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Tearing Down and Building Up in the Contemporary Workplace: How Reflective
Writing Inspires Workplace Learning and Well-Being

Submitted to Southeastern University

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership

Gina R. Pell

March 2023

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership
Southeastern University

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by:

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titled

**TEARING DOWN AND BUILDING UP IN THE CONTEMPORARY
WORKPLACE: HOW REFLECTIVE WRITING INSPIRES
WORKPLACE LEARNING AND WELL-BEING**

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Abstract

Continuous learning is critical for workers and organizations, but traditional learning strategies may be less effective as constantly changing business demands and individual needs among diverse and geographically dispersed workers may create barriers to performance and sustainability. Although alternative learning approaches such as experiential and double-loop learning may introduce risks by uncovering new challenges, they may also benefit workers and organizations when designed to bolster empathy and encourage a better understanding of pressures and stress. Reflective writing is an adaptable alternative learning approach that can be paired with existing workplace learning strategies or tailored to specific needs and learning outcomes. As this topic has not been widely studied in corporate environments, the current research discovered how reflective writing experiences might influence workers' learning and well-being. Data from individual and guided writing experiences were analyzed using a hermeneutic phenomenological method. The results suggested that self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release may be potential benefits of reflective writing and offered reflective writing as a possible means for organizations to enhance workplace learning and well-being.

Keywords: journaling, reflection, reflective practice, well-being, workplace learning

Dedication

People spark faith, the quest for purpose, and meaning in our lives. Connections with others generate the energy and confidence that we need to endure the tumultuous changes within and around us that accompany the winning and losing moments of each journey we take. Offering us their time and presence, the people in our lives ask the right questions, influence the voices inside our heads, and shape who we are and how we serve others. The following dissertation is dedicated to the many people who have listened, heard, and renewed me as I continued to learn my way. Giving me something of themselves, it was my closest family, friends, professors, colleagues, and total strangers—including those who corresponded over email and the local UPS driver—who ultimately made all the difference. God provided me with people. Thanks to you, O., I now remember every day to “enjoy it.” Like you, A., I looked back and asked, “Where did she go?” Now, I look forward with faith in Him and wonder whom she shall be, for it is with a new vision that I see “I really don’t know life at all” (Mitchell, 2000).

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“My heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear son...that all my doings and life may please You” (Luther, 2017).

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Decades before sophisticated technologies like artificial intelligence and advanced data and analytics influenced productivity in organizations, oral histories documented the challenges of work and the “daily humiliations” that workers experienced as they aspired to find meaningful work and have the chance to leave something worthy behind (Terkel, 1972, p. xi). The nature of contemporary work is challenging, entailing environmental pressures and continuous change that constantly create stressors within the tasks themselves and the crucial relationships among workers that both forge and fracture worker perceptions of the workplace (Dobrowolska et al., 2020). Coupled with expanding responsibilities and higher, often ambiguous performance expectations, work is more supervised and measured, and individual results are more transparent (Moore & Piwek, 2017). In addition, the burden of competing with technology increases tension and anxiety, as workers may overemphasize time constraints and struggle with prioritizing the most critical tasks to the extent that the stress of the workplace tears down their sense of self-worth, openness, and confidence in their abilities (Monahan, 2018).

In contemporary organizations, workers can be the most expensive component of the supply chain (Appelbaum, 2019). The costs tempered with the dissociation or fissuring of nonessential competencies and increased contract labor arrangements have led to the inequity of wages (Appelbaum, 2019; Goldman & Weil, 2021). Organizations’ emphasis on the business’s financial obligations, including maximizing the returns that satisfy the shareholders’ expectations, are magnified, and workers face increasing employment uncertainty (Appelbaum, 2019). Consequently, systemic problems and dynamic issues among workers and organizations require new ways of engaging and shaping change by working together (Matthews et al., 2022). In the postpandemic workplace, organizations face economic viability pressures, and workers remain concerned with their basic needs for health and employability (Lopez & Fuiks, 2021). Struggling to attract and retain the right talent, shallow organizational changes such as aesthetic improvements in the workplace or wage increases may neglect workers’ more profound personal needs and necessitate enhanced learning (Hitka et al., 2021) and

improved measures of well-being (Smith, 2021). Skurak et al. (2021) explained that workers are experiencing expanding anxieties and “blurred boundaries” between work and home life created by extended work hours and additional workloads that may be detrimental to their well-being (p. 118). Complicated and difficult to define, well-being involves multiple factors, such as workers’ physical and psychological health and their attitudes about the quality of their life (Tov, 2018). Ruggeri et al. (2020) posited that understanding and measuring the multiple dimensions of well-being has strategic importance because higher levels of well-being may lead to more extraordinary performance and outcomes.

Notwithstanding workers’ challenges, the right work experience can also build up and facilitate workers’ productivity and well-being (Dobrowolska et al., 2020). To thrive, organizations need ambitious workers who invest in the organization’s purpose and who understand the effort to achieve sustainability (Bock, 2015). Work experiences that are inspiring and personalized can both attract and retain talent (Bock, 2015). Workers connect and contribute to an organization more productively when they have access to work that meets their needs (Lysova et al., 2019). Multifaceted internal and external factors like the opportunity for safe working conditions and time away for rest and recovery are critical considerations to workers’ definition of “meaningful work” (Lysova et al., 2019, p. 374). Collaboration within organizations that facilitates workers’ broader understanding or “systematic thinking” and promotes a learning mentality and the need for relevant skills may enhance workers’ ability to achieve ongoing growth (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021, p. 109).

Workers must be flexible and adjust to the continuously changing needs of organizations (Adams, 2019). Similarly, organizations must provide support through policies and actions that address their needs, including their well-being (Adams, 2019). A better understanding of workers’ needs may help organizations promote the “trust, respect, and fellowship” that underpins change agility and ensures ongoing innovation (Caniëls & Hatak, 2022, p. 321). Learning opportunities that promote “psychological meaningfulness” associated with workers’ roles can contribute to continuing engagement and well-being (Lysova et

al., 2019, p. 381). Access to learning can lead to enhanced skills and career mobility and positively impact workers' well-being (Watson et al., 2018). Individual needs guide workers in decisions about workplace learning, including how they participate, assess, and apply learning experiences in their future work (Franken et al., 2018).

Scholars in both popular and scholarly literature have highlighted the need for organizations to prioritize workers' needs in their strategies (Black & Venture, 2017) and understand that profitability involves workers' engagement and use of inimitable skills (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). Organizations need more understanding of the skills and capabilities—both now and for the future of work—to help workers achieve a blend of experiential knowledge and technical prowess (Ennis, 2018; Longmore et al., 2018; Rios et al., 2020). Building and maintaining relevant skills requires investment in continuous workplace learning or the “at work or for work” learning that occurs when doing the work independently and with others (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020, p. 478). Workplace learning can be formally packaged or unstructured, like the knowledge obtained from developing a workaround or solution to an existing issue (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020). Likewise, it can foster the continuous application of knowledge that improves the organization (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020). With the potential to shape the ongoing learning behaviors or “organizational learning culture” that may permeate improvement through an organization (Lin et al., 2022, p. 26), the content and facilitation of workplace learning play a role in workers' well-being (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020).

Learning is a catalyst for career growth, shaping workers for job transitions (Presti et al., 2018), increasing their career ownership (Segarra & Gentry, 2021) and promoting quality of life outside of work (Shum et al., 2017). As technologies re-engineer “the soul of how we think, interact, develop, and work,” there is a need for a “future learning ecosystem” that can better prepare workers to manage broad and dynamic change (Walcutt & Schatz, 2019, pp. 34). New knowledge and skills are critical for workers and organizations (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020), and changing expectations for learning are evident in dramatic shifts from sequenced

and formal learning experiences to more personalized and experiential learning (Walcutt & Schatz, 2019). Learning at work through practices conducive to workers' needs and emphasizing open discussion of common challenges may improve learning outcomes and well-being (Lawless & Willocks, 2021). Encouraging "lifelong learning" or ongoing learning and providing the necessary time allocation and proper materials for workers to engage, apply, and reflect contributes to higher quality learning experiences and reduces the risk that learning becomes an additional source of stress for workers (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020, p. 478).

Lemmetty and Collin (2020) defined workplace learning as learning that involves explicit knowledge sharing among workers. Participative learning activities that magnify customer needs and highlight the impact of lower-cost services may be beneficial to promote organizational commitment to business outcomes (Daneshgari & Moore, 2016). A blend of workplace learning experiences helps workers thrive and innovate (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020), especially where organizations intentionally consider workers' welfare and create opportunities for "physical and psychological safe spaces" (Lawless & Willocks, 2021, p. 131). Designing workplace learning that supports workers with "self-adjustment...to think in a healthier and less stressful way to stay focused" may benefit workers' well-being and career growth and influence job satisfaction and the likelihood of staying with an organization (Lin et al., 2022, p. 26). Comparably, experiential learning involving individual and collective experiences, such as reflective practice, may address personal and situational factors that help workers and organizations manage the ambiguities of the contemporary workplace (Carter, 2019, p. 23).

Early learning models such as Kolb's (1984) experiential learning framework emerged from theoretical perspectives that associated learning and reflection, such as John Dewey's argument in the 1930s that mindfulness, curiosity, and persistence can better inform actions (Dewey, 1910/2020). Similarly, Lewin and Grabbe (1945) encapsulated learning and retooling as learning new skills and being disciplined to understand personal beliefs about new work and the associated standardized practices that enable a change in previously conditioned behaviors.

Workers' learning is enhanced by "questioning the underlying policies and goals" that underpin work and performance (Argyris, 1977, p. 116). Intentionally getting workers together in conversations to discuss problems and issues is vital for understanding behaviors in practice (Argyris, 1977).

Bulman et al. (2014) suggested reflection helps professionals grow through the analysis of the complications involved in work and argued that open sharing of multiple viewpoints about the execution of work could make a difference to the outcomes achieved. Reflective practice has been described as learning through intentional analysis of experiences and has been studied in the workplace to promote greater awareness and improve problem-solving capabilities (Goh, 2019). Marshall et al. (2022) concluded that reflection could be both a discreet individual practice and a collaborative process used within a group. Whether confidential or shared, reflection outputs, like conversations with others or documentation, can positively affect work by improving and expanding knowledge (Marshall et al., 2022). When conducted publicly, it can also strengthen the professional networks within the organization (Marshall et al., 2022). In high-stress workplaces like healthcare environments during the global COVID-19 pandemic, reflective practice established a sense of empathy and belonging among teams (Rodham et al., 2020).

Some researchers studying reflective practice have suggested that reflection inspires workplace learning that fosters a "desirable employee" who makes more informed decisions about future actions and is more accountable for career progression (Helyer, 2015, p. 16). At the same time, scholars have also debated the subtleties of reflective practice and suggested that situational factors are critical considerations for its use (Kuk & Holst, 2018). Griggs et al. (2018) criticized reflective practice for its many vague definitions and the lack of empirical evidence to support its effectiveness. Other authors have cautioned that reflection as a part of action learning approaches may surface complicated and contradictory circumstances for organizations (Vince et al., 2018). For continuous workplace learning to occur, workers need both an environment, agency, and a level of well-being that enables them to adjust to new or modified knowledge, and the nuances

of organizations, roles, and work tasks among diverse workers require further research (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020).

Situational aspects impact learning and change, including time and other unique factors, and workers' work and home circumstances influence the benefits of reflective practice (Bono et al., 2013). Gulseren and Aycan (2019) described multifaceted and increasing "demands in work, family, and personal lives" and the mental and physical exhaustion that comes with constant connectedness (p. 39). Although individuals may be able to respond to their obligations and manage the pressures in each area of their lives, their level of well-being may not be favorable for sustainable performance (Gulseren & Aycan, 2019). More research is needed to inform the workplace's design and use of reflective practice interventions (Bono et al., 2013). Studies that allow for the capture and analysis of specific workplace scenarios with "measures, such as asking about best and worst events (and how bad and how good they were)" can better explain how distinct experiences impact well-being (Bono et al., 2013, p. 1621).

Learning in the workplace is conceptualized as progressing through practice and effort invested in understanding results and integrating new knowledge into future decisions about work (Kolb, 1984; Monahan, 2019). As work evolves, workers need accountability for relevant, actionable development goals and opportunities that tear down the comfortable and more traditional ways of doing things and build up the risk tolerance and learning that evolves from new experiences (Eden, 2014). Through the current study, I sought to understand workers' experiences with reflective writing and to explore how reflective writing might contribute to workplace learning and well-being in a contemporary corporate work environment.

Statement of Problem

Organizations manage microcosms of global "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 155), and the informed decisions that meet broad needs are inherently complicated (Labroo & Goldsmith, 2021). Precarious shifts in the workforce have occurred in response to ongoing global issues that affect economic, political, and social systems (Sorensen et al., 2021). As external factors continue to

influence work structures, both organizations and workers are struggling to meet new and competing expectations (Emanuel & Harrington, 2020). Overwhelming workloads, isolation from virtual work, and the need for new skills to navigate advanced technologies have increased concerns for workers' mental health across industries and presented organizations with opportunities to help workers learn, understand, and reduce the pressures that impact well-being (Sorensen et al., 2021; Weißenfels et al., 2022). Technical skills and emotional and intellectual competencies are invaluable in contemporary work (Longmore et al., 2018). Workers must transform and support efficient organizational models involving remote work and the higher demand for digital transactions (Zwanka & Buff, 2021). Professional development and well-being promoted through workplace learning influencing critical thinking and coping mechanisms for stress may help organizations inspire more significant innovation and productivity and contribute to greater well-being for workers in work and home life (Carr et al., 2011).

Some stress may be a positive catalyst for productivity (Montani & Staglianò, 2022). In contrast, prolonged stress stemming from an increased workload, extreme engagement, sluggish career advancement, and challenging interpersonal relationships may be unfavorable to performance and contribute to a loss of revenue for organizations through higher employee absenteeism and turnover (Akanji, 2015). Evolving research in experiential learning that incorporates social interaction and knowledge sharing of "successes and failures" may have value for organizations, especially in demanding work environments (Myers, 2018, p. 610). Although vulnerability and transparency require courage, engaging with workers to acknowledge the reality of uncertainty through intentional, connected dialogue may be welcomed and bring a "healing process" that builds association and demonstrates that everyone has something to contribute that matters to the future of the organization (Lewin & Regine, 2000, p. 69). Integral to the workplace learning process, reflective practice, which may include techniques such as meditation, written reflection through journaling, and supportive dialogue, has been studied in some work environments such as healthcare and education (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2018; N. Clarke, 2021).

Among professionals in other fields, reflection is considered a tool for learning and “a separate exercise outside the normal activities of an organization” (Pekkola et al., 2016, p. 18). Reflective practice is unique, with “no hard and fast rules” and the potential for multifaceted models (Finlayson, 2015, p. 729). Its benefits for personal growth and development depend on individual needs (Finlayson, 2015). For example, increasing attention to workers’ unique marketable skills like critical thinking, creativity, and communication capabilities has renewed interest in reflective practice and its potential benefits beyond “knowledge and skills” (Pekkola et al., 2016, p. 17). Some researchers have posited that reflective writing focusing on past circumstances involving adversity or failure could reduce stress and prevent performance impacts from stress (DiMenichi et al., 2018). Moreover, Grant et al. (2014) found that reflective writing can support “emotional literacy” by increasing awareness and control of emotions and reactive behaviors (p. 876).

Quantitative research findings have informed the body of knowledge on reflective practice with contradictory empirical results, including how it may increase confidence in some participants and contribute to less productive rumination and doubt in others (Priddis & Rogers, 2018). Similarly, quantitative studies have found that demographics like age and gender influence coping strategies that include reflection (Akanji, 2015). As it may be difficult for quantitative measures to frame what a phenomenon means (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), understanding reflective writing through additional qualitative research involving open-ended questions and examination of writing samples may be valuable to workers and organizations. Furthermore, other studies with larger populations and deliberate research designs involving experienced practitioners and collaboration are needed to understand better how individual preferences and situational factors impact the reflective writing experience (Lefroy et al., 2021).

Purposeful reflective writing may improve learning and well-being, such as journaling to emphasize appreciation (Flinchbaugh et al., 2012). In addition, reflective writing can be “imbued with purpose,” offering specific outcomes for problem-solving, goal-setting, or capturing knowledge for others (Riordan &

Caillier, 2019, p. 132). The findings of one study conducted with a sample of medical students were that the process of formalizing reflection by “putting words to (digital) paper” generated attentiveness (Naeger et al., 2015, p. 1224). At the same time, more research is necessary to understand aspects of the benefits of reflective writing, like how to facilitate experiences that accommodate unique individual needs (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). Achieving the benefits of reflective writing requires a thoughtful approach because the outcomes of its practical application can vary (Lefroy et al., 2021). Although some experiences are meaningful, like using reflective writing to encourage learning, others may be detrimental if workers sense “surveillance” or do not have the context that can come with social interaction (Lefroy et al., 2021, p. 326). Further research and more defined standards are needed to evaluate reflective writing for specific learning outcomes and to reinforce value (Boyd et al., 1998).

Purpose of the Research

Managing rapid change and ambiguity in the workplace requires workers’ awareness and preparedness to respond quickly to the challenges around them (Rimita et al., 2019). Reflective practice promotes intentional thinking that elicits disparities between beliefs and reality, which can help workers improve their skills in the present and the future (Rodham et al., 2020). Learning through shared knowledge, experiences, and engagement that includes reflection on how work gets done may be an advantage for organizations (Harvey et al., 2020). Rodham et al. (2020) recommended dedicated time for reflective practice as a part of organizational culture, and Hunt et al. (2013) advocated for integrated, structured questions to guide reflective practice. The purpose of the current study was to create a set of reflective writing experiences in a corporate workplace to explore whether and how reflective writing contributed to workplace learning and well-being and to determine what facilitation approaches offered the most valuable experience. The study outcomes contribute to the existing knowledge on reflective writing and may inform organizational decisions related to learning and well-being strategies, including specific interventions in the workplace.

Research Questions

Stress and anxiety from adverse thinking about “unsustainable work burdens” can distract workers and tear down the resilience necessary for achieving business outcomes (Akanji, 2015, p. 30). As the alignment of perceptions and the actual experiences of workers is an essential factor related to organizational performance (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015), organizations need to understand better how stress impacts workers and invest in strategies that help workers lessen adverse effects (Akanji, 2015). Furthermore, reflective practice through writing may be a critical tool for learning (Rivera et al., 2020) and well-being (Flinchbaugh et al., 2012). In this study, I aimed to discover workers’ experiences with reflective writing and explore how it might contribute to workplace learning and well-being in a contemporary work environment; therefore, the research questions were as follows:

RQ1: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence learning in the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence well-being in the workplace?

RQ3: What settings and facilitation methods help to create the optimal experience for reflective writing in the workplace?

Significance of the Research

Organizations invest significantly in workplace learning experiences to prepare for the future skills needs of their workers (Bock, 2015); however, identifying the most critical opportunities with traditional methods like employer surveys or interpretations from learning theories may not be effective since there are biases and uncertainties in the workplace (Rios et al., 2020). Understanding workers’ needs for “motivation, morale, and health” is essential (Warrick, 2019, p. 6). Responding to those needs requires development opportunities that encourage formal learning and engagement with others through genuine and caring relationships (Warrick, 2019, p. 6). Designing development programs that emphasize systems thinking and collaboration begins with planning and incorporating the qualities of individual roles by engaging workers to understand

better the values and beliefs which may lead to future success (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021). Although integrated learning is challenging to achieve, it is critical for professionals, as leveraging experience in the workplace informs future opportunities and responses (Eden, 2014). Researchers have also suggested that participative learning approaches can educate organizations on workplace issues, such as health risks inherent in the working conditions, and facilitate social aspects of work that may influence improvements (Silva-Sobrinho et al., 2013).

Recent researchers suggested that workplace learning bolsters motivation and engagement through collaboration and relationships among intergenerational workers (Burmeister et al., 2021). Proponents of reflective writing have praised its merit in adult learning to increase self-awareness and support individuals' positive thoughts about their worth (Rigolizzo & Zhu, 2020). Similarly, the analysis of ongoing reflective writing suggested that it is a tool that can aid workers' ability to identify better actions required to learn and apply information that improves their circumstances (Rigolizzo & Zhu, 2020). In addition, beneficial influences from reflective writing at work and home can facilitate detachment from events allowing less worry and "better direction" and potentially inspiring creativity and new ideas (Levy, 2010, p. 71). To better understand the potential of reflective writing to inform workplace learning and well-being, several conceptual frameworks elaborate theoretical context.

Conceptual Framework

In the current study, I examined three theoretical constructs for learning in organizations, including the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), the double-loop learning theory (Argyris, 1977), and Karasek's (1979) job strain or job demand-control support model. Each framework presented perspectives that shape why and how workplace learning approaches might evolve with attention to individual needs and the realities of problems in the organization's day-to-day operations. In addition, I incorporated some elements of each contextual framework into the reflective writing experiences offered by the study, including the intentional design of detailed individual and guided writing prompts used to collect writing samples. Shared knowledge of the theoretical frameworks was not part of

the study's purpose nor reflective writing experiences; however, it may help inform future research efforts.

Experiential Learning Theory

Learning from experience is the essence of experiential learning; it involves a continuous process of evaluating connections “among education, work, and personal development” (Kolb, 1984, p. 4). Early contributions to experiential learning in organizations centered around the need for interactions among workers involving debate about a tangible experience, and multiple models of experiential learning involve reflection (Kolb, 1984). Morris (2020) described the nature of experiential learning as dynamic and participatory, where “learners are involved, active, engaged, participants in the learning process” (p. 1067). Leveraging lessons learned from actions is vital to experiential learning, as experience can be more valuable to workers and organizations than contextual or subject-matter knowledge (Morris, 2020, p. 1067).

Double-Loop Learning Theory

Concentrating on thinking and learning “to make sense of the world” is essential to organizations and workers (Argyris, 2010, p. 5). Regardless of workers' experience level, reflective practice may contribute to thinking that shapes issues or circumstances in ways that provide deeper insight and opportunities for problem-solving (Goh, 2019). Emphasizing Senge's (1990) learning model, Reese (2020) underscored the importance of “personal change” that comes when individuals learn to understand why and how they think the way they do (p. 15). Double-loop learning involves a willingness to be introspective and a desire to improve (Argyris, 2008), and it can foster “fresh perspectives” that challenge debilitating organizational routines (Argyris, 2010, p. 107). Understanding and managing the personalities among workers is essential to facilitate double-loop learning, as workers may be defensive of their ideas and behaviors and may block their capability to learn and change (Argyris, 2010).

In contemporary environments, well-educated and highly skilled workers may be obstacles to learning because they may unconsciously resist uncertainty and change even though they believe that they understand it (Argyris, 2008). Argyris

contended that professionals are more adept at single-loop learning because they can act on their understanding of new knowledge or analysis of current conditions and rarely experience setbacks from their decisions. Conversely, double-loop learning may be complex, as it involves conscious inquiry and requires workers to generate new and alternative solutions (Argyris, 2008). Although workers can innovate with “the cognitive rules or reasoning they use to design and implement their actions,” some do not realize where their current knowledge is lacking (Argyris, 2008, p. 5). Helping them achieve the more profound curiosity required in double-loop learning requires a thoughtful approach and a willingness to overcome resistance (Argyris, 2008).

Job Demand-Control Support Model

As a framework with implications for learning and well-being, I introduced the job demand-control support model to the current study to understand workplace pressures and workers’ stressors. Originating from Karasek’s (1976) theories on job demands and job discretion or control over the needs of work, Theorell (2020) suggested that the core of the current perspective on the job demand-control support model is simple. Yet, the model remains valuable to researchers because of its humanistic elements, such as its emphasis on how workers adapt to pressures and how stressors may influence elevated energy consumption levels and feelings of separation in the workplace. The origins of this model explained job stress as a result of combined pressures that emerged from “the demands of a work situation and the range of decision-making freedom (discretion) available to the worker facing those demands” (Karasek, 1979, p. 287). The model has been applied across organizational contexts to explore contemporary workplace issues related to learning and well-being, including how to reduce the stress that leads to emotional exhaustion in service workers through training and shared experiences (Ma et al., 2019). Similarly, it has been used with criminal justice system workers to reduce absenteeism and improve job satisfaction and home life (Ellison & Caudill, 2020). Fundamentally, the JDCS model explores the choices workers can make to impact their job outcomes, including developing their skills to enable additional decision-making capabilities (Theorell, 2020).

Methodology

Both workers and organizations can learn from reflective practice, as it surfaces innovations and purposefully contests current realities through open-ended questioning and conversations in “real-life settings” (Hilden & Tikkamäki, 2013, p. 91). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches have informed the body of knowledge on reflection in the workplace, and tools continue to evolve (Bruno & Dell’Aversana, 2018; Gudeta, 2022; Priddis & Rogers, 2018). The essence of reflective practice is rooted in uniquely individual experiences, with broad interpretations shaped by multiple models and contexts (Finlayson, 2015). Phenomenology was selected as the methodology to understand the influence of reflective writing because it centers on comprehending the phenomenon's significance through the comprehensive collection and analysis of particular experiences (Bliss, 2016). In addition, phenomenology can represent participants’ experiences more accurately, depicting the “complexities that exist in real life” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 49).

Phenomenology emphasizes oral and written communication and is sensitive to multifaceted ontological views (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Patton (2014) described three types of detailed qualitative data compiled to explain a phenomenon. Artifacts from qualitative research can include input from personal interviews using open and probing questions, notes from events or discussions, and any written documents that collect and formalize an experience (Patton, 2014). Van Manen (2014) explained that the data of phenomenological research involves the experiences that people lend to one another to help others become “more experienced ourselves” (p. 62). As the objective of phenomenology is to find that which is different and to be amazed by the unique qualities of experiences, the data are examined differently from other qualitative methodologies that utilize “coding, labeling, and classifying types of procedures” (van Manen, 2014, p. 347). Phenomenological data can depict individual experiences to create a “universally recognizable validity” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 5). Similarly, it can build high-quality evidence to support the answers to research questions but without generalizability (Yin, 2015).

Collecting phenomenological data requires intentional decisions to carefully select participants who can provide supporting evidence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). Labeling the participants with terminologies such as *target population* or *sample size* is inappropriate in a phenomenological approach (van Manen, 2014), but using a purposeful or criterion sampling method to identify participants is appropriate (Patton, 2014). For example, in the current study, a single organization to which I had access and where the opportunity existed for the participants to share a common workplace experience was helpful. The participants shared the responsibility for following the same organizational policies and had access to the same learning platforms and options for internal mobility. Representing varied roles, including individual contributors and leaders with direct reports, the participants brought cross-functional expertise from various areas of the organization, including human resources and information technology. They were diverse in age, skills and capabilities, and organizational tenure. Prior experience with reflective writing was not a requirement for the study, but some participants had experience with personal and professional journaling outside the workplace.

A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology allowed me to engage with participants in the research process (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). Compiling participants' experiences into texts created the opportunity to evaluate the language with a depth beyond descriptive words so that meanings might be elucidated by "questioning the good and bad" (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 146). Hermeneutic phenomenology requires immersion in the research process, and openness to others' experiences is crucial (van Manen, 2014). I was committed to listening and writing about the experiences "evoking ordinary life as we live it in our everyday existence" (van Manen, 2014, p. 23). Through active listening, I sought "the presence of something" and gained meaning from the participants' expressions through closeness to their experiences and the process of capturing, reading, and writing for a purposeful and unique understanding (van Manen, 2014, p. 264).

In conducting the current study, I served in multiple roles as "both the teller and the listener," cultivating dialogue with the participants and facilitating the discovery of their experiences using reflective writing in a bridling journal to shape

understanding in a trusting and nonjudgmental way (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 5). Leveraging texts from the transcripts of multiple individual interviews, the focus group, and individual writing samples, a formal process or “structural analysis” guided the data analysis involving reading, re-reading, and deriving and conveying participants’ experiences to capture “lived truth as opposed to correctness” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 5). The understanding of the participants’ experiences developed through the narration of the individual participant stories by “telling what touches” and gleaning meaning of the experiences through “a process of improvement in understanding” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, pp. 5–6). Like other phenomenological methods, the collective themes structured the findings and identified the underlying meanings (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). As thematic analysis solidifies the lived experience and explains the nature of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014), the themes from the study further defined how reflective writing might influence workplace learning and well-being.

Hermeneutic phenomenology can produce profound human experiences with “intuitive-based evidence” (van Manen, 2014, p. 351). With participants who can articulate their experiences verbally or in writing (van Manen, 2014), both “rich and thick” data can emerge describing the meaning of experiences with plentiful and detailed data that supports the outcomes of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409). Multiple interviews and reflective writing opportunities occurred over time to obtain comprehensive data for analysis. It was not my objective to achieve data saturation or an intuitive point at which no new information was realized (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Moreover, the purpose of the study was not to achieve validity or reliability by selecting a specific number of participants, as a larger number of participants does not guarantee accuracy (Fusch & Ness, 2015) nor the repeatability of an individual’s experience (van Manen, 2014). Open-ended research questions and multiple forms of data provided rigor to increase the quality of the research (van Manen, 2014).

Research questions “explore the meaningful experiences that bind person and world” (Stutey et al., 2020, p. 145). Transcripts, writing samples, and notes

from my bridling journal contributed to the data collection and the timing of interactions provided for input from the participants before and after their reflective writing experiences to account for any situational factors and probe for details of the specific circumstances with more depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261). I employed a human-centered approach to the study incorporating a “participant’s lens” in the data collection to “honor, cultivate, and connect with the intricate webs of personal meaning” provided by the participants (Hansen, 2012, p. 138). Protecting sensitive data with careful adherence to the ethical standards established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) included ensuring the de-identification of the participants in the research using pseudonyms. Participants were permitted access to their specific transcripts, de-identified composite summaries of the holistic findings, and my research journal (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). I followed rigorous standards to ensure anonymity and confidentiality to protect the participants and the organization (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Triangulation is vital to validity in some phenomenological research, as collected data may provide a more intimate lens to the “human condition” and foster the potential to capture a realistic interpretation of the individual participant’s perceptions (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 152). Triangulation describes evaluating multiple data dimensions across sources to confirm the data’s credibility and the study outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although collecting, relating, and analyzing the individual participant’s experiences from the multiple data sources may present the opportunity for triangulation, the validity of the unique experiences was a more important outcome for the study. In addition, it was essential to protect the participants’ experiences as complete stories meaning that gleaning individual words as themes or tracking repetitive occurrences as a coding technique was not suited for the hermeneutic analysis (van Manen, 2014). Maintaining the complete language of the individual experiences captured the intricacies of the participants’ interpretive language and helped derive meaning. Preserving the language of the original dialogue was vital to protect the multidimensional aspects of what is said and unsaid (Gadamer, 1976/2008).

Even though software can assist with centralizing, locating, and unifying connections among data to aid thematic analysis (S. Clarke et al., 2021), only humans can authenticate “the belongingness of each experience to the same world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 41). As software may remove researchers from proximity to the parts and the whole of the participants’ experiences, manual methods identified and constructed the thematic analysis. An intentional, “authentic,” and personable interaction with the data was crucial to honor the delicate and personal experiences captured by the reflective writing (van Manen, 2014, p. 41). The data analysis involved the creation of a visual storyboard representing individual personas for each participant and capturing a connected, collective whole of the data to surface the meaning of what it is like to live in the phenomenon. The storyboard included brief narratives drafted for each participant, capturing personal attributes and contextual elements of their work and writing experience.

Similarly, a bridling journal created by myself was used to complement the analysis, recording my “ongoing reflective practice that takes place before, during, and after data collection” and used to mediate the influence of my beliefs and potential biases related to the phenomenon (Stutey et al., 2020, p. 146). Like bracketing traced to Husserl’s (1913/1989) influence on research, bridling begins with identifying and acknowledging the researcher’s ideas and beliefs to maintain openness to the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). Unlike bracketing, bridling accepts the researcher’s thoughts and opinions, encouraging their inclusion in the research instead of separating them from the phenomenon (Vagle et al., 2009). Incorporating the bridling journal not only introduced a method to capture and interrogate texts for more profound understanding, but also allowed me to use reflective writing to explore preconceptions, philosophical concepts, and unexpected insights from the study.

Kekeya (2021) suggested that “mutual understanding and a healthy relationship” are essential in all interactions with participants to ensure the quality of the research (p. 33). Throughout the current study, I formally engaged participants in individual verbal and written communications to ensure

understanding of the progression of the study, reiterate the opportunity to stop participation at any time, and ensure that there were no concerns with anonymity or confidentiality. To address the reliability of the texts created from the data, I offered each participant access and the opportunity to review their texts. Digital transcriptions from interviews, guided writing, and the focus group was made available upon request. Individual participants' writing samples were not available to all participants to protect anonymity and confidentiality. A codebook organized the personal texts and structured the collected data for the research. Participants received copies of their individual stories drafted from their initial interviews and writing samples, and their feedback was incorporated into revised texts included in the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Appendix D contains an excerpt from the codebook.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study involved participants from a single organization. Although the participant selection narrowed the potential for generalizability, the outcomes may still be helpful to the organization and inform other studies (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Because the number of participants in qualitative research may vary with the nature of the research questions, and because the volume of data collected was expansive, constraining the number of participants to eight was not considered a study limitation. Demographics, including age, education, gender, and tenure, captured richer details about the participants; however, they were not specifically part of the data analysis influencing the study findings.

Inter-subjectivity, or the potential for quality issues between the researcher and the participants, is a critical factor to be considered in qualitative research (Kekeya, 2021). One potential influence on inter-subjectivity for the study was any perceived power between myself and the participants perceived by formal or informal hierarchical roles defined by the organization. As a condition for participation, the volunteer participants did not have any direct or indirect reporting relationships; however, the potential for a future relationship may have been a risk inhibiting data collection and the findings. Additional factors, like familiarity between the participants and myself or experiences with reflective writing before

the study, may also have impacted the research outcomes. Finally, concerns about the anonymity and confidentiality of the data may have narrowed participants' contributions.

Definition of Terms

Defining and distinguishing some essential terminology provided a deeper understanding of the theoretical constructs and practical applications included in the research study. The language used to express reflection, reflective practice, and experiential learning was often represented with nuances or adapted slightly across scholarly and popular literature. Some related reflective practices, such as mindfulness and meditation, are defined in the following section to help the reader further understand comparable reflective practice approaches throughout the remaining chapters of the document and for future research.

Action Learning

In essence, action learning is the ability to learn through doing where actions to influence change result from a culmination of an inherent willingness to engage without coercion or force, take ownership of roles and tasks, and work together with others (Pedler & Abbott, 2013). Associated with Revans (1991/2010), who defined action learning as the outcomes achieved when individuals get involved and work together with others to overcome challenges, action learning may have evolved from "ancient wisdom" (Pedler & Abbott, 2013, p. 9). Action learning references learning through experiences and collaboration in the study.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is more than the ability to consume information rationally. It involves the capabilities associated with reviewing an idea or situation, such as looking for options or drawing conclusions, making decisions, and taking action (Shpeizer, 2018). The basic principles of critical thinking or "dispositions and abilities," like collecting and analyzing the credibility of facts or making judgments of diverse perspectives, can be taught and applied more effectively with examples and practice in the proper contexts (Ennis, 2018, p. 165). Sellars et al. (2018) noted that critical thinking has numerous connotations and applications that may be situational and influenced by individual perceptions, culture, and other social and

economic factors. In the context of the current study, critical thinking referred to invoking the process of choosing how to respond (Ennis, 2018).

Guided Reflective Writing

Guided writing techniques that encourage inquiry and engage workers in thinking and interaction through feedback loops with other workers have demonstrated benefits for workers and organizations (Smith, 2021). Comparing independent reflective writing to guided writing, guided writing involves sharing context and writing with others. It may include responsive prompts where writers express their thoughts about another's writing in their journal before discussing their ideas with a small group. Both freewriting or open-ended writing and guided writing have informed research suggesting that reflective writing may improve individuals' perceptions of their effectiveness and confidence, inspiring them toward their goals (Schneider-Cline, 2018). In the current study, guided reflective writing was defined as journaling with a group encompassing dialogue generated from individually written responses to share ideas and experiences.

Mindfulness and Meditation

Strategies in the workplace that involve intentional focus and self-awareness may help workers gain perspective and better manage stress (Heckenberg et al., 2018). Scholars have described "mindfulness meditation" as an emphasis on current circumstances expounding that it involves less critical reasoning, empathy, and respect for others' feelings over one's own (Heckenberg et al., 2018, p. 62). In addition, Hafenbrack et al. (2020) suggested that mindfulness enhances an outlook and can shift attitudes by creating a "fleeing state" that influences more positive and productive interactions among workers (Hafenbrack et al., 2020). Mindfulness has been studied in various workplace contexts (Shahbaz & Parker, 2021). It interrelates mental and physical activities such as "breathing, walking, and eating, as well as body scanning and yoga exercises" (Shahbaz & Parker, 2021, p. 3). Mindfulness and meditation are referenced in the current study, but were not part of the objectives or design of the reflective writing experiences.

Reflection

Dewey (1910/2020) explained reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration” or thoughts that organize ideas and outcomes to inform beliefs (p. 5). Reflection may involve meditation, writing, or dialogue to increase knowledge (N. Clarke, 2021). It may occur formally or informally with an individual or through interactions (Franken et al., 2018). Like a form of “perpetual observation,” reflection can lead to positive outcomes for individuals, such as increased understanding, self-awareness, and self-governance in the workplace (Siebert & Walsh, 2013, p. 169). Conversely, reflection oriented toward advancing organizational outcomes can be manipulative for workers (Siebert & Walsh, 2013). Schön (1987) compared reflection to a “ladder,” in which moving up activates reflecting on what occurred on the last rung and moving down applies the knowledge learning to a new experience (Schön, 1987, p. 114). To define reflection for the study, reflecting can happen “on an action” or “in the midst of action” (Schön, 1987, p. 26).

Reflective Practice

A mindset or attitude, reflective practice involves intentional thinking and learning from experience, whether personal, work-related, or expanded in broader life contexts (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). Schön (1987) explored reflective practice to reduce the gap between knowledge gained through formal education and the ability to apply the learning in the workplace. Schön’s (1983) reflective practice theory suggested that professionals use their experience as a basis for current problem-solving. Other scholars have described reflective practice as thinking and acting by relating learning to new situations (Kinsella, 2010; Van den Bossche & Baktiran, 2021). For example, Hunt (2010) posited that reflective practice transcends analyzing how to improve oneself suggesting it can help differentiate meaning and inspire spirituality. In the study, reflective practice describes components of experiential learning that occur in practical applications such as critical thinking, reflection, guided writing, or other intentional approaches to improve comprehension.

Resilience

Numerous definitions and models have explained resilience at organizational and individual levels, and researchers have debated whether it is influenced more by characteristics or circumstances (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). For example, organizations that respond well to critical conditions like the global COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate “business resilience,” changing to accommodate dynamic needs (Huang & Jahromi, 2021, p. 139) by rallying systems and leadership to pivot quickly (Luthans et al., 2015). Similarly, highly resilient workers are a strategic asset to organizations (Malik & Garg, 2017) as they can manage adversity with optimism and “quickly adapt to work and life...[with] positive working attitudes, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships” (Meng et al., 2019, p. 2231). Malik and Garg (2017) described resilience as an individual’s ability to adapt to challenging situations with confidence and a mindset for longevity. For the study, resilience involves recovering from adversity with positive energy and continued commitment to future progress.

Self-Awareness

Gill et al. (2015) wrote that organizations value workers who bring “resilience, empathy and self-awareness” into the workplace. Harrington and Loffredo (2011) studied self-reflection and internal self-awareness and their relationship to well-being, defining internal self-awareness as an inclination to be mindful of “one’s feelings and mental processes” (p. 40). Vital to growth, self-awareness is “an essential skill” or proficiency crucial in the contemporary workplace (Feize, 2020, p. 907). Self-awareness has elements of “consciousness and reason” and may have roots in Horkheimer’s (1972/1982) critical theory (p. 14). It may be a combination of an inner and outer view of one’s attitudes and actions that changes with the influence of reflection (Wicklund & Duval, 1971). Feize (2020) found that knowledge of expected behaviors or rules in a specific social context and acceptance of “vulnerabilities” were conduits to self-awareness as individuals compare themselves to others (p. 916). For the purposes of the current study, self-awareness meant understanding one’s emotions and actions with

internal and external feedback (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Gill et al., 2015).

Well-Being

Definitions of individual well-being vary, and quantitative tools that measure particular components are valuable (Fukui et al., 2021). Kaufman (2018) explained that multiple psychological factors encompass well-being, such as being fulfilled by life, accepting strengths and opportunities, having high-quality relationships with others, and exhibiting humility. A catalyst for learning, well-being may be nurtured by relationships that include conversations and mentoring where there is “care, trust...safety and connection...calm, and fulfillment” (Rincón-Gallardo, 2020, p. 462). The study of well-being includes both an individual and organizational level lens and has a reciprocal impact meaning both workers and organizations may benefit from increased worker well-being (Corrêa et al., 2019). For example, workers are more fulfilled by a balanced lifestyle where both work and life experiences are satisfactory, energizing, and productive, which may contribute to better organizational outcomes (Becker et al., 2022).

