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BUILDING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

By

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BUILDING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study describes out-of-school education facilitators' perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding the promotion of personal and social, cultural, and academic and career development through creative writing workshops. The focus on the facilitators of the creative writing workshops is to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and values they have regarding the theories they use to inform their curriculum, and, therefore, how they promote student development. The researcher believes that a better understanding of the facilitators' descriptions and perceptions of students and student development within creative writing workshops allows educators and community leaders to proceed from a more informed perspective in terms of student development and facilitation of creative writing workshops. This specific interest on the facilitators, and not the participants, stems from an active resistance to the pervasive negative labeling of youth within previous published research in several fields and within the American educational system. Examining experiences of facilitators of workshops for a targeted age group of 7th–9th grade students narrowed the purpose of the study further so that the research could explore a specific and crucial decision-making period of student development.

Key findings of this study were obtained from eight in-depth interviews with individuals from five creative writing workshop programs at different locations. The criteria for selection of

participants was that all participants are presently or formerly creative writing workshop facilitators using the AWA Method and that all participants had creative writing workshop experience with the research study's targeted age group of 7th–9th grade. The participants accurately represented the titles and positions of those most involved with the outcome development for creative writing workshop programs. The information gained through the interviews formed the basis for the overall findings of the study. To support the findings that came from the in-depth interviews, the organization of each participant was examined and key factors such as mission, values, and teaching philosophy were identified. The process of coding was used to analyze this data. The four findings from this study include how the interview participants presented the importance of identity, the value of modeling, the role of allowing only encouraging feedback, and the use of community mentors. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that creative writing workshop facilitators and programs focus on identity formation and representation in their workshops and curriculum; and leverage the use of modeling and mentoring.

Keywords: creative writing, creative writing workshops, student development, self-efficacy, self-authorship, arts education, out-of-school program

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Five years and two traumatic head injuries later. Thank you to everyone (and all the dogs) along the way.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this study, the researcher sought to explore the experiences of creative writing workshop (CWW) facilitators and their perceptions of building student development within their program. The purpose of this study was to examine their experiences and to describe the perceptions of out-of-school workshop facilitators' promotion of adolescent student development within their program. The researcher anticipated that the knowledge generated from this examination would afford new insights into promoting student development for specific age groups and would inform education practice. In this study, the researcher employed qualitative in-depth interview methodology to explore the phenomenon. The participants of this study included a purposefully selected group consisting of eight private and community education facilitators who have hosted CWWs for students in Grades 7–9.

This chapter begins with an overview of the context and background that frames the study. Following the overview is a statement of purpose and accompanying research questions. Included in this chapter is a discussion about the research assumptions, limitations, and scope. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the proposed rationale and significance of this research study and definitions of the key terminology.

Background and Context

The idea of using creative writing as a tool to achieve a variety of personal, academic, social, and cultural goals is not new. Connolly Baker and Mazza (2004) noted studies, dating back to the 1980s, that showed significant changes in the physiological and psychological health of subjects regarding the value of writing. The importance of telling stories through writing has been studied in the fields of education, physical and mental health, child development,

leadership, and corporate human relations (Hunt & Robbins, 1998). Research over three decades shows the therapeutic effects of writing after facing traumatic experiences (Lengelle, Meijers, Poell, & Post, 2014). Previous studies on the benefits of writing include Lepore and Smyth's (2002) collection of studies on the positive effects of expressive writing on health and well-being.

Several therapies involve helping individuals reframe their life experiences as stories, empowering the writer to make “personal meanings, responses and reactions as a means of changing long-term consequences” (Connolly Baker & Mazza, 2004, p. 143). Vickers (2015) noted creative writing as being especially helpful in exploring situations involving “vulnerable social groups, and social processes that tend to be kept behind closed doors” (p. 31). Writing becomes a “medium for experiencing experience” (Rajabali, 2014, p. 40). “Writing makes events and emotions more manageable when put into words; it provides an element of control to the writer” (Connolly Baker & Mazza, 2004, p. 144). Vickers (2015) found that writing “is especially noted for its capacity to underscore sensitive and difficult-to-uncover social phenomena (p. 31). Wegner, Struthers, and Mohamed (2017) found that creative writing promotes emotional expression and personal exploration. They also found that writing enabled the participants to acknowledge personal changes and development and provided insight into their feelings and experiences. In addition, according to Boldt and Brooks (2006), “The very process of creation involves self-exploration and can be both empowering and healing (p. 224).

The Amherst Writers and Authors (AWA) method is a structured approach to writing that consists of asking participants to tell their own stories in their own voices within a timed writing period (Schneider, 1993). Following the individual writing, participants are invited to read their writing aloud, while others listen and comment on what they like and what they remember.

There is no criticism of the writing. This is the main component of the workshop setting. According to Schneider (1993), the originator of the AWA method, “The safe place depends on knowing there is no criticism” (p. 138). Connolly Baker and Mazza (2004) noted that an essential ingredient of success in the CWW is that participants believe that their writing is taken seriously, is held in confidence, and will have no adverse social effect on them. Benard (1997) found that the creative writing workshop (CWW) environment created caring relationships, positive and high expectations, and opportunities to participate and contribute. Unlike the traditional classroom environment where the teacher is an authority and where communication is generally top-down, an interactive relationship enhances students’ motivation, which in turn renders them more interested and engaged in the learning process (Ho et al., 2012). Ho et al. (2012) described the feature of CWW as being a nonjudgmental and supportive learning community in which everyone contributes. This format allows participants truly to engage in conversation and discussion without constant interruption of a facilitator (Jones & Fenge, 2017).

In a workshop study, Connolly Baker and Mazza (2004) found that the workshops offered another method for empowering individuals toward personal growth and community development. The participants form a community, a word noted throughout the literature when referencing the groups of students in CWWs together. The CWW offered “an opportunity for stories to be shared, whereas feedback on strengths of the narrative provided a vehicle for supportive relationships” (Chandler, 2002, p. 265). Barclay and Saldanha (2016) found the guided writing technique used in CWW to be effective for making meaning of a variety of experiences including transitioning to college, severe illnesses, sexual abuse, and workplace injustice.

The AWA method has been used in a variety of settings, and previous study results indicated that the outcomes of interventions using the AWA method have resulted in encouraging cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes (Chandler, 2002, 1999; Howe, 2014; Porter-Vignola, Daigneault, Garel, Lecours, 2015); and improving the lives of adolescents, low-income women, immigrants, incarcerated men and women, and sexual abuse victims (Chandler, 2002; Deegan, 2010; Wegner et al., 2017). CWW programs have been found to be well suited and responsive to urban youth (Camras, 2004; Cooley, 2003; Deegan, 2010). Evaluations of CWW were found to have connections to improved learning, increased empathy, inspiration to try new behaviors, greater self-understanding, and building resilience (Benard, 1997; Chandler, 2002; Connolly Baker & Mazza, 2004). Zhao and Kuh (2004) demonstrated that students in such an environment are intrinsically motivated to learn. Chandler (2002) used the AWA method and noted that the method provided participants an opportunity to reflect on their situation and validate their experience.

Connolly Baker and Mazza (2004) wrote that the essence of the creative writing technique is that it forces people to stop what they are doing and briefly reflect on their lives. “This is one of the few times when people are given permission to see where they . . . are going without having to please anyone” (p. 146). Several programs throughout the country are focused on providing creative experiences for youth, including CWWs that use the AWA format. The majority of these programs have missions that include the idea that arts and creative experiences for youth should include the themes of expression, exploration, and empowerment. Some programs go as far as offering art programs that are led by professional artists at local schools, youth shelters, recovery programs, and detention facilities, and that allow young artists to engage with art for personal exploration, expression, and empowerment. The young artists learn to

express their identity and to communicate their experiences in an artistic way that removes stigma and breaks out of social isolation for healing and rebuilding toward stability. This structure allows the program facilitators and participants to work on meeting a variety of personal and social, cultural, or academic and career goals.

In response to the previous research findings, this researcher limited the data collection to programs that had a committed focus on adolescent CWWs that used the AWA method, and that had a mission or vision that was aligned with the research problem. The programs selected for inclusion in the data collection methods later in this study came from five separate states. The researcher examined how facilitators of these programs describe their experiences with adolescents in Grades 7–9. Attention was given to the way that the facilitators defined student development and the strategies that they associated with the development of personal and social goals, and academic and career goals.

Statement of Problem

The literature provides insights on how, from an early age, disciplinary interests become differentiated by genders, income levels, and racial and ethnic groups (Wilson & Ziomek-Daigle, 2013). Research shows how race and gender might limit or expand exposure to specific careers or might influence how a person views the possibility of achievement related to a particular interest (Gibbons & Schoffner, 2004; Lent & Brown, 1996). For example, students of minority ethnicities might lack appropriate role models for careers, creating a sense that people from their ethnic background do not enter those careers and that the students should dismiss that career from consideration (Gibbons & Schoffner, 2004). Bryant (2017) found that a student was more positively affected by others if common characteristics were shared (e.g., age, gender, race, or perceived ability). Weibell (2011) claimed that the degree of similarity between observer and

model is the most important factor in determining strength of influence. This gap between observer and model is often larger for students from low-SES backgrounds and from minorities (i.e., those considered nondominant in social systems and subsystems; Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). In addition to the challenges of income inequality, inadequate academic preparation, lack of available information, and lack of peer counseling and modeling are all roadblocks to the positive development of students (Pajares & Schunk, 2002; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000).

The student age group of Grades 7–9 was chosen for the focus of this study because these grades offer a unique timeframe for academic and career decision making. According to Gibbons and Borders (2010a), “Middle school is a vital time in career and college planning, regardless of the type of post-secondary education that students intend to pursue” (p. 234). Most students make decisions about their future academic goals before Grade 10, which directly relates to and affects their academic preparation (Atanda, 1999). According to Bandura (2010), self-development during formative years forecloses some types of options and makes others realizable. The choices made in these formative years of development will then shape the course of the students’ lives. Such choices determine what aspects of their potentialities students cultivate and have cultivated, and which aspects they leave unattended (Bandura, Barbarella, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). By the time most college preparation or bridge programs begin, many students have eliminated from consideration the concept of higher education or those occupations they believe are beyond their capabilities, however attractive the options might be (Bandura et al., 2001).

The combination of age and gaps in student development-building opportunities means many of the students who are the focus of this study will face these additional gaps in equity. The equity gap in opportunities to build student development leads to further gaps in academic

advancement and future career-building opportunities. The problem the researcher explored in this study is how out-of-school facilitation of adolescent creative writing in a workshop format program could fill this student development gap and findings could address the lack of research on the role of the facilitator in these programs.

The researcher focused on the facilitators of the CWWs to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and values they have regarding the theories they use to inform their curriculum, and, therefore, how they promote student development. This specific focus on the facilitators, and not the participants, stemmed from an active resistance to the negative labeling of youth in previously published research in several fields. Although this researcher considered previous studies that used what educators now know to be student handicapping (the characterization of students as “at risk”), this researcher rejected such practices. Handicapping practices (e.g., the negative labeling and sorting of nondominant youth) that are built into societal subsystems require social remedies beyond those offered in the societal subsystems themselves, as well as those offered in public schools (Achinstein, Curry, & Ogawa, 2015; Bandura et al., 2001). In the problem that was studied, the researcher acknowledged the expectations, belief systems, and social practices of home, school, and mass media, and addressed the way that these systems might diminish positive development. The researcher hopes this exploration addresses the equity gap in student-building opportunities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to describe out-of-school education facilitators’ perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding the promotion of personal, social, cultural, and academic and career development through CWWs. By examining the experiences of the facilitators who hosted the programs, this researcher explored the values and beliefs that they

hold about student development. The experiences, views, and perceptions of these educators provided insight to the connections, interactions, and relationships between CWWs and the promotion of student development. The focus on the targeted age group further narrowed the purpose of the study so that the researcher could explore this specific and crucial decision-making period of student development. The exploration of the CWW facilitators' perceptions and descriptions of their experiences in promoting student development within their programs contributed to the understanding of student development theories for the targeted age group and overall body of knowledge of CWW benefits.

Research Questions

To shed light on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1: How do out-of-school education facilitators perceive and describe their experience with hosting a CWW?

Research Question 2: How do out-of-school education facilitators define and promote student development within their program?

By using the definition of student development provided by the facilitator, this research question was also used to explore the values and beliefs that facilitators hold about building adolescent academic, social, personal, career, and cultural goals.

Of the available models of student development, with the research questions, the researcher used the model of self-authorship from Baxter Magolda (2001); therefore, the researcher believed that self-authorship would be the maximum goal of student development for the workshop facilitators. The researcher also assumed that the facilitators want to promote

student development, and that facilitation of self-authorship could help the students meet their desired educational outcomes (Pizzolato, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework combines the theories of student development, social learning, and creative arts education to describe which concepts were used in the collection and analysis of data in this study. The conceptual framework also includes the specific use of CWWs and the use of the student development theory of self-authorship as a curriculum theory within those workshops.

Conceptualizing a definition of student development for this study involved themes of identity, culture, and self-efficacy. The promotion of student development involves the promotion of academic development, personal and social development, and career development (Galassi, 2017). The principles associated with this promotion include the concepts of motivation, goal orientation, self-efficacy, attributions, behavioral self-regulation, and identity (Jones, Kittendorf, & Kumagai, 2017). Although many student development theories target higher education, this study was focused on students of middle school and early high school ages. In this study, the researcher also addressed the systems of oppression present in the traditional perspectives on student development theory. The concepts of student development used in this study show diverse worldviews, systems of power influence, and the nature of cognitive development. It was necessary to combine threads of scholarship used to understand how social forces affect student development, for this framework situates student development in a way that allows systems of oppression to be addressed. To avoid labeling youth, and as an active measure to resist labeling found in previous research, the researcher included in the

conceptual framework concepts that facilitators have used to ground their CWWs with a focus on facilitator evaluation.

Of the available models of student development, the researcher most closely used the model of self-authorship from Baxter Magolda (2001) because this theory involves the cognitive and integrative aspects noted in CWWs, and it acknowledges the gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity contexts central to this study. As Pizzolato (2016) suggested, understanding the participants' social world and cultural context is critical to effectively assess their developmental process. In these ways, the self-authorship theory most closely aligned with the study's characterization of student development not as something only for transitioning college students, but as an enterprise for all students "focused on moral concern, citizenship, and emotional intelligence" (Karp & Frank, 2016, p. 158).

Student development theorists point to self-authorship as one of the mechanisms through which individuals develop a sense of identity. Baxter Magolda (2001) defined self-authorship as incorporating the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of development, and the way that these dimensions are intertwined in an individual's developmental journey from being externally defined to holding internalized values that guide life choices. Baxter Magolda (2001) described it as the "shift of meaning-making capacity from outside the self to inside the self" (p. 268). Research into the self-authoring process for marginalized populations recognizes the increasing complexity in the ways that inequitable social systems might constrain and inform the student's developing sense of self (Abes, 2009; Hernández, 2012, 2016). According to Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, and Wang (2012), cultural, relational, and psychological interactions affect self-authorship development.

For this study, creative writing is a form of self-expression, not a study in form. It is the process that matters, not the product. Creative writing is viewed as both a tool to achieve personal, academic, social, or cultural goals, and a process of learning how one knows things to be true. In this process, a complex interplay exists between thinking and writing in which initial ideas are reworked into new meaning and thoughts are given form (Atwell, 1987; Chandler, 1999; Sorrell, 1994). Creative writing becomes an active process of merging thought and feeling, and in which students have both cognitive and affective responses (Chandler, 1999). When this happens, students construct important connections that lead to the development of self. Using writing as both the tool and the process can provide a neutral way to solve problems, capture feelings and experiences, exercise power and freedom, and know one's own voice (Atwell, 1987; Chandler, 1999; Pipher, 1994). A basic assumption of student development is that, to maintain health, adolescents must develop a strong sense of self through self-knowledge and the ability to express themselves. This type of writing experience has great potential to contribute to the mental, emotional, and social development of the participant (Chandler, 1999; Nicholls, 2009; Sorrell, 1994). In a workshop, all members are expected to share their writing and to participate in discussion. Although a teacher or other leader facilitates the workshop, they are neither an authority figure nor a therapist, but rather an equal member of the workshop with the added experience of being responsible for keeping the workshop on task and safe. There is also no evaluation or criticism of talent. These concepts are fundamental to examining and interpreting the effectiveness of the workshop program.

The focus on facilitation and on what makes an effective CWW facilitator (in terms of promoting student development goals) informed the study. This focus provided a lens to view the experiences and perceptions, and to analyze them. This focus included how facilitators use the

concepts of self-authorship and college-going culture to ground their programs, and the values and beliefs that they hold regarding adolescent student development and self-authorship. The concepts presented in the conceptual framework were also used in the coding process of data analysis. Data collection and analysis were based on the concepts that related to the CWW facilitators' perceptions of the students' development, not on the cognitive analysis of the workshop student participants. Within the critical paradigm, cognitive analysis seemed wrong to describe the students' experience as lacking in development, as it locates the deficiency with the individual student and not with societal power inequalities (Abes, 2009).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

The researcher studied the experiences and perceptions of eight creative writing workshop facilitators who included their descriptions of promoting student development within their program. For the investigation, the researcher used qualitative research methods with in-depth interviews as the primary method for data collection. The information gained through the interviews formed the basis for the overall findings of the study. Six interviews were completed through email, and two were completed on the telephone, during which they were audio recorded and later transcribed. To support the findings that came from the in-depth interviews, the organization of each participant's report was examined and key factors (e.g., mission, values, and teaching philosophy) were identified.

The coding categories were developed and refined throughout the study and were guided by the study's conceptual framework. From the researcher's experience and background in out-of-school youth programs, creative writing, and education, two primary assumptions were made regarding this study. First, the concept of student development was linked with the concepts of self-efficacy, identity, and self-authorship. This assumption was guided by the literature

reviewed, in which the researcher noted these concepts as major factors in personal and academic development. Second, the scope of research was limited to Grades 7–9. This assumption was based on the premise that students create career and academic goals and aspirations in approximately Grades 7–9.

Creative writing was chosen as the specific form of expressive arts used because it is low-cost and can deliver on several student development concepts. Approaching creative writing as a form of expressive art, the scope of this study did not include evaluation of writing skills. This distinction is crucial to data collection and analysis. The researcher explored the process of expression through art and how that could lead to building student development, notably in terms of future decisions.

In addition to the assumptions and theoretical orientations that were made clear at the outset of the study, the researcher remained engaged in ongoing critical self-reflection by way of journaling and peer-review. To address researcher subjectivity and to strengthen the credibility of the research, various procedural safeguards were put in place when addressing the data sources and methods, which included member checking and auditing. At the time the study was conducted, the researcher was employed as a professor, writer, and coach. Previously, the researcher was an executive-level director with board capacities within parks and recreation, city and county government, community outreach, animal welfare, and education. These experiences shaped the researcher's critical theoretical orientation and interest in the findings gained from qualitative research methods. The researcher also shared personal experiences that were similar to those of the facilitators and the workshop participants who were the focus of this study. These experiences occurred as a CWW participant during youth summer camps, an undergraduate student of writing, literature, and publishing, a volunteer within writing and mentorship

programs, while participating in a public relations role for similar programs, and in program development for fine arts education.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study emanated from the researcher's desire to uncover ways to make the possible benefits of building student development through CWWs more accessible to more students. This research adds to the body of knowledge about both CWWs and student development, but it also holds significance for educators, administrators, counselors, and after-school programming staff. The intervention of the CWW is a low-cost and empowering approach to student development. For students (especially those from systematically and historically discriminated populations), the potential of possible self-efficacy and identity transformation might be the most important aspect of the study. An increased understanding of the experiences of CWW facilitators and their perceptions on how to best promote student development aids educators in each of these areas regarding purpose and significance.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher looked in depth at how creative arts, notably creative writing in the workshop setting, could promote student development. By exploring CWW programs and student development, the researcher showed how students could benefit from created opportunities in the fine arts to build important development concepts (e.g., self-authorship) to help make better-informed future academic decisions. The purpose of this study was to describe workshop facilitators' perceptions of how CWWs build student development. In this study, the researcher aimed to address the equity gap that nondominant youth face in student development opportunities.

The next chapter begins with a literature review. The literature first focuses on defining and describing creative writing workshops and student development. Next, the roles of adolescent decision-making and self-authorship in student development is explored. This is followed by the conceptual framework that included concepts of student development, social learning, self-efficacy, and creative arts education. Closing the literature review is the theoretical framework of the student development and curriculum theories of self-authorship and social cognitive theory. A methods section follows the literature review, where the data-gathering methodology and research design is investigated. Next, results from these interviews is discussed and findings are offered. The final chapter provides an interpretation of the findings, as well as the significance, limitations, and implications of these findings. The paper concludes with recommendations for action and proposed future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the researcher explored perceptions that the facilitators of CWWs held of student development building for students in Grades 7–9 through participation in CWWs. This exploration was intended specifically to understand the experiences of these facilitators while working with this population. To carry out this study, it was necessary to complete a review of current arts engagement, creative writing, and student development literature. This review was ongoing throughout the data collection and synthesis phases of the study.

