an

approach may bridge the gap between what creative writing programs offer student-writers and what student-writers expect to gain from them. Of course, "[e]ven with hypotheses or questions in mind...a descriptive researcher tries to withhold judgment in order to allow the weight of data to suggest new conclusions" (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 25). Care was taken in my research design to minimize my influence, as a researcher, on the findings.

Throughout the study illustrated in the following pages, these research questions were addressed:

1. What does a collection of creative writing syllabi illustrate as the current pedagogy in American creative writing classrooms?
2. What alternatives to traditional creative writing "lore"-based pedagogy are currently in use?
3. Considering the theoretical framework this dissertation employs and approaches discovered to currently be in use, what techniques might the future creative writing classroom employ?

The Method: Discourse Analysis

While discourse analysis has many meanings, at its core, it refers to the describing of texts (Johnstone, 2002). Hoey (2001) defines a text as "the site of interaction between a writer and readers which the writer controls" (p. 13). The texts to be analyzed or described in this dissertation are syllabi from creative writing instructors across the country; these syllabi represent interactions between creative writing instructors and creative writing student-writers. As Rapley (2007) posits, people study "language as performative and functional: *language is never treated as a neutral, transparent, means of communication*" (p. 2). In discourse analysis, the focus is *how* language is used, and certain assumptions are made that the text is the way it is

for specific reasons. "…[T]he basic question a discourse analyst asks is 'Why is this text the way it is? Why is it no other way? Why these particular words in this particular order?'" (p. 8). More specifically, Johnstone offers six "broad" categories that illustrate "how discourse is shaped by its context, and how discourse shapes its context" (p. 9). In other words, for the purposes of this dissertation, I argue the syllabi (or discourse) are shaped by the context of the field of creative writing, the university, the instructor, and the course; the syllabi *shape* the context of the course, the students, the university, and the field of creative writing.

Johnstone's (2002) categories are as follows:

- Discourse is shaped by the world, and discourse shapes the world.
- Discourse is shaped by language, and discourse shapes language.
- Discourse is shaped by participants, and discourse shapes participants.
- Discourse is shaped by prior discourse, and discourse shapes the possibilities for future discourse.
- Discourse is shaped by its medium, and discourse shapes the possibilities of its medium.
- Discourse is shaped by purpose, and discourse shapes possible purposes. (p. 9)

Several of Johnstone's points above are particularly relevant to this research, which clarifies the value of course syllabi as a discourse and discourse analysis as a research method. Syllabi represent ideologies of instructors and institutions. Therefore they further serve as representative, at least in some ways, of the learning environments of current creative writing student-writers. Syllabi initiate (or enroll) students into academic environments where "specific way[s] of knowing, acting and being and understanding the world" (Rapley, 2007, p. 123) range from implicit to explicit; in that capacity, they serve as a rich discourse for analysis.

The Discourse

In a survey of 200 professors, administrators and students, Cooper and Cuseo (1989) found a course syllabus is "the component most often contributing to effective college teaching" (as cited in Matejka & Kurke, 1994, p. 115). As a text, the syllabus accomplishes each of the three functions Halliday (1998) characterizes: (1) "The *ideational* function, which concerns how ideas or material are represented," (2) "The *interpersonal* function, which considers the relationships between utterer and audience and between utterer and material," and (3) "The *textual* function, which concerns how a text represents itself and creates internal organization, and holds itself together" (as cited in Bazerman, 2006, p. 84). In considering all three of these functions, it is clear why the syllabus, as a text, a genre, and a discourse, is worthy of analysis.

Furthermore, Parkes and Harris (2002) and others (Cooper & Cuseo, 1989; Lowther, Stark & Martens, 1989) view the course syllabus as "a contract…a permanent record, and...a learning tool" (p. 55). Parkes and Harris identify the syllabus as contract as one of three main functions of the document. They believe "[a]s with other contracts, some syllabi can be heavily negotiated and others not" (p. 55). When it comes to student-writers and the idea of a writer-centered classroom, this point is an interesting one. For Parkes and Harris, the matter of student agency may be decided by their academic level. In other words, they suggest introductory courses may see more restrictive course syllabi than those in senior or graduate seminars. The perspective on what to include is mixed in that "[s]ome instructors feel that it is their right and responsibility to make all decisions about course content and procedures, and others believe that students should always provide input into such matters" (p. 55). Singham (2007) compares the authoritative tone of such syllabi to "the first day of incarceration [rather] than of learning" (as cited in Ludwig, Bentz, & Fynewever, 2001, p. 20). For the purposes of this study, the presence

and/or prominence of authoritative language in the “contract” may offer insight into how writer-centered the classroom is currently and whether the instructor would be open to pedagogical tools meant to increase the classroom’s writer-centeredness in the future.

The second function Parkes and Harris (2002) list for the syllabus is that of a permanent record. This aspect of the syllabus is valid because it facilitates the discourse analysis this research design is founded upon. In other words, since as Parks and Harris point out, accrediting bodies require details of course content, performance expectations, and assessment procedures, "syllabi can be quite helpful in efforts to evaluate both individual instructors and entire programs" (p. 57). Instructors are encouraged to create syllabi that accurately reflect their teaching philosophies and the courses they have designed for their students (DiClementi & Handelsman, 2005; McKeachie, 1986; Parkes & Harris, 2002); however, there are several audiences – students, administrators, colleagues, and the instructor – that influence the construction of course syllabi. Therefore, conducting analyses of the representations of these courses is a strong initial step to conducting analyses of the courses themselves, but there are certainly limitations to be considered. Such limitations are discussed later in this chapter.

Finally, the function of the syllabus as a learning tool supports this research because "faculty members realize that students do not do all of their learning while sitting in the classroom" (Parkes & Harris, 2002, p. 57). In other words, the syllabus serves the purpose of leading student-writers in the realm of acquisition techniques, particularly in the assignments listed. Parkes and Harris write, "Students learn as much or more by reading, writing, researching, and discussing outside of the class as they do from direct interaction with a faculty member" (p. 57). Thus, the syllabi collected are appropriate for analyzing opportunities for both acquiring and learning creative writing skills.

In a larger sense, analyzing syllabi is also appropriate for understanding creative writing instructors and the current climate of the discipline at the undergraduate level. Bazerman (2006) argues that the analysis of texts facilitates the understanding "of students' writing and reading abilities, to assess their skill, to provide them guidance in their production and reception of texts, and to produce materials and curricula for such competence" (p. 77). Of course, he is referring to students' written texts in this regard, but if his claims are accurate, then similar claims could be made about the assessment of instructors' abilities, awareness and competence, if even in a very *minimal* way. In other words, this research does not mean to suggest that the teaching abilities of participating instructors can be fully and accurately gauged from this analysis. It does, however, suggest that some insight into teaching philosophies and course climates, particularly as framed by the theoretical influences of writer-centeredness, acquisition, and learning, may be garnered.

Focus of the Analysis

Pilot study. To better prepare for challenges I might encounter in the discourse analysis of syllabi, I conducted a small-scale pilot study of ten creative writing course syllabi. Miles and Huberman (1984) argue that the recursive nature of collecting and analyzing data "can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots" (p. 49); for me, the pilot study discussed here served a similar purpose. The syllabi included and analyzed in the study were published online and retrieved from university web sites. I coded language in the syllabi that I believed represented: writer-centeredness, acquisition techniques, and learning techniques. I also marked instances of authority that contradicts writer-centeredness. Examples of such language can be found in the sections below. From this study, I found several words that were later flagged in the NVivo software during the large scale study; the purpose, then, was to create a starting point for analysis, and the flagged language served as that starting point.

The pilot study also alerted me to further limitations with the study of course syllabi. While some professors illustrate personality and teaching philosophy, both of which would benefit the findings of this dissertation, others treat the syllabus as a simple contract, listing only the policies student-writers must obey, or else. These authoritarian syllabi speak to the authoritarian teaching philosophies of those who use them. However, beyond that assumption, they carried little value for analyzing instances of acquisition and learning in course writing and reading assignments because the assignments were not available in the syllabi.

To be more specific, for the pilot study, I analyzed ten syllabi I collected in a Google search with the terms, "creative writing" and syllabus and .edu. In scanning the search results, I chose syllabi that were (1) connected to an .edu college or university web site, (2) could be accessed as a non-web document (i.e. pdf or Word doc.), (3) dated 2011 or 2012. I included these criteria for several reasons. First, high school creative writing instructors and programs not affiliated with academic institutions also post their syllabi online; since my research is focused on undergraduate programs, I searched for syllabi that represented undergraduate programs via the .edu address. Secondly, the ability to print a document such as a Word document or a .pdf facilitated the research analysis and is most representative of what instructors would distribute the first day of class. Finally, my goal is to better understand current pedagogy. I found syllabi from eight to ten years ago online but felt that more recent examples would best support my goal.

Of the ten syllabi selected, two are from the same university, but the other eight are from various universities and colleges in the United States ranging from community colleges to private colleges and large universities. The documents range in page length from 1-19, and the average page length is roughly seven pages. Here are a few other notable points I found during the analysis:

- Half include a course schedule as part of the document.
- Only three included some aspect of creative language by using a quote about writing from a famous author.
- Only one referenced encouragement to pursue publishing of the student-writers' work produced in the course.
- One blatantly issued student-writers a warning that the writing in the course was meant to be "literary," continuing that opportunities for "other" genres will be possible "after you've made some headway understanding how to craft the story itself."
- Of the five instructors who "require" specific readings, none of the syllabi issued students the right to choose readings that apply to their particular interests.
- One instructor did invite the student-writers to recommend to the class titles "that have impressed them."
- Another instructor recommended, but did not require, several titles, one being his own. A second instructor required a text he edited in addition to another anthology.
- Required texts were mixed between original fiction and poetry and readings about developing various aspects of craft, such as King's *On Writing* and Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*.
- One instructor made absolutely no mention of reading assignments for the course.
- Another took a stand against required reading in general. She wrote, "There is no required text for this class because I have not found one that I think is worth your hard-earned dollars."
- One instructor urged student-writers to read as widely as possible because "literature itself is always the best instructor and the close reading of texts with a view to unlocking

their secrets is invaluable in becoming a serious writer."

- Although nine of the instructors mention reading assignments in some fashion, interestingly none of them address *how* to read like a writer, which is one of Prose (2006) and Rubin's (1983) criticisms highlighted in Chapter One of this dissertation.

Analyzing the syllabus as a learning tool was interesting in this pilot study as well. Six of the instructors took the opportunity to offer some morsel of instruction on the craft of writing. The instructors make arguments for the need to develop observation skills, read widely, minimize distractions such as laptops and mobile phones, and think of writing as "easy as talking to one's closest friend or lover."

Instructors spent significantly more space in the syllabi on grading policies. Seven of the syllabi included detailed breakdowns of course grading, a number that actually surprised me as lower than expected. The theoretical framework of writer-centeredness creates challenges for "grading" student-writers because of the clear use of power involved. Furthermore, grading creative writing is even more suspect as one instructor pointed out on her syllabus. Reflecting Cantrell's (2005) sentiment, this instructor took an interesting approach to the creative writing grading debate by "highly" encouraging her students to enroll in the class on a "credit/no credit" basis, so that a grade will not be necessary. Of course, the credit/no credit status necessitates a mark of essentially pass or fail, or in other words some form of evaluation.

Even in those syllabi that offered more information in the pilot study, details on writing and reading assignments were often more limited than I would prefer for this analysis. Therefore, I decided to include a brief survey along with the syllabus request in the main study (see Appendix C). The survey provided the opportunity to situation my syllabi, so that comparisons in types and levels of creative writing courses could be made.

Writer-centeredness. This section and the two that follow will identify terms flagged in the pilot study as writer-centered, anti-writer-centered, acquisition-based, and learning-based. The terms were used as a foundation for beginning the formal research study for this dissertation.

Bizzaro (1993) argues "few arenas offer the power of privilege so totally unchecked by a second or third party than the classroom" (p. 5). He explains further that if the teacher "devises the plan for teaching the material, offers the authoritative reading of assigned texts, stipulates specific requirements for student writings, suggests revisions, and offers grades and justifications for grades" (p. 5), he or she is "not only doing most of the writing in the course" but is also "setting rigorous laws for students to abide by" (p. 5). These are situations creative writing students find themselves in and just the reason an approach of writer-centeredness is necessary; the approach should be reflected in the syllabus from the first day of the course.

In the pilot study of ten published syllabi described above, I flagged the terminology in Table 1 below as writer-centered based on my definition of the term in Chapter One.

Table 1

Start-list of Codes that Signify Writer-centeredness

Choice	Community	Diversity	Each	Encourage	Facilitate	Free
Help	His or Her	Inspire	Interests	Motivate	Original	Own
Personal	Self	Support	Students'	Their	Unique	Your

Several of these words were flagged in more than one pilot study syllabus. They were later used as starting points for the discourse analysis of syllabi submitted for main dissertation study. Of course, in some instances, the words above are not writer-centered. Context is key to understanding the purpose of each word choice. However, the language in Table 1 serves as a good starting point for data collection.

The pilot study alerted me to the authoritarian nature of some creative writing syllabi. I

am familiar with the debate of how instructors strive to balance personality and student agency with the need to meet expectations for inclusion of university policies in course syllabi (Baecker, 1998; DiClementi & Handelsman, 2005; Singham, 2005). However, since this dissertation advocates for writer-centeredness in creative writing classrooms, consideration of language that illustrates power is necessary. Table 2 below illustrates the terms I identified as uniquely anti-writer-centered during the pilot study analysis.

Table 2

Start-list of Codes that Signify Anti-writer-centeredness

All	Critical	Don't	Exception	Excused	Exemplary
Expected	Fail	Must	Need	Pardoned	Required
Selected	Substantial	Succeed	Within	You	

As was the case with writer-centered language, context is key here as well, and context was considered in the data analysis. The software marked all uses of these terms, but I reviewed each one to determine if it truly represented anti-writer-centeredness. Therefore, the data in this dissertation reflects those adjustments.

Narrative 11

> *I already had a Master's degree in Creative Writing but was on a quest for a teacher, one who wrote the way I wanted to write, who told the kind of truths I was committed to, who had the power and prestige I secretly longed for…*
>
> *What I really wanted was a Mentor. Not a pragmatic, "showing-the-ropes" kind to guide me on how to publish my work, shine my reputation, and attract favorable attention and reviews. All that would be a bonus, but that was not the object of my quest. Instead, I wanted someone to help explain me to myself. That is, someone who could read my work and say, "Here's what I think you're trying to do," and then suggest ways to do it better – or do something else. At that time, working on my writing and working on myself was more or less the same thing to me. I wanted a Mentor who understood that, who understood what I was up to and could show me how to keep going. Two years out of graduate school, I didn't think I could keep going on my own. Like hot house flowers that lose their luster once transported to a less temperate climate, I found it difficult to sustain*

a writing life outside academia. (Cain, 2007, p. 28)

Acquisition techniques. Gee (1987/2006) says "acquirers know that they need to acquire something in order to function and they in fact want to so function" (p. 32). Acquisition is imperative to student-writers because "acquirers usually beat learners at performance" (p. 33). In other words, in the "performance" of writing, acquisition techniques are necessary. To draw a distinction between acquisition and learning in the syllabus, acquisition techniques are those in which skill may be developed subconsciously through *practice*. In the pilot study, I identified the terminology in Table 3 below as acquisition-based.

Table 3

Start-list of Codes that Signify Acquisition

Daily	Exercises	Experience	Explore	Listen	Practice	Process
Read	Reading	Revise	Revising	Workshop	Write	Writing

The same comments above regarding context apply here as well.

Narrative 12

So during this period, I had occasional meetings with my supervisor, but the main focus of my work was to read as widely as possible the relevant literature (in other words, to undertake the classic doctoral literature review) and to plan the shape and structure of my creative project. In my case, the literature review was two-part. I needed to read as many verse novels as possible in order to get a sense of practice in the area, both contemporary and historic. But, because I had chosen a theme that included a historical strand, I also needed to research texts in Irish history to identify a period or a source material that would provide me with a framework for the narrative. Thus the first year of the doctorate involved a lot of reading, a good deal of note-taking, but little or no creative work. This became a source of increasing frustration as it seemed to completely contradict my preconception that doing a doctorate in Creative Writing would actually involve writing creatively. (O'Mahony, 2008, p. 36)

Learning techniques. Gee (1987/2006) says "learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching [which]...involves explanation and analysis" (p. 32). In the creative writing classroom student-writers must be exposed to opportunities for such learning, or teachable moments. These moments may come from peer discussion, instructor lecturing, visiting author presentations or any instance when the student-writers are engaged in "breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts" (p. 32). The distinction then between learning and acquisition in analyzing the syllabi is that learning techniques involve critical analysis of *theory*. In the pilot study, I flagged the terms in Table 4 below as learning-based.

Table 4

Start-list of Codes that Signify Learning

Analyze	Critique	Discuss	Examine	Judge	Lecture
Read	Reflect	Reflection	Reflective	Study	Theory

The same comments regarding context above apply here.

Narrative 13

> *On the first day of my fiction workshops at Harvard, my students and I tell a story together. This is an exercise devised, I believe, by the angelic writer Nancy Willard. There are usually twelve of us sitting around a seminar table, and we're feeling simultaneously excited and terrified and hopeful and more than a little worried that we'll be unmasked as imposters. (At least I'm feeling these things, and because I've never met a writer who wasn't constantly enduring some mishmash of this weird and potent anxiety, I assume student writers are likewise afflicted.) I tell them that I'm thinking of a character, a man named Bill. Bill, I say, wants a glass of water. Then, with the students confused and staring at me in silence and thinking maybe they should've opted for that economics class taught by the professor who eats his chalk, I turn to the person on my right and ask what happens next in the story.*
>
> *And like that, they're at home. It's one of my favorite moments in teaching, seeing this particular relief deliver the students to solid ground. With the parameters of the project established – each writer contributes to the narrative, then passes it to the right –*

their imaginations soar and they're eager to spend the next twenty minutes telling Bill's story. (Bill's story, you should know, is almost always of the Old Testament sort: abject poverty, intestinal parasites, wolverine and black widow and IRS agent attacks, alien abduction with requisite probing, projectile vomiting resulting from nonpotable water ingested earlier in the story, pachyderm stampedes , and so on. A sadistic bunch, tomorrow's literary lions.) And soon there's this important and undeniable and infectious air of confidence filling the room; I always imagine it's what a locker room would feel and sound like after an underdog football team has won a championship. When the impromptu narrative comes full circle and ends, the students clap and laugh and debate who rained down the most creative trouble on good ole Bill. Was it the iron maiden? The quicksand? The botched sexual-reassignment surgery? Then, in my most professional tone, I ask a serious question, the question that the whole exercise has been building toward: "Where did the story change?"(Johnston, 2007, p. 1)

Discourse Analysis of Course Syllabi: Study Design

The knowledge gained during the pilot study helped me to better design the primary study for this dissertation. The pilot study was much more informal than the primary study. Specifically, the pilot study was inductive and exploratory in that I read through each syllabus and allowed the data to provide a code for future analysis. I will discuss more about how the start list of codes developed, but first, I'd like to discuss the earlier stages of the research study.

To begin, I compiled a database of undergraduate creative writing faculty teaching in the United States. This list was limited by membership in the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP); in other words, I accessed the organization's list of nearly 440 member programs as a starting point for my database. The process of developing the database then became a rather exhaustive one. For each of the 439 schools, I clicked on the AWP profile and subsequent link if one was provided or conducted a Google search for the English department of that member school. Then, I visited the department's web site, accessed the faculty profiles, if available, and studied them until I located the programs' creative writing instructors. In many cases, this process was sufficient. However, there were variations when the creative writing

faculty was classified under the creative writing department, not the English department, which required an additional search. Furthermore, there were instances when faculty email addresses were not included on profiles, which caused me to visit the institution's directory. In some cases, they were available; in others, they were not. In all, the database included 1,997 creative writing instructors from private and public colleges and universities across the country.

The database was completed during July 2012, and the following month I secured IRB approval to begin my formal research. In mid-August, I used the Qualtrics software to email the nearly 2,000 potential participants. The email (Appendix B) linked the participants to an online IRB Informed Consent form (*Figure 1*) and survey (*Figure* 2) where they could also attach their

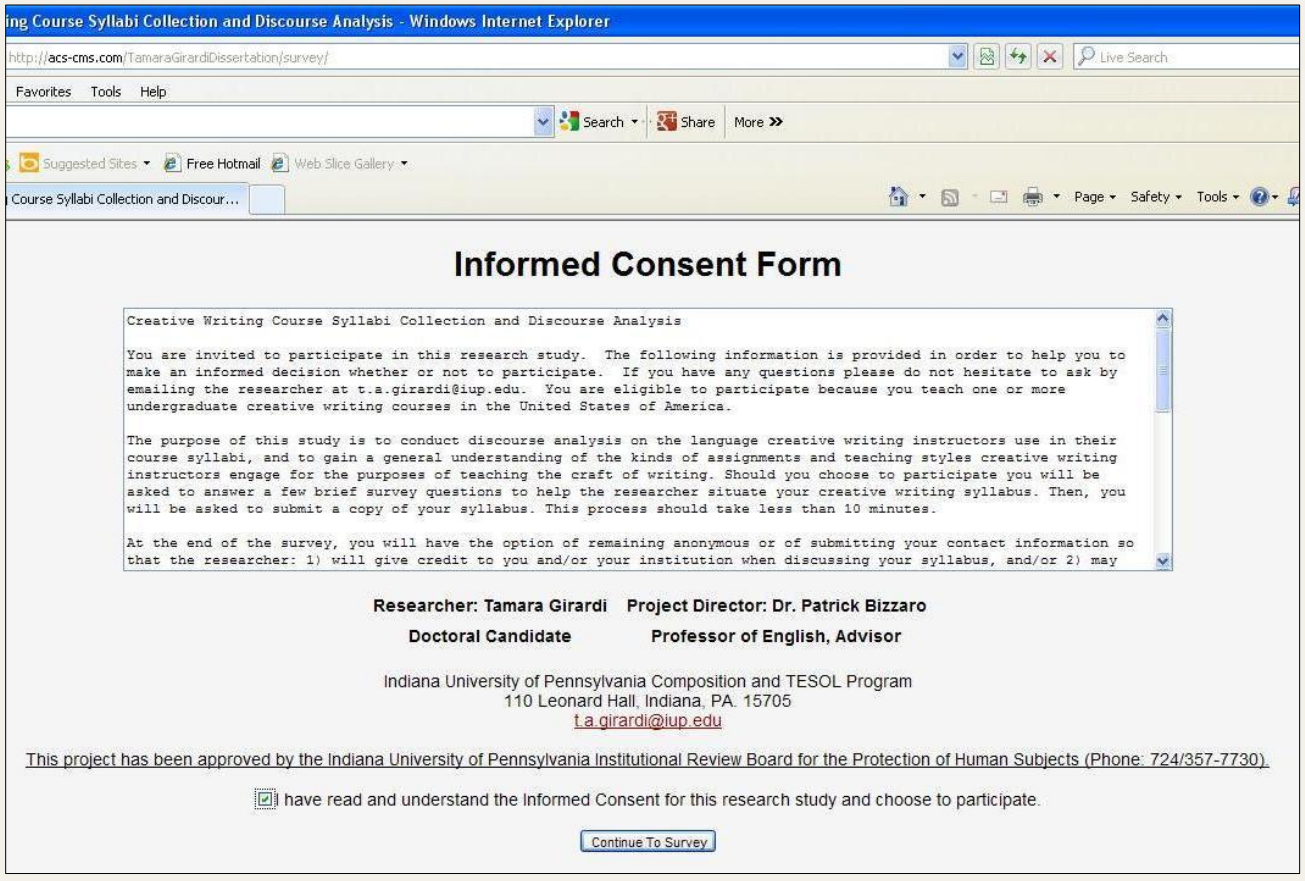

Figure 1. Print screen of Informed Consent Form as part of online survey. To access the online survey, participants were first directed to this page where they had to click the box that states they read and understand the research study details and offer their informed consent for participation.

syllabi and any other supplemental materials to be reviewed in the data analysis process.

As you can see in *Figure 1*, participants could scroll down to read the entirety of the Informed Consent Form. The required contact information for my university, the Institutional Review Board, and me, as the researcher, was available, and in order to continue to the survey page, the participants had to check the box that reads: "I have read and understand the Informed Consent for this research study and choose to participate." Participants then clicked "Continue to Survey," a link that only appears once the informed consent is given, and they are directed to the survey shown in *Figure 2*.

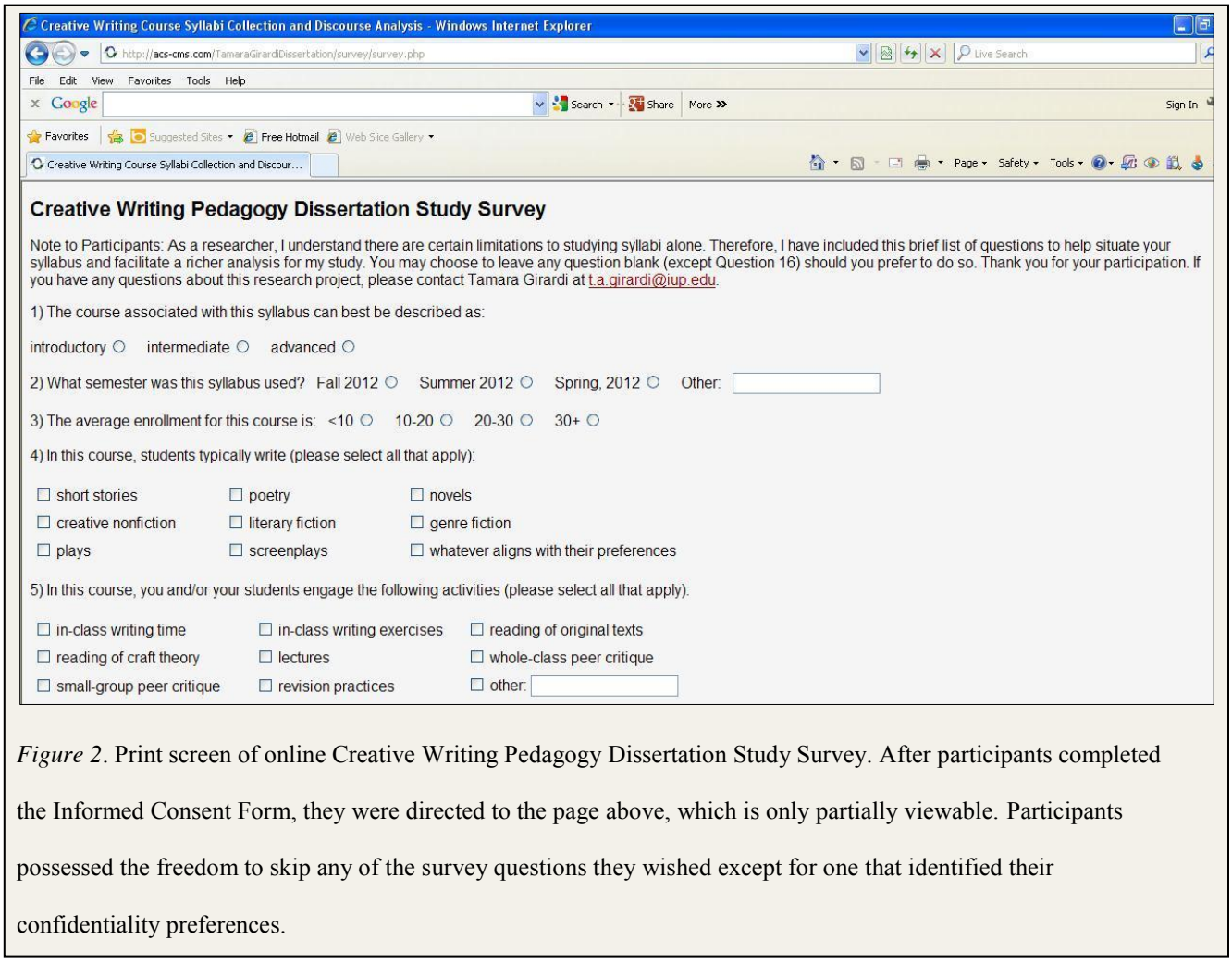

Figure 2. Print screen of online Creative Writing Pedagogy Dissertation Study Survey. After participants completed the Informed Consent Form, they were directed to the page above, which is only partially viewable. Participants possessed the freedom to skip any of the survey questions they wished except for one that identified their confidentiality preferences.