Corrêa et al. (2019) discussed the importance of workers’ specific life experiences and how they impact the work environment. Studying workers’ well-being through factors such as psychological fatigue, perceptions of personal accomplishment, and excitement about work, in addition to finding practical ways to acknowledge how the elements impact the work, may contribute to improved organizational outcomes (Corrêa et al., 2019). Well-being was defined in the current study as workers’ physical and psychological health (Sorensen et al., 2021).

Summary

Sustainable organizations reform policies and practices to improve workers’ work quality and cultivate the innovation necessary for the future (Cloutier & Robert-Huot, 2021). Workers need enhanced capabilities to help them embrace “lifelong learning” that presents more personalized experiences, evaluation, and fulfillment of specific learning needs as rapid change creates pressure and stress (Hallová et al., 2017, p. 45). Learning opportunities enhanced with reflective practice may help workers achieve a deeper insight and improve their performance,

and it may help them identify opportunities for future learning (Davies, 2012). Similarly, higher levels of well-being are influenced by learning that focuses on workers' individual needs and consideration of their unique circumstances (Lawless & Willocks, 2021). In the current study, I explored reflective writing as a technique to understand better how it might frame and enhance workplace learning and what impacts—if any—it might have on well-being within the contemporary workplace. I also briefly evaluated individual and guided writing experiences to illuminate any preferences for facilitating reflective writing experiences.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Investing in workers with learning experiences that foster continuous skills and capabilities creates a competitive advantage and requires vision and courage (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2018). Workers experience more positive perceptions of organizations that support their development (Jin & McDonald, 2017). Learning can fuel the capacity for more robust collective results (Jin & McDonald, 2017) and raise levels of well-being (Huo & Boxall, 2022; Watson et al., 2018). As evolving technologies permanently change the workplace environment and the jobs needed in the future, strategic approaches to enable ongoing growth and upskilling of workers are imperative (Agrawal et al., 2020; Williams, 2020). Where technology does not replace jobs, such as those requiring social interactions (Lewis, 2020), workers need layers of experience and broader competencies that encompass interconnected capabilities like “digital, higher cognitive, social and emotional, and adaptability and resilience” (Agrawal et al., 2020, p. 5). Integrated skills for networking, communication, and participative problem-solving enhance workers’ potentiality and organizational vitality (Rios et al., 2020; Römgens et al., 2020). The purpose of the current research study was to explore workers’ experiences with reflective writing and how, if at all, it might enhance learning and well-being in a contemporary corporate environment.

Age, gender, and previous education influence practical workplace learning experiences (Deepa et al., 2021; De Matas & Keegan, 2020). Black and Venture (2017) proposed that a “people-centered” culture is crucial for workers to adapt to the changing nature of work and explained organizations need to invest in benefits for workers, including workplace learning and communications that instill hope for the future (p. 24). The following literature review, framed with theoretical models, presented the changing landscape of work and the criticality of attention to workers’ needs for enhanced opportunities for learning and well-being. In addition, evidence from the literature describes the practical application of reflective writing to promote workplace learning and well-being.

Navigating Contemporary Work

Precarious consumer demands and other global, political, and societal issues have stimulated new expectations among workers and organizations, generating diverse individual needs (Zwanka & Buff, 2021). Advancing technological capabilities and economic pressures have contested traditional operating models influencing corporate divestitures, reductions in force, and fissuring or shifting accountability for “basic terms of employment” between workers and organizations and changing the landscape of how workers’ needs are met (Weil, 2014, p. 7). Increasing performance expectations and financial obligations to shareholders have contributed to the volatile labor market and worker uncertainty (Appelbaum, 2019). Extraordinary circumstances such as the global COVID-19 pandemic have also changed contemporary work, creating physical and psychological challenges for workers, such as adapting their homes as workplaces and managing the isolation of remote work (Alagah, 2022). The vicissitudes of contemporary work tear down workers’ “workplace protections...rights and benefits,” leaving them vulnerable in competitive labor markets with fewer options for gainful employment (Goldman & Weil, 2021, p. 55). In contrast, the meaning and opportunity in work that builds up workers’ motivation are still achievable with attention to the “fundamentals of humanity...[and] co-creating the future of work” through leadership, inclusion, learning, and connection (Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2021, p. 749).

Like other ecosystems, organizations evolve through constant change, sudden and unplanned or incremental and anticipated, and ongoing change introduces a complex paradox of opportunities and threats to consider (Burke, 2018). Caniëls and Hatak (2022) proposed the unrelenting introduction of innovative technologies and fast-paced change will continue to challenge organizations requiring leadership and focus on the dynamic circumstances that can contribute to workers’ change agility. Undeniably, recent global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have raised awareness of the importance of continuous change for the benefit of the larger society (OECD, 2021). In addition, the complexities of individual attitudes, values, and beliefs that proliferate possible solutions to “wicked problems” are imperative to informing and understanding

impactful decisions for the future (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 155). Involved and compelled to manage the microcosms of broader societal problems, organizations must navigate a broad labyrinth of systems with an unending myriad of issues that influence performance and continuous improvement (Burke, 2011, p. 148). Achieving “the greater good” is inherently complicated and requires extensive knowledge and intense evaluation to ensure the best-intended decisions do not create damaging and irreversible outcomes (Labroo & Goldsmith, 2021, p. 417).

Scholars have renewed interest in the predominance of human factors in the workplace, as humans drive the design of technologies that change how organizations manage work (Sgarbossa et al., 2020). Although advancements in data capabilities may strengthen the organization (Wankhede et al., 2021), the misuse or misinterpretation of workers’ data can be harmful (Areheart & Roberts, 2019). For example, controversial legal and ethical concerns for workers’ privacy have heightened as organizations introduce inconspicuous sensors in workers’ devices and other technologies that automate data capabilities for monitoring “employee’s movements, physiology, proximity, interactions, and physiological states” (Oswald et al., 2020, p. 524). Interminable exchanges and diverse interpretations of complex information may help or hurt workers and organizations (McCarthy et al., 2020). Closer attention to the “human-centered decision support systems” that facilitate a better understanding of factors related to human performance, including age or intergenerational factors, are integral to improved technology and organizational performance (Sgarbossa et al., 2020, pp. 303-304).

Stimulating growth and nimble, high performance among workers can be facilitated with attention to their needs and “patterned behaviors” (Harvey et al., 2020, p. 39). Tailored learning experiences rich in internal and external knowledge and social interactions that promote dialogue in safe spaces can inspire problem-solving (Harvey et al., 2020). Similarly, real-time experiential learning in the work context can facilitate positive change even though it may seem chaotic on the surface (Harvey et al., 2020, p. 39). Supporting workers' needs for a better understanding of critical workplace issues like the mutable nature of jobs can also be accomplished through learning experiences (Watson et al., 2018).

Strengthening Workplace Learning

Human capital remains critical to organizations, and workplace learning along with well-being are essential considerations, as workers have the potential to live and work longer and will need support to enable greater change agility and positive outcomes (Chin et al., 2019). Cultivating workers' change agility presents numerous learning opportunities explored in theoretical models prevalent over decades (Adelman, 1993; Bennis, 2009; Hermann, 2015). For example, Dewey's early 1900s view that "learning [alone] is not wisdom; information does not guarantee good judgement" may have stirred reforms that influenced the need for critical thinking skills and reflection (Dewey, 1910/2020, p. 76). Later in the 1940s, Lewin's research furthered interest in the thinking aspects of learning, asserting social and environmental factors and surfacing the need for retooling or "re-education...when an individual or group is out of touch with reality" (Lewin & Grabbe, 1945, p. 56). Building on Lewin's (1947) theories, Shaw (1997) advocated that change in organizations requires a participatory, social interaction between people that allows for the "living systems" to evolve and move on a continuum that includes periods of stability and "the edge of chaos" (p. 235).

Considering organizational systems in the workplace, complex networks or "shadow systems" intertwine work with human factors such as the perceptions and realities of individual and group attitudes, behaviors and interactions, and feedback loops contributing to organizational change (Shaw, 1997, p. 235). Workers' perceptions of their organization's future viability and beliefs about how the organization has or has not fulfilled their expectations form an unofficial and undocumented "psychological contract" that may influence a range of both positive and negative behaviors as well as the loyalty and performance of workers (Scheetz & Fogarty, 2020, p. 176). Laidoune et al. (2021) suggested that organizations should better understand that workers may resist change because they fear the unknown. Acknowledging what workers believe to be accurate and being proactive in communicating factual information may influence more desirable behaviors (Scheetz & Fogarty, 2020). Bolles (2021) posited clarity and collaboration between workers and organizations to understand both individual and collective attitudes

about organizational strategy and change encourages workers' ability to respond and thrive. Furthermore, the autonomy, confidence, and motivation that drive change agility, resilience, ongoing learning, and well-being require organizations to intentionally promote mindfulness and facilitate a process for knowledge sharing that involves "mining [workers'] personal knowledge" and disseminating it across organizational systems (Lin et al., 2022, p. 27).

Developing habits for "lifelong learning" is also paramount for navigating the rapid and radical changes in the workplace (Kim & Park, 2020, p. 3). Managing increasing demands with higher-level thinking has devaluated workers' prior knowledge, elevated the need for agility, and necessitated new roles and skills across organizations (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020). Previously, a single organization may have accommodated workers' learning and development needs and promised opportunities for continued career advancement and employment (Presti et al., 2018). In today's workplace and in the future, however, workers may have increased personal responsibility for building skills and competencies needed to remain relevant in the competitive labor market (Goglio & Bertolini, 2021; Römgens et al., 2020). Mahapatra and Dash (2021) suggested workers must tend their careers by developing their skills and capabilities. At the same time, stress and anxiety from uncertainty in the workplace environment can debilitate and distract workers, and interventions such as employee assistance programs may not be effective if they do not address the pressures or underlying causes of the stress (Akanji, 2015). Identifying perceived stressors and understanding the "coping mechanisms" to handle them among workers, such as the "disparity between available time, ability, skill, or resources and demands of the job at a given time," is complicated by the variations among individuals (Goel & Verma, 2021, p. 113). Furthermore, variations among workers' learning and development and past professional experiences influence their willingness to understand and respond to critical issues and problems in the workplace, and establishing a sense of obligation and authority for solving complex problems across all roles may be a crucial challenge in organizations (Edmonstone et al., 2019).

Rejuvenating Well-Being

Workers' knowledge of organizational systems and experiences with human resource policies and practices influence change adoption (Cloutier & Robert-Huot, 2021). Earlier research on learning in organizations revealed that internal and external systems impacting an organization and the involvement of individuals and groups are crucial components of learning strategies aimed at improving overall performance (Crossan et al., 1999). Similarly, knowledge of the factors that may contribute to higher levels of well-being, such as managing stress or learning to understand "career calling," is essential for both workers and organizations (Vianello et al., 2022, p. 238). Stress, career identity, risk tolerance, and other work-related phenomena highlight how diverse responses to actual or perceived experiences within the workplace can impact well-being.

Understanding and Managing Stress

Workers experience situational aspects like interpersonal relationships in different ways across roles and levels of an organization, and pressures can create dissimilar types of stress for individual workers that impact their decisions, outlook, and overall effectiveness (Ross et al., 2020). How stress manifests and impacts specific roles within the workplace has received considerable attention in research across industries (Labrague et al., 2018; Lin & Ling, 2018; Naidoo, 2018). For example, Ilić Petković and Nikolić (2020) recommended workplace learning and culture change that advocates health, safety, and security so that workers better understand the stress and its effects on their health. A culture of "health-specific leadership" and organizational support facilitates workers' well-being, and increased knowledge that educates and models behaviors for good health and wellness is vital (Javaid et al., 2017, p. 373). In contrast, well-being and performance have often been studied from a lens of "problems like burn-out, stress, frustration, anxiety, [and] attrition" (Kun & Gadanecz, 2019, p. 187). Workers need learning experiences illuminating how some stress benefits learning agility (Rudland et al., 2020). Moreover, they also require increased awareness that differences in individual personalities and coping strategies can reduce vulnerability to stressors (Akanji, 2015).

Sorensen et al. (2021) posited that the “conditions of work,” including the physical and the psychological aspect of work demands, authority, and the presence of organizational support systems, affect workers’ well-being (p. 1). A deeper understanding of both the business and human aspects of change may help workers cope with the uncertainties of the contemporary workplace (Caniëls & Hatak, 2022). Equally important, a holistic or “systems approach” that incorporates workers as essential contributors and acknowledges how expectations for the future of work are also changing is essential (Sorensen et al., 2021, p. 7). Traeger (2017) found that some workers had an extraordinary capacity for managing change and work pressures when they were intentional with “time, space and a genuine and human-scale quality of listening” (p. 131). Similarly, other researchers have contended that well-being is improved through interactions like coaching and reflection, which drive increased self-awareness (Matsuo et al., 2020). Coaching with a particular emphasis on developing “meaning, positive emotions, locus of control, and new perspectives” not only raises levels of well-being, but also underpins workers’ change agility (Nacif, 2021, p. 171).

Numerous individual and group coaching approaches have emerged in recent literature as mechanisms for encouraging sustainable learning and competitive advantage in organizations, such as career coaching, which supports workers in creating clear goals for their work (Rosha & Lace, 2018). Career coaching benefits workers by creating awareness of their habits and behaviors, but also increases the future capabilities of the organization by concentrating on achieving goals through reflection and collaborative problem-solving that can lead to “higher-order learning such as transformative learning or double-loop learning” (Matsuo et al., 2020, p. 224). In the 1950s, Herzberg (1959/2017) wrote of work as a source of happiness or heartache and described how workers could instinctively interpret the sense of well-being in others at work through the “welter of details” shared in conversations (p. 3). Learning experiences through social interaction, including individual coaching, may create opportunities for workers and organizations that broaden their understanding of reciprocal needs and improve the chance of achieving mutual goals (Matsuo et al., 2020).

Revealing Career Identity

Another element of workers' well-being involves insight into individual career identity. Time and the more significant issues in workers' lives inside and outside the workplace permeate personal decisions about specific roles and professions (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020). Workers' interest in their jobs and beliefs about the importance of their work fuel performance and resilience, and motivation has a critical influence during change (Bhatt, 2019). How workers manage the dynamic decisions needed throughout their careers shapes their career identity or "self-concept" and grows their distinct "aspirations, values, and beliefs" and experience (Lysova et al., 2015, p. 40). A sudden career change or "career shock," triggered by an impactful life event experienced at work or home, often leads to decisions to change jobs or roles (Akkermans et al., 2020, p. 1). Career changes like pursuing a promotion or leaving an organization can also be a result of gradual influences like environmental factors external and internal to an organization or ambiguity about the future of work (Akkermans et al., 2020). Decisions influenced by career shock may be beyond the worker's and the organization's control, yet they are essential to understand since they can affect energy and agility in the workplace (Mansur & Felix, 2021). Learning how to develop "positive affinity" or constructive feelings in the workplace environment may better prepare workers for career shock and the future phases and transitions of their careers likely to be continuously impacted by the dynamic landscape of contemporary and future work (Mansur & Felix, 2021, p. 496).

Inclination for Positivity

Foundational elements of positive psychology championed emphasis on human strengths over weaknesses, and even though "getting control of life is never easy," attention to positive experiences over hardships may be helpful to manage adversity better and improve well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). Supporting a positive mindset and inspiring workers to learn and increase well-being may be shaped by a better understanding of workers' "psychological capital" (Çelik, 2018, p. 67), which encompasses their outlook toward the future, including levels of optimism, hopefulness, and motivation for change (Luthans et al., 2015). Pagán-

Castaño et al. (2020) found that workers who had positive perceptions of human resources management practices in their organization, such as performance management systems that focus on rewards for performance, experienced raised levels of well-being. Conversely, workers may encounter unease and other negative feelings about performance management systems that diminish their well-being (Franco-Santos et al., 2022). Promoting timely, continuous learning to help workers understand organizational strategies, such as the organization's approach to performance management, may improve workers' cognitive processing and performance and foster well-being (Franco-Santos et al., 2022).

Understanding Performance Management

Performance management systems are essential components guiding and facilitating achieving desired outcomes in organizations. When they blend measures of “financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth” with a sense of balance that includes workers' skills and the influences of technology and organizational culture, they have the potential to improve performance at all levels (Cignitas et al., 2022, p. 5). Mangipudi et al. (2019) described the importance of positive perceptions of performance management among workers and posited learning, career development, and opportunity for growth are essential attributes of performance management that organizations should consider and discuss with workers regularly. The relationships between workers' performance and well-being have been explored over decades of research (Franco-Santos et al., 2022; Michie & West, 2004; Sankowsky, 1989). Poškienė and Kazlauskaitė (2020) explained workers might perceive that organizations are more concerned about their well-being when performance management processes are formalized and transparent.

Performance management systems driven by learning and incorporating autonomy for decision-making and risk tolerance are also important for workers and organizations in constant change (Katsman, 2021). Risk tolerance and openness to challenging the current state or status quo can promote learning and well-being among workers, especially when trust is engrained in individual relationships and well-established within the overarching organizational culture (Neves & Eisenberger, 2014). Limiting workers' freedom to experiment,

withholding support, or punishing workers with consequences may block innovation, change, learning, and well-being (Fischer & Riedl, 2022). Beyond risk tolerance, a “forgiveness atmosphere” is vital in organizations as increasing discourteous behaviors have been observed from the intensifying changes and pressures in the contemporary workplace (Khan et al., 2021, p. 1116). More significant innovation is often the result of agility, learning, and well-being; consequently, innovative and noninnovative organizational cultures are associated with improved and reduced well-being (Pot, 2017).

Workplace Learning Context

For organizations and workers, navigating the complexity of competing and constantly fluctuating systems requires reforms in adult education and reskilling with an emphasis on change through “problem-solving and digital skills” (Pittman & Scully-Ross, 2016, p. 73). Learning, well-being, sustained productivity, and reciprocal achievement between workers and organizations result from the ability to partner in the use of existing resources within the workplace like individual worker personality traits that facilitate coping, social connections among workers, and ongoing learning and development sponsored by the organization (Nielsen et al. (2017). Therefore, workplace learning and multidimensional approaches to organizational change, including more options for workers through composite knowledge of current and future work needs and diverse human resource practices, are crucial design considerations to achieve adaptive organizational human resource strategies (Cloutier & Robert-Huot, 2021). Moreover, organizations might have an opportunity for increased emphasis on the more profound components of workplace learning, such as understanding better that an aging workforce does not necessarily indicate a decline in skills growth and development or productivity (Beier, 2022).

Additional investment in understanding better the opportunities that promote “life-span learning” or continuous learning can illuminate multiple options for increasing the value of workplace learning (Beier, 2022, p. 56). The reality is that “reskilling will often involve unlearning old routines” and encouraging a broader vision of meaningful learning and work in the future (Beier, 2022, p. 60).

Growing and sustaining organizations requires knowledge and core values encompassing the logical and emotional components of “listening” to influence behavior (Walton, 2021). The curiosity to ignite learning and growth for workers and organizations is stimulated by logically understanding and measuring what workers “know and what they can do” (Beier, 2022, p. 60). Equally important, the inspiration of learning and growth that permeates productivity also requires understanding the emotional or psychological and uniquely human endeavors needed to nurture an ongoing culture of care and concern for people (Walton, 2021).

Components of Workplace Learning

Workplace learning involves both “formal and informal learning processes” (Huo & Boxall, 2022) and is described as a “journey” or personalized experience encompassing individual beliefs, temperaments, roles, and the context of learning and experience (Goh, 2022, p. 82). Relationships in the workplace contribute to the quality of learning and well-being among workers (Huo & Boxall, 2022), as do the events both inside and outside of work (Meier et al., 2016). Saleem and Chow (2022) discussed that the value of workplace learning depends on how it is delivered and supported for individual workers in the workplace, at home, and in other formal learning settings. Modern solutions for workplace learning that recognize the emotional and political elements of learning among work relationships are essential to driving transformational change in organizations (Vince et al., 2018). Similarly, workplace learning experiences that engage workers in sharing sensitivities and supporting each other can be instrumental to recovery from mistakes and failures (Ladyshevsky, 2017).

Organizations in the United States allocated more than 90 billion dollars to training workers in 2021 (ELM Learning, 2022). Having confidence in the return on investments in learning tools and techniques, meaning whether or not they are transferable into positive outcomes for an organization’s performance, is challenging to quantify as the ambiguity in current and future workplace learning needs is pervasive (Rios et al., 2020). Workplace learning opportunities can positively influence an organization’s reputation during talent acquisition and with

existing workers that want to remain with an organization over time (Tyler, 2020). Building “healthy, high performance organizations” also requires insight into the perceptions and realities of contemporary work and the tenacity for leadership without blinders (Warrick, 2019, p. 12). Understanding relationships and navigating within organizations is critical, and learning the skills and capabilities to manage those challenges comes with ownership, responsibility, “persistence and patience” (Denney et al., 2020, p. 144).

Technical and social skills, including knowing oneself are invaluable (Denney et al., 2020). For example, permitting conversations between workers to intentionally acknowledge workers’ self-esteem and feelings of worth, as the prevalence of technology continues to create uncertainty and changing roles has positive implications for learning and well-being (Monahan, 2019). Learning through iterative cycles or learning loops and partnership among teams or “peer-to-peer” learning (Palmer & Blake, 2018, p. 2) that leverages reflection and feedback to analyze and apply knowledge can be more effective than traditional learning approaches (Miller & Maellaro, 2016). Similarly, promoting the meaning and relevance of learning experiences gained through the actual work of the organization can also augment workers’ perception of purpose and help them develop a personalized story or “career narrative” that guides their performance in both current and future roles (Lysova et al., 2019, p. 378). Furthermore, informing intentional choices to perform individually fulfilling work evolves through pursuing new careers and job crafting that encourages accountability for designing tailored roles that better address organizations' current and future needs (Demerouti, 2014).

Digital Learning

Technology may significantly contribute to optimal learning experiences in the contemporary workplace, as it introduces formal or classroom-style experiences and informal or “social and situated learning” closest to the work tasks (Ley, 2020, p. 332). Ifenthaler (2018) defined learning with technology or digital learning as a broad collection of techniques enhanced by technologies that can play a critical role in efficiently managing learning costs while distributing learning experiences to

large numbers of workers. Digital learning is advantageous for workplace learning experiences as an option between conventional or formal education and less structured offerings (Ifenthaler, 2018). A crucial factor in the effectiveness of workplace learning is the relevance of the content that needs to be “as rich and diverse as the knowledge, feeling, and behavior of all mankind...[to] give students, no matter who they are, the widest possible perspective on their problems and interests” (Borton, 1970, p. 86). Past learning and experiences can create barriers for adult learners, especially since there is a need for future learning that demands an expanded form of thinking that transforms knowledge “toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 155). Moreover, the content of learning is critical regardless of the delivery approach (Borton, 1970). Future workplace learning designed to prepare workers for the increasingly rapid pace and digitalization of modern work requires more emphasis on the “joint purpose” of people and technology in the evolution of work (Vallo Hult & Byström, 2022, p. 471).

Theoretical Frameworks for Workplace Learning

Numerous theories have explained that organizational learning constructs and provides models for implementing specific learning experiences, and some have been thoroughly tested and advocated by scholars and practitioners. The theoretical learning models informing the study include Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning framework and Argyris’s (1977) double-loop learning approach because both underpin the value of reflective practice and interactive learning among workers. In addition, practical elements of the models’ foundational constructs guided the study's reflective writing experiences, such as how the responsive writing prompts and guided writing experiences encouraged participants to respond to and challenge others’ ideas. The theoretical frameworks reintroduce awareness of the criticality of understanding workers’ and organizations’ needs and allow experimentation with existing solutions in the current workplace without incurring new costs. More importantly, these frameworks aim to inform the ongoing quest to solve wicked problems and influence the greater good in work and home life (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Action Learning

Long-standing and obsolete systems are disappearing in contemporary work with the introduction of “disruptive technology” (Medina et al., 2021, p. 54). Workplace learning experiences promoting both technical and relational interactions are vital to evoke the clarity workers need to understand both the viability of the innovations and the why and how involved with the benefits of change so that they can better support the tasks and processes involved (Medina et al., 2021). The findings of Revans’s (1982) research on action learning suggested that the voluntary participation of learners involving the ownership of tasks and ongoing support of others can promote understanding. Revans (1991/2010) contended that learning only occurs when learners immerse themselves in the problems they are responsible for solving. Action learning remains relevant in the contemporary workplace as it encourages open and risk-tolerant methods to facilitate learning from the outcomes of actions (Pedler & Abbott, 2013). In addition, action learning benefits workers and organizations as inherent partnerships instill in fulfilling mutual needs and retooling skills and capabilities (Pedler & Abbott, 2013).

Critics of the action learning model’s capabilities to tackle monumental problems facing contemporary organizations have challenged that it can be problematic to implement (Edmonstone et al., 2019). Specifically, some workers may not proactively embrace their capability to make solution decisions or lead change unless they have permission from others in the organization (Edmonstone et al., 2019). Power or authority is profound in organizational systems, and dysfunctional problems such as the refusal to listen to or acknowledge problems or “errors of interpretation” and differing opinions can silence workers even when they have facts, data, and courage (Revans, 1971, p. 89). Furthermore, Goh (2022) offered that in organizations, the motivation for learning permeates a specific culture for learning that is also a system at play and crucial to understanding to foster engagement of workers as active participants.

Experiential Learning

Understanding learning as a “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” shaped the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Rooted in the idea that changing is quintessential to growth, experiential learning involves action and insight into how humans adapt and continuously reconstruct their knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Like action learning, which involves connections among people, roles, and experiences, Kolb defined experiential learning with practical examples like an apprenticeship or partnership between workers where one shares expertise with another. Considering its origins, experiential learning expands on Dewey’s (1910/2020) ideas that the core of all learning entails “coping with change...[through] lifelong learning” (p. 5). Crediting Lewin’s (1945) group dynamics research, Kolb (1984) stated that experiential learning exists in the “conflict between immediate, concrete experience and analytic detachment” (p. 9).

Kolb (1984) elaborated on Lewin’s (1945) discovery that workers at distinct stages of development can learn within an environment where conversations and shared knowledge seed growth (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning also incorporated Piaget’s (1950/2005) views that suggested intellect is molded by interaction and “patterns” like habits and perceptions (p. 167). The experiential learning theory also stems from the idea that learning occurs through interaction with all aspects of the environment, including higher education and professional development programs, and is comprehensive of all forms of learning over time and in all stages of life (Kolb, 1984). Like behavioral learning, experiential learning theory holds experience at the center of learning (Morris, 2020). Furthermore, Bartle (2015) described experiential learning as a constructivist learning theory where learning occurs within a series of actions as learners engage, explore, and then recall and analyze the experience.

Kolb and Kolb (2018) explained experiential learning as simple and practical, citing that it gained attention because of its adaptability across different curricula. Experiential learning encourages participants to actively engage in learning as opposed to traditional learning approaches, where learners primarily

receive information passed down from an instructor (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). Kolb (1984) suggested learning does not stop at the acquisition of a specific idea and that it can only be measured as a “historical record, not knowledge of the future” (p. 26). Experiential learning theory values the principle of learning as an endless journey, and workplace learning outcomes that incorporate its constructs acknowledge the benefits absorbed from workers' involvement in the process of understanding (Kolb, 1984). Likewise, experiential learning recognizes the struggles inherent to learning that occur when learners process knowledge in opposition to their current view (Dewey, 1910/2020; Lewin, 1947; Kolb, 1984; Piaget, 1950/2005).

The experiential learning theory postulated a four-stage process of integrated capacities foster learning (Kolb, 1984). First, learners need capabilities to acquire “concrete experience abilities” (CE) that allow new information consumption. Next, learners use “reflective observation abilities” (RO) and “abstract conceptualization abilities” (AC) to comprehend and objectively consider experiences from different perspectives. Lastly, learners use “active experimentation abilities” (AE) that involve synthesizing information to influence decision-making (p. 30). Suggesting that learning and creativity depend on cognitive processing and skills that are “polar opposites,” Kolb (1984) described that each set of abilities converges to produce holistic growth comprised of “thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving” (pp. 30–31). Other principles of experiential learning, such as the need to facilitate an iterative process emphasizing the understanding that individuals use diverse learning styles, are integral to the theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). For instance, the initiating learning style introduced the concept of a balanced learning style that considers the positive and negative consequences of actions (Kolb & Kolb, 2018).

Over time, the experiential learning theory has evolved. Still, it emphasizes learning as an unending and cyclical process (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). Enhanced with further knowledge of specific learning implications, the model incorporates personal preferences and contexts, such as education, job types, skillsets, and demographic factors, including age and gender (Kolb, 2007). With continued

interest in its construct of learning style profiles, the experiential learning framework has influenced practical tools like the Kolb learning style inventory, an assessment tool used extensively over 40 years to achieve higher levels of reliability and validity (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). The Kolb learning style inventory does not predict individuals' behaviors nor influence the grouping of individual learners. Yet, it can be a means to define individuals' learning preferences and is helpful in conjunction with other experiential learning research (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). In addition, it can assist educators with a more informed understanding of individual learning needs (Kolb & Kolb, 2018).

Complementing the learning style inventory, Kolb and Kolb (2013) also designed detailed practical applications from the theory, including step-by-step methods like the lemon exercise. As a learning intervention, the lemon exercise leverages the learning styles assessment. It mirrors the capabilities in the experiential learning process aimed to increase learners' recognition of their "experiencing and thinking process" (Kolb & Kolb, 2013, p. 218). In addition, the intervention helps learners "set learning goals that promote self-development and growth" (Kolb & Kolb, 2013, p. 218). Manolis et al. (2013) noted the influence of the experiential learning theory and the learning styles assessment. The research acknowledged Kolb's construct of experience as "an integral part of how humans learn, grow, and develop" (Manolis et al., 2013, p. 44). It also criticized the learning style inventory for its reliance on a single learning style and proposed an enhanced assessment tool (Manolis et al., 2013). Likewise, other criticism of the learning styles inventory noted that the origins of experiential learning were too focused on rational learning processes (Walcutt & Schatz, 2019). More in-depth consideration of the social interactions and emotions within the contemporary workplace is essential to design modern learning experiences (Walcutt & Schatz, 2019). Introducing a new, adapted, and more comprehensive assessment of learning styles that accounts for identifying a predominant type, Manolis et al. (2013) advocated that the experiential learning constructs and the associated assessment instrument can be a valuable contribution to developing leadership skills.

Despite the significance of the experiential learning theory and its continued theoretical implications for learning, Morris (2020) also criticized the theory explaining it lacked refined details to define experiences and empirical evidence to support credibility. Morris also suggested the model needs increased emphasis on different levels of reflection in the different stages of the learning process. As experience is multifaceted and influenced by various situational contexts, practitioners need more insight to guide and facilitate experiential learning (Morris, 2020). In contrast, other criticisms of the experiential learning model have contributed to adaptations and expanded applications in the workplace (Matsuo & Nagata, 2020). Researchers have outlined steps practitioners might implement to account for gaps in the model, such as including processes that consider emotions, unlearning, and deeper reflection that may better facilitate professional development (Matsuo & Nagata, 2020). Furthermore, Saleem and Chow (2022) analyzed the four phases of the experiential learning model, with medical students finding merit both in the framework's ability to construct the learning experience and in its ability to facilitate consistent results across learners in terms of their ability to attain skills. Additional assessment and complementary approaches to experiential learning are also recommended, including a suggestion for further enhancements that offer more support for learners in transferring knowledge (Saleem & Chow, 2022).

Modern work overflows with “uncertainty, uniqueness, instability, and value conflict,” creating an ongoing conundrum of decision points and options for workers to assess and prioritize (Schön, 1983, p. 42). Prominent and seemingly important issues emerge on the “high, hard ground” that might be easy to solve through existing knowledge and resources, but the “problems of greatest human concern” are those that reside in the “swampy lowland” where solutions critical for customers and stakeholders are more challenging to achieve (Schön, 1983, p. 42). In addition, recent learning trends have suggested a shift away from traditional formal learning that is timebound and directed within a classroom “towards an integrated, diverse lifelong learning continuum where all experiences and

development add to an interdependent set of holistic competencies” (Walcutt & Schatz, 2019, p. 8).

Kolb (1984) discussed “a system of competencies for describing job demands” within experiential learning that can bolster connections among “education, work, and personal development” (p. 4). Applicable for broad and complex job demands and valuable in any field or knowledge area, organizations can use experiential learning to prepare workers for future roles through apprenticeships or internships (Perko & Mendiwelo-Bendek, 2019) and transform learning with “instructional designs based on peer-learning and dialogue” (Tomkins & Ulus, 2016 p. 159). The experiential learning theory has been the subject of extensive research in multiple disciplines and workplace environments over the 50 years since it was introduced (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). For example, Kolb (1984) suggested an individual’s profession and current job role may attribute to preferred learning styles and posited that there is a “here-and-now and anticipation of the future” component to the experiential learning theory (p. 132). Describing the multiple levels of the model, Kolb (1984) raised the importance of “integrative levels of affective complexity” within the theory that involves how an individual adapts observation, perspective, and instinct and uses the ability to hypothesize and make choices with tests, committed actions, and “freedom and self-direction” (p. 160).

In the current study, aspects of the theoretical foundations of experiential learning, such as the four capabilities of the learning process, were incorporated into reflective writing exercises at a high level to help participants “experiment with different ways of knowing, perceiving and being” characteristic of experiential learning (Bolton, 2014, p. 17). The participants’ knowledge of experiential learning was not an intended outcome of the study, and they did not receive any instruction or information influencing experiential learning. Still, the elements that promote attentiveness and awareness in the design of the reflective writing experiences reflected ideas Kolb and Kolb (2013) used in the lemon exercise intervention.

Double-Loop Learning

Argyris and Schön (1978) discussed learning as a combination of thinking and action that entailed individuals' values and behaviors. Describing single-loop learning with an example of a thermostat that turns on or off in response to a temperature change, Argyris (2004) explained double-loop learning with the same analogy. Yet, double-loop learning added a dimension of inquiry that involves questioning why the thermostat needed to maintain an exact temperature (Argyris, 2004). The double-loop learning model developed around the construct that humans make decisions and behave with "espoused theories of action" or how they think they act compared to "theories-in-use," which reflect their actual behaviors (Argyris, 1976a, p. 367). After studying diverse genders, ages, and other demographics, Argyris (1997) contended that people are usually single-loop learners and employ a "Model I" theory-in-use which entails values that involve control, winning, and rational thinking over emotion (p. 11). In contrast, double-loop learners develop a "Model II" theory-in-use encompassing the "testing of ideas, views, and feelings" to inform and influence the most effective actions (Argyris, 1997, p. 12). Single- and double-loop learning constructs are helpful in specific situations; however, double-loop learning encourages introspection that challenges beliefs and values and can lead to more significant and productive change (Argyris, 1976b).

Argyris (2004) further defined double-loop learning as "the detection and correction of errors where the correction requires changes not only in action strategies but also in the values that govern the theory-in-use" (p. 10). Adding that it has the potential to shift thinking and alter detrimental organizational habits, Argyris suggested that double-loop learning is practiced through commitment and infused with actual values such as altruism, genuineness, and trustworthiness. Double-loop learning is challenging to achieve as it requires transparency, risk tolerance, and the courage to change (Argyris, 1977). Blocked by individual behaviors, double-loop learning depends on eliminating the aversion to ideas that some individuals introduce, even though they may be unaware of it (Argyris, 1976b). Double-loop learning requires productive reasoning and continued

experimentation (Argyris, 2010). Ego or pervasive self-protection some individuals employ to preserve their perceived advanced knowledge or expertise impedes double-loop learning (Argyris, 1976b). Furthermore, double-loop learning requires a dedicated and disciplined approach to working through internal opposition that most individuals, including executives, cannot achieve since they often struggle with personal beliefs even when open to possibilities (Argyris, 1977).

Argyris (1977) championed the need for double-loop learning in organizations to drive sustainability. Over years of research with well-educated and accomplished professionals, Argyris (2008) found that learning in organizations is often blocked by individuals' "defensive reasoning" that involves suppressing feelings, hiding mistakes, and blaming (p. 22). Professionals often sabotage progress by acting in counterproductive ways (Argyris, 2008). While espousing value for ongoing and systemic improvements, some achieve only selected improvements for "external organizational factors" like designing new roles instead of examining how individual performance in existing positions, including their own, may be improved for better contributions to the organization (Argyris, 2008, p. 9). Because professionals rarely experience failure, they need learning experiences that allow them to realize adversity, recovery, and lessons learned (Argyris, 2008). Even though they can observe the disparity between espoused and actual behaviors, Argyris (1976a, 1976b) contended that professionals at times allow personal attitudes or theories-in-use to prevent them from calling out ineffectiveness and failure.

Learning is strategically valuable for organizations among workers at all levels and is intended to identify opportunities and influence ongoing improvement (Argyris, 1997). Organizations need commitments to learning that include workers and learning tools that enable gradual improvements through "increased involvement and control over their work" (Fulmer et al., 1998, p. 12). Discussing most individual learning in organizations as "maintenance learning" or "crisis or shock learning," Fulmer et al. (1998) suggested learning that focuses on situational needs, such as knowledge gaps or efficiencies, may add only tactical value to the organization (p. 10). Similarly, Argyris (2008) elucidated that single-loop learning

may result in decisions and actions that do not meet expected organizational outcomes. Without learning from failure, professionals must learn “how to reason about their behavior” because they can be the root cause of organizational issues (Argyris, 2008, p. 6). Argyris (2008) advocated that organizations engage people in “learning how to learn” through double-loop learning that involves not only a reflection on actions and results, but also discovering the deeper layers of organizational problems, including the individual and group characteristics and behaviors that are integral to the solutions (p. 64).

Double-loop learning is grounded in opposing viewpoints and the capability to challenge the status quo through better awareness, understanding, and willingness to change an organization's underlying values and behaviors if necessary (Argyris, 1977). Double-loop learning can occur in the context of a facilitated seminar or workshop (Argyris, 1977). Still, it is most effective when it permeates an organization among workers with a personal stake in open, honest, and continual problem-solving and with heightened “aspirations about the quality and magnitude of change their organization can take” (Argyris, 1977, p. 124). Argyris and Schön (1978) described learning in organizations as alternating discoveries between the individual and the “systemic level” of organizations. They discussed double-loop learning as a component of a layered intervention that may be painful and frustrating for the workers and the organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978). They also contended that double-loop learning is an experience that can clarify how workers and organizations think and act, enabling better application of knowledge and expertise toward improved results (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 346). Argyris (1995) offered techniques to promote double-loop learning, such as the left and right-hand column case method that can produce discernable data meaningful to workers and organizations. The essence of the left and right-hand column method is writing about an actual organizational problem and solution and capturing in two columns the critical messages of conversation needed to identify and solve a problem, including the information that might not be shared by the writer (Argyris, 1995).

Intentional reflection like that required in the left and right-hand column method can include building data about thinking and individual actions that can prohibit learning (Argyris, 1995). The data can be coupled with active participation and conversation among workers to surface errors and elicit more useful dialogue (Argyris, 2002). The findings of recent studies have supported the practice of double-loop learning in organizations to elevate intentional thinking and improve decision-making across organizational hierarchies (Li et al., 2021). In addition, single and double-loop learning may lead to a better understanding of perceived opportunities and power wielded among leaders (Li et al., 2021). Moreover, research has supported double-loop learning for its effectiveness in influencing new and diverse ways of achieving organizational outcomes, such as improvements in performance management (Van Dooren, 2011). At the same time, the shift required to accommodate double-loop learning has received criticism as it can be complicated, time-consuming, and replete with risk for the individual workers and the organization (Sonnichsen, 2020). Nevertheless, well-known for its merit as a structure to underpin a better understanding of the “thinking and decision-making” process within organizations, double-loop learning continues to receive attention as a model for managing ambiguity and ongoing improvements (Williams & Brown, 2018, p. 1004).

To cultivate double-loop learning in organizations, a comprehensive and orderly approach that integrates necessary technical learning with a desire to challenge thinking and improve upon engrained operating procedures is required (Williams & Brown, 2018). Through its deliberate inquiry and assessment of existing organizational “processes and procedure,” Dahanayake and Gamlath (2013) suggested that double-loop learning has the potential to navigate and build cultural change through enhanced thinking and collaborative learning (p. 197). Double-loop learning can facilitate organizational change and has been applied in a variety of organizations, such as the military (Dahanayake & Gamlath, 2013) and healthcare (Nyström et al., 2018). Tracking and measuring its outcomes requires time and thoughtful approaches to managing individual changes and various levels of knowledge and experience (Nyström et al., 2018).

In the current study, participants received no exposure to the theoretical elements of single-loop and double-loop learning, nor the opportunity to experience the left and right-hand column writing technique. The theory and practical application involved in double-loop learning may be helpful to organizations designing future learning experiences as a means to foster new perspectives on workplace learning, including how adverse experiences enhance learning. In addition, experimenting with the left- and right-hand column technique may encourage preparation for more effective workplace conversations and build collaboration and confidence in decision-making.