In the review of the literature, the researcher explored the engaged experiences of the facilitators, and explored what they perceived and defined as promoting student development within the CWW efforts. To this end, three major areas of literature were critically reviewed: (a) benefits of creative writing and CWWs, (b) adolescent student development, and (c) self-authorship, particularly how education facilitators use it. A review of the literature on creative writing and CWWs provides an overview of the benefits of arts engagement and provides an understanding of related identity production and empowerment concepts. Literature featuring social cognitive theories and concepts of self-authorship literature were reviewed to provide a context for understanding the process of defining and promoting student development within this age group.

To conduct the selected literature review, the researcher used multiple information sources, including books, professional journal articles, research dissertations, current Internet sources, and periodicals. These sources were primarily accessed online through Google Scholar and RefWorks, as well as personal knowledge of creative writing organizations' website resources. Throughout the review, relevant areas and issues were identified and discussed. The

main ideas and themes that were identified and by which the researcher used to carry out analysis are noted for their significance. In addition, the researcher noted important gaps in segments of the literature. The interpretive and critical summaries that conclude this chapter illustrate how the included literature informed the researcher's understanding of the material and how the material contributed to the development of the study's conceptual framework.

Creative Writing Workshops

According to Boldt and Brooks (2006), "The creative arts have been proven to be especially helpful by fostering positive relationships, academic motivation, responsibility, and climate of respect" (p. 223). Coholic, Fraser, Robinson, and Loughheed (2012) found that using arts-based methods facilitated the learning of a variety of skills, including social and coping skills, mindfulness, and emotional awareness. Boldt and Brooks (2006), who researched creative arts students, found that involvement with creative arts "correlated with improved grades, higher standardized test scores, improved attendance, more interest in school, fewer hours of television, and increased community service involvement" (p. 223). According to Smith and Martin (2014), "The time participants spend on creative activities allows more fundamental concerns and opinions to emerge, providing a greater depth of reflection" (p. 289). Engaging in the arts and creative process within a supportive environment parallels the beneficial effects of improving self-efficacy in other areas (Ho et al., 2012, p. 71).

Catterall (2012) highlighted the positive connection between arts and student development. The results showed that, in middle school and beyond, students tend to do better on a host of academic and civic behavioral measures than do youth who lacked arts backgrounds. Catterall (2012) found that teenagers and young adults who have a history of in-depth arts involvement showed better academic outcomes than did youth who have less arts involvement,

earning better grades and demonstrating higher rates of college enrollment and attainment. These differences were even more pronounced when comparing teens from different social-economic status (SES) backgrounds. Catterall (2012) noted that socially and economically disadvantaged children and teenagers who have high levels of arts engagement or arts learning show a greater number of positive outcomes in a variety of areas than do their low arts-engaged peers. These disadvantaged teenagers or young adults (who are labeled with a history of intensive arts experiences) show achievement levels closer to (and in some cases exceeding) the levels shown in the general population studied (Catterall, 2012). These findings suggest that in-school or extracurricular programs offering arts involvement might help narrow the gap in achievement levels among youth of high-SES versus low-SES (Catterall, 2012, p. 24).

Creative writing programs have been shown to increase adolescent self-esteem and self-efficacy. In their review of after-school CWWs for teenage girls, Boldt and Brooks (2006) noted that “story telling build[s] on the natural strengths of each individual. The very process of creation involves self-exploration and can be both empowering and healing” (p. 224). Having the opportunity to tell their own story in their own language in a safe, structured setting with positive feedback leads to higher self-efficacy (Chandler, 1999). Deegan (2010) claimed that the CWW is a site of individual identity production, as well as a place for individuals to be influenced by others (p. 23) and that creative writing programs are well suited to be responsive to urban youth (p. 31). These studies also approach creative writing as a form of expressive art and creative writing workshops as a way to express oneself, and not a place for the teaching and evaluation of writing skills.

CWWs provide a much different experience than those found in the traditional English class, and they provide an opportunity for students to explore themselves. In CWWs, both the

participant and the audience “see a chance for growth and heightened awareness of who they are and where they are headed” (Freisinger, 1978, p. 284). Group writing workshops have a focus on building and reinforcing resilience and self-efficacy (Coholic et al., 2012, pp. 345–346, 349). Fitzgerald and Schutte’s (2010) results supported the utility of the CWW approach and suggest an “empowering low-cost approach” to enhancing student development (p. 502). In their study of a creative writing program, Lengelle et al. (2014) found that writing engages students creatively, inviting both emotional and cognitive explorations of what is meaningful to them, how they might serve others, and what they might do to set a particular course. Writing can offer useful critiques of uncontested assumptions and beliefs (Vickers, 2015). Wegner et al. (2017) found that participating in CWWs raised self-esteem and self-confidence. Wegner et al. (2017) found that, at the interpersonal level (in terms of social connections and interactions), the participants reported on the development of social skills and leadership skills feeling positive towards their peers and developing new friendships. In a CWW, the participants are allowed the needed ownership of their own writing, receive guidance from an adult writer, and have the support of a community of fellow learners (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001).

“Writing enables critical thinking about one’s own values” (Vickers, 2014, p. 30).

Writing delivers these benefits since writing implies capturing the voice of the individual on the page leading to growth and empowerment (Chandler, 1999). “Voice is a notion of empowerment” (Frostig, 2011, p. 52). When people learn to use their real voice, it leads to growth and empowerment in using words and relating to others as well as self” (Chandler, 1999, p. 77). Wegner et al. (2017) noted that the process of becoming empowered ultimately leads to constructive change. “Creative stories can extend understanding in ways that are unachievable in more standard scholarly submissions (Vickers, 2014, p. 31). Wegner et al. (2017) found that the

participants in the creative writing program “identified new learning that had occurred as well as future goals” (p. 14). Wegner et al. (2017) showed that creative writing “facilitate[d] reflection in adolescents as it enabled them to acknowledge personal changes and development and provided insight into their feelings and experiences” (p. 15).

The CWW is frequently used in academic settings as part of experiential learning (Wegner et al., 2017, p. 11). In the traditional school curriculum, little opportunity is provided for students to focus on the development of self (Chandler, 1999; Linesch, 1988). Writing gives students a way to communicate personal experience, engage in social participation, and explore and experiment with identity (Chandler, 1999; Linesch, 1988). Chandler (1999) found that CWWs gave power to the writer in a community of people coming together to write, to be heard and to be affirmed. Chandler (2002) recognized that using written or oral language alone does not lead to reflective abstract thought. “For reflection to occur, oral and written forms of language must pass back and forth between persons who both speak and listen” (Chandler, 2002, p. 258). Without these interactions, individuals remain isolated from others, and even more important, without the tools for making meaning of and sharing their experiences, individuals remain isolated from themselves (Chandler, 2002). CWWs provide social and intellectual interchanges (Chandler, 1999).

Chandler’s (1999) purpose was to describe the rationale, content, and results of a group creative writing program to increase adolescent self-esteem and self-efficacy. Chandler’s (1999) findings showed that, given the opportunity to tell their own story in a safe, structured setting with positive feedback, students were led to higher self-efficacy and self-esteem. “When the environment felt safe, participants were open to hearing each other’s voices” (Chandler, 2002, p. 266). Jones and Fenge (2017) found that the workshop format was an empowering approach

for marginalized groups and that it enabled individuals to come together collectively to produce new understanding. According to Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Alberts (2006), the workshop provides students an opportunity for disclosure and validation, to have a voice, and to learn that they are not alone. Chandler (2002) found that, when the CWW features diverse participants, it offers the benefit of understanding and relating to the lives of others. Individuals in a group can experience support and learn that they are not alone in their life experiences (Coholic et al., 2012). Jones and Fenge (2017) studied CWWs and their results highlighted the impact of hidden identities on writers, often intersected by age, gender, race, and class.

Researchers (Booker, 2006; Boyd, Kamaka, & Braun, 2012; Crumb & Larkin, 2018; Irvin, Farmer, Leung, Thompson, & Hutchin, 2010) have emphasized the importance of considering contexts out of school that support educational goals and persistence (e.g., CWW programs). These studies share several major themes. The creation of art leads to a sense of personal growth and development, including reflection on the past life experiences, self-discovery and an awareness of creative writing as an outlet for personal, social, and educational goals. Students also reported an enhanced sense of community and development of skills through collaboration (Booker, 2006; Boyd et al., 2012; Crumb & Larkin, 2018; Irvin et al., 2010).

Student Development

The long-accepted purpose of schooling is to provide instruction in academic functioning and to socialize students (Meyer, 1977). Both purposes need to be addressed for student development to occur. The foundational origins of student development date back to the 1930s and the concept of whole student, which evolved to address growing diversity and marginalized voices in 1970s and 1980s, with the current perspectives considering the roles of context, intersectionality, and acknowledgment of individual agency (Abes, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991;

Johnson, 2006; Titchkosky, 2011). Student development theories emphasize the movement toward independent decision-making, which is less reliant on obedience to authority and motivated instead by a sense of personal responsibility (Karp & Frank, 2016). The ways that students recognize and maneuver social forces are part of the developmental process (Hernández, 2016). For example, the process of identifying and making meaning of racism is a significant developmental experience for racial and ethnic minorities (Hernández, 2016).

Education allows individuals to transcend their original generational status and move to higher life aspirations (Brown, Hurst, & Hail, 2016), and higher aspirations are positively related to future academic achievements (Strayhorn, 2006). According to Gibbons and Schoffner (2004), behavior is organized and sustained by using previously set goals. Students need to know what educational pathways will lead to their desired goals, and how their current academic circumstances will affect options (Vargas, 2004).

Gibbons, Pelchar, and Cochran (2012) found that addressing the needs of students before college, and even before high school, can help better prepare them for achieving their postsecondary goals and aspirations. As early as elementary school, students begin to learn about options for their futures and the education required for certain careers with specific focus starting in middle school (Center for Educational Partnerships, 2019). Oesterreich (2000) and Tierney, Colyar, and Corwin (2003) showed that the most effective and successful college preparatory programs start in middle school. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) determined that most students make decisions about their educational future by Grade 10. These decisions directly affect middle and high school students' college preparation and later attendance (Atanda, 1999; Gibbons & Borders, 2010b). Hossler et al. (1999) and Gibbons and Schoffner (2004) recommended that college intervention programs focus on middle school students to help them

make informed decisions about and prepare for their future; nevertheless, unfortunately, not many studies have focused on how to assist these students before they arrive at college.

During adolescent development, the quest for individual identity, self-knowledge, self-confidence, group affiliation, autonomy, and pride in accomplishments can be achieved through enhancing experiences (Chandler, 2002). According to Chandler (2002), teens need to develop protective processes of self-efficacy, self-esteem, coping strategies, and social support. “A primary goal for the transition from childhood to adulthood is to develop a positive sense of self” (Chandler, 2002, p. 259). Resilient children share similar characteristics, such as positive self-concept, hopefulness, optimism, emotional expression and management in stressful situations, and interpersonal problem-solving skills (Coholic et al., 2012).

Targeted intervention efforts that reach out to students before college can help mitigate the differences in development between students (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). Chandler (2002) used a similar age group in his study on CWWs. All participants were adolescents early in their high school education, a time when identity is still being formed, roles are being tried out, and lifestyles considered. This stage of development offers them a unique window of opportunity to influence and modify their values, beliefs, and behaviors (Chandler, 2002).

Student Development and Adolescent Decision-Making

According to Bandura et al. (2001), “The choices made during formative periods of development shape the course of lives. Such choices determine which aspects of their potentialities people cultivate, and which they leave undeveloped” (p. 187). Therefore, adolescents remain open to some types of educational and professional options and dismiss others completely as unrealizable (Bandura et al., 2001). Evaluators of effective college

preparation programs have found that successful programs start in middle school and involve parents and peers (Gibbons & Borders, 2010b, p. 234). Similarly, Hossler et al. (1999) recommended that college intervention programs focus on middle school students to help them capitalize on informed decision making.

As self-development occurs during formative years, it is imperative to establish self-efficacy and other tools of motivation during this time, especially as it will “play a key role in setting the course of lifestyle trajectories with diverse impacts across the lifespan” (Bandura et al., 2001, p. 187). Directly and indirectly, children’s perceived academic-, social-, and self-efficacy influence the types of activities of which they deem themselves worthy, and what they will seriously consider as a possible path (Bandura et al., 2001, p. 187). In middle school, a child might already believe he or she is not capable of any number of lifestyles, including attending college, and start to shape their life accordingly.

Role of Self-Authorship in Student Development

Self-authorship involves defining one’s own beliefs, identity, and relationships (Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2001; Kegan, 1994). It is the tension between the internal voice and external influence. As the participants’ internal voices grow, they become strong enough to supersede external influence (Meszaros, 2007). Becoming the authors of their own lives involves reshaping what they believed, their sense of self, and their relationships (Meszaros, 2007). Emerging sense of self requires renegotiation of existing relationships to be consistent with the internal voice (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Identity formation, interpersonal competence, and taking responsibility are all noted as essential abilities central to student development (Abes, 2016; Baxter Magolda, 1999; Karp & Frank, 2016). Meszaros (2007) noted that participants shift from “how you know” to “how I know” and, in doing so, began to choose their own beliefs. Participants acknowledged

the inherent uncertainty of knowledge and took up the challenge of choosing what to believe. “How I know” requires determining who the “I” is through self-reflection and interaction with others to choose their own values and identity (Meszaros, 2007). Hodges (2009) explained that self-authorship enables learners to evaluate information critically, form their own judgments, and collaborate with others to act wisely. Self-authorship is noted as helping students form and improve on several diverse skills and abilities that are required for successful student development. These skills and abilities include effective communication, clarified values, realistic self-appraisal, appropriate career choices, spiritual awareness, social responsibility, effective partnering work, citizenship in a diverse society, and the capacity to manage multiple external realities (Baxter Magolda, 1994, 1999, 2001; Hodges, 2009). Beyond gaining these skills, self-authorship can also help students learn to integrate these abilities into their knowing and decision-making processes (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Conceptual Framework

The review and critique of the literature, combined with the researcher’s personal and professional experience and insights, contributed to the conceptual framework for the design and conduct of the study. The conceptual framework developed for this study helped to focus and shape the research process, informing the methodological design and influencing the data collection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018, p. 61). It was used to make conceptual distinctions and organize ideas, and it included the theories that informed the study. The conceptual framework provided an outline of how the research was collected and analyzed, but it was also used to position the study within the larger field of research. These concepts were used as the codes that became the foundation for the data collection interview questions and the transcript analysis and coding process. The conceptual framework was developed from the researcher’s experiences

with first-generation college students in the classroom and as a mentor for student support services within a college retention program. These experiences led to a much more critical perspective on student development theories and the way that they were used to inform the methods that high schools and colleges use to prepare and develop students. These experiences also led to the recognition of the powerful role of mentors, role models, and out-of-school educators and the effects of their beliefs and values on students.

Self-Authorship

The self-authorship framework that Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (1992, 1999) first identified offers a context for examining developmental transformations. The framework can orient epistemological and student development theories. The introduction of self-authorship as an epistemological orientation can clarify the skills facilitation needed so that students can meet learning development outcomes (Pizzolato, 2006). These development outcomes and transformations include internally defined goals and decision-making process (Baxter Magolda, 1999; Hodges, 2009), internally constructed identity and sense of self (Baxter Magolda, 1999; Pizzolato, 2006), internalization of community norms (Karp & Frank, 2016), critical thinking (Pizzaloto, 2006), and intellectual, relational, and personal maturity (Hodges, 2009).

Self-authorship, as Baxter Magolda (1999) defined it, is a relatively enduring way of understanding and orienting oneself toward proactive situations, even those deemed uncomfortable or ambiguous, in which the person recognizes the contextual nature of knowledge and balances this understanding with the development of his or her own internally defined goals and sense of self. Self-authorship might help students to make decisions that allow them to balance multiple goals more effectively rather than weighting only on contextual orientation

(Pizzolato, 2006). Self-authored students work to view knowledge as contextual and view identity as internally constructed (Pizzolato, 2006).

Critical thinking, a desired skill of future educators and employers, is the ability to see oneself as autonomous and in control of the knowledge construction process, and effective functioning in a democratic, multicultural society, which is also a typical desired outcome of student development participation and transformation (Pizzolato, 2006). Of specific interest to this study is the idea that students who have experienced significant challenges, particularly because of marginalization, might exhibit self-authorship in a manner similar to other students who gained it through sources that were more traditional (Abes & Jones, 2004; Hodges, 2009; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

Pizzolato (2009) suggested that specific practices could help students to make decisions that are reflective of self-authorship capabilities. Educators could help students become focused more internally by validating them as thinkers by introducing them to the skills needed to address multiple perspectives, and then to form and accept responsibility for their actions and decisions in ways that are consistent with their own identities (Hodges, 2009). Education facilitators could help students make decisions that consider personal and career implications and that might help them negotiate among multiple competing expectations or desires (Pizzolato, 2006). Hodges (2009) suggested that educators move away from the traditional role of the expert and instead push students to gain intellectual, relational, and personal maturity through continuous feedback and high expectations. Pizzolato (2006) suggested that facilitators might need to explain not only the elements of success, but also the ways to overcoming failures. By guiding students to develop an internally defined and integrated belief system and identity, facilitators will be helping students to prepare personally and intellectually for future choices

(Hodges, 2009). To build self-authorship, educational opportunities like CWWs should be presented with a variety of perspectives for understanding and interpreting situations and information. In addition, they could support the students' use of varied perspectives to develop and defend their understanding (Pizzolato, 2006). By actively engaging students in discovering new knowledge and developing appropriate ways of enabling them to make critical evaluations, make informed judgments, act ethically (Hodges, 2009), and by helping students to develop their own beliefs, academic instructors can help students see themselves as capable of making sense of complex experiences and see themselves as important (Pizzolato, 2006).

Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive framework, learning most likely occurs if there is a close identification between the observer and the model, and if the observer has a high level of self-efficacy. For some people, race or gender plays a very prominent role in everyday life, including fewer opportunities to pursue educational or professional goals. The Critical Media Project (2017) noted that this could be more subtle (e.g., not seeing similar people prominently or accurately represented in media, in stories, or in school curriculum). When a person lacks opportunities for similar role models and lacks accurate representation in media, education, or professional arenas, they also lack those opportunities for creating or building self-efficacy. This becomes a concern for low-income students and those who have faced historical discrimination, for they have fewer opportunities for these shared social experiences. Interests are impeded from developing when students do not have the opportunity to form strong self-efficacy and positive outcome beliefs, regardless of their talent level (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Role models and social networks are significant for this population. The social network can provide different types of support, including a social comparison with others in similar

situations or with experience in a particular situation (Blackwell & Pinder, 20014). In this way, a relevant social network is required to successfully navigate academic and professional experiences. When students have less relevant social support, especially from personally relevant models who have achieved success in similar situations, they tend to be less successful at navigating those experiences (Blackwell & Pinder, 2009).

Desjardins (2004) noted that, in the early stage of the student choice cycle, students are highly influenced by cultural, social, demographic, and psychographic factors. When discussing how students develop career and academic goals and aspirations, one must understand the intersecting role of gender, race and ethnicity, and SES because the normative structures within communities have created disadvantages for individuals of certain identities in intersecting and differing ways that are not necessarily additive (McNeill, Pimentel, & Strauss, 2013). For example, the experience of a woman of color is not necessarily the combined experience of being a woman and being of color; it can be unique in and of itself (USC, 2018). Much of the research does not focus on intersectionality, instead classifying people according to their single-member group membership (McNeill, Pimentel, & Strauss, 2013). Betz (1992) also noted how society might alter women's career choices.

With the conceptual framework, the researcher assumes that self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) is a major concept of student development, for self-efficacy is the most focal and pervading of all the mechanisms of human agency (Bandura et al., 2001). According to the frameworks of social cognitive theorists (Bandura, 1977; Bandura et al., 2001; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963), human behavior is caused by the dynamic interactions of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. Individuals develop a sense of self-efficacy from personal performance, learning by example, social interactions, and the way that they perceive their

feelings in a situation (Gibbons & Schoffner, 2004). In relation to this study, engaging in the creative writing process within a supportive environment significantly increases self-efficacy and parallels the beneficial effects of positive student development in such areas as reducing stress, improving self-confidence, opening new perspectives, and enhancing one's general ability to cope with problems (Ho et al., 2012). "Creating inclusive learning environments in which students are encouraged to bring their vast life experiences to the center of their learning will not only create developmental learning opportunities, but also enrich the (sic) learning setting overall" (Carpenter & Peña, 2017, p. 98).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework involves student development theories that make identity a major component of the theory, namely Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship. The concept of self-authorship is explored from two perspectives, with both the students and the facilitators participating in workshops. This framework also includes theories aimed at personal, academic, social, and cultural goals (e.g., Bandura's 1977 social cognitive theory).

