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INVESTIGATING PLACE IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM:
DESIGNING A PLACE-BASED COURSE WITH A LOCAL SERVICE-LEARNING
COMPONENT

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2012

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
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Major Professor: Melody A. Bowdon

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on literature about place-based education and service-learning, as well as three groups' perspectives about their service-learning experiences, this research describes how place (understood simultaneously as a material agent, a setting for human activity, and a factor in an individual's situatedness) and identity (understood in terms of one's social position) are socially-constructed concepts that impact students' writing and learning experiences. More specifically, this project presents place-based education as a teaching method that can focus and reinvigorate service-learning in a writing course.

Including place-based content and service-learning projects in a writing course requires careful design and reflection. However, course design should not be an activity limited to just teachers. In alignment with feminist research methods and standpoint theory, this research values and privileges the perspectives of stakeholders who are not normally included in the course design process: students and community partners. To present a rich account of these stakeholders' experiences designing, implementing, and participating in a place-based service-learning project, a combination of qualitative data methods (interviews, classroom observations, and textual analyses) is used. This information serves as the basis for the design of a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component. The proposed course asks students to work with community partners to identify a place-based need that can be addressed—at least in part—by writing-related service. By collaborating with community partners, creating writing products that address community needs, and reflecting on how their identities and learning experiences have been impacted by the places they've worked and the communities they've worked with, students can apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts, write for real

audiences, and develop more thorough understandings of the places where they study, work, and live.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

FARMWORKERS ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA: FWAF

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION: PBE

RHETORIC AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: RACE

SERVICE-LEARNING: SL

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT NETWORK NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY:

YAYA NFWM

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING PLACE AS A TOPIC OF STUDY IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

“Writing about and researching place involves the multifaceted understanding of the coming together of the physical world (both ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’), the processes of meaning production, and the practices of power that mark relations between social groups.”

—Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*

In the field of Writing Studies, the belief that writing is situated and contingent is commonplace. When writing instructors discuss the situated nature of writing, they often emphasize topics such as the rhetorical situation and audience awareness. We know that writing is situated in time and place, but we often think of place in the abstract sense—place is the setting of our activity or one factor in the scene of writing (Brodkey). This project extends the notion of place as the context of a writer’s experience to, instead, place as both a material agent¹ impacting the act of writing and a topic of study in the writing classroom. Drawing attention to place is important because it helps students to better understand notions of context, personal identity, and writing for particular situations and stakeholders.

The idea that place should be incorporated into writing instruction is not new. In English literature classes, for example, students are often asked to analyze the setting of a text and identify regional themes or allusions. In ecocriticism courses, students analyze environmental themes and examine the subject of nature through writing. And in ecocomposition pedagogies, students investigate ecologies, including writing ecologies (see Weisser and Dobrin). Another approach to including place in the writing course—and the approach that I advocate—is a critical

¹ In “The Agency of Nature or The Nature of Agency?,” Nash suggests that natural environments (i.e., particular places) shape the types of work students and humans can do.

pedagogy of place²³, or place-based education. In the literature review below, I will argue that critical pedagogies of place are preferable to other models of teaching about place because a critical pedagogy of place lends itself to studying the ways that place and positionality are related. In other words, in studying the ways that places both are both socially constructed and construct human experiences, place-based education helps students to explore the ways their writing contributes to the creation of a place and their identities are shaped by the places where they work, study, and live.

As a way of foregrounding place and its social dimensions, I suggest that place-based writing courses should include a service-learning component in which students perform writing service in order to learn more about a community rooted in place, address a local problem, and interrogate their identities within that context. Combining place-based education and service-learning makes sense because these teaching approaches share many elements, including emphases on experiential learning, collaboration with community, and providing opportunities for students to apply course content and reflect on their experiences.

² In “Place-Based Pedagogy for the Arts and Humanities,” Eric L. Ball and Alice Lai describe a critical pedagogy of place as a pedagogy that recognizes how “human communities, or places, are politicized, social constructions that often marginalize individuals, groups, as well as ecosystems” (267). Critical pedagogies of place ask teachers and students to “identify and confront the ways that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and non-human others” (267).

³ I am not using the term “critical pedagogy” that way Paulo Friere used it, although there are similarities between critical pedagogies of place and Friere’s critical pedagogy. Both approaches pay attention to the social contexts of education, emphasize critical thinking and reflection, and pair well with feminist pedagogies. However, critical pedagogies of place do not suggest a process of “unlearning” and then “relearning” lessons from traditional schooling, nor do they suggest that the primary goal of education is to reach “a common understanding about ‘structures of oppression’” (Burbules and Berk). In fact, when paired with standpoint theory, critical pedagogies of place posit that individuals have very different experiences within structures of oppression and that these differences are situated in particular places and social positions.

Both place-based education (PBE) and service-learning (SL) ask students to work with a community to address an issue⁴, and both PBE and SL have students engage in a form of “critical” thinking. In critical pedagogies of place, for instance, instructors ask students to consider the political dimensions of places and communities; they ask who has power in particular places. In other words, PBE instructors realize that:

Human communities, or places, are politicized, social constructions that often marginalize individuals, groups, as well as ecosystems. If place-based educators seek to connect place with self and community, they must identify and confront the way that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and nonhuman others. (Kumashiro, qtd. in Ball and Lai, 267)

Thus, the “critical” aspect of place-based education concerns the positions of communities in places.

In service-learning projects, students are also encouraged to practice critical thinking through what is called “critical reflection.” Critical reflection asks students to “create connection[s] between academic coursework and the immediate social, political, and interpersonal experiences of community-based activities” (Anson qtd. in Bowdon and Scott 6).

One way to help students question the political and social dimensions of places is to have them account for their own positionality in the service-learning site. By considering the ways they are privileged or marginalized in particular communities and locations, students can articulate the ways they experience place. By thinking about how marginalization impacts lived experiences (through concepts such as intersectionality), students can move beyond their own

⁴ PBE asks students to address a local issue, while SL can ask students to address a global issue.

personal understandings of place to the ways others experience place, as well as the way the students themselves might be contributing to the oppressive forces that construct places. Once students have a good understanding of their own positionality and the positions of others, they can consider how knowledge is made and whose voices are valued. Standpoint theory provides language for the idea that the perspectives of marginalized people should be valued, because these perspectives offer “strong objectivity” (Harding).

Rather than putting all the burden of considering positionality and standpoint on the student, though, the instructor should also engage in this critical process. Before the semester or service-learning project begins, instructors have an opportunity to contemplate ideas of power, privilege, identification, marginalization, and representation: they can reflect on which people are privileged (and which are marginalized) in the process of designing a writing course or a service-learning project. Far too often, course design is a solitary endeavor; there is little to no collaboration among other stakeholders in the course design process, such as students or community members who will participate in students’ service-learning projects. However, the perspectives of both students and community partners should be incorporated in the design, implementation, and assessment of a course. Instructors “should consider how [their] community partners might affect the trajectory of our curriculum and pedagogy” (Rios 63); we should “adapt a pedagogy *and curriculum* that can be aligned ideologically with communities materially affected by them” (Rios 63 emphasis maintained).

This project addresses that gap in course design by explicitly asking not only instructors, but also students and community partners, to share their stories about service-learning experiences in order to inform the development of a place-based writing course with a service-learning component. In valuing these stakeholders’ voices, I do not merely listen to their stories;

I actively build their attitudes, values, and beliefs into aspects of the course. Thus, the aims of this project are: 1) to explore the intersections of place-based education and service-learning, 2) to collect qualitative data from designers of and participants in local service-learning projects regarding their experiences, and 3) to use these intersections and experiences to inform the development of a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component.

Research Questions

This project seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What characteristics of place-based education *can intersect* with the design and implementation of a local service-learning project?
2. What are different stakeholders' perceptions of how place, identity, and social position (positionality, standpoint, intersectionality) *should be incorporated* in a writing class with a local service-learning project?
3. Based on these stakeholders' experiences and existing scholarship, what are some good ideas for designing a place-based writing course with a local service-learning project?

Literature Review

“Bodies of land are intertwined with bodies of people and bodies of thought.”
–Phaedra C. Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism*

The Political Possibilities of Place

Place is both a familiar and a complex, highly-contested concept. Definitions of place differ as widely as the disciplines that discuss it. Geographers refer to place as an absolute location on the Earth's surface, a “familiar” space, and the integration of physical and human characteristics (Association of American Geographers and National Council for Geographic Education; Peterson; Tuan); architects describe place in terms of the built environment;

philosophers understand place as occupied space; urban planners discuss “placemaking” as the “planning, design, management and programming of public spaces” through community-driven participation (“What is Placemaking?”); ancient rhetors and rhetoric scholars suggest that “commonplaces” (or “semantic spaces”) exist through the topos (e.g., Miller; Rickert; Ross); and other theories of place describe “individual terroir,” the “locale” (or “local color”) of a place, and the “sense of place” individuals can develop (McCracken). These distinct understandings of place undoubtedly emerge from each field’s epistemologies and influence the ways place is positioned in their scholarship.

As a student, teacher, and scholar, I am positioned in the fields of rhetoric and composition. Both rhetorical studies and composition studies discuss place, but neither field foregrounds place as an object of study. I will be returning to rhetoric and composition to discuss the way place is included in writing pedagogy, but for now, I would like to consider place as an object of study. Since place is one of the primary objects of study in human geography, I draw on Tim Cresswell’s description of place, which emphasizes both the materiality of place and the epistemological possibilities of place. For Cresswell, “place is not just a thing in the world but a way of understanding the world” (11).

In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Cresswell defines place as “a meaningful location” (7). In understanding place this way, he says, we see three fundamental aspects of place: 1) location, 2) locale, and 3) sense of place. Places are located on the Earth’s surface, they are “the material setting for social relations,” and they “have some relationship to humans and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning” (7). We live in places. We (sometimes) develop attachments to places. And we can use places as “a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world”

(11). To reiterate, “place is not something to be observed, researched, and written about but is itself part of the way we see, research and write” (15).

In emphasizing the way that place helps us to create knowledge, Cresswell moves beyond popular conceptions of place as the mere setting of human activity. Place, in this sense, is a material actant that actually shapes perception, thought, and action. Stated another way, places are experienced by people and, in part, construct the social world (Cresswell 21, 31-33). Bodies are placed; our language, movements, and thoughts occur in place and are shaped by place. In other words, “place is primary to the construction of meaning and society” (Cresswell 32).

But it is important to remember that places are also socially constructed. As an example of the social construction of place, Cresswell evokes the image of a neighborhood in New York City, including its built environment, connections to human motives, and community investments:

The buildings, the parks, the trees that have been planted, the roads and restaurants have literally been built – often for the production of profit but also for a range of other reasons. The community gardens are not ‘natural’ but have been put there by the tireless efforts of local residents. It is hard to believe that anyone, in a place like the Lower East Side, could think of place as anything other than a social construct. (30)

In addition to the built environment described above, places are given meaning through their naming (Cresswell 97). Calling a collection of buildings, parking lots, and sports fields a community college campus suggests a different meaning than calling that same collection of objects an R1 Research University. Places are also given meaning through zoning (or creating boundaries or borders), which determine what areas count as “here” or “there.” Thus, some of

the ways places are socially constructed are through architecture, naming, and bounding; objects and language are involved in these processes.

We've established that places construct human experiences. How do people construct places? The construction of places is inherently political (Cresswell 102; Winner). Through their design, arrangement, use, and links to “institutionalized patterns of power and authority,” artifacts have political qualities (Winner 134) and non-human agents and land, such as gardens, can “stand as an argument” (Rios 62).

Feminist notions of place emphasize that “places are socially constructed in contexts of unequal power relations” and places “represent relations of domination and exploitation” (Cresswell 50). These social constructions of place often operate in tandem with the construction of difference (more specifically, markers of difference such as gender, race, and class). Places are not created for everyone. In fact, “the construction of places is more often than not achieved through the exclusion of some other” (Cresswell 97). Gentrification is a prime example. By moving into existing neighborhoods—which have their own meanings for the communities who live there—and purchasing and transforming homes and businesses in order to create an “improved” place for economically-privileged people to live and work, the people involved in this process (e.g., construction crews, city planners, and new residents) create a place that excludes the original community because those people no longer fit the qualifications of the place in terms of social or socioeconomic status (Cresswell 93-95). The original community who lived in that place becomes othered. Thus, gentrification creates a “nice place to live” for some people (i.e., middle-class white people), but not Others (i.e., low-income people of color).

Gentrification is an example of the political dimensions of place. As an analogy of the “politics of place” (122), Cresswell uses the terms “in place” and “out of place” (103). If an

individual fits within the standards of acceptable behavior, material privilege, or definitions of citizenship, they belong in a place. However, transgressing these boundaries marks an individual as out of place (103). Cresswell provides three salient examples of social constructions that label groups of people as “out of place”: LGBTQ (or “closeted”) people living in a heteronormative world, homeless people who legally (and literally) possess no place, and refugees who come from some “other” place.

To return to the way place constructs society, we can consider the meanings we associate with particular locations and the ways we act within those spaces. There are socially acceptable ways to behave and exist in places. Upon seeing a crowd of people arranged between rows of stanchions, we understand that there is a line and that the appropriate way to act in this circumstance is to stand behind the last person in the queue. It would be a transgression to wait outside the stanchions, to cut your place in line, or to skip the line altogether.

This principle that there are acceptable or appropriate ways to exist and act in particular places, and that any behavior outside the norm is considered a transgression (which marks you as an outsider) has consequences for thinking about markers of difference in individuals’ social positions. If sources of difference are labeled as “outside” the norm or “out of place,” the individuals who embody them are effectively marginalized and displaced.

Standpoint Theory and the Privileging of Marginalized Perspectives

As mentioned in the introduction, Standpoint theory gives language for the idea that the perspectives of marginalized people should be valued. In *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, Sandra Harding describes standpoint theory as “a feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power” (1). It is also a methodology for conducting feminist research (Harding 1-2). Standpoint theory makes an argument for “strong

objectivity,” which values knowledge-making projects that start from the perspectives of marginalized groups (Harding, “Introduction” 6; Harding, “Rethinking...” 127-31). Standpoint theory recognizes that knowledge is socially situated (Harding, “Introduction” 7, 11; Harding, “Rethinking...” 127) and “socially legitimated” by communities (Harding, “Rethinking...” 133). Importantly, for the purposes of a service-learning course, standpoint theory assumes that “communities and not primarily individuals produce knowledge” (Harding, “Rethinking...” 133).

Standpoint theorists such as Harding and Alison Wylie regard the perspectives of marginalized/ oppressed/ “othered” people as preferable to—and more objective than—the perspectives of people in power. Asking marginalized people to articulate their needs (i.e., the issues they see as relevant to their daily lives) would provide students in service-learning courses with ideas for projects they can contribute to that confront the realities of power and positionality.

In addition to justifying the reasons why communities are well-positioned to articulate the goals of a service-learning project, standpoint theory once again draws our attention to the ways in which people are situated in particular places. In this case, markers of difference—such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status—intersect, and it is from this intersection that we can understand our place. According to Ila McCracken, place is a source of difference that, she argues, should be added to what she calls the “matrix of difference” (131, 162). The matrix of difference is a “tool that considers all forms of difference (including place) in relation to the others [i.e., gender, race, and class] rather than treating these cultural markers as independent, acontextual actors” (McCracken 19). She goes on to reiterate: “...we know and experience difference in place. . . .what you know and believe to be true about your experiences with race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability *cannot* be separated from the places of your life”

(McCracken 209-10, emphasis maintained). In other words, spaces and places are personal and political (hooks; Wylie).

Scholars such as Judy Whipps make direct connections among situatedness, place, and community work. While Whipps does not call students' projects "service-learning" per se, her thoughts about collaborating with community members are valuable, especially because she uses "place" as the focus for students' work. In this case, place serves not only as a familiar concept that students can carry with them into unfamiliar service-learning sites; it is also a topic that can be investigated to frame "difference" and understand community.

Combining Place and Service-Learning in the Writing Course: Some Common Approaches

Place is an important influence and topic in the writing classroom because it helps students to better understand notions of context, personal identity, and designing writing for particular situations and stakeholders. In anecdotal accounts of their own writing classrooms, numerous teachers have described the benefits of asking students to analyze the places where they have lived, which include increased student engagement and authority in the classroom, a greater understanding of how place impacts their own identities, and more complex understandings of "place," "context," and "community" (Esposito; Jacobs; Lundahl). Therefore, accounting for the places where students write (both in and outside the classroom)⁵ can help them to not only develop a better appreciation of context, but to also investigate how their identities have been shaped by various locations, people, technologies, habits, and experiences.⁶

⁵ This study does not focus on the design or utilization of learning spaces, which is a related area of research.

⁶ See, for example: Pigg, Stacey. "Emplacing Mobile Composing Habits: A Study of Academic Writing in Networked Social Spaces." *CCC* 66.2 (2014): 250-75. Web. 25 Jan. 2015.

Although all students are exposed to numerous places in a traditional writing course (such as the physical classroom, the office where their professor holds conferences, and the college campus in general), some writing instructors ask students to travel outside these academic spaces and into their local communities so that they may participate in service-learning.⁷ To define service-learning, I borrow the oft-cited definition from Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher. According to these scholars, service-learning is:

a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

As the above definition makes clear, service-learning entails work that “meets identified community needs.” But who identifies these needs? The students? The professor? The community? Like proponents of community-driven, community-based learning (e.g., Dewar and Isaac), I advocate the latter. Because community partners are often marginalized in institutions of higher education, standpoint theory would suggest that instructors privilege the needs that community members articulate. Although professors need to articulate the learning goals of a service-learning project on documents like the course syllabus, no population knows the needs of a community better than members of the community.

⁷ Although working in-person with a local community group in a face-to-face mode is common in many service-learning models, service-learning can also occur from a distance in global or virtual environments (e.g., “e-service”).

All communities are situated in particular locations (including both physical and virtual spaces), but students may not be familiar with these places. By entering into the service-learning project with a focus on place, students have a theoretical site or lens that is familiar to them. This same lens can inform their work and conversations so that they learn about the community through the community's place-based needs. Place-based service-learning projects also provide a great opportunity for students to encounter local communities they might not otherwise.

Another important characteristic of service-learning courses is that they often help students to “gain an appreciation for civic engagement while learning course content in a real-world environment” (University of Central Florida, *2015-2016 Undergraduate Catalog*). UCF's Department of Writing and Rhetoric offers a course titled “Rhetoric and Civic Engagement” that normally includes a service-learning component. This course is a prime candidate for incorporating the aspects of service-learning, critical pedagogies of place, and standpoint theory that I will describe in the chapters that follow. Not only was this course the subject of my case study observations, its learning objectives included emphases on writing, reflection, and civic engagement. Like critical pedagogies of place, which stress the importance of analyzing the social context of education, the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course asked students to analyze civic arguments and models of citizenship and civic engagement. Like service-learning pedagogies, the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course asked students to participate in a partnership project and reflect on that experience to inform their understandings of rhetorical citizenship. And, as a writing course, the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement class included assignments that asked students to develop audience-appropriate persuasive discourse and sharpen their reflective writing skills (Pond, “Course Syllabus”).

Ecocomposition and Service-Learning

Many writing pedagogies, assignments, and anthologies have been created in the name of helping students to develop a “sense of place.” Early versions of place-centric courses include the “nature writing course” or other variants of ecocomposition. Ecocomposition pedagogies combine an emphasis on environmental themes/texts with composition theory. In the introduction to *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*, Weisser and Dobrin describe ecocomposition as:

an area of study which, at its core, places ecological thinking and composition in dialogue with one another in order to both consider the ecological properties of written discourse and the ways in which ecologies, environments, locations, places, and natures are discursively affected. That is to say, ecocomposition is about relationships; it is about the constitutive existence of writing and environment; it is about physical environment and constructed environment; it is about the production of written discourse and the relationship of that discourse to the places it encounters. (2)

Thus, place is of critical importance for an ecocomposition curriculum.