Theoretical Framework for Well-Being

Dramatic shifts in work and the workplace environment, like increasing mobility, have impacted workers' health and well-being (Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018). Recent theoretical models of well-being, such as the spaces of well-being theory, have begun to explore relationships between health, well-being, and the environment (Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007). In correlational research evaluating workers' health and well-being in the context of job insecurity, De Witte et al. (2016) referenced job-related resources like workers' energy level as a common theme in workplace research. Stress-related theories, including Karasek's (1976) job demand-control model, have connected job strain or workers' feelings of anxiousness, sadness, or despair at work to lower levels of well-being (De Witte et al., 2016). Karasek and Theorell's (1990) job demand-control support model (JDSC) evolved from Karasek's research on workplace stress and supported an understanding of job strain or stressors in the current study. The model explains how individuals manage stress in the workplace and how other factors contribute (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). The JDSC model can help influence the selection of appropriate interventions organizations can implement to increase workers' well-being (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

Karasek's (1976) job strain research grew from an interest in the effects of the workplace and the nature of jobs on workers' mental and physical capabilities inside and outside the work environment. The theoretical origins of the JDC model explored the need for a better understanding of how stress, work experiences, and

free time outside of work affected workers' behaviors (Karasek, 1976). Karasek (1976) studied connections between "work and leisure behavior...[and] how...that relationship occur[s]" (p. 11), including significant elements such as the "economic resources...[and] social status" work provides (p. 19). The early research suggested that demanding work does not necessarily lead to psychological pressures or job strain and that increased awareness of coping mechanisms for managing demanding work may exist, such as in the autonomy workers have within their roles (Karasek, 1976). Kohn and Schooler's (1973) premise that work affects "psychological functioning" may have been an instrumental influence on the JDC model as findings of the research suggested workers need "substantively complex work, a non-routinized flow of work...[and] self-direction" (p. 97).

Since Karasek and Theorell's (1990) expanded and rebranded the original JDC model as the JDCS model, it has continued to receive recognition as one of the most influential models for asserting the impacts of workplace stress on workers' health and well-being (Mark & Smith, 2012). Two dimensions compose the enhanced JDCS model, including the job demands and the "control possibilities," or the degree of choice individuals have in decision-making, including factors such as control over their role and the level of knowledge and experience that enables their decisions (Karasek & Theorell, 1990, p. 90). Theoretically, the model proposes that increasing strain or stress from the job demands and the level of choice a worker has to manage the job demands contribute to the stress or strain workers experience (Karasek, 1979). Although workers need some level of demand and can benefit from learning that occurs from higher demands, having low demand and control may cause "skill atrophy and unlearning" (Karasek & Theorell, 1990, p. 94). Van der Doef and Maes (1999) evaluated the JDCS model. They highlighted how higher levels of control may reduce stress and raise the level of learning by acting as a "buffer" to higher demands, thereby minimizing the potential for damage to workers' health and well-being (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999, p. 89). Theorell (2020) emphasized the importance of delineating the definition of control in the model, stating that Karasek's purpose (1979) within the model's construct was to understand better the "job circumstances" or

environmental conditions that enabled workers to make decisions about their work (p. 4).

Within the dimensions of the JDCS model, four quadrants categorize job characteristics, including active jobs, low-strain jobs, high-strain jobs, and passive jobs (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). Active jobs promote learning and entail positive stressors with high demands and high decision-making autonomy, while passive jobs exert low demands and low decision-making autonomy (Karasek, 1979). Comparably, high-strain jobs exhibit high demands and low decision-making autonomy, and low-strain jobs demonstrate lower demands and higher decision-making autonomy (Karasek, 1979). Karasek (1979) cautioned that empirical data suggested a low correlation between “job demands and job decision latitude” and advocated consideration of implications from individual and groups of workers as well as “flexibility and equity of the organizational decision structure” (p. 288). Mark (2008) suggested the continued evolution of the original model has improved its usefulness, such as in the way it has enhanced understanding to promote the identification of stressors and the outcomes they produce.

Continued interest in the impacts of work demands on workers led to research on “social support and social isolation” in the workplace (Johnson & Hall, 1988, p. 1336). Workers’ physical health can decline when care and assistance from colleagues are lacking (Johnson & Hall, 1988). In ongoing studies on the implications of the unique and dynamic aspects among workers and their work environments, Karasek and Theorell (1990) acknowledged that “individual mechanisms of perception, coping, and physiological functioning” were valuable considerations for organizations (p. 82). To account for the connections between the workers and the workplace across psychological, social, and physical needs, Karasek and Theorell (1990) posited that despite the attention to stress and its association with health and well-being in the work environment, opportunities still exist to address the underlying sources of stress. In addition, an instrument for measuring elements of job demands, control, and support is also valuable.

Measuring components of the JDCS model in the workplace may provide workers with defenses against stressors (Mark, 2008), and the Job Content

Questionnaire (JCQ) instrument complements the constructs of the JDCS model (Karasek et al., 1998). Excluding personality factors, the JCQ measures “work quality such as decision-making autonomy and the use of workers’ skillsets (Karasek et al., 1998, p. 323). In analyzing the use of the JCQ and other instruments, Alves et al. (2013) advised complexities exist with using quantitative tools. These researchers suggested there are compounding factors from “economic and social development in organizations and society at large” challenging the contemporary workplace that contribute to the ongoing need for tool revisions (Alves et al., 2013, p. 134). Furthermore, influencing the redesign of jobs and improving the quality of work may transcend individual measures and require more concentrated efforts to understand the needs of specific roles, organizations, and industries (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018).

Despite multiple criticisms for its simplicity and methodological approach, including self-reporting measures (Kristensen, 1995; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999), the use of the JDCS model remains prevalent in the current literature and has been used in the exploration of contemporary workplace issues such as organizational commitment, organizational justice, and social interactions including bullying, “workplace hostility, harassment, aggression, and mobbing,” as well as in workplace alienation research (Tastan, 2018, p. 307). In addition, some empirical evidence from epidemiologic and interventional studies supporting the JDCS model and describing the changing nature of work as a shift from physical to been discussed and supported (De Jonge & Kompier, 1997, p. 236). De Jonge and Kompier reinforced that three core elements of the model, including job demands, control, and support, introduced a distinct rather than a collective influence on individual workers and called for an additional and more intricate analysis of the model applied through workplace interventions. Furthermore, they argued that this model remains valuable for its simple and insightful use in epidemiological applications that have added to the existing healthcare knowledge (De Jonge & Kompier, 1997).

Considering the JDCS model’s contributions to the current study, a better understanding of workers’ perceptions of job stressors and their attitudes toward

stress, including defining elements that contribute to energy and support, may influence their capacity for higher levels of well-being. For example, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) found correlations between job demands and resources to promote well-being in an educational context. In addition, the researchers suggested that “a positive and supportive relationship with colleagues may lead to a more open communication of values and thereby also to a more common understanding of goals and values” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018, p. 1270). In the current study, the theoretical framework provided by the JDCS model was not introduced to the participants, as knowledge of the components may influence the reflective writing experience beyond the purpose of the reflective writing research. At the same time, it was helpful in the design of the reflective writing prompts.

Reflective Writing for Learning and Well-Being in Practice

For decades, educators have noted the value of reflection for its intentional analysis of past performance and its ability to facilitate knowledge transfer to future outcomes (Allan & Driscoll, 2014; Fernsten & Fernsten, 2005). Scholars and practitioners have championed reflection as a component of critical thinking and learning through experiences (Argyris, 2010; Kolb, 1984; Senge, 1990). Reflective writing has been part of leadership development and management education based on its ability to raise awareness of oneself and others, encourage ownership for learning, and join individual experiences with the work product (Carden et al., 2021). Reflective writing may begin as a personal practice that involves exploring questions and capturing details through stories. Yet, it can progress to a shared experience that reduces anxiety and builds strength and confidence in capabilities and relationships (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). Reflective writing remains a core component of the nursing learning continuum (Bussard, 2015), and it may promote “a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection...and [produce] an outcome” valuable in any field (Moon, 2007, p. 192). The approach to its use, however, depends on the circumstances, such as a preference for group reflection over reflective writing in healthcare, where legal ramifications surround written artifacts (Gleeson et al., 2020).

Argyris and Schön (1987) frequently leveraged reflective writing to ground their teaching with graduate students. Reflective writing can be the basis for discovering the “difficulties, concerns, and fears” that occurred among students during their learning experiences (p. 267). Schön (1987) described the impact of writing about fear as “cathartic” and noted writing created awareness of “unrealistic expectations for...[students’] performance” and relieved a sense of “perceived incompetence” (p. 292). Reflective writing journals for educators have continued to be promoted as a means to incorporate learners’ experience and learning to improve results and to encourage introspection on personal values and beliefs about theories of teaching compared to what occurs in practice (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Reflective writing has merit in work and professional development, but preconceived attitudes and beliefs that challenge its usefulness require support mechanisms (Grant, 2007). Considering reflective writing within a supportive environment, some researchers have demonstrated its value in promoting learning and relationship building when the writing is shared in an atmosphere of psychological safety (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018).

Among teams, reflective writing may be a competitive advantage to improve collective outcomes when facilitated in a way that allows individuals to evaluate their actions and how they impact the team’s collective results through interaction and conversation that “brings team dynamics into clarity” (Wills & Clerkin, 2009, p. 226). Comparably, Beasy et al. (2020) found reflective writing with groups of adult learners can be a means to promote relationships through shared experiences and that adults balancing competing priorities such as work and home demands are willing to invest time in writing to learn with others. Furthermore, feedback and dialogue between writers and educators can enhance reflective writing experiences, and a guided process, including peer review, may improve the learning outcomes of experiences (Abednia et al., 2013). Comparably, guiding and supporting reflective writing for adult learners involves a commitment to its regular practice with a slower pace and inspiration for learners who juggle priorities and need to have time made available for learning (Rigolizzo & Zhu, 2020). Facilitating reflective writing experiences requires “an experienced,

reflective practitioner” who is open to “complexity, difference, and emotive responses” and capable of engaging others in an environment of psychological safety (Marshall et al., 2022, p. 10). Moreover, reflective writing data can be even more helpful in informing learning needs as technology enables more nimble feedback for learners (Shum et al., 2017).

Reflective writing can also be helpful for the assessment of needs and identification of opportunities that inform well-being (Grant et al., 2014). Writing in a trusting environment can feel “like a gift, a healing balm,” and can cultivate connection and self-care (Green & McClam, 2023, p. 121). New inquiries, perspectives, and meanings can evolve from shared reflective writing experiences (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). At the same time, reflective writing experiences require confidence that all participants will practice confidentiality and work together to create the “uncovering and challenging...[of] power dynamics that frame [its] practice” (Brookfield, 2009, p. 125). Workers may view documenting their experiences as detrimental if they perceive the purpose of the activity to be motivated by organizational drivers, such as writing about deficiencies aimed to increase individual performance (Siebert & Walsh, 2013). A lack of trust and understanding of the expected outcomes from reflective writing experiences might block learning and any other benefits (Siebert & Walsh, 2013).

Girgin (2020) posited reflective writing—specifically, that captured in journals—can cultivate proficiency in reflective thinking and promote learning with valuable outcomes. Reflective writing encompasses the reflective process, formalizing the elements of “events, individuals, thoughts, feelings, and values” to illustrate and help individuals focus on the highest priority needs and emphasizing the opportunity for a broader perspective (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018, pp. 135-136). Considering criticisms of reflective writing in practical application, Williams et al. (2019) stated that measuring the outcomes and value of “metacognitive processes, such as self-reflection” is problematic because it may not be observable (p. 390). Although three types of instruments evaluate the effectiveness of self-reflection, including “rubrics (or scoring guides), self-reported scales and observed behavior” (Williams et al., 2019, p. 389), literature concerning the evaluation of the

quality of reflective writing was less prevalent. Epp et al. (2019) described self-assessment of reflective writing, peer reviews, and instructor reviews. The research recommended that multiple approaches are necessary and that assessments should be used with consideration of methodological implications (Epp et al., 2019).

Critical factors inform reflective writing assessments (Epp et al., 2019). For example, researchers have suggested some of the criteria for the review of reflective writing should include assurance of the confidentiality of the feedback and checks to compare agreement among peer reviewers if they are part of reflective writing experiences (Epp et al., 2019). Some reflective experiences should also leverage control groups with and without feedback loops and include analysis of the learners' perceptions following the return of feedback provided (Epp et al., 2019). In addition, Williams et al. (2019) reiterated how multiple assessments of reflective practice, including reflective writing. Some instruments, like self-assessments, may be influenced by personal considerations (Williams et al., 2019); therefore, using various tools can increase the reliability of the assessment. Regardless of the variations in evaluations, it is more important to understand the original purpose of reflective practice and why it requires evaluation since there is little guidance about what results indicate quality outcomes (Williams et al., 2019). Finally, dual methods like "self and co-regulation," which check for clarity, may be advantageous, especially for writing released in online learning communities (Garrison & Akyol, 2015, p. 71).

Reflective writing has implications beyond its potential for workplace learning, including how it might impact well-being. For example, recent research discussed how reflective writing using journals in higher education following the global COVID-19 pandemic increased a shared understanding of ongoing well-being that transcended physical health implications exploring other basic needs such as interaction with others (Vatansever et al., 2020). Comparably, reflective writing and journaling have offered benefits for well-being during crises and ambiguity when integrated into human-centered comprehensive learning approaches (Wald & Reis, 2010). Moreover, reflective writing experiences can introduce therapeutic benefits (Williamson & Wright, 2018). For instance, some

forms of creative, reflective writing, like writing to avoid an experience through imaginary or fictitious language, can be helpful for individuals to understand their real experience (Williamson & Wright, 2018).

Notwithstanding its benefits, understanding and measuring the therapeutic benefits of reflective writing can be challenging (Williamson & Wright, 2018). Reflective writing has value for “personal development and well-being” (Grant et al., 2014). Helping workers understand its benefits, such as its connection to developing emotional intelligence, may have broader implications (Grant et al., 2014, p. 886). Similarly, the advantages of reflective writing require further understanding, especially in the workplace, where workers may perceive it as another required task (Grant et al., 2014). Reflective writing can uncover the intricate and layered dimensions of the individual and the workplace, increasing awareness and acceptance of the stressors within the work environment (Grant et al., 2014). It can also encourage necessary change (Green & McClam, 2023; Hammond et al., 2022).

Herzberg’s (1959/2017) study of motivation in the 1960s explored workers’ “raw material of experience” or job attitudes through personal interviews that contributed specific connections between attitudes toward work and well-being (p. 5). The research revealed how workers experience situations that at times tear down or dishearten them with feelings of loss, regret, and grief, and also build up and motivate them with positive energy for their job promoting good health and helping them maintain a better quality of life (Herzberg, 1959/2017). Bolton (2014) wrote that “human lives are always storm-threatened” and explained that some “storms are good” like a new job experience (p. 13), and others like “instabilities with colleagues...[and] work issues” leave people “off balance” and living with “anxiety and lowness of spirits” (p. 19). Stressors like financial concerns (Cignitas et al., 2022) or job insecurity (De Witte et al., 2016) can harm well-being in the contemporary workplace. Still, awareness of the stressor through intention measurement and supporting resources within the workplace may also transform workers’ attributes with positive effects on well-being (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018; Johnson & Hall, 1988). Reflective writing prompts intentionally introduced to the

study encouraged participants to write about emotions as “a release” (Bolton, 2014, p. 154). Participants voluntarily shared excerpts from reflective writing produced during the guided writing sessions, increasing social interaction and creating the opportunity for empathy and understanding within the group.

Summary

Copious, interlaced systems connecting people, processes, and technologies form the foundation for an improved quality of life in the future (Mau, 2022). Yet, constant, complex, and overwhelming change disturbs order and creates uncertainty that requires adaptability and learning (Uhl-Bien, 2021) and personalized focus on individuals' needs for well-being (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Designing and improving the workplace for the future involves learning to improve through intentional reflective practice and action (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The nature of continuous change in the contemporary workplace and the importance of attention to workers' learning and well-being needs created the context for the literature review. Several theoretical frameworks captured constructs to understand the implications on learning and well-being better. A discussion of practical applications and criticisms of the frameworks, including using reflective writing as a mode of reflective practice to influence workplace learning and well-being, was provided.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

As organizations and workers respond to the changing nature of work that will continue to present ambiguous shifts in labor demands and necessitate job transitions, identifying interventions that enable workers' learning and well-being is increasingly critical (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012). Workers are experiencing dramatic change and uncertainty in the contemporary workplace, testing existing skills and capabilities and revealing new needs for learning and development in organizations (Harteis et al., 2020). Organizations that invest in learning and support for workers may instill a more relevant workforce (Martin-Raugh et al., 2020). Still, despite many existing models and tools to foster knowledge, insight into individual workers' needs and a better understanding of workers' attitudes toward learning, stress, and the intricacies of personal well-being are critical for organizations (Black et al., 2019, p. 1212). Promoting learning and well-being by assisting workers in discovering their strengths, listening to their needs, and providing empathetic support may nurture the complementary constructs of "career resilience and adaptability" (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012, p. 343). Similarly, providing supportive learning experiences with a broad or "whole person perspective" of life inside and outside work can positively influence workers' well-being (Black et al., 2019, p. 1212). In the current study, I explored workers' experiences with reflective writing and how it might contribute to workplace learning and well-being in a contemporary corporate work environment.

Reflective practice can develop habits of intentional thinking and learning from experiences that can help workers "bridge" the incipient needs they experience in their work and home lives, improving their ability to adapt to continuous change and preparing them for the future (Fergusson et al., 2019, p. 300). As a form of reflective practice, reflective writing can influence more informed "work-life choices" (Lengelle et al., 2013, p. 419) and alleviate the job strain that tears workers down while promoting the well-being that can build them up (Williamson & Wright, 2018). Empirical evidence has captured reciprocal benefits between learning and well-being in the workplace (Abid et al., 2020). Still, more research and practical applications are needed to identify, understand, and

address workers' needs (Watson et al., 2018). I did not intend to provide additional empirical evidence or validation of the effectiveness of reflective writing in the workplace. Instead, my objective in selecting this research design was to enhance the knowledge of the practice of reflective writing within a corporate workplace context by capturing the unique experiences of professionals. Just as problems can be contemplated from multiple positions (Sontag, 1956), understanding workers' experiences with reflective writing may be approached with several different qualitative methods.

Creswell and Poth (2018) extrapolated five qualitative research methodologies, including narrative and ethnographic research, phenomenology, case study, and grounded theory research. Each qualitative research method enables the discovery and interpretation of phenomena (Billups, 2019). Phenomenological research's core instills philosophy and an applied "distinct method" to advance understanding (Zahavi, 2019, p. 260). Phenomenology aims to demonstrate the experience's details and show that "everything is experienced as something" (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 18). Understanding the details of the study's hermeneutic phenomenological methodology underpins the findings. Information on the research method, its philosophical assumptions, interpretive frameworks, data collection procedures, and the data analysis approach, including ethical considerations, are further discussed in this chapter.

Philosophical Assumptions

Qualitative research is grounded in philosophical constructs that relate to what it means to exist and how humans come to know (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Seeing the "multiplicity" or dynamic connectivity among things can surface intricate details and enhance understanding (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 4). Philosophical assumptions are early considerations in planning a research study since they shape the approach to the research problem, research questions, and the nature of the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The philosophy underpinning qualitative designs structures the research approach with four consideration categories: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, prevailing factors such as the

researcher's background, identities, and morals comprise essential aspects of a qualitative study that infuse the research process and require consideration as time and experience can change thinking (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 18). Furthermore, "interpretive frameworks" may guide the research methodology even though they may or may not encompass and represent the researcher's views (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20).

Ontology and epistemology influence the intention of the research, including the research questions and how the research is conducted (Graue, 2015). Understanding evolves with ontology, defined as "the nature of being" or how humans think about life experiences and what they mean (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 141). The capacity for constructing themes from multiple perspectives of experience within the data is characteristic of ontology. In contrast, epistemology associates how the data are gathered among participants and within their environment. Mayer (2015) elaborated that epistemology involves the relationships between the researcher and the participants. Axiological assumptions concern the researcher's values and biases and how they may affect the interpretation of experiences shared in the data. Finally, methodological assumptions incorporate the logical approach, including the process and techniques the researcher uses to orient the understanding, such as building a theory through the analysis of experience, known as inductive analysis, rather than collecting data to test an existing idea, known as deductive analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

An ontological belief underpinning the study involved the idea that many versions of reality exist among individual and collective experiences. In addition, an epistemological opinion held that language expressed between the researcher and the participants reveals various realities and their meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A bridling journal captured the values and contextual elements of the study's axiological assumptions at initiation and throughout the research. The methodological assumptions included an inductive analysis approach, enabling me to construct a unique interpretation of the participants' reflective writing experiences. The research procedures leveraged interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, as explained later in this chapter.

Interpretive Framework

Interpretation is the core of qualitative analysis entailing the intimate and particular perspectives individuals introduce to explain the implications of how they behave alone and with others (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Interpretation is not about the information used to understand; instead, it is about the process of questioning that leads us to visualize the possibilities that invoke understanding (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Like perception, which is abstruse and subject to various lenses such as scientific or philosophical viewpoints (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968), Saldaña and Omasta (2018) defined interpretation as the distinct and biased manner in which people come to understand the world. Although both the researcher's and the participants' interpretations shape the research outcomes, selecting an interpretive framework grounds the methodology and may represent the "belief system" of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 23). Creswell and Creswell (2018) labeled and explained interpretive frameworks as "philosophical worldviews" or attitudes that exist beneath the surface but illuminate the research practices for consumers of a study's outcomes (p. 5).

Interpretive frameworks are also described as worldviews, paradigms, or theories and develop within other categories of assumptions, including ontologies and epistemologies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflecting the intent of the research and prescribing the practices involved, interpretative frameworks are closely related to selecting the research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For example, postpositivism is an interpretive framework that aligns with the quantitative research method. A postpositivist research design relies on the scientific method and uses meticulous observation to capture and measure empirical data to verify a theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conversely, social constructivism is an interpretive framework that involves multiple views and intimate connections among individuals and groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As researchers continue to navigate contemporary and dynamic research problems, combinations of theories now emerging are shaping interpretive frameworks to address diverse needs, including some that introduce ways to represent the views of less-represented populations better (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Consideration of a social constructivist interpretative framework shaped the study's method. Notably, Piaget's (1964/1967) constructivism used in a learning context (Rob & Rob, 2018) differs from social constructivism. Language and culture underpin the social constructivist interpretive framework (Vygotsky, 1962/1986). Relating to understanding work and life experiences, the social constructivist theory contends that meaning derives from multiple and complex perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher must be open to and acknowledge that the participants' experiences offer inimitable intricacies (Boyland, 2019). Constructivist ideas anchor "broad and general" research questions and shared experiences fostered through conversations and interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24). Data collection involves engaging participants in obtaining, organizing, interpreting, and making decisions based on what they know and "are willing to share in the telling of...[their] story" (Boyland, 2019, p. 33).

Research Design

Designing a research study integrates elements of philosophy, methodology, and practical methods used to conduct the study, like personal interviews used in data collection (Birks & Mills, 2010; Graue, 2015). The researcher's philosophy is formative of the study and permeates all aspects of the research, including the role of the researcher (Graue, 2015; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Panneerselvam (2014) defined the research methodology and practical methods as a systematic approach consisting of "models, procedures and techniques" that aid understanding (p. 2). Research methods resemble the economics of a country where policies, industries, culture, and other unique elements of a holistic approach are integral to sustaining the population's way of life (Panneerselvam, 2014). Some research methods are more conducive to understanding phenomena than others since the types of questioning they introduce, such as why, how, and what, can dictate deeper understanding (Yin, 2015). For example, case study research promotes the researcher's underlying curiosity and necessity for learning (Stake, 1995) while illuminating a phenomenon "in...[its] real-world contexts" (Yin, 2012, p. 4).

The qualitative design allows the data collected to conceptualize the experiences; thus, the method selected is paramount (Yin, 2015). Case study

research can be helpful in a business context because it follows a specific timeline, allows for a clear definition of scope or what is included and excluded, and because it leverages different formats of data, such as artifacts or interviews (Schoch, 2020). Still, some recent research questions have challenged traditional research methodologies (Guercini, 2014). Literature reviews (Snyder, 2019), workshops (Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017), and other combined methods introduce alternatives for dynamic environments like the field of management where research tackles significant problems, such as the impact of rapidly changing technologies (Guercini, 2014; Snyder, 2019). Combining qualitative approaches can explore the lived experience and compare results across cases adding depth. For instance, a phenomenological case study framed recent research on workplace bullying where Medina et al. (2020) compared the stories of an American and a Swedish worker with an inductive approach. The current study combined my interests with phenomenology and an interpretive method to allow me to understand the lived experience of reflective writing “in the present...[and] within a particular context” (Schoch, 2020, p. 255).

Unlike a quantitative study that begins with a hypothesis to be tested and quantified, qualitative research seeks “to clarify what is given to consciousness” (Applebaum, 2012, p. 48). The choice of an inductive approach, where the results grow from the experience, compared to a deductive approach, where the data support or do not support a theory, is one of the details that further define the methodology (Yin, 2015). Other defining characteristics of the research method include defining the proximity of the researcher to the participants and relying on numbers or words to guide the answers to the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Phenomenology allows a participative approach between the researcher and the participants (Neubauer et al., 2019). It supports a better understanding of the individual “feelings, values, and meanings” about the phenomenon (Santiago, 2020, p. 1). Often labeled as the study of “lived experience,” phenomenology elicits the participants’ previous knowledge and experience and seeks to understand what “being” in the world means to them (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94). Phenomenology connotes a more profound familiarity and requires careful

consideration of the intricate dimensions of lived experience with a phenomenon (van Manen, 2017). Intricacies such as elapsed time complicate the interpretation of experience since time transfers the “living moment” to a reflection on the original experience that may not be as vivid (van Manen, 2017, p. 812). The essence of phenomenology is transcending the simple, surface-level description of an experience by understanding “what is this experience like?” (van Manen, 2017, p. 812).

Phenomenology influences understanding the meaning of phenomena with movement across complementary ways of thinking described as the “epoché and reduction” (van Manen, 2014, p. 215). The epoché involves eliminating barriers to understanding a phenomenon, such as removing bias with a technique known as bracketing. The reduction involves complex and artful thinking, requiring the researcher to engage with the experiences close enough to uncover the meaning “as it shows itself rather than as we conceptualize it” (van Manen, 2014, p. 220). Hermeneutics facilitates interpretation and adds dimension to research by evaluating the parts and the whole of experiences to achieve “shared meaning” through an iterative cycle known as the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1988, p. 69). The hermeneutic circle in the current study involved thorough repetitive readings and writing about how each text might relate to the others. Within the process, the researcher learns to uncover shared meaning on the premise that each experience “is itself within the whole of life, [and] the whole of life is present in it too” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 69).

A “phenomenological attitude” and human-centered approach orienting lived experience is integral to hermeneutic phenomenology (Suddick et al., 2020, p. 1). My emphasis remains on how the participant’s “meaningful lived experience was manifested through...bodily being-in-the-world—being-with-others’ sensing, feeling, awakening attitude, to explore its possibilities” (Suddick et al., 2020, p. 4). The interpretive hermeneutic method in the current study transcended a descriptive view of the participants’ experiences with reflective writing, drawing shared meaning through a deeper questioning of the “human experience” or what

reflective writing was like for the individuals based on the language expressed during the telling of their experiences (van Manen, 2014, p. 62).

Hermeneutic phenomenological research seeks the expression of experience understood through “language and text” (Love et al., 2020, p. 1). Its origins trace to Husserl’s (1913/1989) ideas on descriptive phenomenology that propose understanding unfolds with a more scientific and “intuited” approach (Suddick et al., 2020, p. 1). Evolving an epistemological or evidenced way of knowing, Husserl (1928/2019) posited that experiences are described and captured through psychological activities and argued that understanding an experience occurs when preconceptions about an experience are bracketed or separated from the description of the phenomenon (Reiners, 2012). In addition, Husserl’s (1928/2019) premise of experience contemplated time as a critical element of understanding and explained that the essence of inquiry is a continual interpretation where there is a process of reflection about a phenomenon that excludes previous thoughts or bias (Charlick et al., 2016).

Husserl’s (1928/2019) view of phenomenology observed the importance of time as a distinguishing factor in understanding lived experiences, and it is the researcher's and the participant's capabilities that reveal a deeper level of insight through a “subjective, inductive, and dynamic” description of the experience (Reiners, 2012, p. 1). Yet, it was Heidegger’s (1927/1962) ideas that expanded on the process of phenomenology to invoke the importance of understanding that comes from “being in the world” rather than simply knowing information about the world (Reiners, 2012, pp. 1–2). Interpretive phenomenological analysis changed with Heidegger’s (1927/1962) insight that humans are part of the world and bring their preconceptions of understanding to new experiences. Its evolution acknowledges that prejudices cannot be bracketed or suspended from interpreting experience because they are part of being in the world (Charlick et al., 2016). Similarly, Heidegger’s (1927/1962) ideas introduced the understanding that interpretive analysis never ends (van Manen, 2014). Heidegger (1927/1962) also introduced the concept of Dasein, which explained how human existence develops through “involvement in the world” with care and concern for the actionable

options in life (Wilson, 2014, p. 2911). Furthermore, time significantly impacts individuals' considered time as an element with considerable effect on interpreting experience (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

Building on Heidegger's (1927/1962) conceptualization of interpretation, Gadamer (1976/2008) contended that understanding is a complex means of realization and "is being" (p. 49). Both Heidegger (1927/1962) and Gadamer (1976/2008) viewed language as a means to understand the motivation and the historic origins of ideas that bring awareness of their meaning. In addition, Gadamer (1976/2008) suggested a specific event can prompt understanding and described a cyclical relationship between the individual and holistic interpretations of experience that allows understanding to unfold through the aggregated synthesis of individual and collective experience (Gadamer, 1960/1998). The research design in the current study incorporated philosophical views on phenomenology from Heidegger and Gadamer, including bridling, a more recent technique for managing the researcher's experiences. Bridling is similar to the process of the epoché, in which the researcher brackets or suspends presumptions and creates a form of self-control that informs interpretative analysis, ensuring that understanding is not "too quick, too careless, or slovenly" (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 16).

As a form of reflection, bridling introduces a thoughtful description of the complexities of the phenomenon in words so that the researcher can be more open to the experience (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2003). Bridling involves writing a position for each research question at the onset of the study (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016). It supports the researcher's ability to intentionally collect, organize, and contemplate the meaning of an experience while protecting the authentic experiences of the researcher and the participants (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016). Rather than bracketing or suspending perceptions of shared meaning, bridling enables the researcher's perspective in the research (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2003). Vagle et al. (2009) discussed the importance of questioning our learning, evaluating distinct learning needs, and appreciating that the experience and context of learning will influence consequent learning.

Research Questions

In the study, three open-ended research questions guided the research to understand better workers' experiences with learning, well-being, and reflective practice within a contemporary workplace. The questions were as follows:

RQ1: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence learning in the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence well-being in the workplace?

RQ3: What settings and facilitation methods help to create the optimal experience for reflective writing in the workplace?

Role of the Researcher

Framing the approach to the research problem began with outlining the philosophical assumptions, interpretive framework, and research questions. Once these foundational elements were in place, the qualitative research "process" complemented the research design selection defining the method that best met the needs for understanding the issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 43). The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology requires the researcher to serve in a dual role introducing personal views and ensuring attention to the critical details that construct the findings (Armstrong, 2005). Relationships, past and present situations, and other factors influencing an individual's life also affect the conclusions (Armstrong, 2005). The researcher's responsibility is to infuse the research with thoughtful interpretation and insights into the phenomenon's implications fortifying the results with distinct and deliberate input (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Vagle et al., 2009). Humans can get "carried away" in philosophical ways of thinking (Sontag, 1956, p. 597). Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to apply a purposeful approach to discovering the influences of how the world is understood (Tuohy et al., 2013). Furthermore, "the 'intentionality' of consciousness" the researcher brings to phenomenology is the keystone for understanding (Armstrong, 1978, p. 6).

There are several ways to understand human experiences better, and each depends on the researcher to translate them with integrity and respect for the

individuals involved (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968). In phenomenological research, the researcher has the utmost responsibility to be open-minded and to intentionally seek “other ways of understanding” the phenomenon (Stephenson et al., 2018, p. 266). The researcher is instrumental in the “interpretation of interpretations” (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p. 336). Just as the researcher’s past experiences shape understanding and analysis of the phenomenon, complicated inherent connections between the researcher and the participants evolve. Vagle et al. (2009) noted the immersion of the researcher’s role and the reciprocal and complicated nature of experiences with the practice of phenomenology requires techniques like bridling to manage better the collection and interpretation of all the experiences involved in a study.

Butcher (2022) discussed the importance of rigorous scientific approaches as a foundation for achieving understanding and contended that all fields of work or “disciplines” have their own perceived realities, which are better understood using the language and the research methods that integrate the nuances of the discipline (p. 148). Hermeneutic phenomenology blends the variations and uncertainties among the researcher’s and the participant’s experiences in a collaborative process to understand their meaning (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The method was fundamental to capturing and appreciating unique human experiences (van Manen, 2014). The analysis process was further enhanced by layering Heidegger’s philosophical insights in the interpretations of experience to intertwine the findings with more profound, introspective thinking aimed to “illuminate meaning” (Riahi et al., 2020, p. 1221).

Applying Heidegger’s (1927/1962) philosophical constructs, such as the importance of time, care, and concern for self and others, and ways of learning, such as how humans might use more questioning rather than offering specific directions (Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2021) provided for a richer research experience. Van Manen (2014) explained that including research design layers with philosophical constructs or other “insight cultivators” discovered from exposure and knowledge of art, literature, or other bodies of knowledge are valuable to the interpretation of a phenomenon (p. 324). Insight cultivators initiate recollections

and reflexivity that can further illuminate the meaning and interpretation of lived experiences. The researcher must continuously learn to inform phenomenological research (van Manen, 2014).

Research Method

Tumele (2015) clarified distinctions between the research methodology and the research methods explaining the methodology “is about the rationale” and the methods are the ways the data is acquired, assembled, and evaluated (p. 46). Just as there are multiple methodologies and combinations (Creswell & Poth, 2018), numerous research methods rely on varying philosophical assumptions (Santiago, 2020). Runkel (2007) categorized research methods in psychological contexts describing two realms of possibilities where more scientific efforts of “casting a net”—also referred to as “the method of relative frequencies” or “counting noses”—allows a researcher to evaluate the quantitative characteristics among a selected population (p. 2). In contrast, “testing specimens” enables the researcher to uncover more mysteries surrounding the human experience by investigating individuals, their surroundings, and their interactions with others (Runkel, 2007, p. 119). Two categories of research methods characteristic of the phenomenological methodology include “descriptive and interpretive phenomenology” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1).

Descriptive phenomenology suggests a more objective view of a phenomenon understood through a lens of how it appears on the surface. In contrast, interpretive phenomenology seeks a deeper perspective seeking the meaning within the phenomenon (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Research methods also describe various groupings of qualitative data such as “observations, interviews and questionnaires, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 212). Van Manen’s (2015) hermeneutical phenomenological research approach provided structure for the current study. It defined the entirety of the research design, including selecting a phenomenological topic that was compelling to me, constructing research questions that explored the essence of the phenomenon or what the experience was like, collecting stories of lived experiences, conducting the epoché and reduction or process of getting to the meaning by letting go of

preconceptions and writing a narrative of the experience that described the process of discovery including both its parts and its whole (van Manen, 2014).

Natural Setting

Qualitative data present lush, descriptive language that enables researchers' understanding at a higher level promoting richer, more provocative results to inspire future thinking (Miles et al., 2018). Philosophical and methodological influences, including the social constructivist interpretive framework, encouraged social interactions in the research design (Boyland, 2019; Morgan, 2021). Therefore, the data collection methods facilitated researcher and participant interactions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained the importance of maintaining qualitative research within the "natural setting" or within the actual environment where the participants have context for the phenomenon and where they can interact authentically for more extended periods (p. 181). The current study participants were selected from a single organization to enable the possibility of a "shared perspective upon the phenomenon" (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 182). The data gathered over 10 weeks fostered "a detailed record of behaviors and beliefs over time" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 474). The participants shared learning and well-being resources, similar contractual agreements and obligations to the organization's policies and procedures, and similar experiences communicating and interacting with others using virtual technologies. In separate geographies and physical locations, they represented different roles but similar service-oriented responsibilities and shared mutual accountabilities for collectively achieving the organization's business goals. There were no co-located or physical interactions among the participants.

Disruption

The research study design intentionally avoided disruption to the organization and minimized any impact on the participants' work and home life. It incorporated flexibility by adjusting to the availability of the participants for the scheduling of the interviews, submission of the reflective writing responses, and attendance during the group experiences. At the organization's request, the research activities occurred outside the participants' regular working hours, with schedules

coordinated according to the participants' discretionary time. The participants provided technology, including mobile devices, to support effective communications. I scheduled Zoom meetings and managed the initiation of weekly communications, including providing the participants with individual writing prompts on the same day each week. The extended study duration created access to a reasonable personal and aggregate data sample. It also offered the participants the flexibility to accommodate the demands of their work and home priorities.

Access and Gatekeepers

I obtained permission to conduct the research study from the organization's gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are the personnel within the organization with "the authority to grant permission and facilitate the researcher's entry into a particular field setting" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 33). Representatives of the organization's human resources department, including an officer, provided confirmation and written consent to conduct the study with volunteer participants. I provided documentation, including the research purpose, questions, number of participants, and the expected reporting procedures to a single gatekeeper who coordinated alignment with others. At the organization's request, a disclaimer releasing the organization from any association with the research was part of the informed consent process. A verbal communication, including an explanation of the organization's disclaimer, was provided for the participant's consideration before they chose to participate. The participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A) before participating. Access to the aggregate data and findings of the study for the organization was a condition of the approval.

Participants

Scholars of research sampling methods have noted dynamic and complex issues that complicate sample selection, such as "subtle inconsistencies, ambiguities, or incomplete descriptions in the methods" (Gentles et al., 2015, p. 1772). In a phenomenological study, the language of sampling and selection is nuanced (Gentles et al., 2015; Yin, 2015). As sampling implies a numerical subset of experiences equated to empirical evidence, it is inappropriate for phenomenology (van Manen, 2014). Multiple participants participated in the

current study selected by a method of convenience and purposeful sampling Saldaña and Omasta (2018) described as a selection with ease of access and based on the likelihood of understanding the phenomenon as a result of their “unique opportunity” within an organization (p. 179). Considering the different scholarly views, the depth of data to be collected, and the intent to capture experiences without an objective for generalization, I identified potentially qualified individuals and invited them to participate.

Following the recommendations of the organization’s gatekeepers, I communicated the opportunity to participate to specific individuals identified by other organization members as professionals interested in developing knowledge related to learning and well-being. I conducted individual conversations with numerous candidates that responded to a brief overview of the current study to explain the opportunity personally. The participants came from a pool of volunteers who confirmed their interest after the initial conversation. To instill diversity in participants’ experiences, I selected participants from different internal business units or areas of responsibility within the organization. Furthermore, I considered potential “direct or indirect relationships” between myself and the participants to mitigate potential ethical concerns, such as a conflict of interest that might surface from organizational structures or hierarchical reporting relationships (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 96).

Another opportunity in the participant selection involved the sample size and its ability to accommodate the personal nature of the data from the researcher’s and the participants’ perspectives (Patton, 2014). Boyland (2019) suggested a tailored participant selection to promote the possibility that the researcher and the participants will have the capacity to “reconceptualize, reframe, re-construct, understand and make meaning of the reality” so that the experiences represent a complete picture (p. 33). Perceptions, events, situations, and interests are all dimensions of a qualitative study that capture the essence of an individual’s privileged experience and are essential to the qualitative context and research outcomes (Patton, 2014). A specific qualitative sample is difficult to determine, but data saturation, or the point at which no new information surfaces, is often a

consideration (Patton, 2014). Multiple data sources increased the credibility of the data through triangulation, rather than targeting specific numbers of participants to achieve data saturation.

The intended outcome of qualitative research is “the meaning of the phenomenon,” which can surface even with “a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 161). A smaller sample size may lead to more intense meaning in hermeneutic phenomenology (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). Researchers can adjust the number of participants should some participants not describe their experiences with the desired level of depth (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). Similarly, the nature of hermeneutic phenomenology can lead to deep and powerful data requiring ample time to collect (Gentles et al., 2015). Therefore, I was mindful and intentional about the number of contacts and the level of inquiry requested from the participants. Ultimately, eight participants contributed to the study following the selection process.

Data Collection Procedures

The vast and varied data that emerges from individuals’ experiences can culminate in an expansive combination of data (Boyland, 2019). It purposefully unites the participants’ beliefs, learnings, and behaviors and highlights that experiences are independently valuable “without any sense of universality” or transferability (Boyland, 2019, p. 30). After receiving the appropriate and complete approvals from the organization’s gatekeepers, I requested permission to conduct the research study from the Southeastern University IRB. I performed all the necessary steps to obtain approval, including completing the required social and behavioral research course and submitting the IRB application. I provided the IRB with a detailed version of the informed consent form that formalized the agreements between myself, the organization, and the participants, including their willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

Following the IRB approval reflected in Appendix B, the participants who returned informed consent documents were contacted and provided information further establishing the expectations for the study. The research procedures, including descriptions of the data sources, the study timeline with milestone dates,

and other logistical details, were confirmed in verbal and written communications with the participants. Procedures such as how communications would be distributed and how the writing samples would be collected and shared were discussed and aligned. A plan for the interactions between myself and the participants was aligned and shared in written communication.