The theory of self-authorship that emerged from Kegan (1994) and was later developed by Baxter Magolda (1999, 2001), entails a shift from uncritical acceptance of external authority to critical analysis of authority to establish one's own internal authority (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). This internal authority represents self-authorship as the capacity to define one's own beliefs, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Self-authorship allows one to negotiate and act on one's own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than uncritically on those purposes, values, feelings, and meanings that might have been assimilated from others (Hodges, 2009). Kegan (1994) first defined self-authorship as an:

ideology, an internal personal identity, a self-authorship that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and interpersonal states. It is no longer authored by them; it authors them and thereby achieves a personal authority. (p. 185).

Instead of depending on external values, beliefs, and interpersonal loyalties, self-authorship relies on internal generation and coordination of one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties (Baxter Magolda, Meszaros, & Creamer, 2010). Baxter Magolda (1999) noted that a student's evolution occurs when the challenge to become self-authoring is present and is accompanied by sufficient support to help the individual make the shift to external meaning making.

This is especially important when it comes to current and future decisions and goals. A self-authored student will not blindly follow parental expectations nor single-mindedly follow a gut feeling or passion (Baxter Magolda, 1999). They will be open to and actively consider the advice and input of important authority figures but will not exclusively consider externally imposed expectations and internally defined goals and values (Pizzolato, 2006; Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2001). Self-authored students will know that the best choice is made after consideration of multiple perspectives, in light of their own short- and long-term goals and values and the constraints of the situations, and they will be reflective about how their decision affects their own future and their interpersonal relationships (Pizzolato, 2006). They will be able to see their individual decisions within a context of goals and situations that is larger than the one in which they presently find themselves. The self-authored student will have the ability to integrate his or her own internally defined goals, values, and sense of self into the decision-making process; including the ability to incorporate both logic and consideration of personal feelings and goals into those decisions (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Originally named social learning theory, Bandura et al. (1963) aimed to integrate a continuous interaction among behaviors, personal factors that include cognition, and the environment. Bandura (1986) later renamed the theory *social cognitive theory* to emphasize the major role that cognition plays in encoding and performing behaviors. The theory shows a direct correlation between a perceived self-efficacy and behavioral change (Bandura, 1977). For students, self-efficacy plays a major role in how tasks, goals, and challenges are approached. Self-efficacy is based more on what people believe than on what is true. How people behave can be predicted by what they believe themselves capable of accomplishing (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). People might prematurely eliminate choices concerning academics and potential careers because of inaccurate self-efficacy (Gibbons & Schoffner, 2004).

Grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, social cognitive career theory (SCCT) promoted by Lent et al. (1994) was used to examine how academic and career interests develop, how academic and career choices are made, and how these choices are turned into action. This is also accomplished through a focus on self-efficacy, along with outcome expectations and goals. SCCT aims to explain three interrelated aspects of career development: (a) how basic academic and career interests develop, (b) how educational and career choices are made, and (c) how academic and career success is obtained (Lent et al., 1994). Social cognitive career theory assumes that people are likely to become interested in, choose to pursue, and perform better at activities about which they have strong self-efficacy beliefs as long as they also have the necessary skills and environmental supports to pursue those activities (Lent et al., 1994). People are likely to form enduring interest in an activity when they view themselves as competent at performing it and when they expect the activity to produce valued outcomes. The converse also holds true (Lent et al., 1994). Gibbons and Borders (2010a) found that SCCT

explains the career and educational experiences of a variety of populations, including minority students and international students. Although this theory is focused on careers, theorists tend to look at younger populations, and several studies have been conducted on challenges faced by nondominant students.

Social cognitive theory stresses the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Blackwell and Pinder (2014) showed that, even if social cognitive theory factors (e.g., economic conditions, socioeconomic status, and educational and familial networks) do not directly affect human behavior, they do influence a person's aspirations, self-efficacy beliefs, personal standards, emotional states, and other self-regulatory influences. Academic career preparation is predicted by self-efficacy not only to complete the academic prerequisites, but also to fulfill academic milestones in the career (Bandura, 2012, p. 26). With the desire to promote college and career readiness, policies that prioritize academic programs over arts might produce unintended consequences that could potentially undermine efforts that have been undertaken to prepare students for successful futures (Yang, 2015).

Conclusion

In examining the experiences of CWW facilitators, the researcher describes the perceptions of the ways that CWWs build student development. To answer the research questions about the way that out-of-school education facilitators perceive and describe their experience with hosting a CWW, the researcher employed qualitative, in-depth interviews to gather applicable data. The conceptual framework that the researcher used addressed the way that education facilitators define and promote student development within their program, as well as their values and beliefs towards adolescent student development. The concepts of student development presented guided the collection and analysis of data and showed the way that the

environment of CWWs could be used to promote student development. The concept of using creative writing as tool to achieve personal, academic, social, and cultural goals was also explored to help address the research problem.

The researcher learned directly from out-of-school educators who now facilitate or have previously facilitated CWWs. These roles occurred in afterschool programs, summer camps, neighborhood library groups, and outreach programs. Subgroups included those educators who have experiences with students in Grades 7–9. Learning about the educators' experiences and perceptions with this target population informed the research. The way that educators perceive their experiences in facilitating CWW programs is important to learning and understanding additional avenues for promoting student development. This perception is even more relevant for nondominant youth. The research is of particular interest to elementary, middle, and high school administrators and counselors; and to out-of-school program facilitators. The data also hold importance for higher education institutions, especially for admissions, student support services, and bridge programs. CWW program administrators and facilitators benefit the most from this research, and it provides an added benefit for grants and other fundraising efforts. This is also applicable to all out-of-school program administrators, facilitators, and counselors. CWW participants themselves also benefit from this research, along with their families and communities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe, by examining facilitator experiences and perceptions, how creative writing workshops (CWWs) build student development. A better understanding of this phenomenon allows for a more informed perspective in terms of promoting student development for specific age groups and informed education practice. In seeking to understand this phenomenon, the researcher addressed two research questions:

1. How do out-of-school education facilitators perceive and describe their experience with hosting a CWW?
2. How do these education facilitators define and promote student development within their program?

The methodology described in this chapter shows how the research proceeded. The study focused on eight facilitators of CWWs from five separate programs located in three different regions of the United States. The two research questions were used to explore and understand how these facilitators defined and promoted student development in their programs. The information needed to answer those research questions was determined by the conceptual framework and was grouped according to contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical information. This information included (a) the context within which the participants reside or work; (b) the facilitators' perceptions of their experiences with hosting a CWW; (c) the definitions of academic, personal, social, cultural, and career development and goals; (d) the values and beliefs regarding their role in promoting student development; (e) the demographic information pertaining to the participants, program leadership, and the program itself; and (f) an ongoing review of the literature providing the methodological and theoretical grounding for the

study. This also provided the theoretical basis of the data collection methods used and why the researcher used them.

In this chapter, the researcher describes in detail the methods used in this study and provides an explanation for the course and logic of decision making throughout the research process. The choices and decisions regarding the qualitative research methodology were determined by a review of the literature and knowledge of current issues and discourse. An overview of the research design is presented, which is followed by descriptions of the research setting and sample, including the population it came from. Next, the methods of data collection, as well as analysis and synthesis of data are discussed. The conceptual framework provided the foundation for how the data were analyzed and synthesized. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are offered. The chapter culminates with a brief summary.

Research Design

Framed within a critical paradigm, the research design served as a template for the data collection and analysis, while it also showed the negative implications of unequal power relationships, like those often associated with race, gender, and social class. The research design also showed that the researcher is not independent from what is researched, and findings were mediated through the researcher; therefore, it also included analysis of historical, social, and cultural events beyond the setting. The research design was shaped by the belief that (a) the social reality is created through social, economic, political, and historical forces; (b) values are key in what is learned; (c) there is no pretense of value neutrality; and (d) interactive research methods procedures should be designed to reveal oppression and show the possibility of change (Bailey & Bailey, 2017). A qualitative research design framed within the critical paradigm

included understanding the processes by which events and actions take place, developing contextual understanding, and adopting an interpretive stance.

Semistructured interviews were used because they allowed some level of flexibility regarding how an interview was administered, but still allowed the researcher to maintain some structure over the parameters (Baily, 2018). The researcher used an interview guide with specific questions organized by topics, but the questions were not necessarily asked in a specific order. This interview guide is attached as Appendix E. In preparing the interview guide, interview questions were linked to the research questions and were reviewed to ensure congruence between the interview questions and the research questions. Each research question had no more than 10 and no less than four interview questions associated in the guide. In that way, the interview questions were broken into sections associated with the types of information needed for analysis.

The potential research participants were sent a recruitment email in February 2020 that described the purpose of the study and invited their participation (Appendix C). Of these candidates, eight were able to participate fully in the in-depth interviews during the study's timeline (see Appendix G). The participants represented separate programs in different states in different geographical regions. The interview participants carried titles (e.g., program director, youth director, professor, teacher, and facilitator). These subjects accurately represented the titles and positions of those most involved with the outcome development for CWW programs. The semistructured, in-depth interviews were conducted by email or by telephone.

The researcher used the two research questions as the framework to develop the interview questions. This alignment ensured that the information that the researcher intended to collect was directly related to the research questions and would provide answers to the research questions. A panel of three communication and English research colleagues reviewed the proposed interview

questions and matrices. Their assessment of the interview questions and the feedback provided was incorporated into the schedule of questions. A series of open-ended questions was developed. The final interview guide is included as Appendix E.

The interview process took place during February, March, and April of 2020. Further information on how the subjects were identified is addressed later in this chapter. All of the interviewees signed a consent form prior to taking part in the interview. This consent form is included as Appendix D. All of the phone interviews were audio recorded by the researcher in their entirety. These recordings were transcribed by the researcher verbatim. Email interviews were conducted by delivering the interview guide to subjects; they replied directly to the form and returned it. This is included as Appendix F. Follow-up questions were also conducted by email.

Setting

Although no physical setting that involved the researcher was used, a full description of the CWW workshops that was included in the research is noted as the research setting in Chapter 4. Similarities between the programs and the participants, including program mission and vision, and facilitator titles are noted in Chapter 4.

Participants

A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select the study's participants. The researcher sought to locate individuals at a variety of CWW programs, first by contacting the organizations that were already known to the researcher. The researcher has a background in creative writing and community programs that includes education, employment, and personal experience with creative writing and community education in four states. Five interview subjects were confirmed in this way. A snowball sampling strategy was also used with these

organizations to garner suggestions for other appropriate interview subjects. This led to one additional secured interview subject. The researcher then conducted an Internet search of comparable organizations and programs to locate additional potential participants. Again, only programs that approach creative writing workshops as a way to express oneself, and not as places for the teaching and evaluation of writing skills, were included. This search was done by reviewing the mission, objectives, and program protocols of these new organizations, and those appropriate for the study were contacted by email. Nevertheless, this strategy limited the researcher to only active programs and those with enough information to find through an online search. Therefore, a snowball sampling strategy was also employed with these organizations, whereby participants were asked to refer other individuals whom they knew to be presently or formally associated with CWW programs. One additional participant was selected in this way.

The criteria for selection of participants was

1. All participants are presently or formerly CWW facilitators using the AWA method.
2. All participants had CWW facilitation experience with the research study's targeted age group of Grades 7–9.

The researcher decided on the delimiting experience requirement to ensure adequate knowledge of the age group and workshop techniques noted in the review of literature and conceptual framework. There were no criteria for age, location, or experience level.

Purposeful sampling allowed for sampling across various locations in the United States. The research sample included eight individuals from five programs at different locations, both as a program and geographical setting. The participants had differences among them regarding educational background, length of time with program, gender, age, and current/previous employment. The accompanying table highlights the demographics of the participants.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

	Educational background	Professional background	Personal background	Current occupation or title	Geographic area	Type of program	Role in program	Workshop involvement
A	MFA, MA	Self-employed, Writer	No youth experiences	Director	Milwaukee, WI	Creative writing day camp	Director of program	Facilitator and model
B	MFA & MAT		Creative writing course as senior in high school	Young Writers Program codirector	Denver, CO	Youth writing and artist residency	Youth program director	Oversees curriculum and workshop facilitators
C	EdD, educational leadership	Los Angeles County Office of Education, and educator	Ad hoc way as part of class assignments		Los Angeles, CA	Mentor-based writing program for female youth	Associate director, professional volunteer	Facilitate and participate in workshops
D	PhD, communications & media arts MA, literature & writing	Communications and Public Relations, College professor	Owned and operated writing school with workshops	Visiting Professor of Communications and Digital Media	Kenosha, WI	Writing school and workshops	Independent book editor and sole operator	Running own writing school with workshops across southeastern Wisconsin
E	NA	Director of national organization, teach writing workshops, and runs teacher trainings	New York public schools and creative writing programs	Executive director & founder	New York, NY	Youth creative writing programs	Director of program	Previously facilitated, train current facilitators, oversee all programming
F	MFA, writing, literature & publishing	Educator and writer	Participated in summer camp CWW programs	English lecturer Writing and reading lab facilitator	Boston, MA	Writing and reading lab	Writing and reading lab facilitator	Facilitator and mentor
G	NA	Educator and nonprofit	Creative writing as subject in language arts classes in middle and high school	Program director	Portland, ME	Youth program as part of larger creative writing organization	Youth program director	To create opportunities for young people, focusing on college access and preparation
H	NA	Educator	Youth reading and writing programs	Middle school teacher	Chicago, IL	After-school program	Teacher	Facilitator and teacher

Data

The information needed to answer the research questions was determined using the conceptual framework, and it was grouped according to contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical. This information included (a) the facilitators' perceptions of their experiences with hosting a CWW; (b) demographic information pertaining to participants, program leadership, and the program itself; and (c) an ongoing review of the literature providing the methodological and theoretical grounding for the study. Contextual information in this study was used to describe the culture and environment of the participants' programs. This included the organization's history, vision, objectives, services, operating principles, strategies, leadership, and structure. The demographic information needed for this study included participant profile information. The information relevant to inform this study included professional background, education, location, and other personal information. The participants' perceptions related to the subject of inquiry were the most critical kind of information needed because this study is using interviews as the primary data collection method. These perceptions, beliefs, and values served as a frame of reference, neither right or wrong, telling the story of what they believe to be true. The theoretical information required for this study included what is already known regarding the topics of CWWs, student development, and self-authorship.

The researcher sought to control for potential biases that might have been present throughout the data collection and data analysis of the study. The goal was to ensure that the participants' perceptions matched up with the researcher's portrayal of them. The panel of colleagues who previously reviewed the interview matrix also reviewed initial data collection to examine it for accuracy and bias. The researcher strove to present data collected in a consistent and dependable way, and any negative instances or discrepant findings were included. The

researcher documented the procedures and demonstrated the coding schemes and categories that were used consistently. Inter-rater reliability was also used by having colleagues review the codes or provide their own coding to two randomly selected interviews. Two colleagues with experience with qualitative research methods and writing education fulfilled these roles. The researcher conducted the data coding and interpretation. This process was also recorded to show a transparent trail of how all of the data were analyzed and interpreted. In this audit trail, the researcher provided detailed and thorough explanations of how data was collected and analyzed, illustrating how the data can be traced back to its origins, and serving as an opportunity to assess the findings of the study.

Analysis

The data analysis took place simultaneously with the data collection to avoid the risk of repetitious, unfocused, and overwhelming data. The formal process of data analysis entailed the researcher assigning codes according to the categories and descriptors of the study's conceptual framework. The researcher identified the descriptors under the respective categories of the conceptual framework for each transcribed interview by placing color coding descriptors in the transcript, then noting the possible codes along a side column and the categories along another. As the process of coding the transcripts proceeded, the researcher continued to prepare columns for each transcript to capture other themes as they emerged.

Before finalizing the coded participant interview quotations, the researcher shared samples of the coded interviews with the same colleagues noted earlier in this chapter. These discussions confirmed the researcher's designations. The researcher also prepared a written narrative on each of the interviews after all the data has been assigned. These narratives were helpful in cross-checking the data and served as an additional layer of analysis. As a final step,

the codes and categories were placed into a visual concept map to aid the researcher with analysis. The research approach involved producing several patterns or themes that were linked in some way and that, taken together, describe or analyze the research. To this end, the process of analyzing the data followed through a series of comparisons. First, the researcher examined and compared within the categories. Second, the researcher examined across the categories. Lastly, the researcher compared the data with that reviewed in the broader literature. This happened not as a step-by-step list, but interlocked and was iterative throughout the synthesizing process. From the analysis and synthesis, the researcher was able to move toward broader implications of this research.

Participants' Rights

Although it was anticipated that no serious ethical threats would occur, the researcher employed various safeguards in this study to ensure the protection and rights of the participants. The research process followed all requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The IRB exempt approval is included as Appendix B. Protecting the participants' rights involved enlisting voluntary cooperation, and participants were informed of the study's purpose. Informed consent was documented. Written consent to proceed voluntarily with the study was received from each participant. Names and other significant identifying characteristics of the participants were kept confidential. Cautionary measures were taken to secure the storage of research-related records and data, and to ensure that only the researcher had access to this material. These measures included keeping audio recordings and all transcripts digitally stored on a password protected computer so that only the researcher had access to these files and backup files.

Potential Limitations

The researcher has personal, professional, and academic experience in this research setting; therefore, one of the key limitations of this study was the issue of subjectivity and potential bias. Recognizing these limitations, the researcher took the following measures. The research agenda, critical approach, and assumptions were acknowledged and stated at the beginning of the study and were repeated throughout the research process. Peers and advisors reviewed and critiqued the coding schemes and transcripts. To reduce potential bias during data analysis, names and other identifying factors were removed from transcripts before the interview transcripts were coded. The researcher used prior interview experience both professionally and as a researcher to ensure that the researcher did not influence the interviewees. By way of thick, rich description and detailed information regarding the context and background of the study, the findings could be assessed for their applicability and were applied appropriately to other contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher provided a detailed description of this study's research methodology. The data were reviewed against existing literature and emergent themes. A process analysis enabled the researcher to identify the key themes from the findings. Through comparison with the literature, interpretations and conclusions were drawn and recommendations were offered for future practice and research. The researcher's intent in conducting this study was to contribute to the understanding of CWWs as a tool to promote student development and to allow the findings to be of value to educators who are responsible for facilitating CWWs.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the in-depth interviews and document review. The first section of this chapter provides a review of the data collection process and then offers a description of the analysis method used to develop key findings. The next section includes a synthesis of the responses that provide the definitions and concepts used by the facilitators in the interviews, and the analysis of these results. The chapter offers a presentation and discussion of the results that details the support and explanation of each finding. A summary of the results linked to the study's purpose and problem statement conclude this chapter.

The purpose of this study is to describe out-of-school education facilitators' perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding promotion of student development through creative writing workshops. The researcher believed that a better understanding of the facilitator's descriptions and perceptions of students and student development withing creative writing workshops would allow educators and community leaders to proceed from a more informed perspective in terms of student development and facilitation of creative writing workshops. The focus on the facilitators of the creative writing workshops was to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and values they have regarding the theories they use to inform their curriculum, and, therefore, how they promote student development. This specific interest on the facilitators, and not the participants, stems from an active resistance to the pervasive negative labeling of youth within previous published research in several fields and within the American educational system.

The key findings of this study were obtained from eight in-depth interviews with individuals from five programs at different locations, both as a program and geographical. The criteria for selection of participants was that all participants are presently or formerly creative

writing workshop facilitators using the AWA method and that all participants had creative writing workshop experience with the research study's targeted age group of Grades 7–9. The information gained through the interviews formed the basis for the overall findings of the study. To support the findings that came from the in-depth interviews, the organization of each participant was examined and key factors such as mission, values, and teaching philosophy were identified.

Data Collection

Potential research participants were sent a recruitment email in February 2020 that described the purpose of the study and invited their participation. Of these candidates, eight were able to fully participate in the in-depth interviews during the study's timeline. The semistructured, in-depth interviews were conducted by email or by telephone. The interview process took place during February, March, and April 2020. All phone interviews were audio recorded by the researcher in their entirety. These recordings were transcribed manually by the researcher verbatim. Email interviews were conducted by delivering the interview guide to participants; they replied directly to the form and returned. Follow-up questions were also conducted by email.

The participants represented separate programs in different states in different geographical regions. The interview participants carried titles such as Program Director, Youth Director, Professor, Teacher, and Facilitator. These participants accurately represented the titles and positions of those most involved with the outcome development for creative writing workshop programs. During the interviews, the opening questions were used to gather information about the participants' personal, educational, and professional backgrounds. General demographic questions were also included. See Table 1 above for more details regarding the

participants. To gather information about CWW programs themselves, each organization's website was examined for its mission, vision, and program overview. The programs themselves served as the setting for the study and, therefore, were described in that context. Each participant's organization or program is described as the setting. These program settings are available as Appendix H.

Analysis Method

By way of thick description, the researcher set out to document a broad range of experiences, and thereby provide an opportunity for the reader to better understand the reality of the research participants. The researcher read each interview transcript multiple times to increase familiarity with the interview responses. This process allowed the researcher to organize responses according to categories designed by the study's conceptual framework; thus, the research findings and results were formed. The categories also naturally organized by the grouping of responses the participants themselves provided. The emphasis throughout is on letting participants speak for themselves. As shown above, illustrative quotations taken from interview transcripts attempted to portray multiple participant perspectives and capture some of the richness and complexity of the subject matter. Moving forward, where appropriate, program-specific data are woven in with interview data to augment and solidify that discussion.