Ecocomposition pedagogy has been discussed in our field’s leading journals and conferences since about 1998 (Dobrin and Weisser 7). What separates this type of writing course from an “ecocritical” or “nature writing” English course is that it focuses not solely on interpreting writing about the environment but on “the activity of writing, about the production of discourse” (Dobrin and Weisser 9). The term “ecocomposition” has roots in “ecology,” or the study of the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings. In ecocomposition classes, students study the relationships among writers, writing activity, and

writing environments, and they learn that both the “environment” and “nature” are discursively constructed (Dobrin and Weisser 10-11). Moreover, they do more than analyze writing—they produce it and contribute to other writing ecosystems. It is important to note, though, that ecocomposition pedagogies primarily use ecologies, nature, and the environment as metaphors for activities and learning spaces. Unlike critical pedagogies of place, which foreground the materiality of place, ecocomposition does not situate place as an object of study.

Weisser and Dobrin’s anthology presents two ways that students can produce writing in place-centric ways: through service-learning reflections and public writing. In her contribution to the *Ecocomposition* anthology, Annie Merrill Ingram describes a “read-do-reflect-write” sequence of class activities (219), which asks students to read about environmental issues, do work at their service-learning site, reflect on their experience and connect it to concepts and theories covered in class readings, and write (analyze, interpret) what they learned. In their service-learning sites, students can provide writing service by contributing to the community’s texts (e.g., flyers promoting events, letters to policy makers, grants for funding projects). Such texts are good examples of “public writing.”

Place-Based Education

While ecocomposition is compatible with service-learning methods, it does not account for the materiality of places, the agency of nature, or the communities who live in particular environments. Ecocomposition pedagogies also do not necessarily help students to develop critical reflection skills, such as identifying the systemic issues involved in their places. Without a focus on social justice or service-learning, students merely write about particular places instead of act within them.

As a partial solution to this problem, some place-based educators have advocated for “critical” pedagogies of place that analyze which places get valued and why. Critical pedagogies of place recognize that:

Human communities, or places, are politicized, social constructions that often marginalize individuals, groups, as well as ecosystems. If place-based educators seek to connect place with self and community, they must identify and confront the way that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and nonhuman others. (Kumashiro, qtd. in Ball and Lai, 267)

Thus, critical pedagogies of place understand that humans and nonhumans can be “othered” in certain places, including the classroom.

Educators who use place-based pedagogies define place according to students’ immediate surroundings: “place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place—that is, in students’ own ‘place’ or immediate schoolyard, neighborhood, town or community” (Wikipedia). Place-based education emphasizes the “local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities and experiences” of a regional locale (“What is PBE”).

John Chrisman, a graduate student in my M.A. program who first introduced me to place-based education, has taught a writing class using place-based pedagogy; he described it this way in his syllabus: “All our students’ paper assignments deal with their lives at Western Michigan University. It is important for all students to feel a connection to their community...” One purpose of using place-based pedagogy at Western Michigan University (WMU) was to reduce student attrition rates among freshmen. The college determined that freshmen often had a difficult time transitioning from their familiar home environments into a new college setting.

WMU faculty believed that using a place-based pedagogy (which asked students to make connections to the university) might reduce the chances of students leaving. In other words, teachers of this pedagogy were asking students to transform unfamiliar “space” (WMU) into a familiar place and second home. As Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, “space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning” (136).

In “The Foundations of Place-Based Learning,” place-based education is described this way:

PBL can be understood as environmental education gone completely local, wholly integrated with the learning standards and expanded beyond the natural environment to include the cultural, social, and economic conditions of place. Place-based learning approaches seek to capitalize on the strong affinity people have for their communities. . . . Through the integration of civic engagement opportunities in place-based curricula, learning in connected to action: students and citizens engage together in the civic life of their communities. This is a values-driven approach, designed to advance educational goals together with locally identified social, economic and environmental objectives. (3)

Based on these descriptions, we can derive the following principles of PBE: 1) PBE asks students to pay attention to their surroundings and use these places as knowledge-generating sites, 2) PBE values the local over the global, and 3) PBE emphasizes connections to particular environments and communities. To this list, we can also add that PBE pairs well with service-learning; “PBE emphasizes learning through participation in service projects for the local school and/or community” (“What is PBE”). In its simplest state, place-based education foregrounds

places and draws our attention to the ways in which places shape our identities, relationships, and writing. PBE also situates “place” as a topic worthy of study in the writing classroom.

Existing Approaches to Place-Based Education

In the last decade, numerous teachers have published reflections on their course-specific models of place-based education. These anecdotal accounts tend to discuss a specific reading or writing task the teacher assigns and the teacher’s perceptions of what students learned.

Sometimes, there are excerpts of student work to support the teacher’s claims, but most of the students’ learning is described from the perspective of the researcher or teacher. As one example, McCracken’s dissertation describes how faculty members use place in their writing classrooms. This discussion does not focus on students’ opinions about the pedagogy; instead, this research describes writing teachers’ connections to places and their hopes to help students develop a similar appreciation or understanding.

As another example, Amy Azano describes a model of PBE used in an English classroom in a rural high school. Azano observed classroom sessions, interviewed the teacher and a sample of students, and collected samples of student work in order to investigate “how one teacher considered place in instructional choices...and student perceptions of this teacher’s place-based instruction” (2). The findings of this study focus on the teacher’s experience of designing the course (4-5), and the only discussion of students’ experiences takes the form of Azano’s (and the teacher’s) interpretation of their learning from samples of the students’ writing (6-7). Thus, students’ voices are missing from this discussion.

Similarly, Elliot Jacobs’ “Re(Place) Your Typical Writing Assignment: An Argument for Place-Based Writing” describes the benefits of place-based writing for student learning, but these benefits are described through anecdotes from Jacobs’ own teaching experience, with brief

samples of students' work sprinkled throughout the article. Although it is encouraging to read that Jacobs believes place-based writing helps students connect with their environments (50-51), "place-based writing is focused on relationships" (51), and "place-based writing has democratic virtues" (52), these claims have not yet been reaffirmed by student voices.

So, the first gap in PBE scholarship is a lack of student voices on the subject. Moreover, place-based lesson materials and teacher accounts do not always describe how instructors and students worked with local community groups to achieve their goals. Also, the perspectives of community members would be valuable additions to our understanding of place-based education.

Using Marginalized Perspectives to Inform Course Design

Like Ashley Holmes, I advocate including students and communities in curriculum design. One way to frame these discussions is through the lens of standpoint theory. Standpoint theory "offers the theoretical framework to incite critical reflection and evaluation of the traditional paradigms of university work, in this case the design of course materials solely by the instructor" (Holmes 80). Standpoint theory also encourages instructors to consider this reality: "because of the organizational structures of the academy, student and community voices are often marginalized, especially in relation to curriculum development" (78).

As a response to this trend of marginalizing students' and community partners' perspectives, Holmes created a Course Re-Design Team (CRDT) model, which integrated these stakeholders' standpoints into the curriculum design process. In her model, these participants offered insights and suggestions for redesigning an existing first-year composition course.

At the end of her article, Holmes calls for additional research on "other potential models and theories that make time and space for including community and student standpoints in the work we do as academics" (96). This project responds to that call by offering a model wherein

three stakeholders—instructor, students, and community partners—reflect on their previous experiences in service-learning courses and their lived experiences in place to offer ideas for designing a new course in which place and standpoint are two of the subjects of inquiry.

Overview of Remaining Chapters

This thesis argues that place-based education can help narrow the focus and reinvigorate the local, activist possibilities of service-learning projects in writing courses. The remaining chapters will describe the methods used to collect stakeholders' perspectives about local, place-based service-learning projects and writing course curricula, as well as ideas for incorporating place and positionality into a local service-learning project.

In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of my study design and describe my qualitative research methods, which include: recruiting participants for interviews, conducting classroom observations and textual analyses, coding and analyzing data, and accounting for my own positionality in the research project. I also provide a brief profile for each of my research participants.

In Chapter Three, I answer my first two research questions. I begin by comparing and contrasting place-based education and the service-learning teaching method. I then describe which characteristics of these pedagogies were present in a writing course titled Rhetoric and Civic Engagement. Following this description, I list suggestions for incorporating place and positionality into a writing course with a local service-learning component; these suggestions are derived from the experiences of the stakeholders I described in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Four, I share the stakeholders' suggestions for improving the design and implementation of place-based service-learning projects. Next, I offer some ideas for designing a

writing curriculum based on these stakeholders' suggestions. I conclude by describing the contributions of this research and by offering ideas for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO: STUDY DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design

I conducted case study research to provide a rich, descriptive account of how three groups of stakeholders interpret their experiences in designing, facilitating, and/or participating in a local service-learning project. These stakeholders include one instructor of a writing course with a service-learning component, two students in that course, and two community partners (one student volunteer who works closely with a statewide organization and one service-learning coordinator from a national activist network). Three different types of data collection methods were used: interview (both individual and group), classroom observation, and textual analysis of course documents and student writing samples. Interview questions addressed stakeholders' perceptions of the goals and outcomes of service-learning, the service-learning site and experience, and how place and identity were incorporated—and should be incorporated—in a service-learning project.

For this study, the writing class with a service-learning component was the case. While data such as course documents (i.e., the syllabus, service-learning site profiles, and assignment sheets) and classroom observations helped me to understand the full context of the course, student writing samples (i.e., reflection logs, final reflection papers, and e-portfolio content) and interviews helped me to zoom in on a few specific individuals within the broader class setting: the instructor and two students.

Because community partners are not traditionally included in college courses through general enrollment procedures, these stakeholders were located outside the main classroom case. When designing this study, my original intention was to recruit these participants from students' connections with the community partners at their service-learning sites. Unfortunately, the

community partners I contacted were not able to participate in the present study, so I had to venture outside of this particular class in order to talk to community stakeholders. I discuss some of the issues involved in this process below.

The paragraphs that follow describe my process of recruiting participants and collecting and analyzing data. These methods follow the procedures outlined in the explanation of my human subjects research, which was labeled exempt by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Central Florida. (Appendix A contains an Outcome Letter from the Institutional Review Board.) Near the end of this chapter, I present brief profiles of the participants you will hear from in this study. I then explain how this project differs from other community-based research and participatory action research projects. I close by engaging in the process of reflexivity: I describe my position in this research project and discuss some ways my positionality affects the way I designed the study, analyzed data, and wrote up the results of my research.

Participant Recruitment

As mentioned above, three types of participants were recruited: the instructor of a writing course, students in that writing course, and community partners who collaborated with students on service-learning projects. In addition to more specific selection criteria described below, all participants needed to meet the following conditions: 1) participant was at least 18 years of age, 2) participant voluntarily agreed to take part in the study, and 3) participant had time to engage in interviews.

Participant Recruitment: Instructor

I used three criteria to select an instructor participant. In order to match the purposes of this study, the instructor needed to 1) be an instructor in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric

at UCF, 2) teach a writing course that—at least in some way—investigated issues of place, and 3) include a service-learning component in the course curriculum. I identified a list of potential participants who matched the above criteria by reading faculty descriptions (which include information such as a short biography, a list of research interests, and a list of upcoming courses taught by the faculty member) from the department’s staff webpage:

<http://writingandrhetoric.cah.ucf.edu/staff.php>. From this list of potential participants, I removed faculty who were serving as members of my thesis committee (in order to mitigate potential sources of bias) and then approached a faculty member whose education and research interests best matched the topics of this project.

This faculty member will be referred to as instructor Amy Pond⁸. Although I work and study in the same department where Amy teaches, I did not formally meet her until we both attended a conference session about evaluating service-learning projects, which was offered as part of a Faculty Center professional development conference hosted on UCF’s campus. It was at this conference that I expressed my interest in incorporating the service-learning teaching method into a future writing course. Amy offered to point me to relevant resources and explain how she incorporated service-learning in her classes. Since Amy had recently received an award for outstanding community engagement at our department’s end-of-semester awards reception, I was eager to learn about her methods for designing, implementing, and assessing service-

⁸ To maintain the anonymity of my participants, I provided each individual with a pseudonym. In accordance with my IRB proposal, I sent an early draft of this document to each participant and offered them three choices. They could use the pseudonym I provided, create their own pseudonym, or request that their legal name be used. Some individuals requested that I use their legal name. Others requested a pseudonym. For this reason, there are two participants in this project with similar names: Nico and Nicole. Although the names are similar, they refer to two different people.

learning projects. For these reasons, I felt she would be a great choice to represent the faculty perspective. Moreover, Amy met my three criteria for selection: 1) she was an instructor in my department, 2) she taught writing courses (e.g., Rhetoric and Civic Engagement and Writing for Social Change) that addressed issues of place (i.e., through discussing campus-based civic engagement and community issues), and 3) both her Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course and Writing for Social Change course included service-learning components. Together, we decided that her ENC 3331: Rhetoric and Civic Engagement (RACE) course would be a good case for this project.

Participant Recruitment: Students

In accordance with the participant recruitment methods detailed in my IRB proposal, I asked instructor Amy Pond to help me identify students who might be good candidates for the research study. My criteria for including students in this study were: 1) student is an active member of Amy's writing course and 2) student is participating in a service-learning project. The assessment of students' "active" engagement in class was based on factors such as their class attendance and the quality of their discussion posts, both of which were determined by instructor Amy Pond. After developing a list of potential student participants with Amy, I approached a select group of students during two events: the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Service-Learning Showcase and a regularly scheduled RACE class session.

The Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Service-Learning Showcase was an event designed to give students an opportunity to present their service-learning projects to a larger audience at the end of the semester. Amy Pond and another instructor in the department organized the event. Both instructors taught sections of ENC 3331 during the fall 2014 semester. This showcase occurred in the Student Union on the afternoon of November 25, 2014. Because Amy offered

three choices for students' service-learning projects and I wanted to include as accurate a sample of the classroom case as possible, I hoped to recruit one student per project type. In other words, I was hoping to recruit three student participants—one student who worked with a local nonprofit agency called Legal Aid, one student who researched UCF transit, and one student who created a digital civic engagement profile. I was not able to meet this goal. Because the showcase was held outside of normal class time and was not an explicit course requirement⁹, not every student from Amy's RACE course attended and/or presented a poster. For this reason, I was only able to make contact with one student from the list of students she had recommended.

The student I recruited from the showcase is named Karina. I approached Karina at her poster table and asked her about the research she completed for her service-learning project. Following her explanation, I described my project, provided her with an explanation form, and asked if she would be interested in participating. She agreed to participate, so I collected her contact information in order to set up a date and time for our first interview.

Following the Showcase, Amy held a normal class session and invited me to attend. At the end of class, I approached two students who were present for class but had not presented at the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Service-learning Showcase. I briefly explained my research project to them and collected their email addresses so that I could send them additional information before they decided whether they wanted to participate. Of these two students, one student (who will be referred to as Nicole) responded favorably. Thus, by the end of the day, I had recruited two student participants: Karina and Nicole. Because of time constraints (the

⁹ It should be noted that the showcase was held two days before Thanksgiving weekend and class attendance during this week of the semester is historically low.

semester and course ended the following week), I was not able to recruit additional student participants.

Both Karina and Nicole met the selection criteria described above. In addition to being engaged members of Amy's RACE course, these students participated in two different types of service-learning projects (Karina researched transit options on UCF's campus¹⁰ and Nicole served as an intake volunteer for Legal Aid).

Participant Recruitment: Community Partners

As mentioned above, my original intention was to recruit community participants from students' connections with community contact persons, volunteer coordinators, or agency staff at their service-learning sites. My original criteria for inclusion were 1) the community partner was involved in facilitating students' service-learning experiences and 2) the community partner was referred to me by a student participating in the service-learning project.

However, I experienced some complications with this approach. First, Karina's service-learning project did not conform to traditional notions of service wherein she would collaborate with an established organization to complete her work. Instead, Karina's service-learning project had more of a research focus (i.e., she was researching transit problems affecting students on campus) and was completed individually. Although she was addressing community needs (i.e., the community of UCF students and faculty) through writing and applying course concepts to her research process and reflections, there was not a community partner overseeing her project.

¹⁰ Although Karina's project does not fully meet UCF's definition of service-learning, which specifies that students should "[work] with community partners such as non-profit organizations, public schools, government agencies, campus groups, or businesses with specifically philanthropic missions" (Office of Experiential Learning), both Amy Pond and I regard her research as a service-learning project.

Therefore, I could not ask Karina to supply me with contact information for a community partner, since no such partner/ agency representative/ staff person existed.

The second complication of this participant recruitment approach involved common barriers to collaborating with community partners. Although Nicole was able to provide me with contact information for one of her service-learning supervisors at Legal Aid and I was able to describe my project to this person, the individual was not able to participate. While, of course, the individual could have declined participation because he was not interested in the project, I believe there were other factors that contributed to his decision: my lack of established rapport with the organization, his misunderstanding of the project's aims, the unclear benefits of participation for the organization, his lack of time, and Legal Aid's emphasis on confidentiality. (These barriers are discussed in more detail below.) In all, I contacted three staff members of Legal Aid over a period of eight weeks. For various reasons, none of them were able to participate in this project.

Since I was not able to speak with community partners from either Karina or Nicole's service-learning projects, I had to venture outside of this particular class to talk to community stakeholders. My second method for recruiting participants was based on convenience: I asked one of my thesis committee members to put me in contact with community partners she had worked with in past service-learning projects. In much the same way I was hoping to leverage the existing relationships students had to community partners in order to make contact with them, I now relied on my committee member's relationships with community organizations to help me introduce my project.

My new criteria for community partner participants boiled down to one requirement: they had to represent a community organization that facilitated service-learning projects with UCF

students. Based on this criterion, my committee member provided contact information for five community partners representing four different organizations. Because of my own time constraints and these individuals' availabilities, I contacted three people. Two individuals agreed to participate. The first community partner to agree was Sean, who works with the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF). The second community partner was Nico, who works with The Youth and Young Adult Network (YAYA) of the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM).

In the next section, I will describe some of the barriers to conducting research with community members to give context for some of the complications involved in collaborating with community partners from outside the university. These barriers might also partially explain why I experienced difficulty recruiting community partner participants.

Barriers to Conducting Research with Community Members

- **Lack of Rapport:** While Amy and Nicole had built relationships with Legal Aid staff members, I—as an outside researcher who was not part of the class or service-learning experience—had not. As a result, Legal Aid's staff was not familiar with me or my research project. Our lack of an existing relationship or rapport meant there was very little trust or familiarity to base our conversations on. Moreover, service-learning literature has described problems of using communities as a research subject.
- **Misunderstandings and Miscommunications:** Previous scholarship on relationships between institutions and community partners has found that “mutual understanding is the touchstone of the relationship” (Stoecker and Tryon 98). Again, because Legal Aid and I did not have an existing relationship, we did not share a “mutual understanding” of our relationship or potential work together. I propose that this lack of mutual understanding and familiarity might have increased the likelihood for misunderstandings or

miscommunications. For instance, although I sent explanations of my project and sample interview questions to each of the three individuals I contacted, I was still sent email responses that suggested misunderstandings of the outcomes of the project. More specifically, in the explanation of my project that I provided to all participants, I described the question topics I would ask about in our interview. These topics included the general types of work service-learning students perform at Legal Aid and the staff member's opinions of how service-learning projects could be modified to better meet the needs of community partners. Thus, these questions did not ask Legal Aid to provide specific examples of cases they were working on or the clients they were working with, nor were these questions framed in such a way that I would be making evaluative statements about Legal Aid as an organization or service-learning partner. However, in my correspondence with one of Legal Aid's staff members, I received a message suggesting that Legal Aid's team of lawyers was concerned with the way Legal Aid's brand would be portrayed in this research. The message read: "We have to be very careful to protect our brand and ensure that positive partnerships, volunteerism and community relations opportunity only exist. . . . So while I am interested in assisting with you, I have to protect and maintain our brand. I am not sure what the lawyers are going to decide."¹¹ Another misconception these staff members held was that I would be asking

¹¹ I would like to emphasize that while the language of "barriers" or "issues" suggests my experiences conversing with Legal Aid staff were negative, I had a pleasant experience communicating with Legal Aid staff; I appreciated these individuals' responsiveness to my queries. It is not my intention to tarnish Legal Aid's brand in any way. I believe they do important work in my city. Their inability to participate in my research project is not an indication of their lack of collaboration in service-learning projects. On the contrary, by welcoming service-learning students into their office, Legal Aid staff members are helping to

them to provide me with specific details about clients' cases. Again, this kind of information was not asked for (or even suggested) in my recruitment materials, but the belief persisted.