After confirming details like the methods of communication through personal emails and Zoom meetings, I ensured answers to the participants' questions. I communicated that any changes made during the study with implications to the conditions formalized in the informed consent forms would require re-engagement with the organizational gatekeepers and the IRB accordingly. I also communicated awareness of the need for flexibility to accommodate schedules given the extended duration of the study. The research methodology and methods were not shared with the participants. Because the nature of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach is “emergent,” I anticipated the original plan for the data collection might change with any feedback shared by the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182). When explaining the research objectives, I delineated possible changes in the writing prompts to accommodate the research questions. I also explained that interactions within the study might pose a risk to participants as they might be able to identify other participants from the writing samples in the research. Finally, I reiterated that participation was voluntary and explained that participants might change should there not be a decline in participation throughout the study.

Data Sources

Uncovering intricate lived experiences requires a systematic and process-oriented analysis (Smith et al., 2012). It begins with an evaluation of the expectations for the primary research question to ensure it is not “on too grand a scale or too ambitious” (p. 47), and it may develop with “secondary or theory-driven questions” that emerge later within the analysis phase (Smith et al., 2012, p. 48). Discussing interpretive phenomenological analysis within the context of a team, Larkin et al. (2019) suggested layered inquiry assists the researcher with revealing the more unique elements of the experience, such as the special

interpersonal relationships and the coping mechanisms used among individuals and teams. Layered data refined interpretations of experiences with a broader lens highlighting a thoroughness of perspective and allowing the influence of time and inevitable change to capture “how things were, and how things are” (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 187). I collected multiple data sources for analysis, including transcripts from semistructured and unstructured individual interviews, writing samples from prompted and unprompted personal journaling, and group-guided reflective writing sessions. Audio transcripts of participant feedback from the guided writing experience, a transcript from the focus group, and detailed notes and insights from my bridling journal complemented the data.

Individual Interviews

Personal interviews between the researcher and each participant that allow for “loosely guided conversations” (Kilgore et al., 2020, p. 373) facilitated the need for social interactions in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews can vary in formality, evolving from “informal conversation” to delicate and detailed questioning (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). There are various types of interviews characteristic of phenomenological studies, and combinations of interview styles like “think-aloud” interviews that engage participants in describing activities or experiences in the moment and “stimulated recall interviews” that involve reflection (Lauterbach, 2018, p. 2887-2888). Patton (2014) suggested unstructured interviews are helpful when the researcher does not know the phenomena. I used a combination of interview styles, including semistructured and unstructured interviews, for the study. I leveraged the semistructured interviews to listen to and collect the participants’ experiences specific to learning and well-being.

I used unstructured interviews to allow the participants to express their experiences with reflective writing through open conversations rather than through questions to prevent “leading the participant into a set answer” (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011, p. 371). The hermeneutic interviews involved a collaboration between myself and the participants. I set the tone for a discussion, and the participant talked openly about reflective writing without the constraints of formal interview techniques (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). For example, with less

structure, I used open-ended prompts or “incomplete sentences” to encourage elaboration on the experiences and affirmed details to increase credibility by restating phrases (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011, p. 372). Table 1 provides an example of an unstructured interview prompt. In preparation for individual interviews, I conducted one pilot interview with a volunteer not part of the study to practice the unstructured interviewing technique.

Table 1

Unstructured, Hermeneutic Interview Format Example

Interviewer Prompt	Example from the Study
Opening question	As you know, I am interested in a better understanding of learning and well-being in the contemporary workplace. Let’s talk about each one of these separately, starting with learning. What comes to your mind when you think about learning at work?

Although I followed a semistructured interview protocol to introduce the study in the initial interviews, I did not provide the interview questions to the participants beforehand. The initial interviews began with an opportunity to answer any questions about the study for the participants. I encouraged an open and conversational experience managing the duration of the interaction to approximately 45 minutes. Verbatim comments were captured in transcripts using Otter, a software application that records and transcribes audio into text transcripts. I also recorded written notes during each interaction. I completed the initial interviews with each participant before sharing the reflective writing prompts. I conducted subsequent interviews after the reflective writing experiences to capture how participants might articulate their experiences at different times throughout the 10-week study. I offered participants the option to receive a copy of the interview transcripts, and they were permitted to change the content. Appendix C reflects the individual interview protocol.

Journal Writing

Journal writing can organize and influence critical thinking by writing personal interpretations, ideas, views, and feelings about a phenomenon (Abednia et al., 2013). Journaling can facilitate freedom from scrutiny and encourage elaboration on one's own experiences and those of others in a way that enables "depth and quality" (Abednia et al., 2013, p. 505). Journal writing can be free writing that is creative or has no specific guidelines. It can also leverage prompts that stimulate responsive writing individually or guided through a facilitated group setting that involves conversation and sharing among the participants (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). In the initial interviews, I requested that the participants create journals to collect their reflective writing experiences throughout the study. I inquired about prior experiences with reflective writing and journaling and explained the concepts in the study context. Noting no prescribed format and no quality requirements for grammar or mechanics, I explained that there would be some variation in the types of writing prompts. I asked participants to write without any constraints or concern for the quality of grammar or mechanics.

Acknowledging that there were no right or wrong responses in the journaling experience, I explained my role to provide individual writing prompts and to facilitate the guided writing experiences. I asked for the participants' input on sharing the writing samples. I agreed to be flexible to accommodate their individual needs since there were variations in the communication tools available.

Individual Journaling. Each participant created written responses to individual writing prompts provided to them for 7 weeks during the study. In the interviews, I explained that there would be no sharing of the individual journal entries without permission and confirmed that there would be no judgment of the writing samples. There were no expectations for the word count or length of the individual writing responses, and the participants did not receive any comments on the content following submission. Similarly, there were no expectations for revisions, edits, or peer reviews in the study design. The concept of journaling for "hot writing" or free writing as a form of informal and impromptu writing (Bolton

& Delderfield, 2018, p. 44) was described and encouraged consistently throughout the study.

To create an expectation for the time commitment each week, I provided a guideline of no more than 30 minutes per week and explained that there was no required time commitment for the independent writing. I encouraged the participants to self-control their time based on their individual needs. Independent journaling captured unique experiences naturally and without constraints and preserved the reflection for the participants' future consideration. Although participants were encouraged to use handwritten journals submitted through images or scanned copies for analysis, they also had the choice to use software tools such as Word or Notepad to produce the writing samples. Appendix D contains examples of individual writing prompts.

Participants submitted individual writing samples for at least 7 weeks of the study, reflecting on a combination of experiences from their work and home lives. The writing prompts intentionally probed current experiences that might influence learning and well-being in the work environment. I created the writing prompts with the intent to accentuate characteristics of the contemporary workplace and to encourage “critical questions...[and] working out their own ways of writing their stories” (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018, p. 62) of learning and well-being. I requested that participants share as many of the writing samples as possible to enable me to respond to the research questions.

Guided Journaling. Reflective writing in a facilitated setting involves supporting the “reflection and reflexivity” that writers need to understand that their experiences are unique (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018, p. 34). Two guided writing experiences were part of the study design introduced after the fourth week to enable the participants several weeks of individual writing experiences before they came together in a group. Most participants attended at least one of the guided experiences, and some shared their writing created in the group. During the guided writing experiences, I initiated interactions by providing context, reading the writing prompts, and loosely managing the time between prompts to allow for dialogue within a 30-minute timeframe. My role invited the participants to share

excerpts of their writing, listen to others, and converse between responding to theme-based reflective writing prompts. Participants were not required to share their writing samples nor discuss what they wrote; however, research suggests that when reflective writing is shared, social interaction allows for learning from others' ideas and stories (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). During the guided writing experiences, I actively participated in writing and engaging with the participants.

Focus Group

Utilizing focus groups in phenomenology has been debated by scholars (Freeman & Vagle, 2013; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Still, some have suggested that combining hermeneutics and focus groups can cultivate “consciousness” and value for the language that better defines understanding and meaning (Freeman & Vagle, 2013, p. 146). A focus group was intentionally placed at the end of the study to debrief the study and to elicit ideas that would compare the individual and guided writing experiences. The purposeful placement allowed the participants to build on their individual and group reflective writing experiences through connections and collaborative discussions with other participants. Encouraging thought partnership, the focus group collected data to reveal preferred conditions conducive to reflective writing. Providing an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their experiences together and building off each other's ideas, “a range of opinions” (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 21) cultivated additional thinking and broadened perspectives (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018).

Another purpose of the focus group was to continue the social interaction between myself and the participants to expand “the social and cultural contexts within which the participants' experiences exist” (Montague et al., 2020, p. 25). To prepare for the focus group, I structured a focus group protocol to “gather opinions” and “obtain perceptions.” I facilitated the focus group and asked the participants to help me guide the discussion in “a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2). The focus group audio was recorded and transcribed. Appendix G contains the focus group protocol.

Bridling Journal

In the context of observation methods, Saldaña and Omasta (2018) discussed the relevance of researchers' "jottings or brief, hastily handwritten notes with simple descriptions of action and participant quotes," recognizing that without a researcher's journal, the data collection process may miss valuable details (p. 40). Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) also suggested that researchers record notes and reflect on the progression of the research in a separate journal. Especially for novice researchers, journaling can facilitate the kind of "reflexive practice" that clarifies ambiguous qualitative research and structures "how data were created and findings reached" (Meyer & Willis, 2019, p. 579). Stutey et al. (2020) explained that researchers could use bridling journals as a source of "connection to the research," yielding a better understanding of the researcher's reactions to experiences (p. 151). Creating a bridling journal requires the researcher to write extensively about what is already known about the phenomenon incorporating personal experiences and disclosing honest viewpoints (Stutey et al., 2020). Moreover, bridling journals capture and explore expectations for the learning outcomes of the research that foster patience for the gradual unveiling of deeper meaning that comes when the researcher can dedicate time to "dwell with the phenomenon" (Stutey et al., 2020, p. 147).

The research design incorporated a bridling journal that includes my preconceptions about reflective writing and contemporary work. In addition to drafting initial bridling statements to highlight expected results before the study began, the bridling journal collected research notes and personal responses to some of the individual and guided writing prompts. The participants were aware of the bridling journal and its purpose, and I was open to sharing the contents with them to validate interpretations of their experiences upon request. The data collected in the bridling journal helped me to derive the shared meaning described in the findings (Moustakas, 1994). Appendix J reflects selected excerpts from the bridling journal.

Data Analysis

Variations of analysis techniques suited to qualitative research can be challenging for researchers to understand and incorporate (Charlick et al., 2016). For example, interpretive phenomenology to describe the participant's experiences embodied the Heideggerian hermeneutic philosophical foundations of the current study. The culmination of methods involved the research approach applied an inductive analysis guiding the construction of the findings. An inductive approach produced an independent case from each individual's data and a thematic evaluation representative of the shared experience across the data (Larkin et al., 2019) that can be valuable to the results (Morgan, 2021; Patton, 2014). To interpret the data, the researcher applies "detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations...[and] specific evaluation objectives" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks the meaning of lived experiences (van Manen, 2014). Introducing Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophy into the analysis of the current study involved layered interpretations, including constructs like time and individual circumstances that refined the understanding of the experiences (Morgan, 2021). Constructing the outcomes of a study adopting philosophical foundations involves a commitment from the researcher to the "bonding relationship" among participants and an awareness of a higher level of "interpersonal and subjectivity skills" needed to conduct the data analysis (Alase, 2017, p. 9). The researcher emphasizes data collection that goes beyond "thin descriptions" or the facts of the experience to obtain "thick descriptions...[that provide] context and meaning to observable actions, words, and artifacts, so an outsider can better understand them" (Hong & Francis, 2020, p. 213).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), one type of interpretive analysis, emphasizes "meaning, not causality," and it can create a complicated process (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 195). Similarly, Lindseth and Norberg (2021) defined phenomenological hermeneutic interpretation as entailing a process that begins with "a first, naïve reading" of the data collected into texts, followed by a repetitive cycle of readings and interpretations that form an intentional and

thorough “thematic structured analysis” (pp. 6–7). Structured analysis elicits “meaning units” or single pieces of experiences from groups of words and even whole sentences to illuminate “the path from the whole to the part and from the part to the whole several times before the research result becomes satisfying” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 5). The hermeneutic analysis cycle requires significant effort (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). Even though “no single fundamental truth” is expected, an intended outcome is to permit participants to tell the stories of their experiences honestly (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 7).

Exploring, organizing, and analyzing the data for the current study was not assisted with software. Some types of data analysis software can effectively manage the centralizing, locating, and unifying of connections among qualitative data to expedite thematic analysis (S. Clarke et al., 2021). It uses features like emotion coding to identify the participants’ feelings more easily (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). In the current study, I avoided isolating words in the texts and emphasized the importance of the participants’ experiences precisely as shared. I used Lindseth and Norberg’s (2021) hermeneutical analysis model, deriving thematic meaning units from multiple readings of the various texts. A gradual progression of interpretations across three phases, beginning with the initial “naïve understanding” and ending with a “comprehensive understanding,” facilitated the analysis (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, pp. 149–150). Understanding that particular parts of some texts may not seem relevant initially, I preserved them. I acknowledged them as essential to future interpretations even though they were not predominant themes (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). Iterations of reading and writing about the data continued until there was confidence that the thematic analysis captured the participants’ experiences, both individually and collectively.

Managing Bias

Dahlberg (2006) explained the intricate connectivity among all phenomena and highlighted the need for the researcher to develop an “attitude or phenomenological reduction” that enables intimate focus on the specific phenomenon in the scope of the research (p. 16). Two controls to manage inherent bias in the interpretive analysis were considered in the research design, including

bracketing, which accommodates the separation of the researchers' perspectives from the data (Tuohy et al., 2013), and bridling, which introduces the researchers' "thoughts and feelings" to the data through continuous reflection and documentation (Stutey et al., 2020, p. 150). Unlike bracketing, which restricts the researcher's preconceptions, bridling is a "reflective stance" that fosters the researcher's ability to gain self-awareness and remain open to observing the phenomenon (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 16). Bridling begins by capturing the researcher's preliminary assertion about the phenomenon (Stutey et al., 2020) and continues to frame the analysis process (Vagle et al., 2009). Bridling statements written before the reflective writing experiences and regular journaling throughout the study governed the analysis and the findings.

Reporting and Data Protection

Qualitative researchers are responsible for conscious choices that ensure the authenticity of the research and protection of the data collected and have heightened awareness of the possibility that some participants might not be able to articulate the "real story" of their experience (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 523). The accuracy and truthfulness of the data and the outcomes of the current study were facilitated by discussing the research methods with the participants, considering data and reporting risks in writing through reflection in the bridling journal, and checking the texts with the participants. I used a careful approach to describe the findings, avoiding quelling and any potential for data falsification. Moreover, I ensured the de-identification of the texts and maintained them securely. Adhering to the American Psychological Association standards, I planned to retain the raw data for 5 years following the study's publication (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In publishing the study, I followed the requirements of Southeastern University and the IRB.

Ethical Considerations

Purposefully exploring the unique and firsthand experiences of others requires adherence to ethical standards incorporated into the research design to protect participants and the organization (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Numerous ethical issues, especially those concerning the need for anonymity, exist in qualitative research because the detailed descriptions of experiences and direct quotations could allow participants to be recognized (Larkin et al., 2019). Peer reviewers and research ethics committees mitigate the risk of ethical issues in research and benefit researchers and participants (Sanjari et al., 2014). Peer reviewers were not part of the current study's design; however, had any ethical concerns surfaced, I was responsible for reporting them to the IRB. Had any ethical issues been reported, I was also required to suspend the study until an investigation was completed and the approval to continue the study was granted. Within the research design, there was a consistent emphasis on respect for the proximity to the participants' personal experiences and a focus on "making a difference in people's lives...without any ethical disturbances" throughout the study (Sanjari et al., 2014, p. 5). As a participant in the data collection, I was constantly mindful of my relationship with the participants. I understood the obligation to protect their voices in all aspects of the research process, including the interpretation and reporting of findings.

I encouraged open and honest communications about conducting the study to ensure the utmost safety for the participants and the organization. I discussed ethical considerations individually with each participant in the initial interview and revisited the criticality of anonymity and confidentiality in each of the group experiences. Through pseudonymization, I de-identified the participants to reduce the risk of releasing personally identifiable information that might associate the participants with the data. The potential for sharing the study outcomes was considered in the research design, including asking the participants to approve their related pseudonyms. As some writing prompts and group experiences elicited emotions and opinions that each participant may view differently (Sanjari et al., 2014), I maintained close contact with the participants for the duration of the study. I offered assistance to listen and support any individual needs.

Planning the research design incorporated "great stock in process," meaning that the design was mindful of the vision for the necessary results (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 11). Just like empirical data in quantitative research, the outcomes

of a qualitative methodology must be of high quality in the meaning it derives, producing “an interrelated, coherent body of knowledge...[through a] research approach...[that is] methodical, systematic, general, and critical” (Applebaum, 2012, p. 68). Ensuring the necessary rigor involves returning to the research purpose often and understanding that the nature of the desired outcomes requires carefully constructing and revisiting the research questions (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 183). As an active facilitator of the participants’ experiences, I respected the complexity of the circumstances of human experience and remained consistently engrossed in the phenomenon with the participants (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016). I fostered interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology through bridling statements encouraging openness to new experiences.

Before conducting the research, I wrote a bridling statement specific to the methodology:

I believe the phenomenological method with bridling will help me be more reflective on my own experiences so that I might contribute to the creation of a better experience for the participants during the study. My objective for the study includes achieving a better understanding of their experiences and providing them with a valuable experience with reflective writing. Keeping my perceptions at the forefront of the design, I will gather data and report on the participants’ diverse expressions of their experience with reflective writing understanding that “nothing is ‘simply given.’” (van Manen, 2014, p. 220)

Qualitative research can impact “the world at many levels,” elevating awareness, advocating for individual voices, and highlighting experiences where participants’ stories might be misrepresented (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 183).

Upholding strict ethical standards and avoiding incentives that might introduce conflicts of interest underpinned the integrity of the research. The thoroughness of the study and the relentless attention to preserving the participant’s experiences in their entirety ensured the examination and reporting process maintained a lens for the “experiences of human healing, caring, and wholeness” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 172). Participants were able to suspend participation in the study at any

time, and it was my responsibility to enter into a relationship with each participant concerned with aligning all of the actions of the research with an outcome-oriented intent to provide service aimed at achieving a greater good (van Manen, 2014, p. 116).

Summary

Guided by a research problem, qualitative research pursues the meaning of the human experience (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). In this chapter, the methodology selected for the study revealed the structured research approach, including the research questions, assumptions, and techniques that I employed to solicit the data and answer the research questions. The philosophical foundations, including the social constructivist interpretive framework, explained guiding principles. A Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology framed the inquiry and supported the interpretive analysis. The research design defined the role of the researcher, how the participants were selected, and the data collected. It included descriptions of the multiple data sources aligned to support the interpretive analysis, including individual interviews, reflective writing samples, and a focus group. Finally, I elaborated on the specific data analysis procedures, like the inductive interpretive analysis process describing how philosophical constructs supporting the data analysis process impacted the findings. In the final sections of the chapter, I discussed additional design considerations, including my adherence to ethical standards to protect the participants.

Chapter 4 – Findings

In this chapter, I present the study's findings, combining lengthy texts comprised of the transcripts and writing samples with a detailed narration of the research analysis process. The purpose of the study was to understand workers' experiences with reflective writing in the contemporary workplace and how it might contribute to workplace learning and well-being. The following research questions guided the research:

RQ1: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence learning in the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence well-being in the workplace?

RQ3: What settings and facilitation methods help to create the optimal experience for reflective writing in the workplace?

Multiple data collection methods supported the findings, including a bridling journal that augmented the interpretive analysis process. In addition, narratives or written texts from the data captured the participants' experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019). The texts demonstrated the depth of "the reality of daily life" (Fuster Guillen, 2019, p. 221), and their examination included my understanding of Heideggerian philosophical insights.

As a reminder, my intention in conducting this study was to understand workers' experiences with reflective writing and was neither suited to identify nor test theories, tools, or techniques. Heideggerian hermeneutic interpretive analysis extended the depth of the study with philosophy (van Manen, 2014). I intended to unveil the meaning of the participants' language below the surface descriptions, including what might not have been shared (Fuster Guillen, 2019). Uncovering the meaning of the reflective writing experiences as the central phenomenon involved sensitivity to the participants' telling of their stories as truth often "lies hidden" (Smythe & Spence, 2020, p. 1). It was equally imperative to narrate the methodology's interpretive process to ensure that the findings are open to further inquiry. Although patterns and themes suggested shared experiences, the participants' individual stories represented by the texts are each gilded and

intricately woven into the holistic interpretation of the meaning of reflective writing and remain the heart of the study. As Roam (2008) suggested, what is within the heart is meaningful, centering and grounding what matters most; therefore, this chapter begins with participants' narratives written interpretively to invite the reader in for a closer consideration of the individual experiences.

Discovering the Parts – Participant Stories

Accommodating Gadamer's (1960/1998) view of the circular nature of influence between the parts and the whole of interpretative analysis, brief stories or narratives introduce the participants with descriptive attributes, including their preconceptions of learning, well-being, and contemporary work. In addition, the stories shaped additional contextual elements of their life experiences, including an explanation of their writing experiences in the workplace before the study. Varied aspects of the texts from the individual and guided writing samples and the interview transcripts were selected to illustrate both descriptive and interpretive language used to tell their stories. Excerpts from each data collection method exemplified the type of inquiry and the level of interaction with the participants. Table 2 summarizes the participants' descriptive attributes that emerged from the stories.

Table 2

Examples of Participants' Descriptive Attributes

Participant (Pseudonyms)	Individual Attributes
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age 54 ● Bachelor's degree ● 29 years with the same organization; senior manager in a technology-focused business unit ● Creative, artist, quilter, married, no children, has a dog ● At work, writes to communicate via presentations, email communications, and problem/solution summaries
Andrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age 26 ● Bachelor's degree ● New to workforce and current organization; brief prior experience as a small business owner; less than 1 year in current role as a technical network administrator

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|-----------|---|
| Ashley | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Enjoys sports, music, poetry, and traveling to experience diverse cultures● At work, writes to communicate via email, problem/solution summaries, and meeting notes● Age 26● Pursuing a master's degree● 5 years in corporate environments mostly in the current organization; recently changed positions and served in a project management role● New homeowner with 3 dogs, "trying to enjoy adulthood"● At work writes accomplishments summaries and populates reports; noted experience with personal bullet journaling outside of work |
| Brianna | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Age 32● Bachelor's degree● Sales and marketing background with most of career in same organization; recently changed positions to broaden knowledge of other business areas within the organization● New homeowner and mother |
| Elizabeth | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● At work, writes performance reviews and meeting notes● Age 53● Some higher education● Majority of career with the same organization; recently moved into a leadership position with direct reports● Single, enjoys work, and has a current focus on improving personal health and caring for aging family members |
| Mandy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● At work, writes process documentation● Age not provided● Some hours toward master's degree● 35 years in different organizations with marketing, higher education, and career coaching roles; 9 months with the current organization● Wife, grandmother, "strong faith that defines who I am"● At work, writes to communicate via email, coaching notes, newsletters, and problem descriptions |
| Reagan | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Age not provided● Bachelor's degree● 38 years in the workforce with over 36 with the current organization in different roles● Widowed with two daughters● At work writes to-do lists and meeting notes |
| Shannon | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Age 45● Master's degree (recent achievement)● 27 years in the workforce within the current organization in different roles● Enjoys sports, nature, and yardwork |
-

- At work, writes for communication via email and status updates

Allison's Story

Allison is 54 years old and is married with no children. She has siblings, and both of her parents are still living. Allison described herself as a creative individual mentioning hobbies such as quilting, painting, and being part of a watercolor art society where she collaborates with other artists to build her skills. In addition, she is physically active, exercising, and managing her health with support from a personal trainer and nutritionist. Allison shared that her interest in participating in the study stemmed from a desire to explore her learning style and “introspectively understanding...what drives me towards some of the things that I do [and] the choices that I make or don't make.” She elaborated that “sometimes a choice of not making a choice says more than the actual choice.” She has worked in the same organization for over 29 years and is currently a mid-level manager. She provided specific examples of workplace changes that influence her perspective on contemporary work:

Lately, it's been very stressful. The environment is changing since COVID, and we mostly work from home. While there's some initiatives to bring people back into the office, most individuals including myself, enjoy the benefits of working from home but there is a bit of a change in our culture and camaraderie, collaboration, the feeling of why you do things sometimes...[what is] driving you towards a community of success seems to be harder to achieve. And as a leader of people, that has really been a challenge. The work becomes more of a grind. People are definitely burning out where we lose a lot of people. There's a high amount of attrition currently across my teams and other teams in our organization. Not to mention just the pressure...offshore certain roles and positions for cost...the company's always looking at expenses and looking at ways to benefit from lower cost resources. So that type of stress makes work...more challenging as a leader or as an individual contributor...[it's] just harder to sometimes get things done.

Explaining her ideas about workplace learning, Allison recollected changing roles and commented on shifting views associated with formal learning:

I learn every day. I am now and have been in leadership almost my entire career. I think I got promoted into management four years after joining the company, and I never cease to learn. I've moved jobs over my career countless times, and I like changing roles and changing responsibilities. I don't mind moving to a new team or a new organization...having a new challenge is inspiring and gives me new things to focus on and new things to learn. We also have required training which I used to really love. I loved learning what the company wanted us to learn. I find that I don't love it anymore. I don't love the required training. I feel that it's distracting sometimes not because I don't want to learn what the company wants us to learn but there's so many things to learn that forcing you into a particular class or subject that they are interested in you completing by a certain timeframe is just additional stress and makes learning less fun. Not to say that I don't get things from those classes. I understand why they ask us to do it. I just don't love it like I used to.

Allison expressed value in the resources her organization currently offers for formal learning noting customized career pathways and platforms like LinkedIn are beneficial, especially for onboarding new workers given the current attrition. She commented on the opportunity to partner with an enterprise-level learning and development team to develop specific learning pathways. Allison acknowledged the organization's support for individual learning through financial support options and programs, such as offering temporary opportunities to work in different roles in another area of the organization. She mentioned one possibility for enhancing the current programs suggesting that some master class offerings that showcase external experts who share their personal experiences could be beneficial:

It intrigues me you can learn from [other industries, like] Steven Spielberg on filmmaking or whatever. I'm curious if there's anything that master classes would offer that would align with what the company's needs

are...[maybe a] marketing master class or management master class...it'd be interesting [for example, to have heard from] Steve Jobs.

Allison explained that well-being is a broad concept “comprised of both physical and mental health...your whole being...your spiritual health, [and] your happiness.” In her writing, Allison reflected on the importance of time away from work, sharing that, at times, she needs a reminder that “time away from work is critical to well-being.” She wrote about experiences outside of work, such as going to her hairdresser and the dentist, that may seem insignificant but were meaningful to her well-being. She wrote about putting in long hours at work yet, feeling guilt for taking time away. She noted that she holds herself to a different standard than she expects of her direct reports:

If someone told me they were going to the dentist at 2 pm I'd be like...okay, see you tomorrow, but when it's me, it's a different story. I know I have things undone, things that will possibly NOT get done based on all that I have on my plate...as the “owner” of this app or team, it's something I have to do. Just Too Much Work! There are good days and bad days. Overall, I'm feeling a bit tired and not focused on my well-being. Days that feel more rewarding are those where I can help solve a problem. Most of my days are brimming with “problems,” but my job isn't to be the solver...but the coordinator of solving them...I feel no one is happy, pressure is constant.

Allison described her experience with writing in the workplace as more formal communication noting it is “most often...email or a PowerPoint or some type of Microsoft Office document to describe a problem or a solution or whatever.” She added that she had an executive coach recently that recommended “daily journaling, which in theory was really great, but in practicality, it just seems that I did not carve the appropriate time out for it.” She explained that she has created a daily space in her calendar for writing since she received the recommendation and commented that writing is “something I have really good intention to do.” She noted that this executive coach's guidance underpinned her interest in participating in the study. She shared that she believes “the practice of

writing...will help with some stress and some positive self-talk.” Allison started the study in Week 2, participating in two interviews, submitting 7 weeks of writing samples, and contributing to one of the guided writing sessions.

Andrew’s Story

Andrew is a 26-year-old network engineer less than 1 year into his current role. Before his current position, he had operated his own small business, and he described his interests outside of work, including sports and music as a drummer. He agreed to participate in the study after hearing about it from a trusted co-worker and shared that he was interested to learn “how [writing] might help me in my work...in [my] career.” He included that he thought if it could help others, it might help him. Andrew described his experience with the contemporary work environment citing examples of fast-paced change influenced by emerging technology:

It is a lot of change...a lot of things happening at once...a lot of changes being made on an executive level and on a department level and when I say changes, for example, we are deploying more advanced technology like cloud technology that will make it easier to work but at the same time, we are trying to learn it and deploy it at the same time...[the experience is like] rapid changing environment...stuff is going down always...a lot of projects [and a] rapid flowing environment and a lot of different things going on at once.

Andrew described workplace learning as “developing a new skill” to meet constantly changing demands and compared his role with that of a retail cashier:

My work is not like a regular job...not to put any other jobs down... when you go to work [as a cashier] you know what you are doing—you know you are going to ring up customers, cash out the register, clean up and go home... [but], when you come to work here, every day you don’t know what is going to happen...[there are] new bugs, new issues, new system problems no one has ever seen before and you have to learn it on the fly... every day is learning something new. I never go to work and fully know

what I'm going to get into. I have some projects that I am supposed to work on but I do not always work on them as planned.

Andrew noted his organization's formal learning tools, such as Pluralsight and Udemy were helpful in his experience. In addition, he commented that he appreciated that the organization reimbursed him for the certifications he pursued. Finally, Andrew commented on the importance of mentors and their impact on his learning in interviews and writing prompts. Before the study, his experience with writing in the workplace was primarily note taking or emails, "I write a lot of personal notes for development [or] to summarize...when I'm in a meeting, I take notes and summarize to get a better understanding." He described feeling anxious when drafting email communications, sharing, "I'm hesitant on certain emails especially important ones where you have to make a decision and copy your manager—I find myself writing, deleting, reading and rereading a million times to myself before I can send it." Andrew started the study in Week 1, participated in two interviews, submitted 3 weeks of writing samples, contributed to one of the guided writing sessions, and participated in the focus group.

Ashley's Story

Ashley is 26 years old, recently married, and recently purchased her first home. At the time of her first interview, she had been in her current position as a project manager for approximately 4 weeks. She described being in the workforce since age 15, progressing into corporate roles with two companies mainly focused on employee engagement or business process consulting with human resources and executives. Ashley is pursuing a master's degree and agreed to participate in the study because she wanted to "share... [her] experiences and help others." She described learning as "structured...[with] reading and assignments" and said she enjoys learning with people more. She alluded to competing priorities between her home responsibilities, work, and school and elaborated that she is "trying to enjoy adulthood [and] to be involved with work as much as I can...networking in employee resource groups and trying to learn as much as I can." She defined well-being as physical and mental health and shared that she had sometimes struggled with anxiety.

Ashley described contemporary work and mentioned that the pandemic had changed the work landscape over her 5 years of experience in the corporate workplace:

It looks very different...working from home, my day tends to be very stressful some days and lax on others. I tend to be able to manage stress better now than when I was in the office [because] it is easier to step away when you need a minute to breathe...[it's] easier to walk away now and [that] helps with work life balance.

Before the study, she had some experience with bullet journaling which she described as helpful for her to “elaborate” on her thoughts:

[It's] helped me get my thoughts down and get organized, helped me track my anxiety levels, eating and exercise habits, and overall well-being. It has helped me get in tune with my emotions...and get in touch with what I'm feeling.

In one writing sample, Ashley described her best day at work as conversing with an employee impact group and meeting with sponsors on her projects. She said, “those are the days that I cherish because they give me a boost of serotonin to say the least.” Explaining her worst day at work recently, she mentioned Thursdays are challenging since she has many meetings, “quick turnarounds,” and competing priorities. She shared finding she is “more mentally drained at the end of the day versus on other days.” Ashley started the study in Week 1, participated in two interviews, submitted 7 weeks of writing samples, contributed to one of the guided writing sessions, and participated in the focus group.

Brianna's Story

Brianna has a bachelor's degree in communications with a minor in Business Management and has worked with her current organization for 13 years. She disclosed she is newly married, recently purchased her first home, and is now living with her husband, elderly mother, and 3-month-old daughter. She positively verbalized the changes in her home life as “a fun dynamic to adapt to...lots of change, but good change, good, good things to grow into.” At the same time, in her writing, she also shared challenging experiences:

My husband and I have been trying to make more time to get out of the house. We went to a restaurant...and hung out and talked for a while. It was nice to be out of the house, since working from home I feel like I hardly ever get out anymore...we had a good time and it allowed me to forget work, and arguments with my mom, and worrying about the baby for a few moments...I really appreciate moments like this...where we can just be with each other and laugh and vent together without any worries...my husband has been researching...trying to find helpful ways to communicate with my mother...people are complicated, and...there's a combination of things my mother is experiencing and has experienced in her life that has led her to be who she is today...I try to stay mindful of all of these factors and emotions, I also try to deal with our day to day interactions as they come.

Brianna associated contemporary work with the “future state of work” and shared, “one of the biggest topics on my mind...relates to...what it would look like for us to live in an agile environment.” She described a difference between her current work experience and what she learned about agile work:

It's funny...my team likes to consider themselves agile but as I've gone through certain courses, I'm realizing that maybe thinking we're agile and truly being agile seem to be two completely different things. What I picked [up on] agile...from some of the things that I've learned, [is that] it's changing the way that we work to look at the work in smaller segments so that we can try to accomplish more and really hold each other accountable to smaller sprints of work...that we can accomplish in a shorter timeframe...[with] more flexibility to...shift on a dime instead of creating really long term goals that can get a little messy.

In the interview, Brianna considered contemporary as an “ambiguous word,” noting that contemporary work could depend on “what you're framing it as...it can mean a lot of different things.” She associated contemporary with the term “modern” and elaborated with an example of how we are “updating the technology that we use at work.” She explained that she and her team are involved in “improving technology

for the company...as a whole...they've created new ecosystems and platforms that make changes faster for customers and our employees as well.” In a later guided writing session, Brianna discussed her most recent work experiences, recapping some of the responses she wrote to the individual writing prompts during the study:

This week at work I felt busy, productive, and a little sad. I couldn't pick just one word. So I went with what came to mind first and I only really got to explain the busy part...busy because I was looped into a project that had a lot of announcements that were all happening in the same week. So even though I didn't have a lot of time to prepare, [it] went well...it [preparation] can play a really big role in the discussion. That's as far as I got.

In several writing samples, Brianna verbalized concern for workers impacted by reductions in force currently underway within the organization. She wrote about how difficult it had been for her to develop plans for other leaders' communication processes. Brianna also discussed feeling accountable for the decisions even though she was involved. Later in the study, during a guided writing session, she shared again that the past few weeks had been difficult because of employee impacts. In response, I asked permission to share my personal journal entry from the session to create a further dialogue on the topic. With approval, I read from my journal, “I am excited about some small wins and really enjoyed working with some of the folks who really seem to care. I felt old this week...too slow and invaluable. It's been a hard week for a lot of people.” After Brianna allowed me to share what I had written, we acknowledged shared feelings about our experiences and continued with the remainder of the guided writing session.

As she described her workplace writing experience, Brianna explained that her writing has been more “administrative...more of a requirement to write what I've had to write.” She depicted her responsibilities in her current role as “more conversations with others.” She noted that she writes primarily to fulfill specific tasks such as completing a “performance review or meeting recaps.” She mentioned being interested in participating in the study to “figure out how to use writing for something other than work” and precisely how it might help her adjust to the remote work environment where there is less interaction with others:

Being virtual...I've lost a lot of that outlet I think I've had in the past of connecting with others and there being a lot more interaction. I've also recently moved cities a couple years back so a lot of those support networks and friends that I used to have are no longer present...finding a way to kind of be able to express things. Writing is going to be, I think, a good alternative for me. I'm one of those talk to think people. So when there's no one to talk to, by yourself, writing feels like one of the most effective ways to really be able to kind of reflect on it...[like it is] easy for me to talk to myself in the bathroom mirror, sure, but writing kind of gives you that ability to go back and reflect on it a little bit differently.

Brianna started the study in Week 1, participated in two interviews, submitted 7 weeks of writing samples, contributed to two guided writing sessions, and participated in the focus group.

Elizabeth's Story

Elizabeth is 53 years old, single, and has no children. She attended college, but did not finish her degree. She described her work as technology-focused and mentioned that she was in her first leadership position this year, one which she was "not really sure about." She commented that working with direct reports has "been a lot of learning, and I don't mind the learning part of it...some of the politics is just not my favorite. It's been a really different year." Elizabeth's responses to each question in our first interview demonstrated deep introspectiveness and thought. At the end of our conversation, I felt immersed in her life and enriched by her calm approach. I appreciated her deliberate emphasis on details that seemed to matter to her. Her interview was the least structured, and I could actively listen and absorb without being distracted by the need to ask the next question. Even though she responded to all of the questions similarly to other participants, the openness and breadth of her responses were profound and contextual, inviting a personal and genuine closeness to her experience. For example, she shared without being prompted that her health and her 85-year-old mother's health have recently required her attention. She described seeking medical attention for multiple anxiety attacks, explaining that ongoing job stress and growing concerns for hereditary

health conditions may impact her physical health. She described how she self-coaches to stay positive, sharing, “My goal I have to tell myself every morning is just to be present and to enjoy the time I have.”

Elizabeth mentioned that she wants to be good at her job and described her role as one that “probably would drive other people crazy” because of the complicated nature of many small tasks and “all the balls in the air.” She explained working from her home for the past 2 years was her “dream job,” as it removes the “visiting” time or unnecessary office interactions and has given her back “anywhere from an hour and a half to 3 hours” of workday by removing her commute. In further explanation of her role, Elizabeth described her work as demanding at certain times:

It gets really, really busy at certain times of the year, and then it kind of slows down a little bit. It's a challenge for me to make sure I get everything done in a day, and I have a tendency to focus on stuff until I'll look up and it's seven o'clock at night and I've not stopped. I set timers basically to keep myself updated...so if it goes off at five...[then at] seven...I'm trying to be [focused on when] I need to be getting ready for bed relaxing a little bit...at nine I need to be in bed...I usually go to bed pretty early...except [then] I can't sleep.

Considering her experience with writing before the study, Elizabeth identified notetaking as a primary type of writing she does in the workplace and commented that her notes jog her memory. She also mentioned that writing has helped her process information and learn her job as she has become known for her skill with technical writing as she has documented all of the processes for her area over the last 2 years. She was unfamiliar with reflective writing and had not practiced journaling before the study. Elizabeth started the study in Week 4, submitted two writing samples, and contributed to one guided writing session.

Mandy's Story

Mandy described herself as “a wife, a mother, and grandmother of two beautiful grandsons, 18 months and 3 [years].” She shared that “strong faith” defines her, “who I am and what I do and the choices that I make...it's in how I

fashion my relationships, what I enjoy doing, the people I invest in, and how I just make decisions daily. We've got enough.” Mandy participated in the study for 4 weeks and shared one writing sample. She explained her work experience and shared that she started her career after finishing college 35 years ago. She held various roles in communications and marketing and was also a motivational speaker:

I worked for 9 years doing motivational programs for high school students...and then college freshman...helping them figure out what they wanted to do with their life...helping them figure out what their strengths were [and] what they wanted to do career-wise, helping them be able to market and brand themselves to where they wanted to go...[with] and a career...that kind of all evolved into I think where I am today.

Mandy has been in her current role working with “young talent and technology” for just over 9 months.

Defining contemporary work, Mandy commented that when she started her career and for most of her time in the workforce, she worked independently but usually face-to-face with people. She commented that the shift to virtual work has been difficult for her, noting that there is value in remote work as it allows workers to “straddle a fence between caring for family and working,” but explained that it also brings challenges:

This contemporary work we're all working more siloed, individually, [with] not as much personal engagement [and it] is going to result in less personal relationships...[and] probably [less] loyalty to organization and company because you don't feel quite as involved...when you're all working remotely from your home and not engaging people on a personal level face-to-face every day.

Mandy shared that she is “a hands-on learner” and defined it as learning “more from doing and experiencing.” She expanded on her experience with an example that when she has a new challenge in her work, she prefers to be permitted “to figure out how to do [it],” she can be creative and use different approaches. She offered approaches to learning, such as talking to others, researching with Google,

or experimenting with “some trial and error.” Mandy started the study in Week 1, participated in one interview, and submitted 1 week of writing samples. She dropped out of the study in Week 6, explaining that she had taken on new responsibilities that were a higher priority.

Reagan’s Story

Reagan has been in the workforce for nearly 38 years, holding multiple positions within the same organization most of this time. She has been an operations leader, business analyst, and specialist and is currently in a human resources role supporting technology-related talent programs. Reagan was interested in participating in the study to understand how writing might influence technologists early in their careers. She described that they often struggle with communicating verbally and nonverbally because “they might be doing coding work and creating but that is not writing to communicate with others.” She described contemporary work emphasizing the shift since the pandemic where remote work has introduced a new dynamic that “is completely different [in terms of] communication, learning, and culture...collaboration from multiple locations.” She also commented on the influence of technology driving change. She noted that “a big drive to collaborate [and] speed to market is huge, as more than ever we are expected to deliver quicker, more efficiently, and with less errors.”

Describing her experiences with writing in the workplace, Reagan offered that she writes lists every day to help her track tasks and shared that she makes notes during meetings to capture “the things that I need to do...[my] follow-ups and I take notes to learn.” She commented that maybe the notes are helpful “because I’m getting older.” She shared this research study was interesting to her because of its potential to influence the programs she conducts to develop talent within her organization and because it might impact her leadership and “daily interactions.” Reagan started the study in Week 1, participated in two interviews, and submitted 7 weeks of writing samples.