The analysis method used for this study followed an inductive reasoning, grounded theory approach, and began while new data was still being collected. Therefore, the process was carried out in several steps and continued in a cyclical manner until all interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed. The transcribed interviews were first reviewed to assign initial open codes. Any occurrences of repetition, recurrence, or forcefulness were noted as possible themes. Concepts, patterns, and themes were highlighted as emergent codes. At this

stage in the analysis, the codes were used to identify and differentiate between concepts that could be labeled and sorted. The researcher developed inductive categories from these open codes. Next, the data were reviewed to assign axial codes in attempts to link categories together for meaning. Relationships within and among the categories were identified. Codes, categories, and category definitions continued to change dynamically while the data collection continued, with the new data altering the scope and themes. These steps continued until the categories were stable enough to no longer be collapsed, relabeled, or refined. The researcher coded and categorized the data manually. This method was used instead of electronically coding or through use of a database so that the researcher would remain closely involved with the data at all times. See Appendix I for the codebook used for analysis. These codes, categories, and emergent themes are explored further in the upcoming section, Presentation of Results.

To test and verify data quality, data triangulation involving comparison of data from different sources was used, including the document review noted earlier. The document review matrix can be found as Appendix J. Transferability refers to the extent to which the research may be applied to a different context (Keyton, 2006). This study improved transferability through rich descriptions of the setting and context of the study, which allows readers to make judgments. Dependability refers to the consistency of the results when replicated (Keyton, 2018). Dependability was improved through documentation of the processes and procedures involved in this study. The researcher also practiced self-examination to minimize personal bias that may influence the results of the study with the researcher being the sole investigator. This included questioning of self during data collection and analysis so that the processes and results remained in line with the purpose of the study and the research questions. Confirmability refers to the

extent to which the results are supported by the data (Creswell, 2017). This was improved through documentation of the processes and procedures.

Presentation of Results

The related literature in Chapter 2 was used to inform the structure of the data presentation and analysis. The codes and categories used for data analysis relate to the original intent of seeking greater understanding of facilitator perceptions of their creative writing workshops and student development and were framed by the literature review and conceptual framework. The categories also naturally organized by the interview guide and grouping of responses the participants themselves provided. These categories include 1) common meaning and practices; 2) experiences with CWW facilitation; 3) benefits and outcomes; and 4) promotion of student development outcomes. In this section, each category that emerged from the coded data is introduced and the results of the analyses performed are discussed. In addition, the researcher presents commentary on the results when needed. The emphasis throughout is on letting participants speak for themselves. Illustrative quotations taken from interview transcripts attempt to portray multiple participant perspectives and capture some of the richness and complexity of the subject matter. Moving forward, where appropriate, program-specific data are woven in with interview data to augment and solidify that discussion.

Common Meaning and Practices

This category explores how the interview participants define and describe terms, concepts, and practices related to creative writing workshops and student development. In the interview guide, these questions were used to review terms, concepts, and definitions. These questions also sought to identify creative writing program facilitation practices. Since educators

may apply different meanings to terms and concepts, it was essential to first establish a common meaning among the participants' responses.

Creative Writing. When asked to define the term creative writing, all participants used the same definition noted in the literature review, which is any writing outside the bounds of normal professional, journalistic, academic, or technical forms of literature with a focus on narration and expression. Participant E described CW as “Writing for the sake of writing. To get words out of your head and onto paper in any way, shape, or form. It is writing without form, especially not strict forms, in an expressive manner.” Some participants focused on the imagination aspects for their definitions, including the form used as well. Participant B stated,

Writing that is imagination-based and open ended, where multiple students might create a variety of products from the same prompt or assignment. It includes traditional forms like the short story, poems of all types, etc. as well as experimental writing.

When defining creative writing the participants most used the term *expression* in their responses. This included writing in an expressive manner, self-expression, and artistic expression, similar to the definitions used previously in the literature review. Participant A defined creative writing as “Writing for a purpose other than conveying information. For example: self-expression, artistic expression.” Interview participants also used metaphors based on exploring and imagination. “Writing that allows the writer to explore approaches and content that may not align with reality. Though it may be informed by reality, it is presented as something new, from a world that does not exist” (Participant C). Participant B described how they present creative writing to the students, saying, “We embrace all types of writing and try to teach students that there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in creative works.”

All interview participants noted that beyond writing prompts, the students involved in creative writing should have as much agency as possible over their writing. Participant G noted that students should “have as much agency as possible over their outcomes, style, and direction.”

Creative Writing Workshops. Most participants defined the term “creative writing workshop” in reference to their own programs, but in general, participants noted three things in their definitions: full group, small group, and one-on-one interactions; a provided prompt or task with a time for quiet writing; and peer or group sharing of creative writing works. Participant B stated, “At its most basic level, a creative writing workshop will include a prompt or task accompanied by an example(s). In a traditional ‘workshop,’ students will share writing they have completed in order to get feedback from the group.” Similarly, Participant E said, “The creative writing portion of the workshop is for students to get a prompt, they free write for a designated period of time, then share with the group what they wrote—all in a safe space.” Participant C noted that “a typical creative writing workshop is very context-specific,” stating:

We may have a topic (such as creative nonfiction) and a prompt (designed to help them meld fact and fiction), and a prompt (designed to help them meld their work with their workshop mentor, special guests and subject and subject-matter expert mentors, and the whole group (they share work created that day at the end of each workshop). Afterward, they work with their mentor to develop what they start in the workshop. Nobody gets a markup covered in red ink. Nobody gets a litany of deficits in their pieces. They get inspired to do more and then, in the careful and trust-filled guidance of their mentor, can receive criticism and revise and improve. I don’t even want to go to another kind of creative writing workshop.

Participant A defined CWW as “a workshop in which participants are encouraged to write in the form/genre that they enjoy.” Participant G describes their workshop as multiple sessions: “Our workshop is actually 2–10 sessions where we will go through the whole process of writing. It includes revision and feedback. Everything except publishing. They have a complete piece at the finish.”

Participants overwhelmingly noted that a workshop is carefully designed to provoke creativity similar to the description used by Participant C: “We impart supportive curriculum designed to provoke creativity and allow participants to take those threads in any way they choose.” Participants also agreed that the workshops must include feedback and encouragement. The workshop itself should be a place where students are guided, trusted, encouraged, built up, and developed according to the interview data.

Student Development. When describing their definitions of student development, most used the current perspectives that consider the roles of context, intersectionality, and acknowledgment of individual agency. They also emphasized the movement toward independent decision-making, which is noted in the student development theories in Chapter 2. Student development is long-term, according to the interview participants. This was used in the manner of life-long learning, achievement, goal setting, and becoming a better citizen. Although most participants defined student development as a long-term concept, they presented immediate goals as well. Participant B explained,

The intersection of the skills I Am, I Create, and We Connect creates the intermediate outcomes of having the ability to engage in tasks, becoming more productive, navigating new situations, and making connections with others. The long-term expected outcomes of creative engagement are resiliency, personal fulfillment, and community engagement.

Participant G defined student development, “It is the focus on social and emotional needs of the student. It is long-term and should carry on beyond being a student.” Participant E said, “These are the goals for the whole student. Not just the student in school, but the student in their community and in the world. It is growing to that next level, sometimes ones you thought were out of reach or didn’t even know possible.” They went on to provide a list of terms that defined student development. These included: goal setting, personal growth, making a better citizen, learning and improving skills, and getting to know their own abilities.

Participant A defined student development as, “Growth in understanding and ability to apply learning to new situations or circumstances.” Participant D defined student development with a focus on writing, stating, “To me student development is about that moment when the student realizes that what they are writing has merit and means something to someone besides themselves—even if it’s just a part of their writing (like the imagery or a strong character development). When the student realizes that their words have reached someone and they got their point across, they are developing and will continue to grow and develop with instruction and creativity.” Participant C responded,

Student development is very level-dependent. It means vastly different things in middle and high school, and then undergraduate and graduate school. In general, I would say it means the deliberate efforts that faculty, the department, and the school or university take to stoke a student’s success, in whatever way helps them. Participation in out-of-school-time programs, extracurricular programs, or on campus activities, help stoke student achievement (at least that is what I believe), so guiding students into these developmental activities is usually a good thing, even though they may take away from study time.

They continued,

I also think student development at any level provides a place or platform for students to ideate different pathways they could follow. I am fond of saying that, whatever you love or are deeply interested in is someone's job, so if you can't or didn't major in it, we can get to it through student development activities. Formal training (workshops, certificates, trainings), informal training (including mentoring) and nonacademic activities are usually synonymous with student development to me.

The student toolbox or referring to student development aspects as tools, skills, and abilities was also noted in multiple interviews. Participant H stated, "I like to say with each lesson that we are adding more 'tools in their toolkit,' and that they are becoming savvy writers based on their new skills. Overall, I try to boost their confidence." Confidence, including the sense that a student matters and has meaning, was also included in most participants' descriptions of student development.

Educational Practices. Educational practices, often referred to as teaching practices and strategies in the interview and document review data and how they are implemented, provide a critical foundation for lifelong progress, according to several of the organizations included in this study. The facilitators noted the importance of their role and that in the care and the education of young children they bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning. These educational practices should be responsive to and build on each child's pattern of development and learning. Five of the eight CWW organizations include on their website the belief that young children thrive and learn best when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning and are responsive to their individual progress. Participants were asked about specific practices they utilize or incorporate into their CWW programs. These responses are captured below.

Self-authorship. Half of the programs reported using self-authorship practices. In this study, the concept of self-authorship was coded as specific practices aimed at personal identity, identity beliefs, identity performance, defining one's own ideas, self-expression, voice, and self in social relations. One organization includes self-identity as a pillar of their mission and vision, "Youth strengthen self-identity and awareness, and develop creativity and self-confidence in a supportive, safe environment."

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy practices were coded to include confidence and belief in self and abilities, the capacity for self-control, motivation, identity, and abilities in a social environment. Seventy-five percent reported using practices to promote self-efficacy in their programs, but every program noted practices to promote confidence in oneself and one's abilities.

Curriculum. All but one interview participant reported using a specific curriculum for their programs. But this participant also stated, "I studied curriculum and instruction, so I am familiar with what it is." In this study, curriculum is broadly defined in the terms of the educator's or organization's goals and refers to the specifically planned sequence of instruction used to reach those goals in the CWW. Many interview participants spoke of this as the total student experience that occurred in the educational process. One organization stated that their curriculum is focused on "developing a method of working with students that inspires them to create original work that embodies their unique personal voice. . . . These students are now empowered to bring their voice into the broader world." Another program stated the curriculum aims to "provide young people with the creative inspiration and intellectual support that may not be available to them at school." Three programs specifically referenced "innovative programming" as part of their curriculum.

Representation. Half of the participants reported using representation practices in their programs. One participant reported that they did not know to what the term referred.

Representation as a practice acknowledges how images, words, and people are used to convey specific ideas and values related to culture and identity. It involves the representation of identity, meaning there is a specific effort to ensure the students' identity and culture is represented. For the interview participants and their organizations, this practice was presented as inclusion of high-level, engaged mentors from the community.

Mentor. Six of the eight participants reported using mentors in their programs, although one noted, "I use the concept of mentoring, but we call these people 'writing coaches' in our workshops." Mentoring included professional socialization, collaboration, enlisting support, personal support, and transferring of knowledge and skills. The mission of one organization included in this study includes mentoring: "Empowering girls through mentorship and self-expression." The organization states their workshop program "pairs professional women writers with teens to explore the power of words and writing. Girls gain confidence, communication skills, creativity and an expanded view of themselves and their futures."

Modeling. In the interviews, participants explained how they model certain behaviors, skills, and interactions. In this way, modeling was noted as an important method of learning and a teaching strategy. It was used to decrease student error, a way to show perceived importance of tasks or actions, and to increase self-regulated learning. Codes and concepts related to modeling include demonstrative learning, observation, proper interactions and relationships, treatment of others, how to give and receive feedback, physical signs of support, real audiences for students to work with and observe. All but one interview participant noted using modeling as a facilitation practice.

Workshop Facilitation Experiences

This section examines how the interview participants describe their experiences, interactions, and activities involved with facilitating creative writing workshops. In the interview guide, these questions focused on the participants' experiences while facilitating activities and interacting with students during the workshops. This section also includes what the participants considered their favorite success story while involved in a workshop. The collection of experiences expressed during the interviews led to categorizing these examples as facilitation. Many of the participants noted similar examples in terms of workshop activities, interactions with students, encouraging students, and types of favorite success stories.

CWW Activities. For this study, the setting referred to the physical location in terms of area and where the workshop was held (school, organization site, other location), but the setting also includes the format of the workshop, philosophical approach, and program mission. More details about the setting for each workshop can be found in Appendix H. A sample of the missions include: "Our mission is to foster joy, literacy, and critical thinking in all young people through writing workshops," "We empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world," and "We strive to ensure literature maintains its proper prominence in the culture, and that individuals achieve their fullest potential as artists and human beings." Despite the differences in setting, most workshops used the same or similar activities. These also included specific activities used to first introduce students to creative writing and workshops.

- All participants stated that the workshops had large group, small group, individual, and one-on-one activities.

- All participants stated that the workshops include writing from a prompt, although each program provided prompts in slightly different ways. One interview participant stated the students in the workshop may or may not be working on the same prompt.
- All participants stated that the workshops include silent writing time.
- Seven of the eight participants stated that the workshops include some type of group sharing. The one participant who did not use a group sharing activity still had individual sharing activities where the student shared their writing with the facilitator or a peer.
- All of the participants stated that the workshops include some type of feedback that does not include criticism. Three of the eight participants stated that their program involves no type of critique at all, and the others were clear about the difference between criticism and critique.

When asked to describe a typical CWW in their organization, Participant A said,

[Students] participate in group and individual exercises and activities in the morning as well as silent writing time. They are encouraged to work on whatever project or type of writing they want. In the afternoon, we split into small, facilitated groups for them to learn how to give and receive feedback on their work.

Participant A continued and stated that other activities include “Writing from prompts, writing from models, collaborative writing, writing games, silent writing time, Writers’ Circle—giving and receiving feedback from peers and writing coaches, preparing a manuscript for publication, delivery of an excerpt of work to an audience.” The typical activities that take place in a workshop facilitated by Participant E included

Peer groups, instruction, social time, food and snack and meals, moving and playing games, songs and singing or listening to music, even dancing, We read a lot and talk

about what we read, we share personal stories, parent or family days, prompts and instruction on them, freewriting, sharing, create a group piece.

Participant B presented the different activities the students participate in during the workshops, such as, “We do writing warm ups or freewrites, reading sample or model texts, teaching about specific writing craft or skills, give students time to write, and give students time to share their writing.” Similarly, Participant G stated,

They typically start out with a little bit more like a whole group, with people speaking on stage but it’s not like a lecture format. It might start out a little bit more whole group and then small groups. They go through in smaller groups and then typically about halfway through the process of developing a piece there’ll be a brainstorming phase. And then kids will be focused in on one specific piece of writing to focus on the rest of the time. And so, once they get to that point for a while, then they’re doing a piece with a mentor of some kind. And so, we have volunteers that we use; we have our teaching artists.

When asked to describe the activities Participant C includes in a CWW, they said,

There are too many to tell, but they come in at the sign-in desk and are usually handed an inspiring quote (on topic) from a writer. They get colorful stickers, meet up with their mentor, are plied with snacks, and rotate through a series of large and small gatherings and groups as they explore and write. Then they read their work (about 20 [students] per workshop so approximately 150 [people]) at the end of the day. . . . We end the day with a tradition called Threads, where everyone writes something on a colorful index card that they loved about the day, and we read as many of them aloud as we have time for.

When introducing students to a CWW, Participant A said,

Day one new members are a bit tentative, but they warm up quickly when they see the process and reactions of others who have been in the [workshop] before. I ask those with experience to share their memories of their first time sharing work. They talk about their initial trepidation and how quickly that goes away after they took the leap. . . . Often by Day Two or Three those who were most tentative on Day One, ask “Is it Writers’ Circle time yet?”

Participant B said, “When first introducing students to CWW we use poems and stories to provide examples of written work and provide a variety of prompts and writing ideas.”

Interactions with Students. When asked to describe their typical interactions with students in a workshop, it was evident that most interactions with students were dependent on the facilitator’s position within the program. Some participants had limited interactions with students in their current role and, therefore, provided responses based on their previous roles or the facilitators there now. The interview participants also divided their answers regarding interactions into what they do during writing time and sharing time. The one constant, regardless of role or task, was encouragement.

Writing time. Writing time refers to the portion of a workshop in which the writing theme or prompt is provided, concepts are taught and explained, silent writing, and feedback process. These interactions took place with the entire workshop group, small groups, and one-on-one. Participant A said, “During the writing exercise time, I am an instructor/facilitator—sharing information and guidance on an element of craft. During silent writing time, I model focused writing and check in with young writers who are stuck or need support.” Participant D stated, “I explain the theme or prompt and how to finish it. Show them or practice what techniques are involved. A lot goes into the front end.” Participant B said that during the writing portion of the

workshop they “listen to a student’s story and offer a response or answer questions about writing.” Participant F noted that their role included working one-on-one with students. “While there is usually more than one person there, and often they come together, their questions and lab time is one-on-one. They are all working on different material and have different questions about them. In essence, it’s like one-on-one tutoring.”

Sharing time. While most programs used a specific term for the time used by students to share what they have written, all of the workshops included a sharing portion in their workshops. This was an essential component of the workshop. Participant A said, “During Writers’ Circles, I facilitate discussion, model feedback process, balance comments between positive encouragement/praise and challenging/stretching the writers.” Participant D also noted that a variety of interactions happen during this time, saying, “When the students are not writing, that is when I have the most interactions. We have a lot of sessions that involve physical activities, learning about each other and their community, eating lunch and sharing stories, talking about what we are reading or writing. The big things and little things.” Participant B said that facilitators “encourage a student to share if they are shy, lead a game to break the ice between the students.” Participant D also referenced encouragement, saying this time includes “Encouragement and acknowledgment so that the student can get to a place they feel confident to share.”

Encouragement. Encouragement was a major focus of most participants’ view of their role as a facilitator. Terms like provide guidance, share information, check in on students, support, positive, praise, challenge, stretch, give feedback, and acknowledge were used to describe this specific type of interaction with students. With encouragement as a major focal point of the participants’ responses regarding activities that take place throughout the workshop,

these questions then narrowed that down to what specific actions the facilitators used to encourage students. When asked what facilitators did to encourage students in the CWW, participants provided the following answers:

- Verbal encouragement individually and in front of the group
- Express the type of difficulties they might be having in general terms to validate their feelings
- Provide examples of different writers' journeys
- Share my own experiences
- Refer students to mentors
- Feel included
- There are no critiques and no criticism
- Only allow positive feedback, never criticism
- Positivity
- Focus on the positive
- Be patient
- Incremental steps
- Build small successes
- Staff/Facilitator/Mentor training and preparation
- Front-end work
- Proper introduction to workshop format

Participant C included most of these efforts in their answer, saying,

We only allow positive feedback in the workshop space so often I will approach a girl and encourage her to expand on a piece, or merely tell her that it was great, what it reminded me of, how powerful the reaction to it was (because when they are reading, they can't always see that) and what I think it could lead to (a book submission, a topic for their college essay, an entry into a contest or publication that we know about, etc.).

Focusing on students who may be struggling, Participant C continued,

Part of the current role in the workshops is to use that workshop space to support or empower our mentees who may be experiencing struggles, so they feel included, seen, etc. I always have a list of [students] I need to check in with and know who needs an encouraging moment. I prompt them to share their pieces if they are not doing so, and even prompt the mentor to help them share, because I know the power of that moment when they do share. I offer to navigate certain issues with their parents if appropriate, which can lighten their mood so they can fully participate in the workshop. I also make specific points of visual support (going over to hug them, knowing their name when they may think I don't know them, etc.) to make sure everyone feels included and comfortable enough to both share and keep them coming back.

Some participants noted that they will approach students differently depending on their skill or experience levels. Participant G said,

And every class through talking then has opportunities to succeed in their writing relative to where their skills are coming into a program. So for some kids, if they're already a very comfortable writer, then our expectations of them and what they produce is going to look different than for someone who feels like it's going to be a struggle to write one sentence right. They couldn't possibly imagine doing a page of writing. So, I really had

modifying the outcome is depending on where someone's skills are, is really important to help them feel like they're aware.

Participant B said, "We offer a variety of prompts to reach students who think they don't like writing. We are able to encourage high performing students by offering them high-level prompts and ideas." Similarly, Participant G said,

We generally know in advance if we will be working with students who don't want to write and we come in with prompts we know will interest them, as well as lots of hands-on activities. We let them try writing at their own pace.