- **Issues of Confidentiality:** As mentioned above, some Legal Aid staff incorrectly believed that I wanted to collect information which could jeopardize Legal Aid's practices of confidentiality. Even though this was not the case, this concern raises important questions for researchers regarding the types of organizations they collaborate with and how both researchers and community partners can maintain standards of ethical research in such collaborations. When an organization (such as Legal Aid) serves a vulnerable or protected population of clients, researchers need to be much more careful about the questions they ask and the ways they frame their projects.
- **Unclear Benefits for Organization:** While it is easy to imagine and articulate the benefits a researcher might experience from participating in a research project with a community partner, it is more difficult to explain the potential benefits for community partners. To be sure, researchers normally gain more from such collaborations; depending on the research project, the results of the research can be used towards publications, degrees, revising curriculum materials, and meeting expectations of institutionally required service. Community partners, who participate in research projects for very different reasons, might not immediately see how they can benefit from this collaboration, or the benefit(s) might not be worth the investment. In the spirit of

ensure that students at UCF have good choices for service-learning sites. However, I believe that my experience trying to recruit a research participant from Legal Aid is indicative of some of the barriers to this type of collaboration among university personnel and community partner staff.

reciprocity, research between institutions and community partners should be mutually beneficial, but sometimes the benefits for community partners are limited or framed in terms that are only tangentially related to the organization's goals. For example, in the explanation document I provided to participants, I stated the benefits for community partners this way: "By learning more about various stakeholders' perceptions of place and the successful aspects of a service-learning project, writing teachers can develop student- and community-relevant curricula that emphasize the importance of context and civic action." Although community partners can benefit from curricula that are aligned to their needs, this benefits statement does not clearly articulate how the particular staff member will benefit from participating, nor are the benefits to the organization easily quantified.

- **Lack of Time or Other Resources:** Perhaps the most common barrier to faculty-community partner collaborations is a lack of time or other resources. Both faculty members and organization staff (particularly nonprofit agency workers) have busy and demanding schedules that might prevent them from taking on additional projects.

Data Collection Methods

To reiterate, five participants representing three types of stakeholders were invited to participate in this research study: one instructor of a writing course with a service-learning component, two students in that writing course, and two community partners who collaborated on service-learning projects with other UCF students. All three groups of stakeholders were asked to participate in an individual interview. In addition, the instructor was asked to provide sample course materials related to the students' service-learning project, and students were asked to engage in a group interview and provide samples of the writing they produced in the course.

Individual Interviews

All three types of stakeholders were asked to engage in an individual interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. In this interview, participants were asked to share their understandings of place and service-learning as well as their perspectives on the design and implementation of the service-learning project, including suggestions for future improvement. (For an abbreviated list of interview questions asked of each type of stakeholder, see Appendix B.) Interviews were scheduled at the date and time of the participant's choosing and took place in a location that was convenient for the participant to access (such as a personal office, study room on campus, or coffee shop). I came prepared with a list of open-ended interview questions for each participant, but I allowed interviewees to steer the conversation in other interesting (and valuable) directions before returning to my list of questions. These conversations were recorded using an audio-capture software installed on my computer¹². Following each interview, I manually transcribed the interview audio file.

Group Interview

Because I was able to recruit more than one student participant for this project and I thought that both students might be able to draw on their shared classroom experiences to offer suggestions for curriculum development, I asked Karina and Nicole to participate in one group interview lasting approximately 90 minutes. For this interview, I prepared a list of questions each participant could respond to, but I instructed both Karina and Nicole to pose their own questions and/or jump between questions. In short, I wanted to give them a chance to shape the focus and content of the interview. At various points in this process, the interview became more of a

¹² The audio-capture software used is Audacity: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

conversation about service-learning among three young women. There were also times when Karina and Nicole would address their questions and responses to one another. In these moments, I was an outsider listening in on stories of their shared experiences in the RACE course. There were also a few occasions in which Karina and Nicole explicitly asked me questions about my research design and how their responses would be used in the write-up. In these moments, I felt that I was not only valuing these participants' perspectives but was actually giving them the opportunity to collaborate in the interview process.

The format of this group interview was influenced by Sue Wilkinson's discussion of focus groups, which she argues constitute a feminist method of data collection. A focus group is "an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics" (Beck, Trombetta, & Share, qtd. in Wilkinson 221). This data collection method involves "the interaction of group participants with each other as well as with the researcher/moderator" and aligns well with exploratory research questions aimed at eliciting and clarifying participants' perspectives (Wilkinson 223, 237). Focus groups have elements of a feminist research method through their emphasis on: "natural" (versus "artificial") contexts and situations in which participants communicate in a style similar to "everyday social interactions" (225, 226); negotiation and construction of meaning with others (228, 229); and shifting and "reduc[ing] the researcher's power and control" (230). Focus groups provide researchers with opportunities to "listen to local voices" (Murray, Tapson, Turnbull, McCallum, & Little, qtd. in Wilkinson 231), use the participants' own language (Wilkinson 231), and work with underrepresented groups (Wilkinson 237). Thus, the choice to use a group interview method of data collection not only aligns with feminist research principles, but also provides another opportunity for researchers to hear and value marginalized voices.

Classroom Observations

To provide additional contextual information about the course and to see how topics such as place and service-learning were incorporated into class discussions and activities, I observed two class sessions of the RACE course during the fall 2014 semester. Instructor Amy Pond encouraged me to attend two particular class sessions relevant to this project: one session in which students created a power map of the stakeholders involved in their projects and one session in which students debriefed their semester-long service-learning projects following the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Service-Learning Showcase. During these observations, I took notes about Amy's directions for students, the content covered in class discussions, and the activities students engaged in. I focused on these aspects of the course because they relate to the design and implementation of course activities. As with the interviews, I recorded these sessions using an audio-capture device and supplemented my notes with transcribed material, when needed.

Course Materials and Writing Samples

To supplement Amy's, Karina's, and Nicole's descriptions of the RACE course, I collected instructional documents and writing samples related to students' service-learning projects. These course materials also provided useful information regarding the design of the course, the types of service-learning sites students could choose from, Amy's expectations for students' service-learning projects, and Karina and Nicole's thoughts about their service-learning experiences while they were still in the process of engaging in service-learning work.

To help me access her instructional materials and student resources, Amy enrolled me as an "observer" in the online component of the course. UCF uses a learning management system that allows instructors to upload files, create modules, and facilitate online discussions, among

other things. With my limited observer course permissions¹³, I was able to view and download materials that Amy had uploaded to the course site (e.g., course syllabus, service-learning site profiles, and assignment sheets).

To collect students' writing samples, I asked Karina and Nicole to send me digital copies of any writing they completed over the course of the semester that was related to their service-learning projects. From this request, I received Nicole's service-learning reflection logs, a link to Karina's e-portfolio (which contains documentation and reflections for her entire research process) and final reflection papers from both students. It should be noted that these documents were not written with me as an audience in mind (e.g., when Nicole wrote her reflection logs, she had no idea they would be used in a research project). For this reason, some of the reflections are rather candid. After all, these pieces were used as a textual space to vent as well as reflect. That being said, I did receive permission from each participant to use (and quote from) their documents. In the end, their word choices are true to their experiences.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research data (i.e., interview transcripts, observation notes, student writing samples, and course materials) were coded and analyzed using a version of the coding method described by Johnny Saldaña in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. The present research study utilizes an "eclectic" or "open" coding approach in which the data are "coded using a repertoire of methods simultaneously" by "employ[ing] a select and compatible

¹³ I emphasize my "limited" observer permissions to allay concerns over FERPA violations and other issues of confidentiality. I was not able to access students' email addresses or identification numbers, assignment submissions, discussion board posts, messages to the instructor, or grades.

combination of two or more First Cycle coding methods” (Saldaña 188). More specifically, to answer the above research questions, a combination of provisional, in-vivo, values, evaluation, and attribute coding were applied.

Before I define each coding scheme and explain how codes were developed and applied to the data set, I would like to emphasize that provisional and in-vivo codes refer to both the source and content of the code. As described below, provisional codes are based on words and phrases from existing literature, and in-vivo codes emerge from interviewees’ unique voices and phrasings. So, when we consider the source of a code, provisional coding refers to information that is external to the interview (e.g., claims made in journal articles, book chapters, and websites) and in-vivo coding refers to information that is found within the interview transcript (e.g., participants’ explanations of their experiences). The remaining three coding schemes used in this study—values coding, evaluation coding, and attribute coding—all differ in content but the source of the code will either be provisional (outside the interview transcript) or in-vivo (inside the interview transcript).

Provisional Coding

Provisional coding uses a list of expected codes that are “generated from [the researcher’s] preparatory investigative matters such as: literature reviews related to the study, the study’s conceptual framework and research questions, previous research findings . . . and researcher-formulated hypothesis and hunches” (Saldaña 144). In other words, provisional codes are key words and phrases culled from existing knowledge and anticipated findings related to the researcher’s topic. For example, to answer my first research question, I needed to establish a list of recognized characteristics of both place-based education and the service-learning teaching method to then develop provisional codes I could search for in my data. To develop these codes,

I compiled a list of characteristics from previously published research (e.g., descriptions from online sources, peer-reviewed journal articles, and book chapters) and assigned a code for each. The table below provides a snapshot of some of the provisional characteristics of place-based education, along with an explanation of what kinds of content would fit the meaning of that coding category, a few examples of coded phrases from the data set, and the location of that code in the data set¹⁴.

Table 1: Characteristics of Place-Based Education

Coding Method	Category	Explanation	Example Codes	Location in Data Set
Provisional	Location	“learning takes place on-site,” which includes on campus, in the local community, and/or in the natural environment (Center for Ecoliteracy; Promise of Place; Smith and Sobel, qtd. in Demarest 14)	<p>“...we will explore...how civic engagement functions here on campus and in the greater Orlando area” (Amy);</p> <p>“Site: UCF and surrounding area for the purpose of considering transit” (Amy);</p> <p>“Site: Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association” (Amy);</p> <p>“It [the service-learning project] was definitely within our region” (Karina);</p> <p>“We focused on the UCF community” (Karina);</p>	Syllabus; Site profile; Karina interview

¹⁴ Please note that, due to sizing and spacing constraints, this table provides only a partial listing of PBE characteristics and does not include every instance of coded material that could be included in the coding category.

Coding Method	Category	Explanation	Example Codes	Location in Data Set
	Content	<p>learning focuses on local knowledge (e.g., geography, ecology, sociology, politics), ways of knowing, issues, themes, systems, and phenomena (Demarest 43; Promise of Place; Smith and Sobel, qtd. in Demarest 14; Woodhouse and Knapp)</p>	<p>“The transit and transportation issues that UCF experiences are a mirror to the larger transit and transportation issues of Florida” (Amy);</p> <p>“I learned a lot more about public housing (the space people live in) and issues facing homeowners and renters. So even though it wasn’t my space, I learned about others’ spaces” (Nicole);</p> <p>“It was on UCF, it was based on UCF campus grounds and it focused on local systems, themes, and content. It was focused on the traffic system” (Karina GI);</p> <p>“People at FWAF—and some of this we do in collaboration with our service-learners—we are able to connect that to larger historical themes, to national and international issues and so forth, but there’s always that connection to the place that we’re in” (Sean);</p> <p>“It’s a localized issue, for sure. There are farmworkers in the US. There are farmworkers in Florida. . . . But most importantly, here in Orlando, there are</p>	<p>Amy interview; Nicole interview; group interview; Sean interview; Nico interview</p>

Coding Method	Category	Explanation	Example Codes	Location in Data Set
			farmworkers in our backyard. There are farmworkers not even an hour away in Apopka” (Nico)	

While the previous list of codes was developed based on existing scholarship, other provisional codes were developed based on hunches and the identification of recurring words and phrases through exploratory re-reading of the data. As many researchers know, coding data is a recursive process; a researcher might begin reading a transcript without paying attention to a particular phrase, but after seeing enough repetition of the phrase in subsequent transcripts, they might return to the first transcript with a label for an idea that represents that phrase—a code—and look for examples. For instance, in answering research question #3, I kept noticing moments in the interview transcript where participants identified risks associated with service-learning work and barriers to success at the service-learning site. Although “risks” and “barriers to success” do not translate to good ideas for designing a curriculum, they do point to issues that a curriculum designer might want to consider in terms of the participants’ overall experience. Each group of stakeholders (i.e., the instructor, students, and local community partners) I interviewed identified areas of potential concern, as well as portions of the curriculum that were either successful or could be improved. Because my last research question asks for “some good ideas for designing a place-based writing course,” and because the basis of these good ideas should come from the participants, it made sense to code for ideas related to usability and design. After all, the final deliverable of this project was developed, in part, from my interpretations of participants’ positive experiences, needs, desired goals and outcomes, constraints, and ease of

use; paying attention to these things is a way of incorporating user-centered design. In this case, the users include the three groups of stakeholders I've identified¹⁵. As such, I developed a list of codes based on recurring ideas in the data related to positive aspects of the existing curricula, desired goals and outcomes (e.g., stated course objectives and personal learning goals), factors impacting the participant's ease of use of the curriculum (e.g., risks associated with service-learning work, barriers to success, and tensions experienced while working with others), and desired changes. In Table 2, below, I show one sample code that emerged from recurring phrases:

Table 2: Curriculum Design: Factors Impacting Ease of Use (Risks, Barriers, Tensions)

Coding Method	Category	Explanation	Example Codes	Source
	Risk (discomfort): negative emotional responses	Students experience uncomfortable or negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear, sadness) during their service-learning work, including instances of negative interactions with clients.	<p>"I often tweeted to vent my anger toward this project" (Karina);</p> <p>"I felt incredibly grossed out by that [i.e., caller trying to wear her down]" (Nicole);</p> <p>"I don't think you can force people to talk about these things. I think it's really important that I bring it up, but I also think it's really important that I don't force. . . . Sometimes things are too close. I think this</p>	<p>Karina's e-portfolio;</p> <p>Nicole's rhetorical citizenship paper; Nicole's reflection log;</p> <p>Amy interview; Nicole interview; group interview</p>

¹⁵ It should be noted that clients of the service-learning work (i.e., those served by a local community organization) would be another potential user group. However, because of the constraints of this research project—which include working with organizations that help vulnerable populations—this group was not included in the present study.

Coding Method	Category	Explanation	Example Codes	Source
			<p>Ferguson stuff and this being black and fearing the police and stuff—it's too close" (Amy);</p> <p>"[A male caller] was getting very heated. So I asked him if he wanted to speak to my manager, and he said yes. But I felt like he thought I was just some dumb bitch. And then I got angry because I'm not, and I am doing my job with the resources I have" (Nicole);</p> <p>"...hearing all these sad stories, I wasn't sure if I was going to get calls of people crying and stuff. I can't emotionally deal with that stuff. I can't do that. That was the only reason I chose like—I can't do this" (Karina in group interview);</p> <p>"I'm like 'I feel bad for these people' but I can't for a whole semester field these phone calls and not be affected by it" (Karina in group interview)</p>	

In-Vivo Coding

Another coding method utilized in this study was in-vivo coding. According to Saldaña, in-vivo refers to “a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (91). Because this coding method uses direct language from the participants—such as quoted excerpts from interview transcripts—it captures participants’ unique descriptions and wordings. In this way, in-vivo coding aligns with research studies “that prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (91). This is especially important for sharing the voices of marginalized populations, since their voices are often unheard or silenced by those in power. Fortunately, “coding with [participants’] actual words enhances and deepens [the researcher’s] understanding of their cultures and worldviews” (Saldaña 91). In-vivo coding was particularly useful for relaying participants’ definitions of concepts. However, I used the in-vivo coding method primarily to capture information related to participants’ individual opinions, which can be loaded with tone, emotions, connotations, and/or community-specific terminology.

Values Coding

In addition to valuing and retaining the language of my participants, I needed a way to describe their perceptions and opinions. After all, my second research question asks these stakeholders what qualities *should* be incorporated in the curriculum. The word “should” implies personal expectations and opinions. These expectations are, more than likely, rooted in the stakeholder’s attitudes, values, and beliefs. For this reason, I used values coding to represent the stakeholders’ worldviews. Although attitudes, values, and beliefs are related concepts, Saldaña distinguishes among the three: an attitude is “the way we think and feel about ourselves, another person, thing, or idea,” a value is “the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, thing or idea,” and a belief is “part of a system that includes our values and attitudes, plus our personal

knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretive perceptions of the social world” (111). Thus, values coding was used to describe: what stakeholders thought, what they considered important, and what they believed to be true based on their lived experiences. An example of a statement coded for values can be found in this quote from a student in a service-learning course: “As far as the semester-long project [goes], I feel like it was the most valuable thing because the hands-on experience of civic engagement . . . [helped me to] learn through my own experiences and relate them back to the readings.” This bit of transcript was part of a longer discussion in which the student ranked the importance of various components of the class. As such, it was coded in the following manner:

Attitude: the hands-on experience was beneficial

Value: service-learning experience is “*most* valuable” (emphasis added)

Evaluation Coding

Oftentimes, when students described what they valued about a course reading or expressed a negative perception of a particular activity, they were providing evaluative commentary on the design and usability of the curriculum. Another coding scheme that captures this type of information is evaluation coding. According to Saldaña, evaluation coding helps the researcher “assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs and policy” (119). The emphasis on merit, worth, and significance parallels the “values” portion of values coding. What evaluation coding helps the researcher to see that values coding might not, though, is “what is working and what is not” in a particular context. It’s one thing for an instructor to say, for example, that establishing strong and lasting relationships with community partners is important (i.e., the instructor *values* personal connections and sustainability of human relationships); it’s another thing to have a community partner say that most instructors do a poor

job of communicating their expectations to the organization (i.e., the community partner has expressed a belief and provided a negative *evaluation* of this desired outcome).

Attribute Coding

The last coding scheme used to analyze qualitative data was attribute coding. Attribute codes describe basic features of the data set, including:

. . . the fieldwork setting (e.g., school name, city, country), participant characteristics or demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, health status), data format (e.g., interview transcript, field note, document), time from (e.g., 2010, May 2012, 8:00-10:00 a.m.), and other variables of interest . . . (Saldaña 70)

Since my data set includes multiple participants and sites of data collection, attribute codes provide useful notations for each piece. These notations give details about my participants' demographics as well as the contexts of the data. I also coded for participants' descriptions of their own demographics and markers of identity. I focused on this data in order to describe how various factors—such as gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, and so on—might be linked to stakeholders' social positions. When stakeholders describe their identity through such markers, they are naming some of the factors involved in their positionality and, potentially, their standpoint in interpreting experiences and making knowledge. For this reason, I also coded interview data with codes such as “identity/ethnicity: Iranian” or “identity/age: millennial.”

To summarize thus far, a total of five coding schemes—provisional, in-vivo, values, evaluation, and attribute coding—were used to analyze qualitative data, which included interview transcripts, notes from classroom observations, student writing samples, and course documents. These coding schemes allowed me to analyze the data in terms of: existing

characteristics of service-learning and place-based pedagogies; curriculum usability and design; participants' unique language; participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs; participants' evaluation of the curriculum and service-learning project; and participants' demographics.

Participant Profiles

Amy

Amy Pond is an instructor in UCF's Department of Writing and Rhetoric. She teaches a combination of first-year composition courses and upper division courses such as Rhetoric and Civic Engagement and Writing for Social Change. She has also worked as a professional writer for nonprofit organizations. Amy's education credentials include B.A. and M.A. degrees in English. Although Amy describes herself as a white woman, she grew up in a school where she was a minority and saw people of other races in positions of power. In her free time, Amy participates in triathlons and organizes in the community. She has previous volunteering experience working with Habitat for Humanity and Alternative Spring Break. Amy is also a transportation advocate and incorporates transit issues into many of her service-learning courses.