The screen shot of *Figure 2* above shows roughly half of the survey page. The "Note to Participants," reads:

> As a researcher, I understand there are certain limitations to studying syllabi alone. Therefore, I have included this brief list of questions to help situate your syllabus and facilitate a richer analysis for my study. You may choose to leave any questions blank (except Question 16) should you prefer to do so. Thank you for your participation.

Again, I included my contact email for any participants who had additional questions. Also, to clarify, Question 16 asked instructors about their confidentiality preference, which I felt was imperative for the research. Participants could choose from the following options:

A) I prefer the researcher use only the content of my submission for analysis, but not include my name or institution in any subsequent discussion or publications, or

B) I prefer my syllabi be attributed to me in this dissertation and any subsequent publications.

Many of these syllabi are already published online via various college and university web sites; therefore, I felt that this corpus was unique in that regard, and as Rubin and Rubin (2005) point out, if participants "might want to be identified...ethical concerns require you to identify your interviewees, not keep their identities confidential" (p. 106). When participants completed the survey and attached their documents, they were greeted by the page shown in *Figure 3* below.

Before continuing my discussion regarding data collection, I want to clarify some aspects of my procedure. Originally, I had intended to utilize the Qualtrics software to conduct the surveys and collect data. However, due to certain limitations to be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Five, I was forced to find other means. The IRB Consent Form and survey were public web documents housed on a server provided by a private company, Advanced Communications.

A web programmer from the company worked with me to develop the pages and their content. While the pages are public, the data collected is secured on a password-protected server with the utmost security and safety. It should also be noted that although I created a panel of my nearly 2,000 potential participants in the Qualtrics program and emailed said participant pool via Qualtrics for my first round of requests, I altered my approach for the second round, or the reminder emails. The Qualtrics approach led to some complications more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Five, so I chose to directly email instructors in the second round of reminder emails from my IUP student email account. I created email lists of 100 potential participants for each email and sent out reminders in smaller chunks to ensure the technology was working effectively. Again, there is more discussion on why I made this procedural decision in Chapter Five.

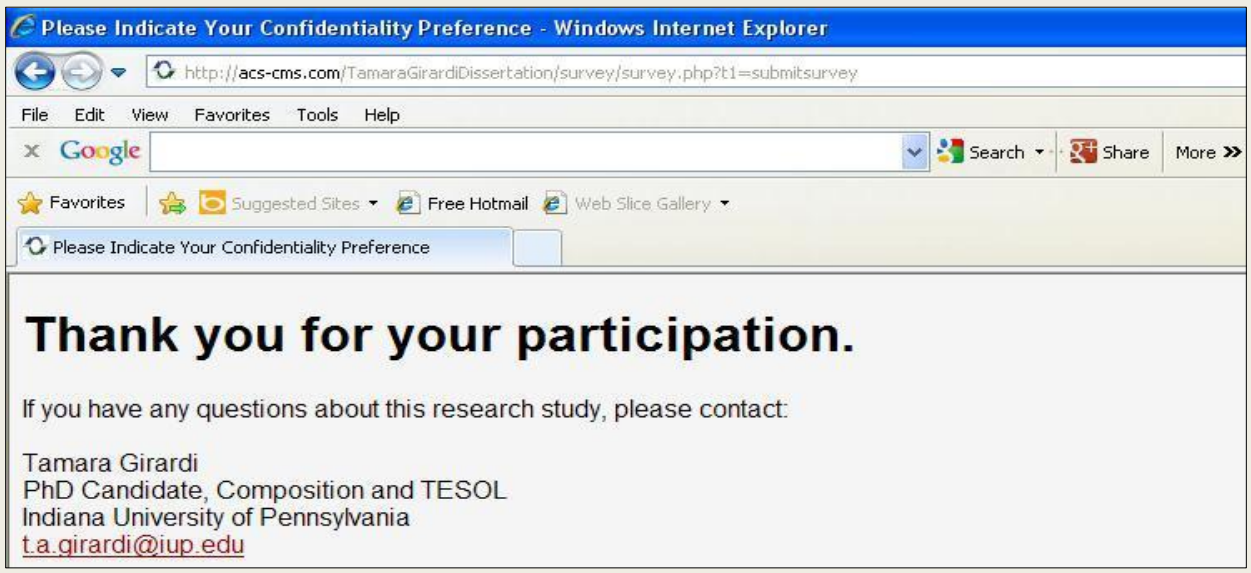

Figure 3. Print screen of final online survey page. When participants completed the online survey, selected their confidentiality preferences, and uploaded syllabi and other files for analysis, they were greeted by the page shown here.

Once the survey and syllabi data were collected via the online forms, I compiled an Excel document of all of the survey data and a folder of all of the submitted syllabi. It should be noted

that some instructors chose to email me directly, attaching their syllabi, rather than completing the online IRB consent, survey, and upload process. In these cases, I contacted the participants to confirm their confidentiality preferences; however, the other survey data to situate their syllabi was unavailable. To begin the data analysis, I imported each of the 67 syllabi and the Excel file with the survey data into the NVivo software. The analysis continued in two basic paths from that point. The first path featured "text" searches, and the second path featured "frequency" searches.

Regarding the text searches, I used terms I developed in the pilot study to conduct searches for specific words, or "codes." To develop the codes, I followed Saldaña's (2009) advice to "attune yourself to words and phrases that seem to call for bolding, underlining, italicizing, highlighting, or vocal emphasis if spoken aloud" (p. 75). Through this grounded approach, I marked words or phrases that I believed represented writer-centeredness, acquisition techniques, and learning techniques, as discussed earlier in this chapter. These codes provided a start list, as Miles and Huberman (1984) refer to it, for data analysis in the main study. In more thoroughly defining a code, Saldaña writes that a code 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" (p. 3). Although some qualitative research codes are more interpretive words or phrases that *represent* a sample of the data corpus, my research approach includes the *exact* terms used by my participants. Saldaña refers to this method of coding as "InVivo Coding," but it has also been referred to as "Literal Coding" or "Verbatim Coding." Saldaña argues this method of data coding is particularly appropriate for use in "studies that prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (p. 74) as this research study does.

In other words, I typed in a particular word to the text search of NVivo, and the software

searched all 67 syllabi for exact uses of that word. I conducted these searches on words that fell into four categories: writer-centeredness, anti-writer-centeredness, acquisition techniques, and learning techniques. The goal of the text searches was to identify the kinds of language instructors use in their syllabi and whether they naturally place an importance on any of the above categories. Of course, as Miles and Huberman (1984) point out, words are more complex than numbers in that they have "multiple meanings" and "most words are meaningless unless you look backward or forward to *other* words" (p. 54). For this reason, it is imperative to point out that although the software automatically searched for the words identified in the tables earlier in the chapter, it was necessary for me to read through the contexts of each use of the automatically coded terms to determine if the instance was a true representation of the meaning intended for analysis. Studying the nuances of the language used by instructors fueled a more comprehensive and insightful analysis for the dissertation.

Furthermore, the start list of codes used for the text searches provided an additional asset to this research in that it not only quantified instances of writer-centeredness, anti-writer-centeredness, acquisition, and learning within the syllabi, but it also allowed me to research what was not said. Rapley (2007) encourages that in discourse analysis attention also be paid to “the silences, gaps or omissions” (p. 111) in a text. Therefore, the coding will allow me to determine not only which syllabi include various terms that represent my four identified categories of importance, but which syllabi do not.

The frequency searches were slightly different from the text searches. The focus with these queries was to see what language is most commonly used in syllabi. To facilitate a deeper analysis and clarity with this path, I first coded the syllabi into relevant sections. The main sections include: course descriptions, attendance policies, other policies, required texts and

materials, assignments, and daily schedules. During the coding process, I studied each of the 67 syllabi to locate the sections mentioned above, among others, and then I highlighted the sections and essentially coded them into the folders for those sections. In other words, what I ended with was a "node," as NVivo calls it, of all identified assignments, for example, in one folder. The folder, or node, allowed me to conduct a focused frequency search to see what the most commonly used language is in that section of submitted syllabi. Then, I moved on to attendance policies and conducted a frequency search of that node, and so on, until I completed frequency searches of the most common language in each of the main sections identified by studying the submitted syllabi.

The data analysis of the "Assignments" node was particularly relevant to the theoretical framework of this research study because this area most appropriately illustrates the instances of and distinctions between acquisition and learning techniques in the creative writing classroom. Further discussion on the analysis of this and other sections can be found in Chapter Five.

One important point to include in discussing my research methodology is the aspect of solitary coding. While many researchers, myself included, are sensitive to the need for intercoder reliability and thus, inclusion of a second researcher to "check" a percentage of my data coding, I did not include this step in my research procedure for this study. Saldaña (2009) points out that "coding on most qualitative studies is a solitary act" (p. 26). Furthermore, I viewed the NVivo software as a collaborator in coding my data and followed Saldaña's advice for solo coders. He recommends to discuss "your coding and analysis as you progress through" the research study with colleagues, which I did with members of my dissertation committee and fellow doctoral candidates (p. 28). Also, when possible, I "maintain[ed] a reflective journal on the research project with copious analytic memos" (p. 28). Although my reflective journal was rather

informal in its language, much of my observations appear in subsequent discussion chapters of this dissertation.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of the syllabus collection includes undergraduate courses in creative writing at American universities; any conclusions cannot be applied to graduate programs or international programs. Although syllabi by nature reflect teaching philosophies and course design, they are limited. Some instructors rely on syllabi as policy documents while others include writing assignments, reading assignments, course schedules, assessment procedures, and other elements that allow for deeper analysis. However, the collection yielded a richness of data for the sections studied. Additionally, as a researcher, I kept limitations such as these in mind with the data analysis. In fairness to my participants, I might critique certain methods or approaches that do not align with the writer-centered theoretical approach for the study, while always conceding the classroom environment is more complex than what can be determined from a syllabus.

To discuss the limitation of syllabi further, Baecker (1998) points out that although syllabi are necessary course documents, many instructors pay little attention to them. Assumptions were made in this research about syllabi's connection to teaching philosophies, but the syllabi may not accurately represent the teachers' intentions if care was not taken in developing them to illustrate teaching philosophies. While that provides a potential disconnect between the instructors' intentions and this dissertation's findings, one important factor remains. These documents represent the first interaction between creative writing instructors and their student-writers; therefore, the language included in them is certainly subject to analysis. Additionally, the resulting recommendations could positively influence the creation and dissemination of syllabi in creative writing and other departments at colleges and universities

across the nation.

Furthermore, the scope is limited to *instructors*' perceptions and goals. I am disappointed to say student-writer voices will be omitted from this research. However, as I considered the research design, I realized a better understanding of current creative writing pedagogy is a logical first step to theorizing pedagogical alternatives for future creative writing classrooms. The subsequent logical step would be to entertain student-writers' reactions to such alternatives, but future research directions such as these will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Conclusion

For the better part of a century, creative writing pedagogy has relied on lore and a singular model, the writing workshop. Scholars in the field have called for increased scholarly debate and additional pedagogical tools for current creative writing instructors and graduating master's and doctoral creative writing students who are likely to enter the classroom as instructors in the future. Yet, Vandermeulen's (2011) text is the first major research study to survey the source – creative writing instructors – about current creative writing pedagogy. His findings show a majority of instructors rely on lore – grandfathered pedagogy they experienced as student-writers and what seems to work best for them as writers. However, he also found that some instructors are innovating beyond what has become the "norm" in creative writing pedagogy. This study represents an attempt to take a closer look at current creative writing instruction via the syllabus, a course document that serves as "the component most often contributing to effective college teaching" (Matejka & Kurke, 1994, p. 115); in turn, the study will also highlight teaching practices that are unique, writer-centered, and balanced (in the sense of acquisition and learning techniques). The data collection and analysis in the following

chapters will further illustrate this representation and lead to scholarly discussion of the pedagogical alternatives creative writing scholars and instructors seek.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

After compiling my database of creative writing faculty, I sent requests for participation to instructors at 343 institutions which included community colleges, public and private universities and colleges, and diverse campuses within the same institution such as the University of Pittsburgh's main, Bradford and Greensburg campuses. The total number of initial requests was 1,997, or an average of nearly six faculty members at each institution. In response, there were a total of 56 participants in the study from 48 institutions. Overall, the return of participants represented nearly 3% of the requests I sent, a lower than normal response rate. According to Christoph Maier, Director of the Applied Research Lab at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the common rate of response for survey requests is between 10% and 20%. However, this rate reflects surveys, only. The additional request for participants to upload files of their course syllabi could have affected that response rate (Maier, personal communication, July 10, 2013).

Although there were 56 participants, I received 67 submitted syllabi. In other words, several participants sent more than one syllabus. Further qualifying the participants becomes difficult in that of the 56 participants, only 39 completed the online survey implemented to help situate the syllabi said participants were submitting. In other words, 17 of the 56 participants either chose to email me their syllabi directly and thus opt out of the survey participation, or their survey data was lost due to technical difficulty, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Five. Therefore, the following breakdown of surveys reflects 70% of the population (or 39 of the 56 participants). Furthermore, while there are 39 faculty participants who completed surveys,

there were 40 syllabi accompanied by surveys. In other words, one faculty member submitted two surveys, one for each of his syllabi.

Survey Data Breakdown

The rates of participation for men and women were nearly equal with 19 men and 20 women participating. The majority of participants possessed more than 15 years of experience teaching creative writing (see *Figure 4* below).

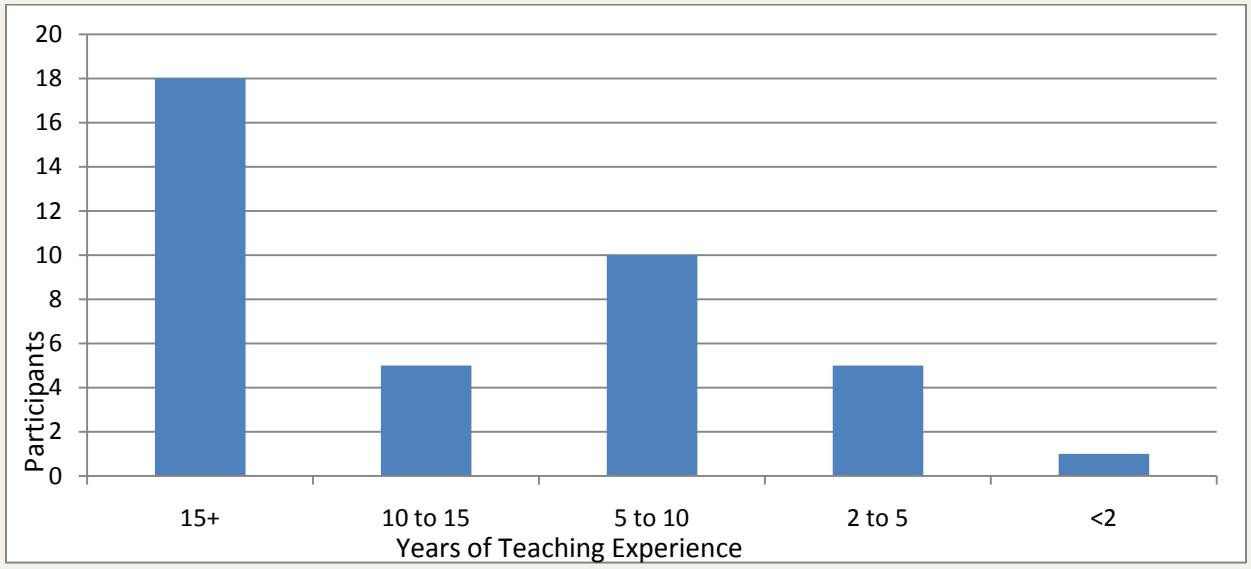

Figure 4. Breakdown of participants' teaching experience by year. Participants identified how many years of creative writing teaching experience they possess, and interestingly the results showed about half possess 15+ years while the vast majority have been teaching for at least five years.

More than half earned doctoral and master of fine arts degrees (see *Figure 5* below). Two of the participants had earned three post-graduate degrees, a master of arts, a master of fine arts, and a doctoral degree.

Average enrollment of the courses featured in the submitted syllabi is between 10 and 20 student-writers, with an overwhelming 93% of courses falling into this classification. Only two courses boasted fewer than 10 student-writers on average, and one participant failed to offer this information for his/her course. There was a surprising balance between institutions with only an

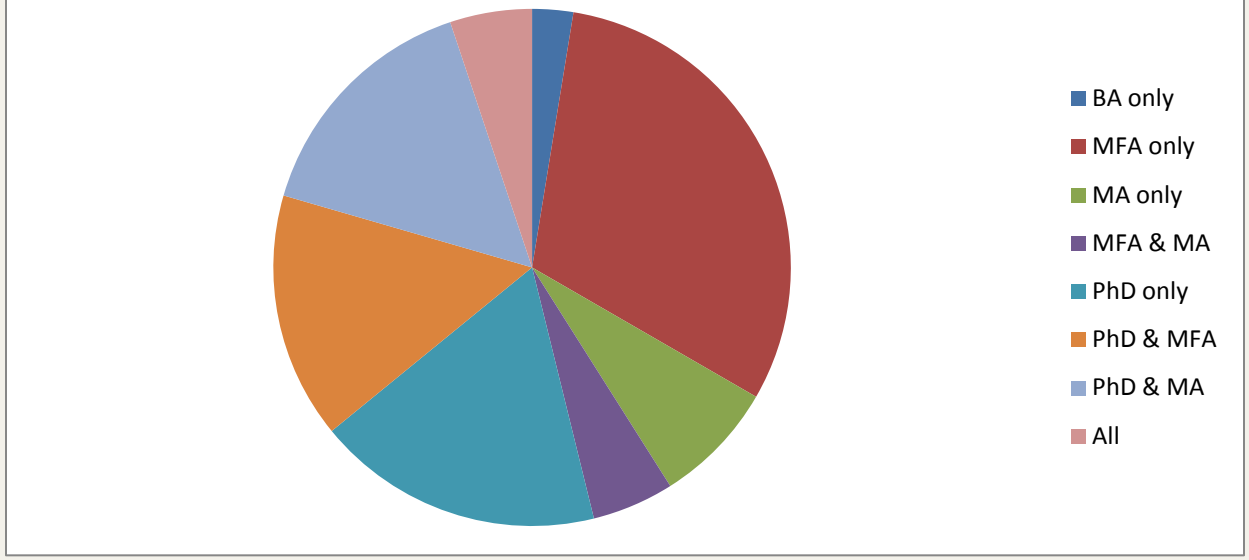

Figure 5. Breakdown of participants' academic degrees. In the survey, I asked participants to identify what degree(s) they hold. The data illustrates the diversity of responses and the prevalence of the MFA and PHD degrees.

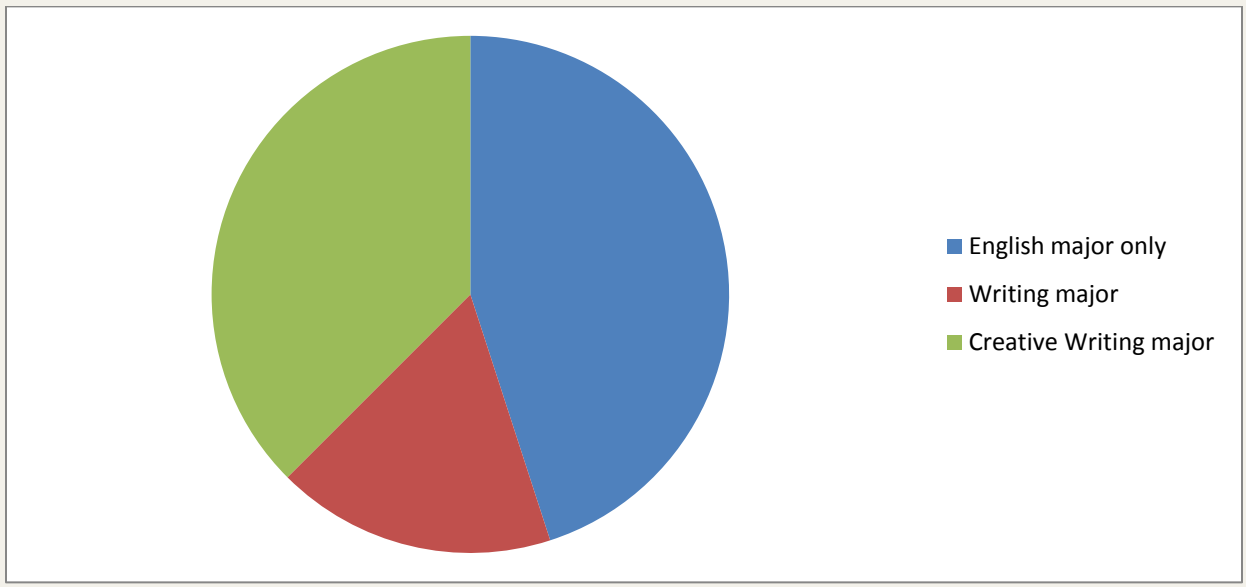

Figure 6: Majors available to students in participants' institutions. There was a near balance between those institutions with specific creative writing majors and only the more general English major.

English major and institutions offering a specific creative writing major (see *Figure 6* below).

The most popular writing assignment in the courses was the writing of short stories, assigned in

26 of the 40 courses, or 65% of them. A close second was poetry, assigned in 19 of the 40 courses, or 48% (see *Figure 7* below for details on other types of writing assigned in the courses).

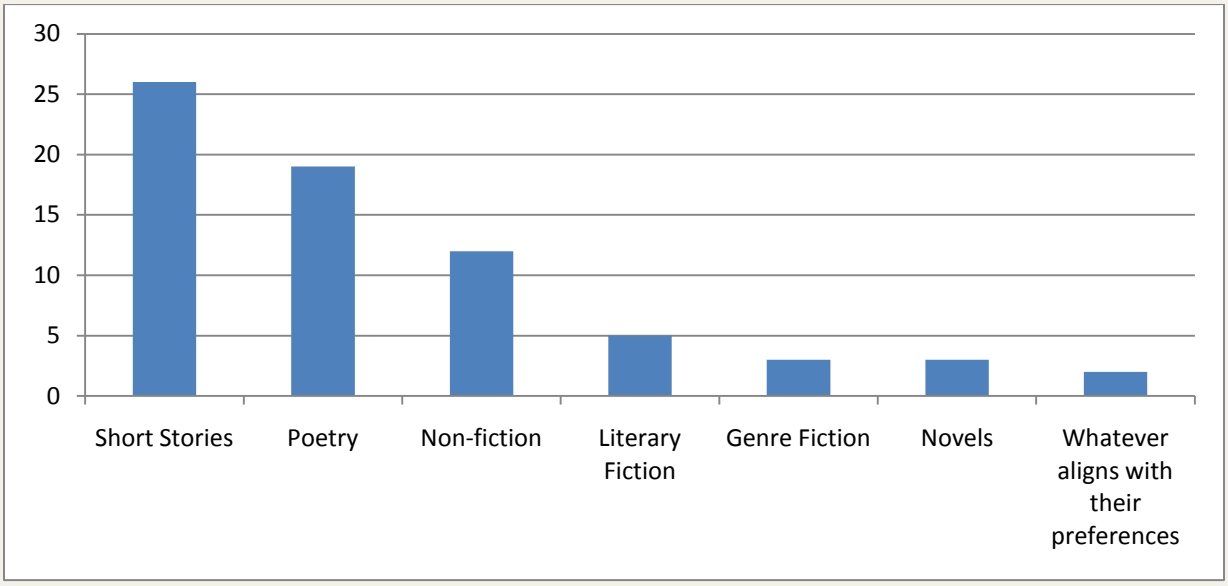

Figure 7. Types of writing created by student-writers in participants' courses. Participants answered this question to help identify the overall representation of these genres within the syllabi submitted for the research study.

Participants also described the kinds of tasks they assign student-writers; the tasks include in-class writing time, in-class exercises, reading of original texts, reading of craft theory, lectures, whole class peer review, small-group peer review, revision techniques (illustrated in *Figure 8* below). Additionally, some instructors opted to write in tasks that were not already listed; those write-ins are presented in Table 5 below.

One point of criticism this research study received centered on whether a syllabus can serve as an accurate representation of what occurs in a course and of participants' teaching styles. However, when participants were asked the question: "Instructors are often required to include institutional policies in their syllabi. On a scale from 1 (least) to 5 (most), in your opinion, how

accurately is your teaching philosophy reflected by the language of your syllabus?," 55% of participants chose the rating of 5. An additional 28% chose the rating of 4 (see *Figure 9* below).

Table 5

Other "Write-in" Tasks Participants Assign Student-Writers

Participant	**Assigned Tasks**
Albers	"recall and question"
Kirts	"online peer critique"
Anonymous	"writing critical responses"
Smith, E.E.	"review literary journals, submission techniques, how to write cover letters, recitations from memory"
Teeter	"visiting poets and artists"
Neal	"discussion of personal aesthetics"
Anonymous	"writing discipline"

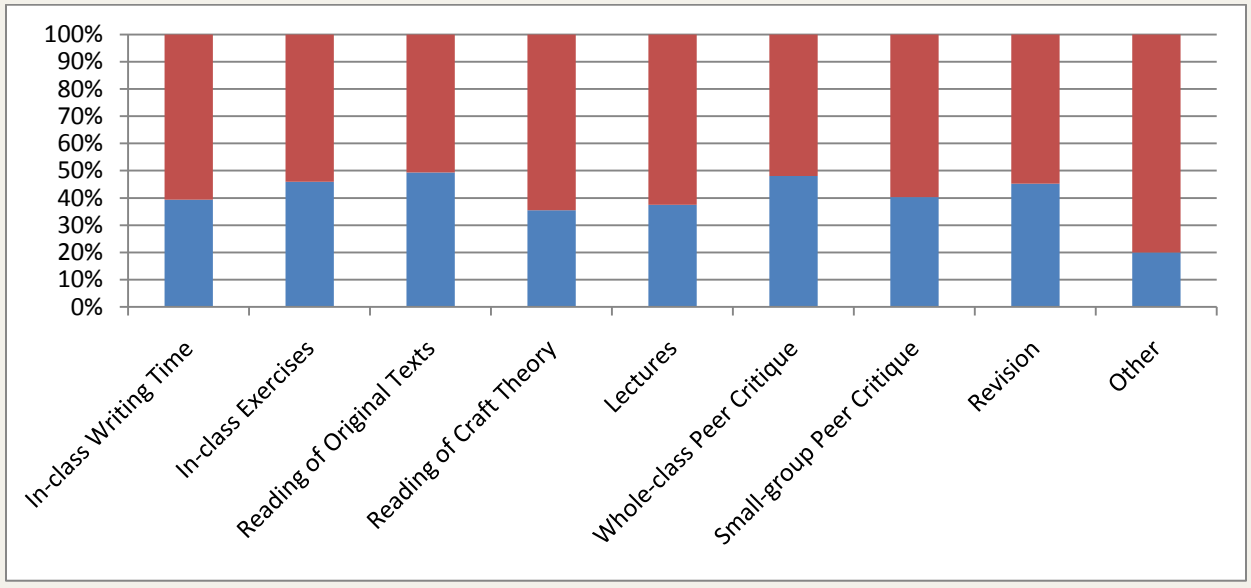

Figure 8. Activities student-writers engage in participants' courses, relevant to the total number of courses. Participants were able to select more than one option in this survey question. Therefore, the data is displayed illustrating how often particular activities occur (in blue) as a portion of the total number of classrooms (in red).