When it comes to encouraging students to share their writing in front of the group or an audience, Participant A said,

I try to treat it with a light touch. I give them the option to pass if they feel uncomfortable but also encourage them to use the opportunity of being in a safe and encouraging environment to step out of their comfort zones. Often when they see how other participants respond to those willing to share, they see that it isn't so scary and can actually feel quite empowering. They can also ask someone else to read their work aloud if they want.

Participant E said, "We let the decision be theirs. But usually with so much work going into the front-end or they have been through enough steps prior to writing and sharing that those cases are rare." Participant G also noted the importance of preparation and front-end work, saying,

We haven't had that often, but it doesn't tend to be a big barrier. I think that our approach is really focused, I guess, for lack of a better way to explain it, on what we call small successes. So, we're really trying to build in enough scaffolding and support so that every kid, no matter who they are, has their voice heard.

Other participants presented support roles as important during workshops. Participant C said,

We prepare mentors to manage the shy ones, so the mentee never feels closed down or not good enough. We do not do that in our space, ever, and it pays dividends later with great writing (sometimes on that very day, sometimes at the end of the year/season).

Participant B said,

For students who don't like to share, our instructors work with them in different ways.

Some instructors don't make them share; others will invite student to please share a single sentence or even one word of what they wrote in order to build confidence.

Modeling. Many interview facilitators presented modeling as a specific way to interact with the students. They model the reasoning, importance, and implementation of a technique, and most importantly, model how to engage in the different workshop tasks and activities.

During the CWW, facilitators said they spent a lot of their time in a workshop modeling.

Participant A covered almost all other interview responses when saying,

During the writing exercise time, I am an instructor/facilitator—sharing information and guidance on an element of craft. During silent writing time, I model focused writing and check in with young writers who are stuck or need support. During [sharing], I facilitate discussion, model feedback process, balance comments between positive encouragement/praise and challenging/stretching the writers.

Most other interview participants also described modeling as being a positive example of how to share and participate in the CWW. The participants modeled focused writing and what techniques may be involved. The coding for this style of interaction included model-focused writing, model sharing, provide examples of different types of journeys, share own experiences,

look to mentor, visual support, focusing on the positive for others to see, explore with students, participation, interaction with mentors, and show them or practice techniques involved.

Favorite Stories. One area of questioning during the interviews involved participants' stories, especially their most memorable, significant, successful, or favorite moments. These stories include references to both general and specific student moments. It was important to record what the interview participants believed to be success stories, as it shows what they value or perceive as successful or optimal outcomes. The interview participants were asked if they had a favorite success story they wanted to share. Most of these stories offered moments of authorship or voice, learning and growing, or a moment of connection, usually to a mentor, and at a lesser level their peer group. The recurrence of these types of stories among the interview participants is not surprising as they align with both the participants' previous answers and the conceptual framework—namely the importance of identity, self-expression, confidence, and relationships. As shown next, many of these stories had overlap across the coding.

Moments of identity and authorship. Self-authorship moments were coded as identity, self-expression, finding voice, and performing identity. These participants' stories described a moment of self-authorship: B, C, E.

Participant B. My favorite success stories are the ones from our outreach workshops where sometimes students originally dislike writing and by the end of the workshop they have realized that they really enjoy it. This happens quite often! Here is an example from our 2019 annual report:

One student in particular struggles at the beginning of the workshop. He would often choose to leave the room to speak with his therapist instead of participating in the group. However, with Roxanne's lessons and encouraging demeanor, later in the workshop, this

same student chose to stay in the classroom and write amazing poems, which he then shared out loud with his peers. I saw significant growth in all areas—confidence, engagement, and willingness to write or try new things—for almost all, if not all, of my students.

Participant C. When my mentee attended her first songwriting workshop she got to watch an incredible songwriter sing a song she had just written the lyrics for. We were talking about that moment just yesterday. She is 32 now and like my daughter—still very close—and the confidence she gained in the program, along with the incredible creative practice she developed are exactly what we hope for all our [students]. My second favorite moment was when we had a girl who was in foster care and had been in juvenile hall. She wrote a piece for an upcoming anthology that was filled with profanity, about being in jail on Thanksgiving, and we had to tell her that we couldn't publish the profanity as is because at that time we were heavily funded by the school district and expected our book to be widely distributed all over the district. We could not risk our reputation in that way. She refused to edit a word. However, we told her, she could read it exactly as is in our workshop space, where we have created an inclusive space for anything to be shared (as long as it isn't aimed to hurt anyone else, which it never has been). She got up to read the piece, full of defiance, and faltered on the first sentence, started crying and stopped. She said, from the stage, that she didn't want to read all of that profanity to her [workshop group]. Her mentor jumped up on the small stage and helped her edit it in real time so she could convey the horror and despair she was trying to convey in the piece, without the distraction of the profanity. Needless to say, it brought the down the house.

Participant E. My favorite examples all center around the A-ha moment. When a student has one of those moments is the best. They may be struggling with a piece or an issue they want

to write about and some encouragement from a mentor or peer and something clicks. They made sense of something they had been struggling with. They made sense of something for themselves. Not someone else.

Learning and growing moment. Self-efficacy was coded to include learning and growing moments like learning their work matters, they found the ability to finish what they start, critical thinking, confidence, and performance task. Self-efficacy learning moments were featured in the stories recalled by Participants A and E.

Participant A. Honestly, every “success” is important to me. . . . I can’t think of one specific individual, but every time a student who enters with their head down and whispering their words on day one stands at the microphone on Friday and delivers their writing with pride is a success. Likewise, watching a kid who was self-isolating on day one exchange contact info with a new friend at the end of the week, so they can keep in touch during the school year: that is a success to me.

Making a connection. Making a connection with facilitators, mentors, peers, and the larger community are included here. These moments were coded as making new friends, building community, community of writers, trust filled guidance, and relationships at home. The stories from A, C, and G featured a moment of connection.

Participant G. I had one kid come up today that I thought was kind of sweet. We have a young woman who’s been working with us for a while. She was one of those kinds of kids who is a total self-starter, doesn’t have a lot of resources at home, has had to make her own way. A lot of the time is just genuinely enthusiastic about academics in a way that her peers don’t always appreciate. And so, I think she’s spent a lot of time kind of charting her own course. And so, a couple of years ago we had the Poet Laureate for the Northeast region come up here and give a

workshop. So, it was like sort of a peer to peer workshop. And we invited them, any kids from any of our programs can come. So, this young woman attended that workshop and you can tell right away, she was like in her happy place. She really appreciated it; you could tell. Like being around someone else who took creative writing seriously and had some notoriety for it. All that stuff definitely would make a spark in her. So, she connected with that [speaker] who happened to have attended Yale. So, our student, I am sitting watching her exchanging contact information and all that kind of stuff. And I was like “Oh, this is so sweet.” It was really nice to see. So, then we just found out actually today that our student also got into Yale. So, I think that’s like kind of a testament to her perseverance, both working with us and has generally taken advantage of opportunities, not waiting around for them; seizing them. So that was something just from today. That was a long-term thing that was gratifying to see.

Benefits and Outcomes

This section reviews how the interview participants presented their views on what is learned and how it is learned by students in CWW. This includes how the facilitators describe what they perceive to be the specific beneficial outcomes of participating in a CWW. Most participants put emphasis on their perceptions of the benefits of CWW for the students. Perceived benefits for students participating in creative writing workshops came through in almost all parts of the participant interviews. The interview participants noted improved writing, confidence, sense of self, and connections as the major benefits. The most repeated benefits were confidence and connection. Participation in CWW was perceived to enhance, develop, build, and improve confidence. This occurred in both their creative writing and in themselves.

The codes used to explore the perceived benefits were also noted when participants discussed their perceptions of what is learned and how it is learned in CWW. These centered

around personal fulfillment, sense of self and how to express it, improved writing, and long-term learning. In terms of how these benefits are learned, participants noted exploration, taking risks, guidance and encouragement, agency, safe sharing, community, and deep and consistent programming. Each program's organization offers insight into what outcomes are sought through their mission and vision. One organization includes an outcome of "grow comfortable expressing herself with words and cultivate or further a love of writing in each of them" and "grow as fulfilled successful member of community."

Participant B shared their program's framework for outcomes through creative writing: I Create—Youth build skills in creative writing, critical thinking, self-expression, and problem-solving; I Am—Youth strengthen self-identity and awareness, and develop creatively and self-confidence in a supportive, safe environment; We Connect—Youth develop community through meaningful relationships of mutual respect and group participation, giving and receiving thoughtful, positive feedback.

These three aspects of building skills, identity, and relationships were noted by several participants while discussing benefits and outcomes.

Participants organized their responses about expectations, outcomes, and benefits of creative writing workshops around several themes: confidence, expression, relationships, creative writing and writing, and academic benefits. Some participants referred to every theme in their responses, like Participant E:

They gain friends, and confidence, and have fun. They learn how to be themselves and feel safe in that. I could go on and on and on. Almost any aspect of their schooling can improve through creative writing workshops and their buy in. And at home, and with friends. Better relationships all around.

Participant B shared their perspective on the benefits of participating in a creative writing workshop in both short- and long-term, noting several of the themes. “We expect intermediate outcomes of having the ability to engage in tasks, becoming more productive, navigating new situations, and making connections with others.” They continued, “The long-term expected outcome of creative engagement are resiliency, personal fulfillment, and community engagement. Students and teachers fill out surveys to provide data on progress toward these goals. Other benefits are of course learning about creative writing, as well as making new friends and increased self-expression.”

Confidence. Every interview participant referred to building and raising confidence, both in their writing and in themselves. Many even noted that the increased confidence was more important than the increase in reading and writing skills gained. As Participant F said, “They take life skills about writing and reading from the lab and transfer them to [their] classrooms and assignments. More importantly, their confidence increases.” Participant E said,

We want them to gain an appreciation for reading and writing and creative writing. And to reap all of its benefits. Being able to write thoughts and feelings. Having more confidence in their writing ability and more confidence in their own thoughts and feelings and more confidence in themselves.

Similarly, Participant C said,

We are improving their writing, boosting their creativity, but what we are really there to do is develop their confidence, in literally anything. Many (if not most) will not become professional creative writers, but they tell me, sometimes many years later, how confident they became and what it led to for them in college and beyond.

Expression. Expression, namely self-expression, was a focal point of the interviews when asked about outcomes and benefits of workshops. All but one participant made specific reference to the terms self-expression or expressing oneself. Other terms used include artistic expression, expressive manner, sharing feelings, finding voice, using voice, sharing own personal words, and engaged discussion. Participant H said, “I would say the benefits are self-expression, and the ability to do something ‘fun’ in their day. School can be so regimented and demanding at times, and kids thrive when they can be creative.” Participant B said, “Other activities that might be similar in benefits are other arts programs or even sports, though of course we think the benefits of creative writing is very particular in terms of self-expression and learning about the world.”

The interview participants also made reference to the self in self-expression. For them, the concepts of expression and identity were connected. Participant C said,

Creative writing for teen girls (and some boys) is a window into their souls—there is virtually no distance between who they are and what they write. Building up those facets of a youth’s persona using writing is the perfect match. I’m not aware of any other out-of-school time content that works as well.

When discussing how a student finds their identity through expression, Participant G said, “Because of what’s specific to writing itself obviously that stuff will come out, come out a lot better in a creative writing workshop.” For many of the participants, the sharing portion of a workshop is part of the expression and self-expression outcomes. Participant F said, “I do think there is something to the benefits from the risk of sharing your own personal words with mentors and peers.” Participant A noted this risk as well, saying, “There is something much more

personally “risky” in sharing their own words with others vs. playing a piece of music at band camp or running drills at a sports camp. With greater risk comes greater rewards, I think.”

Relationships. Relationships were mentioned by several other participants, and included the concept of community, connections, and engagement. Relationships included the new friendships students make within the workshops, as well as several others, including with their mentor and community. When describing relationships, facilitators used terms like supportive, close knit, successful member of community, develop community, meaningful relationships, group participation, culture of teamwork, community engagement, connection, diverse relationships, making connections, and collaboration. The interview participants presented the idea of making new connections and relationships as an important outcome of the workshops. During a workshop, students make friends, build relationships with mentors, and create a community of writers. According to one organization, part of their vision is to “create a diverse community of young writers and high-level instructors who connect over their shared passion for ideas and expression.”

Improving relationships was also a focal point when discussing outcomes. This applied to existing relationships with parents, family, friends, classmates, and even themselves. Interview participants explained this improved relationship with self as feeling safe in themselves, personal fulfillment, and freedom to be themselves. Participant E summarizes this, saying,

They gain friends, and confidence, and have fun. They learn how to be themselves and feel safe in that. I could go on and on and on. Almost any aspect of their schooling can improve through creative writing workshops and their buy in. And at home, and with friends. Better relationships all around.

Creative Writing and Writing. All the interview participants stated that involvement in CWW improved the students' creative writing abilities and their overall writing long term.

Participant A noted, "I want them to 'own' their calling to writing, explore different types of writing and take risks, and learn elements of craft." Participant B said,

We want students to both learn about the craft of writing, including the specific skills of whatever genre they are exploring, as well as to learn to trust their creative impulses and discuss their own written work and the work of others.

Student learning goals to Participant D included, "How to tell a story. Even in the most mundane writing, one is telling a story. So, learning to put in the details, to use imagery, to create a picture of the characters. . . . That is all important." Participant H said,

I want them to recognize patterns and techniques when they read or watch a story. I also want them to feel comfortable when they have to write an essay, also called the performance task on the state exam at the end of the year. Most importantly, I want them to love stories and English Language Arts as much as I do.

Participant H continued,

I always justify the need to develop as a writer by asking the students, 'Why does this matter? Why am I taking the time to teach it to you?' They always have reasonable answers! I also like to acknowledge that the writing process is not easy, nor does it come naturally to all students; although creative writing is usually the type they feel most comfortable tackling. I like to say with each lesson that we are adding more 'tools in their toolkit,' and that they are becoming savvy writers based on their new skills.

Academic Benefits. The interview participants believed that CWW fosters learning. According to the participants, the students learn something new about making a story, poem, or

other piece of writing; learn writing skills that will help in future Language Arts classes; and learn transferrable academic skills. Transferable skills were one of the most-mentioned academic benefits. These skills included critical thinking, collaboration, communication, passion, and hard work. Participants presented the academic benefits as developing skills, vital communication skills, critical thinking skills, deeper academic engagement, and enhanced creativity for a lifetime. Participant G noted that students who partake in “programs that integrate arts and writing and emphasize small group work and one-on-one attention are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement and can raise their grades by one letter in the course of a school year.”

Promotion of Student Development Outcomes

This section explores how interview participants described and defined what creative writing workshops and facilitators do to promote student development outcomes and goals. This section aligns earlier findings about how the interview facilitators defined student development, what is learned and how it is learned, and what goals they set. This grouping of interview questions solicited the participants’ thoughts and perceptions about student development outcomes and how to achieve these outcomes while in the workshops. To deliver the student development outcomes, facilitators focused on planning and curriculum, facilitation behaviors and strategies, and goal setting.

Planning and curriculum. All but one interview participant mentioned workshop planning and preparation as necessary to achieving the workshop goals and learning outcomes. Participant E said,

There is a lot of front-end work that the students don't see or that they aren't even aware of. Our goals turn into plans. We plan everything. The more we prepare and plan, we are more successful in meeting those goals.

Facilitators noted that each aspect of the workshop itself is carefully planned; this included training of facilitators and mentors. Participant C went into great detail describing these interactions, saying, "Every facet of participation has been thoughtfully designed to glean the maximum of creative space from the time we have, and provoke the greatest depth of creative freedom, and also to be a lot of fun." Following a curriculum or manual also dictates how facilitators interact with students, according to the participants. Participant G said, "We have a whole manual, like a philosophical approach that we train our teaching artists and our instructors in. That's super important to us." Participant B said, "The instructors run their lesson plans by a co-director first."

Participants used terms such as provoking, thoughtful, rigorous, challenging, inspiring, entertaining, philosophical approach, training, lesson plans, curriculum, and high-level to describe this process. Many of these programs use terms such as manual, curriculum, or method to refer to this preworkshop concept. For example, one organization describes their program as "developing a method of working with students that inspires them to create original work that embodies their unique personal voice. . . . These students are now empowered to bring their voice into the broader world." Participant C said, "We impart supportive curriculum (which follows state high school standards) designed to provoke creativity and allow participants to take those threads in any way they choose."

The curriculum and planning extended to the inclusion of high-level prompts that evoke creativity. Participant B said, "We offer a variety of prompts to reach students who think they

don't like writing. We are able to encourage high performing students by offering them high-level prompts and ideas." Participant C said, "The main goal is to support their creative exploration by providing them an intentional set of program approaches, as well as broad freedom around what they may be provoked to create."

The workshop space itself was presented as part of the planning and curriculum of the creative writing workshops. Participant C referred to this as "benefitting from the sanctuary of the workshop space." The interview participants used terms like safe space, creative space, community, accepted, respectful, inclusive, and embracing. Participant E noted workshops use "encouragement and acknowledgement so that the student can get to a place they feel confident to share."

Facilitation. Facilitation as a category here refers to what specific actions are used by facilitators within the CWW to promote student development. These facilitation actions were noted by the interview participants as specific ways, processes, and theories to address student development. This includes support, empowerment, encouragement, safety, security, connection, expectations, teaching strategies, and learning processes. Participant C summarized their facilitator role,

I have done everything from develop the curriculum, present sections at the workshops, mentor my own weekly mentees and as a mentor for the day at workshops, feed them, etc. In the current iteration of my role, I focus at workshops on troubleshooting and/or catching up with mentees (and sometimes mentors and parents) who have specific issues. In this role, I also read and engage around their writing but I often have a dual agenda beyond supporting them creatively—sure that support (which is genuine) as a conversation starter so I can minister to them around another issue, that may or may not

be related to creative writing—most often it is related to the challenge and process of getting into college. . . . I deal with any [student] who is experiencing something that is preventing her from benefitting from the sanctuary of the workshop space. (Participant C).

Participant H presented how they facilitate for different students, saying,

If I have a good class with students who exhibit self-control, I allow for collaborative writing in which they tell the same story, but from two different points of view. To differentiate, if I have a low class, there will be some students that I will pull into a small group, and we will plan the same plot together, and I will get them started. This usually is enough to get them going on their own, and I check on them frequently. Conversely, if I know I have some talented students, I will put extra writing lessons and techniques on my website for them to access and experiment with at their discretion.

Specifically for students who think they can't write or write well enough, Participant C said, "We are patient with them [those who think they can't do it], but I can usually predict the time when they will rush to line up for the microphone to share their work (usually their first or second time in our space)." They continued, "Belief in self (especially for adolescent girls) is more important than actual skill. Writing needs to steep to improve, so we need them to feel confident enough to keep doing it, knowing that persistence will improve it."

Facilitating CWW for grade 7–9 students. This age group of students was described as young writers and storytellers by the interview participants. These terms were confirmed by the organizations' program descriptions, and none of the organizations involved used terms like minority, at-risk, disadvantaged, or other disconfirming language. Only one organization made reference to something similar when noting that one of the organization's goals is to "dismantle

historic barriers to after school specialty programs.” All of the programs reference the students in the age group as youth or young people; but not as adolescents, which was a term used often in the literature used in Chapter 2.

The interview participants described facilitating CWW for students within the target age group of 7th to 9th grade. Some interview participants noted this age group’s desire for guidance and inclusion. Participant A said, “They tend to need more guidance and modeling to feel comfortable.” Participant C said,

When I know we have made them feel included, I know I can get extraordinary creative writing out of them and know I can build them up to both survive adolescence and move on to the tough landscape of high school and college. The privilege of seeing them in 8th grade is never lost on me.

Participants were asked about characteristics of the target age group of 7th to 9th grade students. Some participants make observations about what that age group enjoyed in terms of genre and theme, while others focused on the characteristics of the students themselves. Participant E said, “They often feel ignored, voiceless. They truly transform when they feel heard and seen.” A few also made comparisons to other age groups and grade levels. Participant A said,

Our camps are split between students who will enter grades 6 to 8 in the fall and those who will enter grades 9 to 12. This is our 9th graders’ first experience as high schoolers so they can be quite tentative at first. However, if they were in our middle school camps, they know the drill and get acclimated quickly.

Participant C said,

They are open but also very guarded, unless they know and trust you. . . . They want independence and freedom but want you to give them a lot of guidance around what

those things look like, they want to be unique but also just like everyone else, so they feel included. They are loud and bold, but also shy and interior (like most writers). . . . They are malleable but also much more forged than you may think – our work is to bring out the creativity that we see developing out of whole cloth.

Other interview participants referenced the age groups' developing status and place within the student development process. They noted how this age group is at once developing into themselves, but also developing opinions and beliefs about roles and aspirations. Participant C said, "They are malleable but also much more forged than you may think—our work is to bring out the creativity that we see developing out of whole cloth." Participant G noted how this age group develops aspirations saying,

There are pockets . . . where people in the community really aren't going to college and there's not an expectation necessarily that people will go to college. So, I think it's not, it's not unheard of that like aspirations are not really high. . . . I'm not going to say like every one of the schools we work with has a strong college going culture, but I think it's recognized by most students as an option for them. But we do have several kids for sure who are a little bit checked out academically at a young age.