Karina

Karina is an undergraduate transfer student who is majoring in Advertising/Public Relations and minoring in Writing and Rhetoric. She aspires to become an event planner. When she is not in school, Karina is an active member of UCF's campus, as she is a member of the Office of Student Involvement Special Events Team, Campus Activities Board Street Team, and Quotes Public Relations Club. She also interns at the Orlando Science Center. Karina describes herself as a middle-class millennial. She was raised in Brooklyn, New York and moved to Orlando during her senior year of high school. The research project she completed in the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course was her first service-learning experience.

Nicole

Nicole is an undergraduate student who is majoring in English: Creative Writing. When she is not in school, Nicole performs improvisational comedy. Nicole describes herself as a woman and middle-class millennial who is slightly hard of hearing. Her ethnicity is half Iranian and half European; her father is from Iran and her grandmother is from France. She lived in Miami, Florida before moving to Sanford. Her past volunteering experiences have included phone banking for the Obama presidential campaign and tutoring for an education course. Nicole has participated in multiple service-learning courses and is currently earning the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate. She has just accepted a position with City Year in Orlando; she is continuing the trend of service-based civic engagement. In the next year, she will be applying to graduate schools across the country. Nicole is interested in studying women's issues and people's media habits.

Sean

Sean is a graduate student pursuing a degree in Mental Health Counseling from Rollins College. Through his program's service-learning requirement, he has completed over 100 volunteer hours with the Farmworkers Association of Florida (FWAF). Sean describes himself as a white man who "[is] getting a master's degree because of [his] white privilege." Sean has lived, worked, and studied in a number of cities across the United States: he was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; lived in Connecticut until he was 8 years old; attended high school in Fort Meyers, Florida; attended NYU for his undergraduate degree; moved to Ohio post-graduation; and returned to central Florida for graduate school. Sean is interested in identity development, including factors such as race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Nico

Nico Gumbs is an organizer and service-learning coordinator for the Florida chapter of the Youth and Young Adult (YAYA) network for the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM). Their education credentials include a B.A. in Philosophy and a minor in Women's Studies. Nico completed numerous service-learning courses as a college student and now works with other students to place them in worthwhile projects. Nico describes themselves as a masculine-presenting transgender person. Nico is interested in empowering communities through social justice and activist work.

Why This Project is Not PAR or CBR

Although I value PAR (participatory action research) and CBR (community based research) approaches to engaging in collaborative research with community participants, I did not utilize either of these methods for this project due to the nature of a thesis project (e.g., a thesis study is designed by an individual graduate student). My understanding of PAR and CBR approaches is that the research project is initiated by the community itself; the community identifies the problem to be addressed and then recruits allies (including university personnel and, potentially, service-learners) to work alongside them in their community space. Unlike that approach to identifying a research project topic, this thesis was conceived and designed by an individual from within the university. Moreover, community partners are only incorporated in the data collection portion of this project; I did not collaborate with community partners to design research questions, conduct interviews, or analyze data. Therefore, this study does not qualify as one employing a PAR or CBR method.

Self-Reflexivity: Accounting for My Position in the Research Process

In “Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research,” Gesa E. Kirsch and Joy S. Ritchie encourage feminist researchers to locate themselves in their writing, even as they admit that “any location is fluid, multiple, and illusive” (8). This naming of the researcher’s location involves more than describing one’s positionality. According to Kirsch and Ritchie:

In addition to acknowledging our multiple positions, a politics of location must engage us in a rigorous on-going exploration of how we do our research: What assumptions underlie our approaches to research and methodologies? And a politics of location must challenge our conception of who we are in our work: How are our conflicting positions, histories, and desires for power implicated in our research questions, methodologies, and conclusions? . . . for example, researchers need to acknowledge the way race (and for most composition scholars this means examining their whiteness), social class, and other circumstances have structured their own thinking and how that, in turn, has shaped their own questions and interpretations. (9-10)

Thus, in response to this call, I make a concerted effort to—now—describe my motivations for completing this project, name some of the factors involved in my positionality, state some of the assumptions and values that guide my thinking about research, and consider how my own situatedness and lived experiences impact the questions I asked, the way I analyzed data, and the way I wrote this very chapter.

My interest in studying place developed as a result of feeling like an outsider in the city where I lived, worked, and studied: Orlando, Florida. I have lived in central Florida for about

seven years now, but I still don't feel like I have a strong sense of the history of this region and the communities that make up this place. One way I've been able to start making connections with my community is by volunteering and participating in service-learning projects. During high school, I volunteered in my church; I served as a teacher's aid in the children's bible study. This teacher-focused volunteering translated to an interest in pursuing an education major during my first years of college. As an undergraduate student, I completed many courses that required me to serve the community by tutoring students and aiding teachers in the classroom. I also participated in the Junior Achievement program. Making these sorts of one-on-one connections with students was meaningful, but I didn't find myself working with likeminded colleagues my own age. I attempted to join a few student organizations related to my interests, but the connections never stuck. Recently, however, I have been trying to connect with organizations related to my interest in food justice, such as the Society of St. Andrew (a faith-based ministry that gleans fresh produce from farms and gardens and donates this food to agencies that serve the poor)¹⁶. By attending volunteering events hosted by these groups, I feel I am learning more about a local issue that matters to my community and I am making connections with members of the community, too. This is still an ongoing process for me, but this is the kind of relationship-building work that I think service-learning courses are so great at nurturing. Thus, part of my motivation for developing a place-based service-learning course is to help my students (and

¹⁶ Food justice (or food security) concerns four main issues: food availability, food access, food utilization, and food stability (Wikipedia). I became interested in food justice issues when I learned about food labeling practices, food deserts (and some people's limited access to fresh, healthy food), and the poor working conditions farm workers experience. Food has always been an important part of my daily life, as I am a vegetarian who enjoys preparing food. In addition, my grandparents owned plant nurseries and worked as indentured servants on farms. Thus, farming and food are woven into my upbringing and family history.

myself) develop better understandings of our place and deeper connections with our local community.

In terms of demographics, I identify as a young, white, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, middle-class, feminist Christian woman who works as a writing teacher and research assistant at a large southeastern research university. In many ways, I am very privileged. For example, I was raised by middle-class parents in a “good” neighborhood in a highly rated school district. As a result of my parents’ financial stability and other opportunities, I was able to attend a four-year university for both my undergraduate and master degrees. Thus, my position in a non-marginalized socioeconomic sphere, in some ways, allowed me to complete this project.

Of course, my privilege extends beyond my socioeconomic status. As a straight, cisgender woman, for instance, I find that those portions of my identity are often accurately represented in course readings, television shows, and the like. In addition, as an educated person, my voice is often valued in public forums. I fit comfortably in institutional systems that were designed for people like me, such as many higher education settings, where my identity as an educated white woman is not overtly challenged. However, there are also facets of my identity that can be marginalized by people in other positions of power. For instance, some people might regard my perspective as a young woman as less valuable than the perspective of an older man.

According to Kirsch and Ritchie, an important part of engaging in reflexivity is “acknowledge[ing] what is contradictory, and perhaps unknowable, in [my] experience” (Kirsch and Ritchie 9). Essentially, this suggestion urges researchers to consider the multiple layers of their identity and how those layers produce competing understandings. For instance, in my own life, I sometimes find that my alignment with the Christian faith and feminist values produces “contradictory” or competing claims. As a child, I was brought up in a Christian home and was

indoctrinated to see rigid categories of sexual orientation and gender identity; I was surrounded by heteronormative assumptions. Later in life, as I developed my own belief system and was introduced to people who challenged those heteronormative assumptions, I adopted feminist views on sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity. That being said, as a straight, cisgender woman, I fully recognize that I am not marginalized based on my sexual orientation. That type of lived experience is “unknowable” to me. Because I believe that the personal is political, though, I feel compelled to act as an ally for people who do experience that kind of marginalization.

As earlier descriptions of standpoint theory have suggested, the fact that so many types of marginalization are unknowable to me (such as marginalization based on race, sexual orientation, or able-bodiedness) means that my perspective is limited and less objective than those who experience these types of marginalization. People who experience such forms of marginalization, via their ability to see the world from both their own perspective and the perspective of those who are not marginalized, have “strong objectivity.” In other words, I am following Kirsch and Ritchie’s advice to “to preserve the value of experience as a source of knowledge” by “[locating] the experience of others, especially those previously excluded or devalued” and “[recognizing] the impossibility of ever fully understanding another’s experiences” (13).

Although I cannot begin to speculate on all the ways it might have occurred, my privileged position has definitely impacted the way I interacted with the participants in this research study. For instance, my role as the “researcher” places me in a position of power through actions such as asking interview questions, interpreting the participants’ words, and assigning my name to the title page of this document. This position probably cast me in a more authoritative role than the students I interviewed. However, I occupy multiple positions of power

within the institutional context; yes, I am a researcher and writing teacher, but I am also a graduate student. Thus, when I interviewed Amy Pond, I had less authority in that situation than she did, since she has completed more education, holds a higher position in the department, and has more experience teaching writing courses with service-learning projects. Thus, there are instances when my position is more or less authoritative than the research participant, depending on with whom I'm talking.

Now that I've described some of the factors impacting my positionality and privilege, I will state some of the assumptions and values that guide my approaches to research. I will begin by sharing five beliefs I bring with me to every research project:

1. Knowledge is socially constructed
2. Differences in lived experiences (gender, race, class, ability, etc.) matter and have material consequences
3. Writing is epistemic
4. Writing is both embodied and emplaced; it is situated and contingent.
5. Objects and environments can have agency

Clearly, these beliefs inform this project. Because I believe that knowledge is socially constructed, I actively sought out other people I could collaborate with to design a writing course curriculum. Because I believe that differences in lived experiences matter, I incorporate the perspectives of stakeholders who have experienced service-learning projects in ways that differ from mine. Because I believe that the act of writing creates knowledge and this act is embodied and emplaced, this project values the fact that people grounded in places produce knowledge. And because I believe that objects and environments have agency, I pay attention to the ways places impact students and community partners in service-learning projects. These beliefs also

influenced the types of research questions I used to guide this project and the questions I asked participants in interviews.

In addition to these beliefs, I bring existing values about the research process to this project. Earlier, I mentioned that I value PAR and CBR research methodologies. Since I could not use this approach for this project, I tried to incorporate the community stakeholder as a voice in the curriculum design process. Thus, although community partners did not identify the needs to be addressed by this research, they were involved in articulating a solution. Including community stakeholders' voices in the course design process approaches (but does not meet the criteria of) community-based research. Some other values I have brought to this project include a commitment to feminist research principles such as including the voices of marginalized people, limiting my power in the group interview process, and engaging in a reflexive reflection of my position in the research project.

My purpose for explaining my positionality in this study is not to establish myself as the authority in the discussions I have mentioned thus far. Rather, I candidly recognize the limited perspective I bring to this project. By incorporating the voices of others, I hope I have presented a more accurate¹⁷ picture of the possibilities this writing course can present to instructors, students, and community partners.

¹⁷ By "more accurate," I mean more objective. As Sandra Harding suggests, marginalized people present a more objective account of experiences. By including the voices of people who are typically marginalized in the course design process, I hope I have shared a more objective account of students' and community partners' experiences participating in place-based service-learning projects.

CHAPTER THREE: PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PLACE, SERVICE-LEARNING, AND POSITIONALITY

Class, gender, and race have so often been treated as if they happened on the head of a pin. Well they don't – they happen in space and place.

–Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (27)

In this chapter, I draw on a variety of sources (including my literature review, participants' interview responses, notes from classroom observations, and textual analyses of course documents) to answer my first two research questions. I save the answer to my third research question for the conclusion chapter, where I share my ideas for designing a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component.

Comparing Place-Based Education and Service-Learning

My first research question was “What characteristics of place-based education *can intersect* with the design and implementation of a local service-learning project?” To answer this question, I first thoroughly describe the characteristics of each teaching method separately. I then present the overlaps between these two approaches. Finally, I identify which characteristics of each teaching method were present in the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course Amy designed, the service-learning projects Karina and Nicole participated in, and the service-learning experiences Sean and Nico have collaborated on.

Characteristics of Place-Based Education

In a place-based course, “learning takes place on-site,” which includes on campus, in the local community, and/or in the natural environment (Center for Ecoliteracy; Promise of Place; Smith and Sobel, qtd. in Demarest 14). In addition to learning in the classroom, “the real world acts as a curricular laboratory to deepen students' understanding of content” (Demarest 43). PBE

asks students to “view their community as an ecosystem” and understand “the systems nested within larger systems that constitute their local place in its wholeness” (Center for Ecoliteracy).

The content emphasized in a PBE course includes local knowledge, ways of knowing, issues, themes, systems, and phenomena (Demarest 43; *Promise of Place*; Smith and Sobel, qtd. in Demarest 14; Woodhouse and Knapp). Learning is interdisciplinary (*Promise of Place*; Woodhouse and Knapp) and personally-relevant to the learner and builds on their past and present experiences (Demarest 43; *Promise of Place*). In addition, place-based projects align with course (Center for Ecoliteracy; Lewicki) and institutional goals (*Promise of Place*).

Place-based education is a type of experiential learning where students must take action to solve an issue (Woodhouse and Knapp) and then reflect on their work (Lewicki). During the design phase of the project, “students play an active role in defining and shaping projects” (Center for Ecoliteracy). Students’ projects respond to local issues, and through their work, students “apply their knowledge, skills, and energy to community issues or problems” (Center for Ecoliteracy; Smith and Sobel, qtd. in Demarest 14) and begin to understand and participate in addressing regional and global issues (*Promise of Place*).

Just as writing courses ask students to tailor their writing to particular audiences, PBE courses ask students to tailor their projects to particular communities (*Promise of Place*). Students’ learning is public and visible to their audience (Lewicki), in part because students learn from and alongside community partners such as local organizations, businesses, agencies, and government (Center for Ecoliteracy; *Promise of Place*); they collaborate with their community. Ideally, this collaboration should “contribute to the community’s vitality and environmental quality” (Center for Ecoliteracy; *Promise of Place*).

Some other outcomes of place-based courses include: students' develop a "love of one's place" or a sense of place (Demarest 43; Promise of Place), students build relationships with members of a diverse community (Woodhouse and Knapp), and students imagine their civic futures (Demarest 43). In other words, students' learning and project results lead to future work (Lewicki).

Characteristics of Service-Learning

Like place-based education, service-learning is a type of experiential learning (Campus Compact) that "relates directly to course goals" (Bowdon and Scott 5) and "furthers the learning objectives of the academic course" (Office of Experiential Learning). Instead of merely writing about service-learning activities, in the Stanford model of service-learning, students work as unpaid writing consultants to provide writing as their service (Bowdon and Scott 5-7). The service students provide addresses needs in the community (Bowdon and Scott 5; Bringle and Hatcher, "Implementing," 22; Campus Compact; Office of Experiential Learning). Ideally, students work with diverse individuals, including community sponsors and those "served" in community (Bowdon and Scott 6; Office of Experiential Learning). This collaboration between the classroom and community should be mutually beneficial (Bowdon and Scott 6); there should be reciprocity between the server and those served (Office of Experiential Learning).

After students perform their service, they reflect on that service. In fact, service-learning methods emphasize "critical" reflection. Students reflect on the service-learning work, their own ethics, and the benefits their service did (or did not) provide to the community. Critical reflection can take many forms, including asking students to "create connection[s] between academic coursework and the immediate social, political, and interpersonal experiences of community-based activities" (Anson qtd. in Bowdon and Scott 6), asking students to "reflect on their activity

in order to gain an appreciation for the relationship between civics and academics” (Office of Experiential Learning), and asking students to “reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the disciplines, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (Bringle and Hatcher, “Implementing” 222).

Some of the outcomes of a service-learning course include: students apply their knowledge (Office of Experiential Learning), students develop leadership and critical thinking skills (Office of Experiential Learning), students develop a sense of civic responsibility (Bringle and Hatcher, “Implementing” 222; Office of Experiential Learning), and students “[develop] a relationship with like-minded community partners” (Office of Experiential Learning).

Intersections of Place-Based Education and Service-Learning

As shown in Figure 1, place-based education (PBE) and service-learning (SL) share many similarities in their approaches and student outcomes. Both PBE and SL projects align with course goals and involve meaningful service in—and with—the community. Through these projects, students apply course concepts, reflect on their learning, and develop civic understandings and/or commitments.

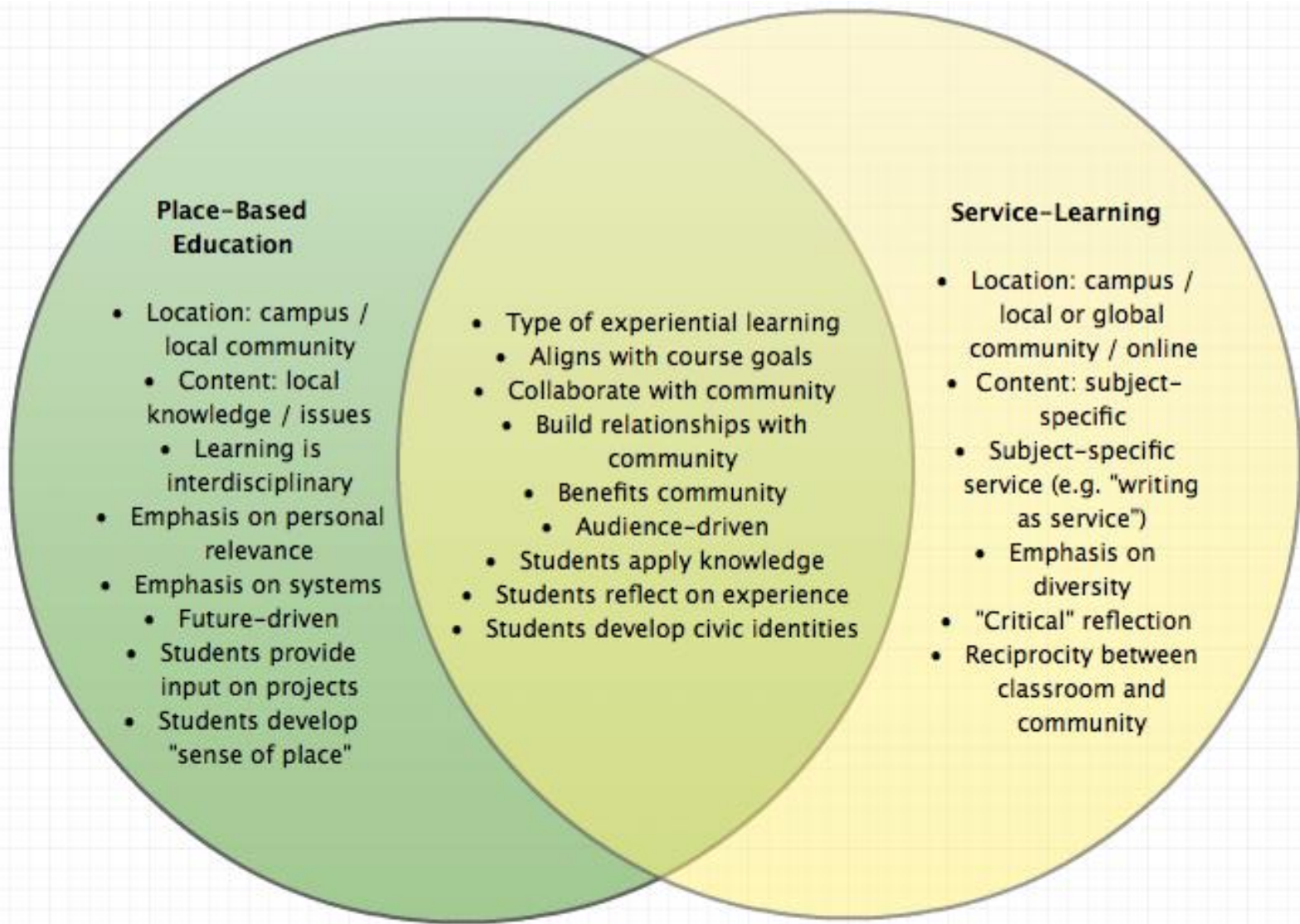


Figure 1: Venn Diagram Comparing Characteristics of PBE and SL

The similarities between PBE and SL have led some to conflate the two teaching approaches. For example, The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement subsumes service-learning into place-based education when they state: “PBE emphasizes *learning through participation in service projects* for the local school and/or community” (Promise of Place, emphasis added).