Shannon’s Story

Shannon has been in the workforce for 27 years. She recently completed a master’s degree and agreed to participate in this study to understand the research

process if she pursues further higher education. In her current role, Shannon manages technology releases for a large organization coordinating testing and backup plans and communicating release status across multiple audiences, including executive-level leaders. Describing a typical workday, Shannon highlighted frequently communicating with people across different time zones and continents. In one interview, she discussed the importance of individual flexibility and adaptability in her work with diverse and geographically dispersed teams. I found what she shared about working across time zones unique to the study later in the research, as she was one of only two participants who mentioned managing schedules across time zones. Returning to her interview transcript in subsequent readings, I recognized that cultural awareness and agility might be areas for further study in contemporary work as work schedules and other behavioral norms exist in the workplace across geographic locations. In her telling of this experience, the value of the spoken language stood out, as I inferred from the tone of her voice a sense of continual struggle with personal time commitments to accommodate others' needs. Her experience provided me with a sense of the flexibility required of workers:

[Shannon] Sometimes I have to move my days to start real early in the morning or late at night to accommodate my peers that are offshore. Time management [and] moving...changing things around, talking and meeting with people on lots of different schedules, talking to officers and leaders, different times, different ways, [and] learning how to approach different people. When I have suggestions or when I have a question I need to get...[answered, I'm] partnering with the individuals to get done what needs to get done.

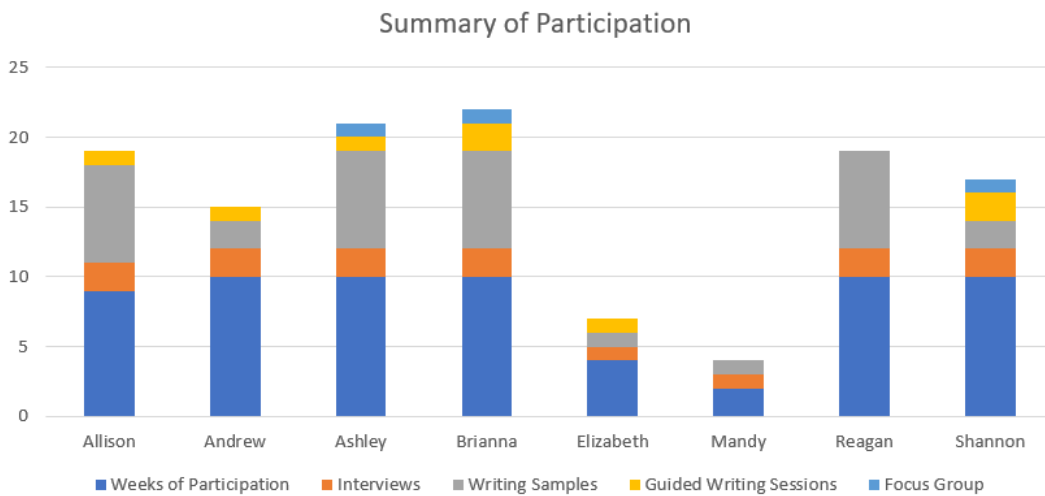
[Gina] You have been in the same company for a long time. Could you elaborate a little bit on how your experience has changed, such as how work has changed over those years?

[Shannon] Definitely, from starting up an entry-level position as a rep on the phones to having several [other positions], I think I count eight different promotions since I've started. Starting at entry-level where you really don't

have a lot invested, you're young [and] you just want to get a paycheck and do what you need to move on to actually taking responsibility and accountability for your career...then actually going into leadership and being more visible and vocal has [required] learning how to lead horizontally and vertically...leading with my peers, but also having those tough conversations with officers and directors.

Considering her experience with writing at work, Shannon described specific communications, “whether it's emails, status updates, communication that people [use to] know how projects are going [as] there's some [that] go wrong...writing a normal email, sending Teams messages.” In her journal entries, she wrote about current challenges with her health and uncertainty at work, such as ongoing organizational changes, including the potential for reductions in force. Shannon started the study in Week 1, participated in two interviews, submitted 4 weeks of writing samples, contributed to two of the guided writing sessions, and participated in the focus group.

Each participant’s individual stories offered insights into the personal aspects of work and home life relevant to the meaning of the reflective writing experience. Throughout the study, most participants engaged regularly and contributed writing samples. Figure 1 summarizes the participants’ involvement throughout the study, and the following section describes the interpretation and blending of individual stories to construct the findings for each research question.

Figure 1*Participants' Involvement in the Study*

Note. Participant involvement over the 10-week study.

Navigating the Interpretive Analysis

It is essential to understand the iterative or cyclical cycle of the hermeneutic process before presenting specific findings; therefore, I narrate the experience in this section. After composing the individual participant stories, I was uncertain how to protect them and still describe the broad conclusions related to the meaning of the reflective writing experience. Scholars have suggested that each story would connect to the other somehow, with a holistic experience emerging. More than 1 month after the stories were compiled and validated with input from the participants, I was still trying to find my way through the interpretive analysis process, “not knowing the way in advance” (Smythe & Spence, 2020, p. 7). I struggled with the thematic analysis not because I could not identify shared experiences or salient themes but because breaking the texts into themes seemed damaging to their “tone” or the felt meanings they conveyed (van Manen, 2014, p. 267). Labeling and summarizing words and sentences as codes seemed to lessen their quality and remove the purposeful “reflective wondering, deep questioning, attentive reminiscing, and sensitively interpreting” required by the methodology (van Manen, 2017, p. 819). I found that the texts themselves drove the conclusions of the study (Smythe & Spence, 2020) as the meaning and “truth” shaped the

“understanding [that] is always the fusion of these horizons” (Gadamer, 1960/1998, p. 306). I analyzed the connotations of the words as expressed and infused rudimentary learnings from Heidegger’s (1927/1962) philosophical constructs. The following section introduces the analysis process incorporating some examples from the texts to illustrate the qualities of the language presented in the participants’ experiences. More specific findings for the three research questions follow later in the report.

Preserving the Parts and Seeing the Whole

Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenology pursued the “changing possibilities” of human existence in the study (Brito et al., 2021, p. 306). Since the meaning of an experience is always subject to change (Dahlberg, 2006), it was crucial to protect the stories the participants shared as individual parts and as pieces of a connected, holistic meaning. Just as unique experiences shape “Dasein” or “Being,” which define what it means to be human and alive in the world (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 27), similar experiences form a collective meaning. For example, shared responsibilities for caring for loved ones and the struggle to manage multiple priorities were individual stories and shared experiences. The personal experiences revealed in the interviews and reflective writing samples needed to be separated from the phenomenon of reflective writing to answer the research questions. A view of the visual storyboard offered in Appendix H represents how the participants’ experiences contributed to the parts and the whole of the data.

It is challenging to distinguish multiple phenomena within rich experiences (Finlay, 2014). Using the storyboard permitted numerous interpretations of the participants’ experiences and how they might connect to the research questions. Texts and labels were repositioned on the storyboard during the iterative analysis process to understand better the changing interpretations and possibilities that did not initially exist. Inseparable qualities of the participants’ life experiences and the phenomenon of reflective writing remained throughout the study. A more intense focus and closer examination of the language within the experiences occurred with

the physical act of organizing the texts visually on the storyboard. Furthermore, the storyboard maintained the parts while illuminating the whole.

Listening for Meaning in Language

Gadamer (1960/1998) contended that complexities such as language, time, and “the real situation of the dialogue” are vital to understanding (p. 308). An “eidetic analysis” or “multidirectional analytic process” that involves a close connection with the language to identify the “essences” of the phenomenon and carefully extracts thematic interpretations elucidates meaning (Finlay, 2014, pp. 127–129). The bridling journal influenced the analysis process, encouraging my openness to the language and the possible implications of the experiences. Listening to the language of the experiences uncovered potential implications of meaning. In this section, an example from the bridling journal explains how the language in the experiences influenced the interpretations resulting in identifying patterns, themes, and forms of purposeful reflective writing in the workplace. It also reveals more of my experience with the iterative analysis process that developed through multiple readings and writing about the experiences with input from scholarly literature.

From the initial interviews, I was immediately drawn into the experiences of each participant and found that recording my feelings, thoughts, and observations in the bridling journal improved my ability to listen for meaningful interpretive language. The following text is an excerpt from the bridling journal illustrating my reflective writing following an interaction with one participant:

I reflected on the guarded tone I felt I instilled by simply asking one question after another [in the pilot interview]. In the first [actual] interview...I knew some of her career stories, but to hear the things she said in this context—I could identify and feel the words she experienced in my own work-life—she spoke about the voice inside her head and how she had been encouraged to write recently and in the past by her executive coach—she explained how she let time pass and just hadn’t done it—I wanted desperately to tell her to change her perspective on learning and work, but I just listened—our perspectives and beliefs were different there—where I

crave the mandatory learning, I also understood her point that it is extra and has to be done outside of work in order to get it completed and that is bringing extra pressure—I see that in the things we shared in the conversation after the recording stopped—that did not happen in the first interview because I was [too] guarded to allow the conversation to flow. The bridling journal example shows how my preconceptions and closeness to the participant’s experience could shape my interpretation and how I learned to improve my listening through reflective writing by evaluating the interaction and considering how I might improve future interactions. Additional examples of bridling journal entries appear in Appendix J of this dissertation.

I suspected multiple patterns and themes and captured them in a table view early in the analysis. I noted in the bridling journal that I felt “like it was coming together” and that “I could move on.” I later realized, however, that the analysis approach I had used lacked attention to detail and respect for the language. I realized I missed the words that needed to be heard (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968). Revisiting the texts, I wrote interpretations on the hard copies, and I recorded additional observations in the bridling journal to better “settle into the data” (Finlay, 2014, p. 126) using a lens for the “collective whole” (Suddick et al., 2020, p. 7). I found the interpretive language and the meaning within the experiences were unveiled slowly and methodically, not by selecting and counting occurrences of verbatim words from the texts or positing general themes, but by thoroughly reading, reflecting, writing, and working through the lived experience of the research process itself (Smythe & Spence, 2020). Lindseth and Norberg’s (2021) method of isolating collections of words described as “meaning units...[or] single pieces of experience” was used to capture distinct situations from the texts (p. 149). Working with the language in the form of meaning units and staying close to the collective details of the participants’ experiences provided a richer understanding of the real people involved in the research (Suddick et al., 2020).

Revealing Patterns, Themes, and Forms of Reflective Writing

In the following section, several examples of the participants’ experiences will be presented separately from the findings of the individual research questions

to establish better and explain the inductive analysis process. For example, interpreting words and phrases can be complicated as language is often elusive, abstract, and intangible (Finlay, 2014). The patterns, themes, and purposeful forms of reflective writing revealed through the participants' experiences evolved structure for the findings by extracting significance from meaning units (Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2021). In the following text, italicized words enclosed in parenthetical brackets highlight interpretations of meaning units. For example, "brainstorm write" was identified as a meaning unit and associated with the purposeful form of reflective writing, *writing to be open*:

I think from a learning perspective [RQ1], [this experience was] the reminder that jotting things down [*writing to capture*], writing complex things down [*writing to clarify*] or just [writing] things in your head are so helpful because, as I have always said to many people, and I have to remind myself [*self-awareness*] when you get it out of your head [*writing to release*], and onto paper... either one or a couple of things happen, either it's not as overwhelming [RQ2] as you'd thought it was going to be, or it's not as important to prioritize as you thought it might have needed to be, or you come away with a whole new perspective [*critical thinking, writing to think, writing to understand, writing to grow*]...writing in that sense, I think whether it's personal or whether it's work, it is a really great way to get what's in your head out [*writing for release*]...I almost equate it to brainstorming [*writing to be open*]. We should all brainstorm write [*freewriting, writing to be open*] every day [*time, beneficial characteristic, meaningful*].

Within the meaning units, actions like "jotting things down" influenced interpretations of the meaning beneath the words and phrases. Purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to capture* and *writing to understand*, were uncovered, categorized, and labeled from the shared reflective writing experience. Occasionally, meaning units were linked together, like "get it out of your head...get [it] written down...taken through a flowchart to the next level." The individual meaning units and the combinations of meaning units shaped purposeful

reflective writing forms. Unlike forms of coding that examine the repetition of specific words to assess characteristics like the possible impact of the experience, the meaning units and their combinations in the hermeneutic analysis informed the interpretation of meaning. The previous example demonstrated the importance of maintaining the entirety of the texts to expose other language characteristics, such as the sequence of the words, the depth and progression of thinking through the writing, and the process of emotional release the reflective writing experience evoked.

The meaning units structured patterns, themes, and purposeful forms of reflective writing that emerged from the completeness of the participants' experiences. Holistically, in interpretation, the previous text provided an example of a purposeful form of reflective writing labeled *writing for results*. In the participant's words, writing for results was described as the ability to "come away with a whole new perspective." In addition, the participant also explicitly suggested the potential for personal and professional benefits from reflective writing, demonstrating the potential for multiple interpretations within the same text. Furthermore, the language alluding to self-awareness and the potential for reflective writing to be a meaningful daily practice added an interpretive component to the thematic analysis for the overall findings. The following example briefly introduces self-awareness as a general theme. It also identifies other characteristics, patterns, and phenomena from the experience, such as the impact of remote work, that are important to interpreting the findings:

I hate to keep harping [*self-awareness, significance, release, topic is meaningful for the participant*] on working from home [*changing nature of work*], but [it's difficult] when I'm not surrounded by other people [*disconnected, not belonging*] or in a place [*physical contact*] where we are all collaborating on the same whiteboard [*connectedness, commonalities*] or in the same room [*connectedness*]... I think that this [reflective writing experience] has been extra beneficial [*meaningfulness*] for someone like me [*self-awareness*] because it's reminded me [*preconceptions, self-awareness*] that you can still collaborate and accomplish things even virtually

[*preconceptions, belief, writing to clarify, writing to understand*] but it's more important that you're writing the thoughts down, that you're writing the processes down [*writing to capture*]. Even though you might not be in the same room or same group where people can see it [*sameness, connectedness, absence of commonality, writing to capture*]...when I really hone in on your question [*need for precision, clarity*], I think for me personally [*individualistic, self-awareness*], it's been because I do often make lists for myself [*writing to accomplish tasks, writing to prioritize*], and I do tend to write things down [*writing to capture*] when I feel that the waters are muddy [*feeling ambiguity, unrest, writing for clarity, writing to see*] or when I need to hash something out [*writing for clarity, writing for critical thinking, writing to release*]...I think the thing for me that has been so pivotal [*writing to grow*] is that I felt a loss [*writing to overcome*] in terms of doing things as a bigger group because we weren't all in the same place [*disconnection*] where writing things down kind of helps that as well [*writing for connection*].

The meaning of the individual and shared experiences emerged through interpretation from within the meaning units, such as “I do tend to write things down when I feel that the waters are muddy or when I need to hash something out.” In addition, the meaning appeared within the parts and the whole of the texts, making multiple interpretations possible. In the previous example, one holistic interpretation was that the participant may have valued writing in the past and may already be using it in the present to clarify situations. Although lengthy, the text, in its entirety, provided multiple interpretive opportunities and represented the quality of the writing samples collected throughout the study. Table 3 reflects examples of meaning unit interpretations that shaped the findings. In the next section, thematic interpretations with supporting texts introduce the purposeful forms of writing in the context of the prevalent themes offering initial implications of how reflective writing influences learning and well-being.

Table 3*Examples of Patterns with Meaning Units and Interpretations*

Patterns	Text with Meaning Units	Interpretations
Time	“I’m not a fan of desiring to change anything that is past tense, I believe that everything happens for a reason.”	Significance of time, looking forward, looking back, beliefs, values, meaning, spirituality
Multiplicity	“I think [my] well-being could be a long rant I could fall into, so I’ll just say I think of it comparatively to others. I am stressed about things, but happy and comfortable. The things I stress about are things that only those who are fortunate enough to have the life I love [to] stress about. So I am good. It’s been a week of ups and downs at work, and although I am disappointed that I was overlooked for [omitted text to protect anonymity and confidentiality], I am also grateful that this is one of my biggest problems. I want to excel, I want to be considered as one of the best, and I feel that when I don’t get a chance to use my skills and produce meaningful work that I am not doing enough, or my part. It feels like this [omitted text to protect anonymity and confidentiality] may be the validation I need to be given more meaningful work. Hence my frustration about not being picked...but other than that small annoyance, I have a job where I’m paid well, everyone on my team is agreeable...and I have a compassionate boss. Life is good.”	Significance of stress vs. lack of stress in perspective, range of thinking, critical thinking, self-awareness, comparing self to others, perceptions of others, awareness of abundance and scarcity, releasing/ranting as detrimental
Age	“The one critical problem that comes to mind right away would be how to better speak for myself and represent the type of worker I am. I want to show my new team that I am driven and am able to have conversations with executives and eloquently speak towards the actions we are taking. I	Proving value or worth, feeling less valued or unseen, critical thinking, lack of belonging, weakness or opportunity over strengths, striving for more

Roles	<p>think being a younger person on the team, I have found that some look at me as the child or the unexperienced one and I want to prove that, aside from my age, I am [able to] perform as much as the next employee.”</p> <p>“I first began with this company as an admin and put in a lot of work to show that I was capable of the job and was driven. I found myself not only giving 100% to my work but giving more like 120% to work. I am not saying this is a bad thing, but I became almost resentful because I felt I was not being recognized for the work I was doing. Even after a year and taking on multiple projects that I did not have to, I still was in the same position. I think what really helped me overcome this was getting the recent promotion. Yes, I was losing motivation back then but I still pushed through because that is a part of my personality. I can't just not try my hardest. This last promotion really proved to myself that if I continue to do the work that I am capable of and pushing myself to do better, then eventually it will pay off. I know that sounds cliché and that's what everyone tells you, but it makes a difference when it actually happens to you.”</p>	Feeling unseen, less worthy, striving for more, looking back, looking forward
Location	<p>“I feel like my answer has shifted since COVID. And the reason why I say that is because the workplace that I'm currently in, has moved to a model of hybrid or home based work, not as much in the office. And so that's a very contemporary take on what has basically been the last 34 years of my life where...you were required to be in the office. Yes, there were the minority. The homebase workers were probably not the majority, they were probably less than the majority of the</p>	Significance of change, age, and time, new ways of working, separation, looking back and looking forward, continuums, being in/being out, adapting, awareness

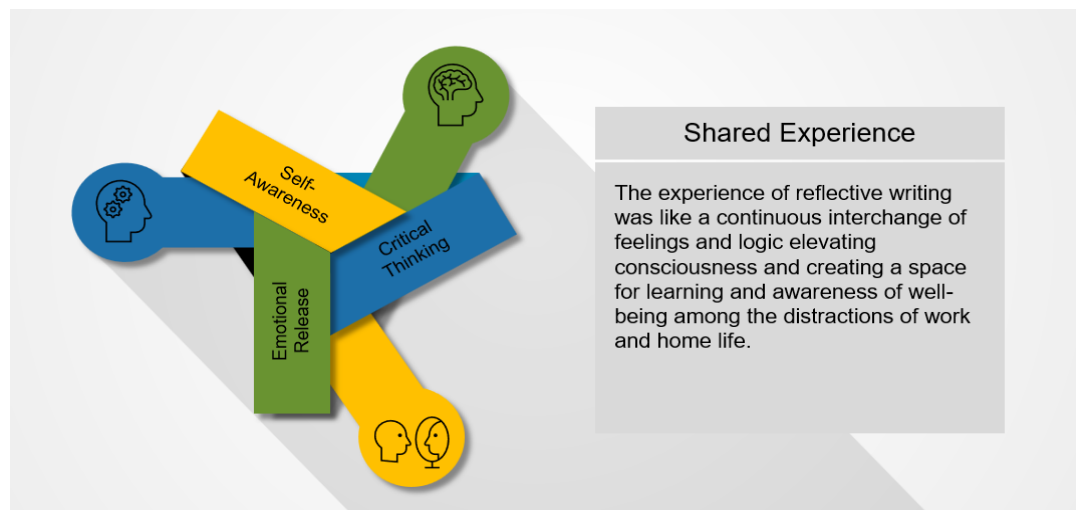
people. And so now that brings a whole different style to the workplace, whether it's communication, whether it's learning, whether it's culture, it just brings about a whole new set of dynamics that honestly it's just very blaring for me...the new model that we're working on there, where the collaboration is occurring across multiple locations not from an open desk workplace.”

Constructing the Whole – Thematic Interpretations

The iterative hermeneutic analysis process revealed three predominant themes suggesting how reflective writing influences learning and well-being in the workplace, including self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release. Figure 2 consolidates the prevailing themes with a holistic interpretation of the study's shared experience with reflective writing. Using the bridling journal and introducing some Heideggerian philosophical elements enabled the interpretation of the meaning units unifying the findings. Appendix I contains examples of the Heideggerian philosophical constructs briefly considered. An overall conclusion from the study suggested that the emotional and logical aspects of thinking, which influence focus, learning, and well-being, may be supported by reflective writing experiences.

Figure 2

Thematic Interpretations of the Shared Experience of Reflective Writing



Evaluating the primary themes from the study may suggest that the intent of reflective writing does not need to be known ahead of the experience as it evolves with the experience. The findings suggested participants engaged in freewriting or responding to writing prompts intuitively. The purposeful forms of reflective writing that emerged enabled the participants' self-awareness, ability to think critically, and capacity to release their emotions constructively. Furthermore, reflective writing experiences may have inspired better clarity, prioritization, and productivity, as the participants described being more attentive during the time dedicated to writing. Table 4 illustrates the holistic themes of the study with associated purposeful forms of reflective writing and individual texts with supporting meaning units.

Table 4

Themes and Examples of Purposeful Forms of Reflective Writing with Meaning Units

Theme	Form of Reflective Writing	Text with Meaning Units
Self-awareness	Write to explore	“Handwriting is slowly becoming a skill I use less and less. I find myself getting frustrated that my hand won't move as fast as my brain, so if I were to type I can keep up. I wonder what's lost in writing over typing though. It's been a busy week so today I'm choosing typing to avoid distracting myself from having to stop and recall what I was writing just to keep pace with my thoughts. I also realized that writing makes it difficult to go back and edit, both spelling and grammatically. It makes writing things out almost feel very finite? Intentional? Permanent? Not sure what the right word is for what I'm feeling about it, but there's something about writing on a keyboard that helps me process more and know it doesn't need to be perfect because edits are easy. I wonder how having bad handwriting will affect my ability to help my daughter with her schoolwork? How much handwriting will they do at all in school now?”

Self-awareness	Write to reveal	Food for thought as we dive further into parenting.” “For me, noticing things means something that I find interesting or something that draws my attention. It can be interesting in a good or a bad way. For example, my coworker said, ‘as leaders we tend to try to brush difficult emotional conversations under the rug’ in a presentation she was delivering. I noticed that most out of all the things she discussed about managing emotional conversations. It did not resonate positively with me, but I noticed it because I felt an emotional connection to that phrase in particular...out of the entire presentation, that line “became my world” and I spent the remainder of the session hoping others had not taken it that way because the content itself in the presentation is helpful.”
Self-awareness	Write to consider	“I don’t write much so if it was not planned, I would not spontaneously write things exclusively to be creative. I think I actually struggle to write more than others.”
Self-awareness	Write to focus	“The most critical issue that I face in my work is trying to overcome the anxiety I get when I am presenting or speaking in meetings.”
Self-awareness	Write to adjust/adapt	“Writing about these issues allows me to self-reflect on what happened and makes me feel like I am venting to myself. I sometimes relive these moments and imagine different scenarios of how I could have done things...[how] things could have possibly gone differently.”
Critical thinking	Write to see	“I had to learn how to communicate in a professional manner and although I was younger than a majority of my coworkers, I felt that I had to hold myself to a higher standard of being mature so that my coworkers would view me as a peer and not as some "young girl." I would say that this changed me because it has set me up for my future and looking back at it, it's probably a pivotal moment in my life where I had to choose to be responsible.”
Critical thinking	Write to be open	“My immediate work future has me transferring to a new position. I am nervous, yet excited about this. I’m always concerned

		<p>about imposter syndrome. I think the most important thing I need to do to manage these changes is to remember the skills, actions and traits that brought me to this new position; use those as strengths coming into the new role. Continue to be people focused, open to learning and building new relationships and be ready to work hard to overcome the learning curve. This new role is a step in staying relevant as it builds on the work I've done over the past 3 ½ years and really is a nice bridge in connecting dots between the work I currently do and the organization I will be supporting.”</p>
Critical thinking	Write to understand	<p>“I have had a surprising variety of struggles at work. I think being in leadership it opens you up to a lot of scenarios that lead to struggles, dealing with people is complicated in general. But I think a significant one to write about here was a struggle of understanding where to draw the line between personal and work-life...[omitted lengthy text explaining a specific scenario] but this was a truly difficult phase in my career where I struggled emotionally to know what to do...it taught me that I need to do what is right for myself, even if it means that others may not like my reaction. It also taught me I need to trust that there is a system in place...and that I should not deal with...out of fear of it impacting my career. My mental and emotional health comes first, and I have prioritized that ever since.”</p>
Critical thinking	Write to think	<p>“Free writing...just thinking about what occurred that day...whether it was professionally or something [the doctor said] at a doctor's office or something that I said [to myself] ‘okay, remember this next time, so you won't reboot, [so] you will repeat it again, or you can learn from it.”</p>
Critical thinking	Write to inquire/ask	<p>“I have failed several times not only at work, but in my personal life. What is interesting though is most people's fear of failure...they may ensure that they know something so well before attempting to implement, enact or use it, that perhaps they were just so prepared that failure didn't happen? Or maybe they did not</p>

Critical thinking	Write to clarify	take any risks and only worked in a ‘sure bet’ type of approach to avoid failure altogether?” “It feels really good to help people with what they need. I’d like my [ideal] role to...have authority to make changes or suggest changes to help our customer...the authority and trust from the company to try out ideas that will help build a real culture of customer centricity.”
Critical thinking	Write to analyze	“I guess one of the first things that comes to mind reflecting on it is [that] I talked a lot, even in writing...[and] maybe writing is a good way for me to kind of get all of that out so that when I am going to focus or talk or write about something, [I can do it] in a more serious manner [because] I’ve kind of gotten all that extra, like squirrel moments and branches out of the way before I can really focus on what I’m like trying to say [and] make it more concise.”
Critical thinking	Write to define	“Having ADD means it is very rare that I can focus on one thing at a time most of my day, and mixed in with the chaos of my surroundings, I find that there are many big things I often do at once...having a job, maintaining a household, maintaining a martial relationship, having pets, having hobbies, the list could go on forever and it is all done at the same time. Now that example may be considered cheating because it is a long journey.”
Critical thinking	Write to improve	“I used it more as an enhancement for my communication...doing this exercise has kind of helped me as I say, “be brief and be gone” to eliminate some of the things I didn’t need to say... because what I wrote in the journal [is] as it [is]...I’m [not] trying to be politically correct or use lingo that I definitely don’t have to use...I still get the same point across.”
Emotional release	Write to grow	“I met with the Vice President of my organization because I am new in my role and wanted to network seeing that I don’t know anyone in this area of work. I think it was a great conversation to understand her vision and what her goals are for others that report to her. This surprisingly gave me a boost of

		<p>confidence and excitement for my new role. Lately, I have felt distant to work because this role was maybe not everything I was expecting, but this conversation made me realize that this is just the beginning and I am excited to grow within this organization. Starting this morning, I am ready to work hard and show that I am supposed to be here and bring something to the team.”</p>
Emotional release	Write to feel	<p>“I feel like a failure when I walk away from a conversation without feeling like I had a lot of clarity about next steps, but many would just consider that an unfinished conversation.”</p>
Emotional release	Write to listen	<p>“I first began with this company as an admin and put in a lot of work to show that I was capable of the job and was driven. I found myself not only giving 100% to my work but giving more like 120% to work. I am not saying this is a bad thing, but I became almost resentful because I felt I was not being recognized for the work I was doing. Even after a year and taking on multiple projects that I did not have to, I still was in the same position. I think what really helped me overcome this was getting the recent promotion. Yes, I was losing motivation back then but I still pushed through because that is a part of my personality. I can't just not try my hardest. This last promotion really proved to myself that if I continue to do the work that I am capable of and pushing myself to do better, then eventually it will pay off. I know that sounds cliché and that's what everyone tells you, but it makes a difference when it actually happens to you.”</p>
Emotional release	Write to process	<p>“Losing weight is difficult. Lots of ups and downs and the past few weeks have all been downs. Most of it is extremely mental. It is getting into the right mindset and not having an ‘all or nothing’ approach. I don't know why that is so difficult for me. I'm pretty logical. I've identified the issue, but yet, still struggle to make progress.”</p>

Emotional release	Write to inform decisions/action plans	“I feel that I have become more aware of my emotions...I think it [reflective writing] allows me to take time for myself to reflect on the previous week and see where I did well and where I could do better. This has inspired me to pick up journaling again, even though I am busy. I want to make it a priority.”
Emotional release	Write to overcome	“What’s most stressful for me is the way we can’t finish a conversation about some of these things. She cries and gets very mad and tells me she needs space and asks me to leave her alone which I respect every time, but I fear if we can’t talk about how she feels, and more importantly, WHY she feels that way, I don’t know what the future of our relationship will look like.”

The thematic analysis of the reflective writing experiences produced themes relevant to workplace learning and well-being contexts. Similarly, the forms of purposeful reflective writing are interchangeable, meaning that they can be impactful for any of the predominant themes depending on the needs of the individual or the organization. Therefore, visualizing the purposeful forms of reflective writing associated with the themes may be helpful context before reviewing the findings of each research question. Table 3 illustrates several forms of purposeful reflective writing accompanying the prevailing themes and represents one interpretation of the possible productive outcomes of the reflective writing experience.

Figure 3*Meaningful Outcomes from Reflective Writing*

In the next section, each theme is briefly discussed and supported with texts capturing the participants' experiences and interspersed with interpretations from the bridling journal and Heideggerian philosophical concepts.

Writing for Self-Awareness

The first central theme of the reflective writing experience captured in the study is writing for self-awareness. Self-awareness involves knowledge of oneself achieved through mindfulness, meditation, or other interventions that promote an increased understanding of the situations and experiences that integrate an individual's mental and physical conditions. During the study, reflective writing prompts elicited numerous experiences from the participants, allowing them to explore meaningful personal situations and how they related to learning and well-being. The potential to encourage or increase self-awareness through reflective writing developed across the texts as explicit and nonexplicit language emerged. In the context of the experiences, participants described feeling "mentally exhausted," not sleeping well, or not getting enough sleep. The prevalence of similar

experiences related to self-awareness was extensive, including one negative case that may have suggested the need for self-awareness, expressing others' mistakes without accepting personal responsibility. In this unique example, later writing samples and discussion during a subsequent interview demonstrated that the participant had considered alternative ways of responding to the situation, possibly influenced by the reflective writing experience during the study. In another explicit description of self-awareness influenced by the reflective writing experience, a participant discussed how self-awareness occurs, how it feels, and connected the feelings of self-awareness to well-being:

With regards to learning and well-being, my takeaway is that because I like to be self-aware [*writing for self-awareness, writing to clarify, writing to understand*], I am probably [*confident or unconfident*] more inquisitive about people and situations [*writing to think, writing to clarify, writing to learn*] and engage in conversations [*connectedness, being-in-the-world*] that ask 'why' [*meaning, truth*] so I can better understand [*writing to clarify, writing to learn, writing to understand*] and be present [*time, being-in-the-world, presence, writing to focus*] for whatever a person or situation requires [*inauthenticity, perceptions of others, care or concern, being-in-the-world with*]. For me, personally, that makes me feel good [*writing for self-awareness, writing for well-being*], and it makes me feel like I've made a difference [*writing for self-awareness, writing to discover purpose*]. Whenever I feel good about something, it attributes greatly to my well-being [*writing for self-awareness*]. I feel balance and harmony and those are good feelings to have [*dasein self-care*].

Examples from the texts embodied self-awareness, such as one participant's description of self-awareness as being mindful. Another offered that having "high self-awareness" was vital to personal growth, and another described the social implications of self-awareness:

I like to be aware of how I'm interacting [*connectedness, self-awareness*], who I interact with, how I'm perceived or could be perceived [*perceptions of others, inauthenticity*]....I tend to notice a lot. I like to observe and take in

my surroundings [*situational awareness, to determine action? for belonging?*]. Like any person [*belonging, dasein care*] I remember good times, bad times, good experiences, [and] bad experiences [*time, writing to reflect, writing to recall*].

Another participant also wrote about self-awareness with a perspective on how much others' perceptions influence choices:

This experience has shown me how much I reflect [*self-awareness*] on others' perspective [*inauthenticity*] and that it doesn't mean anyone is right or wrong [*self-awareness, multiplicity, writing to clarify, writing to see, writing to understand*], but that there are just differences in thought and emotion [*multiplicity*] and it's ok to feel the way I feel [*meaning, acceptance, authenticity*], and not allow others to sway my thought process [*authenticity*].

Notably, the last text revealed an opportunity for further research. Heidegger's (1927/1962) concept of inauthenticity proposes how humans make intentional choices not to be themselves. Inauthenticity surfaced in multiple examples from the texts. It was recorded in the bridling journal notes and labeled as an experiential theme discussed later in the findings as a phenomenon considered outside the scope of the current study. For example, feeling inauthentic was an interpretation of the statement "I have not been my happy-go-lucky self" in the following text:

I just feel like I am all over the place [*writing for self-awareness, overwhelm*] so I'm not sure [*uncertainty*] if I can pinpoint [*need for precision*] the most critical issue [*writing to clarify, writing to understand*] I'm facing right now [*time*]. It's a slew of things [*dasein - care for ordinary things in life*] that come together [*fusion of horizons*] to make one large issue...I have not been my happy-go-lucky self recently [*writing for self-awareness*], and [I'm] kind of just in the dumps sometimes [*writing for self-awareness*].

Similarly, another experience highlighted self-awareness in the telling of a perception of the current workplace environment that may also warrant additional attention in a future study:

Something new I have learned [is] that although I may be in an area now [*time, writing to learn, writing to understand*] that is very driven towards results and not so much about connections [*lack of belonging, community, or affiliation, writing to clarify, writing to understand*], [I have] to not let that affect my personality and how I show up at work [*authenticity*]. Some days [*time*] it can be difficult to be cheery and ask about everyone's weekend when not many respond [*writing to see, writing to process*], but I should never give up [*tenacity, writing to grow*] on trying to make those connections [*meaningful*]. This is important to me [*meaningful*] because I want to be the person that everyone...[describes as] "oh she was always cheerful and had a smile on her face"[*inauthenticity, need for admiration or positive perceptions from others*]. I want to be THAT employee. I applied [*action*] that today [*time*] with starting the call asking how everyone's weekend went and dove a little deeper into their plans. It seemed to come across well and we even began to joke around a bit [*writing to inform, results*].

Interpretations of the previous text led to several findings. First, it demonstrated an interesting element of surface-level descriptive language captured visually with the capitalized word emphasizing the participant's desire to be "THAT employee." Next, the same meaning unit might also suggest a more profound meaning as an example representing Heidegger's concept of inauthenticity. In addition, critical thinking and action learning seemed evident in the text as the participant discussed an intentional effort to act cheerful with others. Moreover, the text explicitly offered examples of individual needs, such as connection and belonging in the workplace. Finally, the text was unique because the participant exposed personal values, explicitly offering language stating that making connections at work or networking "is important to me" and accentuating that networking is a meaningful experience.

The text provided potential evidence suggesting that self-awareness gained through reflective writing experiences might capture and formalize values that can help workers understand better how and why they make the choices they do.

Interestingly, one of the participants identified that a desired outcome of the study was to understand decision-making better. In addition, the findings suggested that reflective writing experiences may influence future intentions and actions by encouraging intentional thinking and helping workers and organizations uncover ways to develop new skills or better manage challenging situations. For example, the following text revealed increasing self-awareness about how writing about stressful topics specifically was helpful to the participant:

It's ironic the topics that I feel like it helped me with the most [*writing to acknowledge, writing to articulate meaning*] are probably some of the ones that were the most stressful to me too [*writing to clarify, writing to process*]...there's a few different places where I write about relationships with others in my household and being a parent and things like that [*writing to capture, writing to formalize*] and I think those are some of the ones that I probably felt the most relief writing out [*writing to release*]...most of those are a barrage of questions [*writing to explore, writing to inquire*] that I asked myself. I found that I have a lot of questions that I kind of jot down, but it helped to get those out there [*writing to capture, meaningful experience*]. I can go back and say, "well, which one of these was really important when it came to those relationships or conversations?" [*writing to inform, writing to grow*]

In the preceding text, the participant described the specific and valuable outcomes of reflective writing experiences during the study, offering that it can generate attention to issues through open-ended questioning and consideration of what might be most meaningful to the individual. This participant acknowledged that reflective writing helped manage stressful situations and may encourage valuable future reflection. Other participants also described reflective writing experiences as beneficial encouragement to deeper thinking and understanding. In addition, one participant commented that reflective writing directly contributed to clarity, sharing that writing was a form of problem-solving:

Writing the issue down helped to get it out of my head and onto paper [*writing to clarify, writing to process*]. Some of the time, [*multiplicity, time*]

I was able to solve the issue by continuing through and writing possible solutions. In other cases, the issue wasn't as potent as I thought it was after I got it out on paper and really thought through it. Overall, I would say writing had a pretty large influence for me with regards to work [meaningful]. In some cases, I learned [writing to learn] what I didn't need to worry about or prioritize and in other cases, I learned how to solve the issue. Sometimes we think that productive work has to look like we completed something or that there was a final outcome where sometimes productive work is a work in progress [writing to clarify, writing to understand].

The previous text emphasized how reflective writing might contribute to increased self-awareness by encouraging prioritization of issues and offered that reflective writing may have a different outcome depending on the individual situation. In other texts, participants presented how gaining self-awareness through the reflective writing experience promoted learning by encouraging them to be open to different perspectives and to consider trying new things. Participants also offered value in increasing self-awareness, including appreciating experiences that bring them satisfaction or content. A critical finding from the study was the potential for reflective writing experiences to inspire self-awareness as a conduit to better understanding meaningful experiences that matter most in work and home life.

Writing for Critical Thinking

The second pervasive theme in the study's reflective writing experiences involved writing for critical thinking. Critical thinking is process-oriented, including logical and emotional thinking, ideating, and decision-making, all aimed at creating options that inform a response. Critical thinking was identified as a crucial and marketable skill in the workplace and is fundamental in the theories related to experiential learning, double-loop learning, and reflective practice, including journal writing. The study's findings may position reflective writing as a tool to promote critical thinking and more informed decision-making. Participants suggested reflective writing offered space to be curious and open to options

through increased clarity and the ability to dedicate time to seeing and understanding situations at work and home with a broader lens. The interpretation of critical thinking as a central theme developed from multiple texts, such as the following example illustrating the participant's thought process while envisioning a future role in writing:

I believe that in the future [*writing to be open, writing to see*] I will do more direct... [*intentionally omitted descriptor*] work with clients [*critical thinking*]. Driving conversation...getting to ask questions [*inquiring*] to understand the impact and getting to interpret those analysis results into a recommendation [*clarifying, refining, understanding*]. I think some of the skills I will need are tactical [*self-awareness, critical thinking, writing to explore, writing to understand*]. And what I mean by that [*focusing, considering, writing to clarify, writing to understand, writing to articulate*], is taking these tools and understanding them at a level where I can navigate them smoothly [*self-awareness, considering, critical thinking, understanding*], ask thoughtful questions [*exploring*], and bring a customer and employee-based perspective [*clarifying*] where I can ensure we have thought through those changes from a true value standpoint [*refining, seeing*]. A lot of the work I've been involved in often feels shallow [*self-awareness, clarifying, refining, understanding, emotional release, releasing, processing*]. We do it because it looks good or sounds good to our leaders [*perception*], but it's not truly meaningful to our employees or customers [*releasing, processing*]. We constantly try to reinvent the way we problem solve [*perception, considering*], but often don't give enough time or thought into the last process we rolled out before deciding we are trying out a new one [*focusing, seeing*], and we lack communication about work across business areas [*perception, refining, understanding, seeing*]. By growing my...[*intentionally omitted descriptor*] skills [*self-awareness*] I want to be able to help close those gaps between projects and departments and make the company more collaborative [*seeing, understanding, growing*]. I've begun reading content about... [*intentionally omitted*

descriptor] and try to read a couple of new articles a week to keep me up to speed on new theories or methodologies (which also change so often I can see a conflict there too) [*clarifying*] and have worked with my leader for some formal training and verification [experiences] over the next year to get me more familiar with...[the] tools [*growing*].

Also reiterating the theme of self-awareness discussed in the previous section, the last text may indicate the experience of reflective writing has the potential to foster critical thinking by providing the participant with dedicated time to think strategically and capture plans for the future. One of the study's guided writing sessions offered another illustration of critical thinking as participants practiced reflective writing through list-making. Without any context except for guiding principles indicating that there were no right or wrong responses, participants made open-ended lists. They then shared their writing and the context of their lists with the group. Some lists contained seemingly typical or mundane tasks commonly associated with list making, such as "fix the snaps on my jacket, look for an umbrella, start packing for my trip." Others delivered diverse interpretations and potentially deeper meanings, such as one participant's list titled "What's Unnecessary: Stop Doing Actions" and another that included "get at least three things done after work, get some quiet time before work, get centered, remember I'm here for a reason."