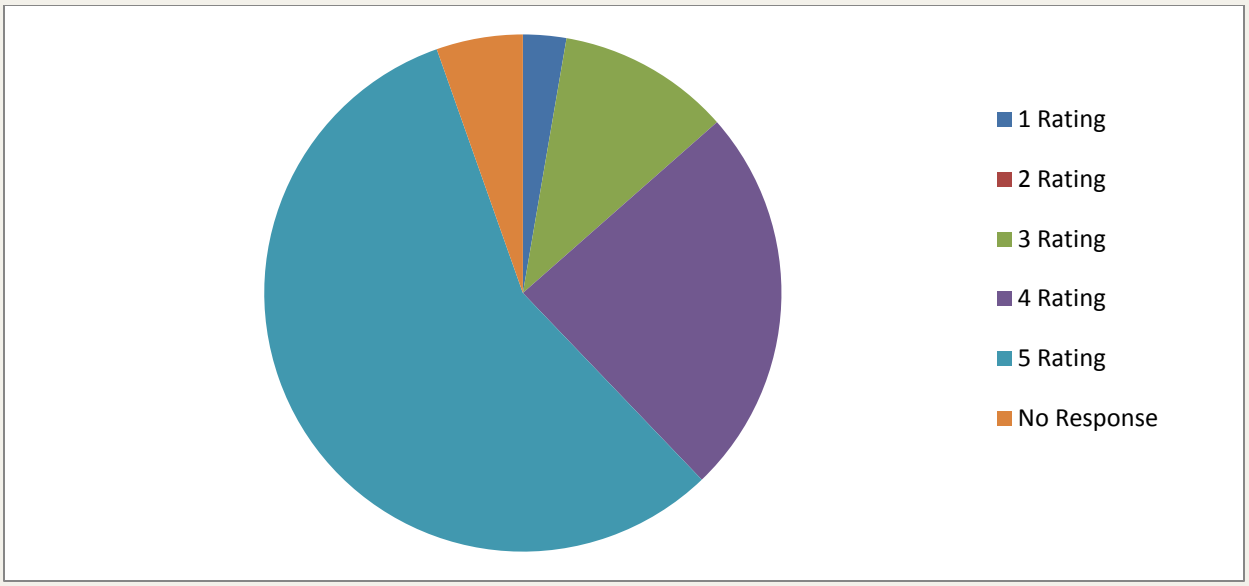

Figure 9. Participants' ratings of how closely syllabi reflect teaching philosophies. To combat the criticism that syllabi may not appropriately reflect participants' teaching philosophies, I asked participants to rank how well their syllabi reflect their teaching philosophies. An overwhelming number of the participants chose ratings of "4" or "5," indicating that their syllabi policies closely align with their teaching philosophies.

Vandermeulen (2011) conducted a study that showed a small 5% of creative writing faculty are engaging in the scholarly conversation by researching and/or presenting on creative writing pedagogy. For that reason, I asked my participants: (1) Have you conducted research on creative writing pedagogy?; and (2) If yes, have you published or presented your findings? My results differed from Vandermeulen's. Of the 39 participants who completed the survey, 16 (41%) answered "Yes." In other words, 41% have conducted research on creative writing pedagogy. More interestingly, only half of those participants have published or presented their findings. Although the limitations of my data prevent me from knowing exactly why half of the instructors who *did* conduct research failed to present or publish their findings, I will discuss some potential reasons in Chapter Five.

Survey Data Highlight One: Creative Writing Teaching Philosophies

While most of the survey questions were basic inquiries about the participants and their classrooms, I took the opportunity to ask two open-ended questions; my goal was to grant the participants the freedom to open my thinking to ideas I had not considered when creating the survey, and on a larger scale, when developing the research study. The first question was: "How would you describe your philosophy of teaching creative writing?" To encourage brief and spontaneous responses, participants were limited to 250 words to summarize their philosophies. Table 6 features a sampling of their responses, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Table 6

Sampling of Creative Writing Teaching Philosophies Responses

Participant	**Response**
Fleming	"Strategies plus nuts and bolts of craft."
Haven	"I believe there should be a balance of attention on invention, analysis, and revision. Students should understand how stories work, not just how their own stories work. A classroom should offer students possibilities, and also strategies to help the student choose between the many possibilities and commit to the right one(s)."
Hoppenthaler	"I aim to provide beginning poets with a 'tool kit' that will allow them to make informed and calculated choices during the entire writing process. I grade on students engagement with their work, not on whether or not a poem is a 'good' poem. I try my hardest to present all aesthetic possibilities, and I do my best to help each student follow his or her own muse, even if that might be in a style that I don't necessarily find compelling."
Kirts	"I am a very experiential teacher. Students write in every class. Students also read exemplary works in individual genres, and imitation is a big part of students' drafting of works in the class. I require my students to attend readings by visiting writers, encourage them to participate in local open-mic readings, and help them

	develop not just a craft of writing but a culture and attitude of a writer/intellectual."
Monson	"Much practice – writing a great deal. Lots of assignments. Primary focus on generation; secondary focus on revision (we talk about this a lot in class). Reading is obviously very important, as is doing the work and committing to the program."
Ponce	"It's not up to the instructor to tell a student what is good or bad writing. There are only choices, made consistently or inconsistently. My job is to acquaint students with the broadest range of choices they can make on the page, and to help them become better readers of themselves for consistency or inconsistency. They should know why they are making specific choices, but the choices themselves are up to them."
Smith, E.E.	With a strong focus on revision, but also the practical aspects of being a writer –sending work out, writing consistently, being engaged with the literary world, promoting poetry to non-majors, etc."
Smith, R.	"Writing is a gift that must be used and developed. We designed the program (BFA in Creative Writing) as a kind of apprenticeship. Students are required to take writing courses every semester of program, from small writing groups (6 students) to genre-based workshops (12 students)."
Stroud	"I want the students to read as many models for their work as possible, but I also want them to write, over and over—not to concentrate on one thing but to write many things. I think that's the best way for them to improve (and at the early stage perhaps more important, as they might not have fully developed their reading skills—though I try to do that with them too in discussing readings)."
Walker	"Students learn more by critiquing others than receiving critiques. The ability to confront someone on what might be improved in their work is one of the best skills we teach any major."

Using the frequency query feature in NVivo, I discovered that the top five words used in the creative writing philosophy response section of the survey were: 1) writing, 41 uses; 2) students, 35 uses; 3) work, 17 uses; 4) creative, 13 uses; 5) also and want, tied with 12 uses each. Although "students" appeared 35 times, words such as "writers" (8 uses), "writer" (6), "poets"

(3), and "poets" (2) were much more limited. The frequency of the words "teach" and "learn" was also interesting. Earlier in the dissertation, I argue that creative writing scholars should not be focusing on the teaching of creative writing, but the learning of it. Learning places more responsibility on the student-writer and relinquishes power from the instructor. However, the data features the term "teach" 9 times while "learn" appeared only twice. More discussion on these language choices and others is available in Chapter Five.

Survey Data Highlight Two: Ideal Creative Writing Classroom

The second open-ended survey question was: How would you describe the ideal creative writing classroom? Again, participants were limited to 250 words for their responses. Thirty-nine instructors responded, and as was the case with the question about creative writing teaching philosophies, the most frequently used words were "students" and "writing" with 33 and 28 uses, respectively. "Class" and "classroom" came in third and fourth with a total of 25 uses for the similar words. "Work" appeared frequently in these responses as well with 11 uses. Table 7 features a sampling of participants' responses regarding the ideal creative writing classroom; these responses will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter Five.

Table 7

Sampling of Ideal Creative Writing Classroom Responses

Participant	**Response**
Albers	"The teacher ensures the creation of a safe space with wide permission for voice and subject matter, one that promotes student discovery and risk-taking while students are exposed to a wide range of classic forms and make connections to their own experiments in writing. The emphasis must be on the positive rather than negative critiquing…"
Anonymous	"Overall, my goal is to produce in every creative writing class I teach a roomful of agile, self-made writers". The philosophy here is further explained by the

	participant suggesting that limiting peer review and encouraging complications and disruptions in the writing process, students will be able to "enact the process of writing"
Haven	"One where students are just as interested in and excited by the work of others as they are their own work"
Neal	"An ideal classroom is a room of people with similar goals (to become better writers) who are there to help each other in their individual goals. Students should read a wide variety of published stories by authors of diverse backgrounds who write with varying styles, methods, and themes. Each student should be able to fall in love with at least one published author. Craft should be taught, but it should also be questioned. Skills should be presented, but with the knowledge that there is no 'best' or 'correct' way to craft a story. Reasons for writing stories and reading stories should be interrogated. Students should investigate and articulate their reasons for writing. They should write stories they'd want to read. They should be given the skills necessary to be able to teach themselves outside of the classroom setting. They should learn how to read like writers. They should learn how to recognize what authors are trying to do and be able to help others write the stories they want to write instead of offering how they would have written that story. The atmosphere should be congenial and supportive, never competitive. The instructor should invest in each student instead of picking a few he/she likes and ignoring/criticizing others. The instructor needs to understand that his/her personal aesthetics may bias him/her towards and against certain modes and methods in student work."
Ponce	"Regardless of level, whether intro or advanced, the ideal creative writing class should be half theory and half practice. If it's only practice of the craft, the class is vulnerable to reinforcing one style—usually determined by the subjective preferences of the instructor. Theory broadens the conversation to include the history and cultural significance of specific genres."

Participants also identified activities that make the creative writing classroom ideal: discussion, analysis, exercises, personal conferences with instructor, readings from visiting writers, workshops, critical reading, and of course, writing.

Syllabi Data Results

Writer-Centeredness Codes

As part of designing my research study, I conducted the pilot study detailed in Chapter Three. As a result, I developed a list of start codes that represent four categories of language in syllabi: writer-centeredness, anti-writer-centeredness, acquisition techniques and learning techniques. During my data analysis, I used the text query search in NVivo to find instances of these words in the syllabi corpus and to further analyze their contexts. *Figure 10* below provides an illustration of the frequency of terms determined to support the writer-centered classroom as "one that supports student-writers' rights, passions, and unique development of their writing abilities, present and future." The terms were compiled during the pilot study, and the definition serves as part of the theoretical framework for this dissertation discussed in Chapter One.

However, as the discussion in Chapter Six will further illustrate, some of these numbers are misleading. For instance, although there were 36 instances of the word "community" in the syllabi corpus, when analyzing the context, I found only 7 to be positive, or writer-centered uses of the term. There were also negative, or anti-writer-centered, uses of the terms "diversity," "encourage," "motivate," and "support."

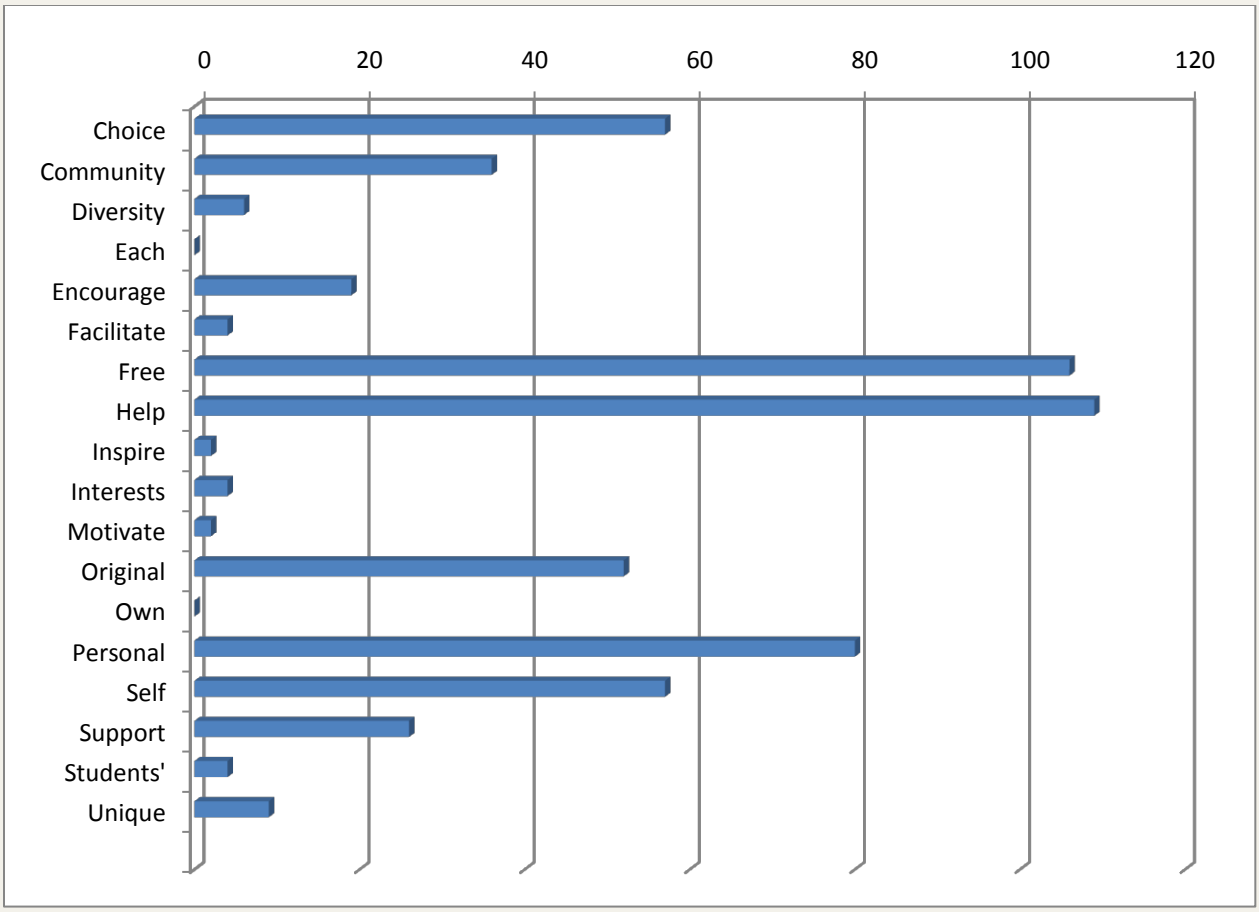

Figure 10. Frequency of writer-centered codes in syllabi corpus. By conducting text queries in NVivo software, I was able to identify the frequency of the terms listed in the figure. Some of the highlighted terms for further discussion in Chapter Six include "choice" and "community."

Anti-Writer-Centeredness Codes

In the pilot study, I determined that by looking at writer-centered language, a necessity was created for looking at anti-writer-centered language, or authoritative language that decreases the amount of student-writer agency in the course (see *Figure 11* below). Such language does not support or potentially contradicts "student-writers' rights, passions, and unique development of their writing abilities, present and future," which is the definition of writer-centeredness in this dissertation. *Figure 11* above illustrates the frequency of various terms deemed anti-writer-centered. As can be seen in the visual above, the terms "must" (235 uses) and "need" (174) were

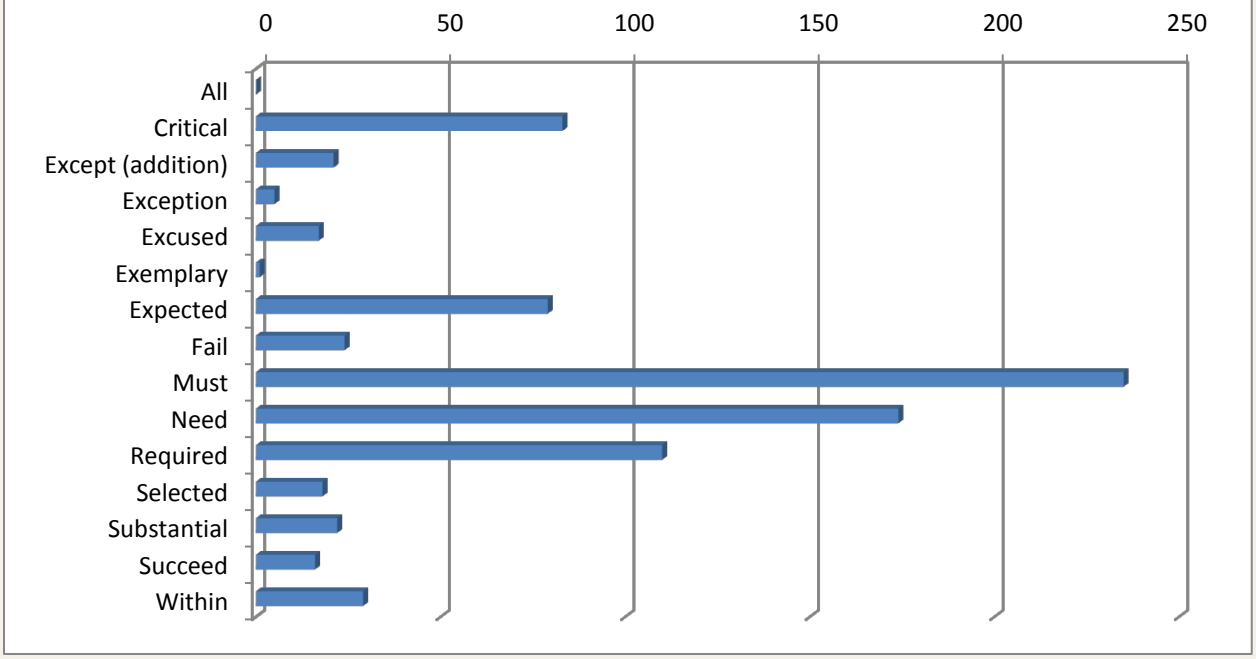

Figure 11. Frequency of anti-writer-centered codes in syllabi corpus. By conducting text queries in NVivo software, I was able to identify the frequency of terms listed here; some are discussed more in Chapter Six.

more frequently used than many of the other anti-writer-centered terms. As discussed further in Chapter Six, anti-writer-centered language, which tends to be more restrictive and directive in nature, is much more frequent in the syllabi, overall, than writer-centered language, or open, encouraging, and freeing language meant to embrace the individuality and unique motivations of student-writers.

Acquisition Codes

As I defined it in Chapter One, acquisition "refers to the practices student-writers engage, both inside and outside of the classroom, that allow them to acquire skills through personal exploration; furthermore this definition includes an aspect of subconscious knowledge construction." In the pilot study, acquisition codes were identified in the ten-syllabi corpus as those words that represent knowledge attainment through some subconscious means. In other words, acquisition techniques are those that require practice, and through that practice, student-

writers learn to improve their writing and reading. As the research study developed, various codes anticipated to represent acquisition were actually eliminated, and others were added. Overall, the codes in Figure 12 below are those that were present in the syllabi corpus and offered unique insights into acquisition in the creative writing classroom. The high frequency of terms such as "reading" and "writing" was obviously anticipated. I found more interesting the analysis of the terms "daily" and "exercise(s)." Supported by a theoretical framework of acquisition, daily exercises are paramount in writing classrooms. Student-writers must learn by doing; therefore, further discussion of these two terms can be found in Chapter Seven along with other notable analyses for this particular section of data.

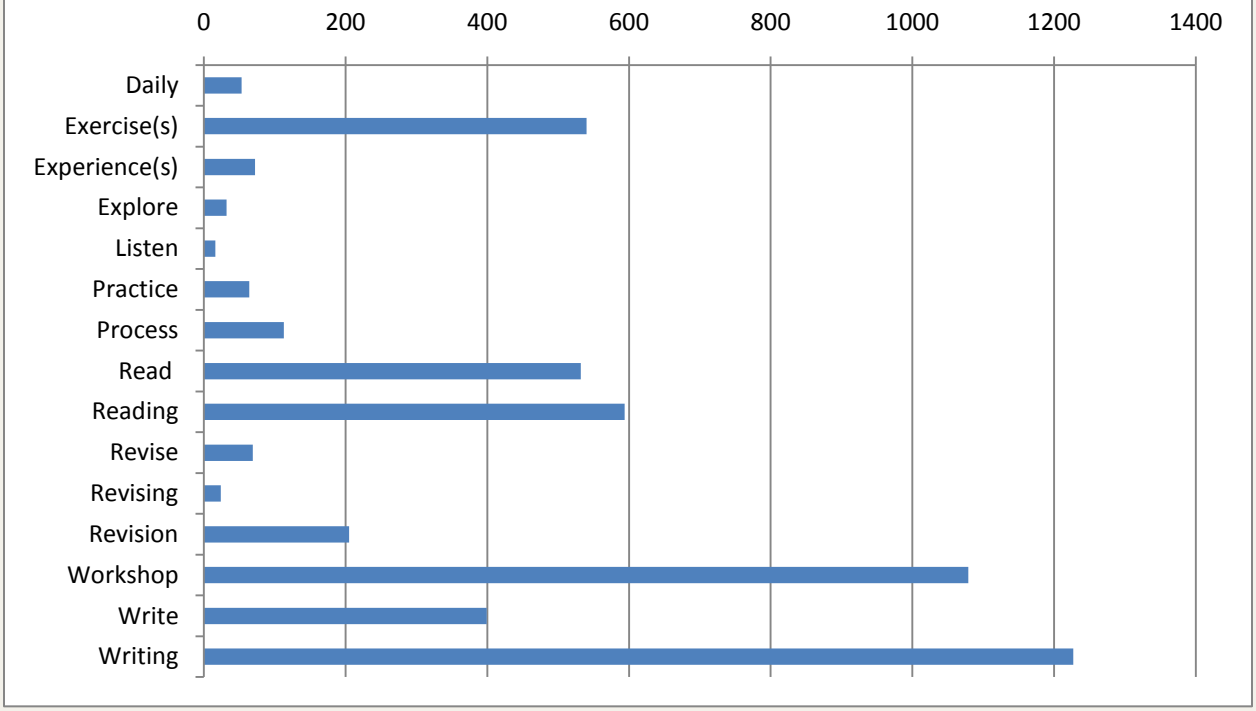

Figure 12. Frequency of acquisition codes in syllabi corpus. By conducting text queries in NVivo software, I was able to identify the frequency of the terms listed in the figure. Some of the highlighted terms for further discussion in Chapter Seven include "daily," "exercise(s)," "practice," and "write/writing."

Learning Codes

Also as I defined in Chapter One, learning "refers to the knowledge student-writers gain through explanation and analysis and the breaking down of creative writing to its analytic parts." In a similar fashion to those acquisition codes discovered in the pilot study, I identified words that represented learning, or the breaking down of writing to its analytic parts. While student-writers gain knowledge by doing (acquisition), they are further challenged by creative writing instructors and thus the participants of this study to translate that acquisition to a more active, or learning, experience. Therefore, the student-writers begin to analyze their experiences in acquiring knowledge to further solidify it. The partnership of acquisition and learning, as a result, offers the greatest opportunity for growth and development in the writing classroom. The terms in *Figure 13* below illustrate the frequency of those terms identified as learning codes.

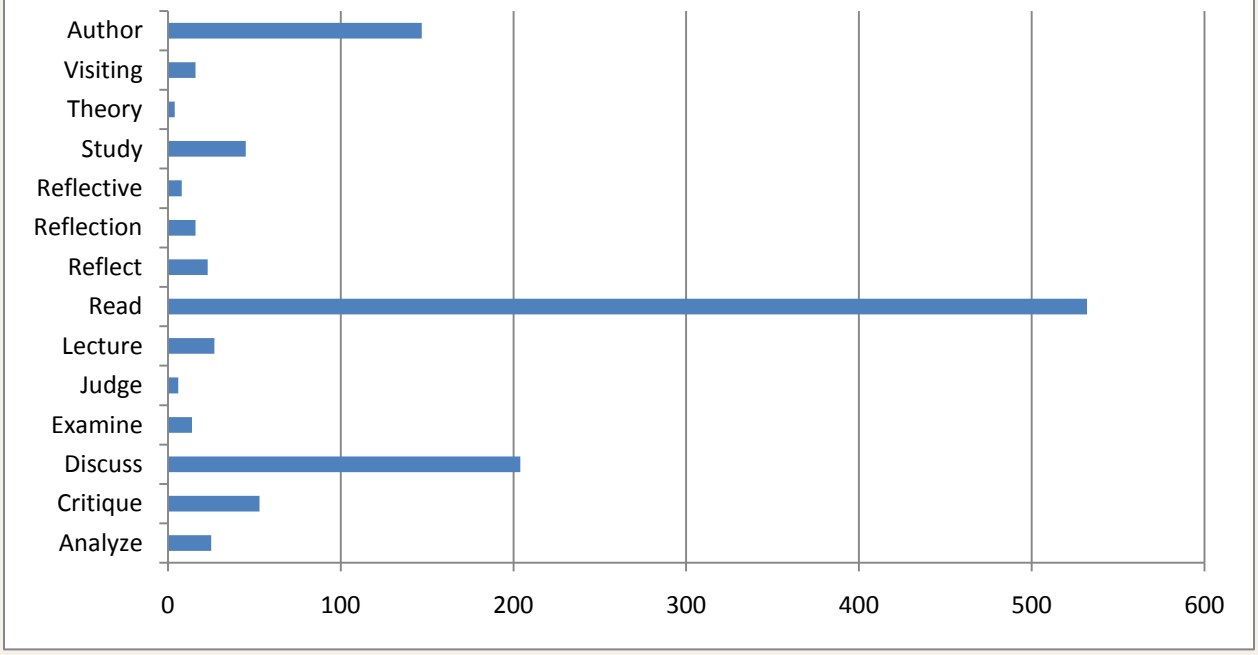

Figure 13. Frequency of learning codes in syllabi corpus. By conducting text queries in NVivo software, I was able to identify the frequency of the terms listed in the figure. Some of the highlighted terms for further discussion in Chapter Seven include "analyze," "discuss," "read," and "reflect."

Many of the terms in *Figure 13* are quintessentially learning-based. For example, during the learning process, student-writers will theorize, study, reflect, examine, discuss, critique, and analyze. These activities are mentally engaging, and the goal is for the student-writers to gain a better understanding of their own writing or the writing of others through these processes. Chapter Seven discusses more clearly how student-writers might achieve that and the guidance the participating instructors give them for doing so.

Coded Sections in Syllabi Corpus

Despite the anxiety during my data collection and the desire to collect as many syllabi as possible, I soon realized that 67 syllabi represented a vast corpus to analyze. Therefore, I thought about ways in which I might break that data down into smaller, more manageable parts. My decision was to code various sections, such as course descriptions, assignments, policies, writerly advice, and others of the syllabi. The process of coding these parts was essentially copying each syllabus' assignments section, for example, into a folder and then analyzing that folder separate from the corpus. The list of sections in Table 8 below includes the most prevalent and/or interesting sections I identified in the submissions. The table also shows the number of syllabi the sections appeared in; for some syllabi, the sections were labeled exactly like the "Section Title" below, but in others I used discretion to determine if the particular section of the syllabi qualified for coding in such sections. The third column shows the percentage of the corpus in which the section appeared, and the final column includes a list of the most frequently appearing terms in that section, as per frequency queries in NVivo.

Table 8

Data Breakdown of Coded Sections in Syllabi Corpus

Section Title	Syllabi	Percentage of Corpus	Top Frequently Appearing Words & No. of Uses
Assignments	56	84%	class (334), story (260), writing (236), one (228), work (189), workshop (171), write (151), reading (149), stories (142)
Attendance Policies	56	84%	class (210), grade (90), absences (85), attendance (71), absence (63), course (53), time (51), miss (42), three (39), one (37)
Course Descriptions	64	96%	writing (276), course (190), work (117), creative (107), class (100), fiction (99), students (91), poetry (86), workshop (67)
Grading Policies	62	93%	class (223), work (169), writing (165), grade (145), workshop (101), final (96), course (83), participation (83), 10 (80), assignments (71)
Other Policies	60	90%	class (359), work (231), students (162), please (130), course (125), academic (118), student (103), may (89), writing (82), one (81)
Rules & Writerly Advice	4	6%	story (23), conflict (8), writing (8), need (7), character (6), enough (6), first (6), main (6), people (6), really (6)
Writerly Quotes	17	25%	God (17), poetry (11), writing (9), form (6), literature (6), wisdom (6), art (5), like (5), one (5), something (5)
Writing Workshops & Peer Review	28	42%	workshop (134), essay (125), work (113), class (93), reader (71), author (51), piece (50), story (49), writing (49), comments (48)

The limitations of space and time prevent me from conducting thorough analyses of each of these sections. Additionally, I felt it necessary to keep my overall focus of writer-centered language and acquisition and learning techniques in mind as I continued to discuss my findings and offer recommendations. However, I thought the data above would be interesting to an audience. Some sections are more telling than others. For instance, the most frequent words in the Grading Policies section include “workshop,” “final,” and “participation,” which suggests these three aspects of a creative writing course are commonly assessed. Furthermore, they are

likely assessed more than other activities as they appear more frequently in the corpus. Additionally, an interesting point is the inclusion of "please" and "may" in the Other Policies section, with 130 and 89 uses respectively.