Others describe PBE and SL as related, but distinct, teaching methods. For instance, The Center for Place-Based Education at Antioch University differentiates SL from PBE by defining each individually:

Place-based education focuses learning within the local community of a student. . . . The resources of the community are brought into the learning process in a way that makes education exciting. The approach emphasizes hands-on, real world learning experiences that challenge students to learn and solve problems. . . . Community vitality and environmental quality are enhanced as local citizens, organizations and environmental resources are woven into the process of educating its citizens.

Service-learning integrates school or place-based projects with academic skills and content. It provides students the opportunity to use school knowledge to solve real-world problems. In service-learning, students work on projects directly relevant to their class curriculum. They also work with the recipients of service to define meaningful solutions to the problem, plan the actions which need to be taken, and implement the solutions which they have planned. As a result students

complete service projects which provide greater depth to school curriculum and come away with the experience of solving locally relevant issues.

Two of the most important differences between place-based education and service-learning approaches are the types of projects students engage in (i.e., research projects versus service projects) and the locations where those projects happen (i.e., in the local, physical community or possibly elsewhere, such as online spaces).

In the definition of PBE above, students learn through hands-on place-based projects (e.g., students in a science marine biology course might collect water samples from local rivers) but these projects might be more research-focused than service-oriented. In PBE community collaborations, the community is regarded as a resource and the place is a laboratory for students' learning. Thus, the experiential aspect of place-based education might translate to a community-based research project rather than a service-learning project¹⁸.

Unlike PBE's emphasis on local places and environments, in service-learning, the issue students address through their project might not be tied to a particular physical location. For instance, instructors who teach online or distance learning courses might utilize an "e-service" model:

Conventionally, service-learning experiences are structured in a local community that is usually in proximity to the higher education institution where students are enrolled and to which they can easily gain access. With online courses, students

¹⁸ When discussing service in PBE courses, there is some slippage among the terms service-learning and community service. Also, in general, there are many variations of service-learning employed in institutions of higher education. For this reason, it is important for instructors to clearly define what sorts of learning experiences meet their definition (or the institution's definition) of service-learning.

are based in their own communities, which might not be in the same county, state, or even country as the higher education institution. The challenge then is how to provide a quality experience in service-learning while meeting the needs of multiple students in multiple communities. This type of distributed service-learning is called e-service. (Strait and Sauer 62)

As the above quotation suggests, e-service provides opportunities for students who do not live in close proximity to the university to engage in a service-learning project. One model of e-service¹⁹ has students work individually in their local, physical communities and then report back to their web-based classroom community. In this model, students work with their community partners face-to-face. For example, a student in a writing or language arts education course might contact their local library, conduct a needs assessment, determine that the library needs to promote some of their books, and then create a handout for library patrons about the library's offerings, including reading recommendations for certain demographics (Strait and Sauer 63). This model of e-service differs from traditional service-learning methods because students perform their service in locations far removed from the classroom and then participate in other class activities (such as reflections, discussion posts, etc.) in the online course system. Moreover, students complete their service-learning projects individually and instructors are tasked with managing many student projects and contacting numerous community partners (Strait and Sauer 64).

However, there is another model of e-service that makes more use of students' web-based

¹⁹ Due to the focus of this project, I cannot fully address the topic of virtual worlds in service-learning and/or writing courses. I present e-service as one way that instructors have combined service-learning with web-based course modalities.

course modality. In this model, students actually perform their service online in a virtual environment. For example, students might “coordinat[e] specific caused-based interest groups on behalf of one's placement using a social networking website” (Guthrie and McCracken 154).

Of course, models of service-learning in hybrid/ mixed-mode courses also share some similarities with e-service. For instance, many hybrid models ask students to engage in a service-learning project in the local community (either individually or as part of a group) and then discuss their project both in class and online. In fact, some instructors ask students to use technology devices and online applications (such as cell phone cameras, Google Maps, and Twitter) to document and engage in their service-learning work so that they can take these mobile spaces with them to both the service-learning site and the classroom; in essence, the technology enables them to move between the physical and online spaces (Walls and Wolcott). Thus, e-service and other models of service-learning (e.g., hybrid service-learning and global service-learning) do not necessarily align with PBE’s emphasis on working in the local, physical community.

Despite these differences in project type and project location, PBE and SL share many important similarities, such as employing an experiential learning approach, asking students to collaborate with communities, and requiring students to make connections among their projects and course content via ongoing reflection.

Presence of PBE and SL Characteristics in the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Course

Now that I’ve established the intersections of place-based education and service-learning, I will describe the ways in which these characteristics were and were not present in the RACE course and service-learning projects that Amy, Karina and Nicole participated in. I will also

include the voices of Sean and Nico, two community partners who have engaged in service-learning courses and who can speak to their experiences.

Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Course and Service-Learning

Amy Pond designed her Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course to include a service-learning component and explicitly states this requirement in the course syllabus: “This is a service-learning course. That means that in addition to class readings and assignments, and as one of your major class assignments, you’ll be participating in the community on a regular basis.” Because the RACE course was a reduced seat-time course (the class met once per week for 75 minutes), Amy expected her students to complete two hours of service-learning work per week. Through these service-learning projects, Amy expected students to explore what civic engagement meant on UCF’s campus and in the greater Orlando area (“ENC 3331 Course Syllabus”). Some of the course objectives that aligned with this service-learning project included students: “understand[ing] how various (and sometimes competing) models of citizenship shape contemporary notions, practices, and educational models of civic engagement,” “analyz[ing] and critically assess[ing] different models of citizenship and civic engagement,” “synthesiz[ing] and adapt[ing] various notions and models into [their] own working definition of rhetorical citizenship,” “develop[ing] an effective civic engagement project involving audience-appropriate persuasive discourse,” “sharpen[ing] analytical and reflective writing skills,” and “develop[ing] a plan for expanding and sustaining [their] various civic engagement activities” (“ENC 3331 Course Syllabus”).

Amy provided students with three service-learning projects and site options. The first option was a transit study of UCF and the surrounding area. According to the Site Profile, “the goal of this work is for students to consider transit in an around UCF and think through a number

of ideas” such as mobility, access, intentional design, and car-centric rhetoric. This is the service-learning project that Karina chose to complete. The second service-learning site contained two options: public relations work for a special event called The Breakfast of Champions and phone intake with the Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association. While the projects differed in the service provided (e.g., making cold calls to donors or completing intake forms for agency clients), both service options benefitted Legal Aid. According to the site profile, Legal Aid exists to:

provide quality legal services to low-income residents, the working poor, children, and disadvantaged groups with special needs in Orange County, Florida, and to assist in providing legal aid services to similarly situated residents of neighboring counties through an effective and fiscally sound program through the combined efforts of staff and pro bono attorneys.

Nicole chose to complete the phone intake project. The third option was a multimedia civic engagement profile project, where students were asked to conduct interviews and compile information in order to present the class with profiles of civic engagement on UCF’s campus.

As these descriptions suggest, the service-learning component of this course matched many of the characteristics of place-based education and service-learning in general. In addition to the explicit naming of students’ projects as service-learning, these projects aligned with service-learning methods because they: allowed students to apply their knowledge in real world scenarios, related directly to course goals, included subject-specific service, benefitted the community, allowed students to collaborate and build relationships with diverse community partners, and prompted students to critically assess their own learning, their position at the service-learning site, and their civic identity.

Amy, Karina, and Nicole agreed that working with Legal Aid and researching transit on UCF's campus represented service-learning projects. For instance, Amy explained that both projects provided students with opportunities to engage in writing- and rhetoric-related service. Through her work with Legal Aid, Nicole used persuasion and phone literacy skills to record callers' information so that they could qualify for the agency's services. During our interview, Nicole connected this rhetoric-related service to the tangible benefits it provides to clients: "My conversation with the caller is what stands between their current state and their eligibility for Legal Aid services. Without the intake, the caller will never qualify for the free services." In addition to performing intake work, Nicole also scheduled appointments for callers and pointed them to additional resources. Although she was not creating traditional writing products (such as brochures or grant proposals) for Legal Aid, she was still performing meaningful writing work: she documented facts on intake forms and through this process made arguments about whether the caller would advance to the next stage of the agency's process.

For her project, Karina did not partner with a community organization, but instead collaborated with students (both in and outside the class) to construct surveys, document the need for shuttle services, and reach out to authority figures in order to initiate conversations about transit on UCF's campus. Through this project, Karina produced a writing portfolio that captured her entire research process and the results of her survey and communication efforts; this portfolio was directed to multiple real audiences, including future students in the RACE course. In fact, at the bottom of her portfolio, she encouraged others to continue her project by contacting individuals she reached out to. She states "Below I have provided links and emails to kick start your civic engagement" and includes the names, titles, and contact information of relevant points of contact. Therefore, both Nicole and Karina's projects addressed relevant

community needs: Nicole provided intake services so that lawyers at Legal Aid could begin contacting and helping clients and Karina provided documentation about transportation issues so that future students could extend her project.

During their service, both Nicole and Karina were asked to reflect on their learning. In Amy's ENC 3331 syllabus, she tells students that they "will include a final reflection that describes what [they] have learned in the class" and states that this reflection log should include "your thoughts on the work you're doing, the people you're working with, and how the work does or does not reflect the concepts we are talking about in class." More specifically, Amy states: "I am looking for reflection and evidence of critical thinking about your own role in the community, your actions as a rhetor, and of course a constant reflection on the idea of civic engagement." In an interview with Amy, she emphasized the need for students to critique themselves throughout their service experiences. She believes her course is a good time for students to engage in this thinking because she provides students with a safe environment to ask questions. She stated: "When you do [service-learning] in a class, you can look at it critically and talk about it and kind of process some of the things that are going on." This kind of critical reflection is rare in the college curriculum, but it is an important part of investigating one's identity and processing learning.

Nicole's reflection logs are a fitting example of what a student's critical reflection can look like because she explores her identity in the service-learning site and suggests ways that her persona impacts her interactions with agency staff and clients as well as her development of confidence and authority in her work. In these logs, Nicole describes her fears about working at Legal Aid in terms of her lack of expertise and familiarity with the legal system. She also acknowledges the skills she brings to this service work: she has experience phone banking for a

presidential campaign, she performs improv comedy, and she has phone literacy skills. In discussing the strengths and limitations of her prior experiences, Nicole makes claims about her rhetorical persona on the phone with clients, in the Legal Aid office, and in the academy. She names factors impacting her identity and authority in each situation and speculates as to how these factors (e.g., her youth, her gender) affect the way she is treated.

The following excerpt from Nicole's reflection log is an example of some of the critical reflection she engages in:

Week of October 13, 2014:

When people think of authority, they tend to think of force from figures such as police, politicians, and lawyers. This was my perception of the word prior to this class. After reading Welch's meditation on authority and who has it, my definition has widened. Authority is assertion and expertise, something everyone has. What changes is what people are authorities in...

Since volunteering at Legal Aid, my idea of authority has changed again. I am practicing authority on a weekly basis. My idea of authority combines my preconceptions and Welch's idea: authority is to speak firmly and confidently while being aware of and imparting knowledge. Being aware of knowledge not only means internalizing the intake handbook, but also knowing when you don't know.

A phone call this week led me to this realization. The man who called explained his situation, but I was not sure if Legal Aid would accept him. I consulted [my supervisor] and he said Legal Aid could not help him. I told the man that unfortunately he does not qualify because he is outside of our priorities...

When speaking to this man, I was firm, but cordial, in my approach. I spoke with an authoritative tone. This is my working on my preexisting knowledge of authority. I had an idea that Legal Aid could not assist this man due to prior reading of the intake manual and experience doing intake. This was Welch's idea that authority is inherent. I did consult [my supervisor]; this can be seen as me not having the confidence in my own authority. I intended it as a way to check my expertise with his expertise. He still has more authority than I do because he is my supervisor and has been at Legal Aid longer than I have.

Clearly, Nicole is applying her knowledge of the course readings to the service-learning work she is performing at Legal Aid. She is developing her own understandings of how authority is developed and negotiated among people, and she is constantly refining her persona in her work. She recognizes when she lacks authority and expertise, but she also recognizes when she has the knowledge and authority to act—in this case, to inform a caller about Legal Aid's policies. When asked how she reflected on her service-learning, Nicole responded: "I talked about what I did that week and how I felt about it, and then how I could connect it to the class. And I thought about my persona. That's something I'm really interested in, like intersectionality."

The ways that intersectionality and positionality can be incorporated into service-learning projects will be discussed in another section. For now, it is important to note that students are capable of not only applying their knowledge of course content to the work they perform in their service-learning sites, they can also apply this knowledge to the process of developing and refining their identities. Through critical reflection, students can reflect on course content and their own personal development. Nicole echoes this sentiment when she describes what she learned about herself through rereading her reflection logs: "Reading through my weekly logs...

shows a progression. I began as an unsure and overwhelmed person. I wasn't confident.... By the end of my time at Legal Aid, I asked fewer questions to the supervisors and handled calls on my own.... My authority grew.”

Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Course and Place-Based Education

Nicole and Karina's service-learning projects align with many of the characteristics of place-based education. Both projects were located in a local community, employed experiential learning methods, addressed a local issue situated in a system, benefitted the community, were audience-driven and public, were personally relevant to students, incorporated interdisciplinary topics, prompted students' reflection, and helped students to develop a sense of place and a plan for their civic futures.

First and foremost, both students worked in the local community and addressed a local issue: Nicole's work with Legal Aid occurred in downtown Orlando and helped clients secure legal services, and Karina's work occurred on UCF's campus and assessed the transportation needs of the university's students, faculty, and staff. While both projects were localized in terms of the communities students worked with, the issues represented in these projects—lack of affordable legal representation for underserved communities and lack of affordable and accessible transportation options—can also be found in other regions across the nation. Amy verbalized this realization after considering the sheer size of UCF's student body and its location in a city designed for cars (rather than people). She said: “The transit and transportation issues that UCF experiences are a mirror to the larger transit and transportation issues of Florida. . . .It's not even a micro-scale at UCF. [UCF is] the size of a medium city. Everything that's happening at UCF is happening in Orlando, in Florida, in the south even.” Similarly, Nicole explained that many of the circumstances affecting Legal Aid's clients were happening in more locations than

central Florida: “I think these problems are national. There is a high divorce rate in this country. People are still recovering, still having trouble from the Great Recession. They’re having trouble paying their mortgage. They have trouble with landlords. So I think they’re more global than just this community. I don’t think these problems are just local.” Thus, students’ service-learning projects were local in scale but national in scope.

In addition to considering the scope of the issue they were addressing in their SL projects, Nicole and Karina also saw how these issues fit into larger systems. For example, Amy encouraged her students to look at UCF’s transportation options in terms of the transit system of the greater Orlando area and she asked students to investigate the car-centric rhetoric of campus documents. For instance, the “Site Profile” template provided by the university includes a section titled “Parking,” which suggests that students would arrive to their service-learning sites by car. On the Site Profile for the transit project, Amy writes: “This is a modified form from the university. Parking is actually what we are studying here, but consider why a form like this asks about parking but not about bus, walk, or bicycle options.” In relation to her work at Legal Aid, Nicole noted that “Sometimes Legal Aid becomes part of the cycle of poverty” because (as a result of limited resources) the agency can only serve a small percentage of the clients that qualify for their services. Therefore, un-served clients experience a disservice and remain in the circumstances that prompted them to call Legal Aid in the first place.

In accordance with the “relevance” criteria of place-based education, Karina’s service-learning project helped her to consider the personal relevance of transportation issues to her own life. Contrastingly, Nicole’s project helped her consider how she could work in a community without necessarily identifying with the clients’ lived experiences. Instructor Amy Pond offered SL site choices that allowed students to consider both relevance and identification. When she

first designed her course to include a transportation research option, she purposefully chose an issue that would be relevant, and therefore interesting, to all her students: “What got me to transit was ‘What’s one thing that everyone has to do?’ . . . I thought ‘Everyone has to get here [to campus]’. . . . This first time I teach this class, I want it to be on something they all have to do so that they can’t say ‘I’m not interested.’”

Both Karina and Nicole were interested in the transit project. In our interview, Karina described her motivation for selecting the transit project this way: “I took an interest in UCF’s shuttle system because if I made a proposal to the University... and they were to implement my proposal, it could affect me in a positive way” and “based off of my own experiences with UCF’s transit system... it became apparent that there is a majority of people who feel that the transit system lacks efficiency.” Karina also stated that if UCF implemented one of the solutions she proposed in her project—making shuttle buses accessible to more students living off-campus—she would personally benefit from this service. Although Nicole did not select the transit project for her service-learning work, she agreed that the deliverables produced by Karina and other students in her class who were also working on transportation issues were relevant to her life. She said: “I have to drive 30 minutes to get [to UCF], so the information that everybody found was still relevant to me because I’m part of that local audience.”

These service-learning projects also afforded students with opportunities to consider how they may or may not identify with those served by their service-learning work. For instance, although Nicole herself did not experience issues related to affordable housing and legal representation, she was still able to learn about these topics and gain a better understanding of the clients she served—and, as a result, the community where she worked. Through the process of learning about local content, she learned about unfamiliar spaces: “I learned a lot more about

public housing (the space people live in) and issues facing homeowners and renters. So even though it wasn't my space, I learned about others' spaces."

Through their service-learning work, Nicole and Karina also developed a sense of place. In reflecting on how her knowledge of central Florida changed as a result of her time at Legal Aid, Nicole stated: "I'm more aware of who lives here. . . . through this I've become aware of who lives here, why they're here, what they need, what they want" (Nicole). Before Nicole began college, she says, she hated central Florida. But, as a result of making connections in the community (through her service-learning experiences, improv experiences, and so on), she has begun to feel attached to this place. She continued: "Working at Legal Aid and being able to actually help people in this area, I have an attachment to here. . . . Like I said, I hated it. Now, I have a sentimental attachment."

Unlike Nicole, Karina did not express an attachment to Orlando, but instead said she learned a lot about UCF's campus and offices through her service-learning project. Regardless, both of these students developed a greater understanding of the places they worked and the population served by their projects. This was one of Amy's goals. When asked how this service-learning project aligned with the institutional goals of UCF, she talked about how having students partner with local community organizations can help them to develop commitments to their community: In working with others, students can "sometimes [see] that they're not so different from the people that they're helping. Somewhere like Legal Aid, you might be in contact with someone like you parents or your brother or yourself. . . .I guess that I want [students] to realize that this is their community. It's not 'those poor people over there.' It's the poor people that could be me or are me." Throughout her reflection, Amy emphasized that she does not desire for students to develop a "love" of their place, but a commitment to making their place better.

Another characteristic of place-based education is that students develop a plan for their civic futures. For these students, their civic futures involve continuing to volunteer with Legal Aid (Nicole) and collaborating with Amy to guide future students in their research process (Karina). For Karina, sharing her portfolio with other service-learning students is another way she practices her civic engagement. She has developed this portfolio with their needs in mind and also plans to send the results of her project to UCF's Student Government Association so that the powers that be know students are interested in solving UCF's transportation problems. To get to this point, she had to narrow the focus of her research, imagine the final deliverable of her service-learning project, and tailor that message to her audience. While these aspects of public learning and audience awareness fit within the criteria of a place-based course, they also complement the goals of a writing course.

The last way that the RACE course aligned with characteristics of PBE was through Amy's interdisciplinary instruction of civic engagement. During our interview, Amy explained that her educational and professional background—which includes studying property law and environmental ethics, writing for nonprofits, and organizing with political groups—has taught her concepts such as “the tragedy of the commons,” “carrying capacity,” “power mapping,” and “earned media.” She includes these concepts in her RACE course by having students engage in “commons” problems (such as limited parking), by asking students to consider who their allies are in the issues they are addressing through their service-learning work, and by writing for public outlets without compensation.