Participants also used lists to respond to writing prompts later in the study. They formalized what they wanted to accomplish for the week ahead, using the reflective writing time to think about and organize tasks, estimate time commitments, and prioritize items with thoughtful analysis, emphasizing setting more realistic expectations. After the study, several participants expressed that reflective writing improved their thinking by making their thoughts more real and helping them nurture their presence:

It's [reflective writing] allowed me to be in the moment [*writing to think, presence*] because I'm taking these things that right now [*time, presence*] are intangible, but now I'm putting them down on paper which makes them a little more tangible and [they become] something that I can go back [*time*]

and look at when my mind goes to a different direction [*multiplicity*] and when I need to be brought back to the present [*time*].

The preceding text highlighted the time pattern across the study and how reflective writing might influence future thinking and action by helping look back and forward. Likewise, another participant's experience described how formalizing upcoming work through reflective writing brings transparency to the severity and priority of tasks and how carefully exploring issues with reflective writing can change perspective:

What might feel overwhelming or difficult or alarming or something I have to do right now...when you get it out on paper, it looks different [*writing to clarify, writing to understand*]. It can look different for the better. It might look different for the worse. But in general, it helps to take the things that bounce around and ping pong inside our heads [*multiplicity*] and...[make them] something tangible. I think what it [the reflective writing] has done...in some ways, it's forced...I won't say forced [*writing to articulate*]...it has allowed me to slow down to go faster [*writing for results*].

Writing for Emotional Release

A third predominant theme found in the study involved the need to express emotions or feelings. Many of the participants' experiences highlighted unique circumstances where identifying, acknowledging, and releasing emotions occurred in the reflective writing experiences during the study. For example, one participant described the experience of reflective writing as writing "what's in your head," sharing that reflective writing was freeing "instead of thinking that I always have to be [in control of] emotion and be careful what I say." Another noted that the responsive prompts used in Week 5 of the study were inspiring, sharing feelings, and reiterating that reflective writing was a freeing experience:

I feel inspired in a way! It's been a hectic week between the different last-minute meetings while we support some employees going through staffing changes [reductions in force]. I was feeling anxious, stressed, and sad to see these things happening at my work. It felt nice to focus on interpreting

quotes that took me away from my day-to-day stuff and just write about my feelings and opinions. Who doesn't love sharing their opinion, right? In juxtaposition, another text offered descriptive language to demonstrate the emotions involved in a work experience. It added a unique dimension of the reflective writing experience that supported existing literature, positing that, at times, words cannot describe experiences:

I'm gonna try to explain this as best as I can [to] maybe help you kind of imagine what I'm feeling. With the issues that I was facing at work I was kind of stressed and drained. I've realized that I'm probably not a fan of writing at that moment.

Compared to the last example that demonstrated that it might be challenging to describe experiences, another unique example of the influence of reflective writing involved a participant's expression of writing as a way to release without affecting others. This participant said, "journaling seems like a safe place for me to articulate my concerns without having to actually verbalize it to anyone." In addition to the need for psychological safety, the last example highlighted the need to write to release emotions and to express worries or issues. Interpreting the theme of reflective writing for emotional release evolved with repeated language using descriptive words such as "venting," "ranting," and "complaining." The meaning interpreted from these experiences suggested the need for a safe space to work through individual problems illustrated in the following text:

It feels like a place I can go to vent, but then sometimes I realize my venting may sound crazy without background and context...then [I] realize how long that background could be [and] that I sometimes stress about stressing...it does allow me to reflect more on the 'what am I doing' aspect of it. It allowed me to try to think through what am I actually doing aside from complaining about some of my problems.

Even though participants often wrote about emotions and problems, they also described ways reflective writing might promote opportunities. For example, one participant noted that in addition to venting, the reflective writing experience influenced the emphasis on the quality of communication:

It has forced me to reflect on how I am wording things...[I may] sound super negative...[or] over highlight the positives. It has also allowed me to reflect on the ‘but what am I doing about it’ and made me focus on highlighting that as well. It’s easy to vent, but I am also aware that with problems you need to look for or present solutions, so this process has reminded me to reflect on that more in order to make progress over dwelling.

Comparably, another participant explicitly shared that the reflective writing experience was helpful because it led to relief from releasing feelings:

I think writing has helped me in two main ways. One, [it] is allowing me to reflect on my feelings and thoughts. It’s easy to get caught in telling a story, and paragraphs later, pause and read back what I wrote. It’s interesting to read back and think, “did I really finish that thought?” or “what was I really trying to convey, and did I accomplish that really with these words?” I think my writing in this study is almost me “pouring out my thoughts” (and I think in part it was due to my preference to type over handwrite). Although that writing style seems messy, I do acknowledge that after writing I also felt a little relieved, like maybe I had needed to reflect and write my feelings out and didn’t realize it. The other value I found in this was a way of self-reflecting on my communication. It brought [me] thoughts like “is this how I sound when I communicate to others?” or “is there a better way to organize my thoughts by doing this more often?”

Overall, the capacity to express emotions through the experience of reflective writing may be necessary for workplace learning as it may help workers see, articulate, and solve problems. Moreover, it may influence well-being by aiding workers in relieving unnecessary stress.

With a more comprehensive background on the salient themes of the study, in the following sections, I present more detailed findings for each research question in four parts, including my preconceptions and bridling statement, highlights of participants’ experiences and related interpretations, meaningful patterns and influences on learning or well-being, and summaries of the findings.

Characteristic of the Heideggerian phenomenological hermeneutics methodology, some texts are lengthy (Smythe & Spence, 2020). Likewise, as phenomenology constantly involves changing circumstances (Dahlberg, 2006), protecting the parts and the whole of the participants' experiences as initially expressed was vital. The intentional inclusion of the complete texts enables many interpretations of meaning beyond those included in the findings. As a reminder, the study was not intended to be an intervention or an experiment to support any particular reflective writing theories, tools, or techniques. Instead, I aimed to understand workers' experiences with reflective writing, including capturing the varied and unique possibilities of the phenomenon.

Findings for Research Question 1

Findings from the study's first research question, "In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence learning in the workplace?" revealed that reflective writing encourages learning through self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release. Participants did not often explicitly refer to the specific word *learning* following the reflective writing experience. The experiential themes they shared in their writing samples, such as observing opportunities for change and striving to improve, demonstrated that reflective writing may have inspired their learning by helping them think about why, what, and how they learn more intentionally. For example, one participant explained the need to learn the work's dependencies to help others. Elaborating on the experience, this participant mentioned that the content and context of the work situation influenced learning sharing, "I find I learn what is needed in the moment." Another participant highlighted that learning requires social components and repetition:

I learn most from the invigorating collaborations—the meetings where you see visual, talk it through—listen to the pain the other team will experience with this change, and work together to solve. Also, repetition. I hear about it, as I better understand I can ask more questions. As my confidence builds I share with others, then answer their questions as they learn more—that repetition is good for my learning.

The texts captured other examples of learning from exposure to new knowledge and learning through applying knowledge by changing approaches. Some participants offered that the reflective writing experience helped them absorb situations' details, discerning and comparing ways they could have done things differently. Several participants expressed that they gained a broader perspective from the study's experience, suggesting that reflective writing may inspire learning that can result in personal and professional growth through sharper thinking, clear focus, presence, and informed decisions. Furthermore, when writing with a defined learning outcome, the purposeful forms of reflective writing identified in the study may complement learning content to improve the application. Figure 4 frames the purposeful forms of reflective writing explained later in the findings.

Figure 4

Purposeful Forms of Reflective Writing for Workplace Learning and Well-Being



RQ1: Preconceptions, Bridling Statement, and Initial Interpretations

Van Manen (2015) wrote of the paradox inherent in achieving the meaning of a phenomenon explaining that phenomenology seeks the “uniqueness” (p. xii) and “essences” (p. xiv) characteristic of openness to alternative views. I captured my personal experiences with reflective writing as a means for learning in the workplace in a bridling statement ahead of the study that affirmed, “I have confidence in the use of reflective writing as a technique to build the trust, connection, and understanding that leads to better results within the workplace.

Writing can fill the gaps between skills and competency. Learning is less about skills and more about thinking.” I established the bridling statement based on observations of 2 years of facilitated guided reflective writing with a small group of workers who influenced my interest in the current study. In the prior guided writing experiences, I had espoused the value of journaling but had not explored the associated phenomena in a scholarly way; therefore, my preconceptions of the significance of reflective writing as a means to facilitate workplace learning was limited.

RQ1: Interpretive Thematic Analysis and Synthesis

The six specific forms of purposeful reflective writing identified in Figure 4 relate to how reflective writing can inspire learning and well-being. Because the study’s purpose did not include a specific learning outcome, the participants’ experiences represent more general implications of reflective writing for learning. Interpretations of the themes and purposeful forms of reflective writing are elaborated in the following section and supported with selected texts. The meaning of the reflective writing experiences developed with insights from the bridling journal and brief examinations of related Heideggarian philosophical constructs.

Keen observations describing customer needs, workplace culture, organizational policies, products, and services, pervaded the participants’ interviews and writing samples reflecting an existing depth of business acumen and a concern for the organization’s sustainability. Each participant demonstrated a desire to learn and an awareness of the learning options available within the organization. The reflective writing experience invoked logic and emotion in the participants’ telling of their work and home experiences. It encouraged attentiveness and thoughtful writing containing descriptive details, extensive questioning, and specific ideas and opportunities that might inform future action, exemplified in the following text discussing collaboration, change, and strategy:

My team is charged [*action orientation, ownership, accountability*] with making sure we go through change better [*continuous improvement orientation*]. . .there’s a lot of political gridlocks, budgetary, and credibility barriers working with a large organization [*broad vision, critical thinking,*

understanding of business and management, writing to see, writing to understand]. Everyone has ideas [*diversity, innovation, critical thinking for sustainability*] they want to implement [*action-oriented*], everyone thinks we need to refresh our employee culture [*engaged, accountability, ownership, awareness of needs, behaviors and their impact on the organization*], the list goes on and on [*significance, magnitude, impact*]...[and] the obstacle [*challenges in contemporary work, effort, struggle, opportunity*] is getting these folks to think about change [*time to think? writing to learn, writing to think, collaboration, connectedness*] not only [*multiplicity*] from the lens of how to interpret their idea, but [to] think through [*critical thinking*], is it a good idea? Why this change? [*customer and business focus, writing to explore*] Why now? [*time, priorities*] What will success look like? [*awareness of criticality of measurement and results*] What do we need to do to get there? [*strategic thinking*] How will we measure its success? [*importance of data and analytics, business focus, result-oriented*] Who is experiencing this change? [*people focus*] Who's experiencing it the most? [*critical thinking, data and analytics, people focus, impact analysis*] How will they experience it [*people focus, impact analysis*], and how will they adopt it? [*critical thinking, writing to inquire, writing to learn, writing to ask the right questions*] The solution still escapes me [*self-awareness, critical thinking, writing to grow*]. We know [*certainty*] progress on such a wide scope will take time [*time, critical thinking*], so we influence [*action-oriented, accountability*] little by little for now [*time, reflects the interactive awareness working from unknown to known; Dasein dwelling in the familiar and unfamiliar*], but I would be lying [*self-awareness, honesty, trustworthiness, writing to grow*] if I said we have the solution for it all [*need for problem-solving, writing to learn*]. My opinion [*self-awareness*] is [that] we start with better communication plans [*tactical thinking and focused output with visibility to achieving outcome based on why first exhibited in earlier questions*]. Employees need detail [*individual needs, organizational responsibilities*], they need time to

process [*time, time to think*], and they need continued enforced messaging [*consistent actions, ongoing support, writing to think, critical thinking, narrowing the focus started at the higher level view*]. They also need proper [*writing to clarify, precision*] feedback loops [*need to be heard, active listening, caring for the ordinary things in life, writing to think, critical thinking*]. Too often, [*time*] change happens “to us,” [*critical thinking, connectedness*], but it doesn’t have to feel that way all the time [*time, critical thinking, logic and feelings*]. We need [*individual and collective needs*] proper feedback loops where employees can see/feel [*logic and feelings*] that we took their emotions into account [*people focus, active listening, reality that emotions and perceptions make an impact on the business and also matter*]. We also need [*in addition to, needs*] a better explanation of why we are asking them to change [*clarity, precision, asking why, understanding needs of the business and the people, sustainability, present and the future, change agility and adoption, critical thinking*], and I don’t mean ‘faster technology ecosystems and applications that meet you where you’re at,’ [*awareness, writing to clarify*] I mean [the] relatable why [*critical thinking, business acumen, content area/technical knowledge, writing to understand*].

Representative of how reflective writing can generate deep thinking, the previous text illustrated some elements of the underpinning themes of self-awareness and critical thinking heightened as the participant explored the criticality of managing organizational change. Equally important, the detail and progression of the reflective writing highlighted the potential for valuable insights within the reflective writing data. The synthesis of the influence of reflective writing on workplace learning culminated in the identification of several purposeful forms of reflective writing presented previously in Figure 4. In the following sections, I explain the purposeful forms of reflective writing in more detail.

Purposeful Reflective Writing: Write to Explore and See. *Writing to explore* and *writing to see* are intentional ways of using reflective writing to help visualize, articulate, and assess existing knowledge interpreted from the

experiences captured by the study. Both forms of writing can identify learning opportunities, such as considering necessary skill sets or contemplating feedback on current performance. In the previous text, reflective writing allowed the participant to develop insights that could influence current or future organizational strategy. The text illustrated *writing to explore* and *writing to see* by revealing gaps and possible solutions from the participant's perspective. Interpretations of other texts also supported reflective writing's capability to uncover opportunities for improvement:

I think this [reflective writing experience] can align well with doing retrospectives after a sprint [*application to the work*]. It would provide a great chance to view [*write to see, write to visualize*] what went well and what didn't [*write to understand*] and create an action plan [*write to plan, write to think, write to articulate*] on how to improve [*write to improve, write to plan*]. I think this would help overthinkers like myself [*self-awareness*] to not be in your head [*self-talk*] about all the negatives [*multiplicity*] and be able to focus on the upcoming changes and the positive aspect [*writing for positivity*] you can have on the team [*writing to influence, writing to inform*].

Another text also captured the possibility of reflective writing as a means to explore and see as one participant considered a specific challenge, acknowledging gaps in understanding and connecting with the writing experience to look back at past experiences with more perspective:

I think [*considering*] my challenge at the moment [*time*] is proving [*other's perceptions*] that I belong in this position [*writing to understand, questioning skills or abilities, confidence*]. At the moment [*time*], I am trying to be like a sponge and learn as much as I can about the team and the work they do [*needs for knowledge that is not technical nor emotional*] to support them appropriately [*helping others, tailored needs*]. This question is hard to answer just because I am so new in this role [*rationale that experience makes thinking easier?*]. I don't have a full grasp on my role at the moment, but I plan [*has considered, action-oriented*] to ask as many

questions I can and learn as much as I can in the next few weeks [*time*]. Reading back at my responses...[*benefit of writing to capture*] it's personal and I possibly overshared some of my personal life that wasn't necessary [*self-awareness, concern for others' perceptions*], but I have realized [*writing to see, writing to understand*] that my traumas in my personal life have positively affected me [*learning*] in the work-life so it's all a part of my story [*whole person*].

The findings suggested the reflective writing experience can influence learning by helping participants to realize and articulate needs and opportunities and offering forms of writing tailored to specific outcomes. In addition, the texts from the study uncovered unique and unexpected experiences that might be valuable for further studies, such as a better understanding of how workers manage the perception that they need to prove their worth in their roles.

Purposeful Reflective Writing: Write to Think and Understand. *Writing to think* and *writing to understand* are intentional ways of using reflective writing to help focus attention and inform better decisions. Participants commented on the importance of having time to think, but expressed not being able to achieve it often. Some shared that the experience of reflective writing during the study permitted clarity to current challenges. Others highlighted that reflective writing “gave them permission for dedicated time to think about work” and discussed how their behaviors and interactions impacted colleagues. They also described how reflective writing influenced their work's ordinary and everyday aspects, such as how it aids in “prioritizing” and organizing what they need to do “more effectively.” One shared that learning about reflective writing through the context of the interviews and the individual writing prompts created a shift in thinking about previous perceptions of contemporary work and writing for business purposes:

Initially, I started out with the whole definition [*need for clarity and understanding*] that contemporary work means how we work from home and doing things differently [*change*]...[and] that kind of changed as I did [*self-awareness, writing to understand*]...with the writings or even [when we] met with the group [*social interaction, connectedness*] or even just

talked...I kind of feel like now...actually putting...I don't know if this even sounds right [*writing to think, writing to clarify, precision, perception of others, difficult articulation, questioning*], putting feelings to paper [*writing about emotions, writing to release*] ...communications at work or anything...including some of the nonprofits I serve outside of work [*business focus, community involvement, skills at work and for the broader society*] actually putting warm feelings into it [*awareness of descriptive and interpretive language*]...when we spoke last time [*remembering, looking back, time*]...what really struck home [with] me I guess [*meaningful to the worker, questioning, ranking*]...[was] putting people [*people focus*], people's feelings first instead of the business [need] [*writing to see*].

The previous example lends interpretive language helpful for understanding the experience of reflective writing in the context of both learning and well-being. It reflected how the participants needed to think through what the experience was like to describe it. It also associated specific meaning with the types of reflective writing introduced by the study, including comparing the individual writing prompts to the interactions with others in the guided writing sessions. The perspective created a view of the possibilities of how thinking and understanding through reflective writing might inform ways for workers and organizations to identify gaps and opportunities and approach the change that drives innovation and sustainability. It was interesting to note that the last text highlighted how the participant was applying the experience of reflective writing in other roles, with them mentioning how it was influential to the contributions made to a service organization outside of work.

Another intriguing finding highlighting how reflective writing can influence learning with thinking and decision-making involved participants' concern with learning to differentiate themselves as experts with refined skillsets. One participant noted that at work, there is a "need to be good at something and set myself apart from others." Elaborating on how learning at work and home are different, the participant shared that learning at work is required for "self-improvement" and does not come with the same "stress and emotional battle" as

learning at home where “the emotional considerations of others in your household...[are] a heavy weight at times.” Other participants described learning at work through a different lens, suggesting that to be relevant meant constantly upskilling. Learning new skills and regularly asking for and taking on new responsibilities were valuable for the participants.

Not only were they willing to learn new skills to differentiate themselves, they were also willing to take on roles even when they were not necessarily interested in them. The critical thinking that evolved with the reflective writing experience surfaced meaningful perceptions about roles and the participants' choices based on others' input or expectations. Noted as an unexpected finding, taking on roles without a clear desire or purpose seemed aligned with Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical view of existentiality, which described how humans dilute or dissolve themselves by choosing to be inauthentic or satisfying the “they-self” or the version of themselves that pleases others (p. 167). As presented in previous texts' interpretations, the findings of this study revealed multiple examples of participants managing their time and making decisions with concern for others' perceptions of them.

Further considering *writing to think* and *writing to understand* as potential learning mechanisms, the findings suggested that reflective writing experiences can help individuals learn more about how they inform and make decisions. For example, at the study's initiation, one participant commented that the sole reason for participating was to “contribute to research [and] to help you,” and another desired self-improvement because the study “might be a good way to improve my communication skills.” Interestingly, several participants initially shared an aversion to writing from their prior experiences, communicating that some writing was “a distraction” and describing how it could be a burdensome task they only do because it is a requirement in their work. Yet, they chose to participate in the study to learn something new from experience. During the reflective writing experiences, one participant provided conflicting descriptions that the study's reflective writing experience neither motivated nor influenced learning at work, but also offered that it “has helped me to be in a new place.”

Purposeful Reflective Writing: Write to Be Open and Grow. *Writing to be open* and *writing to grow* are intentional ways to use reflective writing to help define workplace learning approaches and encourage development. Before I introduced the reflective writing experiences, participants described learning with descriptive language and used examples such as learning through reading or attending a workshop. One participant recalled a meaningful series of seminars offered by the organization to increase awareness of well-being and suggested it had been a valuable experience for change and growth:

Our company has developed a very big emphasis on learning [*awareness, knowledge or perception of organizational culture, need for clarity or to understand, perception of organization investment*]. I read last year [*time*] the book, *The Power of Habit* [*recommended at work*] and I think that was one of the best books I've ever read [*comparing and contrasting, learning as reading*]. I decided that I would leave it...[*on my list and that*] I would read over [*it*] every single year [*time, repetition, thoroughness*] because you do think unconsciously [*self-awareness*] a lot of times [*time, repetition*]... just because your brain cannot handle all of the inputs it takes to breathe [*overwhelm, related mental and physical capabilities*] ...that's why...[*you need to*] do things on a regular basis [*repetition, habits, behaviors, culture*]...you develop these habits, which can be a good thing or it can also be a bad thing...[*multiplicity, continuum of possibilities*] learning [*helps you*] to break those habits [*need for change, change*]. You know [*validating experiences based on hearing and interpreting the inflection and tone in the voice and listening for the pause*], for example, [*to*] stop smoking...[*I learned*] to find an adopter to ask for help [*asking for help*]. I asked as many people as I could to keep me [*be*] accountable [*connectedness, networking, desire to improve well-being*] and if there were people that had smoked before...[*I learned from*] what they found [*learning from experience, participant found meaning in experience, value for experience*]...[*as*] the best way [*multiplicity*] to do it [*action-orientation*].

Other participants' initial interpretations of workplace learning were similar, more descriptive, and elicited learning details, such as through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic or hands-on learning preferences or learning styles. Participants described formal learning opportunities in the workplace, including instructor-led workshops or seminars, self-directed online learning from platforms, reading books, and listening to podcasts or watching TED Talks and other videos. They shared descriptive perspectives on learning needs and possibilities for improving formal learning offerings. Although they were open to new learning experiences and personal growth, several participants shared that neither mandatory learning nor learning by achieving a specified number of learning hours was valuable to them. They expressed being less engaged in the content of those experiences and "less likely to be able to apply the learning to my work."

Before the reflective writing activities in the study, participants shared examples of writing in the workplace, explaining that writing is primarily a means of communicating at work. Using descriptive language, the participants described writing with examples such as writing meeting notes, emails, and feedback for employees in performance reviews and writing technical or process documentation. Three participants mentioned journaling for personal or professional growth; one said that experimenting with bullet journaling for well-being outside work was interesting. In one response to an individual writing prompt, the participant compared learning at work and home, sharing that learning can be categorized as gaining skills or "emotional" growth. Similarly, one participant explained roles influence different learning needs:

At work there's a lot of programs we use, that I've never had to use in so much detail...in school...not even in college. Starting my career [*omitted text intentionally for anonymity and confidentiality*] I learned new systems...[to enable my work] and that was fine considering they're fairly intuitive. But moving into leadership was where I saw a shift in how proficient I needed to be in programs I hadn't considered important before. Word, PowerPoint, Excel, these are programs I've always "known about" but didn't put much stock in them [*devalued skills, critical, self-awareness*].

I realized [*learning*] knowing how to make things visually appealing, removing backgrounds, using shapes and graphics, calculating formulas and averages, conditional formatting, ‘what if’ functions, all of that becomes skills others notice [*perceptions of others, critical in absence*]. Naturally [*innate, self-awareness*] being the achiever-driven personality that I am [*achievement over fulfillment? scarcity vs. abundance?*] I wanted to be a ‘go-to’ for those skills [*desire to be an expert, worth/value in expertise, individual vs. team?*]. Anytime we used these programs and I wanted them to accomplish something for me, I chose the internet as my first means of research [*shifting ways to learn toward digital connections, less emphasis on quality of learning vs. availability of information?*] but would also lean on my peer and friend, [name omitted] [*meaningful to participant, human connection, experiential and experience-based learning, validation of learning*] for certain things that I just had trouble describing [*hard to pinpoint phenomena*] in order to get the right search results [*accuracy, precision, outcomes focus*]. The internet was always my first choice though, it gives me multiple options very quickly, and hides the fact that I didn’t know something from others [*why do we hide? Why is it important to hide?*]. Little by little [*time, slow, incremental experience based learning*], I learned different things about the programs we used, and anytime an opportunity came up to add features to huddle boards (we used virtual boards to send stats to employees) I volunteered to make the edits [*experiential learning, Revans’s learning in the chaos*]. Sometimes it was frustrating [*learning or mastering is difficult?*], but there’s so many learning options [*too many to describe them...why writing doesn’t surface since it is more action-oriented?*] that eventually you find the right one [*there is one? there is a right way?*]. So, I learned how to find quick ways of learning [*adapting*] that can hold my attention [*individual needs*], and I learned how to manipulate those programs to do what I wanted [*individual needs*]. It was meaningful because it did help me become someone others could come to for questions or tutorials [*learning was meaningful when I was able to share*

with others] and helps me feel confident [*why is confidence necessary?*] that I can use data and visuals [*important to contemporary work?*] to share a vision or message better with others [*improving communication to accommodate others?*].

The descriptive language of the previous text identified tangible means for learning, as well as the participants' perceptions of the necessary skills and resources needed in the organization. The findings suggested that the participant was open to better understanding skills gaps and may want to address them through learning approaches that enable shared knowledge and experience. Additional meaning units related to the importance of clarity and the implications of exactness and finding "the right" method of learning also surfaced, as well as ideas about the needs of others and what it means to communicate "better," which might be necessary for further study within the organization. In addition to sharing specific examples of learning, the participants repeatedly discussed building confidence through experience. An opportunity for further research emerged to understand better workers' perceptions that some skills have more value than others.

Being open to new experiences, asking questions, and focusing or concentrating on thinking may have been facilitated by the study's reflective writing experiences. As the participants described past learning experiences and their individual needs, they also offered specific suggestions for improving learning opportunities reiterating the ability of reflective writing to promote new ideas and inform future action. The purposeful writing activities, including *writing to see*, *writing to think*, and *writing to grow*, that evolved from the interpretations of the participants' experiences may suggest that even though reflective writing may not be explicitly associated with learning, it can inspire it. Furthermore, reflective writing might complement other workplace learning solutions.

RQ1: Meaningful Patterns and Influences on Learning

Experiential patterns and themes emerged in the texts of the reflective writing experiences, such as time and its array of interpretations. Definitions and expressions of time occurred in the participants' descriptive language, such as looking back, looking forward, and not having enough time. Other phenomena like

work quality were also related and discussed. Specific to dedicating the time for reflective writing, one participant discussed “challenges in just being able to sit down and write...I'm terrible at sitting still and focusing on one thing for a long time.” Several texts echoed that writing requires intense concentration. In the example, the meaning unit “focusing on one thing for a long time” invoked the possibility of a need to concentrate and a perception that writing requires extended time. It also suggested that workers not only have individual learning needs, but also may need accommodations for learning and working when they face challenges like attention deficit disorder.

Conversely, another participant recommended that writing quickly throughout the workday by placing thoughts on Post-It notes was a helpful way to guide reflective writing at a later time. Other unique meaning units also highlighted perceptions of time using interpretive language, describing it as a process like a “learning curve,” or “catching up,” or how at work, progress may “move very slowly.” An interpretation that there was potential for preoccupation with time was characteristic of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) emphasis that time is quintessential to understanding being-in-the-world. Interestingly, the importance of time as a factor in the reflective writing experience surfaced for discussion in the focus group—not from the perspective of having limited time, but from the standpoint of receiving constant interruptions or distractions.

Other influences on learning emerged from the reflective writing experiences in the study with tangible learning outcomes, such as how the reflective writing experience can relate to both oral and written methods of communication influencing ways to improve social interaction:

It made me feel a little bit more vulnerable [*self-awareness*]...not necessarily in a bad way [*multiplicity*]...it uncovered a lot of ways [*multiplicity*]...[*opportunities*]...it allowed [*need or desire for permission*] me to hear myself [*writing to listen and hear, writing to comprehend*], and see [*multi-sensory*] how I communicate in a different way. I can reflect on how I communicate in a way that I’ve not really thought to [*writing to learn*]...[*its*] helped me really be more thoughtful [*writing to think, critical*

thinking] about what and how I think I say things [*self-awareness, meaning in the perceptions of others*]so it's funny [*surprise, interest*]...writing is helping me [*writing to learn*] figure out [*writing to understand*] how I would communicate verbally with others more [*writing to articulate, writing to listen, writing to prepare*].

Reflective writing may have inspired learning by encouraging the participants to be more open and introspective on the surface level of the language in the last text. Supporting previous research with educators that suggested professionals are often capable of “noticing” and sharing their thoughts and emotions about their experiences in writing (Hegarty, 2011, p. 590), the text provides explicit language that clearly articulates the value of reflective writing experience; however, there was also a deeper potential meaning in the text. For instance, even though the language provided in the meaning unit, “writing is helping me figure out how I would communicate verbally with others,” explicitly validates the benefit of reflective writing, understanding the entirety of why and how it helps is not fully expressed. Other meaning units introduce intriguing ideas about the possibilities of reflective writing as a conduit to multisensory experiences and how they might enhance communication capabilities.

Undoubtedly, the text presented numerous opportunities for further examination. First, it was an exemplar of the rationale for preserving the entirety of the participants' experiences, rather than coding words or phrases. The layered descriptive and interpretive language was critical to questioning the potential meanings beyond the benefit described. Second, the texts' significance supported existing research, such as confirming that writing can help prepare for a better communication experience, as Argyris (1995) posited with the left and right-hand column tool that encouraged preplanning for conversations before engaging with others. Third, it contributed uniquely to the current study by introducing reflective writing as a multisensory experience, and finally, it created multiple opportunities for future research. Just as Argyris (1995) argued that most professionals are single-loop learners, Hegarty (2011) also found that professionals seldom achieve a level of “critical reflection” that involves asking why and making changes as a

result of learning (p. 582). An understanding of how or if the participant pursued reflective writing beyond the study would be interesting.

Influencing the practical application of reflective writing in the workplace requires an appetite for experimentation and change. Another set of interpretations from the previous text evolved from the meaning unit, “it [the reflective writing experience] made me feel a little bit more vulnerable.” Initially, the meaning unit presented evidence to support the possibility of fully delineating the texts as examples specific to the influence of reflective writing on either learning or well-being since vulnerability might be associated with either phenomenon. Another interpretation of the meaning unit focused on the participant’s mention that reflective writing can influence vulnerability with either a positive or negative effect. The experience also highlighted an interpreted pattern of multiplicity and the continuums of emotions that composed the experiential themes captured for future study.

Senge et al. (2004) explained two forms of learning, one that looks to the past and one that looks forward, even though the future is unknown. A unique participant experience may have illustrated these looking back and forward aspects of learning in the contemporary workplace, elaborating further on how reflective writing can influence learning. For example, the participant shared, “I found myself being cautious...not speaking up and I have a habit of talking in time [as] I want to give other people the opportunity to talk as well.” Recognizing the cautiousness and the “habit” of waiting for others attributed to the self-awareness theme and exposed a deeper level of possible inquiry to understanding better if the participant held back ideas or progress by “talking in time.” Moreover, understanding any underlying rationale for the cautiousness might uncover opportunities beneficial to the participant and the organization.

RQ1: Summary of Findings

The findings of this study suggested that reflective writing may influence workplace learning by benefiting and encouraging self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release through purposeful forms of reflective writing. In addition, through the reflective writing experiences in the study, participants may have been

exposed to new ways of thinking about their learning. Table 5 further summarizes the findings for RQ1 providing additional examples of the themes, meaning units, purposeful forms of reflective writing, and interpretive understandings related to RQ1 and how reflective writing may influence learning in the workplace.

Table 5

Examples of Patterns, Meaning Units, Themes, and Interpretation for RQ1

Theme	Meaning Unit	Forms of Reflective Writing	Interpretive Analysis
Self-awareness	“It seems that I have relied on myself to learn new things and adapt to the changes that I have endured.”	Writing to think Writing to recall/remember Writing for self-awareness Writing for clarity	Sometimes but not always, I believe that I taught myself the things that I know, learning is individual and isolated, learning means acquiring new knowledge, learning means change is required; adapting to change, trying to survive, change is difficult, uncertainty/not knowing requires coping
Critical Thinking	“This is not a specific task or application, but I think the one thing that changed me when I had to learn something new was when I first began my journey in a corporate environment. Before that, I was working [in] typical college student jobs like serving and retail. When I got my first job at a large organization, I had to learn how to	Writing for clarity Writing to learn Writing to think Writing to recall/remember Writing for self-awareness	Clarifying for the precision of the example, thinking, reflecting, looking forward, looking backward, comparing roles, comparing needs of roles, identifying skills, age, time, concerns for others’ perceptions

	<p>communicate in a professional manner and although I was younger than the majority of my coworkers, I felt that I had to hold myself to a higher standard of being mature so that my coworkers would view me as a peer and not as some "young girl". I would say that this changed me because it has set me up for my future and looking back at it, it's probably a pivotal moment in my life where I had to choose to be responsible."</p>		
Emotional Release	<p>"I can't explain to you the type of treatment [I experienced]...I got thrown under the bus and it seemed like I would lose my job. I was so mad...it was terrible. I almost quit. I did what I was supposed to do and the issues I had no control over."</p>	<p>Writing to recall/remember</p> <p>Writing to release</p> <p>Writing to focus</p> <p>Writing to think</p> <p>Writing to understand</p> <p>Writing for well-being</p>	<p>van Manen's (2017) "phenomenological examples" (p. 814) of the greatest opportunity for learning to share this experience and widen perspective, facing difficult situations/adversity, depth of emotion, looking back</p>

Findings for Research Question 2

The second research question concerned in what ways, if at all, reflective writing might influence well-being in the workplace. The findings suggested that reflective writing may benefit well-being through its ability to help participants manage the perceived or actual implications of personal and professional issues. Specifically, reflective writing experiences may foster coping mechanisms to help

acknowledge, manage, and overcome repressed emotions. The themes identified in RQ1—including self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release—remain consistent across the well-being experiences. The predominant effect of time, a pattern also recognized in the findings for RQ1, remained a salient theme throughout the data for RQ2 and was expressed in additional variations in connection with well-being experiences, such as how it manifests in other phenomena like age and work experience or tenure. The participants offered descriptive and interpretive language, and the texts produced meaning units suggesting distinctive interpretations of the reflective writing experience. In the following sections, findings for RQ2 discussed the patterns and structured interpretative thematic analysis interweaving influences from the bridling journal and Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical interpretations.

RQ2: Preconceptions, Bridling Statement, and Initial Interpretations

During the literature review, the therapeutic benefits of reflective writing had been identified in previous studies supporting my presumptions from personal experience. Before the data collection, I recorded a bridling statement formalizing my preconceptions of how writing might influence well-being:

I have seen the value of reflective writing in my prior experience. I have observed colleagues release emotions in guided writing expressed through gregarious conversations and laughter and deeply intense empathy for each other as some have started to cry during their sharing and in mid-sentence have paused for periods until they could regain composure to speak again. I believe in the powerful nature of writing to release feelings and to begin to acknowledge and overcome barriers in the workplace.

I leveraged the bridling statement as a reminder to stay open to the participants' experiences. I organized the texts so that my initial analysis first defined well-being from the participants' perspectives.

In the initial interviews conducted before initiating the reflective writing activities, one participant described well-being as “an overall health perspective, healthy not sick, and...from a mental state of mind... feeling happy [and] managing stress.” Generally, the participants defined well-being as a blend of

physical and mental health involving resilience or the ability to respond well when faced with extraordinary pressures. Individually, more detailed understandings of well-being emerged. For example, one participant described well-being as “being able to overcome issues...everybody has issues...[there is] no position in life where you don't have some sort of issue either in your personal life or your work-life [and] probably in both.” Offering that it is essential to move past issues, this participant further explained that facing challenges leads to growth and wrote that self-improvement was desirable:

I want to be able to overcome [*courageous, capable*] whatever adversity comes my way [and] it never stops coming [*multiplicity, time*]. There are always challenges [*time, overcoming*], and if you don't have them, you are not growing [*challenges are learning opportunities*]. Every opportunity God [*spirituality*] can give you to be stressed to the max...[to] see things as they are without a whole lot of emotions [*emotional intelligence*]...[to] get a good night's sleep [*importance of rest, release*]...things look better [*abundance, positivity*] when you have slept...[well-being is to] be as good of a version of myself as I can possibly be [*wanting to be the best, striving to improve*].

Expounding on managing issues in life well, the participant also identified that concern for others' perceptions could influence well-being:

Learning to be a person who can overcome problems [and] not let them drag you [down is important] [*writing to understand, meaningful*]. The nice thing about getting older [*age*]...is [realizing] I spent my whole life [*time, age*] worried about what somebody else thought about me or if I was disappointing somebody...[at a certain age] you're able to ask yourself in the grand scheme of things, what matters? [*writing to acknowledge, writing to understand*]

RQ2: Interpretive Thematic Analysis and Synthesis

The previous text referenced age and experience as factors with implications for well-being, such as how concerns or worries might change over time. In the analysis for both RQ1 and RQ2, age and experience were patterns in

the findings that may also influence workers' learning and well-being, necessitating further research. For the initial interpretations of the findings for RQ2, reflective writing seemed to benefit well-being by capturing and evaluating feelings to help the participants move forward. One participant suggested that writing at specific times, such as at the beginning of the day or the beginning of the work week, was a valuable frame for creating consistency and effectiveness. The participant portrayed reflective writing as impactful to the psyche, describing it as "great for my mental health and to really analyze how my week went and how I have been feeling...to leave it in that week and start the next week fresh."

Considering the experiences related to well-being, there were everyday needs among participants, such as recognizing the difficulties involved with maintaining physical health, like stopping smoking, losing weight, or finding the time to stay active with exercise. Reflective writing highlighted these needs with rich, descriptive, and interpretive language such as taking a walk at the right time "when the sun was over the horizon but it was still light enough," "a week of ups and downs," and being "happy and comfortable...life is good." In addition, some participants discussed the importance of hobbies like watching sports with family members or gardening, and one noted that extended work hours constrained free time:

Outside of work this week I took the time to play my drums which I haven't had the time to do in a while because I have been very busy with work [*constraints, time to recharge*]. I am a big fan of music, and I will always choose that over any other form of entertainment [*writing to articulate, meaningful experience*]. Playing the drums along to some good music or creating new beats is very therapeutic for me and is one of my main methods of stress relief. I feel like I am releasing all the tension held within [me] every time I play... I just focus on better healthy tranquility outside of work [*writing to focus, writing to listen*].

The same participant elaborated that over the last year, there was a high demand for extended work hours, sharing, "I'm putting in long hours, starting early and leaving late, then being contacted at home." Other participants also mentioned

extended work hours and stated that long hours can be “draining.” In the writing samples, I interpreted low levels of well-being from multiple expressions of “feeling tired” and being “mentally and physically exhausted.” Two individual writing prompts introduced in Week 4 aimed to elicit when there might be positive levels of well-being. The prompts asked, “During an average workday, when do you feel like you are at your best? and what does it mean to you to be at your best?” Like the findings for RQ1, time remained a significant factor across experiences, and interpretations of the texts continued to support the purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to think* and *writing to understand*. One participant introduced roles and responsibilities as an influence on well-being at work and discussed how distractions, the impact of changing positions, and worry and uncertainty were a combination of factors that influence stress levels and productivity:

I think in many ways [*writing to clarify, writing to think, multiplicity*], I am still trying to define what a “usual” workday looks like for me [*writing for clarity, writing to understand, self-awareness, critical thinking, continuum, need for stability, need for certainty*]. I have been in my current role for about a year [*time*], but it is very different [*newness, uncertainty, lack of control, need for learning, writing to learn, self-awareness*] than other work experiences [*need for experience, control, competency*]. I am no longer a leader [*perception of leadership as title or hierarchy-based, leadership role may be meaningful for worker, change*], so I have a lot more flexibility [*autonomy*] with my time and way less stress and demands regarding availability [*more control, perceived greater opportunity for well-being*]. However, while I am free to own my time [*accountability, flexibility, awareness, autonomy*] more [*abundance-scarcity*], it also has opened the door for disorganization [*self-awareness, perceived lack of control, order*]. I’ve been a leader for 8 years, so I am well-versed on setting reminders and timelines for my work and calendar [*tactical, skills-based knowledge, writing to clarify, confidence*]. Now as a project manager [*new role*], I feel like I “wait” for meetings to drop in and struggle to parcel out my time

[*time as an influence on disconnection*] into each of my projects and deliverables [*perception-reality, writing for self-awareness, writing for critical thinking, care/concern for work*]. I know this is all a personal growth opportunity [*writing for self-awareness, positivity*], but it has certainly added [*“adding more without taking away”*] a sense of “hurry up and wait” to my work life [*delineating work and home life*] that I had not anticipated [*self-awareness, perception-reality, writing to clarify, writing for critical thinking*]. When I think about this question, being at my best to me means [*self-awareness*] feeling like I really accomplished something [*productive, achiever, meaningful to the participant*] or successfully moved the work in the right direction [*contributing*]. Very ambiguous [*need for certainty, awareness, acknowledging multiplicity*], yes because that can mean many things [*acknowledging multiplicity*], but it’s how I can best [*continuum, need for excellence or precision*] describe [*arriving, decision-making, confidence*] being at my best. Usually [*time, looking back, past experience*] this means...[task omitted for confidentiality and anonymity] or finishing a deck we are going to present. So that’s the what, then when [*time*] is tricky [*time as challenge*]. With meetings, dogs, baby, and others in my household I work with A LOT of interruptions [*interruptions are impactful and meaningful to the participant in the text as presented in the syntax and given the tangible examples*]. Many days [*time*], I feel most accomplished between 7-9PM [*time*] when I get quiet undisturbed time [*meaningful to the participant*] after dinner [and] while baby naps [*abundance-scarcity of time, quality of time, adding-taking away*]. That’s when I can really focus [*self-awareness, meaningful to the participant, writing to understand*] on making my [*ownership, territorial, individual contribution over collective results?*] projects look and feel complete [*meaningful to the participant, care for the ordinary things in life, others’ perceptions*] without worrying [*stressor*] about timing [*time*] or breaking my train of thought [*concentration, writing to think*].