Goals and goal setting. Participants were asked about their goals for the students in the creative writing workshop programs. These goals were grouped by social, personal, academic and career, and cultural terms when presented by the participants. Participant B stated, "We focus on personal and social goals, cultural awareness and community goals, academic and career goals."

Personal and social goals. According to the interview participants, personal and social goals focused on the individual, their sense of self, and their relationships. Creativity and

creative expression were also included in these goals. Participants presented personal and social goals as helping students express themselves, envision opportunities, feel comfortable, feel connected, building up the person, validation, feel included, feel accepted, and feel appreciated. Participant E said, “Personal and social include building the person and learning their opportunities for their role in their community and their place in the world.” Developing meaningful relationships with peers and mentors was presented as a personal and social goal. Participant B described the goal to “engage students, teachers, and peers in deeply collaborative relationships.”

Cultural. Cultural goals were presented in terms of cultural awareness and connection to one’s community, even their place in the world. To ensure cultural awareness, the interview participants noted the importance of having a diverse and inclusive space for workshops. Having a diverse community of students and high-level instructors was mentioned by facilitators as a way to reach cultural awareness goals. Many organizations mentioned these goals in their mission and visions statements. One organization describes their workshops as

A place where all participants feel valued and respected. Respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are heard. To that end, we uphold a commitment to a diverse community by nurturing an inclusive, supportive, and welcoming environment.

Similarly, when mentioned by the interview participants, community and culture were presented together. Participant E said,

We don’t focus on cultural goals specifically but we do try to have diverse staff and volunteers in terms of race, age, and others, but we also want them to learn about the culture of their community so we look at aspects of that.

Academic and career. Each interview facilitator presented similar academic and career goals, including improved reading and writing skills, deeper engagement in learning, motivation, creating and working toward goals. Some programs and facilitators described the specific goal of attending college as an academic and career goal. In terms of academic and career goals, Participant C said, “For academic or career goals, we get 100% to college so we are always focused on those goals, even if it is not always visible to the girls.” Participant E also noted that these academic and career goals are not always presented to the students themselves, saying, “For school or career goals, we look toward what they can achieve in high school and even college. We usually save that secret for the parents, not the students. They just think they’re having fun and writing.”

The interview participants also included long-term goals, namely, to be a better world citizen. The phrase better citizen was mentioned by three of the eight interview participants, and two additional participants noted this concept using similar terms. Participant C presented long-term academic and career goals as, “The effects of the programming can be felt long after they graduate from high school. Alumnae continue to succeed long past college graduation and choose professions that will enable them to make a difference in their communities and the world.”

Goal setting. Similar to the above goals, the act of goal setting was discussed as immediate and long term, and as a step in student development. Participant B presented goal setting as “supporting the highest potential of each writer, whatever their goals and talents.” Participant E said, “We discuss goals but more in terms of their learning how to set goals for themselves for maybe the first time.” Participant A explained how they set or create goals, saying,

The other coaches and I open the week by sharing our ‘wishes’ for the participants—‘My wish for you is that you’ll discover a new writing form/genre that you don’t know you’d like.’ ‘ My wish is that you’ll make a new writing friend.’ Etc.—to help them envision what they might get out of their week at camp. Rather than have them declare their goals for the week, we have them state what project they plan to work on during silent writing time each day. At the end of the week, we ask them to consider what they would like to continue with their writing.

Participant G also noted how they develop goals for the students in creative writing workshops.

All of us want to feel like when we do something it’s appreciated. And so, we try to make sure that we’re setting everyone up for success. And that’s not just saying that we lower expectations, but that we recognize that it’s bringing a whole range of experiences to our programs and producing writing can be something that becomes really frustrating for kids in school. And we want to make sure that we’re always aware that they might not have a lot of confidence built up over the years in their writing. And so, I think that’s some of the stuff we’re thinking about in our programming to make sure that nobody’s too hard.

Findings

Evaluation of the categories and their connections to other categories led to the generalized findings of the study, namely in terms of learning outcomes and benefits to the students and the role of the facilitator. The following major findings emerged from the study:

1. The concept of identity was described by workshop facilitators as important to several aspects of the workshop, and to the learning outcomes and benefits presented.
2. The interview participants put a high value on modeling as a form of facilitation.

3. The interview participants believe a specific concept of feedback as being essential to the ability to reach learning outcomes and CWW goals.
4. The use of mentors in creative writing workshops was important for community-based programs.

Finding 1

The concept of identity was described by workshop facilitators as important to several aspects of the learning outcomes and benefits presented. The interview participants presented the concept of identity as the student's voice and as having confidence in themselves. This included the ability to feel comfortable, to be able to express themselves and to share that expression with others, and to have their identity validated and represented. The concept of finding, having, creating, or building an identity the student could be proud of and comfortable enough in to share with others. Having this identity was the first step toward being able to express that identity.

Finding 2

The interview participants put a high value on modeling as a form of facilitation. In all stages of the workshop, the interview participants presented modeling as a teaching method and strategy. Modeling was used for focused writing, sharing, discussion, participation, mentoring interactions, and showing and practicing techniques involved. As noted, this age group thrived with guiding teaching, so modeling was valued as a form of facilitation.

Finding 3

The interview participants believe a specific concept of feedback is essential to the ability to reach learning outcomes and CWW goals. The concept of feedback was presented as positive and encouraging, and all participants noted that critique and criticism were not used.

The interview participants noted this style of feedback was preferred as it aligned with programming and learning goals, and also aided in developing personal agency, relationships and connections, and a sense of self and safety.

Finding 4

The use of mentors in creative writing workshops was important for community-based programs. The six community-based programs included in this study all reported the use of mentors as an essential component of their workshops and learning outcomes. The use of high-level, representative mentors was presented as a key component to the workshops and their anticipated outcomes. They describe their importance as a trust-filled way to guide, reach, improve, build, care, and encourage students and their development.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings uncovered by this study. Data from individual interviews and program reviews revealed the participants' perceptions of their experiences with creative writing workshops. Typical of qualitative research, extensive samples of quotations from participants were included. By using participants' own words, the researcher could accurately represent the reality of the persons and situations studied. The results were used to form a narrative of the participant's experiences facilitating CWW and their perceptions of its involvement with student development. Data were organized and presented using categories influenced by the conceptual framework. Findings from the examination of the programs themselves corroborated the findings from the interviews. The primary finding of the study revealed most CWW facilitators perceive identity and identity formation as an essential part of CWW and student development. The interview participants also present the concept of

encouraging feedback in the workshop as important to meeting outcomes. Additional findings show facilitators value modeling and the use of mentors in workshops.

These findings address the problem of this study of how out-of-school creative writing workshop facilitators perceive and promote student development and address the lack of research on the role of the facilitator in these programs. The findings further link to the problem of this study, which notes how the lack of representative peer engagement, modeling, and mentoring can affect future decisions and successes. By examining the experiences of the facilitators hosting the programs these findings explored the values and beliefs they hold about student development. The experiences, views, and perceptions of these educators were examined to create findings related to the connections, interactions, and relationships between creative writing workshops and the promotion of student development.

The results will be interpreted and discussed in the next chapter. The discussion will include comparisons with the literature presented in Chapter 2. Further, Chapter 5 presents a conclusion to the study, including implications of the findings relevant to practice in the field and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to describe out-of-school education facilitators' perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding promotion of student development through creative writing workshops. By examining the experiences of the facilitators hosting the programs this researcher explored the values and beliefs they hold about student development outcomes and how to best promote or achieve those outcomes. The experiences, views, and perceptions of these educators provided insight to the connections, interactions, and relationships between creative writing workshops (CWWs) and the promotion of student development. The focus on the targeted age group narrowed the purpose of the study further to explore this specific and crucial decision-making period in student development. The exploration of the CWW facilitators' perceptions and descriptions of their experiences promoting student development within their programs contributed to the understanding of student development theories for the targeted age group and overall body of knowledge of CWW benefits. The knowledge generated from this examination affords new insights into promoting student development for specific age groups and informs education practice.

The study used naturalistic inquiry to collect qualitative data by conducting in-depth interviews and review of specific programming documents. The purposefully selected group of interview participants in this study included eight creative writing workshop facilitators who worked with the target age group of students in grades 7–9. In response to the literature, this study limited data collection to those programs with a committed focus to youth creative writing workshop programs utilizing the AWA method and with a mission or vision aligned with the research problem. The programs and individuals selected for inclusion came from five separate

states in different geographical regions. Attention was given to how facilitators defined student development and the strategies they associated with the development of personal, social, cultural, academic, and career goals. The semistructured, in-depth interviews were conducted by email or by telephone in March and April 2020. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized first by the topics pertaining to the interview question and then by categories and subcategories guided by the conceptual framework depicted in Chapter 2. The study was based on the following two research questions:

Research Question 1: How do out-of-school education facilitators perceive and describe their experience with hosting a CWW?

Research Question 2: How do out-of-school education facilitators define and promote student development within their program?

As noted in Chapter 2, literature provides insights into how, from an early age, disciplinary interests become differentiated by genders, income levels, and racial and ethnic groups. The challenges of income inequality, inadequate academic preparation, lack of available information, and lack of peer counseling and modeling are all roadblocks to the positive development of students. Additionally, most students make decisions about their future academic goals before grade 10, which directly relates to and affects their academic preparation (Atanda, 1999). According to Bandura (2010), the self-development during these formative years forecloses some types of options and makes others realizable. The choices made in these formative years of development will then shape the course of the students' lives. But by the time most college preparation or bridge programs begin, many students have eliminated from consideration the concept of higher education or those occupations they believe beyond their capabilities, however attractive the options may be (Bandura, et al., 2001). This is especially true

for students who lack identity representation in education or career fields. The combination of age and lack of identity representation leads to the problem of this study. The problem this study aimed to explore was how out-of-school facilitation of youth creative writing in a workshop format program could fill this student development gap and to address the lack of research on the role of the facilitator in these types of programs.

To address this problem, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

(1) How do out-of-school education facilitators perceive and describe their experience with hosting a creative writing workshop; and (2) How do out-of-school education facilitators define and promote student development within their program? The focus on the facilitators of the creative writing workshops was to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and values they have regarding the theories, strategies, and processes they use to inform their curriculum and facilitation interactions, and, therefore, how they promote student development. This specific focus on the facilitators, and not the workshop student participants themselves, stemmed from an active resistance to handicapping practices, such as the negative labeling and sorting of youth utilized in American public schools and other societal systems and subsystems described in Chapter 2. Specifically, for this study, this labeling and sorting referred to the forced identity of children as at-risk, minority, disadvantaged, underserved, unprivileged, delinquent, inner-city, and other similar terminology.

These research questions were largely satisfied by the findings in Chapter 4. For discussion, the results are arranged according to research question and then by concepts associated with each. This arrangement aided in analysis and illustrated key findings. The overriding findings in this study revealed the importance interview participants put on identity formation, modeling, and mentoring. The findings of the study showed how the interview

participants view their role while facilitating creative writing workshops, and consequently, how they view the promotion of student development within the creative writing workshops.

The remainder of this chapter will consist of interpretation of the findings and a discussion of the relevant conclusions that can be drawn from them. The following section will include an interpretation of the results in relation to the extant literature and in response to the research questions. Following the interpretation of findings, implications of the research findings are discussed. Recommendations for action and further study will be provided, followed by a discussion of the potential recommendations from the study. The chapter ends with a conclusion stating the significance of the work as a final reflection on this study.

Interpretation of Findings

Guided by the existing literature and a conceptual framework rooted in student development theories, the researcher sought to understand how the CWW facilitators perceive and describe workshops and their role as facilitator, as well as how they define and promote student development goals and outcomes in their workshops. Findings from the examination and analysis of interviews relate to these constructs as noted in Chapter 2. The information given by the participants demonstrated a number of patterns and repetitions throughout the categories. These patterns and repetitions were examined to establish findings within and across the data. Further examination and interpretation of the interview data led to the formation of four central findings. These findings are:

1. The concept of identity was described by workshop facilitators as important to several aspects of the workshop and the learning outcomes presented.
2. The interview participants put a high value on modeling as a form of facilitation.

3. The interview participants believe a specific concept of feedback as being essential to the ability to reach learning outcomes and CWW goals.
4. The use of mentors in creative writing workshops was important for community-based programs.

Research Question One

The first research question guiding the study asked how out-of-school education facilitators perceive and describe their experience with hosting a creative writing workshop. The interview participants provided descriptions of how they conducted CWWs and what they perceived as best practices for workshop facilitation. These descriptions included their role as facilitator and the workshop itself. The examination of the facilitator experiences while hosting and planning workshops are discussed. This section will consider the concepts of identity, modeling, feedback, and mentors as presented by the interview participants and in relation to the research question.

Finding 1: Identity. The concept of identity was described as important to several aspects of the workshop. An internal personal identity is also central to the theory of self-authorship. Identity formation was presented as the first step toward self-expression. The interview participants presented self-expression as a principal purpose and result of experiences with creative writing workshops. The next step in the identity process required that the workshop students gain confidence in that identity. Increased confidence in themselves, in their writing, and in other abilities was presented by the interview participants as the focus of workshop planning, curriculum, and facilitation. When it came to increased confidence in themselves beyond creative writing, several participants presented this increased confidence as coming from the large risk and reward factor of a CWW, as Participant A stated, “Young writers get a chance

to have their creative work, ideas, and feelings validated. They are rewarded for taking creative and personal risks. They gain confidence.” Other participants also believed the validation students received in CWW helps them build confidence. Some of the interview participants reported that they focused on building up students, helping them be resilient, to be themselves, broaden minds, and be safe in their identity. For the interview participants, the ability to express oneself or learning how to express oneself is a major concept in creative writing. This is a large step for young writers, and as students. This is essential to creative writing, to hosting and participating in CWW, and to building student development.

The interview participants presented the workshop space itself as a part of the identity formation process. While describing experiences facilitating CWW, the interview participants presented the workshop space and format as a place for identity formation and empowerment. When interview participants describe creative writing workshops, they were not describing the physical space, but the space created within the workshop. The facilitators believed it was important to make the workshop a safe space by ensuring a space free of criticism or critique, with only positive feedback and encouragement.” This is supported by the literature, as Chandler (1999) noted that when given the opportunity to tell their own story, in a safe, structured setting with positive feedback, students build higher self-efficacy and self-esteem. A safe place allows the students to feel comfortable to be themselves, find their voice, and share it with others.

Participant D shared,

A facilitator’s job is to lead the group into trusting their instincts when it comes to writing creatively. Exercises should be employed that encourage the writers to try new strategies and reach out beyond what they are used to doing. And encouragement and care for the written words should come from the facilitator as well. Encouragement first, always.

Finding 2: Modeling. When the interview participants explained how they perceive and describe their role as facilitator they included their experiences with modeling. In relation to this research question, a primary finding is that the interview participants put a high value on modeling as a form of facilitation. Despite differences in communities served or setting, the interview participants reported using modeling in their workshops. For the interview participants, modeling is a twofold process that includes demonstrating a desired skill or behavior, like the appropriate way to provide feedback after a student shares their piece in front of the group, and often describing the actions and decisions being made throughout the process.

Facilitators of CWWs presented themselves in a number of roles: teachers, mentors, models, writers, educators, and more. Of the roles or interactions mentioned by the interview participants, modeling came up the most. The interview participants described their experiences with facilitating workshops in several portions that included writing time and sharing time. In both portions of the workshop, facilitators utilized modeling. Writing time featured modeling of techniques, quiet writing, and group interaction. Sharing time featured modeling of sharing, encouragement, and feedback.

Finding 3: Feedback. In each interview participants reported feedback as an essential component of the CWW and that only positive, encouraging feedback was allowed. The interview participants believe this specific concept of feedback is essential to the curriculum and format of the workshop. Additionally, the interview participants from unaffiliated programs specifically noted that feedback must not include critique or criticism. Encouragement was presented as the preferred style of delivering feedback to students in a CWW. The interview participants believe this style of positive feedback helped create the safe space that allowed for growth to influence identity development and reach writing outcomes.

The interview subjects reported this specific style of feedback was included in their curriculum. They noted how deliberate efforts to create activities and exercises, that when employed, encourage writers. Lesson plans are created and approved to ensure each is offering a different curricular component. This front-end work also ensures that facilitators, mentors, and volunteers are properly trained and that all involved understand the positive feedback-only model. For the interview subjects, this was essential so that all voices at the workshop feel comfortable enough to be heard. Participants also noted that this preparation and planning saves space for more engagement and interaction during workshop.

Finding 4: Mentors. The use of mentors was mentioned by each interview participant from a program with no associations to schools and led to the finding that the use of mentors in creative writing workshops was important for community-based programs. Those affiliated with a school were less likely to use mentors in their CWW.

Mentors in CWW were experts in their field and subject-matter experts with strong ties to the community and high levels of engagement. The six programs that used mentors in workshops also noted that they utilize mentors with an eye toward representation to ensure those serving as mentors could create relationships and connections with the workshop students. The interview participants believed the experience of working with a professional mentor added value to the workshop for the students and an additional way for them to connect to their community.

Participant C said,

We are always mentoring so that could mean connecting with a journalist to talk about her career, gathering backstory traits or experiences in a literary scavenger hunt to build a character for a fictional piece, outlining a family tree to mine important family members when writing nonfiction or memoir pieces, developing letters to the mayor or editor or

head of a television network to experience persuasive writing and make their voices heard, and on and on.

Research Question Two

Personal, social, cultural, educational, and career goals became a major focus in answering the second research question. The second research question guiding the study asked how out-of-school education facilitators define and promote student development within their program. By using the definition of student development provided by the facilitator, this research question was also able to explore what values and beliefs facilitators hold about building youth academic, social, personal, career, and cultural development. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the promotion of student development involves the promotion of academic development, personal and social development, and career development (Galassi, 2017). The principles associated with this promotion include the concepts of motivation, goal orientation, self-efficacy, attributions, behavioral self-regulation, and identity (Jones, Kittendorf, & Kumagai, 2017).

Finding 1: Identity. As noted in the Chapter 2, identity formation is an essential aspect of student development (Abes, 2016; Baxter Magolda, 1999). For the second research question, identity was described by workshop facilitators as important to reaching the learning and development outcomes presented. How facilitators promoted identity formation and self-expression were inseparable from how facilitators promoted student development in their workshops. Identity formation was presented as the first step in self-expression and also in student development. Interview participants reported that facilitators and mentors can guide students to develop and grow into their identity.

One aspect of promoting positive identity formation took place in how students were labeled and described. The most used labels by the interview participants and their organizations

were young writers and young storytellers. Interview subjects were not specifically asked about terminology they used, rather the researcher paid added attention to the terms they used throughout the interviews. Writer was used most, followed by student. Positive labels leave more options open to them and validate the values and identity they are developing.

Finding 2: Modeling. To engage students as much as possible in the development outcomes, CWW facilitators gave students encouraging feedback often and provided frequent opportunities for creative and self-expression. Yet another important tool, according to the interview participants, is modeling desired actions or behaviors. The interview participants put a high value on modeling as a form of facilitation. The interview participants used modeling to help students attain personal, social, cultural, and academic goals. Modeling was presented by the interview participants as guided learning, as a tool to guide students toward the CWW immediate and long-term outcomes. Modeling is an appeal to students for engagement and imitation that should continue beyond the workshop. The interview participants presented modeling behavior as a way to create the safe and secure space of the workshop needed for self-expression, and therefore needed to achieve the desired outcomes discussed in Chapter 4.

Finding 3: Feedback. Learning outcomes for CWWs included both immediate and long-term objectives arranged by personal and social, cultural, and academic and career goals. The interview participants believe a specific concept of feedback is essential to students' ability to reach learning outcomes and CWW goals. Providing consistent feedback aimed at encouraging the student in both their writing and in themselves was presented by the interview participants as a main method of delivering outcomes. By allowing only positive feedback and rejecting criticism in the format of the workshop, facilitators believed they could deliver on more student development outcomes and achieve a greater number of goals. When discussing positive

feedback, the interview participants presented the rationale that it leads to more personal and academic growth than criticism and critiques. Combined with instruction and creativity, the interview participants believed this form of encouraging feedback could improve students' understanding of the immediate lessons but also their ability to transfer those skills to future lessons outside of the workshop and apply learning to new situations and circumstances. In this way, the students are receiving personal and academic guidance with the additional benefit of building confidence and knowing their work has merit and meaning.

Finding 4: Mentors. The community-based programs reported using mentors as a way to accomplish a number of goals and outcomes. In this way, the use of mentors in creative writing workshops was important for community-based programs. Mentors were used to engage students in reaching the previously stated social, personal, cultural, academic, and career goals. By working one-on-one with mentors, students build positive relationships, gain cultural awareness, receive expert guidance and exposure to different career fields. Findings from the interview data show how facilitators believe the use of mentors improve development by providing the opportunity and benefit of understanding and relating to professional, engaged community members.