Therefore, as these examples from course documents, student writing samples, and interview transcripts have shown, the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course incorporated both a service-learning project and elements of place-based education. However, based on my

observations and textual analyses, there are elements of place-based education that were not fully incorporated into the course. For instance, although Amy created critical reflection prompts for students to answer throughout their service-learning experience, these prompts did not explicitly ask students to “identify and confront the ways that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and non-human others” (Ball and Lai). Thus, the “critical” portion of place-based education could be improved by modifying reflection prompts so that students consider not only their own experiences, but the ways that others—including those served by their service-learning work—are positioned and represented in the system they engaged in (e.g., public transit and legal representation).

There was also limited evidence of including local knowledge in the course. Local knowledge can be built into the course by: inviting local experts to speak and/or lead a class session (as Amy did when she brought a police officer into class); assigning readings written by local residents about local issues for local audiences; and infusing elements of local geography, ecology, sociology, and/or politics into course content. These two characteristics of place-based education (i.e., critical reflection prompts and local knowledge) provide opportunities to modify the RACE course so that it aligns more closely with place-based education. In addition, because these elements were missing (or not as heavily emphasized) in the course, I offer suggestions for incorporating them in Chapter Four, where I present ideas for designing a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component.

Sean’s SL Experiences and Their Connections to PBE

As previously mentioned, Sean has devoted more than 100 hours of his time to service-learning projects. Currently, he volunteers at the Farmworker’s Association of Florida (FWAF) as a student coordinator. When asked what his role at FWAF was, Sean responded: “I coordinate

between people (the farmworkers) and people from different universities in order to link up, for example, the different courses that have social justice or a SL element.”

Sean describes FWAF as a volunteer-based organization that works towards the empowerment of farmworkers. He elaborates: “[The empowerment of farmworkers] means legal empowerment in relation to immigration, economic empowerment, and workplace safety. We do have some connection, also, to sustainable agriculture in the sense that we’re trying to emphasize the human sustainability aspect [of agro-ecology and farming industries.]” FWAF addresses issues such as farmworkers’ rights, the effects of pesticide use on farmworkers’ health, food security, and so on. While these topics are national in scope, some of them—particularly pesticide use—are tied up in the history of the city of Apopka, where FWAF’s headquarters are located. During our interview, Sean shared a story of one of these place-based issues and how it affects the local community:

Lake Apopka basically began as one of the main tourist attractions before Walt Disney World. Back in the 1950s, everybody came here for bass fishing. There was heavy pesticide use on all the farmland around the lake. People were sort of draining the lake to have watery soil and then they would let the lake rise back up over the soil and that would pull the pesticides back in when they drained it again. What ended up happening is that the ecology of the lake just collapsed. Even though a lot of those pesticides have been banned now, they stay in the soil. Families who have lived there for generations, they work that land and they still have those pesticides in their bodies. I think Lake Apopka is not unique in terms of being an ecological and health disaster, but it is one of the more severe ones, especially in Florida’s history. So, there are a couple of specific ways that

manifests with people who are living in the area now. One is the health condition of people who are actually working there, but also people who live around there. New developers and zoning committees—they don't want to use the farmland anymore, so they're just going to build condominiums. Well, that creates problems of its own with all the waves of runoff. It's just a big pile of toxins. I'm not someone who uses the term toxin lightly, but there's an enormous amount of nasty stuff in that environment. I find that, if you start at [the FWAF] office, the association [of our work] is very much tied to the lake.

This story clearly demonstrates that FWAF is concerned with place-based issues such as the toxicity of farmland and a community's health and well-being. Sean sees FWAF's work as consistent with place-based education's focus on local themes, systems, and content. He says: "People at FWAF—and some of this we do in collaboration with our service-learners—we are able to connect [issues] to larger historical themes, to national and international issues and so forth, but there's always that connection to the place that we're in."

This understanding of the relationships between people and land is an overt theme in Sean's understanding of place. Sean defines place this way:

Place means the interconnections between people, land, and institutions. . . . It's kind of hard to define "What is the boundary around place?" but I think that the boundary must be created by the people who are invested in place. By investment, I don't mean financially invested in terms of land developers; I mean people whose lives and identities have been invested in place. . . . I think place is constructed in collaboration with the stakeholders in a place—human or family or community stakeholders. I see a dichotomy between that and the multinational

interest, the chain stores, the corporations and so forth. . . .The dissolution of place in the last few decades of our history or the last century of our history, I think, can be a pretty threatening thing. Even if you look at, say, the journey that oranges picked in Apopka go on to end up being eaten by somebody in Kansas or Washington or wherever... That is undermining the concept of the place of Apopka in the sense that [farmworkers] are, in a way, being colonized. Their labor and their resources are being drawn out and they are getting almost nothing in return.

So, for Sean, places are both physical locations (e.g., oranges are picked in the city of Apopka) and constructions based on human relationships and investments. Places help to define the identities of people who live and work there (e.g., farmworkers) just as places can be redefined by globalizing forces (e.g., through the presence of chain stores and multinational corporations).

When students engage in service-learning projects with FWAF, they collaborate with community partners (including farmworkers) to address place-based issues. Students also have the opportunity to bring their disciplinary focus to FWAF and investigate how farmworker issues are connected to their field of study. For instance, Sean described a history student who wrote a paper on the economic history of Apopka's agricultural system from the time of slavery up until the present. These opportunities to apply learning and incorporate interdisciplinary knowledge align with some of the characteristics of place-based education.

By completing service-learning projects with FWAF, students can also develop a sense of place. This is particularly true for Sean, as his work with FWAF has prompted him to think about the history of Florida and the social justice issues involved in that history. During our interview, Sean described his first encounter with farmworkers:

The first time my family moved to Florida, I was eight years old. My parents were tired of the cold weather in Connecticut, so we moved to Fort Myers. That place, actually, is kind of directly connected to the farmworkers stuff because we lived right next to Immokalee. . . . I always knew that there was a place called Immokalee and that there was injustice there, and yet there was nothing that clicked for me that told me to go there to learn about it or to be helpful.

Sean credits the farmworkers in Immokalee as what prompted him to think about social justice. After high school, Sean moved north to attend college, but he ended up back in central Florida when he decided to continue his education at Rollins College. When he returned, he asked himself: “You know what? There have got to be farmworkers around here.” Based on that inquiry, Sean connected with FWAF and has volunteered with them ever since.

Through his work with FWAF, Sean says, he has “learned that [Florida] is a place with a local history.” He continues:

Previously, I thought that Florida was—this sounds really simplistic—that Florida was a swamp until the 1970’s or the 80’s and then all of these strip malls and planned communities were built and that was that. Now, I know that Florida has an extraordinarily rich history, and it’s also a history that’s much more tied into the history of the south than I had thought. We always joke “Well, Florida’s not really part of the south,” but it is. . . . When I spent time with people who have been involved in this history and we’re doing something like a community meeting, like a vigil for Eric Garner, it’s like “Wow. There’s so much history here and the people [who made this history] are still living.” It made everything much, much more concrete for me.

By learning from community members involved in FWAF's efforts, Sean has developed a sense of place—and a sense of history—for Apopka, Florida. However, Sean admits that developing a sense of place of central Florida is an ongoing process for him:

One of my projects has been to feel more connected to central Florida and a large part of that has been the farmworker stuff I've just been describing. I don't know quite where I'm with that yet. . . . I think in terms of having an understanding of like the ecosystem of central Florida, I'm not quite there yet. I have somewhat of an understanding of the ecosystem around Lake Apopka because it's something that's studied in such great detail by FWAF, but to broaden it to Orlando proper, the universities, the parks... I know nothing about the parks, even though I've gone there a couple of times. I have no idea how that works. And yet, it seems to be very important to keep trying to understand as I plan to continue to work here for at least a couple years after my degree.

Clearly, Sean values developing a personal understanding of the place where he lives, and the process of developing a sense of place takes time. In our interview, Sean also explained how developing a sense of place—or a love of a place—is not always a positive experience. He stated: “The love of a place, for me, isn't all warm and fuzzy. It can carry with it a great sense of frustration. For me, that frustration is made manageable and I'm able to cope with it through relationships with other people in the place.” Like Amy, Sean sees the potential for students to commit to a place without necessarily associating only positive emotions with that place. And, once again, Sean's understanding of place emphasizes the interrelated nature of people and locations. Through this project, I hope to show that working with community partners to solve

local issues can help students to develop a complex understanding of place like the one Sean has provided.

Nico's SL Experiences and Their Connections to PBE

Like Sean, Nico works with an organization that addresses farmworkers' rights. This organization is YAYA NFWM, or the Youth and Young Adult Network of the National Farm Worker Ministry. According to their website, YAYA NFWM is "a national network of young people actively working to change the oppressive social, political and economic conditions faced by farm workers in the United States." According to Nico, YAYA NFWM works in solidarity with other organizations that are led by farmworkers; the farmworkers themselves run the campaigns.

Nico became involved with YAYA NFWM when they were an undergraduate student completing a class titled Global Transnational Feminisms. One of the requirements of the course was for students to complete a service-learning project with an organization that addressed a "global to local" struggle. Nico was part of a student group that decided to work with FWAF, which is one of YAYA NFWM's partnering organizations. During this project, Nico's group participated in the Coalition for Immokalee Workers' Parade and Concert for Fair Food and volunteered at the Woman-to-Woman Conference. The class entered UCF's Service-Learning Showcase and won a first-place award for Diversity Initiatives.

As a result of this moment, Nico would later return to work for YAYA NFWM. Nico explains their motivation for returning to this organization by sharing a story about this service-learning award. They recall:

When [my class] won the award, we were given \$500 to split amongst the 7-9 people in our class. I remember this question happening during the end of the

event, after we won, of “What do we want to do with the money?” . . . I just thought the question could be answered very easily: “To go back to the organizations that needed it.” Instead, the money got split up amongst our UCF cards. I thought that was weird. That was my last semester of college. . . . What really drew me back to YAYA and the NFWM happened when I was in New York during the fall of 2011. I was talking to the president of YAYA pretty frequently and she was telling me something about [another student organization] and how they wanted to go to the Fellsmere community garden. They were just giving her times when they were available and were not understanding that there’s another side to [planning service-learning events]. . . . She said something to me that has stuck with me ever since and literally drew me back like a magnet to YAYA and the ministry. She said “There’s all these college students who go in to do research on farmworker and low-income communities and they never share any of the results or resources that they get from that research.” Immediately, I felt guilty because of what my class had done. . . . As soon as I got back from New York, not even four days later, I joined up with the National Farm Worker Ministry.

This story demonstrates the importance of reciprocity and the sharing of resources among service-learning students, classrooms, and the community partners who host SL experiences. But this experience also informs Nico’s views on service-learning partnerships.

Now, as the service-learning coordinator for YAYA NFWM, Nico works with many students to provide them with service-learning opportunities. Nico likes to have one-on-one phone calls with students to assess their interests and see how the student can connect their

course concepts with one of the events or farmworker-led campaigns YAYA NFWM is participating in. Some options for students' service work include picketing, working in the community garden, and planning events.

Because FWAF and YAYA NFWM are partner organizations, it is not surprising that they address similar place-based issues. These issues, such as farmworkers' rights and concerns (e.g., immigration status) are both local and global in nature. Nico explains:

You can practically drive anywhere in the state and see an orange grove or some sort of field, especially in central Florida. The farther south you go, the more you start to see plant nurseries, and that's also a huge part of that cultural work. On the more global aspect of it, it's clear to me that—and maybe not so much other folks—we have this immigration problem, as they say. The United States has this influx of migrants coming in from Mexico and Central and South America. But why is that? If you understand the way that globalization works, this influx of people is the product of what the North American Free Trade Agreement did in Mexico. You take all the corn that Mexican farmers were producing, you destroy their land, and they are forced to migrate because NAFTA and other free trade policies have literally forced them to cross this imaginary border. So, it's like, they come to the US and there's only one job they are really getting and it's farm work. They are being exploited and being paid shitty wages (but better than they would be in Mexico). So, there are a lot of policies that we have to look at, especially U.S. imperialism in South America, Central America, Mexico, to see how this issue ties to the agricultural history in the United States...

Like Sean, Nico ties place-based issues to historical events and the effects of globalization.

Nico's understanding of place has been informed by their connections to particular locations, their education, and their experiences working with farmworkers. Nico defines place in this way:

To me, place has always been an occupied space. That's how I learned about it in philosophy. What I mean by occupied, that includes bodies, buildings, territories, etc. For me, place is what's gotten me to where I am—the different places that I've been a part of have gotten me to work with farmworker issues. Growing up in rural Homestead where there are fields literally offside of the road and you see Haitian and Mexican and Guatemalan workers there—this has led me (in retrospect, however many years later) to see this farmworker issue much more clearly. That's just one example. . . . I grew up on a farm. I've farmed to an extent—I've done farm work in my own backyard. So, that's another thing that also led me to this. . . . I was involved in FFA (Future Farmers of America) for a while (throughout middle and high school) and I learned about plants and horticulture and all of these fun things. Then, it just came back in a full circle and I came to college and had the opportunity to work with YAYA and the ministry.

Once again, this personal understanding of place was informed—at least in part—through engaging in service-learning work.

Like Amy and Sean, Nico believes students can develop a sense of place, but that this process occurs by developing a commitment to that place. Nico describes commitment with the analogy of a “point of agitation.” Nico explains:

In organizing, we have what is called a “point of agitation.” In relation to the sense of place, the point of agitation is going to be the point of commitment. With

the NFWM and YAYA, an example on the ground would be meeting a farmworker and building a relationship. Then you have some sense of place with that individual... maybe you don't get that here in your local community, but you find that somewhere else that you can take with you. I think it's a sense of commitment, a point of engagement, for an individual to take with them wherever they go. Places are more likely to stay with you as opposed to spaces. I think space is this—we can fill up the space. That's how I've always seen it. Place is where you actually fill in the space.

Thus, developing a sense of place involves the process of building relationships, filling a space with associations, and committing to that place.

Participants' Suggestions for Incorporating Place and Positionality into a Place-Based Service-Learning Course

Now that we have seen how characteristics of service-learning and place-based education have been incorporated in the RACE course and community partners' previous service-learning experiences, we will turn towards these participants' suggestions for how place and positionality should be incorporated into a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component. This discussion answers my second research question: "What are different stakeholders' perceptions of how place, identity, and social position (positionality, standpoint, intersectionality) *should be incorporated* in a writing class with a local service-learning project?" To answer this question, I will first describe moments in the service-learning experience where students can consider place and identity/ social position. Then, I will share participants' suggestions for incorporating place, followed by participants' suggestions for incorporating identity, positionality, and standpoint.

Moments to Consider Place

Students, instructors, and community partners have many opportunities to consider the impact of places on students' service work throughout the service-learning experience. However, the following moments provide some obvious opportunities:

- **When instructors create service-learning site profiles:** In creating a site profile, instructors must consider where the organization is located, what kinds of service opportunities are available in that location (especially if the course emphasizes environmental topics), and how students will access that location (i.e., how students will travel to the site).
- **When community representatives visit courses to “pitch” their organizations:** In describing the work that is completed at the organization, community partners often give students a sense of the context of their service (e.g., the neighborhood they will be working in) and the needs of the local population.
- **When students collect background information on their service-learning sites:** Again, students are given the opportunity to explore who the “served” community is, where they are located, and what they are looking for in a service-learning collaboration.
- **When students select their service-learning sites:** Students need to consider their willingness to work in various locations and their ability to access service-learning sites.
- **When students complete a site visit:** Students can gauge their comfort in the service-learning location, they can get a sense for the neighborhood and community surrounding the organization, and they can see whether this place meets their service-learning needs.
- **When instructors design critical reflection prompts, and when students answer them:** Instructors can explicitly ask students to reflect on how the place where they

worked impacted their learning, relationships with community partners, and identity-development.

Moments to Consider Positionality

Students, instructors, and community partners can also consider their identity and positionality both in and beyond the service-learning site during these moments:

- **When students inventory their interests and skillsets:** By assessing their own skills and interests, students can make more informed decisions about which service-learning sites will match their personal strengths and learning goals. Students can ask themselves questions such as: Am I invested in a cause associated with this project? Do I share the organization's values or beliefs? Does this organization work with people like me, or a group I want to help (because I have some familiarity)? Do I have the appropriate skillset or experiences to do this work? How is this type of work relevant to me? Will I be a minority at the service-learning site?
- **When students interact with agency staff or clients:** Students can consider the personas they are performing at their service-learning sites. They can ask themselves: Which parts of my identity am I presenting to others? Which parts am I keeping private? How am I being read by others?
- **When students reflect on their service-learning experiences:** Students can think about how their identities, personas, or values have changed over the course of the semester. They can ask themselves questions like: What attitudes, beliefs, and values am I bringing with me to this site and this work? How have my identity and/or attitudes, beliefs, and values changed over the course of the semester?

- **When instructors create a reading list, and when students read those texts:** Both parties can consider which groups are represented in course readings. They can ask: Whose voices are valued? Whose voices are absent from this conversation? Are there people on this reading list from a group I identify with (e.g., women of color)?

Suggestions for Incorporating Place in SL Projects

The following list of suggestions is based on coded portions of participants' interview transcripts where they explicitly discussed place. The majority of these suggestions involve prompting students to consider places in their service-learning work and overall learning experience.

- **Include service-learning options that involve place-based issues:** Like Amy, instructors can offer multiple service-learning options to students. Ideally, a few of these choices will address place-based topics that are relevant to students' lives. For instance, transportation is an issue that affects every person who has to commute to campus. Students can research transportation methods on campus or work with transit advocacy groups to improve these conditions. Another issue that is relevant to all students is food. Nico described their rationale for working with YAYA NFWM well when they said: "I think what drew me—what continues to draws me—to the farmworker movement is the fact that I eat every day." Obviously, issues such as food security are very much tied up in the places where people live. By selecting service-learning topics that address local issues, instructors can help their students make tangible connections between their learning and particular places.
- **Consider the place-based issues involved in a course concept:** Help students to see the connections between their area of study (i.e., their academic major) and the location where they study (e.g., their own city). In my interview with Sean, he expressed a desire

for instructors to help students see that “whatever they’re studying is probably going on in the place that they are or the place they could be working. So, if someone is studying biology, they might think ‘All I need to know about biology is here in my lap’ [i.e., in a textbook] or ‘I can go on a field study and I can learn about biology there.’ [When students engage in service-learning,] then they find a real human relevance to what they’re studying. I think the study of place has to be a study of people. Place is defined by people.” Amy provided another example in which a place-based issue—water use—helped her to learn about the environmental politics where she lived. She stated: “If you can map your watershed, you know the politics of the place where you live, especially in the West. . . . Simply the act of knowing the place where your water originates and the place where it winds up can connect you to so many social, environmental, political issues where you are.”

- **Invoke relevant place-based issues from current events in class discussions:** In both of the classroom observations I completed for this project, Amy and other students invoked other places in their discussions. These places included cities such as Ferguson, Missouri. During the fall 2014 semester, the Black Lives Matter movement was a major topic of discussion in the media, and the entire class would often bring up this topic when discussing civic engagement. For instance, Ferguson was invoked in discussions about how people of color often distrust the police (Observation #2). From this discussion, students decided that a city’s police force should reflect the demographics of the population it serves. This example demonstrates how places and current events can be incorporated into the curriculum in order to infuse discussions with relevant content.

- **Consider the unique features of particular places:** Sean believes it is important for students to “comprehend places without a colonial mindset.” By this, he means that students should consider which aspects of a place make it that place (e.g., environmental issues, geological features, community diversity, local knowledge and customs). If you remove the national chains and other markers of globalization, what makes the place unique and truly local? Instead of just fetishizing the local, this understanding might help students to develop a more thorough understanding of their place because exploring the unique characteristics of a place can help students to understand the identity or branding of that place and how it is positioned relative to other locations.
- **Ask students to reflect on how their perceptions of places have changed as a result of their service-learning work:** As Nicole, Sean, and Nico have described, their perceptions of central Florida changed as a direct result of participating in a service-learning project. This change in perception presents an opportunity to reflect.
- **Push students to the “point of agitation” in developing their sense of place:** As Amy, Sean, and Nico have described, an important step in developing a sense of place is committing to making that place a better place to live. This commitment to place can translate to a commitment to addressing a community need via a service-learning project.