In Chapter Six, I discuss anti-writer-centered language in syllabi, and often times that language appears in the policies. However, I concede that many instructors are pressured or even required by institutional standards and expectations to include some policies that may seem harshly worded toward students. The frequent appearance of "please" and "may" could suggest that creative writing instructors are attempting to politely require things of students, as that may be their only option when institutions require certain policies be outlined in the syllabi. Also, in Chapter Eight, I include a more thorough discussion of some of the major syllabi sections including Assignments and Writerly Advice.

Conclusion

Overall, the data provided by the 39-participant survey and 67-syllabi corpus has been very insightful regarding creative writing pedagogy. One of the clear limitations in designing the study was in the medium I chose to analyze – syllabi. However, participants made it clear in the survey responses that they believe their syllabi very closely reflect their teaching philosophies. As discussed in Chapter Three, the syllabi serve as contracts between students and instructors, and as a discourse, they are rich documents for analysis. The data results in this chapter illustrate that point further. Additionally, in Chapter Three, I discussed my desire to remove myself, as the researcher, from my study as much as possible. However, I understand the unique role the researcher plays in studies such as these. Therefore, the text searches that were sparked by the start list of codes I chose and that were conducted in NVivo software represent the aspect of the study in which my perspective is much larger in the results. On the contrary, the frequency

searches in NVivo allowed me to see the data from a more objective perspective. The software searched the corpus and declared which words were used the most frequently throughout. As I move into the discussion chapters of my dissertation, the balance of text and frequency searches creates greater opportunity for knowledge construction. Thus, in the chapters that follow, I will discuss the results described in this chapter; specifically, I will discuss the language used in the discourse and how that reflects teaching philosophies and the content of the discourse and how that reflects the current trends in creative writing classrooms.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION PART ONE:

RESEARCH STUDY EXECUTION AND SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction to Discussion Chapters

Before I begin the formal discussion of my data, I want to clarify how the discussion will be presented. Since there were many avenues of analysis for the amount of data collected and the ways in which it was collected, I chose to divide my discussion into four parts, or chapters. This is the first of the four chapters; here I will analyze the execution, in general, of the research study, and the survey data in particular. The other three chapters will discuss findings of the writer-centered theoretical framework, findings of the acquisition and learning framework, and analysis of highlighted sections of the course syllabi. It is my intention in dividing my analysis into these four chapters to facilitate ease of reading and, more appropriately, to thoroughly analyze the most relevant aspects of my data without overwhelming readers with one unnecessarily long chapter.

Research Study Execution

Overall, I believe my study was successful – especially in light of the argument presented in Chapter Two that creative writing studies research should embrace many methods and approaches. Because, as Vandermeulen's (2011) research illustrates, few creative writing instructors participate in the scholarly community by researching, presenting, and/or publishing on creative writing studies, instructor's voices were not as strong and diverse in the conversation as I would like to see. Also, I felt that much of the creative writing scholarship to date was based on lore and tradition rather than current classroom trends; therefore, I wanted to research what instructors do in their current classrooms through the medium of course syllabi. As this

dissertation shows, there was much to be learned. However, there were also several challenges, and I will discuss those here.

Limitations of the Database

It is worth noting my database of nearly 2,000 creative writing instructors was not as comprehensive as it could have been. First of all, I used the list of member programs from AWP to build my database, and there are institutions with creative writing courses and/or programs that are not members of AWP. Secondly, I compiled my database in the month of July when institutional web sites may or may not be updated for the new school year. I did not foresee this complication; however, it became clear when I received several automatic replies to my emails that certain faculty members were on sabbatical or that addresses were defunct. This complication was particularly relevant in cases of visiting authors or lecturers. I may have included outgoing visiting lecturers and/or faculty who were moving from one job to another and not have included incoming lecturers and faculty, which could have later negatively affected my response rates. In other words, if the email addresses I compiled were no longer valid, then responding would have been impossible.

Of course the flaws mentioned above also reduced the number of instructors in the database. In some cases, there were no faculty profiles, specializations, and/or email addresses; therefore, those potential participants were lost. Likewise, there were some institutions that did not adequately identify faculty specializations. In those cases, I was forced to guess whether an instructor might teach creative writing courses. Faculty whose profiles listed creative writing were added immediately as were faculty with mentions of fiction, poetry, screenwriting, playwriting, and creative nonfiction. However, at times, these exact terms were not used, and I had to look at the context – the instructors' graduate degrees, course titles they teach,

publications, professional memberships, etc. – to guess if they teach creative writing courses. When in doubt, I chose to include the instructor. That way, he or she could decide if a particular course was relevant to my research. Although I was certainly aware of how factors such as those mentioned here limited my database, I was relatively unconcerned because the database still seemed representative based on the types of institutions (i.e. four-year school, two-year school, public and private instutiones) and the nearly 2,000 faculty members that were included.

Testing and Technological Frustrations

Prior to emailing the faculty listed in my database, I worked with about a dozen colleagues, which included my committee members, to test the IRB Informed Consent and survey web pages. These test participants answered questions in the survey and uploaded documents. The web programmer and I ensured the results were recorded and filed on the server appropriately. Based on the recommendations of some test participants, we revised the wording of some questions. Once we were satisfied with the testing results and subsequent changes, I launched the survey by emailing a Qualtrics panel of my nearly 2,000 potential participants. During this process, several unforeseen complications occurred.

The first was with Qualtrics. The software sent my email from a "Do Not Reply" address, which caused some issues with firewalls and security restrictions of institutional servers. These issues ranged from my email likely being blocked to the link contained in the email being inaccessible. In addition, the "Do Not Reply" address created apprehension among some potential participants. One faculty member emailed to confirm the request was legitimate, in other words not spam, which caused me to wonder how many potential participants feared my request was spam and simply deleted it. Several potential participants emailed me to say my link was broken. Concerned, I immediately visited the link to find that it was working appropriately.

When I advised the faculty to copy and paste the link into the browser window rather than attempting to click it directly from their email clients, they responded that the link was working fine. There is no way to tell how many potential participants attempted to click the link but were denied and therefore chose to ignore my request entirely. Likewise, Qualtrics does not offer reports detailing how many emails were undeliverable; such information could have facilitated my participation breakdown.

When I identified the limitations and complications of using Qualtrics to email requests to potential participants, I felt a change was necessary. Therefore, when I sent my second round of requests, or my reminder emails, roughly three weeks after the initial emails, I chose to send the emails directly from my IUP student email account. To achieve this, I used a comma-separated values (CSV) file to create groups of 100 potential participants; email addresses for members of the group were then separated by commas for ease of importing to the BCC line of the email message. Because of technological errors described below, I also chose to send these emails out in smaller batches. In other words, the Qualtrics email went to all 1,997 potential participants at once. The reminder emails sent from my student account were distributed at a rate of about 300 or 400 per day on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, the day and time of the best response rates according to researchers at IUP's Applied Research Lab. Using my student email allowed me to record the number of undeliverable emails and the number of automated responses (i.e. faculty members on sabbatical or out of the office for a period of time). Furthermore, the potential participants may have been more receptive to an email from an actual address rather than a "Do Not Reply" address. However, even with these extra attentions, I was acutely aware that many potential participants may have already chosen not to participate because of issues encountered with the first email and/or were too busy, since the semester had begun, to

participate.

Despite exhaustive testing (which included several weeks of testing conducted by the web programmer and me, the researcher, in addition to the testing conducted with colleagues and my dissertation committee), technological errors persisted. Flaws with the coding caused several uploaded syllabi to be lost in cyber space; they could not be retrieved. A handful of surveys were also lost, but the corresponding syllabi for those surveys were saved. In these cases, I contacted the participants and either asked if they would be willing to resubmit their syllabi or answer questions detailing their confidentiality preferences as these were necessary for me in discussing their syllabi throughout this dissertation and any subsequent publications. In other words, although the technological errors caused much frustration, I was able to find ways to minimize the errors' influence on the outcome of my research. In the early stages of my data collection, the errors were the cause of my greatest lesson: a researcher must always be flexible and persistent, especially when procedure does not follow the plan. In retrospect, I suppose an additional round of testing may have caught such issues; or, I could have sent the first email to a small number of participants to test the method on a small population that may unknowingly make me aware to necessary changes before sending the entire participant population. The lessons were valuable; however, I do believe the resolutions minimized the potential effects the complications could have had on the study data.

Participation Rates

Not wanting to prematurely limit myself, I chose not to draft a random selection of potential participants from my nearly 2,000-member database. Rather, I chose to email a request to all potential participants with the intention that if I received an overwhelming number of syllabi, I would then randomly select those to analyze for the dissertation. As it turned out, not

limiting the participant pool was an appropriate decision and one I would recommend for other researchers. Due to the complications detailed above and other factors, my participation rates were much lower than I had expected. Outside of the aforementioned complications, I can only speculate as to why many creative writing instructors chose not to participate in this study. For instance, several scholars have noted the creative writing field's aversion to formal research studies. Technically, there were several faculty members who retired, do not check email, or were on sabbatical. Others voiced objections to my research study, and thus chose not to participate. Table 9 highlights a sampling of those objections that I labeled with letters for ease of discussion.

Table 9

Sampling of Objections/Responses to Research Study Requests

Label	**Response**
A	"Dear Tamara. I mean and intend no disrespect, but I think the best thing for Creative Writing is stay as divorced as possible from Comp and Rhetoric, and respectfully decline. I wish you the best with your research and your career."
B	"Hi Tamara, Can I ask why this is a Comp/Rhet study rather than something in the realm of art education?"
C	"Hi there, you're [sic] survey does not seem to differentiate between grad and undergrad courses…" o My response: "Thank you for your interest. The focus of my dissertation study is undergraduate coursework. If you teach undergraduate creative writing courses, I would truly appreciate your participation. Please let me know if there are other questions I can answer." o Instructor response: "You might want to make that clear in the survey and notes you're sending out!"

More generally, there were respondents who encouraged me to refer to one of their scholarly works but chose not to participate in my survey or submit a syllabus for analysis. Initially, I was grateful for any response from creative writing faculty. However, some of these comments caused me to wonder why the instructor would take the time to comment at all. If he or she did not find value in my project, deleting my request would have been simple. The exchange shown in Response C above was perhaps the most frustrating as I had made note in two different places, my IRB Informed Consent and on the survey page, that I was specifically researching undergraduate creative writing classrooms. However, I decided to make that research choice even more explicit by placing the word "Undergraduate" in the subject line for my second round of email requests. Therefore, although the objections proved frustrating at some points, they were also helpful in various ways, especially in reminding me that despite the effort and thought invested in this project, there will always be scholars in the field who disagree with my methods, approaches, and outcomes.

Finally, there is an issue of time. In my experiences, both as a student and a faculty member, I have witnessed the time crunch faculty members face. They are expected to teach, research, write, serve, and innovate. Compounding on these demands, a creative writing instructor often has the burning desire to spend his or her time, above all else, writing creatively. I recall a professor wisely saying that faculty must be protective of their time, and I believe this. Therefore, I cannot judge those creative writing instructors who may have chosen to spend their time writing rather than responding to my research request.

Another potential cause of the lower than expected participation rates could be the motivating concern mentioned in Chapter Three. Vandermeulen (2011) found that 5% of the

Midwestern creative writing faculty he surveyed have researched or published about creative writing pedagogy. Among my participants, research and publication rates were much higher (about 41% of survey participants have researched creative writing pedagogy, but only about half of them have presented or published their findings). I speculated earlier in the dissertation that the reason for this lack of widespread scholarly research and publication could be that creative writing faculty are unaware of the scholarly discussion developing around creative writing studies. However, I must add to that speculation that creative writing faculty may not believe in scholarly research in the same way some other disciplines do. Additionally some creative writing instructors continue to debate whether what they do is even possible – can creative writing be taught? Although creative writing instructors may desire innovative pedagogical techniques, they may be unlikely to search for them because of their beliefs regarding the necessary divorce between creative writing and other fields of inquiry.

Survey Data Analysis

Despite the technological frustrations, my requests yielded rich data sources – both survey data and syllabi data. Before reviewing the data collected in the syllabi corpus, I chose to review the survey data, which I'll discuss more here. To reiterate, some of the participants chose to email me their syllabi directly rather than complete the online survey and upload form. Therefore, 39 of my 56 participants completed the survey, or 70% of the respondents. However, there were 40 surveys submitted; one faculty member submitted two surveys, one for each of his syllabi. Although most of the survey data was intended to situate my participants, there were two open-ended questions posed to participants. The answers to those questions were rich for data analysis; that analysis is below.

Creative Writing Teaching Philosophies

While some creative writing teaching philosophies suggest that student-writers should spend their time as undergraduates exploring craft theory, their own writing practices, and the practices of published authors in the hopes of gaining a more global understanding of the complexities of creative writing, others imply there is a "right" answer participating faculty aim to steer student-writers toward. For example, one participant wrote, "give them good poetry to read and examples of good poetic practices" (Teeter). The implication here is that the determination of what qualifies as "good poetry" comes from the instructor's singular perspective, which is problematic in a field where the opinions of distinct readers may ultimately determine the fate of a writer's work. Furthermore, the decision-making power lies with the instructor as he or she is awarded the privilege of defining "good poetry" and "good poetic practices" rather than in a classroom where such definitions can be decided upon in a conversation between the instructor and the student-writers.

The example in the last paragraph sets a tone for instructors as members of an elite group student-writers cannot engage. However, another participant approached the concept of student-writers' publishing future differently. The instructor wrote in describing teaching philosophy, "With a strong focus on revision, but also *the practical aspects of being a writer – sending work out, writing consistently, being engaged with the literary world*, [emphasis added] promoting poetry to non-majors, etc." (Smith, E.E.). This instructor clearly values the practical aspects of writing lives and aims to instill those experiences in the classroom experience. My preferred approach would be one of a practical connection between the classroom and the publishing world. Students in other disciplines across the campus curriculum participate in internships, scientific research projects, student-teaching, art shows, and performances. It seems logical to

prepare student-writers for a future of submission letters and interactions with editors, publishers, reviewers, and readers.

From my research in this dissertation, I wondered if even those instructors who believe in the practical application of creative writing realize that their language may not illustrate that. For instance, a word frequency query of the creative writing philosophy responses found 42 uses of the term "student[s]". On the contrary, only two participants referred to their students as writers when discussing their teaching philosophies (other instances of the term "writer" appeared as noted in Chapter Four, but did not refer to the student-writers directly). An additional participant suggested that the goal is for the student to develop into a "writer/intellectual". Two separate participants referred to their students as poets. The results of this word frequency query caused me to pause. Throughout this research study, I have aimed to think of and write about students as student-writers. I believe they qualify as writers if they wish to, but I also believe for the purposes of clarity in the dissertation, it is important to identify the students as, in fact, students. Additionally, I'd like to note that I refer to the students in my classes as writers, a title that has occasionally surprised them.

Issues of self-identification and self-representation have been heavily discussed in the past decade throughout several university disciplines. In discussing issues of Native American self-representation, Cushman (2008) explains why. "Self-identification is a claim about one's identity that needs no other evidence…Self-identification…is not convincing to many audiences" (p. 323). Many writers and scholars believe aspiring writers must reach a certain level of success before they can be fairly referred to as writers, authors, or poets, but when is that distinction made, and who possesses the power to make it? The issue seems more of an identity issue, and if student-writers choose to self-identify as writers or poets, perhaps that is a valuable contribution

to their identity development as writers. In addition, the encouraging nature of the language many of the participants used in the survey suggests they support their student-writers' individuality and creativity. I wonder, therefore, if the participants are unaware of the contradiction the language use implies and if they would feel differently if they became aware of the situation.

Furthermore, one of the most commonly used words was "work," with 17 uses. Only the words "students" and "writing" appeared more frequently in this particular data set. The uses of "work" included phrases such as "doing the work," "sending work out," "what might be improved in their work," and "practice of becoming a careful reader…will most enhance his or her work." In other words, instructors are regularly referring to students' writing as "work," which is a term that implies professional rigor, yet those instructors are not labeling students as professional writers. If instructors are keen to refer to student-writers writing as *work*, why not also refer to student-writers as *writers*? To be fair, the use of the term "work" is prominent in education. I recall having to "show my work" on math home*work* in elementary school, and I was certainly no budding mathematician. However, I still believe the meaning of the language we use in our teaching and our correspondence with student-writers helps to shape their own beliefs and confidences. I cannot deny the extreme difference between referring to student-writers in our classrooms as writers or students, as poets or students, as authors or students.

Ideal Creative Writing Classroom

As illustrated in the sample list of responses to the question, "How would you describe the ideal creative writing classroom?", interpretations were diverse. Participants discussed (1) the fact that student-writers should possess excitement regarding their work, (2) practical approaches such as personal choices with process, (3) class size, (4) class activities, (5) the instructor's role

in the classroom and more.

As previously mentioned, some participants attached class size limits to the ideal classroom. One participant limited the class size to 6 students; another wrote 10 to 12 students. One said no more than 15 students. Responses also included literal interpretations of the actual room: "windows, comfortable chairs with conference table OR desks that can be arranged in a circle/no loud heating/cooling machinery" (Machan), "a circle of chairs comfortable enough for three hours of good talking" (Miller), "a 'smart' conference room-style classroom complete with a black board and screen" (Hoppenthaler).

Instructors seemed to prefer environments where student-writers are committed to a community, come from a "wide range of backgrounds," and are willing to work. "[T]hey have to be on board, to care, for it to really work" (Stroud). Ideal student-writers were described as "fearless, wired, curious, unabashed, hungry" (Monson) or those "screened for admission" (Anonymous Participant). The words (followed by the number of uses for each word as it appears in the survey data) used to describe ideal creative writing students included: engaged (3), committed (2), curious (2), willing (2), agile (1), eager (1), fearless (1), hungry (1), passionate (1), unabashed (1), wired (1). As these terms suggest, the theme of student commitment seemed particularly important for instructors, but they also, refreshingly, addressed instructors' commitment as well.

> The teacher ensures the creation of a safe space with wide permission for voice and subject matter, one that promotes student discovery and risk-taking while students are exposed to a wide range of classic forms and make connections to their own experiments in writing. The emphasis must be on the positive rather than negative critiquing… (Albers)

Another participant implied a criticism of some instructors by writing, "The instructor should invest in each student instead of picking a few he/she likes and ignoring/criticizing others. The instructor needs to understand that his/her personal aesthetics may bias him/her towards and against certain modes and methods in student work" (Neal). Overall, it was refreshing to see instructors focus the attention on themselves as part of the success in an ideal classroom.

Another frequently used term resulting from this data set was "reading" with 9 uses. Thus, participants argued the ideal creative writing classroom is one where visiting writers come for readings, one with "lots of reading assignments – literature, not process" (Anonymous Participant), one with students "both reading as writers and writing regularly to establish the power of the time-tested principles of writing" (Anonymous Participant), one with a "long reading list," one where students "hone their critical reading skills to develop their tastes as writers" and "bring their own reading/writing experiences into the classroom and inspire each other" (Kirts).

The diversity of responses to this question about the ideal creative writing classroom symbolizes the diversity of pedagogies and interpretations of creative writing. What is important to the classroom? How many student-writers are present? What attitudes and motivations do the student-writers possess? How is the classroom environment structured? What do students actually do in the classroom? The recommendations in this dissertation only address the last question in the above series; it is a weighted question, to be sure. However, the diversity present in this data set further illustrates the need for research in creative writing studies, not strictly regarding what occurs in the classroom, but in analyzing several other factors of the "ideal" creative writing classroom as well.

Conclusion

Although some of my data collection was meant for specific purposes based on the theoretical framework, the knowledge I gained due to technological frustrations and these two open-ended survey questions was unexpected, and it helped frame my analysis during the later parts of the research study. Primarily, the lesson was that so little can, and perhaps should, be controlled in the research process. The technological issues forced me to think differently about my research methods and brainstorm ways to resolve unforeseen issues. Likewise, the open-ended responses framed my thinking for later analysis in the dissertation and sparked ideas for coding data for further analysis, analysis that will be discussed in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION PART TWO:

WRITER-CENTEREDNESS AND ANTI-WRITER-CENTEREDNESS

IN THE SYLLABI CORPUS

For Part Two of my discussion, I focus on writer-centeredness and anti-writer-centeredness in the syllabi corpus. I initially embraced this theoretical framework because of its relevance to the identity development of student-writers; however, as I began to analyze the corpus, I realized that, as a medium, syllabi are highly directive. I anticipated the document would be directive by nature, but I was still surprised by the overwhelming anti-writer-centeredness I encountered during my data analysis. Further discussion of such observations can be found in this chapter.

Writer-Centeredness and Anti-Writer-Centeredness

When I began my pilot study, I viewed the points of analysis for the syllabi language as representing three areas: writer-centeredness, acquisition techniques, and learning techniques. However, I soon realized in my pilot study a factor that was later confirmed in my primary research study: discussion of writer-centeredness is nearly impossible without also discussing anti-writer-centeredness. In other words, the writer-centered language in the syllabi is that which "supports student-writers' rights, passions, and unique development of their writing abilities, present and future," as defined in Chapter One. But such language is not always present. In fact, with the institutional pressures faculty experience regarding creating syllabi that serve as course contracts, the opposite is often true. Anti-writer-centered language, or language that fails to support or potentially contradict "student-writers' rights, passions, and unique development of their writing abilities, present and future," can frequently be observed in syllabi. Therefore, an

appropriate analysis of one must include the other; that is why you will notice in the following discussions that codes anticipated as writer-centered are also used in anti-writer-centered contexts and vice versa. For example, I anticipated the term "community" would represent writer-centeredness in that students would be free to engage and build the classroom community and therefore, classroom dynamic unique to that particular group of students. However, there were several instances of the term that suggested instructors possess the appropriate definition of what the community should be, and student-writers must engage that community appropriately, *or else*. Such consequences included grade reduction and removal from the course. Additionally in terms of analysis, while it is fair to understand that there is perhaps a continuum of instances of writer-centeredness and anti-writer-centeredness, my goal here is not to discuss such a theory. Rather, my intention is to consider the relationship between these representations of language and how instructors might attempt to include more writer-centered language in their syllabi.

Writer-centered Codes

Overall, the writer-centered language was perhaps the most interesting to me for several reasons. Again, I have to concede that syllabi are often used as "contracts" between students and instructors. As such, these contracts often include language that is authoritative and cautioning to students. Furthermore, the language is seemingly geared more toward the appeasement of administrators than the audience of student-writers, a phenomenon Bizzaro has referred to as "the shadow audience" (personal communication, July 3, 2013). That said, I appreciate instances where instructors have succeeded in illustrating course objectives while still utilizing writer-centered language in their syllabi. We will look more closely at such examples here.

Choice. The term "choice" was drafted for the list of writer-centered terms because I anticipated it would appear in such contexts of student-writer choice when it comes to reading or

writing. Of the 57 references, 18 uses were in the spirit of student-writer autonomy. They most frequently referred to reading choices. For instance, one participant listed "Supplementary literary works of your own choice" under the section "Required Texts & Materials" (Anonymous). A second instructor offered student-writers the opportunity to choose another story of their choice to read from the course text (Graver). While the first example illustrates more flexibility with the reading selections, these student-writer choice selections are supplementary. In other words, the instructor requires the main texts of the course and allows student-writers the choice of how they might supplement them. This may be a good approach for instructors who want to maintain a "quality" deemed as such by them or the canon while also offering student-writers free choice for their supplementary reading. Overall, it also encourages significant reading, which is appropriate for developing writers. The excerpt from Graver's syllabus in the second example reflects a more limited approach to student-writer choice in that students are able to choose a reading from the required text. While I support free choice readings, I realize it can be difficult for instructors when students read so many different stories, and at the least, limiting student-writers to the required text limits the number of stories they have to choose from, and therefore the number with which the instructor might like to possess some familiarity.

In addition to the reading free choice references in the syllabi corpus, there were also mentions of choices made in writing assignments. For example, Clark writes "Except for the first assignment (which is required), all weeks are 'open choice' weeks, meaning you may choose from any of the exercise categories in *The Mind's Eye*." Clark's example illustrates a broad range of choice for student-writers. Although they are required to read along with the assigned schedule, they are free to choose what kind of poem they'd like to write each week, with the exception of the first week when all students write the same type of poem assigned by the

instructor. While free choice seems to be an asset here, if students do not choose to write poems that coincide with the mandated reading assignments, there may be a disconnect in their writing development. Additionally, in a writing workshop situation when student-writers have written different types of poems, students may struggle in critiquing the work of their classmates as they have not had the experience or knowledge with the particular form being shared in the workshop. Ideally, the reading and writing assignments in the creative writing classroom would complement each other. Therefore, choice in this situation may actually be counterproductive for student-writers.

A second example comes from Eddy, a participant who encourages students to:

> Write about one of the following (or something else of [their] choice) and suggest the rhythm of the subject in [their] sentence rhythms: a machine, a vehicle, a piece of music, sex, something that goes in a circle, an avalanche.

The instructor offers the student-writers some examples for the writing assignment but also offers them the opportunity to choose a topic not listed. This may prove an appropriate approach as some student-writers struggle with topic selection and others prefer the freedom to choose. Yet overall, it is interesting if you consider the purpose of educating writers. When the student-writers leave the classroom, they must be able to brainstorm their own writing topics and to make choices about topics without an assignment schedule before them. Again, although this assignment example serves as one of balance, it is a valid point of debate to consider when and how student-writers must develop into autonomous writers and poets.

Community. "Community" proved an interesting term in the analysis because my anticipation was that community would be inclusive and encouraging in its language and context. Definitions of community, of course, can vary greatly. While there was not a specific definition

of community I searched for in the data, I was open to participant interpretations of the term. In many cases, the interpretations suggested contexts that were more cautionary than I expected; in some cases, the language possessed the potential to spark guilt in student-writers, cautioning them to view the classroom environment as a community they must engage in a respectful way. If student-writers failed to treat the community with such respect, they might consider another environment to spend their time. One instructor openly states, "If you are not willing to participate in this class community you should find another course that better suits your personality and needs" (Russell). Perhaps the instructor was merely being candid, but there is no way to determine what other courses are available to the students. Thus, it is difficult to determine if the warning was potentially helpful to the students' choice making. Graver's "Academic Integrity Policy" states "We are a vibrant intellectual community operating on trust, integrity and good faith." Hoppenthaler's "Plagiarism and Other Matters of Academic Integrity" "constitutes a serious offense in the academic community." Dunning's "Attendance Policy" cautions student-writers that "For the duration of this course, you belong to a writing community: our class. If you're not there, you miss out and so does the community." In other words, these examples illustrate that the community *needs* the student-writers and their respect in order to thrive. The implication may be accurate, but I wondered during the analysis if there might be a better approach to encourage student-writers to embrace a community as their own, not a community instituted by the instructor, and one that the student-writer must engage or face consequences.

Upon further analysis, I was able to find such encouraging, writer-centered uses of the term community. Finkelstein wrote under the heading "Principles and Procedures," "…My hope is that as your teacher, I can provide, with your help, a supportive environment through which

you can work as a poet, and enjoy the benefits of a like-minded community of fellow students." Rosenberg under "Course Description & Goals" writes:

> A portion of this course will focus on 'workshopping' your original writing, that is, sharing your writing with a community of peers [your classmates] that is invested in your work. Together we will be developing strategies for the workshops so that we establish a supportive, encouraging environment where students can give and receive feedback that is productive.

Machan includes in her *Introduction to Creative Writing* syllabus a "Note to Students" that includes the following:

> Unlike a lecture course in which a professor relates to you facts and hypotheses, on the retention of which you can be tested, this course is based on artistic process, which calls for a strong emphasis on exercises, a great deal of reading, engaged discussion, and intensive workshop interaction. The best writing class is a community. Student involvement is essential, as is the willingness of all involved to care about each other's progress as writers as well as one's own individual achievement. Your improvement will depend on your efforts to read and write steadily, learning from others' examples and suggestions. In its thorough embrace of creating literature, this course is a challenging and demanding one! I wish you passion, courage, and fortitude. (Machan)

Machan encourages student-writers to invest in the community, not by cautionary or authoritarian language, but by placing responsibility, rightly so, on student-writers. In the first sentence, she moves the focus of the course away from the lecturing instructor to the actions and activities of the students. She writes about a community where "all involved…care about each other's progress as writers as well as one's own individual achievement" and follows that

definition of community with a clear role of responsibility on the student-writer. Machan's note to students reflects the emphases of post-graduation writing environments such as writing groups and critique groups. In such instances, the goal is writers helping writers. Members give and take to improve their writing, publishing, and marketing opportunities, and such practical preparation for the future is invaluable to student-writers.