Significance of Findings

The findings discussed in this chapter were a product of addressing the problems proposed by this study: first, how out-of-school facilitation of youth creative writing in a workshop format program could fill student development gaps, and second, to address the lack of research on the role of the facilitator in these types of programs. The examination of CWW facilitators' experiences highlighted the values and beliefs about what student development outcomes they valued. The findings show that facilitators value personal, social, and cultural

goals on the same level as academic and career goals. This belief in the development of the whole student was significant to how CWWs were facilitated. The experience of participating in a CWW was presented by the interview participants as a route to identity formation, self-expression, increased confidence, enhanced creativity, academic engagement, career orientation, improved relationships, cultural awareness, and connection to their community. Facilitators focused on how best to create confident, creative, and connected students who were engaged and expressive. In this way, the findings presented the facilitators' belief that the best way to promote or achieve student development outcomes was to promote the whole person, not just the academic parts. This is especially significant for the target age group, as the facilitators believed this age group was at the beginning of their development process and thrived on guidance and inclusion. For facilitators of out-of-school time programs with target age group of 7th to 9th grade students, these findings are especially significant. According to the interview participants, and supported by the literature in Chapter 2, these students are in the process of developing as a person, but also developing ideas and opinions about themselves and their future. According to Gibbons & Borders (2010a), "Middle school is a vital time in career and college planning, regardless of the type of post-secondary education that students intend to pursue" (p. 234). The facilitators presented modeling and mentoring as main tools in achieving these outcomes. This is significant for future CWW curriculum, planning, and training. The knowledge generated from this examination informs education practice and presents new insights into promoting student development for middle school aged students through this low-cost intervention.

Limitations of Findings

The findings were limited by the scope of the research data collection and the variety of programs included in the research data collection. Some facilitators and their programs or

associations had a high level of similarities in workshop format and style. Some of the interview participants had similarities only in facilitation and descriptions, and major differences in format and style. Either a larger variety of workshop styles and settings or a specific focus on just one workshop style could overcome this limitation. These findings maintain integrity with respect to the limitations of the data as well as discrepancies in findings. The major discrepancy that the researcher attempted to account for was whether the program, organization, and facilitator see their role as a reading/writing program, as an educational program, creative writing program, summer camp, after-school program, or mentor program. The distinction mattered to the facilitators and how they viewed or perceived their role. Facilitators working in programs associated with a school or who were teachers in a school saw their role as more traditional teachers of creative writing. There was more emphasis and value on writing elements and improving learning than with those programs without associations to schools. The research illustrated a difference between programs affiliated with a school, either by teacher, location, or even classmates, and those with no affiliation to a school.

Implications

Several implications were identified from the participants' discussion of lived experiences with creative writing workshops and promoting student development. The implications presented have also been addressed by scholars. The researcher will first revisit assumptions made at the onset of the study as these assumptions influenced the findings and implications. The discussions that follow include a brief synopsis of the scholarly works for each implication, as well as their reference to transformative learning and leadership. This discussion will also show how the results may be of use to individuals, communities, organizations, and institutions.

Revisiting Assumptions

It is useful to revisit the assumptions underlying the study that were stated in Chapter 1. These assumptions were presented at the inception of this study and were based on the researcher's background and professional experiences, as well as the reviewed literature. The assumption of self-authorship as a goal of student development is discussed in light of the analysis of the study's findings. Of the available models of student development, the research questions assumed the model of self-authorship from Baxter Magolda (2001) and, therefore, it was believed that self-authorship would be the maximum goal of student development for the workshop facilitators. This study also assumed that facilitators want to promote student development, and that facilitation of self-authorship may help students meet desired education outcomes (Pizzolato, 2006). Baxter Magolda (2001) defined self-authorship as incorporating the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of development, and described how these dimensions are intertwined. This assumption was supported by the findings and the interpretation.

The inclusion of self-authorship as the main goal of student development also led to the exclusion of college-going culture within the conceptual framework for this study. The rationale for this focus was two-fold. First, the researcher speculated that attending college may not be a goal in the creative writing workshops. The goals then were left open as simply academic and career goals. Next, as the researcher was dedicated to a critical paradigm in the study, the labels of college-going and college-ready used in college-going culture theoretical frameworks were rejected. Again, this was due to the acknowledgement that those terms are inherently unequitable. The standard for "college readiness" centers on students' experiences in the educational system that are traditionally less available to some students because it requires

access to institutional support that most majority nondominant schools have been systematically cut off from due to zoning, redistricting, and education funding tied to property taxes. This concept was not fully supported by the findings as college-going culture was noted by multiple interview participants and attending college was a goal for a number of programs.

Research Question 1 Implications

The literature (Abes, 2009; Hernandez, 2012; Hernandez, 2016; Pizzolato et al., 2012) shows how cultural, relational, and psychological interactions affect self-authorship development. Of the available models of student development, this study most closely utilized the model of self-authorship from Baxter Magolda (2001) as this theory involves the cognitive and integrative aspects noted in creative writing workshops, but also acknowledges the gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity contexts central to this study. The self-authoring process recognizes the increasing complexity of the ways that inequitable social systems may constrain and inform the student's developing sense of self. Out-of-school programs, like CWWs, are primed to address inequitable systems such the handicapping practices used in education. It will take experiences outside of that system to deliver on those outcomes. Students cannot be expected to overcome these hurdles when those hurdles are a product of the environment they are currently in. Although the interview participants did not use that term, the concepts were used by the interview participants throughout the research data. Self-authorship involves defining one's own beliefs, identity, and relationships (Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2001; Kegan, 1994), all of which were noted by the interview participants.

Through self-reflection and interaction with others in the workshops, the students can choose their own values and identity (Meszaros, 2007), which is essential to self-authorship and achieving the stated student development outcomes. The curriculum and facilitation of

workshops are built around this concept. First, the students need to find their identity, then have confidence in that identity in order to share that identity. This tiered process to self-expression involved curriculum, workshop setting, and facilitation, and by creating a safe workshop space, building up students, and encouraging them to share their creative writing. Within CWW format, facilitators foster trust and emotional security; use communication and language rich strategies; and promote critical thinking and problem-solving. They also support social, emotional, behavioral, and language development; provide supportive feedback for learning; and motivate continued effort.

The interview participants agreed with the self-authoring literature, that in order to become the authors of their own lives, students need to gain a sense of self (Meszaros, 2007). The concept of identity was prevalent throughout the interview data. It was a guiding force in how facilitators created curriculum, trained mentors, modeled activities and interactions, and provided feedback. They believed identity formation was essential to full participation and engagement in the workshops and to reap its benefits. Identity was presented in a tiered process. First, interview participants viewed the workshop space and style, and the act of creative writing, as a way for students to find their identity, their voice. As noted above, facilitators see their role as an encourager, and the workshop setting itself as a way to build confidence. Without that confidence, the students would not feel comfortable enough to share their writing and fully experience the advantages of self-expression. Without this identity-driven workshop format, students would not be able to fully achieve student development goals. This aligns with the concept of self-authorship, where “How I know” requires first determining who the “I” is (Meszaros, 2007).

Research Question 2 Implications

Aligned with self-authorship, facilitators presented identity and self-expression as goal of CWW. Encouragement and feedback were reported as ideal ways to guide students toward identity formation and gaining the confidence to express that identity. Aligned with social cognition, facilitators presented confidence in self, learning through modeling, and representative mentors as key to achieving student learning outcomes. The findings note how this age group is at once developing into themselves, but also developing opinions and beliefs about roles and aspirations, and then making choices based on these. According to social cognitive theory, the choices made in these formative years of development will then shape the course of the students' lives. Such choices determine what aspects of their potentialities students cultivate, and have cultivated, and which they leave unattended (Bandura et al., 2001). Facilitators and CWW help guide students to make choices from a place of confidence grounded in their own identity, and the students are able to express these choices as well. Gaining self-authorship through their experiences with CWW enables learners to evaluate information critically, form their own judgments, and collaborate with others to act wisely (Hodges, 2009).

The concept of the workshop as a safe space was introduced by the interview participants in relation to the first research question, but it also played a role in answering the second research question regarding promotion. The concepts of safe and structures were presented as inseparable from student development. This is supported by the literature, as Chandler (1999) noted that when given the opportunity to tell their own story, in a safe, structured setting with positive feedback, students build higher self-efficacy and self-esteem. The interview participants presented a number of ways to promote and develop student learning outcomes within the workshop space. In terms of how these outcomes are learned, participants noted modeling,

exploration, taking risks, guidance and encouragement, agency, safe sharing, community, and deep and consistent programming.

The interview participants believed CWW programs that deliberately and carefully designed CWW programs to provoke creativity and encourage engagement will lead to student development. Facilitators mentioned and described rigorous, deep, and consistent programming were key to fulfilling their goals. They noted how deliberate efforts to create activities and exercises, that when employed, encourage writers. Lesson plans are created and approved to ensure each is offering a different curricular component. As several participants noted, this is the structure, scaffolding, front-end portion of the facilitator interactions with the immediate and long-term goals in mind. This front-end work also ensures that mentors are properly trained, and all involved understand the positive feedback-only model, so that all voices at the workshop feel comfortable enough to be heard. Participants also noted that this preparation and planning saves space for engagement and interaction during the workshop. According to the interview participants, personal and academic growth occurred through encouraging facilitation with targeted programming and guided learning.

Modeling as a learning strategy was especially important for the target age group, since it was reported that they thrive when feeling included and comfortable. This seems consistent with the participants' descriptions of how the students learn, especially those in the target age group. Modeling ensures both guidance and inclusion, which was presented by the participants as necessary for these students to meet outcomes and gain benefits. Modeling was not just a strategy used by facilitators, it was built into the curriculum and training for the CWW programs.

The terms relationship and community were widely used in the interview data as the interview participants presented relationship-building, connections to the community, and

cultural awareness as important for building student development. Interview participants reported that connection to self, to others, and to the community were key to both the CWW setting and to student development goals of the facilitators. Many of the interview participants' organizations used culture and community together, and they valued building relationships in the community as growing cultural awareness. As Pizzolato (2009) suggests, understanding participants' social world and cultural context is critical to effectively assess their developmental process.

Such understanding was often achieved through mentoring. Participants voiced the importance of having culturally diverse peers and mentors in their workshops. Bryant (2017) found that a student was more positively impacted by others if common characteristics were shared, such as age, gender, race, or perceived ability. This is why the concept of mentors was noted as having such a high level of importance by the research participants. The community-based programs were more likely to utilize mentors, and their influence makes sense as the research data proposes that it was more likely to achieve this level of self-expression when the students feel their identity is being represented in a positive way. Beyond personal development, though, mentors were also used to promote social, cultural, academic, and career goals.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher offers recommendations for action. The four findings interpreted in this study include how the interview participants presented the importance of identity, the value of modeling, role of only allowing encouraging feedback, and the use of community mentors. These recommendations acknowledge the overlap among the findings, but also how the findings from the first research question were intertwined and at times were the means to the findings for the second research question. The researcher recommends that

facilitators focus on identity formation and representation in their workshops and curriculum; and leverage the use of modeling and mentoring.

Focus on Identity Formation and Representation through Modeling and Mentors

Creative writing workshops and facilitators should continue with the goals of increased confidence and self-expression. Identity formation, having confidence in that identity, and being able to express that identity becomes much easier when students see their identity represented, especially in a positive, fulfilled, and available manner. The specific focus on the facilitators, and not the workshop student participants themselves, stemmed from an active resistance to the handicapping practices, such as the negative labeling and sorting of youth, utilized in American public schools and other societal systems and subsystems described in Chapter 2. For students to meet student development goals and reach self-authorship, negative labeling must be removed from educational and out-of-school programming. Terms such as under-achieving, at risk, underserved, low income, and disadvantaged all lead to forced identities that confine students, their abilities, and opportunities. These terms push an identity of victim, other, less than, and incapable onto students. Especially in education and nonprofit educational programs, these terms ignore the unequal generational support other students have received to scaffold their academic achievement while at the same time erasing the added emotional and physical labor some students must do every day while navigating and surviving institutionalized discrimination and poverty. These labels also position some youth and their communities as centers of risk, but the risks for many of these students emanate from institutional and social systems. This misdirection is a form of victim blaming because it holds students responsible for overcoming conditions created by oppression rather than dismantling that oppression. In order to address issues of equity and justice in education, all students need the ability to develop their own identity

regardless of background. Community-driven, out-of-school time programs are well suited for this goal, as these unequal practices built into societal subsystems, like schooling, require social remedies beyond those offered in the societal subsystems themselves.

The use of modeling as a teaching strategy should be incorporated into planning, training, and curriculum for CWW facilitation. Guiding the students and providing encouraging feedback led to a safe and supportive space where students felt empowered and confident. Self-expression and self-authoring outcomes occurred naturally in this way. Mentors should be included in planning and training as well. With all participants, students, facilitators, and mentors, operating under the positive feedback only model, the workshop was able to deliver on more student development outcomes. As noted above, mentors need to be representative of the community they serve. Representative mentors aid in identity formation, increase self-efficacy, and contribute to students' improved academic and career goal setting. The use of high-level mentors from the community also provides a powerful way to connect with the community and provide a personal path to increase cultural awareness.

Recommendations for Further Study

The next steps for researchers interested in this topic involve looking further into the relationship and connection of the organizations and their communities. The data from the interview participants showed that there could be differences between the makeup of the organization and the level of success they may have in the community. More research on the makeup of out-of-school programming is also needed. The searches used for identifying the interview participants showed that while many programs had racial diversity in terms of staffing, every director or position of leadership in every program researched was white. While most programs noted they practice representation, further research should be employed to determine

the actionable steps and benefits of this practice. In this frame, it would be beneficial to investigate the makeup of the communities these programs serve and where they are located. Do these programs mirror the community? Is the community represented?

One major area that asks for further study is the comparison of out-of-school programs affiliated and nonaffiliated with schools. One thing to note, while all eight programs were out-of-school programs, two of the programs still held an affiliation to a school, meaning that they were held on school property and with many of the same classmates and teachers they see daily in school. Facilitators working in programs associated with a school or were teachers in a school, saw their role as a more traditional teacher of creative writing. There was more emphasis and value on writing elements and improving learning than with those programs without associations to schools. The research illustrated a difference between programs affiliated with a school, either by teacher, location, or even classmates, and those with no affiliation to a school. This would also include the use of teachers as facilitators who also teach in the community and therefore may be known to the workshop participants. This could also include funding sources, as noted by one of the interviewees. Funding from school districts or from grants with requirements could affect or lead to issues with relationship building and trust. While evaluating and analyzing the interview data, there appeared to be differences in context and facilitation between the programs affiliated with a school and those that were not. This should be the subject of further inquiry. The difference between creative writing objectives could also be explored. The programs that valued identity formation above creative writing skills would most likely also have differences in facilitation.

Along with the context of the workshop, the style and format of the workshop itself should also be examined in more depth; for example, are there other methods or frameworks

beyond the AWA model that could lead to student development benefits? As shown, the structure and context of the workshop itself matters for creative writing workshops and student development outcomes. Further study would be needed to examine if and how the different program structure or context shape student engagement and development.

Conclusion

The examination of the experiences of the facilitators hosting creative writing workshop programs provided insights into the values and beliefs they hold about creative writing, creative writing workshop, and their role as facilitator. This study also described their perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding promotion of student development through creative writing workshops and the best ways to achieve those outcomes. Most of these experiences aligned with Self-Authorship Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. Results of this study illustrated four primary findings. These revealed identity and identity formation as central to CWW goals and student development outcomes, and feedback, modeling, and mentoring could be used to deliver these outcomes and reach a number of personal, social, cultural, academic, and career goals. The findings further link to the problem of this study which notes how the lack of representative peer engagement, modeling, and mentoring can affect future decisions and successes.

The rationale for this study emanated from the researcher's desire to uncover ways to make the possible benefits of building student development through creative writing workshops more accessible to more students. This research adds to the body of knowledge about both creative writing workshops and student development, but also holds significance for educators, administrators, counselors, and after-school programming staff. Stakeholders in this study include facilitators, CWW programs, arts education programs, community leaders, the teaching community, professional writers, and mentors, as they would be most interested in utilizing the

intervention of the creative writing workshop as a low-cost and empowering approach to student development. Quality creative writing programs provide opportunities, a positive climate, and connections to create change in the lives of youth.

This study contributes to the expansion of research on student development and out-of-school time creative writing workshop programming by specifically examining the experiences from the perspective of facilitators and by utilizing the context of Self-Authorship and Social Cognitive Theory. This study also provides further exploration of how creative writing workshops can be utilized to reach a large number of student development goals and outcomes.

Researcher's Reflection

As noted previously in Chapter 1, the researcher has had several experiences with creative writing workshops programs from different perspectives. The first experience took place at a city recreation summer camp in Milwaukee, WI. Sponsored by the Milwaukee Public Schools and Libraries, these summer camps took place at public high schools for one week and were open to all children living in the city school district. She attended these types of camps with the city for several years. The next experience came in high school at a live-in summer camp in Chicago, IL. This program was hosted on the campus of Northwestern University and facilitated by writing students from that college. The first program described was attended when the researcher was in the target age group range and the second program was attended two years after the target age group range. Other later experiences would come from the perspective of educator and volunteer facilitator. The researcher volunteered with several literacy programs in Los Angeles, CA. These programs were geared toward students and children in the target age group or extremely close to it. The final experiences of note came while the researcher was employed as a college writing and literature professor in rural Maine. These classes were for

first-year students and the college itself enrolled an extraordinary number of first-generation college students.

These personal experiences helped shaped the interest and impetus for this study, the underlying thread being that the researcher believed creative writing and creative writing programs held opportunities for youth. It also showed the researcher how important those opportunities are for children who had lacked opportunities like those previously noted due to financial or other reasons. From the educator side, the researcher witnessed a growth in students after they participated in creative writing. While the younger students in the LA literacy programs focused on imagination and crafting characters who looked and lived like them, the college students used their creative writing to tell the stories they were struggling to make sense of. These were stories of what they overcame or achieved to be where they are today. Conversations with these students would also reveal that they made the decision to work toward and attend college while they were in the target age group, and that was due to an experience or opportunity of identity-building. Additionally, nearly all of these experiences would also include the encouragement of a role model or mentor, whether from a peer or adult.

Beyond the power of creative writing, these experiences shaped how the researcher viewed the concept of student development overall. First, the participation in summer writing programs as a child were a part of development many growing up in cities like Milwaukee, Chicago, and Los Angeles, with poverty and violence do not get. The benefits noted in the study were real to the researcher and the researcher's peers who experienced these life-changing opportunities.

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APPENDIX A

DUNE

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MISCELLANEOUS: A waiver of any breach of this Agreement must be in writing and signed by me and an officer or other authorized representative of UNE. No such waiver shall be construed to affect or imply a subsequent waiver of the same provision or a subsequent breach of this Agreement. In the event that any provision of this Agreement is determined by a court to be invalid or unenforceable, such provision shall be modified by the court so as to be enforceable to the full extent of the law, and the remaining provisions of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect. This Agreement contains the entire understanding of the parties with respect to my Submission and supersedes all prior agreements and understandings between the parties with

respect to my Submission. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Maine and the exclusive jurisdiction and venue for any disputes arising hereunder shall be resolved in the state or federal courts located in Cumberland County, Maine.

Reviewed and agreed to via email as indicated above.

APPENDIX B
IRB EXEMPTION



Institutional Review Board
Mary DeSilva, Chair

Biddeford Campus
11 Hills Beach Road
Biddeford, ME 04005
(207)602-2244 T
(207)602-5905 F

Portland Campus
716 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME 04103

To: Kerry Hoey
Cc: Michelle Collay, Ph.D.
From: Liam Harrison, M.A., J.D. CIM
Date: February 17, 2020
Project # & Title: 20.02.10-009 Student Development through Creative Writing Workshops

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the materials submitted in connection with the above captioned project and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.104 (d)(2).

Additional IRB review and approval is not required for this protocol as submitted. If you wish to change your protocol at any time, including after any subsequent review by any other IRB, you must first submit the changes for review.

Please contact Liam Harrison at (207) 602-2244 or wharrison@une.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liam Harrison", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

William R. Harrison, M.A., J.D. CIM
Director of Research Integrity

IRB#: 20.02.10-009
Submission Date: 02/06/20
Status: Exempt, 45 CFR 46.104 (d)(2)
Status Date: 2/17/20

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Sample 1:

Name,

My name is Kerry Hoey and I am a graduate student in the Educational Leadership doctorate program at the University of New England.

I am conducting a research study designed to investigate how creative writing workshops and programs promote student development. The youth programs at Urban Gateways and their goals align well with the goals of my research. The study would include interviews with directors, program directors, and facilitators of these types of programs. Possibly yourself as the Executive Director at Urban Gateways or others you could recommend.

Please let me know if this is something you might be interested in and I will be happy to provide more information or answer any questions you might have. I am currently located in Milwaukee and would be available to also meet in person if preferred.