Time was a recurring pattern in the last text, with descriptive language further defining characteristics such as its ability to create perspective through distance and the quality of uninterrupted emphasis. Interpretive language reveals possible individual needs such as autonomy, clarity, meaningful work, and accomplishment or achievement. The experience further uncovered emerging patterns of multiplicity, meaning that there are diverse arrays of possibilities to consider and extremes or continuums, such as too much or not enough at play in the workplace and at home that may generate distraction and impact well-being. In addition, the prospect of a pattern with changing roles emerged. Shifting work experiences were interpreted from an understanding that participants were either new in their position, meaning that they had 1 year or less experience in the role, or were employed in a role where the responsibilities had increased or changed substantially within the last year. Several participants expressed that changing roles helped them feel challenged and provided them and to contribute to the organization positively.

Also related to roles, several participants discussed perceptions of authority among roles and offered that proving skills and capabilities to others are necessary. In the following text, one interpretation of a predominant theme, writing for emotional release, is illustrated with the participant's description of a specific work-related situation:

This week [*time*] at work I experienced a difficult [*challenge*] time [*time as an event*] dealing with a 3rd party vendor [*collaboration with extended contributors, valued as team members?*] with poor communication [*communication as value add*]...which resulted in me delaying a project that has an approaching deadline [*perception or reality, importance of good communication to the business results*]. It influenced my well-being by giving me anxiety [*feelings*] over the weekend [*time, time outside of work*] because I have been overthinking [*critical thinking, self-awareness, excess, unnecessary rumination*] about the kind of response I will receive from my managers [*others' perceptions, pleasing others, not enough?*]. My reporting manager is a pretty understanding guy [*meaningful for the participant*] but I

want him to know [*certainty, others' perceptions*] that I take my job seriously [*need to be understood, need to express values and be heard, experience, caring for the ordinary things in life, writing to understand, writing to articulate*] especially while my team is shorthanded at the moment [*awareness, pressure, stressor, writing to clarify*]. I am currently planning [*preparing, critical thinking*] on setting a meeting [*need for communication, connectedness*] with him this upcoming week [*time*] to properly explain [*continuum, clarifying, objectifying, defending*] how the vendor failed to deliver efficient customer service [*blaming, transferring risk, fear of personal failure*] to us [*connectedness, identity with team or organization*] and how I want to rectify [*action-orientation, writing to process, writing to solution*] this situation for an outcome of better communication going forward [*writing to identify continuous improvement*]. One thing I did [*looking back*] and will always continue to do [*time, looking ahead*] in this line of work [*role, meaningful to this role only?*] is to keep documentation [*need for evidence/proof, others' perceptions*] of how I [*disconnection from team*] professionally [*awareness of others' perception, judgment*] played my part [*role*] when conducting business and keep receipts of everything [*need for precision, clarity, perfection*] because that is what will save you [*need for security, need for evidence, need for justice*].

The last text revealed individual needs essential to well-being in the workplace, such as the need for understanding leaders and recognition for one's knowledge or experience. In addition, it exposed organizational opportunities, such as the potential for strengthening relationships across supply chains and collaboration among workers to improve when undesired or unexpected results occur. Finally, the reflective writing experience may have captured awareness of the emotions the participant experienced and had the potential to influence the ideas for future action and improvement. Other texts also discussed sadness, feeling overwhelmed, worried, or hesitant. Several participants wrote about feeling guilty and conflicted

but expressed feeling relieved by the process of writing about the feelings through the reflective writing experience.

RQ2: Meaningful Patterns and Influences on Well-Being

The findings in this section specific to RQ2 further defined the concept of writing to release and described two purposeful forms of reflective writing that appeared to promote well-being functioning as coping mechanisms for the participants: *writing for presence* and *writing for positivity*. Like the format used to describe the findings for RQ1, the section includes support from the participants' texts and weaves in personal interpretations and some Heideggerian philosophical constructs. As previously mentioned, elements of the findings reiterated from the reflective writing experience highlight their importance to learning and well-being.

Written responses from prompts in Week 6 of the study demonstrated how participants identified issues at work and home that were impacting their well-being. For example, participants shared problems such as dealing with uncertainty about the outcomes of medical tests and navigating challenging relationships with others. In addition, one shared the weight of pressures from the experience of dealing with a spouse's job loss:

My husband losing his job. For obvious reasons, this causes [*correlations to events*] a lot of financial stress [*awareness, threat to basic needs*] and overall stress [*combined pressures or stressors*] in the personal life [*separation of work and home life*]. Sometimes [*time*] it's hard to balance everything [*combined pressures or stressors, perception there is balance*] when something like this gets added on but nothing gets taken off your plate [*combined pressures, perception or experience that there could be adding and taking away*]. I would say this is a large driver [*quantifying, impact*] for my inconsistent [*less or more well-being? continuum*] mood [*well-being influences mood*] recently [*time*].

Other participants added more context to their experiences by discussing the impacts of issues on their well-being and how they responded to them. For example, one participant acknowledged pressures from stress and described refocus and rest as a specific response, writing, "this has been a very stressful week.

However, I find myself being more active trying to keep my mind off of the current situation. I will need to concentrate on getting more rest going forward.” Another described the significance of a work issue that took precedence over concerns for physical health and explained that self-care, time, and learning from experience would aid the response to stressors:

The critical issue of weight loss [*physical*] has had a lot [*significance*] of mental impact on me [*well-being as mental and physical health*]. As mentioned earlier [*time, looking back, meaningful to the participant*], it is very defeating [*feeling, self-awareness, meaningful to the participant*] to make progress and lose progress [*continuum*]. I’m sure [*need for certainty, need to understand*] there has also been physical impact in the sense that losing weight and then gaining weight [*continuum*] cannot possibly be good physically [*awareness*]. The work issue has impacted my well-being more [*self-awareness, quantity/magnitude*] from a mental perspective as I’m worried and I also don’t do well [*self-awareness*] with periods [*time as incremental*] of sadness [*feeling, self-awareness*]. I can usually [*time*] help myself to move on [*self-care*], but the role [*role*] I’m in currently is very involved with the future strategy of people talent [*meaningful work?*] [and] it is content that I am pretty [*quantifying*] immersed in [*awareness, proximity as close to, connection*]. I think [*writing to understand, writing to think*] that as I continue to [*time as progression*] become acclimated to this role [*role, experience*] and strategies become more centered [*precision, focus, meaningful for participant*] around the talent we currently have [*awareness, business acumen*], it will help [*time as progression, experience, time as clarity*] to remove that feeling of sadness.

Within the experiences, typical demands influencing potentially unhealthy stressors emerged. In later written responses, the participants shared that the reflective writing experiences supported relief from the stressors by generating presence, focus, and better understanding to help them gain a healthier perspective. Unique aspects of implications for well-being were also present, such as a participant’s

suggestion that more prominent societal factors or awareness of perceived factors may exacerbate pressure:

Just reading this question made me emotional [*writing to think, writing for stress relief*]...I am exhausted [*self-awareness*]. Emotionally, physically, [*writing to clarify*] but regardless [*continuum*], life goes on [*time*] and others depend on me [*critical thinking, obligation, accountability, responsibility, care for other things in life*], tired or not [*continuum*], things need to be done [*critical thinking, ownership, responsibility, accountability, tenacity*]. In a sense [*multiplicity of feelings*], it's nice to feel needed [*connectedness, purpose, meaningful to the participant*] but on the other hand [*continuum, multiplicity*] I find it difficult [*self-awareness, critical thinking, continuum*] for time alone [*need for separation, writing to clarify*] to myself [*self-awareness, meaningful for the participant*] to decompress [*writing as a release, need to release, self-care*]. It makes me feel like there's a bubble [*emptiness, gaps*] inside of me [*isolated, ownership, repressed*] that may burst [*self-awareness, magnitude of pressures*], and it will be ugly, angry, and probably hurt some feelings [*self-awareness, impact to others, care for others*]. It's like when people ask me "how's motherhood?" and I feel immediately irritated [*self-awareness*]. It's such an innocent question [*critical thinking*]. But as someone who never pictured herself being a parent [*self-awareness, unexpected roles and responsibilities*], and as someone who is uncomfortable around children in general [*self-awareness*], the question feels like mockery [*perception or reality, self-critical, not being enough, perceptions of others*]. There's just something [*writing to clarify*] about the word motherhood that maybe I don't like in general? [*self-awareness, impact of language, writing to clarify*] It has this weight [*burden*] of the misogynistic roles that society assigns to women [*social awareness, knowledge, beliefs*]. No one asks my partner, "How's fatherhood?" [*perception or reality, continuum, fairness or justice*] Fatherhood even sounds like [*impact of language, sensing*] a rarely used [*proportion, continuum*] term. Why not just ask, how's the baby? Or

how is parenting going? Because being a mother doesn't make you a parent [awareness, experience, knowledge], so why motherhood at all? All of that [combined pressure] squirrel moment ranting [perception of lack of focus, writing to release] to say, I am tired [feeling], but I am coping [need for coping mechanisms] the best I can [self-care]. Being stressed about my mother and work [combined pressures, stressors] definitely [certainty] [makes] it difficult to enjoy some others things in life [missing opportunities], but I try to [managing or not managing?] continue [time] looking for the positive [self-care, coping] and capturing little moments [perception and articulation of the word little may be significant, meaningful for participant] of relief and joy [continuum] with our baby [connectedness at home], since those moments only happen once [time, meaningful for the participant].

The last text introduced personal coping mechanisms the participant understood and actively utilized to influence positive responses to stress at work and home. It also may have demonstrated the capability of reflective writing as a means of coping offering emotional release and the perspective to reinforce the importance of presence and positivity. The study's findings indicated that as a purposeful form of writing, writing to release involves intentional reflection, emphasizing describing and interpreting feelings and emotions.

Writing to Release. Releasing emotions and feelings through reflective writing may be experienced through unprompted free writing about any topic that comes to mind or guided by prompts offered, with or without interaction with others. The current study produced multiple interpretations of *writing to release* as a purposeful form of reflective writing. The findings propose that *writing for release* may enable listening for feelings, thinking for clarity and solutions, and promoting growth and development through objective analysis of experiences. In addition, a distinct finding suggested there are benefits to using reflective writing to complement advisory or mentoring partnerships. Across the texts, all the participants surfaced specific feelings such as anger, disappointment, frustration, and sorrow in one or more of their written responses. One participant highlighted

how some individual writing prompts evoked emotions before the writing began. Another reiterated a similar experience referring to how some writing prompts felt like “triggering a backlash.”

Further inquiry through subsequent interviews with the participant allowed the participant to continue to provide details about the specific experience. This participant explained that demeaning and damaging comments were exchanged over several days during the situation and noted eroded working relationships among the team. The participant also described how the tension at work inhibited the ability to reason and be productive, mentioning that responding to the study’s writing responses for the week was impossible to complete in the moment. The participant shared there was value in the writing process as it permitted a “flashback” followed by concentrated thinking about the “really stressful” and intricate aspects. They also offered the need for flexibility regarding when to respond to them. The participant elaborated on the stress in the experience describing constant phone calls and text messages from colleagues and expounding on the time constraints created by a perception of the need for extraordinary availability to support the teams spanning multiple time zones over numerous weeks. The participant suggested the reflective writing experience helped build self-awareness and self-confidence as it created space for questioning the events that occurred and allowed for the capture and release of feelings. Also, reflective writing helped clarify and understand the participant’s perceptions of the situation.

Another interpretation of writing to release involves how reflective writing may encourage clarity that stimulates innovative solutions. A need for clarity was a recurring subtheme in the study developing from experiences in different ways, such as in the detailed questions some participants wrote and asked during the interactive sessions. In addition, there was a need for accuracy and preciseness demonstrated in texts that referred to improving communication skills or recovering from mistakes through clear and concise communication and documentation. One participant captured clarity similar to Heidegger’s (1962) “everydayness” (p. 102) in descriptive and interpretive language, stating that “having clarity and being able to solve problems and feel forward momentum is

something I value at work.” The participant further explained that the experience of reflective writing “helped my well-being in the sense that I felt satisfied and accomplished when I was able to make progress and tackle or acknowledge an issue through writing.” Correspondingly, another text discussed overcoming negative feelings about failure and using it to learn and grow:

I believe that most people, professionals included, fail more often than we may cognitively recognize or acknowledge...we have all failed at one time or another but may not have recognized or acknowledged [that] failure is where we...learn...what could be learned...Failure is a very tough, harsh word which may be some of the reason we don't recognize instances where we've 'failed.' Failure does not have to be a huge devastating event. I believe many overlook failure because we are looking for something huge such as losing an election or a quarterback throwing an interception in a big game or making a decision that has costly impacts. In actuality, failure can be as simple as missing the mark on an assignment, realizing that I've gone down the wrong path and need to course correct or missing an exit on the interstate. Would most people equate that to a failure? Possibly not. Is it something we can learn from? Definitely, yes. In summary, I think we experience many 'mini failures' that lead to greater learning and knowledge, but because we don't always realize and acknowledge that has what occurred, we are learning without even realizing it or missing out on an opportunity to analyze and learn even more.

The third interpretation of writing for release involves writing to grow from experiences similar to the last text, where failure may be a catalyst for learning and well-being. Participants described growing through reflective writing as the ability to let go of feelings sharing that the experience of reflective writing was like “stress relief or therapy” and noting examples such as how the individual writing prompts helped balance “the adrenaline rush” during some situations. Participants often identified age and tenure as influences on growth, comparing themselves to others through self-assessments of their skills and experience in their roles. In explicit language, age was prevalent in the texts, appearing as “being the oldest” and “being

the youngest” in a team or among colleagues. It also occurred frequently in the context of having more or less tenure or being more or less experienced than others. Work experience was another experiential theme described in the texts with unique interpretations by the participants. One experience labeled levels of experience, offering, “If I could create my next role, it would be a senior [*omitted type*] role in my position. It will require having the confidence to take lead of projects and other junior level talent looking to excel in this industry.” It might be interesting to further explore the connotation of the labels in a future study.

Another participant discussed age in the context of roles, explaining that it is meaningful to have opportunities to change positions to learn and grow and offering a perception that there is a need to be young in the contemporary workplace. This participant explained,

I tend to [*pattern of prior experiences*] put myself in situations [*achieving, ambition, willing to be uncomfortable*] where I’m always having to learn something new [*meaningful to the participant, critical thinking*]. It is rare for me to stay in the same role [*job crafting? lacking identity, seeking something missing, role may be broken? Relationships?*] for more than 3 years [*time, how was that time determined? Why? Meaningful work? Meaningful change?*]. Prior to [*time, looking back*] the role I’m in now, I spent only 1 year in 2 different roles before coming into this position [*time, career as a zig zag*]. I know this is probably a much more generic answer [*precision, accuracy, expectation that research is looking for an answer*] than you might have been looking for [*writing for me, writing for the study vs. writing to learn?*] but overall, my career over the past 10 years has been filled with changes whether it was my moving to a new position, learning a new part of the organization, or moving processes forward [*momentum, meaningful for participant*] and improving them from when I first started them [*continuous improvement*]. Because of this, I feel like [*feeling or logic?*] I’ve been able to adapt to many of the changes in the work world [*change agility, what changes?*] since I first began in it. I think that helps to be relevant [*meaning valuable to the workforce, to the organization, to the*

world?] and stay ‘young’ [*meaningful to the participant, young can learn? young is relevance?*].

Age, experience, and tenure within the organization were meaningful patterns across the shared experiences with reflective writing, and the texts reflected that they might also create stressors in the workplace. For example, several examples of perceptions suggested that being the youngest team member required holding back input at times, as more tenured workers may disregard and circumnavigate younger team members with less experience:

I’m the youngest on my team actually...and so of course these guys you know, they've been in this industry in the same line of work for way longer than me...some of them way longer than I've been alive. They're really smart...they kind of just know everything. They have the answers to everything, and me, I have the answers sometimes and sometimes even if I do or don't fully know the answer, I don't want to contribute.

Only one participant shared an experience describing what it was like to be older in the workforce, suggesting that with age, there may be a need for more continued self-awareness and emotional intelligence to remain flexible as younger resources fill open positions;

My manager [recently] retired and has been replaced by a young woman the age of my daughter. She definitely has had more experience in [area omitted to protect anonymity] than I have, but not in running programs. I will need to dig deep to be able to have a positive approach to this leadership shift.

Another text highlighted that time and experience influence growth and development:

I tend to approach work the same way I approach life. The skills I use at work are life skills and vice-versa. If there were one big difference, I would say that at home, I might get a little more frustrated and behave in a less professional way than I would if I were at work. Through the years, I’ve learned that the frustration and less professional [behavior] doesn’t really produce a better result. However, sometimes it just feels good to get the emotion out. At work, that type of emotion would not be acceptable.

Similarly, in response to a writing prompt about priorities, one participant captured the idea of age as a factor in growth and development, identifying the elements of time and the possibility that change and progress in a career journey are not always linear:

To learn and grow, most people start at one point and often branch out into others before deciding on where they are going to funnel their talents, skills, and energy. I would also say that the big things I wanted to do at 25 looked very different at 35 and then 45 and so on. Depending on the season of life you are in, the big thing can and should change. When I was 25, I don't know that I would have been able to envision what one big thing would be later in my life.

A brief dialogue in a guided writing session uncovered a unique finding related to growth and development. Participants discussed never feeling like they were enough despite their knowledge and diligence for growth. Some shared that mentors had been especially helpful in guiding and encouraging them, and others discussed feeling like they were at their best when they were "helping others." One wrote in multiple prompt responses about the importance of supporting team members and solving problems together, demonstrating an interpretation of sharp awareness and passion for the opportunities within the work. One participant described,

There are good days and bad days. Overall, I'm feeling a bit tired and not focused on my well-being. The days that feel more rewarding are those where I can help solve a problem. Most of my days are brimming with "problems," but my job isn't to be the solver (as in tech solution) but the coordinator of solving them. This is exactly the part of my job I wasn't satisfied with when I was in [omitted area]. I absolutely LOVE helping my team get past a problem. If I can coach them, support them in some way—I'm happy. Lately—it's been the opposite. I feel no one is happy, pressure is constant. Everyone wants delivery sooner...all tough.

The previous experience noted that there seems to be clarity around meaningful work. At the same time, there may also be a need to continue to explore the

feelings associated with the perception that no one is happy. Correspondingly, the findings suggested that there may be perceived personal deficiencies, such as feeling inadequate or undervalued, in the workplace. Explicitly referring to the construct of “imposter syndrome” described by Clance and Imes (1978), several participants explained that in the contemporary work environment, they consistently question their skills, abilities, and fit for their current roles. Some mentioned changing positions, and some shared they have in the past or are currently considering leaving the organization for a completely different work experience. One participant expressed the perception of being overlooked and unappreciated:

I’m beginning to see that my future may not be in this role [*writing to visualize*]. What I’m good at is not being highlighted [*writing to acknowledge*]. I am reflecting on what I would like to do more and will search for other opportunities [*writing to clarify, writing to plan*] that align better to my strengths where I can truly add value And Feel Valued [*writing to release*].

Writing to release was associated with voicing feelings, encouraging thinking, and creating growth and development. The prior experience demonstrated how a participant may have been able to use the reflective writing process to create a plan for addressing feeling undervalued. Reflective writing also revealed patterns like age and experience that may influence the findings and offer insight into the participants' needs in the workplace. For instance, navigating the multiple generations collaborating in the workplace was revealed in the texts repeatedly. The following section defines writing for presence and positivity as two purposeful forms of reflective writing that may be suitable coping mechanisms to enhance individual well-being.

Coping Mechanism – Writing for Presence. Presence or attentiveness means caring about what matters most and requires meticulous focus among the many distractions that connect the multifaceted details of life (Ford, 2008). The combined pressures of work, like constant interaction with technology, supporting others, increasing expectations for “results and output” (Andrulli & Gerards, 2023),

and other responsibilities, can be overwhelming and detrimental to well-being. In addition, workers face caring for children and aging parents at home and many responsibilities, including managing time to pursue additional education, exercise, and serve in their communities. One participant explained how well-being is impacted by learning to appreciate experiences and realize meaningful time:

I decided that I needed to...really clean up my act and help myself out. So I quit smoking two months ago and...whenever I'm stressed, I exercise...and I feel [I'm] better and going back and forth to my doctor to make sure that everything that's happening physically right now it's not some sort of illness...we've pretty much eliminated everything...[and] narrowed it down to anxiety...I lost my dad...the day before his 62nd birthday...so I do know there's no such thing as losing somebody [without] impact...and maybe the pressures that I'm putting on myself that's my biggest issue...to not have any regrets with my mom and [to] enjoy the time we have. She's been pretty healthy up until this last year...when she was in the hospital a couple of times...which was frightening.

Words and language depicting the impact of time and experience stand out in the text, illustrating the potential for significant effects on well-being. In another example, meaningful time or presence was attributed to well-being and described as the need for space and focus. *Writing for presence* may be explored and defined with some context from Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical constructs.

Describing "the everydayness of Being-in-the-world," Heidegger (1927/1962) emphasized that humans engage in "concernful dealings" and have needs from the world that may go unnoticed until the discovery that they are missing, dysfunctional, or presenting barriers (pp. 102–103). In comparison, everyday responsibilities can prevent seeing the opportunities that make life meaningful (Ford, 2008). In the study, participants often discussed high demands and distractions preventing them from engaging with concentration, such as being disturbed by pets or family members when working from home or being interrupted at home by texts or calls from work. One participant reinforced time as finite and surfaced the importance of colleagues and collaboration:

[It's] challenging. There is never enough time to do all that is expected. I have great teams that are in my organization and so many wonderful collaborators/contributors. I feel that I need to lean on them too much in order to share out with others and because my team is broad (both in work and geography) I can't know everything—the many inquiries on where things are [and] when they will go are impossible to keep up with.

Responding to the pressures of work and home life, participants also wrote about learning to cope with outside help from counselors and mentors who also recommended that journal writing may be helpful. One participant mentioned the irony of being in the current study and being asked by a counselor to start a new journal:

I have met with a counselor who has asked me to journal my future self! So, I am now journaling daily to help me in visualizing [*writing to see*] what my future self will look like [*writing to explore*]. It is so ironic that writing will be part of the solution. I'm not surprised at all because I know the powers of putting thoughts on paper, but it was so timely given these writing assignments.

This participant explicitly mentioned having a counselor in the last example. Other participants also described managing responsibilities and personal challenges through close relationships; some described navigating alone as best they could. Several mentioned the need for a conscious focus on presence “in the moment” describing disciplined behaviors and conscious decisions such as being agreeable with others or not speaking up to “maintain the peace.” Several shared that some issues will naturally subside as attention shifts with time and other changes. One participant wrote about current work issues: “I think time will help. It will help because we will ultimately move into a place where we settle into focusing on how to do great things with the talent we have in our organization.” Several participants inferred spirituality as an outlet for dealing with life's pressures without sharing language that indicated any particular religious affiliation, although one mentioned that attending church was meaningful. In response to a free writing prompt, one participant shared the importance of unwavering hope and commitment:

[The] topic for this week is persevering. Having the courage to keep going despite experiencing obstacles on every corner. I'm also realizing that there is a purpose for everything. This is also where my faith comes to play.

Another participant illustrated a possible example of *writing for presence* as a coping mechanism responding to two prompts that explored a recent experience and how it might be changed if there was an option for reliving it. The texts brought attention to a possible pattern of concern for the physical location of work and how it may relate to well-being. In the first response, the participant described a meaningful trip:

This weekend my husband was out of town...so I took the opportunity to go up to...[*location omitted*] with my two girlfriends. I feel like now that I work from home, I find it challenging sometimes to put myself first and get myself out of the house. We...did a nice nature walk and had great conversations. This really just helped me reset and enjoy nature for a day. This made me realize even though I am busy and have school and work and chores and whatnot, [that] I still need to get out of the house to benefit my mental health.

In a second prompt response, the same participant wrote about changing the previous experience if it was possible to go back in time, including how and why. The second prompt explicitly described awareness of the need for presence:

I think I would change the day with my girlfriends in the aspect of being more present. It was a long week and although I was excited to be out, I was also excited to get home and relax. Looking back at it now, I should never be in a rush to get home and truly enjoy the time I have with my friends and the adventures we have.

In addition to the potential importance of presence to well-being, the participant's description of working from home in the prior text may indicate that remote work is a current contributor to feelings of isolation from the rest of the world for the participant. Likewise, all participants shared perspectives on remote or hybrid work, consistently referring to the shift to more distributed work as a factor related to well-being, yet with various interpretations of the impacts and suggestions for

additional workplace policy. The written responses referring to remote or hybrid work may reflect the need to feel seen and heard and be recognized for contributions to results regardless of physical location. One participant explicitly described the meaning of remote work as disconnection from work and colleagues:

It's really difficult to know what's going on with other people because they're like you...somewhere [else], doing something else. To stay connected...we have to work a little bit harder at...staying engaged and keeping your team engaged...I think that's a little harder...people can actually hide out pretty easily as far as not having anybody know what you do or what you're doing. I have to make a conscious effort to remember to email my boss sometimes and let her know what I'm doing and what I'm working on. I send her something every week to let her know what my plans are...I document everything...you have to make it [*connection, physical presence*]...a conscious effort.

Beyond the disconnection from remote work, other experiences highlighted that the experience of reflective writing created attention to work and mental health:

So far, I think the prompts have done a great job getting me to think [*writing to think, writing to inquire, writing to question*] about what has happened in work and how that has affected my mental health. I don't know if this has anything to do with the study [*writing to clarify*], but I am always curious to see how much our personal lives affect our well-being towards work and our attitudes towards work. I know that sounds straightforward...of course our personal lives affect our work to some degree, but I know it can go one way or another [*multiplicity*]. Some people dive into work when something in their personal life is wrong versus someone [else] being too distracted and can't focus on work due to the personal issue depending on what it is [*writing for presence*]. I think it's hard to set boundaries between your personal life and work and your overall well-being because we spend more time at work.

Writing for presence developed as a coping mechanism from texts that described how the experience of reflective writing benefited reduced feelings of

being overwhelmed or overcome by tasks. In one text, a participant explicitly described the experience of reflective writing as a means for “dimming the extraneous noise” of distractions. Correspondingly, in the following text, one participant expanded on the need for focus on what matters summarizing how managing the multitude of activities in the work may cloud the attentiveness to a purpose or the real significance and value of the work:

For the personal issues, I think the journaling solution speaks for itself. For the work issue, getting to put it on paper helps me to realize that there is more to my work than just the cruddy content. I may have written this in a prior assignment, but during times of too many ‘to-dos’ both at work and at home, I write lists of what needs to be done. When all of the to-dos are in my head, they feel incredibly overwhelming. As soon as I write them down, it suddenly becomes manageable and not so overwhelming anymore.

Considering the possible significance of writing for presence as a coping mechanism for well-being, one text emphasized prioritizing people’s needs at work. Exploring what appeared to be meaningful conflicting feelings and logical conclusions about a current work situation, the example seemed to resonate with the importance of reflective writing as a center or grounding mechanism for values and action:

I’m not sure why [*writing to clarify, deeper meaning?*] it has taken until this week [*time*] for me to verbalize this [*writing to articulate*] because I think in my head [*writing to think*], I always knew [*prior knowledge, preconception*] what I’m about to share: People take a lot of time...I have direct reports but also have a lot of people that are in a program that I run. It takes a lot of time [*meaningful to participant*] to treat people in a responsible, respectful, and caring way [*meaningful to participant*]. Please note [*pause, writing to convey other’s understanding*], I’m not complaining [*denotative complaining, writing to clarify*], I’ve just somehow come to that realization [*writing to clarify, certainty*]. For the past two weeks, I have been juggling [*risk, balancing, blending, action-oriented*] different deadlines and initiatives [*need for prioritization, focus, attention*]. It had been difficult

[*challenge, pressure, stressor*] to make forward progress [*meaningful to participant*] and since I was in the midst [*distractions, competing priorities*] of trying to accomplish meeting deadlines and beginning new initiatives [*challenge, pressure, stressor*], I couldn't figure out why it was taking me so long [*writing to think*]. I had definitely [*certainty*] been putting in the right amount of hours [*expectations for standards? meaningful to participant*]. I had been attentive [*self-awareness, awareness of presence, meaningful to participant*]. I sure [*certain*] felt like I was working hard, but I was still not making the progress I had been expecting [*self-awareness, critical thinking*]. That is when I realized it was because there were a lot of things that crept up [*why unexpected?*] related to people. There were some organizational changes [*navigating change*] that created high emotion for my direct reports...and others [*emotional intelligence, managing well-being of self and others, care for others*]. As I'm coming to realize this [*writing to think, writing for solutions*], going forward [*looking ahead*], I will make sure [*accepting responsibility and ownership*] that even though relationships with employees are for the most part intangible [*writing to gain perspective, meaning?*], I am going to give myself some grace [*well-being, self-care*] if a deadline or more hands-on work must go by the wayside to attend to people [*prioritizing, putting others' needs first*]. I am also going to make sure [*committing to action*] I am making my leader aware [*writing to think, writing to plan, writing for solutions,*] if that is what is taking me away from deliverables my manager expects [*meeting expectations, acknowledging expectations*] to see so that we can decide together [*collaborating, influencing*] how to divide and conquer [*partnership*]. Given the organization I am in [*perception of organization, trust*], I suspect [*uncertainty?*] that we will always [*time, certainty*] approach our work with the mindset [*awareness*] of 'people over processes' [*perception of the organization, meaningful for participant, care for others*].

In the current study, writing for presence was identified as a possible form of reflective writing that may serve as a coping mechanism to manage stress. Diverse experiences framed the finding, including the need to focus on engaging others for support and supporting others in similar circumstances. Participants discussed the experience of reflective writing as a beneficial practice to identify and prioritize activities or tasks, to bring clarity to purpose and meaningful experiences, and to help them place more emphasis on the experiences in their work and home life that are the most meaningful to them.

Coping Mechanism – Writing for Positivity. Managing emotions and pressures among competing priorities at work and home and being aware of the need for presence to enjoy life is further complicated and intensified by adverse experiences. Throughout the study, participants offered experiences such as declining health or job loss that, by nature, may threaten basic needs (Argyris, 2004). Writing for positivity emerged as a possible form of reflective writing that may serve as a coping mechanism for managing the stress and uncertainty associated with the continuums of emotions and other phenomena contributing to the complexity and problematic aspects of work and home life. Like the previous sections, writing for positivity is explored in this section through the language provided in whole texts intermingled with interpretive analysis from the study's bridling journal and some possible associations to Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical perspectives.

Throughout the 10-week study, I observed my perspective broadening from the influence of the participants. Even in their time away from work, they were willing to reach out and connect, offering inspiration, providing insight and feedback for the research, and helping me shape the analysis process and uncover the findings. For example, one insight from a participant magnified the potential need for purposeful writing that encouraged positivity as it described how it is difficult to process and overcome adversity as there is often a lack of balance in the experience of life:

My husband is losing his job. For obvious reasons, this causes a lot of financial stress and overall stress in the personal life. Sometimes it's hard to

balance everything when something like this gets added on but nothing gets taken off your plate. I would say this is a large driver for my inconsistent mood recently.

I feel like the last few weeks have been crazy and I have been all over the place [*writing to think*]. With life being hectic but time not slowing down, it just makes it work. Found out 3 weeks ago that my husband is losing his job, so the stress of bills on top of homework for school and everything at work, I feel like I have been just barely scooting by [*writing to listen, writing to process*]...something I hate [*meaningful, facticity*]. Mmm okay I'll keep this short and not rant [*meaningful not to rant*], I'm ready to write [*enthusiasm for release?*]!

Acknowledging the participant's challenges in the last text and their potential for impact on well-being led to an interpretation of the multiplicity pattern. For instance, multiple texts described managing continuums or ranges of emotions, such as experiencing joy or gain and pain or loss. Several continuums categorized as experiential themes were grouped into experiential themes and labeled. They explored using strengths, learning from weaknesses, and visualizing opportunity and hope over despair. I found possible evidence of Heidegger's (1927/1962) construct of facticity that concerned how humans use limitations such as strengths and weaknesses and create habits with poor choices even when they identify the adverse consequences. Examining another text describing a participant's best and worst day at work, a view toward scarcity and inadequacy emerged. An interesting perspective is that negativity may reduce well-being:

I can't even think about my last couple of weeks in periods of days. But I get the gist of the question. The negative days/moments seem to take a bigger toll than the highlight moments/days. Those are poof, gone fast. The negative weighs and eats at me until well-being is a term I know of, but don't really feel I'm paying attention to.

Reiterating similar sentiments that positive moments at work are short-lived and challenging moments outweigh the positive, and another participant described conflicting feelings:

It's difficult to call a whole day [*time*] best or worst for me [*multiplicity*]. My days feel like they happen in bursts or spurts of activity [*writing to visualize, writing to process*], followed by lulls in between. If I had to pick a best day, I would probably say holiday planning day. Now, it was really just a one-hour meeting [*meaningful*], but it set a fun and energetic tone for my whole day. Worst day at work recently, was when I was pulled into a project that is going to map out impacts and job elimination to employee roles. It was the worst day for two reasons though [*writing to clarify, writing to process*]. One being the reason I was looped into this work was due to my peers' father [who] passed away and he is taking time away to mourn and make arrangements. My heart has been heavy just thinking of what he is going through [*meaningful event*]. I have not lost a parent yet, so I can't imagine the emotional weight he is feeling at this point in time [*what it means to care for others*]. The second reason being that of all the projects they could assign me to they picked the type of work that I hate the most [*facticity*]. I am passionate about employees and making them feel good about working for my company but it's very difficult to continue that passion when I don't know if the decisions we make are what's best for our employees [*writing to process, writing to understand*]. Granted, I'm not the decision maker in these scenarios, and I have a limited view into the reasoning for these changes [*perception*] because I've been included so late in the game [*limitations*] but none the less, it's work that's hard to embrace with a positive outlook. I'd say the worst day was more influential, mostly because of the amount of time I spent thinking and worrying [*writing to release*] about what is happening to others.

The previous two texts initially highlighted that defining the best and worst days at work was difficult, as if the reflective writing experience may not enable the capture of experiences. In the ongoing writing, however, both examples conveyed a spectrum of experiences highlighting awareness of the opportunities for positive or different thinking. Correspondingly, one unique writing sample distinctively captured a range of feelings and perceptions that may be useful to the

organization as a finding that illustrates the need for encouraging self-efficacy, opportunity, and agency:

My current work assignment is something I grapple with emotionally [*writing to release*]. Work is fine overall. I like [to] work, it helps me feel accomplished, and I want my work to be valuable [*writing to clarify*]. I like helping others and problem solving...[omitted details for anonymity and confidentiality] I have been such a strong advocate for my company... I think that the company tries to put forth an effort to be customer and employee-centric...but... it feels difficult to be as excited anymore...how can I openly support my work when the planning is so monopolized in the decision making process that we are really just doing what we are told instead of working together to help [*perception, writing to process*]...in a way I feel helpless as I watch changes happen and feel a little muted as my ideas and suggestions are dismissed. How are we empowering employees and customers if they have no choices?

Although the prior writing began focusing on the participant's well-being, critical thinking during the reflective writing may have produced detailed and insightful opportunities significant for both the participant and the organization with broader implications. Specifically, looking within the language of the meaning units such as advocacy and "working together," there may be some actionable areas for further inquiry. In another text, the importance of positivity for well-being emerged from the experience of reflective writing can promote optimism and action over dwelling on obstacles:

I think this really gave me a chance to sit down and just look at how I was feeling the past week...[at] work...what were my challenges and really...looking at more of the bright side of things and not sitting down...[saying] oh, wow, this is such a tough week. It really gave me an opportunity to...[say], okay, these are the challenges that I overcame, and this is what I'm going to do next week even better.

The last text explicitly described the reflective writing experience as a conduit for thinking about opportunities for the future. Again, explicit language discussed how

understanding emotions, mood, and perspective may encompass optimistic thinking and provide performance benefits. Its interpretation might mean that emphasis on positivity can influence higher levels of well-being. It did not, however, offer the same interpretive quality as other texts. It may be an exemplar for comparison to inform future studies about the quality of language and layered interpretation.

Notably, several participants discussed self-talk or internal consciousness, contending that the reflective writing experience had influenced their awareness of how negative self-talk negatively impacted their well-being. I had not considered self-talk before the study, and it was not within the scope of the literature review. In the following text, self-talk or the “internal voice” is referenced in managing time and competing priorities:

Procrastination. Is it procrastination or prioritization? [*writing for clarity*]
This week for instance, something each evening after work... working out, hair appointment, board meeting, other meetings, plus prepping for a vacation [*distractions, competing priorities*]. There is a lot to do. I don't mind that pace when it's not work related [*meaningful*] and work isn't also pressing. How many balls can one...keep in the air? I think I do pretty well [*writing to listen*]. I need to slap myself on the back and give a...[compliment] vs. a flogging for being behind. Sigh. [*writing for release*]
Some things are hard to change [*facticity*] and the biggest for me is that internal voice who thinks I'm not good enough... [That voice] needs to go away and at least pipe down for some other piece of me who thinks I am.

The last text illustrated several unique meaning units with potential for further study in the context of well-being, including the impacts of procrastination, the comparison of managing priorities at home to those at work, and the idea that individuals pressure themselves with an “internal voice” and might benefit from self-care. Similarly, self-talk appeared in multiple texts with descriptive language. Several participants expressed influence from an internal voice and described it as “self-talk” or being aware of the “voice inside my head.” Several participants described self-talk as disadvantageous. One participant offered that the experience

of reflective writing was like reducing the magnitude of self-talk to influence presence and well-being and possibly improve performance at work:

I could see that for me, I bring a better self to the work table if I'm not anxious, worried, or stressed about something that needs to be done at work [*writing to clarify*, *writing to understand*, *writing to see*]. In the cases where writing helped me to identify a solution or where writing just helped me to feel better about the issue [*writing to release*], it allowed me to bring a more present self to my work [*writing for presence*]. I was able to enjoy what I was doing in the moment [*meaning*] because the noise in my head wasn't as loud [*writing to process*, *writing to understand*]. Any time you can be fully engaged and not thinking about other things [*writing to understand*, *writing to clarify*], outcomes are going to be better. In retrospect, I think this answer can also be one that I should add to Question 3 because bringing my present self [*writing for presence*] to the table and dimming extraneous noise is also how writing influenced my well-being at work. See, the more I write, the more clarity that comes along with it [*writing for positivity*]!

Seeing *writing for presence* and *writing for positivity* as purposeful forms of reflective writing that enable coping mechanisms for well-being may also involve other purposeful forms of writing, such as *writing to think* and *writing to release*. Each purposeful form of reflective writing can provide opportunities to consider and acknowledge emotions, with an intentional emphasis on positive responses that can be helpful to well-being. In addition, purposeful forms of reflective writing in combinations and sequenced groups might offer a more personalized experience that may help individuals view situations with varied perceptions. There are innumerable ways to structure the purposeful forms of reflective writing. For instance, an example of a sequenced reflective writing experience that may influence presence might contain four purposeful forms of reflective writing, including:

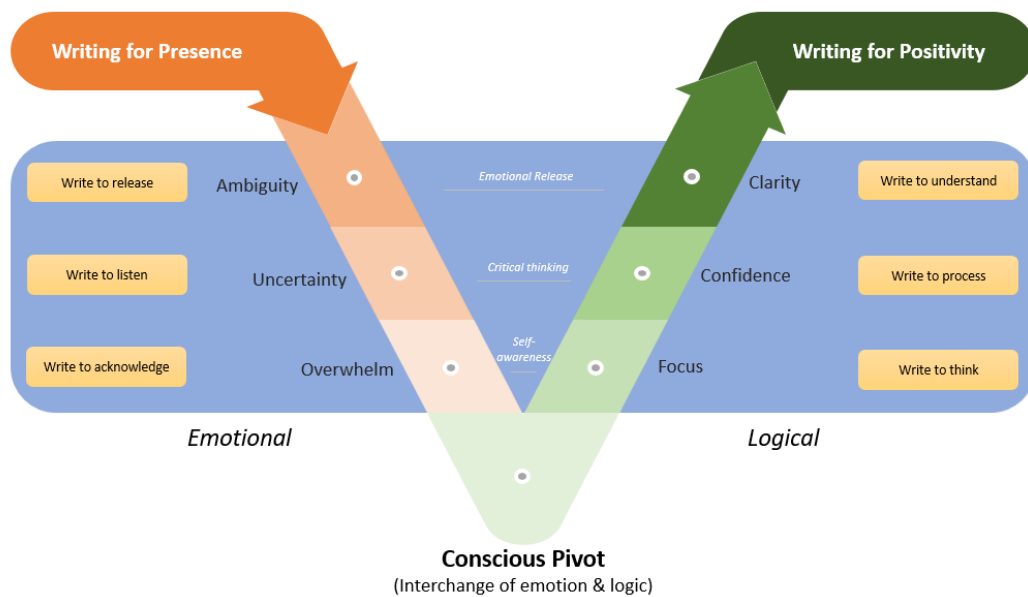
- *writing for presence* with freewriting prompts
- *writing to listen* with prompts that capture self-talk or others' perspectives

- *writing to acknowledge* through responses to previous prompts, with or without peer reviews
- *writing for presence* to debrief the experience

Purposeful forms of reflective writing designed in a cadence or sequence construe a process approach toward improved well-being for individuals willing to gain knowledge, manage emotions, and change direction. Figure 5 visually depicts a potential model of reflective writing that incorporates a directional view of the shift of mindset that may occur with the use of multiple and sequenced purposeful forms of reflective writing. It combines *writing for presence* and *writing for positivity* and entails a conscious pivot toward hope and inspiration for the future. The sequence of the purposeful forms of reflective writing within invokes a downward progression toward enhanced understanding. As stressors tear down and cloud action, the experience of reflective writing may build up optimism and resilience. In a spiritual context, Palmer (2000) described a similar journey suggesting that achieving well-being was process-oriented, involving being “forced underground” before reaching an understanding (p. 69).