Overall, there were 36 uses of the term "community." I identified 7 as writer-centered. Additionally, I dismissed 11 uses because they did not apply to the analysis for various reasons. For example, the term was used as a name in web or mailing addresses and as a description of the Writing Center as a service for the community at the college. Finally, 18 were actually anti-writer-centered in that they cautioned the student-writers to embrace the community "or else." It was interesting to see that this term I anticipated would be supportive toward student-writers was changed so significantly by the contexts analyzed in this data set.

Encourage. As was the case with many of the other terms I anticipated to being writer-centered, "encourage" proved to be as anti-writer-centered as writer-centered in participants' uses. Uses of the term that fall short of writer-centeredness mostly focus on the instructor encouraging the student-writers to do something that, if not done, will affect their grades – attend out-of-class readings, explore web sites that detail submission guidelines, communicate with the instructor if something personal is preventing the student-writer from performing well in the course, attend class, write a certain way for the audience, etc. Table 10 features samples of the word "encourage" as they will be analyzed in this section. Even the relatively neutral uses of the term, such as Brown's above, seem to be preceded or followed by some more authoritarian language (in this case, require). Therefore, I still marked the use of encourage as neutral, but thought it was worth noting that the contextual language was not always neutral. The samples

Table 10

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Encourage"

Participant	**Use of "Encourage"**
Anonymous	"Ultimately readers own stories, not authors, and this course will encourage you to look at your own stories from the perspective of readers who want to be told an entertaining story, but also want to see or learn something about the world that they didn't know before."
Anonymous	"In this class, you are a writer. Writers write every day. Writers revise boldly, read voraciously, and respect and pay careful attention to each other's work. The assignments for this class are designed to encourage you to do these things. If you do not do them, your grade will reflect it."
Brown	"In my academic writing classes I encourage students to use personal experience as part of their evidence. And of course I require them to write a thesis statement that articulates their main arguments, which are themselves to be very distinct, clear, or sharp—the word we use in the teaching business for this quality is 'pointed.'"
Dent	"Here you can play. You can pick what story or stories that you are going to respond to. **I encourage you to respond creatively, with a story or scene** (please include a sentence explaining your choice)."
Langenberg	"You are more than welcome to include visuals or create a 3-dimensional project, though you don't have to (though I'd encourage you try. ☺[sic]) Let your creativity and wordsmithing skills really shine in this assignment."

from syllabi of participants who chose to remain anonymous further illustrate the directive language of context. In the first sample, the instructor describes his or her philosophy that "readers own stories," and that the student-writers must learn that. In other words, the student-writers must embrace the instructor's philosophy regarding ownership of stories. In the second anonymous sample, the instructor cautions student-writers that although they are encouraged to write, read, revise, and respect, if they fail in these tasks, their "grade[s] will reflect it."

Overall, with "encourage," the word seemed to carry three meanings. The first was a writer-centered approach of encouraging writers to approach writing a certain way – experimentally, innovatively, passionately. The second was an anti-writer-centered approach that encouraged student-writers to do something "or else." Finally, the last usage was, to be fair, a bit neutral. The language was not particularly writer-centered, but it also did not challenge students to do something or risk a lower grade in the course. Both Dent and Langenberg's samples above are much more writer-centered in their usage. For instance, Langenberg uses an emoticon, potentially attempting to further encourage student-writers and show that the encouragement is not a demand. The language could be tightened, as this seems potentially confusing to student-writers. Still, she is trying to encourage student-writers to experiment with the assignment without demanding it. Overall, I determined 11 uses of the term encourage to be writer-centered, 4 to be anti-writer-centered, and 4 to be relatively neutral.

Support. As expected, the term "support" was both student and writer-centered in its uses. Table 11 includes three samples of the writer-centered term usage. In the example from the participant who preferred to remain anonymous, the instructor of fiction shows support of all students' writing interests, as long as student-writers realize writing is not necessarily easy from one genre to the next. By encouraging student-writers to see that complexity within genres, the participant is further supporting the diversity of students' writing interests. Langenberg encourages student-writers to enjoy the process. She also refers to the student-writers' "own creativity" and "own voice." Overall, in this example, there are several examples of writer-centeredness, which I think the term "support" tends to spark. The breakdown of the term's uses illustrates how highly writer-centered it actually was. Eight uses were positive; only one was negative. Seventeen other uses were neither writer-centered nor anti-writer-centered. They

referred to policies, office names, supporting claims in essays, etc. So overall, "support" proved a good word for writer-centeredness and a good word for student-centeredness.

Table 11

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Support"

Participant	**Use of "Support"**
Anonymous	"And, yes, I'm a hundred percent in support of genre fiction, unless of course you're writing it because you think it's easy, because you think the standards aren't the same. If that's the case, then chances are I'm kind of a hundred percent against you writing it."
Eddy	"Peer-editing and collaborative writing help writers hone their skills, brainstorm, and develop an editorial persona. In creative writing courses, students sometimes present texts that may be problematic for others. While that is protected by the Biographical Fallacy (just because the poem says "I" doesn't mean it's me), students must feel safe to express themselves without facing discrimination or intimidation. That includes texts, class discussion, and the online bulletin boards. Students should report any such incidents to me for support and action. The classroom is a protected free speech zone, but prejudice has no special place there."
Langenberg	"Be sure you're having a good time exploring the parameters of your own creativity. Ideally, the process of working on crafting your own voice can allow you to discover things about yourself you didn't know, or to experience life more fully. Do challenge yourself to do your personal best, but don't beat your head against a wall. Seek support and feedback."

Final thought on writer-centered codes. While completing this analysis, I felt an inherent contradiction. Just as student-writers in a classroom should feel the freedom to create based on their beliefs and interests, so too should instructors have the freedom to create a classroom environment based on their beliefs, to an extent. The section above criticizes participants for their lack of writer-centered language in syllabi, but I know that a similar

analysis of my own syllabi would yield anti-writer-centered language. I have recently started teaching at a new institution that references policies often. It became clear to me early in my employment that adherence to policies, especially when creating the syllabi (which has been referred to as a contract) is crucial. As an employee interested in keeping my job, I respect that, and I must respect that my participants may be in similar situations. I am certain some do not believe in the same level of student-centeredness that I do. I am certain some do strive toward a writer-centered classroom but battle innate and institutional issues of control in the classroom. Regardless of the participants' situations, my goal here, with this analysis and discussion, is to draw attention to the language we may use without due consideration and to the language we might consider using as we see others have done so effectively and successfully.

Anti-Writer-Centered Codes

As can be seen from the drastic contrast in Figure 12 of Chapter Four, three words coded as anti-writer-centered in the pilot student – "must," "need," and "require" – appeared much more frequently in syllabi than the others listed with 235, 174, and 110 uses respectively. For comparison, the most frequently appearing writer-centered words were "free" and "help" with 106 and 109 uses, respectively. That said, the total usage rates do not reflect the contextual analysis, which will be discussed more here.

Must. Since the uses (235) were so frequent for the word "must," I chose to look at particular syllabi or sections of syllabi that used the word more than once. In other words, the NVivo software offers links to references of the term, and some syllabi featured more references than others. For example, one syllabus may have used the term "must" once while another included the anti-writer-centered code eight times. I chose to look more closely at those syllabi with higher frequency uses of "must" for closer analysis. However, it should be noted that 57 of

the 67 submitted syllabi included, at some point, the word "must." That accounts for 85% of the corpus. In Figure 14 below, there is an example of this anti-writer-centered code, and others, used frequently within a single section of the syllabus. Not only is "must" used here, but so is "essential" and "thoroughness." Additionally, there is repetition of "I will" and "you must." The language draws excessive attention to the power relationship between the instructor and the student-writer.

Quizzes, Pre-Writing and Presentations:

- **Pre-Writing:** I will sometimes ask you to come to class with notes for writing in hand. **I will grade** these notes on a five-point scale for thoroughness. This work is **essential** to your participation in class discussion and writing. These **must** be typed, and you **must** bring a hard copy to class. You will get no credit for pre-writing if you miss the class.
- **Quizzes:** I will give a reading quiz of some sort most every day. You **must** be able to summarize the work, to identify author and title of the selection (spelled correctly), and to comment on its content, if asked. You **may not** make up quizzes you have missed.
- **Informal Presentations:** Each student **must** participate in a group that leads the class in a close stylistic reading of a section of a text for that day's class. In other words, students **have to** choose a section of one of the day's texts (ten lines of a poem, a paragraph or page of an essay) and lead the class to look carefully at how the author words his or her lines. How do they use the elements we are discussing in class such as imagery, character, setting, or voice?

(Anonymous Participant)

Figure 14. Extensive use of anti-writer-centered term "must" in single section of syllabus. The example in the figure comes from a syllabus submitted by an anonymous participant. To facilitate discussion, I have bolded anti-writer-centered terms throughout these few short lines.

The power relationship between instructor and student is also featured in the next example. Figure 15 below includes a bulleted list of "musts" for students under the instructor's "Attendance and Participation Policy." While the participant's decision to use the actual term "must" only once may have lightened the sense of anti-writer-centeredness for student-writers, the fact is student-writers are reading a list of things they *must* do in order to succeed in the course, which can be unnecessarily overwhelming.

Attendance and Participation

Participation is essential for a successful creative writing workshop. Each student must:

- attend every class;
- closely read assigned essays, and prepare for and participate in discussions of reading assignments. Bring hard copy of the reading assignments to class, with your notes and thoughts for discussion;
- complete any writing exercises assigned
- write thoughtful, considered critiques of your peer's work and prepare a copy for the workshop writer, and also for the instructor;
- participate actively and constructively in workshop discussions;
- turn in your most finished work for critique

(Anonymous Participant)

Figure 15. List of "musts" in Attendance and Participation policy. The frequency of the term "must" is significantly reduced in the language above by the instructor's tactic of including the term once and then bulleting a list of all of the activities student-writers are expected to complete for attendance and participation credit.

Other participants used the term more frequently, but they spread their commands out throughout the syllabus whereas this example seems loaded in such a small space. Table 12 illustrates several instances of the term "must" as it is used in various sections of the syllabi. The commands continued in a similar fashion for all of the 57 syllabi that included the anti-writer-centered code. Analyzing uses of the code "must," and of the other anti-writer-centered codes, is challenging because in many cases there are, in fact, things student-writers must do in the classroom. However, the reality is that students possess choice regarding all assignments and course tasks. They possess choice regarding participation in the classroom environment. In other words, the instructor can say students "must" do certain things in the classroom, but whether or not students obey is their choice. Therefore, I wonder if the language could be more writer-centered to reflect that responsibility on the student. In other words, perhaps language such as "must," "need," and "required" is not as effective as instructors hope it to be.

Table 12

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Must"

Participant	**Use of "Must"**
Anonymous	"You won't receive a letter grade on first drafts, but all stories and exercises must be on time, completed, substantial, and ready to be workshopped, to earn full credit."
Czierwiec	"You must come to each class prepared to write, discuss, share your work with others, revise what you have written, and turn in assignments." "**If you must miss a class, let me know in advance; you are still responsible for all assigned work...** These pieces must be in a fairly standard format: typed, one side of the page only, one-inch margins, in 10- or 12-point font, and in a professional font style. Because the progression of assignments moves quickly, late work will get you behind on subsequent assignments. **All work must be turned in as hard copies; e-mailed assignments will not count."**
Haven	"All course work must be completed in order to pass the class…You must provide written critical commentary on *every* piece that is up for all-class workshop…Because of the nature of this class, you *must* turn in your work on time…All the work you turn in to the class, of course, must be original work…All workshop material must be typewritten…You will volunteer for workshop times throughout the semester, and you must bring copies of your story the period *before* discussion of your work."
Monson	"Everything you write for and workshop in this class must be written for this class… What we do and read and talk about in workshop must stay in workshop."

Need. The anti-writer-centered code "need" is another interesting one because it is synonymous with "must" in many uses. "You need" to do this and "you will need" to do that is basically saying "You must". Also, as was the case with "must," 57 of the 67 syllabi, or 85%, included the term at least once. Overall, there were 174 uses of the code in the syllabi corpus. One interesting example comes from Harmony Neal's *Introduction to Fiction Writing* syllabus. In Neal's syllabus, the term "need" appears in the "Revision Process," "Discovery Notebook," "Workshop," "Individual Conferences," "Writer's Block," and "Story Assignments" sections of the syllabus. Table 13 lists those five uses of the term "need"; I labeled the uses with letters for ease of discussion.

Table 13

Sampling of Participant Neal's Use of the Term "Need"

Label	**Use of "Need"**
D	"To earn an A in classroom citizenship, you will need to conscientiously read and analyze the published stories, chapters assigned from *Writing Fiction*, and your fellow students' work and come prepared to discuss these texts in a substantive way."
E	"Every time you sit down to work on your story, you need to 'Save As' a new draft."
F	"Each time you revise, you need to include **authorial notes** to yourself that will be included in your Revision Process file. You need to note what you've accomplished so far and how, and what you still need to address, and how, in future revisions."
G	"After your story is workshopped, you need to write a plan for revision of at least 300 words that outlines specifically how you plan to revise the story and why, specifically addressing elements of craft, in your Revision Process file."
H	"You need to let yourself write down anything and everything until you hit on an idea you can work with…"

To be fair, Neal includes some great advice to student-writers throughout her syllabus. Her sections on the "Revision Process," "Discovery Notebook," and "Writer's Block" offer candid and, in my opinion, helpful advice for writers. I wonder if this is an instance of an instructor developing a syllabus without awareness of the language used and how it might affect student-writer autonomy and motivation.

Interestingly, "we need" represented a small trend in the syllabi corpus. There were 10 instances of "we need" and it was used in a few cases when the instructor was encouraging student-writers to attend class because "we need" your insight. Also, instructors used this when talking about what writers, as a group, need to do, which is a writer-centered, inclusive approach to welcoming student-writers into an elite society they so desperately wish to join. Of course, as can be argued in many discussions of power relationships, the fact that the instructor is in the position to grant that confidence to student-writers by welcoming them reflects an issue of power not to be overlooked.

Finally, there were only four examples of "I need" which I thought would have been more prevalent. Instructors only used this phrasing a few times. One example was an expression of power but also read as a plea: **"I will not accept e-mailed assignments! I need hard copies!"** (Graver, English 453). In fact, the use of exclamation points here caused me to consider what a future study on the punctuation used in syllabi might also reflect regarding power in the classroom.

Required. The trend of anti-writer-centered language continued with the frequency of the word "required." Fifty-three, or 79%, of the 67 syllabi included the term at least once for a total of 130 uses in the corpus overall. There were 34 appearances of the term in the section detailing required texts and materials, 26 appearances of "you are required" or "you will be required," and

5 appearances of "students are required." Additionally, 42 uses of the term appeared throughout sections of the corpus detailing grading policies, assignments, and expected student behaviors. Student-writers are required to turn in homework, respond to readings, work with others, submit proof of disability, submit assignments by due date, ask for instructor permission before bringing a child to class, and so on.

Table 14

Sampling of Participant Rosenberg's Use of the Term "Required"

Label	**Use of "Required"**
I	"While *you are certainly not required* to accept another person's comments (either your peers or mine), **you are required** to carefully and extensively *revise your own writing*. **I simply do not accept** the view that an initial draft is inspired, and therefore complete, writing. It may be a strong first draft containing lots of original language and ideas, yet it is still the raw beginning of a complex process. In this course **you are required** to *be open and willing to make changes to your work*."
J	"While *you are not required* to make changes suggested by other readers, your finished piece(s) should show substantial revision, indicating that *you have thought carefully about how to continue crafting your work*. Simply editing is not sufficient. Remember: a first draft of anything – poem, story, essay, etc – reflects the raw nature of first thoughts. You may be attached to your early drafts; however, writing (especially creative writing) gains depth as it is rethought and reworked. *You are free to add a completely new piece to your collection of revised work*. In addition to the poems/stories, **you will write** a 3-page *self-reflection in which you explain your analysis of your own work (i.e. how you understand the work in the portfolio, how each piece evolved, what sorts of questions/problems you tackled as you composed/revised*). **You will** end your reflection by considering *how (and if) you have changed as a writer this semester*."

The word was actually used positively in three instances when the instructor wrote that something was "not required". The two examples from Rosenberg in Table 14 above, labeled with letters for ease of discussion, feature some anti-writer-centered language (which I marked in bold), but the instructor also moves toward a more writer-centered approach (which I marked in italics) by further explaining the expectations to student-writers so that they understand them as, ideally, actions that will help them in the presumed goal of becoming better writers.

Overall, "required" is an interesting word to consider. Student-writers are required to complete certain tasks if they want to do well in courses, but instructors truly do not have the power to require anything of student-writers. They can set as many incentives and consequences as they please, but ultimately, student-writers possess the choice to complete required assignments or not. Rosenberg's examples above illustrate what might be an appropriate balance of teacher influence and student responsibility. Rosenberg is leaning on student-writers to become diligent thinkers and writers in the course, but she is also granting them the power to make choices about their writing projects and writing development on their own. Striving for a balance of guiding our student-writers and inspiring them to become independent writers is an admirable goal; I find myself thinking more deeply about how such a goal can be obtained after analyzing Rosenberg's approach.

Conclusion

As I considered ideas for my dissertation, the issue of student-writer identity development was key for me. I was concerned with the ways creative writing pedagogy in the academy encouraged or restricted student-writer development. Participants certainly have several opportunities outside of the syllabus to encourage identity development in their classrooms; however, analyzing the language instructors use in their syllabi, in assignment descriptions, and

throughout the course – both in documentation and in face-to-face interaction – is an important consideration. It is necessary to consider the struggle between balancing institutional expectations and instructors' teaching philosophies with course syllabi; however, if there are opportunities to innovate our language usage to enable student-writer identity development, we should certainly embrace such innovations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION PART THREE:

ACQUISITION AND LEARNING IN THE SYLLABI CORPUS

Just as Part Two discussed the first theoretical framework of the dissertation, Part Three focuses on the discussion of the second theoretical framework – that of acquisition and learning. This framework is paramount to the research study and the dissertation findings. I included the framework because the balance of acquisition and learning in creative writing classrooms is highly relevant to the success of student-writer development, according to my pedagogical beliefs and research that the two work best in tandem. Therefore, I wanted to look at acquisition and learning techniques occurring in current creative writing classrooms and search for innovative approaches, not relying on lore and tradition, that balance the two techniques for the benefit of student-writers. Occasionally, the lines between acquisition and learning tend to blur, especially as they are often partners of sorts. Additionally, syllabi offer only a limited view of these classroom techniques. The discussion in this chapter serves as the spark of what acquisition and learning looks like in the creative writing classroom.

Acquisition and Learning Techniques

As was the case with the lesson learned regarding writer-centered and anti-writer-centered language, the analysis of acquisition and learning techniques in the syllabi corpus did not progress quite as expected. For some time, I debated the true representations of the codes discussed below and whether they could be classified as acquisition or learning and what it would even mean to classify them as such. After much thoughtful debate, I realized the value in discussing acquisition and learning is not necessarily in classifying certain activities as one or the other but in identifying partnerships between the techniques. In other words, when a strong

acquisition technique can be found, the next logical step for analysis is to think about how a learning technique might be partnered with said acquisition technique for the ultimate knowledge-gaining experience for student-writers. The text searches for codes deemed representative of acquisition or learning in the pilot study below, I keep the concept of a partnership between the two approaches in mind in my analysis.

Acquisition Codes

As per my definition developed for this dissertation, acquisition in the creative writing classroom refers to the practices student-writers engage, both inside and outside of the classroom, which allow them to acquire skills through personal exploration; furthermore this definition includes an aspect of subconscious knowledge construction. The following discussion addresses those terms identified as acquisition-based in the context of creative writing courses.

Daily. In all, there were 53 uses of the term "daily" in 16 of the 67 syllabi. While many of the uses, as shown in the examples below, reflect the intention of daily writing and/or reading assignments to improve writing, some uses (11 of the 53) reference the course schedule of assignments, which may include writing and reading; but in these cases, the term "daily" reflects the schedule, not the activities. Table 15 below features some specific examples of daily acquisition techniques in the syllabi studied.

Table 15

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Daily"

Participant	**Use of "Daily"**
Eddy	"**Online Journal/Workshop** (30%): You will write nearly daily on the course's D2L web. The journal is a place to respond to and apply concepts of the course, discuss your own writing experience, discuss your reading (especially as it relates to writing or the craft of the writers you read),

	attempt exercises, record drafts, and respond to the writing prompts of the text book. You will also submit drafts and respond to work on the online workshop. In this way, you will get rather prompt feedback from the class, so you can resume work on revision."
Haven	"200 Words a Day: Writers write. To help you with this, you will, for two week-long periods during the semester, write 200 words a day. You will be placed into a small group, and you will email the members of your group (and me) your words daily, for accountability only: the sole purpose of the exercise is to produce raw material. We will arrange the due dates for this project in class."
Machan	"The course guides students to learn the basic techniques of writing poetry and fiction. Daily readings in the textbook, integral as models, help shape in-class and homework exercises; short quizzes on these readings help to assure their completion. Daily writing assignments, carefully read and evaluated by the professor, and totaling at least 30 pages, will culminate in a final portfolio consisting of 1) at least one finished draft of a story, 2) at least five finished poems, and 3) intermediate drafts of one other story and five or more other poems."
Monson	"Daily writerly reading: this is the primary portion of the work for this class. Yes, there is a lot of it. For aspiring writers, reading is key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key key [sic] to your success."
Walker	"**In class writing 15%:** You will be asked to write in class almost daily. If you miss a class you cannot make up the writing for that day."

The journal writing in Eddy's example was a particularly interesting exercise to me. Encouraging student-writers to engage this kind of writing daily is an acquisition-based exercise, but it partners well with learning techniques because student-writers would do well to reflect on their

own ideas and experiences (reading and writing) and say something about them. Such an action takes the student-writers from acquisition to learning, and the combination of the two provides the richest knowledge-gaining experiences.

The sample from Machan offers an opportunity to discuss this theory further. As part of the "Course Description," Machan describes a highly acquisition-based classroom where importance is placed on the daily acts of writing and reading. Although one of my motivating concerns in designing this research study was that, in my own experience, my creative writing instructors did not design the courses I took with adequate acquisition techniques, especially during class time. My research has caused me to think differently. Acquisition is, indeed, imperative in creative writing classrooms, but that additional step of *learning* in the form of reflection especially, is also imperative. In other words, the acquisition that takes place during a classroom such as Machan's should be reinforced with learning techniques that cause the student-writers to gain an understanding of the subconscious acquisition that has occurred. Otherwise, I theorize that knowledge construction for the student-writer would be limited and, thus, there may be a lack of satisfaction with the course and the overall experience.

The example from Walker's syllabus was pulled from the grading breakdown, and the acquisition technique of in-class writing represents 15% of the student-writer's final grade in Walker's course. To give you some context, the entire grading breakdown is included in Figure 16 below. The exercises and peer review also offer opportunity for acquisition to occur. Overall, the grading structure suggests a balance of learning (quizzes, peer review, explication in the portfolio) and acquisition (in-class writing, exercises, peer review, revision) assignments in this classroom. As such, the "daily" act of writing and reading represents an acquisition technique, but the term represents the how, not the what. The examples in the discussion above and in other

discussions in this chapter offer more insight into "what" instructors might have student-writers do daily in order to acquire improved writing ability and to connect acquisition-based strategies with learning-based strategies.

Quizzes 10%: I will occasionally give reading quizzes. Please do the readings. If you miss a class you cannot make up the writing for that day.

Poems/Exercises 25%: I will assign several formal poem assignments. These will be peer reviewed or workshopped and then graded by me.

Peer review 30%: I will ask you to write brief comments for in-class writings as well as for more formal exercises. You should provide a typed copy to me as well as a copy to the writer. These may be posted via BB Learn.

Portfolio 20% Revised poems plus a two-page, single spaced explication of how the assignments and prompts guided your writing.

(Walker)

Figure 16. Context for Walker's use of "daily" as listed in Table 15. In addition to providing context, the figure shows what other assignments are included in Walker's syllabus and could be viewed as acquisition-based tasks.

Practice. Appropriately, Hoogestraat lists in her "Objectives" that students will "learn and practice" several aspects in the course, including editing and writing. In her own words, she has illustrated the two aspects of the balanced acquisition and learning approach with practice representing acquisition. Monson also illustrates the approach in his welcome to the *Intermediate Fiction Workshop* he teaches:

> I can't make you a great writer. No one can. Possibly not even you can (I don't know you well enough to say). I can, however, help make you a better writer, a more versatile one, a more powerful and interesting one. What's really important to your development as a

> writer is partly pretty simple: your work ethic: your reading (how much and how well you read) and how much work you put into your fiction. Practice is the main thing that will make you a better writer. Hence the rationale of this class's blitz approach to story writing: we will be doing a lot of practice. (Monson)

As the title of this dissertation suggests, my hypothesis here is that writing abilities can be improved through a balance of acquisition and learning, thus placing a balance of responsibility on the student-writer and the instructor. As Monson points out, he is certainly part of the process, but a student-writer's work ethic is paramount, and that reflects the importance of the term "practice" in the syllabi. Additionally, he qualifies student-writers' reading as "how much and how well you read." The phrase represents both acquisition – how much – and learning – how well – regarding reading assignments.

Despite the importance of practice in developing writing abilities, only 32 of the 67 syllabi, or 47%, include the term. Of course, practice is implied in many of the course assignments throughout the syllabi corpus; still one of the foundational arguments for this dissertation is that the language we use should ideally reflect the intentions and goals of a course and our teaching philosophies. Thus, as a word that represents acquisition techniques, I would like to see the term "practice" more widely used in creative writing syllabi.

Read(ing). The prevalence of the term "read" was no surprise, although to be fair, its extreme use in reference to other terms analyzed in this study was interesting. "Read" appeared in 91% of the syllabi corpus a total of 532 times. The gerund "reading" appeared in 94% of the corpus a total of 594 times. As full disclosure with the analysis, the high frequency of uses is in part due to the daily schedules where instructors listed reading assignments daily. For instance, one syllabus included the term "reading" 22 times because of the frequency in the daily schedule.

Likewise, other syllabi included the term "read" 48, 29, and 26 times. Still, however, there is a significant presence of the term in the course descriptions, assignments, and other sections of the syllabi discussing writerly advice.

The importance of reading as an acquisition technique is illustrated in the Monson excerpt under the Practice section heading above. Monson references student-writers' "work ethic" as "how much and how well" they read. The subconscious knowledge construction student writers gain from reading makes the action inherently acquisition-based. The more student-writers read, the more knowledge they may acquire regarding writerly craft. Therefore, the frequency of the term "read" in the corpus is highly relevant to the aspect of acquisition; however, as I will discuss later in this chapter, reading can also be a learning-based technique as well.

Write/Writing. Initially, I was surprised to see that the term "write" was used only 399 times in 88% of the corpus. Then I ran the text search query for "writing" and found numbers that aligned more closely with my expectations. One hundred percent of the syllabi include the term "writing," and it is used in the corpus 1,227 times. Of course there are several uses of the term "writing" in the course titles and even required texts, and these uses boost the overall frequency. However, there were several acquisition-based uses of the term that urged student-writers they would be doing a significant amount of writing in the course. Similar to Monson's comment referenced above regarding the work ethic of reading, the frequency of writing also reflects the student-writers' work ethic *and* the potential for acquiring knowledge through practice. Although the term "practice" was not as widely used as I desired or expected, essentially the act of writing is practicing, and it is clear from the number of uses that writing, as an act, is highly valued in the creative writing classroom. While this is certainly not a surprise,

looking more closely at the kinds of writing that occur in the classroom and how that writing might be acquisition and/or learning-based could be a strong research direction in the future.

Learning Codes

As per my definition developed for this dissertation, learning "refers to the knowledge student-writers gain through explanation and analysis and the breaking down of creative writing to its analytic parts." The following codes represent learning techniques because they embody this definition in some way in the creative writing classroom.