Thanks so much,

Kerry

Sample 2:

Name of personal contact,

My name is Kerry Hoey and I am a graduate student in the Educational Leadership doctorate program at the University of New England. I had the pleasure of working with WriteGirl about 12 or so years ago when I was at California State University, Fullerton while earning my Master's there in Communications.

I am currently conducting a research study designed to investigate how creative writing workshops and programs promote student development. There would be some similarities to the study you conducted regarding self-efficacy. The study would include interviews with directors, program directors, and facilitators of these types of programs. Possibly yourself as the Associate Director at WriteGirl or others you could recommend.

Please let me know if this is something you might be interested in and I will be happy to provide more information or answer any questions you might have.

Thanks so much,

Kerry Hoey

khoey1@une.edu

207-877-1968

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Version 8.22.18

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Student Development through Creative Writing Workshops

Principal Investigator(s): Kerry C. Hoey

Introduction:

Please read this form. You may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document that choice.

You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this research study being done?

I am conducting this research as part of my doctoral dissertation at the University of New England in Educational Leadership.

The purpose of this study is to describe out-of-school education facilitators' perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding promotion of personal and social, cultural, and academic and career development through creative writing workshops. By examining the experiences of the facilitators hosting the programs this study hopes to explore the values and beliefs they hold

about student development. It is anticipated that the experiences, views, and perceptions of these educators can provide insight to the connections, interactions, and relationships between creative writing workshops and the promotion of student development.

Who will be in this study?

8–12 education facilitators who currently or previously hosted creative writing workshops for students in grades 7–9.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to fill out a background questionnaire and participate in a face-to-face interview either in person or via video interface. If needed the interview can also be conducted via telephone. The interview is expected to last approximately one hour to 90 minutes.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

There are no identified benefits of taking part in this study.

What will it cost me?

There is no cost associated with participation.

How will my privacy be protected?

Names and other significant identifying characteristics of participants will remain confidential. Specifically, all interview transcripts will be sanitized so that names of participants and organizations will not be identified.

How will my data be kept confidential?

Cautionary measures will be taken to secure the storage of research-related records and data, and to ensure only the researcher will have access to this material. These measures include

audio and video recordings on secure networks via Zoom, Facetime, or Google Chat. All transcripts will be digitally stored on a password protected computer and only the researcher will have access to these files and backup files.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University.

Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with _____.

You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.

If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.

If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research.

If you sustain an injury while participating in this study, your participation may be ended.

What other options do I have?

You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Kerry C. Hoey

For more information regarding this study, please contact Kerry C. Hoey

If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature or Legally authorized representative

Date

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.



Researcher's signature

Date

Kerry C. Hoey

Printed name

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduce Myself and Project

Hi! Some quick reminders:

My name is Kerry, I'm a doctoral candidate at University of New England studying Educational Leadership. I'm here to learn about student development and creative writing workshops. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experiences. There are no right or wrong answers or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. As I mentioned in our earlier conversations, if it's ok with you, I will be recording our conversation since it's hard for me to write down everything while also carrying on an attentive conversation with you. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning only I will be aware of your answers—and that purpose being so I can contact you if there might be further follow-up questions after the interview.

Confirm Informed Consent

During this interview you will be asked to tell me about your experiences with creative writing workshops. This may be your current position or a previous role no matter how long ago or for what length of time, or whether or not it was a paid or unpaid position. I am interested in your experiences and activities while involved with these programs, and what you thought and felt about those experiences.

Notes & Prompts

Some questions may not apply to your present situation or to a previous role, so please let me know if that is the case.

[[A little bit more about myself: Beyond my doctoral, I am currently an adjunct professor in Communications & PR at Carthage College in Kenosha, WI and at Carroll University in Waukesha where I am in the English Dept. I also coach high school girls swimming and work with several animal rescue organizations. My interest in creative writing and especially creative writing workshops stems from my own experiences as a child through college to today with creative writing, and how I benefitted from those experiences.]]

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Introduction – Personal references

- Where did you grew up? And what types of school did you attend? Especially junior high and high school.
 - Reference of shared locations and schools

- Did you participate in CWW when you were that age?
 - What were those like?

Establish Common Meaning—Review terms, concepts, definitions

Notes & Prompts

People apply different meaning to terms and concepts, so first I'm going to start by asking you how you would define and describe different terms.

- How do you define creative writing?

- If you were describing a typical creative writing workshop, how would you do that?

- What does student development mean to you?

- What terms do you use to define student development?

Identify Practices

I am going to ask you some questions about some of the terms I am using in my study. Just let me know if you are familiar with them or if you utilize any of them in your workshops.

- Self-efficacy:

- Self-authorship:

- Curriculum:

Notes & Prompts

- Representation:

- Mentor:

- Out of school program:

Defining and Describing Experiences

- Tell me about your time/work at _____.

- Can you explain how those workshops were conducted?

- What are all the different kinds of activities that took/take place during your workshops?

- How did you interact with the students during the workshops?
 - Can you go into more detail about that?

Notes & Prompts

- Could you give an example of a typical interaction with a student during a workshop?
 - What's your reaction to students who don't think they can write, share, participate?
-
- Can you tell me what you do to encourage students within your workshops?
 - Describe some of the main things that happen when you first introduce a student to creative writing? To a creative writing program?
 - What are some of the things you wanted the students to learn/gain?
 - What are some of the things you did to make that happen?
 - Can you tell me your favorite experience you had hosting a workshop?

- A favorite story? Favorite success story?

Perceptions

I am interested in your perceptions and thoughts about what went on with your students and what you thought about their development and growth, or lack thereof, while in the workshops.

- How would you describe any benefits of creative writing workshops?
 - Are these any different from the benefits of creative writing in other settings?
 - Can you think of any other kinds of activities that provide the same benefits?
- What are your views regarding building student development?
 - What sort of concepts are included?
- How do you feel when things go well? When things don't go well?

[[Questions: ask only if familiar with previous terminology]]

- What are the stages or parts of student development?

- What are the stages of developing self-efficacy?

- What are the stages of becoming self-authored?

I would like to talk to you about working with the specific age group of 7–9th graders.

- What are some of the characteristics of this age group?
 - Are any of these unique to this group?

Promotion

For the next few questions I want to talk about some of the specific things you do while planning, conducting, facilitating CWW.

- What types of techniques or educational practices or types of curriculum do you utilize?
- What practices do you use with the students in the workshops?
- Do you include anything specific for creating/building:
 - Personal and social goals

- Cultural goals

- Academic and career goals

Notes & Prompts

Prompt:
Reminders regarding
privacy and
confidentiality

Thank You and Wrap Up

- Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like me to know that I haven't asked you about?

- Thank you and follow-up timeline:

APPENDIX F

EMAIL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS EMAIL TEXT AND QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Personal references and Demographics: Only answer the questions you are comfortable sharing.

Demographic information:

Age

Gender identify

Highest level of education and where

Current employment status

Currently located, previously lived

Where did you grew up? And what types of school did you attend? Especially junior high and high school.

Did you participate in CWW when you were that age? And if yes, what were those like?

Terms, concepts, definitions: People apply different meaning to terms and concepts, so first I'm going to start by asking you how you would define and describe different terms.

How do you define creative writing?

If you were describing a typical creative writing workshop, how would you do that?

What does student development mean to you? Or, what terms do you use to define student development?

Identify Practices: I am going to ask you about some of the terms I am using in my study. Just let me know if you are familiar with them or if you utilize any of them in your workshops.

Self efficacy:

Self-authorship:

Curriculum:

Representation:

Mentor:

Out of school program:

Defining & Describing Experiences: You will only need to answer the questions that apply to you directly.

Can you explain how the workshops you are involved with are/were conducted?

What are all of the different kinds of activities that took/take place during your workshops?

How did you interact with the students during the workshops? Or could you give an example of a typical interaction with a student during a workshop?

Can you tell me what you do to encourage students within your workshops?

What's your reaction to students who don't think they can write, share, participate?

Describe some of the main things that happen when you first introduce a student to creative writing workshop program?

What are some of the things you wanted the students to learn/gain? Was there anything you did to make that happen?

Can you tell me your favorite experience you had hosting a workshop? A favorite success story?

Perceptions: I am interested in your perceptions and thoughts about what went on with your students and what you thought about their development and growth, or lack thereof, while in the workshops.

How would you describe any benefits of creative writing workshops? Can you think of any other kinds of activities that provide the same benefits?

What are your views in regard to building student development? What sort of concepts are included?

How do you feel when things go well? When things don't go well?

Promotion: For the next few questions I want to talk about some of the specific things you do while planning, conducting, facilitating CWW.

What types of techniques or educational practices or types of curriculum do you utilize?

What practices do you use with the students in the workshops?

Do you include anything specific for creating/building: Personal and social goals; Cultural goals; and/or Academic and career goals?

If Applicable: I would like to talk to you about working with the specific age group of 7–9th graders.

What are some of the characteristics of this age group? Are any of these unique to this group?

APPENDIX G
PARTICIPANTS

Participant Demographics

	Educational background	Professional background	Personal background	Current occupation or title	Geographic area	Type of program	Role in program	Workshop involvement
A	MFA, MA	Self-employed, Writer	No youth experiences	Director	Milwaukee, WI	Creative writing day camp	Director of program	Facilitator and model
B	MFA & MAT		Creative writing course as senior in high school	Young Writers Program codirector	Denver, CO	Youth writing and artist residency	Youth program director	Oversees curriculum and workshop facilitators
C	EdD, educational leadership	Los Angeles County Office of Education, and educator	Ad hoc way as part of class assignments		Los Angeles, CA	Mentor-based writing program for female youth	Associate director, professional volunteer	Facilitate and participate in workshops
D	PhD, communications & media arts MA, literature & writing	Communications and Public Relations, College professor	Owned and operated writing school with workshops	Visiting Professor of Communications and Digital Media	Kenosha, WI	Writing school and workshops	Independent book editor and sole operator	Running own writing school with workshops across southeastern Wisconsin
E	NA	Director of national organization, teach writing workshops, and runs teacher trainings	New York public schools and creative writing programs	Executive director & founder	New York, NY	Youth creative writing programs	Director of program	Previously facilitated, train current facilitators, oversee all programming
F	MFA, writing, literature & publishing	Educator and writer	Participated in summer camp CWW programs	English lecturer Writing and reading lab facilitator	Boston, MA	Writing and reading lab	Writing and reading lab facilitator	Facilitator and mentor

	Educational background	Professional background	Personal background	Current occupation or title	Geographic area	Type of program	Role in program	Workshop involvement
G	NA	Educator and nonprofit	Creative writing as subject in language arts classes in middle and high school	Program director	Portland, ME	Youth program as part of larger creative writing organization	Youth program director	To create opportunities for young people, focusing on college access and preparation
H	NA	Educator	Youth reading and writing programs	Middle school teacher	Chicago, IL	After-school program	Teacher	Facilitator and teacher

APPENDIX H

PROGRAM SETTING

Program Setting 1. Located within the city of Milwaukee, WI, this organization offers programming for writers of all levels of ability and experience. For more than twenty years, this organization has helped thousands of writers find their voice through classes, workshops, and roundtables. They also offer writers' retreats throughout Wisconsin and Midwest. Through the roundtable critique groups, craft workshops, author readings and Creative Writing Camps for young people, the organization creates a supportive community of writers who have the same goal: to improve their writing and help others to do the same. The youth creative writing camps are located on-site and utilize the outdoor space weather-permitting.

Program Setting 2. This organization is located in Denver, CO and features numerous programs for all age groups centered around writing. The Young Writers Camps are led by published and award-winning writers, and each workshop is designed to foster creativity, self-expression, and excitement about writing. The Young Writers outreach programs connect children and teens to literature, new friends, and a writing community. The workshops are taught by published and award-winning authors and performers, and they are designed to foster creativity and self-expression and to empower youth to find their voices through creative writing. These ever-expanding offerings include youth community engagement in libraries and museums, medical and residential treatment centers, neighborhood youth centers, and a variety of school models.

Program Setting 3. This organization is a Los Angeles-based creative writing and mentoring organization that spotlights the power of a girl and her pen. They match girls with women writers who mentor them in creative writing. Every year, the organization produces

dozens of workshops, panel discussions and special events to help girls get creative, get through high school, and get to college. Through one-on-one mentoring and monthly creative writing workshops, girls are given techniques, insights, and hot topics for great writing in all genres from professional women writers. Workshops and mentoring sessions explore poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, songwriting, journalism, screenwriting, playwriting, persuasive writing, journal writing, editing and more.

Program Setting 4. This Participant operated an independent creative writing workshop program. While working as an independent book editor, they began running their own writing school with workshops across southeastern Wisconsin.

Program Setting 5. Located in downtown Portland, ME, this organization offers programs that enlist the support of local writers, artists, teachers, and community groups. At the writing center they offer free afterschool workshops and writing help, and host field trips for school groups from all over Maine. They also lead workshops at local schools and community organizations; bring acclaimed writers to Maine to give public readings and work with small groups of students; publish bestselling anthologies of student work; and carry out community-wide writing projects and events. The students work with fellow writers and artists.

Program Setting 6: This organization describes itself as a national community of young writers and thinkers. They offer age-based workshops that give young writers the opportunity to work on their own pieces alongside four to six peers. All workshops are guided by a published author or produced playwright thoroughly versed in the organization's student-centric methodology. Students are encouraged to share their completed pieces with friends, family, and the world at large in a variety of ways. They are located in six major cities, including New York

City and Chicago. These locations offer writing labs, camps, school outreach programs, after-school programs, and community-based organization partnerships.

APPENDIX I

CODEBOOK

Data How do facilitators describe:	
Creative writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creative writing • creative writing workshops • student development
CWW experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interactions with students • encouragement • Favorite story
Perceived benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benefits • what learned and how learned • age group specifically

Coding Schema

Facilitator perceptions, values, and beliefs

1. Creative Writing Workshops
 - a. Defining creative writing—exploration, imagination-based, self-expression and artistic expression
 - b. Designed to provoke creativity—mentor, guidance, feedback, encourage
 - c. Benefits—confidence, connection, self-expression, writing
 - i. Confidence
 - enhance, develop, build confidence
 - validation
 - risk/reward
 - ii. Connection
 - making connections
 - sharing
 - accepted
 - community
 - relationships at home and with friends
 - iii. Self
 - sense of self
 - self-expression

- safe
 - personal fulfillment
 - freedom
 - iv. Writing
 - learning
 - improved writing
 - long-term
 - programming
 - guide
2. Facilitation
 - a. Goals—personal, social, academic, career, cultural
 - i. Personal and Social
 - creative and creative outlets
 - ii. Academic and Career
 - leadership
 - iii. Cultural Awareness and Community
 - connection
 - culture of community
 - b. Qualities—curiosity, openness, willingness
 - c. Interactions (formerly CWW Activities)
 - i. Modeling
 - ii. Talking & Listening—expression, encouraging
 - iii. Prompts & Program Design—provoke, rigorous, high-level
 - iv. Encouraging—student agency, relationships, connection
 3. Student Development
 - a. Growth—resiliency, personal and academic
 - b. Tools—skills, abilities
 - c. Confidence—meaning, matter
 - d. Long-term—achievement, goal setting, better citizen
 - e. Actions—focused, deliberate
 - f. Community—connections, engagement, cultural awareness
 4. Success/Best/Favorite—moment of authorship, learning/growing, connection
 5. Age group
 - a. Young writers & storytellers
 - b. Guidance
 - c. Inclusion
 - d. Developing—roles & aspirations

APPENDIX J

DOCUMENT REVIEW

<i>Organization</i>	Description of Document	Key Words & Concepts	Comments and Quotations
<i>1 --</i>	Website review: Who We Are— Mission & Culture Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture driven by open communication within close-knit community • Passion for innovation, hard work, and continual learning • Demonstrate learning • Collaborative • Empowered both as individuals and teams • Fosters learning • Inspiring and supporting • Spirit of discovery • Encourage • Personal evolution with understanding • Optimistic • Foster creativity • Demonstrate hard work • Culture of teamwork and openness • Role in community • Cultivate sense of community <p>Grow as fulfilled successful member of community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people finding their voices, turning pain into power, transforming their ideas into accomplishments, and achieving their award-winning potential regardless of their key economic status • Developing a method of working with students that inspires them to create original work that embodies their unique personal voice. . . . These students are now empowered to bring their voice into the broader world • Provide young people with the creative inspiration and intellectual support that may not be available to them at school • Grow comfortable expressing herself with words and cultivate or further a love of writing in each of them • Create diverse community of young writers and high-level instructors who connect over their shared passion for ideas and expression

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture in which writers learn to hear and articulate empathetic and constructive feedback • Dismantle historic barriers to after school specialty programs • Open, safe, and nurturing space for young people who are highly engaged in creative and intellectual endeavors, as well as those who struggle with verbal and written expression • Leadership opportunities 	
<p>Our mission is to foster joy, literacy, and critical thinking in all young people through writing workshops.</p>			
2 --	<p>Website Review: Mission & Values</p> <p>Young Writers Program: Evaluation Student Survey</p>	<p>Framework for Outcomes through Creative Writing: (see attached diagram)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I Create—Youth build skills in creative writing, critical thinking, self-expression, and problem-solving • I Am—Youth strengthen self-identity and awareness, and develop creatively and self-confidence in a supportive, safe environment • We Connect—Youth develop community through meaningful relationships of mutual respect and group participation, giving and receiving 	<p>Organization Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Collaboration—engage students, teachers, and peers in deeply collaborative relationships • Creativity: Foster innovation and encourage experimentation • Community: provide space and spirit for fellowship • Discovery—writing empowers greater understanding of self and others and thereby encourages compassion and empathy in our society • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Place where all participants feel valued and respected. Respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are heard. To that end, we

	<p>thoughtful, positive feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to engage and be productive • Able to give and receive feedback • Able to make connections with others • Resiliency • Personal fulfillment • Community engagement <p>Theory of Change: When young people participate in high-quality literary arts programs they develop specific skills (I create, I am, We connect) which lead to intermediate outcomes (able to engage and be productive, to navigate, and make connections with others), which in turn lead to long-term outcomes (resiliency, personal fulfillment, and community engagement) that together constitute life success</p>	<p>uphold a commitment to a diverse community by nurturing an inclusive, supportive, and welcoming environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellence: supporting the highest potential of each writer, whatever their goals and talents. • Quality creative writing programs provide opportunities, a positive climate, and connections to create change in the lives of youth. <p>Workshop helped me:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express myself • Improve my writing skills • Find a creative outlet • Reach a goal I had for the class • Gain confidence in my writing • Feel more comfortable sharing • Feel connected to other writers my age • Learn something new about someone in the group • Feel like part of a writing community • Learn something new about making a story, poem, or other piece of writing • Learn writing skills that will help me in future Language Arts classes
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Provide the highest caliber of artistic education, support, and community for writers and readers. We strive to ensure literature maintains its proper prominence in the culture, and that individuals achieve their fullest potential as artists and human beings.

3 -	Website Review	Time Space Support Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering inspiration • Listening to the writer within • Valuable insight and support • Friendships form quickly and last beyond the end of our week at camp
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Led by accomplished writing coaches who tailor activities to the age and interests of each group, Creative Writing Camps provide young writers with the time, space, support, and community they need to nurture their passion for writing

4 -	<p>Website review: About Success Stories</p> <p>About Brochure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within a community of women writers, XX promotes creativity and self-expression to empower girls. • A caring role model can change lives and indeed has changed many lives • Helping girls write their way to more positive futures. • Never underestimate the power of a girl and her pen! • 100% college acceptance rate for graduating seniors in the program 	<p>XX is a creative writing and mentoring nonprofit for teen girls in Los Angeles. XX pairs professional women writers with teens to explore the power of words and writing. Girls gain confidence, communication skills, creativity and an expanded view of themselves and their futures.</p> <p>Participants develop vital communication skills, self-confidence, critical thinking skills, deeper academic engagement and enhanced creativity for a lifetime of increased opportunity</p> <p>The effects of the programming can be felt long after they graduate from high school. Alumnae continue to succeed long past college graduation and choosing professions that will enable</p>
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		them to make a difference in their communities and the world.
Empowering girls through mentorship and self-expression		
5 – Website Review: About	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative programs • Enlist support • Increase self-confidence • Strengthen creative skills, which are vital in the 21st century <p>Programs that integrate arts and writing and emphasize small group work and one-on-one attention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4xs more likely to be recognized for academic achievement • Can raise their grades by one letter in the course of a school year • Strengthen their problem-solving and critical thinking skills • 2xs less likely to engage in risky behavior 	<p>We know that everyone has a story to tell, and through our programs for young storytellers our cadre of adult writers and artists come together with young writers and artists to tell these stories and share them with each other, and ideally also with a greater community audience as well. This is our vision, and our baseline; we love to invent new ways of finding and finessing and then unleashing our words into the world.</p>
<p>We empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world. Focused on young writers ages 6–18, we seek to build confidence, strengthen literacy skills, and provide real audiences for our students. We believe that the power of creative expression can change our communities and prepare our youth for future successes.</p>		