Suggestions for Incorporating Identity, Positionality, and Standpoint in SL Projects

The following list of suggestions is based on coded portions of participants’ interview transcripts where they explicitly discussed identity, positionality, intersectionality, or standpoint. The majority of these suggestions involve prompting students to consider their identities in their service-learning sites.

- **Match your personal interests and skillset with the service project:** Often, service-learning site profiles will include a description of “required skills.” Students should inventory their own skills, interests, and learning goals to see if there is match between these things and the work required by the service-learning organization at the service-learning site.
- **Give students choices for their SL work so that they can choose what identity they feel comfortable performing in that place:** Amy explains: “[Instructors] have to think really carefully about putting students in the spotlight in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender because nobody wants to be the representative minority at the place where they’re serving; nobody wants to be a minority in the service-learning experience. In letting students pick [which project] they did, that meant I didn’t place them in [a site] where they had to perform an identity. If they placed themselves somewhere where they wound up performing an identity, that was fine, but they didn’t have to.”
- **Consider how students’ identities might be connected to the service they want to perform or the clients they want to work with:** Because of their unique social positions, students might identify with—or express empathy²⁰ towards—a group affiliated with a particular service-learning project. Instructors should consider whether they want students to draw on these existing connections in their service-learning work.
- **Draw on prior experiences, areas of expertise, and personal connections:** Instructors and students should capitalize on their prior knowledge to make the service-learning

²⁰ See “Feminine and Feminist Ethics and Service-Learning Site Selection: The Role of Empathy” by Bowdon, Pigg, and Pompos for more information.

experience more meaningful and successful. For instance, instructors can partner with organizations they have worked with in the past to ensure that students will be placed in sites that have been “vetted.” When selecting their service-learning site, students can look for a project that would help them develop an existing skill set. For example, Nicole already had phone literacy skills through her experience phone banking for the Obama campaign. However, doing phone intake for Legal Aid allowed her to practice her professional persona and further refine her communication skills.

- **Ask students to use their lived experiences as a source of knowledge:** In the prompt for her students’ Rhetorical Citizenship Paper, Amy informs students: “your idea of rhetorical citizenship should also come out of your experiences and perspective.” This kind of assignment values students’ prior knowledge and allows them to see how lived experiences can form the basis of knowledge claims. Karina describes how much she appreciated this aspect of the course: “The most valuable thing I got out of civic engagement is finding a place where you feel like your input is valued. . . . I think everyone has expertise in what they’re comfortable with in certain areas.”
- **Provide opportunities for students to hear other perspectives:** Students, such as Karina, appreciated when class discussions afforded her opportunities to hear other students’ views on the course concepts, current events, and service-learning experiences. She credits these moments with “opening her eyes” to certain arguments. She also believed it was important for her class to discuss “touchy” or controversial subjects because these discussions fostered understanding. When asked if there were any subjects she thought should be “off limits” for class discussions, Karina states: “I probably would have said race in the past, but now that we’ve had this whole uprising about Ferguson, I

feel like it's healthy [to discuss this subject] because we see these protests and more people acknowledge there's a lot of people out there who stand up for those who don't feel as if they are an equal; now, more people support the movement toward equal rights.”

- **Reflect on how you are represented in various systems, scholarship, and media:**

Students can complete textual analyses to determine how documents (such as service-learning site profiles and agency websites) construct their roles. For instance, in the site profile for the transit project, Amy asks her students: “What assumptions do university communities make about the ‘typical’ college student and what transit choices are then made for them?” Students can also analyze articles about their generation to see how authors construct the identity of millennials (Amy; Nicole) or “read” a place as a text and discover which people are present (and absent) in that place. In treating the “place as text,” teachers and students can “decode . . . the images of their own concrete, situated experiences in the world” (Friere referenced in Demarest 11-12).

- **Be conscious of representing the university during service-learning work:** When students enter the community to perform service-learning work, they act on behalf of the university and course. Therefore, Amy reminds her students of the importance of their choices, including decisions about what to wear to the site. She states: “Remember: you are an ambassador on behalf of UCF when you move into an community concerning this project.” In their site profile, Legal Aid is more specific about students representing their office. They ask volunteers to “Please dress the part when you are entering our law firm...” Clearly, students should practice professionalism during their SL work.

- **Tailor your persona to the specific context:** Students’ identities are comprised of multiple layers and they will perform different identities based on the situation and place where they work. For example, Nicole performs the persona of an authoritative and knowledgeable volunteer at Legal Aid, but she performs the persona of a comedian at her improv shows. This persona performance provides students with an opportunity to reflect on how the context of their actions influences the identity they perform, the actions they take, and the level of comfort and authority they feel in a given situation. For example, in her reflection logs, Nicole stated: “I have to keep in mind my rhetorical persona, which is different from my casual, phone persona.” This reflection demonstrates Nicole’s recognition of her multiple and competing identities as well as her negotiation of identity based on the rhetorical situation.
- **Consider how you are similar to (and different from) those served by the SL project:** When investigating their positions in service-learning sites, students should think about how they identify (or dis-identify) with the clients they serve. In addition, one of the outcomes of a service-learning project might be helping students to see that “they can be like people who are different from them while they also keep difference in mind.” According to Sean, students need to “get out of the binary of ‘Oh, I know them, I’m just like them’ or ‘I’m nothing like them.’ They have to integrate the two.” Sometimes transporting yourself to a different location can prompt you to encounter people who you would not otherwise meet, such as poor white students in the city of Bithlo (Amy).
- **Check your privilege and consider how your privileged status impacts your interactions with—and understandings of—other people:** Instructors, in particular, need to make a concerted effort to consider how marginalized students will feel in certain

situations. Amy provides a great example of reflecting on her privilege when she describes an experience of bringing a police officer into her course as a guest speaker. She recounts: “I was speaking to my husband about [the lack of student discussion in class that day] and he said ‘You mean people of color and at-risk populations wouldn’t challenge your guy with a gun in a police uniform in your class?’ And I was like ‘Yeah.’ He was like ‘Why do you think that is?’ And me—I’m white. I’m privileged. I’m not scared of police officers. It was a good learning moment for me.”

- **Interrogate notions of intersecting oppressions by considering the positions of service-learning clients:** Amy provides a salient example of the types of questions students can ask in order to understand the larger systems involved in community issues: “Like Habitat [for Humanity]—Why do you think somebody needs a house? . . . They’re not just lazy, poor people. There may have been sexual violence. There may have been somebody that got killed. It’s all connected, if you look into it enough.”
- **Pay attention to how other groups are represented in the SL site:** Based on her own experiences, Amy has found that “sometimes when you see people of different backgrounds in positions of authority, you start to understand those people differently.” As an example, in her RACE course, some students work with people who have physical disabilities (such as deafness). These staff members expose students to people different from themselves and can help them to begin to understand differences in lived experiences.
- **Ask yourself “Whose struggles are being ignored in this issue?”** Encourage students to look for voices that have been marginalized or erased from the conversation. For example, Nico describes the way organizations such as Planned Parenthood can ignore

the issues of an entire group of people: “I think there are a lot of nonprofits that focus on single issues and they can represent so much more. For instance, Planned Parenthood is a big one. It’s like ‘We’re worried about women’s health and planned pregnancy’ but there are folks with vaginas who aren’t necessarily identifying as a woman. [Planned Parenthood] should be reaching out to those folks, too.”

- **Work in solidarity with people in different social positions; let marginalized people articulate their needs and how those needs should be addressed.** This suggestion applies to YAYA NFWM’s model of service-learning. Nico explains: “We’re a solidarity group of privileged people, people of faith, specifically with the NFWM. . . . We never went into farmworker communities and said ‘I know what’s best here.’ Instead, it’s within our mission to take the lead from these farmworker-led campaigns because no one’s going to understand their struggle better than the people who are fighting for the struggle. It makes no sense for us as privileged folks to go on the farmworker communities and say ‘I know what you need.’ At that point, it becomes a Band-Aid as opposed to self-determination by the community.”
- **Think about ways to leverage your social position to help others:** “Sometimes a community in need is not willing to speak up for what they’re in need of because it’s too high risk. So, sometimes, a partner or someone in a stronger socioeconomic position has to be the one who speaks up” (Amy).
- **Consider authorial identity when composing and presenting writing products:** Because the writing in service-learning projects is often public, it is important for students to consider the ways they establish their credibility and present themselves to an outside audience. In the RACE course, this suggestion manifested in Amy’s instructions

to students about constructing their e-portfolios. She said: “You should think carefully about the design and the aspects of your work and personality that you think are important to convey through this portfolio” (Syllabus). She also told students to “think about how you might define and describe yourself as a writer (or communicator more broadly), including how you have developed, your experiences writing across the various spheres of your life (educational and otherwise), and your goals involving writing. Also, think about what you value about writing/rhetoric and what you see as your strengths” (Syllabus).

- **Investigate notions of power, influence, and force:** Discussing these topics can help students begin to understand the differences between police officers and politicians, laws and politics.
- **Consider others’ power and authority, and how those people can contribute to your service-learning project:** One way to investigate positions of power in a service-learning site or issue-based campaign is to complete a power mapping activity. During one of the class sessions I attended, Amy led her students through a process of naming and narrowing the goals of their service-learning project, listing the stakeholders involved in that goal, considering those stakeholders’ levels of agency and influence, and developing a plan of action based on the students’ relationships to those stakeholders.
- **Challenge prior understandings of authority, expertise, and who counts as an authority figure:** Help students to recognize their own authority and expertise so that they can draw on this knowledge to make decisions and claims.
- **Anticipate the challenges to authority that students might encounter in their service-learning work, and help them prepare for these moments:** Community partners can

help students to navigate power relations with clients by prepping them for difficult client interactions. For example, in her reflection log, Nicole described a moment when her supervisor explained a tactic callers might use to wrestle power from her: “A big thing [my supervisor] stressed was power and authority. She said that some callers will try to have a conversation right off the bat or will try to weasel sympathy from me... [Once I take down their information] my role as legal authority begins.”

- **Critique yourself in your service:** In addition to asking students to answer critical reflection prompts, instructors can critique past service-learning experiences. Amy explains: “Sometimes, I’ll offer critiques of past situations involving partnership opportunities at the beginning of the class... I’ll say ‘Here’s what we’ve done in the past and here’s what’s gone wrong with it.’”

This list of suggestions is by no means exhaustive, but it does provide all three groups of stakeholders with some ideas for investigating the relationships among place, positionality, and service in a place-based course.

CHAPTER FOUR: DESIGNING THE CURRICULUM

The last research question left to answer is: “Based on these stakeholders’ experiences and existing scholarship, what are some good ideas for designing a place-based writing course with a local service-learning project?” My answer to this question will draw on a combination of research articles about curriculum design and participants’ answers to questions regarding the positive and negative aspects of their service-learning experiences. This is where participants’ evaluations of the course will be incorporated.

Before I describe my recommendations for designing a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component, I would like to explain the placement of this course within a larger writing program. During my classroom observations of the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement (RACE) course and my analysis of the documents associated with this course (i.e., instructor materials and student writing samples), I saw firsthand how this course complements many of the emphases of the writing course I was proposing: it includes a service-learning component, the service students perform is (for the most part) rooted in a local place and community, and the students are asked to interrogate their positions in their communities (e.g., through power mapping activities). In hindsight, it makes perfect sense that the RACE course would match so many qualities of the course I wanted to design; after all, my criteria for the course’s inclusion in this study necessitated elements of writing and service-learning. Therefore, the course I propose would either be a modification of an existing Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course or a course that occupies a similar position in the writing program.

My course would be an upper-level (junior/senior) course housed in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric that would build upon Writing Studies and Composition ideas introduced earlier in the program, such as rhetorical situations, audience awareness, genre conventions,

reflection, revision, and critical thinking/reading skills. For instance, when students create writing products for their community partner organizations, they will consider the exigencies of their work, the constraints of the genres they are writing in, and the values of their audience members. When students read pieces before class discussion, they will annotate their texts and connect the themes to the course objectives and their own service. And when students reflect on their learning, they will interrogate their positions in both the classroom and the service-learning site. They will also revise their writing products, beginning definitions, and reflections to account for what they've learned over the course of the semester. Because students will be performing writing service, composing reflections, and revising their work, writing will be a central part of their learning experiences. In addition, by analyzing discourse, practicing persuasion, and interrogating what it means to be civically engaged, students will be actively involved in rhetorical work. Thus, this place-based version of Rhetoric and Civic Engagement will fit well within existing degree programs available in my department.

This course will also build upon students' potential background information about the intersections of texts and the environment and, as a result, would be an extension of courses such as ecocomposition or environmental rhetoric, which may be offered in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric and/or the Department of English. As mentioned earlier, ecocomposition focuses on the writing environment and uses concepts like ecologies as metaphors for the writing process. Contrastingly, critical pedagogies of place emphasize the material conditions of places and treat those places as actual objects of study that can be investigated through writing activity (e.g., you can learn more about the city of Orlando by researching and composing an informational brochure for a local organization). The writing course I propose would be an extension of ecocomposition and/or environmental rhetoric courses.

Positive Aspects of Existing Curriculum and Service-Learning Projects

When asked which aspects of the RACE course or service-learning project that they would like Amy to keep for future semesters, Karina and Nicole provided the following list:

- **The service-learning project itself:** Both students described the service-learning project as a valuable learning experience, but Karina said it was the “most valuable” aspect of the course.
- **Service-learning project options:** Karina and Nicole appreciated that they were offered some freedom in selecting their service-learning project, although they were required to choose from a limited set of options. This limitation made the selection process manageable and ensured that students’ projects would meet the expectations of the course. Nicole explained: “If [Amy] hadn’t listed the options, I wouldn’t have known what to do, what was available, what interested me, who had a need, who had open positions or availability to fit my schedule.”
- **Service-learning project guidance:** In addition to guiding students in selecting their service-learning project, Amy served as a resource and sounding board when projects did not align with students’ expectations. Karina said that Amy encouraged her to continue her transit research project when she wasn’t receiving responses from any of the UCF officials she contacted. Nicole said Amy maintained a good balance of high standards for students and realistic expectations for service-learning deliverables.
- **Class activities such as guest speakers, debates, and the power mapping activity:** These were some of the class activities that were mentioned over and over again by students. The guest speakers and debates, in particular, were valued by students because they exposed them to different perspectives.

- **Multiple voices and “reading” mediums:** Nicole said it best when she shared: “I liked how [Amy] included a variety of voices. It wasn’t just academic paper after paper, but she brought in several authorities like mixed media and podcasts. She included different perspectives and different authorities on civic engagement.”

Desired Changes to Curriculum or Service-Learning Project

As with any curriculum, the instructor and the students expressed desires for some changes and recommendations for future courses.

- **Class mode:** Because the RACE course was a mixed-mode class, students only met with Amy once per week for 75 minutes. Amy, Nicole, and Karina stated that they would prefer to meet face-to-face at least twice a week. However, Amy acknowledged that she has very little power over course scheduling.
- **Length of readings:** Students felt that they were asked to complete a lot of work for this course—including readings, discussion posts, and continuous work on their service-learning projects. This work added up to a large time commitment, and the students suggested reducing the length and/or amount of readings so that they wouldn’t feel overburdened by work.
- **Representation of voices in readings:** Although Nicole applauded Amy’s inclusion of multiple voices in the course reading list, Amy felt that she still struggled to include “a multiplicity of voices and a multiplicity of types of writing.”
- **The public nature of students’ writing:** Although Amy and her students did not encounter any issues related to the public writing they composed, Amy admitted that she still grapples with “how much of [students’] thinking and writing is done publically because I think it’s important that it be done publically, but I also think it’s important to

protect [students'] intellectual adolescence. . . . I don't want the intellectual adolescence permanently catalogued on the internet. . . . Something I will continue to think about is public versus private reflection and processing of ideas."

- **Establishing classroom community through group work:** At various points in the semester, Nicole and Karina felt alone in their service-learning work. They suggest building in more opportunities for students to collaborate on projects, discuss their progress, and check in with their classmates. Nicole explained: "The only thing with the class [I didn't like] is that most people were doing the transit project, and I wasn't, so I felt excluded from some of the discussions." Karina added: "I feel like [Amy] could have done a better job of getting us together. . . . Maybe there should have been more activities that could have brought us together."
- **Location of service-learning resources:** In thinking about the future lives of students' service-learning deliverables and e-portfolios, Karina recommends creating a repository of resources that future students can access to help them in their own projects.

Suggestions from Community Partners

- **Do research on the community partner organization:** By conducting some preliminary research on the organization's mission and activities, instructors and students can determine whether the organization will meet the instructor's criteria for a service-learning site. Nico explains: "The first mistake that I think a lot of service-learning students make with contacting me is that I can tell they don't really know anything about YAYA or what we do. . . . they've got to meet me halfway. It's about reciprocity; it's about meeting the organization where they're at. It's about doing your research first instead of just reading a blurb [on the internet]." Some of this research can include

learning about the history of the place (i.e., the service-learning site) and what issues the local community faces in that place (e.g., farmworkers living near Lake Apopka face health issues related to the pesticides found in their soil and water).

- **Engage in a 1-on-1 conversation with the community partner to match students' interests with the organization's needs**
- **Define the community partner's role**
- **Collaborate with the community partner to determine learning and service goals, as well as assessment criteria**
- **Ensure community partners receive copies of students' project deliverables**
- **Articulate goals for both students and the community partner at the beginning of the service-learning partnership.** Steven Mills offers the following suggestions for making students' learning goals clear to the agency: students can share their syllabus, learning objectives, and/or a letter from the instructor that describes their expectations for the experience (38). To make the agency's mission clear to students, community partners can offer "brief orientations to the agency mission, scope of work, and current resources available to do the work" (Mills 38). Agencies can also provide current students with a sample of former students' reflections (Mills 38).
- **Invert the triangle of the service-learning relationship so that community partners do less work.** Nico: "There's got to be some sort of reciprocity between the organization and the institution and also the professor as a result because it's their course, their curriculum. There also has to be some sort of better understanding between what I see as a triangle. On top you have the ivory tower, the institution. Right below that you have the professors who are creating this curriculum. Below that, you have the students. At the

very bottom is the community partner. If you look at the triangle, who is carrying the most work at all times? The community partner. So, as someone who is carrying the blunt of the work, there has to be more... it has to be less of this top-down figure. The triangle, inevitably, should be inverted so that the community partner is on top.” As Stoecker and Tryon describe, unless instructors actively work against this top-down model, “the burden of managing the service-learning students will fall disproportionately on the community organizations that host them” (6).

- **Build sustainable relationships with community partners:** Steven Mills describes “four furies” or primary tensions between service-learning students and community partners. The top fury pits students’ emphasis on completing their service-learning hours against the agency’s emphasis on commitment to the cause and organization.

Other Suggestions for Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Assessment

- **Engage in backwards design:** Apply Wiggins and McTighe’s concept of backwards course design to create your course. Backwards design involves “starting with the goals, objectives, and standards, then deriving the curriculum from the evidence of student performance” (Holmes 85). By engaging in backwards design, an instructor first articulates the learning goals of the course and then considers which course outcomes can be best met through various activities (Demarest 16), such as a service-learning project. For example, a writing course might include learning goals such as “Students will write in appropriate genres for real communities and reflect on the choices they make in composing these documents” and “Students will demonstrate an understanding of positionality and articulate a beginning definition of their writerly identity.” Students can meet both of these learning goals by engaging in service-learning work: they can provide

writing service for a local organization and produce a document suited to the organization’s needs, and they can critically reflect on their positions in the service-learning site.