Analyze. Gee's (1987/2006) definition of learning, "involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts" (p. 32). The definition illustrates the importance of the code "analyze" as it relates to learning representations in the syllabi corpus. Because of his inclusion of the term and synonyms of it, one anonymous participant's upper level fiction writing course seems to rely heavily on learning although the participant reveals openly to students that they will write at least 100 pages of prose throughout the semester, which reflects acquisition. In the example below, I have bolded the words that represent learning and italicized the words that represent acquisition; likewise, I have bolded and italicized those words that represent both. The participant writes in the "Learning Outcomes" section:

> We will **discuss** how the writing of prose is an essential discipline in an attempt to lead an **examined** life, in addition to honing our ability to **analyze**, **synthesize**, ***revise***, **think** and **respond critically**, and perhaps **think** new thoughts that will allow some *illumination* into parts of our characters or imaginations heretofore untapped.
>
> We will **learn** how to ***write*** short fiction in addition to learning how to ***write*** intelligent and focused **Critical Responses to** our classmates' work. Again, the above disciplines will

hone your ability to **think critically** and **respond intelligently**. (Anonymous)

The bolding shows the importance placed on the analytic element of learning the craft of writing in this classroom. The participant uses language such as "discuss," "analyze," "synthesize," "revise," "think," "respond critically," "learn," and "write." The instructor uses some of the terms more than once. On the contrary, there are only three terms coded as acquisition-based. Two of those words were both acquisition and learning-based. The course, therefore, seems to be designed as highly analytical, which can certainly be an asset in the course.

Let me explain further. In several other syllabi, the term "analyze" closely follows the term "read." In other words, participants are grouping the acquisition-based activity of reading with the learning-based activity of analyzing, an appropriate partnership by this dissertation's expectations. Student-writers are encouraged to analyze their own writing, the writing of their classmates, and the writing of published authors to gain a better understanding of their own writing abilities. Thus, the anonymous participant's example above illustrates the importance of grouping the step of analysis with acquisition-based techniques in the classroom. In all, there are 25 uses of the term in 17, or 25% of the syllabi. The limited frequency of the term is somewhat disappointing considering the importance of analysis in Gee's (1987/2006) definition of learning; however, there are several other learning codes that represent analytic actions (some of which are discussed below), and those should not be overlooked.

Discuss. The act of discussing is likely one of the most common learning techniques in the creative writing classrooms, as is the case with many other disciplines as well. There were more than 200 uses of the term "discuss" in the corpus, and it appeared in 54 syllabi, or 81% of the submissions. Discussing material is a natural action in a classroom, and in a creative writing classroom, the approaches include one-on-one discussions between students and between the

Table 16

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Discuss"

Participant	**Use of "Discuss"**
Anonymous	"As we discuss these stories you will be thinking about why *you* as an author make the decisions you do."
Eddy	"The journal is a place to respond to and apply concepts of the course, discuss your own writing experience, discuss your reading (especially as it relates to writing or the craft of the writers you read), attempt exercises, record drafts, and respond to the writing prompts of the text book."
Farmer	"As we write, we will discuss matters such as getting a first sentence on the page, creating characters, developing a rising tension strong enough to carry the reader through the story, and revising a final draft."
Hoppenthaler	"The course also acknowledges the important relationship between poetry writing and the practice of literary critique and explication by requiring students to read, analyze, discuss, pass informed judgment upon, and write about contemporary poetry."
Platt	"We will read quite a few of these two writers' poems, discuss them briefly in class, and ask ourselves what we can learn from their examples as regards to craft, style, and subject matter." "Meet with me at least <u>once</u> (preferably twice) during the course of the semester to discuss your writing."
Stroud	"You will also read the stories from the assigned reader according to the class schedule and be prepared to discuss them in class as we expand and deepen our ideas of fiction." "We'll also discuss the other basics, such as character, point-of-view, and the like."

student and the instructor, small group discussions, and whole class discussions. The dynamics differ in each case. Furthermore, participants offered several classroom instances when discussion would be included; a sampling of those uses is listed in Table 16 above.

The first samples listed in the Table for Platt and Stroud address the discussion of assigned reading, a frequent point made by participants. Student-writers are often urged to read and come "prepared to discuss" in the syllabi. There is also significant attention paid to the conference-style discussions between student-writer and instructor. Several participants require some form of conferences. The frequency of required meetings tends to vary by instructor preference, though. Although there are not several mentions of the discussions in peer review or workshop environments, the implication is surely present in those sections of the syllabi; in other words, the exact word "discuss" is not often used in those cases. Finally, the examples from Eddy, Farmer, Hoppenthaler, and Stroud (second entry) include details about the types of learning student-writers might do by discussing various aspects of writing and the writing life.

Overall, the inclusion of the term "discuss" in the corpus is frequent and diverse. Although discussion seems to be an obvious activity for creative writing instructors, analyzing the diversity in the term's usage helps to refine the types of discussion faculty may want to include in the classroom and why that discussion is appropriate. For instance, in the example from Table 16 from the anonymous participant, the discussion of stories leads to why student-writers, as authors, make the decisions that they do with their own writing. Therefore, the acquisition technique of reading becomes a learning technique with the analytical aspect of connecting the reading to the student-writers' own writerly decisions. Farmer groups discussion with writing, another learning/acquisition grouping. Hoppenthaler writes about the "important relationship between poetry writing and the practice of literary critique and explication," or in

other words, the importance of the relationship between acquisition and learning. To embrace the writer-centered perspective of this dissertation, it would be ideal for the explication to be applied to the student-writers' own works rather than or in addition to explication applied to the work of other published authors. Finally, Platt illustrates the partnership between acquisition and learning with the example "[w]e will read…and ask ourselves what we can learn from their examples as regards to craft, style, and subject matter." Approaches such as these exemplify what it means to read from a writerly perspective, and this approach represents the partnership of acquisition and learning in terms of reading and writing.

Read. The fact "read" is listed in both the acquisition and learning sections illustrates the overall value of the act. While student-writers subconsciously acquire better understanding of the various aspects of the craft of writing by reading, they are often encouraged to perform some "active" reading in classrooms. Therefore, in addition to the acquisition, student-writers are also learning from the reading by analyzing and studying it. Still, I would like to reiterate the distinction between reading from a literary perspective and reading from a writerly perspective. When student-writers read from a literary perspective, there is certainly an aspect of critical analysis; however, reading from a writerly perspective causes the student-writers to apply that critical analysis to *writing*, and in particular, to their own writing. There are many ways to critically analyze other authors' works in that the student-writers are learning about their own work. In doing so, student-writers are achieving, not simply acquisition, but also learning. Table 17 below lists examples of participants encouraging student-writers to engage that kind of analytic reading.

Table 17

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Read"

Participant	**Use of "Read"**
Anonymous	"We will read and analyze published fiction. We will read and analyze our own stories, giving and receiving direct, honest, constructive feedback on each other's work…The goals of the course include: to produce and polish work that you are proud to share with an audience; to develop our understanding of, and facility with, the elements of fiction; to read and analyze work, others and your own, from a writer's point of view; to see the world as a writer, with narrative possibilities everywhere."
Monson	"The idea is not just to read, but to read as writers. This is a key idea here: though we may enjoy our reading (I imagine most of you will enjoy most of our reading), as writers, we're not reading for pleasure. We're not reading to like or dislike. We are reading this semester—and you will be reading in your future as writers—primarily to isolate elements of craft and to see how they operate in works of literature, and then, of course, to be aware of and manipulate them in your own work."
Anonymous	"[D]evelop the ability to identify artistic and technical elements in a piece of writing, and see how, where, and why they succeed or fail which is essentially supported by active reading…" "[P]articipate in regular workshop sessions, attentively read and give constructive commentary (oral and written) on peer writing…" "In my class, what I am trying to do is have students understand the craft of writing and see it in action before they attempt to do so themselves. By choosing *The Great Gatsby*, I am allowing them to map out a book that most of them would have read, and having them re-read it slowly. By going through only one chapter a week, we can focus on every word, sentence, paragraph etc. to give the students an understanding of how

	decisions are made while writing fiction. By having them go through all the small elements that go into making a book, I am hoping they will understand the difficulty of creating art, as well as appreciate it on a micro rather than macro level. This semester-long affiliation with a single book will allow them to understand the patience and painstaking annoyance of writing their own work, and will hopefully allow them to make micro as well as macro decisions, and understand how to get down to the nuts and bolts of writing a story. At the same time, by studying a novel, the students will get an idea of the larger purpose of authorial decisions and ideas."

Reading from a writerly perspective is illustrated in several of these examples starting with the first from the anonymous participant: "to read and analyze work, others and your own, from a writer's point of view" is essentially writerly reading. "The idea is not just to read, but to read as writers....we're not reading for pleasure….We are reading…primarily to isolate elements of craft and to see how they operate in works of literature, and then, of course, to be aware of and manipulate them in your own work" (Monson). Monson includes the phrase "of course" as if there could be any other kinds of reading for writers. Although acquisition certainly does occur with reading, it is this writerly reading that facilitates learning. The lessons acquired through reading might not be realized for some time without the partnership to learning, which creates an opportunity for student writers to really mine their thoughts and reactions to writing. Furthermore, and "of course" as Monson would put it, student-writers who read from a writerly perspective might be able to better manipulate their own writing into what they envision it will become.

Overall, it seems that the strong presence of the terms "read" and "reading" in the syllabi corpus illustrates participants' clear understanding of the importance of writers reading. The

single act can represent an impressive balance of acquisition and learning, perhaps more than any other – even writing. However, that balance depends on the way the reading is assigned, analyzed and discussed. Therefore, reading assignments must connect to assignments of reflection, discussion, and writing, a claim that is further discussed later in this chapter and in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Reflect. The limited presence of the term "reflect" or any variation of it in the syllabi corpus was disappointing because this single code illustrates the combination of writer-centeredness, acquisition, and learning perhaps more appropriately than any of the others discussed. The reason for this is that during reflection, the student-writer is independently thinking or reflecting on personal experience or knowledge attainment and therefore focusing on his or her own ideas and styles (thus, writer-centeredness). Furthermore, the process of reflection combines consideration of what student-writers may have acquired from activities such as reading, writing, exploring, and so forth, with the cognitive learning that occurs in analysis, discussion, and lectures. Because of this overall combination, the theoretical importance of reflecting as part of writing growth is clear.

The act of reflecting does not seem as valuable to the participants as I envisioned it to be, judging by the lack of prevalence of the term and, thus, the action, in the submitted syllabi. However, there are still 47 appearances of some variation of the term (reflecting, reflection, or reflective) in roughly 36% of the syllabi in the corpus. Table 18 lists a sampling of some of the uses. In these examples, there is a trend of writer-centeredness as the assignments and discussions place value on the students' own ideas and analyses of their improvements with writing. For example, the anonymous participant writes that the reflective essay with the portfolio should address "what you were trying to do, what went well, what challenges you

Table 18

Sampling of Participants' Use of the Term "Reflect"

Participant	**Use of "Reflect"**
Anonymous	"The aim of this system is to encourage revision and experimentation, provide opportunities for you to reflect upon your work and the writing process, facilitate skill-building, and help you become a better reader and critic of your own work." "At the end of the semester, you will submit a final portfolio of your best writing. Portfolios need not—and indeed should not—include everything you have written for this class. Rather, they should contain your best expanded and substantially revised working drafts and/or writing exercises. You should preface your portfolio with a 2-3 page reflective essay discussing your writing: what you were trying to do, what went well, what challenges you faced, etc."
Dunning	"You should also turn in a (separate) 3-page reflection of what you have come to understand about how stories work, and your own writing process, in the course. Please be as specific as possible and back up claims with examples from your reading and writing over the semester."
Graver	"A meditation (~ 4 pages) in which you reflect on your writing—both process and product this semester. What sort of journey have you gone on in this class? How did your writing process change? What did you struggle with? What did you learn? What exercises, reading, processes did you find most and least helpful? What are your thoughts as you read over your final portfolio? (Please do so, cover to cover, before you write your meditation.)"
Hoogestraat	"Students will reflect on what they value in poetry, including its expressive, aesthetic, and psychological (or even spiritual) components."
Neal	"In addition, you must include entries for all three readings titled 'Revision Process,' describing each author's revision process, then

	reflecting on how this new information will affect *your* process." "Self-Reflection: (10% of your grade) 3-5 pages double-spaced self-reflection on what you learned about your writing process during this course. You should assess your own dedication, growth, and development honestly and in-depth, using specific details about where you began in this course, where you ended up, and how you got there. Be sure to address your revision process, classroom citizenship, and discovery notebook entries. Include a breakdown of the grades you would assign yourself and why, including your overall grade."
Rosenberg	"You will submit your revision, the earlier version of the piece, and a self-assessment in which you reflect on your process of crafting the story."

faced, etc." Dunning asks what student-writers "have come to understand about how stories work." Graver places importance on the student-writer's journey of knowledge construction in the course. Neal asks student-writers to reflect "on what [they] learned about [their] writing process during this course." Overall, the language places importance on the student-writer's ideas regarding their writer identities and development. Perhaps it is even of higher value that the student-writers must reflect on their identities and their development; yes, instructors are asking them to do so, but the act of reflecting for the student-writers may prove the *learning* breakthrough they desire. When such a breakthrough occurs, the students could ultimately place value on the course and their experiences within it.

There is also a trend of coupling the valuable act of reflecting with another action that combines acquisition and learning – revision. By reflecting on their revision processes, student-writers acquire improved writing skills by engaging the act of revision *and* analyzing the decisions they made in the revision process, which causes them to think more deeply about their writing in a critical way as clear representation of learning. With limited time and resources in

one semester, I believe reflection and revision represent some of the best activities for student-writers to develop their writing abilities primarily because they require a balance of acquisition and learning.

Conclusion

The codes discussed here helped to guide an analysis of what constitutes acquisition and what constitutes learning in the creative writing classroom. The language chosen during the pilot study to represent both techniques provided an analytical framework for the dissertation study. With a clearer understanding of what constitutes acquisition and what constitutes learning, I was able to conduct a more comprehensive and complex analysis of the tasks that feature either of the approaches. Additionally, it became clear that the techniques are also collaborative in some cases in that reading, writing, and reflecting, for instance, can be both acquisition-based and learning-based. For instance, when we read, we acquire knowledge subconsciously and consciously. We acquire an understanding of how writers successfully intrigue readers from the first page, but we may not be able to explicate that process and additionally, apply it to our own writing – not without learning. In other words, we, as writers, may not *learn* how to succeed in intriguing readers from the first page without some reflection that causes us to think more deeply about instances of acquisition and learning. This is only one example of how acquisition and learning work together so that student-writers can most effectively understand and utilize the knowledge they develop within the creative writing classroom. Although several others have been discussed throughout this chapter, I will revisit the partnership of acquisition and learning in Chapter Nine and further recommend how it might be useful for student-writers in the creative writing classroom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION PART FOUR:

HIGHLIGHTING SECTIONS OF THE SYLLABI CORPUS

In Part Four of the Discussion, I chose to look at specific sections of the course syllabi. Early in my data analysis, I coded various sections of the syllabi, so that I could isolate them for additional analysis. Although this chapter does not discuss each of the coded sections, I chose to focus here on those sections that seemed most relevant either to the framework of writer-centeredness, or to the framework of acquisition and learning, or to both.

Highlighted Syllabi Section One: Required and Recommended Texts

In addition to the text queries conducted for the codes discussed in the previous two chapters, I also searched for high frequency terms in various sections of the syllabi. A surprising piece of data arose from this process in the "Required and Recommended Texts" sections of the 67 syllabi submitted. Twenty-one percent of the participants feature writing texts by one author: Janet Burroway. Overall, two of her texts were required or recommended in the corpus. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft,* written with Elizabeth Stuckey-French and Ned Stuckey-French, was required in eleven courses with titles ranging from *Introduction to Creative Writing* to *Advanced Fiction Workshop* and *Introduction to Narrative Fiction: Theory and Practice*. *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft* was recommended in four mostly Introduction to Creative Writing courses. While the latter addresses four genres: fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and drama, the former focuses only on fiction, as the title suggests. For that reason, the prevalence of the text being required in the corpus is even more interesting. Roughly two-thirds of the corpus represents courses where students write fiction; therefore, the percentage of fiction classes in the corpus that feature Burroway's work is more accurately about 32%.

Burroway's web site does boast that her text *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* "is the most widely-used creative writing text in America" ("Biography"). It should also be noted that no other textbook appeared in the corpus with any identifiable consistency.

Although such an analysis does not fall under the scope of this dissertation, I include this information about Burroway's texts because further analyzing her text and other popularly assigned texts in creative writing courses could become an entirely different study, and one that benefits creative writing faculty and student-writers across the country. In that regard, such a study could also provide insight regarding what is being taught in a significant portion of American creative writing classrooms.

Highlighted Syllabi Section Two: Common Assignments

Of all the sections for analysis, that of the Assignments is probably the most vital to the overall study because it ties directly to the creative writing that is occurring in the classroom. There are several goals for this study, including understanding what is occurring in creative writing courses and determining what approaches include writer-centered, acquisition, and learning techniques. The reason the Assignments section is so important is because it can offer concrete examples that help to fulfill all three of these goals. The interesting aspect of analyzing the "Assignments" listed in the syllabi corpus is seeing the diversity of approaches even with the same assignments. After a thorough analysis, the following is a comprehensive list of common assignments participants describe and the variations among the courses represented.

Journals

Overall, journals seem to monitor student-writers' progress and ensure they are writing frequently, an appropriate acquisition technique. However, participants such as Langenberg refer to the project as an "Analytic Journal," which couples the acquisition technique of writing

frequently with the learning technique of conducting analysis in addition to writing. Langenberg offers her students specific ideas for the journals. They include: reactions to assigned stories, class discussions, peer workshops and drafts of student-writers' own stories. Holding true to the acquisition techniques of frequent journaling, Randall Smith gives student-writers a composition book and tells them to fill it up.

> Treat the book as an extension of your body—carry it with you everywhere. Write on one side of the page. The journal will be a place for you to record and reflect on your experiences, your memories, and your observations of the world around you—these reflections may become raw material for the poems and stories you write during the course. (R. Smith)

Personal Reflections

As discussed earlier in Chapter Seven, the act of reflecting is a strong learning technique, and many participants include some aspect of reflection perhaps coupled with midterm or final assessment, with workshop submissions, and also with portfolio submissions. For instance, McCabe offers student-writers the following questions to facilitate personal reflections:

> What are your strong points, your weak points? What are you improving on? Where do you want to go from here? What do you want to focus on, develop, revise? How have you or will you incorporate class comments and use professional writers as models? Mention specifics. What are you especially happy with and why? What are you less happy with? What class activities have most assisted you? Be specific. What would you like to do more of? (McCabe)

McCabe urges student-writers to be specific; it is that specific analysis and reflection that will most lead to the occurrence of learning.

Portfolios

As an assessment tool, portfolios are common among creative writing faculty. The variations found in this analysis were interesting. While the most common approach seems to be a final portfolio, some participants also include a midterm portfolio. The faculty often set numerical requirements such as a midterm portfolio featuring 10 of the student-writers' strongest poems with "evidence of significant revision" and a final portfolio featuring 12 of the student-writers' strongest poems, also with revision (Hoogestraat). Kovacik encourages her student-writers to envision their portfolios as "a small book: it should contain a title page, table of contents, and prefatory essay along with 7-8 pages of your best work completed during this class." McCabe's approach is to have student-writers include all of their early work in an organized mid-term portfolio and later work into an organized end-of-semester portfolio. The portfolios often feature a reflective element from the student-writers as well, and participants often make clear that the portfolio writing should be polished or highly revised. Childress' approach is 25-30 pages of "radically revised and highly refined writing." The term "radical" seems appropriate because, in my experience working with writers, revision seems to be minimal until the writers are prodded to really think more radically. The term might be just what student-writers need to really understand the significance of a strong revision *and* the acquisition and learning that occurs by engaging a radical revision.

Presentations

An interesting approach of the traditional presentation assignment, which is required in many college courses across the curriculum, appears in several of the submitted syllabi. The assignment is for student-writers to present publication information and submission guidelines for a literary journal they are considering for their own writing. For example, in Ponce's

classroom, student-writers are to use *Duotrope* to identify a literary journal and then research the journal as a possible publication for their final projects. Ponce then uses the submission requirements of the chosen journals to assess the student-writers' final projects, an interesting writer-centered approach that individualizes the students' writing based on the student-writers' goals. Fleming also assigns student-writers a presentation on a literary journal or magazine, but the intention with his assignment is that by each student-writer discussing a different publication, the entire class will gain insight into several new publications they may want to consider for their own work. In other words, Fleming does not require student-writers to submit to the publication, only to research it. An additional presentation idea is to have student-writers introduce craft topics such as character development, uses of various points of view, setting, scene, summary, dialogue, story beginnings, story endings, and theme (Dunning). The assignment is further described as:

> You should research your topic by consulting several craft books (you are welcome to use my collection). Because our text does not go into much detail about these concepts, these talks are a critical part of the course. It's your job to sift through the various suggestions and warnings and insights about how to use the concept effectively in fiction, and what pitfalls to avoid. Please focus on contemporary fiction. Your presentation should include both concepts and examples. Short (no more than 5 minutes) writing exercises may be used. Please prepare a PowerPoint with key information that our class can use for future reference; Powerpoints should be posted before class on our class server. Presentations should be well organized and presented so that your classmates come away with what they need to know about your topic. You want the important ideas to stand out for your audience. Examples help make concepts clear. Be creative! Creative

presentation of concepts goes a long way to help the ideas sink in. Each presentation should last 15-20 minutes (20 if you include a writing exercise or discussion). (Dunning)

In addition to the content of Dunning's example being valuable to other creative writing faculty, it is interesting to note that the assignment fills a void in the textbook, which is an appropriate teaching technique other faculty might want to consider in course development.

Reading Responses

There seems to be little variation of the overall intention of the reading response assignments. Student-writers are expected to be readers as well; the idea is one I have supported here by discussing the strong connection between acquisition and learning during the reading and analyzing processes. Where the variation occurs, however, is in how the reading responses are submitted. Some participants allow student-writers to include the responses as one of several tasks in their journals, and others require student-writers to post their responses publicly, on a class blog for instance. Other participants have the student-writers submit the responses by hard copy during class. In many cases, participants declare a satisfactory length for responses; the requirements vary by page length (half page, one page, two pages) or word count. In terms of word count, 250 words seems a common approach, which is roughly one double-spaced page.

Revision

Although revision is not often discussed in detail, several participants mention the need for revision. They urge student-writers to revise in-class writing exercises for peer review workshops, to revise peer-reviewed submissions for mid-term portfolios, and to revise mid-term portfolios for final portfolios or submission to literary journals as part of final projects. Miller requires four manuscripts from his student-writers: two original stories and two revisions of those stories. In this example, the participant is placing equal importance on the drafting and

revising stages of the writing process, which is an interesting approach. Overall, revision is key, as a blended acquisition and learning technique, in the creative writing classroom, and it encourages student-writers to consider their personal goals with a piece of writing before shaping that writing into whatever vision they possess for it. The latter is a strong writer-centered technique.

Submitting for Publication

Several instances of submitting student writing for publication appear in the other assignments discussed here. A practical connection between the academic world of creative writing and the wide world of publishing is imperative for student-writers' development and success beyond the semester's time limitations. Some participants require research of literary journals the student-writers may target, and others require outright submissions to contests or publications throughout the semester. In fact, Randall Smith requires two contest or publication submissions for the course. A participant who requested to remain anonymous urges student-writers to "get stuff in the mail and keep it there. I'll talk you through it. And if you don't get accepted anywhere…no worries. All you need instead are three rejection letters." The participant's advice is for student-writers to "mail out ten or fifteen…aim high, and aim often." Submitting work is a practical assignment that blends both acquisition and learning. The student-writers acquire certain skills by experiencing the process of submission, and they also have the advantage of the instructor's experience (learning), which guides them through the process.

Workshop Critiques

For several reasons of which I could only speculate, participants seem to require student-writers to attend peer review workshops with written critiques for their classmates. In addition to the assignment of reading the classmates' story or poem, the student-writers must also write

either a number of pages or a number of words, at the instructor's discretion, that offers specific feedback based on the reading. The writing could appear as a letter to the student-writer or as a general analysis of a piece of writing. To facilitate this later discussion, McCabe requires her student-writers to submit "Author's Notes" with their critique submission, so that their peers can gain a better understanding of where they are in the writing process and what their goals with the project are. Perhaps the written critiques ensure students are better prepared to discuss and critique their peers' works. Additionally, though, the approach serves as a balance of acquisition and learning in the creative writing classroom. Student-writers may gain more from the exercise of reading and critiquing if they are motivated to consider the acquisition that occurred during the reading process.

Writing Exercises

Writing exercises are common in the creative writing classroom. The types of exercises are intended to develop various aspects of craft (a technique blending acquisition and learning) and to ensure student-writers are writing often (an acquisition technique). Dent's approach is a practical one in that she encourages student-writers to further develop in-class writing exercises into stories, if they feel the exercise warrants something more substantial. A participant who requested to be kept anonymous in this discussion assigns her student-writers what she calls "craft annotations." Student-writers are expected to write "an analysis of a specific element of craft in one of the assigned readings—and present it to the class. Presentations should last about 5 minutes and should include a related writing exercise" (Anonymous Participant). A similar craft assignment from a different participant was to write 600-800 words that "explore each of the elements of creative writing…in any genre you choose" (Anonymous Participant). The five elements for the assignments were based in New Criticism and listed as imagery, setting,

character, voice/point of view, and narrative/story. Additionally, I have included a list of 44 writing prompts from Eddy's syllabus in Appendix E.

Assignments that were also included in the syllabi corpus but are not discussed in length here include: attending visiting writers' lectures and signings and/or poetry readings, class attendance, exams, one-on-one conferences, participation, and quizzes. Although I saw one assignment of corresponding with a writing partner and another of collaborating in a research and editing group of three student-writers, I would like to see higher rates of instructors pairing student-writers with writing partners. The purpose for such a partnership would be that partners share work more frequently than time limitations can allow in the group workshop format. Published authors often work with critique partners in the early brainstorming stages all through the drafting, revising and preparing for agent/editor submission stages. Thus, such an experience for students is one that might set them up for a continued relationship when the course ends. Furthermore, instructors are often swamped with extensive reading, and their abilities to offer quality feedback regularly for their student-writers are limited. Therefore, writing partners, if matched appropriately, could be a positive solution that ensures student-writers are able to discuss their work frequently without requiring the instructor to do all of the responding.

Highlighted Syllabi Section Three: Unique Assignments

The Assignments section of the syllabi corpus was enlightening not only due to the variations in common assignments but also because of several unique assignments participants described. Although it is difficult to offer strong analysis of these assignments without having experimented with them in my classroom, I find their innovation as their value at this stage. I look forward to studying them further in the future and exploring other unique activities.

Anonymous Participant's Teaching Project

In my experience, English departments are often acutely aware of the likelihood their majors will one day be teaching. Therefore, an assignment to teach a particular short story or some other lesson is not uncommon. However, the interesting twist in this example is that the student-writers are teaching the lessons, not as literary analysts, which is often the case in literature courses, but as creative writers. In the syllabus, student-writers are urged to choose "the work of a writer you particularly wish to emulate, someone you feel is part of a tradition to which you aspire." The student-writers distribute the stories of their choice to their classmates and then teach the story paying "particular attention to thematic and stylistic choices the writer makes." Other advice in the assignment description is to "determine how the story's content determines its form. Come to conclusions about the author's syntax, diction and punctuation direct our reading. Characterize the story's voice and figure out how it is conveyed." A literary analysis, for example, might focus on the voice in the story, but the twist of the creative writing angle is to "figure out how it is conveyed." This assignment combines the acquisition technique of reading – particularly a story that the student-writers admired – and forces the students to break the story down to its analytic parts, or reading from a writerly perspective. The goal is for the student-writers to explicitly discuss the craft elements and why they chose the story, which is a writer-centered assignment as well.

Dunning's Story Starts

Dunning offers an assignment designed to study elements of craft. Her "story starts" encourage students to write three to four pages weekly "focusing on whatever craft concept we are working on that week."

> Each "start" should involve different characters and situations. Don't think of these as the beginning of a story so much as a stab at discovering characters, voice, how you might tell this story. Experiment with these pieces of writing. Try some with characters and situations you know from your life, others with completely invented material. Try a historical subject. Do research about something you know nothing about. Use different points of view (some will be assigned specifically). Use different voices. Try a present-tense story. Past-tense. Reminiscent narration. While these are "low-stakes" assignments and not intended to be complete stories, they should be pieces you have worked on and are happy with. When feeling out a new story, the best method is to start over once you've begun to discover your characters and world. My expectation is that what you turn in for a "start" will have gone through two or three drafts, starting over each time. Bring 4 copies on Mondays for small group peer review. Starts should be free of careless errors. (Dunning).

The assignment provides for some flexibility in craft topics and story ideas, and ideally student-writers would become more flexible and diverse writers as they continue to experiment with writing as this assignment suggests. While the assignment is primarily acquisition-based, if student-writers engage the revisions Dunning expects, that analytic aspect of choosing what to revise would spark learning as well.

Fleming's Class Novel

Fleming's syllabus only included a brief mention of a class novel. The intention is that student-writers will brainstorm the novel together, so that they could discuss and "work out" craft aspects on a larger scale. The assignment is unique because many undergraduate creative writing courses that focus on fiction include the writing of short stories more than novels.

According to the data illustrated in Chapter Four, 26 of the survey respondents, or 37%, reported that students in their classrooms write short stories. On the contrary, 3 of the respondents, or 8%, said their students write novels in the classroom; I should point out that Fleming's course is a novel-writing course. However, due to the prevalence of short-story writing in creative writing classrooms, an assignment such as Fleming's which would include the exercise of plotting and debating the building of a longer work such as a novel, might offer additional benefits to students who are more frequently writing shorter works. Furthermore, I want to point out that Fleming includes an additional assignment that is more novel-based than might be expected in undergraduate classrooms as well. He offers student-writers the "NaNoWriMo Deal."

> November is National Novel Writing Month. In honor of this and [to] encourage you to write many pages, I'm offering a deal. If you will participate in NaNoWriMo and write at least 150 pages of your novel between November 1 and November 30, you will be guaranteed no lower than a B+ in this class.
>
> Conditions:
>
> 1. The novel you write for NaNoWritMo must not be a revision of one you've already written;
>
> 2. You must write 150 pages (in standard manuscript format) during the month of November;
>
> 3. You must keep a journal of the experience, just a paragraph or so per day that lists your page count for the day and any thoughts you have about the novel's progress;
>
> 4. You must turn in your 150 pages and your journal to me electronically on 12/1.
>
> If you do all these things, you're guaranteed at least a B+ (though the attendance policy

still applies). If you turn in all the rest of your work for the class and it's all of acceptable quality, and if you don't miss too many classes, you'll get an A. So go for it! (Fleming)

Fleming's NaNoWriMo Deal encourages significant acquisition in that he openly states the goal is to encourage student-writers "to write many pages." However, an aspect of learning is included in the process in that Fleming requires student-writers to keep a journal of their experiences with the project: "just a paragraph or so per day that lists your page count for the day and any thoughts you have about the novel's progress." Additionally, NaNoWriMo is an international event that attracts a large and diverse community of writers; such an experience could prove practical and influential for the development of the student-writers' identities and for their future careers as writers.

Langenberg's "Carry it Forward Bag" Project

In all the syllabi, this is the only instance I found of some object (other than a book, folder, portfolio, etc.) representing knowledge attained through the course experience. In her course, Langenberg gives each student-writer a black canvas bag that is meant to "be a gift to your future self."

> What knowledge do you want to take away from the course: lines from stories, images from stories, quotes from significant characters, compelling arguments in the critical essays we read, passages from the novel, remarkable things said in class discussion, etc? Develop your own system to take notes, highlight particular passages in the texts in a special highlighter color, reserve a section of your journal to log information you want to transfer to your Carry it Forward bag, etc. Many students also choose to decorate (paint, tie dye, embroider, glue-gun) their bags to make them uniquely their own. Think of this bag as a kind of time capsule. Some students have also lined the inside of the bag or

created/sewed pockets on it, (one student sewed an old training bra to the outside that she intended to use for a cellphone pocket) etc .

You should probably wait to do the actual work on your bag until the end of the course when you can look at everything you want to "carry forward" and decide what's worthy of going on the bag, how much room you have, how you're going to decorate, etc. Christiana will show the class photos of former students' bags so you can get some ideas of what you want to do for your own. These projects are not graded individually; rather, the effort is folded into your class participation grade.

In a way, I find the concept intriguing, but I also wonder how the act of decorating the bag is connected to the content of the course and overall learning about writing. I anticipate there are some unique examples the instructor could share if given the opportunity.

Monson's Commonplace Book

Monson describes the assignment as "primarily on exemplary or interesting sentences/lines from the readings…[I]t features excerpts from work you are reading that you find notable or perplexing or wonderful or awesome or just plain old kickass." As for structure, Monson has his student-writers post their findings to D2L, an online course management system, before class, so that he may mine the submissions for classroom examples and discussion. Regarding the foci of this dissertation, the assignment extends the acquisition of reading to a more analytic learning technique, and since the student-writers are the ones finding the examples based on their preferences, the task is also writer-centered.

Ponce's Workshop Reflections

Participants often discuss in peer review sections of syllabi the intensity of writing critiques and the need for student-writers to approach workshop sessions open-mindedly.

Welcoming criticism on one's writing is difficult. Ponce justifies his assignment of workshop reflections by arguing that "for developing writers, the workshop is an invaluable resource for working through the challenges and rewards of the writing process." The assignment details are:

> Workshop reflections must be 2-3 typed, double-spaced pages in length and include 1) a summary of the workshop's comments on your manuscript; 2) an analysis—grounded in specific fictional techniques as well as your own artistic intentions—of which workshop comment(s) you agree with; 3) an analysis—also grounded in specific fictional techniques as well as your own artistic intentions—of which workshop comment(s) you disagree with; 4) an outline of one or more possibilities for revision inspired by workshop comments. (Ponce)

Several instructors seem to assign a formal letter or analysis for workshop participants critiquing fellow writers' work. Ponce's approach is unique in that, in addition, he assigns student-writers who are *receiving* critique to write a formal analysis. Welcoming and considering the feedback from a critique can be overwhelming for student-writers, for all writers, really. Thus, the learning that could occur with an honest evaluation of a student-writers' feedback could lead to greater understanding and improvement of the craft. Additionally, Ponce is placing the power for changing the work with the student-writer; he asks the student-writer to analyze which comments he or she agrees and disagrees with and why. A possible extension of this assignment, although not discussed in Ponce's submission, might be to share the student-writers' analysis of the critique they receive with those who gave the original critique; there could be some benefit to student-writers in identifying when their feedback was particularly helpful and when it was not. That writer-centered approach continues with the student-writers outlining future approaches for their writing based on the workshop comments.

Highlighted Syllabi Section Four: Rules of Writing and Writerly Advice

During my initial analysis and coding of the sections of the submitted syllabi, I found the instances of writerly advice offered by instructors to student-writers as particularly interesting for a couple of reasons. First of all, the advice seems wholly appropriate in the syllabus; the medium serves as an opportunity for instructors to introduce general course concepts, and writerly advice may be among them. Yet, I also found that such advice was above and beyond the usual expectations of a syllabus. Therefore, the presence of such a section in creative writing course syllabi seems admirable. I intend to include a recommendation in the concluding chapter of this dissertation that instructors consider the best advice they can give their student-writers and highlight such advice in a "Writerly Advice" syllabus section. That said, it is appropriate to analyze the advice participants shared to make the best possible recommendations.

Overall, there seem to be two approaches in these sections. The first is a more instructor-focused approach of sharing "writing rules"; the second is, although still focused on instructors' ideas and experiences, less restrictive, and that is "writerly advice." The rules address such issues as what constitutes a short story, how to respond to peer writing, and explanations of craft and artistic process. Ultimately, my recommendation would be to share advice while also making student-writers aware that what works for one writer may not necessarily work for another. Nevertheless, for the purposes of discussion and illustration, I include three examples of writerly advice in Table 19 below. I have also included a longer list of advice Langenberg includes in her women's studies writing course about what makes a story a story in Appendix D.

Table 19

Sampling of Writerly Advice from Syllabi Corpus

Participant	Writerly Advice
Anonymous	"Under the heading "My Tastes": I really prefer stories in which things happen, so, if you can write those, wow, that'll be pretty great, thanks. I like to be surprised but not cheated, to be thrilled but not catered to, to be challenged but not shown how stupid I really am. But yes, I really respect those stories that can be quiet, too, that can just drift along until one person seeing another in a picture, it makes me want to cry (Richard Hugo says good writers always toe that melodramatic line). However, telling that story in such a way that the pacing and tension and interest—level and entertainment and all that's in place—good luck. It's been done, of course, but not that often. Please, though, try if you want, if that's what you're into. As for particulars, I think flashbacks are too often a crutch, I think dreams are the cheapest way into exposition, I think titles and hook—lines are as important as anything, and I'm very much against innovation solely for innovation's sake. If the story requires a different shape or mode in order to tell itself more economically, then, yes, please, improvise. This is how storytelling stays alive. But, if you're rendering your dialogue in some unconventional way just because it looks cool to you, then you need to understand that it probably only looks cool to you. And, yes, I'm a hundred percent in support of genre fiction, unless of course you're writing it because you think it's easy, because you think the standards aren't the same. If that's the case, then chances are I'm kind of a hundred percent against you writing."
Farmer	Under the heading "A Final Note": Carl Hiassen writes: "'If you work as a reporter long enough and you end up sitting in a prison cell listening to someone tell his story, it will dawn on you that he's in this situation for committing a truly gruesome and heinous act, and yet you're having a fairly normal conversation, as if you were sitting with him in Starbucks. You realize that there are glimmers of humanity in even the most ghastly of characters. It's important to have that if you're going to tell realistic stories.'

	"Writing is, at its best, an act of empathy. By examining the world through our words we engage more deeply, and develop skills that will help us understand others and take us deeper into our own hearts in ways that will benefit us far beyond what we publish, or what accolades we are awarded. Thanks for being here. Enjoy it!"
Neal	Under the heading "Writer's Block": "Most of us have heard about the dreaded 'Writer's Block.' Quite simply, Writer's Block occurs when you sit down in front of a blank page and expect a perfect story to pour out of you. Rough drafts are messy and ugly. Revision is 90% of the process. You will not experience 'Writer's Block' if you allow yourself to write shitty first drafts. You need to let yourself write down anything and everything until you hit on an idea you can work with. Freewriting can be extremely useful for coming up with ideas. Use Burroway writing exercises or go back to freewrites you've done in class if you get stuck. The longer you stare at your computer screen not typing, the longer the process will take. Start typing!"

The example from the participant who requested anonymity combines humor, diversity of appropriate writing approaches and ideas, and some cautionary items as well. The balance works, I think, for the overall goal. When the participant discusses the types of writing that he or she finds appealing, the diverse approaches that are included welcome the approaches student-writers in the course may want to attempt. Therefore, the language is instructor-focused and also writer-centered.

Famer includes a quote from Carl Hiassen that discusses the shades of character. Farmer's advice is specific, but in the second paragraph, he broadens it to a philosophy of what creative writing is. I anticipate his approach is inspiring and encouraging toward his student-writers. His concluding lines, also writer-centered, thank the student-writers for joining him in

the course and encourage them to enjoy the experience as well.

Although Neal's overall intention of steering her student-writers clear of writer's block is admirable, the blunt language, at times, can be seen as anti-writer-centered. She says "You will not experience 'Writer's Block' if…" you approach writing a certain way. I would have to say, personally, the advice may be helpful for some writing student-writers; however, one of the foundational beliefs this dissertation is built upon is that not every approach will work for every student-writer. The philosophy described here is to allow students, as writers, the freedom to explore the writing process. What will these student-writers do if they attempt Neal's advice, but it does not work for them?

The writerly advice in the above examples ranges from specific explanations of character and avoiding writer's block to generally enjoying the writing experiences. Langenberg also encourages student-writers to enjoy the process (see Appendix D). In addition, she includes a more comprehensive list of tips for fiction writers. The diverse approaches of these four examples provide some unique insight for what types of writerly advice creative writing instructors may want to share with their student-writers.

Conclusion

The data discussed in this chapter is most similar to the data discussed from the open-ended survey questions. Here, I simply looked to the information instructors shared in their syllabi without restricting the analysis to language or codes. As a result, I found there are certain assignments frequently assigned in the creative writing classroom and other assignments that are uniquely assigned in some classrooms. Overall, the assignments address my research question: What is occurring in creative writing classrooms? Some assignments such as reading, writing, and workshopping were likely expected by anyone with familiarity of the creative writing

classroom. Are these activities present in the corpus because of the "lore" that they work, because of the tradition of them being included in creative writing classrooms, because Student-Writers who have become writing instructors recall their instructors using the approaches? One can't say for sure. However, it is important to note that reading, writing, and workshopping have evolved in the classroom. In other words, no matter the reason for the inclusion of the activities, present instructors are attempting to innovate these approaches, in many cases, for the betterment of their students. I will argue in the next chapter, as I have throughout this dissertation, that these activities and others in the creative writing classroom should be rooted in a balance of acquisition and learning while paying consideration to student-writers' identity development, or writer-centeredness.

CHAPTER NINE

RECOMMENDATIONS

When I began this dissertation, I envisioned my study as a very clear, concise approach of examining teaching practices of the undergraduate creative writing classroom. However, as I began compiling data, I soon realized the many directions in which my research would take me. The complexity of the study occurred due to the presence of two distinct theoretical frameworks: (1) writer-centeredness, and (2) acquisition/learning. Additionally, the study design and diverse course syllabi collected added complexity. As a result, my discussion chapters multiplied, mostly for ease of reading, but also to accommodate the various branches of thought and inquiry. That said, as I considered potential recommendations resulting from my learning with this project, they were broad, ranging from advice to English departments regarding web site design to advice to creative writing instructors regarding course assignments and advice to all faculty regarding development of course syllabi. The diverse recommendations are discussed further in this chapter, and as my reflections of the knowledge I acquired (using the term as a subconscious form of knowledge-construction similar to usage throughout this dissertation) develop, so too will my recommendations. However, it is important to note that my recommendations were formulated based on the study design and my three research questions. Before discussing my recommendations, therefore, I would like to address my specific research questions and my findings for each.

Research Question 1: What does a collection of creative writing syllabi illustrate as the current pedagogy in American creative writing classrooms?

First and foremost, the syllabus is a written discourse that represents, at least in some regard, the course for which it was written. In Chapter Three, I discussed theory of discourse

analysis and referenced Halliday (1998) who characterizes texts as employing three functions: (1) "The *ideational* function, which concerns how ideas or material are represented," (2) "The *interpersonal* function, which considers the relationships between utterer and audience and between utterer and material," and (3) "The *textual* function, which concerns how a text represents itself and creates internal organization, and holds itself together" (as cited in Bazerman, 2006, p. 84). I have considered these functions throughout my research study. The ideational function provided opportunity for analysis regarding the balance of acquisition and learning represented primarily in the course assignments. The interpersonal function served as the root of analysis for writer-centeredness. Considering how the relationships between the utterer, or instructor, and audience, or student-writer, is represented provided rich discussion of power and student agency. Finally, the textual function provided a more general analysis for both theoretical frameworks; however, this analysis was somewhat limited in that I began my research by deconstructing the syllabi into various "nodes" for further analysis.

Regarding the ideational function of the syllabi, I determined that instructors assign both acquisition-based and learning-based tasks regularly. However, I'm not certain those tasks partner in a way that results in the most appropriate knowledge construction for student-writers. In other words, if student-writers are reading original texts, an act that is acquisition-based initially, but not continuing that assignment to conduct a deeper intellectual analysis from a writerly perspective, those students may not be *learning* everything they could from the reading assignments. Additionally, if student-writers are listening to lecture or reading craft theory about how to achieve a certain effect in their writing, but they are not practicing that task through significant acquisition-based approaches, they may not achieve their highest potential for knowledge construction. Later in this chapter, I discuss my recommendations regarding the

partnering of acquisition and learning with each and every creative writing assignment, but for the purposes of answering this research question fully, I offer this: the syllabi only offer a glimpse of the pedagogical ideas instructors possess; however, that glimpse has shown me that some assignments are successful in balancing acquisition and learning. Others are not. But ultimately, there is great potential for developing a classroom environment that balances acquisition and learning.

Regarding the interpersonal function of the syllabi, I determined there remained a disconnect between the instructors' intentions and the actual classroom environments their students might have experienced. The resulting data suggested that many creative writing instructors seem to embrace the idea of writer-centeredness; however, perhaps it is the continuation of lore and tradition-based pedagogies that influence classroom practices in ways that are not writer-centered. Many participants wrote or suggested they would like student-writers to take responsibility for their writing development, but the restriction of some assignments – particularly reading assignments – may not facilitate such ownership. The *writing* assignments, however, are much more writer-centered. Yet, I think the challenge for instructors is to ensure that their pedagogy is streamlined throughout their syllabi, their reading assignments, and their writing assignments. At present, the pedagogy of American creative writing classrooms, based on the data collected in my study, seems to represent an amalgam of techniques that both reflect instructors' teaching philosophies and traditional, lore-based creative writing pedagogy.

Overall, such a finding should be encouraging to those scholars who have argued that creative writing pedagogy too heavily relies on tradition and lore. The research in this study illustrates innovative techniques that vary from the traditional workshop model and other lore-

based approaches. However, traditional approaches still exist in classrooms. They may exist because they work; or they may exist because of tradition alone. Further research is necessary to make a determination in that regard; my intention with this dissertation was not to make that assessment. My goal was to determine what is occurring in classrooms and search for innovative techniques apart from the traditional, lore-based approaches. I realize the presence of innovative techniques in the classroom does not ensure those techniques are any more, or less, effective than traditional, lore-based techniques. However, innovative techniques have the potential to influence research and growth in the field of creative writing studies.

Research Question 2: What alternatives to traditional creative writing "lore"-based pedagogy are currently in use?

Lore-based pedagogy, by the standards of the scholarship reviewed for the early chapters of this dissertation, relies heavily on New Critical approaches and the writing workshop. One of the goals of this dissertation was to bring a broader population of creative writing faculty into the scholarly discussion regarding pedagogical alternatives. Question 2 fueled that goal and the discussion in Chapter Eight regarding unique alternatives to the traditional New Criticism and writing workshop.

One of the ways in which I examined differentiated pedagogies was in the syllabi corpus' assignment descriptions. As part of my analysis sparked by this research question, I divided the assignments highlighted in the syllabi corpus into common assignments and unique assignments. I made this decision based on my experiences in creative writing classrooms but also by how frequently various assignments appeared in the syllabi. Common assignments included journals, reflections, portfolios, presentations, reading responses, and workshops or critiques. However, some participants described assignments that they had innovated to make unique to their

classrooms. A participant, who requested to be kept anonymous, introduced a teaching project to accompany course reading assignments, but the instructor requires that student-writers read from a writerly, not a literary, perspective. Fleming incorporates collaboration with a class novel, which encourages student-writers who work together to "work out" craft aspects on the larger scale of a novel. Therefore, many student-writers who might be writing shorter forms of creative writing, including short stories and poetry, have the opportunity to work with a longer form without necessarily writing a novel. However, Fleming also includes the option of writing a novel in coordination with National Novel Writing Month, an event embraced by many creative writers outside of the academy. Overall, the data illustrates these approaches as alternatives to or twists from the traditional or common assignments; however, their difference alone does not ensure their success. I believe it is important to open student-writers' minds to different forms of inquiry and possibilities for knowledge construction, and assignments such as those discussed here succeed in that. In the next section, however, I will offer a test to determine whether these approaches and traditional approaches are effective for student-writers.

Research Question 3: Considering the theoretical framework this dissertation employs and approaches discovered to currently be in use, what techniques might the future creative writing classroom employ?

The framework of acquisition and learning served primarily as a theoretical foundation during the design stages of this dissertation. However, as I collected and analyzed data, the framework became livelier to me. Rather than searching syllabi for instances of acquisition and learning to assess how each was implemented, I began searching for instances of *balanced* acquisition and learning. My beliefs are strong in that a combination of acquisition and learning techniques, not only in the creative writing classroom, but with each and every assignment will

yield the best results for student-writers; although, such an assertion requires additional testing as the discussion of future research directions later in this chapter illustrates. Furthermore, the belief of balanced acquisition and learning techniques provides a more concrete and innovative response to issues of lore-based creative writing pedagogy.

For instance, creative writing faculty may require student-writers to read the work of other authors in the classroom because that is an assignment the instructors always engaged as student-writers themselves. An innovative twist on that traditional pedagogy would be to consider reading assignments based on the need to balance acquisition and learning. Student-writers acquire various forms of knowledge from reading. They may internalize quality openings, strong character development, plot structure, sentence structure, word choice, theme, voice and more. However, the student-writers may not intellectualize what worked in the story and specifically why; in other words, acquisition may be present in this example, but not learning. Even with the traditional literary discussion during the class session following the assigned reading, student-writers may not achieve the kind of *learning* necessary to enhance the knowledge they *acquired* while reading.

In order to balance the acquisition and learning, there are several steps an instructor can take to facilitate learning. Some techniques include requiring a reading journal that discusses personal reactions to specific aspects of the reading and challenges student-writers to intellectualize why they responded the way they did. For instance, what, specifically, did the writer do to cause the reaction the student-writer experienced? And ultimately, what can the student-writer learn from this reading that could apply to his or her own writing? Acquisition is a form of knowledge construction that is more subconscious and can develop over time. Student-writers may not immediately be capable of transitioning from acquisition to learning, but a well-

constructed assignment can challenge student-writers to move beyond New Critical and/or abstract discussions of an assigned reading to intellectualized learning *and* application of that learning to their own works.

Thus, the theoretical framework of acquisition and learning is more than a framework for analytic purposes in this dissertation. This framework can serve as a pedagogical approach for creative writing instructors who are struggling to improve their class assignments and to encourage student-writers to reach a higher level of understanding regarding their own writing processes and development. A classroom rooted in a balance of acquisition and learning no longer focuses on traditional or innovative techniques or assignments; rather, it adapts all approaches and assignments, ensuring that each features some aspects of acquisition and others of learning, so that student-writers may gain the greatest knowledge construction from each and every one of them. Furthermore, the framework provides a clear guide for instructors as they design and implement their assignments. Students will likely identify the pattern and begin to read and write with it as a guide as well. Therefore, my response to the question I posed to my participants, "How would you describe the ideal creative writing classroom?," would be "one where all assignments and pedagogical approaches are rooted in a balance of acquisition and learning techniques to spark the greatest possibility for knowledge construction for each student-writer in the course."

Recommendations

Regarding Online Presence of English Departments

One of the most exhaustive aspects of the dissertation process was the compilation of contact information for the creative writing faculty database. While some Association of Writers and Writing Programs member colleges and universities have designed their English and/or

creative writing department web sites for ease of use, others offer a convoluted path of clicks to access faculty profiles. As I continued to study English department web sites, I developed strategies to facilitate my process and potential recommendations for departments to consider in designing their web pages. Although I did not foresee such an outcome when designing my research study, the unique opportunity of studying 439 English department web sites qualified me to make some assessments based on potential best practices in web development.

Before critiquing the web sites for potential flaws in design, it was necessary to consider the purposes of English and creative writing department web sites. Certainly, the purpose was not to simplify *my* research process. On the contrary, I concluded that the purpose of the web sites was to facilitate access and understanding of offerings and opportunities within the department primarily for current and potential students. With this purpose in mind, however, the flaws that slowed my research progress could also be considered flaws by the target audience of current and potential students.

For example, in 12 cases I noted, the faculty web pages did not list specializations. Some departments were uniform in this flaw while others featured some faculty with complete profiles and others with incomplete profiles, and thus no specializations. Perhaps even more surprising was that 26 institutions included no faculty profiles at all. While this was disappointing to me as a researcher and caused additional steps to ensure the integrity of my creative writing faculty database, the fact is institutions could improve their web sites. There were some institutions that clearly give their faculty a form to complete, and when the form was incomplete, the default options became visible to web viewers. For example, there were several profiles that included text such as “insert here.” Another oversight included spelling and grammatical errors, which serves as poor representation for an English department attempting to recruit new majors and

students. Contact information, especially email addresses, also facilitates recruitment; a disappointing eight institutions listed faculty but no email addresses to contact them.

Overall, my recommendations for departmental web sites, English or otherwise, which I may elaborate on and publish at a later date, include the following: (1) Make every attempt to ensure the faculty profiles are accurate and complete; (2) Include basic information such as office locations, telephone numbers, and email addresses; (3) Include supplemental information such as recent faculty publications, research interests, teaching interests, and specific courses taught; (4) Organize this information in such a way that is user-friendly for students and others visiting your departmental site and can be easily updated by your staff; (5) If part-time faculty teach a significant percentage of courses at your institution, plan to include them in the faculty listing for students who might be assigned their courses. Such information would have surely simplified my database construction, but I do believe that current students who are English majors or considering the English major would want to explore these areas of information as well. Likewise, potential students who plan to major in an area of English studies would likely desire such information and even wish to contact faculty members before committing to the institution.

Regarding Development of the Course Syllabus

One of the greatest challenges in developing a writer-centered, or student-centered, course syllabus is the requirement of honoring institutional expectations. Often, institutional polices feature directive language, and including those policies in the syllabus is mostly unavoidable. Therefore, a possible recommendation to minimize the influence of institutional rhetoric on perceptions of instructors' teaching philosophies is transparency. A simple division in the syllabus between course policies and institutional policies with a disclaimer that institutional

policies are university or college-wide and must be included in the syllabus regardless of the course could provide such transparency. Instructors could support the policies overall while noting that they might have worded such a policy differently. A discussion about this issue on the first day of class, when instructors tend to present the syllabus, could be the first step in building the classroom community instructors envision.

Secondly, instructors could look to some of the language coded in this dissertation as directive or anti-writer-centered and brainstorm ways to transform that language into writer-centered language. In other words, instead of cautioning students on the error of their ways, instructors could encourage student-writers to actively pursue paths that will lead them to their writer identity development. The first step to achieving this goal is to refer to student-writers as that. Or perhaps, instructors would prefer to refer to them simply as writers or poets. The intention here is not provide a false sense of reality for student-writers; on the contrary, the goal is to encourage student-writers to think of themselves as writers.

Additionally, instructors might use the list of anti-writer-centered language detailed in Chapter Four to analyze their own syllabi. How often do they use language such as "expected," "must," "need," and "required" versus writer-centered language such as "choice," "encourage," "free," "motivate," "support," and so on? Are there opportunities in the syllabi where instructors can transform the cautioning messages about the classroom community to encouraging messages that illustrate why student-writers should *choose* to embrace the community, or better yet, in a more writer-centered approach, to make the community what they'd like it to be? The first step to transforming issues of language in the syllabi is becoming aware of them. Hopefully, whether readers agree with all of the language choices and the analysis in this dissertation, the spotlight

on syllabi language created the kind of awareness that could lead to language transformation in course syllabi.

Finally, to further transform the syllabi into more writer-centered documents, instructors could create an environment of partnership or collaboration with students regarding course decisions. One option is to engage students in a discussion on the first day of class; the results of which would lead to a course being developed to the students' particular needs. Students could discuss what they want to get from the course in small groups and then as a whole class, or they could respond to an anonymous survey following a brainstorming discussion to get them thinking about what they might do in a creative writing course. Instructors could choose to guide this discussion or not; for instance, the instructor might present the learning outcomes for the course and ask students how they would like to meet those outcomes. Of course, such an approach may be more appropriate to upper level creative writing courses because beginning creative writing students may not know what to expect. Additionally, the feedback instructors receive could be excessively varied to the extent that building one cohesive course would be impossible, and the instructor would be pressed to build a course around the requests of the students in a limited time frame.

There are other complications with the collaborative approach as well. For instance, many institutions request a syllabus be submitted and filed before the first day of class; this would not be possible if instructors had yet to create the course. Instructors may not be prepared to deliver on the student expectations in a short amount of time. However, such collaboration could help instructors gauge student expectations, which may change only minimally from semester to semester. Therefore, the alterations may be larger at first but become more minimal as time passes. Instructors could also opt to welcome collaboration for a portion of the course (on

course reading selections, for example) but rely on tried and true methods for another portion of the course. Finally, if the first-day collaboration is not possible for some instructors, for whatever reason, they may rely on frequent evaluations with students to tailor the course as much as possible as the semester progresses. Evaluations could simply ask students what class activities they prefer, what knowledge they've gained from those activities, and how they would prefer to spend future class time.