- **Create a learning outcomes and assessment grid.** Once the instructor has determined the learning goals that align with the service-learning teaching method, they can plan activities that assess students’ learning (Gagne and Briggs 1979 and Gagne 1985, cited in Pienta, Cooper, and Greenbowe 46). A simplified version of an assessment grid is shown below²¹:

Table 3: Learning Outcomes and Assessment Grid

	Learning Goal #1	Learning Goal #2	Learning Goal #3	Learning Goal #4
Assignment #1				
Assignment #2				
Assignment #3				
Assignment #4				

- **Emphasize local knowledge, systems, and content.** Incorporate local voices by inviting local experts to speak and/or lead a class session (as Amy did when she brought a police officer into class); assign readings written by local residents about local issues for local audiences; and infuse elements of local geography, ecology, sociology, and/or politics into course content. Place-based education regards both people and places as sources of

²¹ This assessment grid is adapted from: Saitta, Erin. “Creating Assessments and Assignments for Service-Learning.” STEM Faculty Scholars Institute. Altamonte Springs, FL. May 2013. Conference presentation.

knowledge (Demarest 108-14). For instance, students can interview residents of local communities to learn about the history surrounding a local or particular community issue (Demarest 112).

- **Have students help identify the organization’s writing needs.** Amy describes this idea using Jeff Grabill’s concept of mundane writing. She explains: “One of the things that has really influenced my teaching is Jeff Grabill’s idea about mundane writing. It’s almost like the organizational partners don’t think of the writing they do as writing because it’s not formal writing, so they can hardly mentor students when they don’t even think they’re doing writing. But, my students might realize that it’s writing. . . .it’s kind of the students’ job to identify what is writing and what is rhetoric in the situation.”
- **Assess students’ learning, not their service.** Instructors should separate grades for students’ participation or professionalism in the service-learning project from their learning of course concepts. Just as with other types of course concepts, instructors can assess students’ mastery of facts, processes, and attitudes. To assess these observable learning behaviors, traditional assessment tools can be used. For example, tests can measure students’ recall of facts; graded presentations, demonstrations, or simulations can measure students’ mastery of a process; and surveys and written reflections can measure students’ changes in attitudes (Saitta).
- **Celebrate community partners’ participation:** At the end of the service-learning collaboration, instructors and students can send community partners “thank you” letters or certificates of participation. These documents express the class’ appreciation of the community partners’ efforts and can also be included in community partners’ promotional binders or displayed in the agency office. In addition, by including

information such as impact numbers (the number of students the community collaborated with and the number of volunteer hours completed) and student testimonials, the community partner can brand their service-learning program (Saitta).

Sample Curriculum Materials

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Collaborate with a community group to identify a relevant place-based issue that can be addressed through writing
- Analyze the social, historical, and political aspects of a place-based issue
- Write in an appropriate genre(s) for a real community
- Demonstrate an understanding of positionality, intersectionality, and standpoint theory, and articulate a beginning definition of their identity as a writer
- Develop a sense of place for their campus and its surrounding communities
- Engage in critical and self-reflexive reflection of their service and writing processes

Partial List of Suggested Readings

- Bowdon, Melody, and J. Blake Scott. *Service-Learning in Technical and Professional Communication*. New York, NY: Longman, 2003. Print.
- Cresswell, Tim. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004. Print.
- Harding, Sandra, ed. *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual & Political Controversies*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

- Pezzullo, Phaedra C. *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2007. Print.

Assignment and Activity Ideas

- Service-Learning Project Proposal: In small groups, students will work with community partners to identify and articulate a pressing community- and place-based issue that can be addressed (at least in part) by writing and develop a student-organization contract for the service-learning project. In this proposal, students will outline the issue, suggest possible solutions, assess the team's strengths and skillsets related to this project, describe anticipated project deliverables, outline the distribution of work, and provide a tentative schedule of due dates.
- Paper Clip Privilege Activity: Students will consider their social locations, tally their privilege, and engage in a class discussion of privilege and power dynamics (Sgoutas).
- Power Mapping Activity²²: Students will describe and visually document their goals for their service-learning project, the community stakeholders invested in this issue, and the influential people who can help and hinder the student's cause. An example of a basic power mapping grid is included below:

²² This activity is adapted from Amy Pond.

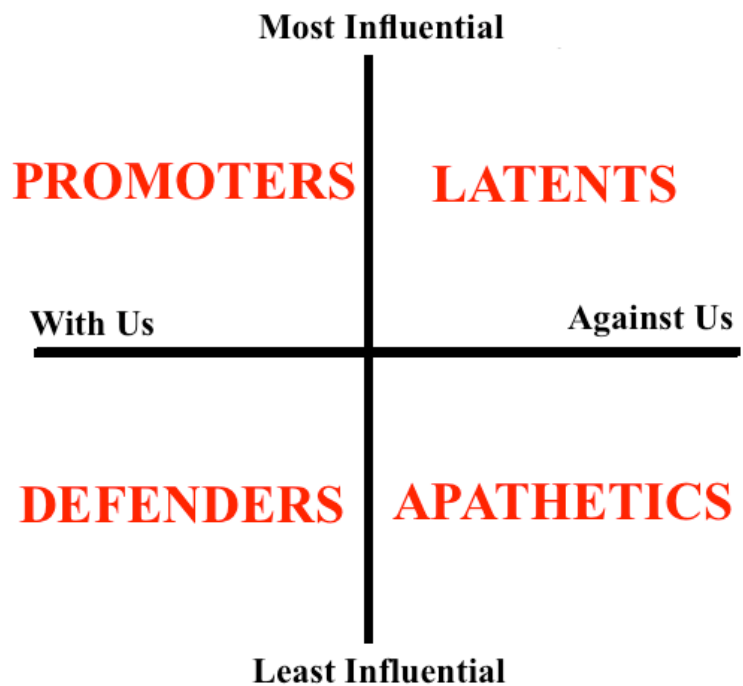


Figure 2: Power Map Populations

- Service-Learning Critical Reflection Logs: At various points in the semester, students will complete reflection logs about their service-learning experiences. In these logs, students will connect their work to course concepts, critique their positions in the service-learning site, and track their perceptions of place, community, and personal identity. Below, I have included some sample reflection prompts.
 - Reflection Log #1: Describe your identity in the place where you live, work, and/or study. Explain how particular people and places have shaped who you are as a person, student, writer, and citizen. You should answer questions such as: Who am I? Where do I come from? What is my relationship to the place I live (or have lived)? What is my relationship with others in the community in which I live (or have lived)? (Demarest 8).

- Reflection Log #2: Compare your skillset with the needs and service opportunities of two-three potential service-learning sites. First, complete a personal skills inventory: list any skills, qualifications, and/or areas of expertise that might be relevant to your service-learning work (e.g., time management skills, organization skills, experience composing collaborative writing documents). Also list any attitudes, values, or beliefs that may impact your service-learning work (e.g., religious beliefs, political beliefs, attitudes about social issues). Then, conduct some research on the missions/ goals, locations, services, needs, clientele, and service opportunities of two-three service-learning sites. Create a visual that shows possible connections among your skills and attitudes and the goals of the service-learning site. Then, rank your two-three choices according to the level of match. Explain your choices.
- Reflection Log #3: Describe the place of your service-learning site. Where is it located? What is the neighborhood like? (Think about aspects of the built environment, access to public spaces and needed services, and so on.) What human and nonhuman actors constitute this site? Who has power? Who is served?
- Reflection Log #4: What is your persona in the service-learning site? What role have you been assigned? In which moments do you feel you have authority? What aspects of the service-learning work have allowed you to draw on your prior knowledge, skills, or areas of expertise? How have you presented yourself?
- Reflection Log #5: What does “place” mean to you? What places have been meaningful in your life? Why? How have these places impacted your identity? Tell a story about a place that holds special significance to you.

- Service-Learning Project Deliverable: Based on the writing need identified during the “Project Proposal,” students will create a deliverable for the community organizations’ use. Example deliverables include agency brochures, how-to handbooks, event flyers, a social media campaign plan, or a community comic book. Below, I’ve included an example deliverable assignment:
 - Community comic book: With your service-learning organization, identify a place-based issue that the local community needs more information about. Then learn more about the issue: conduct interviews and research about the place-based problem. Finally, “develop a narrative and design components that disseminate [this] information through a comic book publication” (Landorf and Doscher).

Other Resources

The following resources all describe some aspect of local knowledge, systems, or content. They can be incorporated into students’ processes of articulating the issue they would like to address in their service-learning project, developing an understanding of the physical location of their service-learning site, or conducting research on community histories of particular places.

- Central Florida Memory Collection: <http://www.cfmemory.org>
- Florida Watersheds and River Basins Map:
<http://www.protectingourwater.org/watersheds/map/>
- Orange County, Florida: Community Issues:
<http://www.orangecountyfl.net/BoardofCommissioners/CommunityIssues.aspx#.VSE15yb3anM>
- RICHES of Central Florida: <http://riches.cah.ucf.edu/projects.php>

Conclusion

In this study, I have argued that place is a topic worthy of study in a writing classroom. Through my literature review, I have shown that scholars in the fields of composition, rhetorical theory, and writing studies have investigated the concept of place. I have suggested that place can be considered both a material agent that constructs human experiences as well as a product of social constructions. I have introduced place-based education and service-learning teaching methods as complementary approaches for exploring concepts of place, positionality, and personal identity. As noted above, there is a trend of lumping place-based education and service-learning together, since these curricular approaches share many similarities. However, they are distinct teaching methods.

That being said, each teaching method can benefit from the other. For instance, place-based education can be improved by incorporating service-learning's emphasis on encouraging reciprocity between the classroom and community and by including critiques of more than the places where students work (e.g., by critiquing sources of difference and students' positions in the service-learning site). Service-learning can be improved by narrowing its focus to locally-relevant, activist-oriented issues and by helping students to develop more thorough understandings of the places where they live, since these places impact their lived experiences and identities in material ways. Moreover, since local problems are smaller in scope than national or global issues, they present a good starting point for students' investigations and might present opportunities for them to tackle a more manageable topic in the span of a fifteen-week semester. And again, because local places, communities, and issues are personally-relevant to learners, students should be able to make strong connections between their service and learning. In sum, then, place-based education can improve service-learning projects by providing a focus

for students' investigations and understandings and by reinvigorating the service-learning teaching method.

The goal of this project was to develop a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component. To achieve this, I drew on the experiences and perspectives of three stakeholder groups: the instructor of a writing course, students in that writing course, and community partners who collaborated with students on service-learning projects. By including these voices in the curriculum design process, I have valued marginalized perspectives. This curriculum deliverable includes sample course learning objectives, a list of recommended readings and resources, and descriptions of course assignments and class activities.

This study offers three main contributions. First, this project addresses calls for more research on how students and community partners can be included in the curriculum design process. Second, this study offers a method for coding interview data in order to generate suggestions for designing and revising a course. Third, this project includes notes toward a sample curriculum that can be utilized to design a place-based writing course with a local service-learning component.

This project has implications for instruction in writing and service-learning, research on curriculum design, and community partnerships and service. For instance, I have suggested that community partners should be responsible for identifying and articulating their service-learning needs; this claim is supported by place-based education and service-learning approaches, which both emphasize community collaboration and reciprocity. I encourage writing instructors to establish community partnerships with local organizations and begin to explore the ways such partnerships can be mutually beneficial for both parties. I also encourage instructors to include

not only students and community partners in the course design process, but clients served by the organization, too.

Still, further research is needed. Some questions researchers can address include: How might institutions create and maintain meaningful partnerships with community organizations that host service-learning experiences? How might place-based education help students to not only develop a positive sense of place but productively interrogate and dis-identify with places based on their social positions and/or lived experiences? And How might risks of the service-learning experience (e.g., inconsistencies among agency's expectations and students' service-learning projects, students' feelings of discomfort at service-learning sites, and so on) be mitigated to create a worthwhile (but not necessarily all positive) learning experience for all parties involved? These questions do not come with easy answers. However, I believe that any investigation into ways we can improve instructors' design processes, students' learning experiences, and/or community partners' relationships with institutions of higher education is a worthwhile endeavor.

APPENDIX A: OUTCOME LETTER FROM IRB OFFICE



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Melissa Marie Pompos and Co-PI: Melody A. Bowdon**

Date: **November 26, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/26/2014, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Investigating "Place" in the Writing Classroom: Designing a Place-Based Writing Course with a Local Service-Learning Component
Investigator: Melissa Marie Pompos
IRB Number: SBE-14-10779
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

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

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis on 11/26/2014 08:28:17 AM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: ABBREVIATED LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Instructor

1. What are the objectives of this service-learning project?
2. Have you ever taught a writing course with a service-learning project before? If so, how many? What lessons from that experience did you keep in mind while designing this particular course?
3. In your course, who is responsible for selecting the service-learning topic/site: you, students, community members, or some combination?
4. How do you help students to choose their service-learning sites/projects? Do you suggest particular locations, organizations/community groups, or causes? If so, why these ones?
5. What types of projects do you, personally, regard as valuable? Are these projects issue-specific, community-specific, place-specific, or something else? What kinds of populations or communities are you most committed to working with (both in and outside this class)?
6. Have you established any “partner” relationships with local service organizations, charities, and/or nonprofit volunteer organizations? If so, what types? What kinds of issues are addressed by these organizations?
7. At what sites do students’ service-learning projects take place?
8. Some instructors ask students to complete a “personal inventory,” skills assessment, or some sort of reflection where students are asked to consider what unique skills and interests they bring to a service-learning project. Do you have students complete any sort of similar exercise? (In what ways do you ask students to examine their own identities, priorities, or positions in the service-learning site?)

9. In a service-learning project, who teaches students? (The instructor, the community members, someone else?)
10. What disciplines do you see as informing this service-learning project? (For instance, are concepts from fields like political science, writing studies, and/or social work represented in the course readings?)
11. Since this class is part of the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, I'm wondering: How do you incorporate writing concepts in the course? Do these concepts overlap with any of the students' service-learning work? (For example: Do students see their community partners as "audiences" and/or "rhetors"? Do students pay attention to the context/setting/place of their work? Do students reflect on the process of their work?)
12. This is a civic engagement course. How do you define "civic engagement"?
13. Where does civic engagement happen? (When students are civically engaged, are they concerned with local, national, and/or global issues?)
14. How do you define "place"?
15. Do you have any particular connections to this place (Orlando, Florida)? In your own scholarly research, do you focus on issues of place, community needs, and/or service-learning?
16. Are you familiar with place-based education? If so, how would you describe it to someone who was unfamiliar? If you're not familiar with this pedagogy, what kinds of assumptions do you make about a pedagogy called "place-based education"?
17. One of the principles of place-based education is that "learning focuses on local themes, systems, and content" (Promise of Place). In your class, are "local"

- communities or local, physical places favored over other national, global, or web-based environments? If so, why? If not, why not?
18. Another principle—or, rather, a goal—of place-based education is that students develop a “love for one’s place” or a “sense of place.” Do you hope students will develop attachments to this place (and/or their local communities) through their service-learning/civic-engagement work?
 19. Have you ever taught a “place-based” writing course before? If so, how many? Was the course similar to this one? If so, in what ways? If not, what have you revised and why?
 20. If you were to teach this course again, what would you keep and what would you change or do differently? Why?

Interview Questions for Students (Individual Interviews)

1. Have you ever taken a service-learning course before? If so, how many? What were those experiences like?
2. What were your expectations for this service-learning project?
3. Did you have any say in the service-learning project you participated in, such as choosing the site where you completed your work? If so, how did you choose? What factors contributed to your decision?
4. What were your choices for this service-learning project? What kinds of topics/issues were represented?
5. What personal skills, interests, beliefs, experiences, and/or qualifications do you possess that made you think you’d be a good fit for your particular service-learning project?

6. If you could choose any type of service-learning project to participate in, what would you choose? What topic would you address? What community would you work with? Where would the project take place? Why?
7. Please describe the service-learning project you participated in. (How would you describe your service-learning site? What was the community like? What was the place like?)
8. What did you learn throughout this service-learning project? How did you learn those things? (Who/what helped you to learn them?) Please describe a particular moment when you learned something during your service-learning project.
9. How do you define “place”?
10. Do you have any particular connections to this place (Orlando, Florida)?
11. Do you have any connections to other places? If so, where are they and why are they meaningful to you? Do you think these connections impact your experience here in Orlando? How have these connections shaped your identity?
12. How, if at all, has this service-learning project changed your perceptions about Orlando (or UCF or the surrounding area)?
13. One of the principles of place-based education is that “learning focuses on local themes, systems, and content” (Promise of Place). In your class, are “local” communities or local, physical places favored over other national, global, or web-based environments? What makes you think so?
14. Another principle—or, rather, a goal—of place-based education is that students develop a “love for one’s place” or a “sense of place.” Did you develop an attachment

- to this place (and/or your local community) through this service-learning/civic-engagement work?
15. Was the setting/context/place of your service-learning project an important influence on your work and/or learning in this civic engagement/writing class? If so, in what ways? If not, how do you think your learning might have been different if you had participated in a different service-learning project?
 16. Would you say that this service-learning project helped you learn more about “place”? If so, in what ways?
 17. What parts of this course were valuable?
 18. Would you take this course again? If so, why? Would you recommend any changes? If so, what changes? If you would not take the course again, why not?

Interview Questions for Students (Group Interview)

1. In our individual interviews, I described a few of the characteristics of place-based education, such as an emphasis on local themes and the development of a sense of place. I will now share a list of other criteria that place-based educators have determined are central to place-based education. (Distribute list.) To what extent do you believe your experiences in the service-learning portion in this class met these criteria? Were there other portions of this class that met some of these criteria?
2. Which of these criteria would you like to see incorporated in a writing course? In a writing course with a service-learning component?
3. Based on your experience, how do factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, or other markers of “difference” impact your work in the service-learning site?

4. As a result of your service-learning project, did your opinions about (or knowledge of) UCF or central Florida change? If so, in what ways?
5. As a result of your service-learning project, did your attitudes toward the population served by your project change? If so, in what ways?
6. Do you believe that the place you worked in (during your service-learning work) affected what you learned in the class? If so, in what ways?
7. Do you have any other insights about the presence of (or importance of) “place” in this course that you’d like to share?
8. If you were to design your own service-learning project, what would that look like? What would the goals for the project be? Which types of issues would be represented? Which groups or organizations would you work with? What types of assignments would you design? Why?

Interview Questions for Community Partners

1. Please describe the mission and goals of your organization. (What issues does this organization’s work address? Are these goals related to a particular community and/or place? If so, how?)
2. What kind of work do students normally complete when engaging in service-learning/volunteering with your organization?
3. Have you ever collaborated with students in a service-learning project before? If so, how many? What were those experiences like?
4. Please describe the service-learning project you most recently participated in. (How would you describe the service-learning site? Who makes up the community? What is the place like?)

5. How much say do you or your organization have in the articulation of the service-learning project's goals, the actions that are completed, the students who you worked with and/or other matters?
6. What is your role in a service-learning project? What is the student's role in the service-learning project? What is the instructor's role in the service-learning project?
7. What personal skills or qualifications do you think students should possess to work with your organization? Do you have a screening process for students or "match" them to specific work?
8. In your opinion, what kinds of relationships should students (and classrooms) have with community organizations that participate in service-learning projects? Based on your past experiences, is this relationship usually the case? If so, how do you help that to occur? If not, what prevents this type of relationship from happening?
9. Would you participate in a service-learning project again in the future? If so, why? If not, why not? Would you recommend any changes to the service-learning project? If so, what changes?
10. Do you think that your organization's location affects the type of work you do? In other words, do you believe that this work is unique to this region? If so, in what ways?
11. Has your work at this organization changed your perceptions about central Florida? If so, in what ways?
12. How do you define "place"?
13. Do you have any connections to particular places (such as central Florida)? If so, what are those places and why are they meaningful to you? Do you think these

- connections impact your experience at this service-learning site? How have these connections shaped your identity?
14. As part of my thesis research, I'm looking at the principles of place-based education and seeing if and how those principles align with service-learning pedagogy. One of the principles of place-based education is that "learning focuses on local themes, systems, and content" (Promise of Place). In your organization and/or service-learning work, are "local" communities or local, physical places favored over other national, global, or web-based environments? If so, what makes you think so? If not, what communities and places are favored?
15. Another principle—or, rather, a goal—of place-based education is that students develop a "love for one's place" or a "sense of place." Do you believe that students who work with you develop a sense of place through this service-learning work?
16. What place-centric issues or topics should higher education courses be addressing?

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