Regarding Acquisition and Learning in Creative Writing Classrooms

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter when responding to the study's research questions, the framework of acquisition and learning may be one of many keys to innovating creative writing pedagogy. Why is that? First of all, let me reiterate the definitions and benefits of both acquisition and learning. As I defined it in Chapter One, "Acquisition refers to the practices student-writers engage, both inside and outside of the classroom, that allow them to acquire skills through personal exploration; furthermore this definition includes an aspect of subconscious knowledge construction." Also, as defined in Chapter One, "Learning in this dissertation will refer to the knowledge student-writers gain through explanation and analysis and the breaking down of creative writing to its analytic parts." Both of these definitions developed from the work of Gee (1987/2006) and Krashen (1981) as explained in Chapter One; however, in Gee's scholarship, he discusses the benefits of both acquisition and learning. "Acquisition and learning are differential sources of power: acquirers usually beat learners at performance, while learners usually beat acquirers at talking about it, that is, at explication, explanation, analysis, and criticism" (Gee, p. 33). However, the challenge here is that writers must possess the ability both to perform by writing well and to explain and analyze by reflecting on their writing, determining what is not working, and solving writing problems. Successful writers are not often those who

simply wrote something by accident. They wrote with purpose, clarity, and awareness. Writers are often encouraging of developing writers to "learn their craft," but what exactly does it mean to "learn their craft"? I believe it means that they must balance acquisition and learning to identify their writing abilities and how to best use them. Therefore, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the greatest recommendation resulting from this research is that innovative creative writing pedagogy should balance acquisition and learning in all classroom endeavors.

Regarding Future Creative Writing Studies Research

In a budding field such as creative writing studies, perhaps the most valuable recommendations are those detailing future research possibilities. As Harper (2013) points out:

> [C]reative writing is certainly not an activity with a narrow range of methodologies, as will already be clear. Nor is it a field of endeavor where the number of methods used can be predetermined. That idea is inimical to what is being suggested. It is certainly not the suggestion…that we can categorise, tabulate and codify research in and through creative writing so that what we end up with is a decidedly singular blueprint for creative writing itself, fixed and uncreative. We trust that the readers of this book will use it as a starting point, not an end point. (p. 223)

With the goal of using this dissertation and the knowledge construction that has occurred throughout the process of attempting to analyze the climate of creative writing classrooms, I offer, in this section, a summary of potential future research directions.

Syllabi Corpus. First of all, I would be remiss not to point out the wealth of information available to me from my survey data and syllabi corpus courtesy of those gracious instructors who participated in my study. In this dissertation, I chose to look at a few pieces of the syllabi for analysis; however, there are several other opportunities for future research. In addition to

studying these syllabi in the context of creative writing courses, I could study syllabi as a genre. What other knowledge can we gain regarding the document that drives the majority of college classrooms? What types of flexibility do instructors possess regarding collaborating with students on the course syllabi and design? How would institutions react if faculty refused to create course syllabi? Or, how would they react to an instructor's request to allow the syllabus to evolve as the course evolves? How would students react to such approaches? How do faculty respond to analysis, such as that in this dissertation, to course syllabi?

Regarding creative writing course syllabi, how do course schedules develop in the creative writing course? How frequently is reading required? How frequently is writing required? Although reading and writing were features of this dissertation analysis, additional inquiry can be made to attain an even greater knowledge regarding these most important activities in the creative writing classroom. Additional analysis could be done on my syllabi corpus, but I could also extend the collection to graduate programs. Are the activities and requirements in higher level courses, such as master's courses, more flexible than undergraduate courses? Finally, what results would analyses of graduate courses in creative writing pedagogy yield? I see my future research extending more in the direction of acquisition and learning as it applies to creative writing pedagogy, but there are several potential avenues for further syllabi research.

Extending Questions Raised Here to Student-Writers. One of the most disappointing aspects for me in this dissertation research was that student voices were omitted. If I continue research into acquisition and learning, as a framework for developing creative writing abilities, I would ultimately want to share my findings and recommendations with student-writers. The goal would be to test the protocols and recommendations for practicality; would the students embrace them? Are the approaches truly helpful to student-writers starting their creative writing journeys?

Are there specific approaches that match students' unique goals? What adjustments might be made to account for introductory, intermediate, and advanced student-writers? This dissertation served as a starting point for analysis of acquisition and learning as it pertains to creative writing, but once I develop a more detailed framework and protocol for analysis, bringing those findings to student-writers will prove the greatest challenge as ultimately what works for them is what is most important. As instructors, we should do more than ask our students the questions; we must trust that they know, at least in some manner, what they're talking about when they respond.

Additionally, in presenting my research at a recent conference, I was asked about whether student-writers would find the terms I identified as writer-centered and anti-writer-centered as, in fact, writer-centered and anti-writer-centered. Have they become desensitized to directive, authoritative language in course syllabi? Do they believe language in the classroom should be writer-centered? Are they excited about the prospect of such freedom and focus on their desires, or is the concept overwhelming? Although I believe in writer-centeredness in my classes, some students rebel against freedom. They want to be told what to do and how to do it; other students, of course, embrace freedom. The motivating concern for including writer-centeredness in this dissertation was rooted in my belief that freedom and internal motivation is paramount for creative writers if they intend to be successful as writers post-graduation. However, balancing that writer-centeredness with student apprehension in the classroom is worth considering and certainly worth future research.

Individual Process Research. Early in the dissertation, I argue for the development of student-writers' identities. Rather than searching for a magic feather that signifies a secret formula that will lead to writing success, I encourage instructors of creative writing and student-writers to embrace the idea that each writer is different, and likewise, their reasons for being in

the creative writing classes differ as well. Because of such differences, no one approach, style, or process can serve as the answer for all writers; on the contrary, every approach, style and process offers the potential for success depending on the writer. Therefore, additional research into my own writing process could be valuable for the future of creative writing studies, not as a guide for all other writers but as a protocol for how other writers might identify what unique approaches work best for them.

In light of the scope and findings of this dissertation, I would be interested in engaging a study of both the acquisition and learning of reading and writing. After some consideration, I have developed the following idea for a future possible study. I will read several examples of young adult fiction, as that is my genre of choice for writing, and also read craft theory. In reading both of these types of texts, both acquisition and learning with occur. To enrich both acquisition and learning, I will keep a reflective reading journal and, as time passes, reread earlier journal entries for further reflection; the time that passes during this process may allow me to better understand and qualify the acquisition that has occurred. Likewise, I will write frequently and reflect on my writing development as I do so. I will purposely attempt strategies learned through reading, and I will allow acquisition to occur through the process of writing often. Over time, I will continue to journal about my writing, as I described with the reading, and hope to gain an understanding of the acquisition and learning that occurred during the study. Finally, it will be my intention to take such copious notes on my research process that other writers, if they find my experience appealing, could duplicate the process to develop their own writing and to gain an understanding of their writing abilities and styles. Ultimately, it would be excellent to build a creative writing course around such a personal study, so that student-writers could develop and understand their writing abilities and processes as well. Therefore the goal of

such research would be for me personally to better understand my writing process but to more broadly create a protocol that other writers could follow to gain the same benefit of understanding their own.

Process Research with Other Authors. A research study such as the one described in the previous section could also prove as a blueprint for authors interested in further developing their writing abilities. For this research direction, I envision enlisting published authors, offering them a protocol for the research, and then allowing them a period of time to engage the protocol and share their findings. The reason for this is twofold. First, the findings will vary and could prove enlightening regarding techniques and processes other writers may want to attempt for their own writing improvement. But, additionally, the authors may have to adjust the protocol for various reasons. Such adjustments could create even greater insight into the methods writers and creative writing studies might utilize for future research. In other words, the authors would be studying not only their own writing but the research method as well. Depending on the success of the project, this research study could prove interesting enough for a book length project that would appeal to creative writers and creative writing studies researchers.

Interdisciplinary Approaches. Although my primary interests would be to develop the studies discussed in the previous two sections, I am intrigued by Spencer's (2013) discussion of interdisciplinary methods in creative writing research. She raises such anthropological and sociological questions as "Are stories merely products of their cultural environments?" (p. 95). She considers cognitive studies of what happens in the brain of the writer and international studies with the question of whether "creative writing can often be a reflection of – or at least be influenced by – a particular society – its morality, sensibilities, logic, values, etc." (p. 96). Although I had never considered it, she raises the question about the influence of computer

science and software development on writing research. These approaches serve as only a few examples of how researchers can look at creative writing from various angles. As I mentioned, such research would be in the distant future for me, but it is certainly a possibility.

Not a Conclusion

I began this dissertation journey with what Lauer and Asher (1988) refer to as "motivating concerns." I was concerned that the lore and tradition of grandfathered pedagogy in creative writing classrooms infringed on student-writers' identity development. Furthermore, I worried that students are so eager to learn the craft of writing that they are willing to "borrow" writing processes from successful or "star" writers, which could also infringe on student-writers' identity development. Through my research, I learned that an additional connection to this concern is that even when instructors aim to promote student-writer identity development, the language they tend to use may inhibit such development, whether they intend for that to be the outcome or not.

The second motivating concern I discussed in Chapter One was what student writers want and what they need. Are those two aspects synonymous? How can we make decisions on either without consulting students and by employing unchanged, unevaluated, and potentially dated pedagogies? Through my research, I determined student-writers need a balance of acquisition and learning in the classroom; this determination connected to the third motivating concern about learning to read from a writerly perspective. A balanced approach of acquisition and learning with reading assignments could achieve such a perspective with student-writers. However, the success of such an approach remains to be seen with future research.

Finally, I discussed a motivating concern of what student-writers can learn from each other. Perhaps this concern was the most under-represented throughout my dissertation research.

It remains a concern for me, as do the others mentioned above, and that is one of the reasons this section is titled as it is. I borrowed this section heading from Harper (2013) because the motivation and inspiration I have for creative writing studies research now feels like anything but a conclusion. In fact, since I completed my dissertation study, several influential texts such as *Key Issues in Creative Writing* (Donnelly & Harper, 2012), *The Art and Craft of Fiction: A Writer's Guide* (Kardos, 2013), and *Research Methods in Creative Writing* (Kroll & Harper, 2013) have been published. I'm eager to engage this vibrant creative writing studies discussion and grateful my dissertation research has introduced me to that possibility. Because of the theoretical framework I employed in this dissertation, I realize I am still in a stage of acquisition regarding the data and the analysis discussed in this chapter and others. I have read these syllabi and acquired knowledge I have yet to realize. Therefore, I will continue to break down my data to its analytic parts, as Gee recommended, and gain knowledge about creative writing pedagogy. Although such knowledge construction will certainly continue long beyond my time writing and defending this dissertation, I look forward to the lessons I may realize in the days, months and years to come.

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Appendix A: References from Syllabi Corpus

**Note: In this Appendix, I have cited all of the syllabi from the corpus that have been directly referenced in the pages of this dissertation* and *have requested as their confidentiality preference to receive credit in any discussion and publications that result from this research. Syllabi that have been omitted are those that have not been directly cited and those whose creators requested anonymity in subsequent discussions and publications.*

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Appendix B: Email Requesting Syllabi Submissions from US Creative Writing Instructors

Dear Creative Writing Instructor:

There are nearly 1,000 creative writing programs around the world, according to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. Although scholarly discussions of creative writing have increased in the past few decades, I am interested to learn more about what is occurring in creative writing classrooms.

For that reason, my dissertation, It Can Be Acquired and Learned: Building a Writer-Centered Pedagogical Approach to Creative Writing, will analyze the language of creative writing course syllabi and look specifically at the types of assignments and approaches instructors employ. To facilitate my research, I am asking that creative writing instructors submit a copy of their most recent undergraduate course syllabus and attach any addendums, such as, but not limited to, reading lists and detailed course schedules.

To participate, please click this link or copy and paste the address into a new browser window: http://acs-cms.com/TamaraGirardiDissertation/survey/

I appreciate you contributing to this research and to the growing field of creative writing studies. If you are considering participating but would like to know more, please email me at t.a.girardi@iup.edu with any questions.

All the best,

Tamara Girardi, PhD Candidate

Composition & TESOL Program

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

t.a.girardi@iup.edu

Appendix C: Online Survey Form for Participants

Note to Participants: As a researcher, I understand there are certain limitations to studying syllabi alone. Therefore, I have included this brief list of questions to help situate your syllabus and facilitate a richer analysis for my study. You may choose to leave any question blank (except Question 16) should you prefer to do so. Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Tamara Girardi at t.a.girardi@iup.edu.

1) This course can be best described as:

☐ introductory ☐ intermediate ☐ advanced

2) What semester was this syllabus used?

☐ Fall 2012 ☐ Summer 2012 ☐ Spring 2012 ☐ Other: _____

3) The average enrollment for this course is:

☐ <10 ☐ 10-20 ☐ 20-30 ☐ 30+

4) In this course, students typically write (please select all that apply):

☐ short stories ☐ poetry ☐ novels
☐ creative nonfiction ☐ literary fiction ☐ genre fiction
☐ plays ☐ screenplays ☐ whatever aligns with their preferences

5) In this course, you and/or your students engage the following activities (please select all that apply):

☐ in-class writing time ☐ in-class writing exercises ☐ reading of original texts
☐ reading of craft theory ☐ lectures ☐ whole-class peer critique
☐ small-group peer critique ☐ revision practices ☐ other: _____

6) Does your institution offer (please select all that apply):

☐ an English major only ☐ a writing major
☐ a creative writing major ☐ a poetry major
☐ a fiction major ☐ other:_____

7) Instructors are often required to include institutional policies in their syllabi. On a scale from 1 (least) to 5 (most), in your opinion, how accurately is your teaching philosophy reflected by the language of your syllabus?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8) How would you describe your philosophy of teaching creative writing (note limit of 250 words)?

9) How would you describe the ideal creative writing classroom (note limit of 250 words)?

10) For statistical purposes only, please check one of the following: ☐ Male ☐ Female

11) How many years have you taught creative writing courses?

☐ <2 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 15+

12) What degree(s) do you hold?

☐ PhD ☐ MA ☐ MFA ☐ Other: _____

13) Have you conducted research on creative writing pedagogy? ☐ Yes ☐ No

14) If yes, have you published or presented your findings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

15) Do I have your permission to contact you with follow-up questions regarding particular aspects of your syllabus and/or responses? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please list your name, institutional affiliation, email address and/or phone number below.

_____

16) Please indicate your confidentiality preference:

A) I prefer the researcher use only the content of my submission for analysis, but not include my name or institution in any subsequent discussion or publications ☐

B) I prefer my syllabi be attributed to me in this dissertation and any subsequent publications* ☐

Upload File(s)

Please upload a copy of your undergraduate creative writing course syllabus below by clicking "Browse" and locating the file on your computer. Then please click "Submit Survey." *Accepted formats (.doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf)*

☐ Browse

Submit Survey (link)

*Instructors who choose to remain anonymous should remove any identifying information from their syllabi before submitting. However, if the instructor requests anonymity but forgets to remove identifying information, the researcher will remove the information on the instructor's behalf.

Appendix D: “Rules to Live By” from Participant Christiana L. Langenberg

Basic Components of Fiction - Your Rules to Live By

Consider what follows to be a kind of “cheat sheet” as to what makes a story a story. These are what I consider to be the basic elements of fiction writing (as opposed to, say, poetry-writing or nonfiction). We will assess all stories in this class through this list, so it’s critical that you read and reread it throughout the semester.

1. The Element of Conflict.
   What is the conflict that drives the story? ONLY trouble is interesting. Perfect lives and perfect people do not make for engaging stories. Your story must have a central conflict, an element of resistance that needs to be overcome or at least dealt with by the main character(s) in some way. This can be either internal (within the person) or external (having to do with nature or another person, etc.) No conflict, no story. This is very important and this is often the most difficult aspect of creating your own story. What’s the conflict? Without one you’ll simply have an anecdote or essay and not a “real” short story.

2. The Main Character’s Desire.
   Conflict usually has something to do with what your main character wants. Otherwise referred to as what your main character desires. Power? Wealth? Sex? That etched blue vase in her sister's kitchen? Freedom? Her boyfriend Rolf to quit acting like a stupid pothead? Acceptance? A really good bra? What does your main character want? This desire needs to drive the story towards an ending that works for the people involved.
   Also, your readers need to care about your characters enough to care about what happens to them. This doesn't mean we need to like them, but it does mean we need to invest enough that we feel a sense of urgency about witnessing their demise/success. The only way this can happen is if your characters become individual and real enough on the page to engage our concern. We can’t care about people we don’t know.

3. The Character as an Individual.
   Your characters, especially the main ones, need to come across as individual people rather than types. If you set about to write a story about a popular cheerleader with a football star for a boyfriend without really thinking about who they are as individuals, (Suelana with the auburn hair and the little checkmark scar on the inside of her left forearm and Marc, who makes a to-die-for pumpkin-bourbon cheesecake every thanksgiving) your readers will not be able to invest in the people enough to care about what happens. To achieve credibility you’ll want to use specific detail (see #8).

4. The Crisis Action.
   Your story should have a rising action that peaks not too long before the story's resolution/end. We should be able to look back on the story, after having read it, and identify the “crisis” point, the turn-around point, where the conflict sort of comes to a

head.

5. The Lure of the First Paragraph.
   Your first paragraph is critical to the success of the story. You want to grab the reader by her neck, stop her breath long enough that she feels like she must go on reading. Some element of your conflict should be in the first paragraph, even if only subtle at that point.

6. The Closure of the Final Paragraph.
   Your final paragraph is the second most important in the story. This is the last image your reader will take with her when she finishes your story. Whatever the ending, it needs to feel, for those characters, like it was bound to happen. It should leave us both satisfied and wanting more, yet realizing the story had to end right there.

7. The Rhythm of the Prose.
   Use the texture of sentences to your advantage. Vary their length for emphasis, use fragments deliberately, not haphazardly. Long, winding sentences actually create momentum and will affect your reader differently than short, staccato sentences, which slow the reader down. Use phonetic spelling minimally.

8. The Specific, Concrete Sensory Detail.
   Taste the salty eggplant parmigiana. Smell the acrid waft of hair burning. Hear the lick-slap lapping of the waves, etc. Get your reader right there by using details that appeal to all the senses, not just visual.

9. Revise, Revise, Revise.
   If writing fiction was easy, everybody would be doing it and most people would be good at it. This is the opposite of the truth. Your first draft usually has miles to go before it can sleep. Revision is your best friend with whom you will develop a love-hate relationship. You must trust that writing is a process; revision is the vehicle you need to get to the destination of a finished, polished story. So many times you won't really know what your story is truly about when you first set down to write it. Give yourself the time; give your story the space to grow up to what it wants to be.

10. The Enjoyment of the Process
    Be sure you're having a good time exploring the parameters of your own creativity. Ideally, the process of working on crafting your own voice can allow you to discover things about yourself you didn't know, or to experience life more fully. Do challenge yourself to do your personal best, but don't beat your head against a wall. Seek support and feedback.

Appendix E: 44 Writing Activities from Participant Gary Eddy

You may repeat exercises that are especially productive or congenial, but don't get stuck. Try the ones that seem weird, lame, difficult, silly, too. Please put the numbers of the exercises on them when you turn them in.

1. Write about that most trite of topics, the writer writing. Make it somehow fresh and surprising or let something go terribly wrong.

2. Choose the poet (either one we've read or one you admire) whose use of language is LEAST like your own. Choose twenty- five words that you would never use in a poem and use at least one per line to make a poem of your own. Be sure to let me know who the poet is.

3. Get a hold of a good dictionary of literary terms or the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics or one of the various books of poetic forms (check the reference section of the library or online sources) and try your hand at a formal poem. You may choose to rewrite one of your previous poems in a fixed form. The form you choose is strictly up to you; just let me know what it is.

4.Go to a place you are completely unfamiliar with and take notes for about a half-hour on your sense impressions and the social (or ecological) context of the place. Use these as a starting point for a poem about being born into, living a whole life in, or dying in that place.

5. Seasonal emblems. Write a poem that begins with looking at some seasonal sign: autumn leaf, say, or up into falling snow. Try to look past the emblem to yourself.

6.Go outside for a walk in some place where you are likely to encounter nature (Prairie Island, say, or Sugar Loaf). Keep track of all the "natural" events that happen. Write a poem about what was on your mind at the end of the walk. Use as many of these events as you can.

7. Open the encyclopedia to a subject about which you know nothing. Start with a fact or detail that surprised you. Try to connect it with some intimate moment in, or side of, your life.

8. Pick at least 20 words at random from the dictionary. List them in two columns on opposite sides of the page. Connect them with lines of poetry. Be free to associate wildly.

9. Take any dead metaphor or metonymy (look it up) and write a comic or serious scene that reinvests that metaphor with its original comparative force. Some examples (but your own is best):
sifting evidence soft shoulder broken home branch of government
toehold devil in disguise road of life

10. Make up as many metaphors or similes as you can for a common object (spoon, fireplug, dandelion, streetlamp, whatever you like). Try to turn the list into a poem.

11. Write a dialog between 2 people who are talking about a third. Characterize all three using

only what they say. No authorial interpretation, please.

12. Write out a brief sketch of a personal experience that changed something about you: the way you treat others, the way you see or treat yourself, how you conduct your life, etc. Convert it into a poem or fictional scene without mentioning what in you has changed.

13. Choose a poem or a paragraph from a story that you love. Write it out, then rewrite a poem or paragraph of your own so that it resembles the model in coherence, diction, form, sentence rhythm, emphasis, plot movement.

14. The Chinese Menu. Pick ONE from each column and combine. Once you've selected, focus on a scene or start the story. Try this as fiction, poetry or dramatic dialog. You can add details or change as the story requires.Have big fun.

Column A	Column B
A disbarred attorney	A hunting accident
A kidnapped diplomat	Discovers a corpse
A magician	Wins the lottery
A chauffer	Takes a payoff
An assembly-line worker	Hires private eye to spy on spouse
A burglar	Picks a fight with a stranger
A famous composer or musician	Falls in love with one much older or younger
A pilot	Takes a night school course
An inmate	Gets in on big business (or drug) deal
A reporter	Considers leaping off a bridge
A nun, priest, monk, or minister	Plays practical joke on boss

Column C	Column D
Has a Ph.D.	Decides to get married
Blind in one eye	Wakes up alone in bed
Alcoholism	Gives all money to cult group
Haunted by memories of abuse	Walks into a religious revival meeting
A facial tic	Escapes
Unemployed	Goes to palm reader/fortuneteller
Has a famous parent	Gets a dog from the pound
Fan of old movies	Files for divorce
Chain smoker	Discovers break-in at home
Possessed by demons	Packs a suitcase
Obsessed with sex	Falls down in a supermarket

15. Write a rhyming poem (or use one of your that already rhymes) then rewrite it so that the rhyme words appear in the middle of the lines. Write a paragraph on what has changed about the poem's total effect. Would you still choose the same words you used to rhyme? If not, change.

16. Choose an object from your past or currently in your possession that reveals something about your ethnic or religious background (try not to use a cross, okay?). Describe it so its meaning is

apparent but do not name it.

17. Identify the most pleasant and peaceful experience you've had lately. Using this as a starting point, introduce a bitter conflict into the scene. Remember that purely external antagonist—hit men, Martians, tornados—are less convincing sources of conflict than more realistic scenes and antagonists.

18. Write a character sketch employing the 4 elements of direct presentation: appearance, action, speech, thought. Use no authorial interpretation. Put one element in conflict with the other three.

19. Write a short story that is a short story (conflict, crisis, resolution) in exactly 100 words.

20. Place a character in conflict with some aspect of nature. The character need not be fighting for survival--indeed, the antagonist could be a mosquito—but we should not be sure who will win.

21. Get it out of your system: write a poem using as much rhyme (end and internal) and alliteration as you can. Don't worry about making sense. You may only do this exercise once.

22. Write a brief narrative in prose, then rewrite it as a poem using as much of the original as possible. Write a brief statement about what you changed and why.

23. Pick one of the following first lines and complete the poem.
--Always it comes when we least expect it, like
--Long, long ago when the world was a wild place
--I will teach you my townspeople
--This is what I want to happen:
--While I stood here, in the open, lost in myself
(Later, you can cut the first line to make the poem your own.)

24. Write about one of the following (or something else of your choice) and suggest the rhythm of the subject in your sentence rhythms: a machine, a vehicle, a piece of music, sex, something that goes in a circle, an avalanche.

25. Take any poem you're proud of and rewrite it with ten syllables per line (break words if you have to), then with five, then with three words per line. Write about what you learn from the process.

26. Use the memory of the most lowdown thing you've ever done (or that was done to you), change what you must to protect the innocent (and the guilty, if you must), exaggerate or diminish where necessary for brevity or effect, and write a first-person scene. The scene should provide some defense of the perpetrator for doing such a despicable thing.

27. Describe a lake from the point of view of someone who has just committed murder. Do not mention the murder. And, remember, describe the lake.

28. There are moments in our lives we don't usually write about—going to the bathroom, getting dressed, feeding the dog, preparing a meal, having sex—for reasons of taste or expediency or because they make us uncomfortable. Write a scene that includes the "unmentionable" act. Do it tastefully. Better yet, try describing the act performed by someone for whom it is especially difficult.

29. Garbology: present a character or sequence of events by describing the contents of a garbage can or wastebasket.

30. Paint a self-portrait in words.
a. Prop a mirror in front of yourself and used the most focused visual details you can (think police sketch-artist detail)
b. Set it aside for a while. Think about what you would want your face to reveal to a lover.
c. Rewrite the scene (you can use more than visual details, now) to convey that image.
d. Now think what you'd want it to reveal to a child, or a burglar, or a boss. What details change?

31. Now, try to write such a portrait of someone you dislike. Be careful not to use modifiers that reveal how you feel. Nouns and verbs primarily.

32. Each of 2 characters has half of something that is no good without the other half. Neither wants to give up his or her half. Write a scene or a short short.

33. Identify the kernel of a short story in any one of the following:

First memory	yesterday	a recurring dream
Your parents	getting lost	your body
Your phobia	something you're wearing	

Then, write a paragraph of outline and the first sentence of a story.

34.Write about a boring situation. Be fascinating and/or funny, but make sure we know how boring the scene and characters are. Let yourself loose as an intrusive, interpretive author.

35. Write a short sketch of one of the following stock characters, making the character a unique individual through detail. Try to make a reader sympathize with him/her.

Absent-minded professor	lazy laborer	groupie or adoring fan
Domineering wife	hen-pecked husband	aging film star
Staggering drunk	tyrannical boss	small-town librarian

36. Pick 2 contradictory qualities about yourself (e.g., smart in school/fool for love—but try to be more creative than that) and make each a key feature of a different character. Put the two characters in a conflict (even a dialog or a conversation poem). Make the characters radically different from yourself in age, gender, race, nationality, etc.

37. Write a scene in which a man questions a woman about her mother. Characterize all 3. Or turn it around: woman questions man on father.

38. Write a scene set in the strangest place you've ever spent the night. It should not be the story

of the strange night but of the place.

39. Write a scene set in a place very familiar to you. Write from the point of view of someone for whom it is completely bizarre. Or the alternative: write a scene set in a bizarre location by someone for whom it is familiar territory.

40. Write a love scene, serious or comic, in limited omniscient p.o.v. using one of the lovers as center. Make this character believe the other is in love with him or her but, through presenting action, demonstrate that is not the case.

41. Poetry: Renga: Gather 7 people (from class or from among yr friends or at a party) and over the course of 7 days (or sooner as a party game) each contributes a 4-line stanza (roughly 30 syllables, but who's counting?). The person who starts it writes a final stanza.

42. Write your autumn or winter or spring poem. No other rules apply.

43.Copy change: Copy a poem by hand. Then change one key event or detail or character or setting from the beginning and write a poem that uses the same formal features (rhyme/meter, e.g.), sentence patterns, and key structure words (prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions). If you like the result, you'll have to credit the original poet.

44. Repeat the one exercise you like best.