Figure 5

Increasing Positivity Through Purposeful Forms of Reflective Writing



RQ2: Summary of Findings

The findings answered RQ2 by suggesting that reflective writing may influence and benefit well-being, offering specific coping mechanisms for managing stress, including writing for presence and positivity. In this section, samples of the texts describing the participants' experiences melded with interpretations of the possible meanings support the evidence for RQ2. In addition, additional individual interviews scheduled after the reflective writing experiences contributed to the depth of the data. Table 6 presents examples of the patterns, meaning units, related themes, and interpretive understandings related to RQ2 and further illustrates ways reflective writing may influence well-being in the workplace. From the interpretation of the findings under RQ2, a unique finding emerged suggesting that the design of future reflective writing experiences might include mentoring or advisory partnerships among participants aimed at cultivating a network of supportive relationships infused with the empathy and connection necessary for resilience.

Furthermore, the findings suggested the flexibility of reflective writing experiences may introduce additional benefits when combined with particular learning and well-being needs. For example, combining the purposeful forms of reflective writing with multiple reflective writing experiences like individual and guided writing over time or sequencing them in specific combinations to introduce and enhance layered introspection may be helpful for some participants. Moreover, tailoring approaches to emphasize personal reflective writing followed by guided writing enabling social interaction may expose additional benefits. Finally, working with participants to increase their knowledge of the purposeful forms of reflective writing and allowing them to structure their own experiences individually or with others could provide endless possibilities.

Table 6

Examples of Patterns, Meaning Units, Themes, and Interpretation for RQ2

Theme	Meaning Unit	Forms of Reflective Writing	Interpretive Analysis
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Time	<p>“Time flies when you are doing something you feel good about and feel that you are good at. When you are excited about something that energy is inspiring, and I enjoy it even more when it rubs off onto others!”</p>	<p>Writing to understand Writing for self-awareness Writing to clarify</p>	<p>Time is defined as velocity, strengths, passions, energy for well-being, positivity in meaningful activity/work; motivation and engagement [note in bridling journal] “Without being formally introduced to the concept of flow as it relates to the context of intrinsic motivation in the study, participants discussed the importance of being fully engaged or absorbed in experiences both at work and home and how immersion in experiences can increase satisfaction or happiness in life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).</p>
Time	<p>“Years ago, when I was put in a manager position over a group that was overstaffed...I knew I would be expected to make tough choices...there really isn’t a good way to tell really great people that some would be impacted. I don’t remember being intentional about how I dealt with it, but I do remember feeling separated from it. Like I was watching it rather than</p>	<p>Writing to recall/remember Writing to clarify Writing to understand</p>	<p>Coping with adversity, caring for others, remembering, separating/creating space</p>

<p>living it. I remember when it came time to have the conversations, it came to me in all reality. I wanted to be there for them and offer support; but I also suspected I wasn't the person they wanted to lean on. I did treat everyone respectfully, but honestly, there are no words that make that easy. Lately, I've been feeling this could happen to any one of us at any time—and I always in the past thought, my work, my image, my capabilities, would keep me safe from that. No. Not anymore.”</p> <p>“I think over time I have written an interesting variety of topics, some highly personal and stressful, some fun and lighthearted. It would be very interesting to hear others' emotions and experiences and find connection with writing. I think I would also ask how they have used writing to motivate them to do other things if it has at all.”</p>	<p>Writing for self-awareness</p> <p>Writing to cope</p> <p>Writing for presence</p>	<p>Write to connect</p> <p>Write to understand</p>	<p>Need for association, belonging</p>
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Findings for Research Question 3

Findings for the third research question, “What settings and facilitation methods help to create the optimal experience for reflective writing in the workplace?” were derived from interpreting the single focus group transcript. Three participants were part of the focus group; none were familiar with each other before the session. Given anticipated time constraints, I provided a brief reminder of the focus group's context and ground rules but no individual introductions. After introducing the first question to start the discussion, the conversation was uninterrupted. It flowed as the participants paused to allow each other to contribute to a round-robin-style interaction. As in the prior guided writing sessions, the participants commented on the value of sharing perspectives and listening to each other's thoughts, even in the virtual meeting session conducted through Zoom. Overall, the findings from the focus group indicated that reflective writing was conducive to learning and well-being and that both individual and interactive

facilitation of writing may benefit workers depending on their individual needs. Appendix G contains the focus group protocol.

RQ3: Preconceptions, Bridling Statement, and Initial Interpretations

From my prior experience facilitating guided reflective writing sessions, I observed how writing about an experience and then sharing it verbally with others led to a rich conversation among group members. I had observed that asking workers to prepare a writing sample ahead of a guided writing session was not likely given other work priorities; however, writing during a dedicated meeting time provided the space to think and craft meaningful experiences. Recalling these experiences before the study, I wrote an initial bridling statement, “Participants will appreciate the guided writing sessions more than the individual writing prompts.” The learning preferences shared by the participants in the initial interviews influenced my preconceptions of the value of guided writing. I believed that there would be a preference for collaborative learning “in the moment.” I knew the need for social interaction from the interviews and texts such as the following example, which highlights the importance of being able to ask and answer questions:

Personally, I learn most from the invigorating collaborations—the meetings where you see visual, talk it through—listen to the pain the other team will experience with this change and work together to solve. Also, repetition...[when] I hear about it as I better understand I can ask more questions. As my confidence builds, I share with others, then answer their questions as they learn more...that repetition is good for my learning.

Contemplative of social interaction as a benefit and the virtual nature of the study, the element of remote location did not seem to be a detrimental factor. I expected a sense of camaraderie and trust would develop over time based on my previous experiences outside the study. Instead, I was surprised that there appeared to be a natural partnership and desire to learn among the participants, demonstrated by their willingness to read verbatim from their journals and share personal stories and thoughts without knowing each other for more than a few minutes.

Insights on the Value of Individual Writing Prompts. Participants openly shared feedback on their experiences with the individual writing prompts,

explaining that some were more difficult than others. For example, several participants suggested that Week 5's responsive prompts, which presented passages from popular literature, were particularly taxing. One participant described "struggling with where to begin for this statement." Another identified several specific prompts and declared they "bogged me down a bit," saying,

Some of them were pretty heady and I needed to think long and hard about them. I also misinterpreted a few when I went back and re-read my answers, so I did a lot of re-writing this week. I'm not complaining, just stating that for a few of these questions, I had to do a lot of thinking and re-thinking...this week's writing left me a little more mentally drained than the weeks prior and I think it is because it required more thought to provide answers and there were several layers to these questions.

In contrast, other participants seemed to appreciate the same type of individual writing prompts:

[Brianna] I think the ones that I enjoyed writing about the most were actually the ones during I think it was Week 4 or Week 5 where it was write or react to a quote. I don't know what it was about those. Maybe it was just separating from focusing on what happened in my day but being able to just think about something different. That maybe resonated with me more. I kind of liked being able to react...and you know, try to interpret a meaning it gives me a different type of focus. I think that [I] struggle more with writing about myself than with my opinion on something if that makes sense.

[Ashley] I would have to agree with Brianna. Actually, [I] really enjoyed that week's writing. I think it gives me a different perspective just hearing different quotes, I mean. I can think the same thing about life all day. But you know, when you read something that has a different perspective that you haven't heard before, it definitely just brings light to other thoughts. I would say that would probably be my favorite one and just one that really stuck with me.

Other comments about the individual writing prompts described them as enjoyable: “I could catch myself smiling as I’m writing certain prompts.” One participant explained that there was enjoyment in some of the topics and rereading past responses, “laughing at myself for the way that I wrote it...I think that it was the prompts that kind of maybe broke the mold of feeling like...[reflective writing] is different [this style of writing]. One participant shared that the experience of reflective writing with the individual prompts could differ with the type of writing prompt, describing how the writing could be “more relaxing than work” or, conversely, an added pressure:

Some of the ones about writing about my day [and] especially the ones where you [have to answer] what are you trying to accomplish or what are some of the things you want to learn...stressed me out in a little bit of [a] sense because it was a reminder of things that I need to go get done and the difference between the weight of those topics was interesting to reflect on.

Insights on the Value of the Guided Writing Sessions. In both guided writing sessions, I observed that the participants seemed energetic and engaged by their willingness to share their written responses freely. They appeared to collaborate easily despite being unacquainted, and they seemed to appreciate the experience of adding to each other’s commentary from their own experiences. Different topics arose from the writing prompts that were sometimes general, such as when a participant shared, “Someone told me if you are the highest achieving person in your circle, your circle is not good enough.” At other times, more profound and personal situations emerged, like one participant’s sharing, “I wrote [that] I faced a tough decision. I know that the other side will be better than the place where I am, but the conscious mind pushes away the enormity of it...for sanity.” In the second session, the following excerpt exemplified how the conversations led to what appeared to be group coaching among the participants:

[Andrew] It's so crazy. I've done a lot of influential things over the course of my life...I kind of started from the bottom...I've made a lot of different changes in my life, but I never give myself enough credit. I always feel like there's more...like there's a big end goal that I'm trying to reach. I had a

mentor...he's like a big brother to me...and whenever I say...oh, man, I gotta get my life together, he'd be like, dude, what are you talking about? Look how far you've come...you've done all this. You've been through this. And you've gotten to this point...how could you not appreciate all the things you've accomplished before? [and] I'm just like, well, yeah, that was before...I just feel like I could do better. I always feel like I could be better...I'm doing great [by] people outside looking in...and I've got all this good stuff going on, but I still feel like there's just more. I guess more I could be better [at] than what I am. So I'm always trying to reach a higher potential.

[Shannon] Just listening to Andrew talk, it's made me think of [how] we're always our worst critic as it relates to what we have achieved...sometimes we have to give ourselves a break and acknowledge and celebrate ourselves as well.

Before the focus group, one participant communicated with me directly and shared positive feelings about the guided writing sessions. This participant shared value in the experiences, offering, "I am excited to do the guided writing because I always find it helpful to see other people's viewpoints and what they are going through. It helps to relate and not feel crazy or alone." Appendix E and Appendix F capture the visual presentations used to disseminate the writing prompts and facilitate the discussion in the two guided writing sessions conducted for the study.

RQ3: Interpretive Thematic Analysis and Synthesis

RQ3 and the focus group questions aimed to capture initial insights about the types of facilitation and settings the participants found conducive to reflective writing. Although it was an unstructured discussion, a formal focus group protocol presented in Appendix G was prepared before the session. The conversation opened by inviting the participants to share their experiences with reflective writing during the study. Reiterating themes and needs, such as uninterrupted time and the opportunity to release feelings, the participants recalled individual writing prompts. They exchanged thoughts, including their preconceptions of reflective writing and how they evolved throughout the study. Participants offered different perspectives

on the facilitation methods for reflective writing. One discussed that there may be more value in guided writing:

For me, it wasn't necessarily the [individual] writing [that was meaningful] but when we would have one of these group sessions. The one that really stood out for me was the one where you asked us what is gold? I've actually been asking several other people those questions that you asked us, my friends and family and that stood out for me more than anything...it kind of got a lot of people thinking.

Another participant shared that one of the prompts related to writing about a memory “made me get emotional out of all the different things that we've written about over the last few weeks...like that one right stroke of color...was a powerful one for me to share.” Finally, when asked about writing individually, one participant acknowledged another’s comment that the reflective writing experience could feel like a rant and expanded on how it might be effortless:

I found it kind of easy just because I used to journal a lot and I've gone through therapy and whatnot. And so, writing is always a big thing...for me, it wasn't super challenging to kind of just sit in my thoughts on the page, but I agree with Brianna, I kind of feel like sometimes I was just rambling on and on and just kind of ranting about my day or my thoughts.

In a different interpretation of the reflective writing experience, another participant shared that it was meaningful to write coherently and accurately, yet disruptions made it a challenge. This participant identified an essential outcome of the reflective writing experience was realizing that even time dedicated to the individual writing experiences was often interrupted. In addition, the participant offered how interruptions presented barriers to the quality of reflective writing. For example, the text highlighted the unique experience of rereading reflective writing for clarity: “The big one for me was [having] uninterrupted writing...[I would have to quickly] finish the thought and kind of come back and make sure...go back through it and [ask] after the interruption did what I write make sense.” Similarly, the interruptions may have challenged the participant’s understanding of the potential benefits of the reflective writing experiences. This participant also

elaborated that the study had encouraged a shift in thinking about the purpose of writing:

It's a different experience for me because writing has never been a big part of my life. I mean, outside of school and I think that's probably where maybe writing was ruined for me early on [because] it always felt like...I had to write...it wasn't like, "let's do this out of inspiration." It [writing] was a task that was given to me and so you know, like creative writing... so to do it in this context which is, I guess, one of the reasons that I thought it could be good...it's not like an obligation but it's like an experiment. So I think that was one of the challenges for me...[to] focus, sit down and do it and think about how to enjoy it versus it's something that I just have to do.

I asked the participant to discuss what it meant to enjoy reflective writing.

Following the response, the dialogue continued among the participants illustrating how they appended to a continuous reflective discussion during the focus group:

[Shannon] I think Brianna recalled a little bit [of] what I was going to say...I use it [writing] as a memory board somewhat. And I don't know if this was part of [the] rules or not, but during the daytime...I [would] say, "Oh, this is something I need to write down and write about," and...I was making notes and then [later] combined it together.

[Ashley] Oh, that's good. I didn't think about doing it through the day. I tried to sit down and do dedicated afterward writing. I wonder if it would have flowed easier? I was like, okay, Monday morning, sit down drink my cup of coffee write about my week. I never thought about actually taking the time to write a few things here and there throughout the day to help bring you back to "oh, yeah, this would be a good thing to write about." I like that Shannon.

Another example of the potential impact of the reflective writing experience discussed during the focus group was a participant's comment that reflective writing might be a way to achieve clarity and bring focus to communication. The statement echoed findings provided earlier in the chapter; however, another participant added to the quality of the conclusion by sharing that reflective writing

may also create a more consumable experience when taking in and processing information:

One of the takeaways for me is [that] there's a lot going on in my brain. So it really does help to kind of put that out in writing and then I can kind of dissect it to where are the nuggets that I really want to build off of. Another thing that I learned for me in particular...I didn't realize so many people journal already. I went to talk with my friends and some people in organizations that I met and I was just telling them this has really helped me out as far as thinking. I hit them with the "what is gold?" prompt as an icebreaker for my meetings...[and] the people in the room [who are] really general on a daily basis...[started talking and I realized] this is a real thing [and] a lot of people really do it...that [meeting] was like an hour nursing me.

Seeing the meaning unit, "like an hour nursing me" seemed to suggest that the connection and conversation in the guided writing experience were beneficial for the participant; however, the reflective writing experience might also have influenced the specific situation as a catalyst for the exchange.

Some research explored in the literature review research suggested that reflective writing may be like a healing experience, and one participant described it explicitly as "therapeutic." Participants discussed the irony and timing of individual writing prompts that asked them to explore and describe relevant, current, and stressful experiences. One commented on the reflective writing experience related to well-being as an "extra boost" that helped with mental preparation for multiple responsibilities. Another shared that writing about health brought clarity and accountability for the actions that could help them change their habits and improve their physical health. One participant described the experience of reflective writing as a combination of feelings that sometimes created stress:

I think for me, it was a 50-50, a little stressful because as I'm recalling some of these things, did it really stress me out to think through some of those? Again, trying to find the time, trying to make it meaningful [then] being interrupted and trying to make sure it made sense. I feel like sometimes if I

wrote a story, like there's somewhere in the middle that the story just breaks because I got interrupted and now the tone of the second half is different. A little bit of stress from those standpoints. But then there's other topics that like I said, it just let me get a lot off of my mind where I do feel like it destressed me and it was more relaxing when I was able to do it...[when] I finally just have some me time...it was a little bit destressing before bed to kind of just get that off of my mind. So I felt like I could lay down...not thinking through as many things at once...because I wrote it all out and got it off my chest.

RQ3: Summary of Findings

The findings for RQ3 suggested that the optimal reflective writing experience varies with the needs of the individual and is personal and situational. The participants did not offer a preferred optimal setting and facilitation approach during the focus group, but some shared considerations, such as the need to write without distraction. Participants discussed that individual writing was enjoyable when they had dedicated “100 percent just uninterrupted time,” “sacred time,” or “me time” to “sit down and be able to reflect.” General focus group comments supported that there may be value to guided writing as it creates connection and the opportunity to hear others’ perspectives. One participant raised the importance of facilitating the guided writing sessions to ensure they were open and safe for dialogue for individuals without fear of repercussions, no matter what experiences were shared. Table 7 presents examples of the meaning units, related themes, and interpretive understandings related to RQ3, including what facilitation methods and settings create an optimal experience for reflective writing.

Table 7*Examples of Focus Group Questions and Related Meaning Units for RQ3*

Focus Group Question/Prompt	Meaning Units
Have you noticed anything different about these prompts compared to the ones you've been writing [individually]?	<p>“These are not necessarily making me reflect always on an experience. Right? Like I’m relating it to an experience more so than other questions that are asking about an experience and to reflect on it. And these are kind of triggering an experience but not by asking for it directly. Does that make sense?”</p>
What would inspire you to continue reflective writing?	<p>“For me, having small groups actually talk about some of the stuff you journal, because once I brought it up in one of my Junior League meetings, they were like, “oh, let me tell you about this.” We can really have good conversations on some personnel stuff you don't want to talk about...and [we can] talk about some of the things that we journal.”</p>
Share a little bit about your experiences with writing in general.	<p>I realize that I should start doing this more...[I] do benefit from it and I think it just makes me start my week off a lot better. It just made me put [things] into perspective, kind of getting all your thoughts out and somewhere like what Brianna said just being able to dump everything so you can better focus on the things that you should say in a precise way. It really does help.</p> <p>I used to journal a lot before this and I think this has definitely inspired me to start journaling again. You know, [it was] something I didn't really expect.</p> <p>It is teaching me how to write without specific subjects or persons. They [the writing samples] tell a story without naming the person or being able to exactly say, the group or the individuals I'm talking about. I wrote [that] down mentally.</p> <p>The Myers Briggs thing...all the different personality things I've always thought...it was wrong when it said I was feeling instead of thinking...I was like, no, no, but it's [the reflective writing] made me think I am very much that like, more of a feeling...[person] and this is really making me self-reflect more. I should do the journaling thing more often. Definitely. And I have always had good intentions to do it. The practice of it is challenging.</p>

Two key learnings emerged from the focus group. First, additional time would have been beneficial to include more dedicated time for the participants to contribute feedback on meaningful future reflective writing experiences. A continuous flow of conversation occurred as the participants debriefed their experiences from the study, and the scheduled time ended just as the participants had begun to consider whether reflective writing might be “a good team-building activity,” explaining,

I think with my work because we all kind of work in our own silos...everybody kind of has their own projects. Sometimes when you want feedback from someone about a project, I find that based on the personalities...it may actually be better to submit a question to them in writing where they have to write it [feedback] back to me...so that I can get a different perspective. Sometimes I find if I put myself and a couple of other people on a call to ask for feedback on something [such as] if I'm showing them a presentation...I have to give them a lot of context...I have trouble getting them to flow [in] the conversation. So I thought about asking them to write it out to me...maybe use it [meeting time] as a writing session. It's interesting. It's like pre-thinking...it's like writing to brainstorm and then talking through it to brainstorm so I don't know if it would make things better or worse. I'll report back if it works.

Another learning from the focus group experience identified how the preferred settings for reflective writing did not receive attention in the study. Given the virtual nature of the interactions and the depth of the phenomenon of reflective writing, sharing experiences in the focus group took precedence over discussing the details of the other settings. Interestingly, experiences describing the impact of remote work were prevalent in the reflective writing experiences. Several participants described the lack of social interaction as challenging. Yet, there was no mention of the need for co-located reflective writing sessions or other alternatives to using Zoom to facilitate social interactions in the focus group. Overall, the findings for RQ3 suggest the reflective writing experience is immensely personal and situational. Participants indicated that the individual

writing prompts and the guided writing sessions had influenced their reflective writing experience. In addition, they offered perspective on the focus group, suggesting further discussion in the form of an unstructured session with additional time to allow a more profound retrospective of their experiences.

Finding Gold in Everyday Experience

Extensive data and analysis are characteristic of hermeneutic phenomenology. Collecting, organizing, and examining layered data from multiple sources with an iterative and meticulous lens for meaning was a transformational experience.

A high quality phenomenological text cannot be summarized. It does not need to contain a list of findings—rather, one must evaluate it by meeting with it, going through it, encountering it, suffering it, consuming it, and as well, being consumed by it. (van Manen, 2014, p. 355)

In addition, including the Heideggerian philosophical constructs also contributed insights and possibilities for further understanding influences on the meaning. Many texts captured by the reflective writing experiences and the bridling journal omitted for practicality might inspire future research. They included critical elements of the research method, like how I learned to appreciate the types and details of the language within the texts. The remainder of this section describes some examples.

Used as an analogy in the second guided writing session, finding gold was a symbolic thematic interpretation that evolved for me during the study as I gained closeness to the participants' experiences. The words in the texts inspired the design of the guided writing context and informed sets of writing prompts intended to encourage participants to look within and consider meaningful experiences. The opportunity to practice reflective writing with the participants during the study involved personal reflective writing in the bridling journal. It produced meaningful insights into combined challenges at work and home. As I wrote the summary of findings, I experienced a "dawning moment" or pivot in thinking about the themes uncovered in the analysis process (van Manen, 2014, p. 265). In a dual role as a researcher and participant, I also experienced how reflective writing shaped my

learning and well-being. My experience helped me distinguish the participants' experiences specific to the study's purpose. It brought transparency to the potential for losing the context of their work and home life experiences formalized in the texts.

Trying to separate the participants' everyday experiences from the phenomenon of reflective writing seemed to diminish the findings, as the patterns, themes, and significant meanings seemed to depend on both. Finlay (2014) described the analysis process of collecting and sorting the meaning units as "clustering any general or essential meanings," noting that it is critical to cull specific outcomes (Finlay, 2014, p. 129). Yet, for me, the gold or significance of the research outcomes permanently resides in the people who experimented with reflective writing to help themselves and others manage similar problems and seek what matters most in their lives. Table 8 represents some experiences that formed experiential themes that may further explain the benefits of reflective writing on learning and well-being.

Table 8

Selected Experiential Themes From Writing Samples With Forms of Reflective Writing

Experiential Themes	Purposeful Forms of Reflective Writing
Competing priorities	Writing to capture
A lot to do or too much to do	Writing to prioritize
Constant prioritizing	Writing to accomplish
Overburdened	
Wrestling with age	Writing to see
To be younger/older	Writing to understand
Time constraints	Writing to capture
Not having enough time	Writing to see
Awareness of time	
Venting/ranting	Writing to release
	Writing to clarify
	Writing to process
	Writing to think
Motivation	Writing for purpose
Enjoying helping others	Writing to clarify
	Writing to understand
Need for accuracy	Writing to think
Fixing errors	Writing to plan
Need to be correct/not to be wrong	Writing to release
Need for clarity	Writing to inquire
Precision	Writing to acknowledge
Giving/helping others/altruism	Writing for purpose
	Writing to understand
Observing opportunities for change	Writing to clarify
Taking action on opportunities for change	Writing to visualize
Striving to improve	Writing to inform
Disconnection	Writing to release
	Writing to understand
Desire to be valuable	Writing to release
Holding self to higher standards	Writing to understand
Need to make decisions	Writing to acknowledge
Need to have decisions to make	Writing to clarify
Asking questions	Writing to see
Probing questions	Writing to inquire
	Writing to learn
	Writing to understand
Growing with support from others	Writing to see
	Writing to grow
	Writing to inform

Growing from trying something new	Writing to be open Writing for clarity Writing to grow Writing to understand
Questioning skills and abilities	Writing to focus
Comparing self to others	Writing to see
Imposter syndrome	Writing to inform
Coping	Writing to release Writing to see Writing to think Writing to understand

Appreciating the Language

Accepting that the collective experiences of the study were equally valuable allowed a more detailed examination of the texts. Van Manen (2014) proposed the possibility that having lived experiences with phenomena does not mean that participants can articulate them. In the current study's findings, explicit language to describe meaning was infrequent in the texts, and one participant reiterated the scholarly thought, sharing that some experiences are "simply hard to describe." Denotative and connotative meanings of the words influenced the interpretation of the participants' language. Examining other linguistic characteristics, such as the structure of particular sentences and punctuation, was intriguing. Pauses, questions, humor, and affirmations may have had implications on the possible meaning intended by the participant and were part of the examination. Some participants often used ellipses and dashes interpreted as intentional breaks or time spent considering their thoughts. They may also have represented missing experiences or details that the participant intentionally chose not to share.

Appreciating and protecting the language was crucial as the participants' meaning or intent may not reside on the surface. Avoiding separation and cleansing of the texts was essential; therefore, condensing the length of the study's findings was more difficult. Similarly, managing the iterative hermeneutic analysis or the circle of interpretation was a relentless process as the language continued to reveal new possibilities in each reading and during the writing of the research report (van Manen, 2014). Many texts provided numerous opportunities for connection to the

phenomenon or introduced new and sometimes unexpected insights. In the following section, I briefly present examples of unexpected insights.

Unexpected Insights

Many examples of unique experiences and interpretations filled the bridling journal. Some examples further explained the experience of navigating the hermeneutic analysis process. Others explored alternative interpretations and particular aspects of the participants' experiences. Consequently, the iterative interpretive process involved asking more questions and writing about the possible interpretations to achieve a deeper understanding. These experiences usually connected to more than one research question and were valuable in the holistic interpretation of the reflective writing experience. Therefore, I categorized them as unexpected insights and considered them essential findings for future research. A repeated concern for clear and precise information among the participants' experiences provided one example of an unexpected insight elaborated in the following text:

When writing about the work issues/concerns over the past several weeks, it has definitely helped me to gain clarity. Writing the issue down helped to get it out of my head and onto paper. In all cases that led to awareness and as I mentioned earlier, clarity. Some of the time, I was able to solve the issue by continuing through and writing possible solutions. In other cases, the issue wasn't as potent as I thought it was after I got it out on paper and really thought through it. Overall, I would say writing had a pretty large influence for me with regards to work. In some cases, I learned what I didn't need to worry about or prioritize and in other cases, I learned how to solve the issue.

Examining multiple texts referencing the need for clarity, I recalled questions in the initial interviews about the expectations for the written responses. Some participants expressed concern about their writing styles and offered that they wanted to ensure they met expectations and provided quality data for the study. Considering preconceptions about workers needing creative outlets to think and innovate and given perceived ambiguity in the contemporary workplace, it was

surprising that the participants pursued an understanding of limitations instead of experimenting. Even though the text revealed that reflective writing experiences might offer more clarity to situations, the unexpected learning from the study may be that workers focus on constraints preventing innovation. Interestingly, Heidegger (1927/1962) also discussed the possibility that humans concentrate on what is missing or limited in their lives.

Another unexpected insight was multiple participants' concerns about improving communication skills. For example, some offered specific challenges with writing effective emails or experiencing anxiety speaking in front of senior leaders:

I continue to learn the same lesson repeatedly though and that is [to] be succinct. I need to be heard. Time is short. People need to understand the intent of what I'm saying not the details of what went into it. I am not great at applying this learning, hence why I keep learning the same lesson. I am not naturally succinct (you should meet my mother; it could be worse).

The text suggested there may be specific learning needs to develop communication skills not currently met with traditional learning approaches. It was interesting to notice the language of the written text, which on the surface, provided a clear and concise descriptive explanation of a specific learning need. Yet, ironically, the participant perceived deficient skills. In addition to the possible need for further inquiry into ways to strengthen workers' understanding of communication skills gaps, understanding better Heidegger's (1927/1962) constructs of fallenness and inauthenticity might be helpful to encourage workers to accentuate and build on their strengths instead of concentrating on weaknesses. Similarly, another unexpected insight suggested workers understand, and experience imposter syndrome yet may need support to manage its implications. Finally, the findings suggested that further study of perceived skills gaps, including a better understanding of how workers experience and leverage learnings from failure, may be valuable.

Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968) posited "access to the private view of another" is complex and complicated by multiple interpretations of a phenomenon (p. 11).

Data analysis can be overwhelming with details (Bortoft, 1971), and focusing on reflective writing as the study's central phenomenon was challenging because the participants' workplace experiences were equally significant. The philosophical foundations of the hermeneutic analysis process exposed "objective markers" or influential positions in the participant's experiences (Denzin, 1989, p. 19). Poor health, excessive stress, and influences such as job insecurity unveiled by the reflective writing delineated participants' perspectives and revealed their needs as whole persons. Though briefly introduced, the Heideggarian philosophical constructs sharpened awareness of unexpected insights. Other realms of possible meaning may exist within the reflective writing experiences that deserve further inquiry. Table 9 includes some examples of unexpected insights that added richness to the study.

Table 9*Examples of Unexpected Insights from the Texts*

Unexpected Insight	Interpretation/Meaning
<p>“I have not worked with my current leader for too long...he is a very caring individual, and really puts a lot of effort into checking in about my health and home life during our check-ins. This doesn't come naturally for all leaders, so I certainly appreciate the thoughtfulness of taking the time to ask before jumping into work talk. He was also mindful of checking in and asking if I needed flexibility, again, not something that all leaders do proactively...”</p>	<p>Leaders who make an effort to care are meaningful, there is a need for care and concern for employees, caring does not come naturally to some leaders, leaders do not see what workers need even though it matters to workers</p>
<p>“Reflective writing need not be polished or ‘beautifully written or something that you would even send to somebody else,’ but instead, it should be like free form thinking and used in multiple ways every day.”</p>	<p>Learning that writing is thinking, seeing multiple practical applications, seeing writing less structured or formal and more useful</p>
<p>“For me, personally, I enjoy being part of something that can lead to future learning and improvement. Not only have I experienced that, but my hope is that this study will enable better ways for people to function both personally and professionally no matter what stage they are in life.”</p>	<p>“Promotive voice, (Jahanzeb & Newell, 2022, p. 244),” servant leadership, future-orientation</p>
<p>“Team culture and team productivity...there is a lot of work. We need the people we have, and we need them to know their importance. It's important for many reasons—first, when people feel valued, and appreciated, they operate at a higher level. When they know you are counting on them and they are recognized for their contributions, they will work harder to do more and deliver more. It's also a great culture to work in a high performing team—more fun. Work is hard, but when people are happy, they stick around to grow and learn together. When people don't feel appreciated, or valued, they are more apt to leave. That leads to attrition, which means bringing in new people. Training people, outsiders especially, takes time. Time from others, time from delivery, you lose productivity and when the work is piled sky high over you, you don't want to lose time.”</p>	<p>Needs of contemporary work, knowledge of organizational challenges acknowledged in reflection, time as a constraint, perception of external hires</p>

“Writing helps me process what I think...[I] just kind of replay it and it helps me learn how...I should go about doing this next time...and it makes me feel a lot better about it...it’s hard to explain...with the issues that I was facing at work I was...kind of stressed and drained. I've realized that I'm probably not a fan of writing at that moment, but...when I ended up writing about it, it helped me reflect on what happened on those issues...and explain... kind of visualize...pretty much relive those moments... where I could have possibly done something different...maybe I've had some faults in why that project didn't go so well... when I'm writing, I'm talking to myself and...thinking.”

“Maybe it's just a thing at our company, but the proven methodologies we tend to take...[one or] two pieces of it as if we're shortcutting it to get to an end result. With the writing the way I've been doing [it] and the...study...I believe that...what you're doing requires a holistic approach, and I just don't know that we really allow employees time anymore to be holistic with their jobs. We want you to be healthy. We want you to have a work-life balance. But here's the reality. If I work 40 hours a week, I have 40 hours a week worth of work, and it's not like it was where you work 40 hours a week but you really have 36 hours a week worth of work so you can invest your time doing things like this [reflective writing]. I find most people end up having to make that investment outside of work. Well, then your work family life balance can be disrupted. It's a long winded answer but I think until corporations...most companies...until schools and colleges and organizations...until we [all] recognize the value of holistic development which I think includes writing [for/and] self-awareness...being able to really tap into your inner self. I get afraid that we're going to just become a very robotic society.”

Informed self-talk; contemplating the experience within the framework of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) concept of dwelling or being-in-the-world, reflective writing may create an opportunity to pause and separate from the closeness of the situation in order to gain insight and perspective; writing to process

Seeing the whole person across work and home life, lack of autonomy, time constraints, need for being fully human, need for being-in-the-world, the idea of robotic or mechanical vs. human

Beyond specific results to answer the research questions, other findings recounted in the previous sections offered rich support for the influence of reflective writing on learning and well-being. Indeed, the art and science of the

hermeneutic analysis process emphasized preserving the participants' everyday experiences. It enabled numerous interpretations and multifaceted opportunities for further inquiry derived from various aspects of the participants' unique lived experiences captured by intricacies within the language of the texts. In conclusion, the findings accentuated the depth and power of phenomenology as a continuous process of understanding meaning that is never complete (Merleau-Ponty, 2014/1945).

Summary

Descriptive and interpretive details from the participants' experiences shared in the interviews, individual and guided writing samples, and the focus group presented findings to address the research questions in this chapter. Participants' experiences were compiled and reviewed through iterative readings and thematic interpretation, infusing careful consideration of the language expressed in the texts. Preconceptions and questions from my bridling journal and some aspects of Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical ideas informed the interpretive analysis. A holistic, shared experience emerged from the thematic analysis to explain what reflective writing was like for the participants, including an identification of several purposeful forms of reflective writing that may facilitate practical application. A focus group designed to debrief the reflective writing experience revealed that unique individual needs influence preferences for facilitating reflective writing experiences. Finally, themes, unexpected insights, and suggestions for further research elaborated on the potential of reflective writing as a meaningful learning and well-being approach to support workers' awareness and capability to gain understanding and manage the competing priorities and distractions of work and home life.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The research study described in previous chapters examined reflective writing as an opportunity for improved learning and well-being in a contemporary corporate workplace. The purpose of this study was to explore workers' experiences with reflective writing to understand better how it might contribute to workplace learning and well-being and what facilitation methods might create the optimal reflective writing experience. In Chapter 1, I outlined problems in the modern workplace and identified the importance of learning and well-being for workers, and suggested how reflective writing might influence more positive experiences. Through the literature review in Chapter 2, I surveyed the changing nature of work and described frameworks for learning, including Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, Argyris's (1977) double-loop learning model, and offered a brief overview of Karasek's (1979) job demand-control model as a framework for understanding well-being. Finally, the literature review captured how reflective writing can potentially strengthen learning and well-being in multiple fields.

The study's hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, which I described in Chapter 3, shaped the research method. It defined the inductive approach to understanding the meaning of the reflective writing experience with attention to language and multiple interpretations. Hermeneutics appreciates the words expressed to describe the lived experience and how they introduce nuances that enlighten living in the world (van Manen, 2015). Therefore, coming "to grips" with asking the questions to glean the significance of a phenomenon must be approached with care and meticulous attention to detail (van Manen, 2015, p. 46). The hermeneutic methodology involved an immersive investigation of what the reflective writing experience was like for the participants, with myself serving as both a facilitator and an active participant in reflective writing.

Further guided by Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical concepts, including care and existentiality, the methodology introduced an iterative interpretive analysis of texts created from interviews, interactive activities like guided reflective writing, a focus group, and writing samples. Participants practiced

reflective writing independently and within small groups. Writing prompts encouraged freewriting and presented questions and responsive writing to explore real work and home-life experiences. When debriefing the study, the focus group aimed to collectively discuss the reflective writing experiences soliciting feedback specific to the participant's preferences for settings and facilitation methods most conducive for reflective writing.

Repetitive readings and writing in a bridling journal to infuse philosophical constructs and my preconceptions fostered the analysis and findings discussed in Chapter 4. Constructing a visual storyboard to identify connections among meaning units refined the patterns and themes that led to a holistic interpretation of the reflective writing experience that considered the parts and the whole of the lived experiences. Five patterns of broad experiential themes emerged from the collected experiences and identified opportunities for further study: time, age, multiplicity, roles, and physical location. The predominant themes of self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release influenced the interpretation of numerous purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to see* and *writing to understand*. In the final chapter, the study's outcomes are discussed further, with implications for possible practical applications and additional recommendations for future research.

Answers to the Research Questions

Contemporary work is fraught with disruption, as the convergence of changing needs, technology, and industry strategy continues to influence and transform economic systems (Bearson et al., 2021). Continuous learning opportunities designed by workers and organizations are vital to enable competitive skills and competencies that safeguard ongoing employability (Le et al., 2022). In addition, learning is a critical conduit to improving workplace conditions for workers influencing sustainable mental health (Paterson et al., 2021) and other aspects of well-being, including overall job fulfillment (Haep, 2022). I sought to understand workers' experiences with reflective writing in the workplace and how it might influence learning. Three research questions framed the inquiry:

RQ1: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence learning in the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways, if at all, does reflective writing influence well-being in the workplace?

RQ3: What settings and facilitation methods help to create the optimal experience for reflective writing in the workplace?

The comprehensive findings of the study suggest that reflective writing can inspire learning and well-being in the contemporary workplace, as it contributes insights and a better understanding of workers' and organizations' needs by creating greater awareness and space for deeper thinking at work and home. Furthermore, the reflective writing experience might inform opportunities to remove barriers to individual and collective performance by identifying strategies and tactical approaches to improve skills, adaptability, and resilience. In the following sections, answers to the research questions are reiterated briefly from the findings in Chapter 4, and theoretical and practical implications are presented.

RQ1: Reflective Writing for Workplace Learning

Previous research highlighted in the literature review established that reflective writing benefits learning in education and healthcare. The first research question sought to understand in what ways, if at all, reflective writing might influence workplace learning. In this study, I examined participants' lived experiences in a corporate setting to determine the meaning of the reflective writing experience inductively. My findings suggested that reflective writing may influence workplace learning with its capability to encourage self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release. Purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to explore*, *writing to see*, and *writing to think*, emerged from interpreting the experiences. Through reflective writing, the participants had the opportunity to explore how they might approach situations differently, and the experience provided them with additional perspective. Before the study, the participants may not have considered writing as a means of learning. Comparably, after the reflective writing experience, the holistic interpretation of their experiences suggested reflective writing increased their focus, presence, and capabilities for making more

informed decisions, such as helping them more clearly see their role and behaviors in the workplace. The findings support the existing body of knowledge explaining the benefits of reflective writing for learning and well-being. Moreover, the study findings expand the understanding of reflective practice by illustrating the implications of reflective writing in a corporate context with diverse professional roles.

RQ2: Reflective Writing for Well-Being

Past researchers have cited the therapeutic benefits of reflective writing, proposing that it enhances well-being (Williamson & Wright, 2018). Numerous pressures that could create stress surfaced from the participants' reflective writing experiences, such as feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and overwhelm at work and home. The individual and guided writing experiences promoted the disclosure of emotions and feelings. Two purposeful forms of reflective writing, *writing for presence* and *writing for positivity*, might be coping mechanisms to help workers alleviate stress. The findings from the current study may support existing knowledge suggesting that reflective writing may help manage the stress associated with perceived or actual personal and professional issues by enabling self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release with an emphasis on well-being.

Participants expressed that the reflective writing experiences in the study helped them think about their circumstances through a different lens. They described how the reflective writing experiences helped them discern a more positive outlook by sharing personal stories and asking questions of themselves and others when they were together. They offered that reflective writing may stimulate improved well-being by helping them manage negative self-talk and dedicate time to concentrate on gaining clarity on specific events and identifying and planning for addressing their individual needs amid their responsibilities to others. The meaning interpreted from both the individual and holistic experience of reflective writing suggested that it can be a tool that encourages optimism and courage in life at work and at home.

RQ3: Optimal Reflective Writing Experiences

Previous research on the specific settings and facilitation methods that might create the ideal reflective writing experience was limited. Interpretations of the texts collected from the individual and guided writing experiences, along with the focus group transcript, informed the answer to RQ3. The current findings suggested that the optimal reflective writing experience depends on individual needs and preferences. Some individuals prefer independent writing, and others like the opportunity for social interaction introduced by guided writing sessions. A combination of approaches may also introduce benefits. Because the study's reflective writing experiences were conducted remotely with geographically dispersed participants, additional research may still be needed to understand if co-location provides other benefits.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The purpose of the research aimed to explore how reflective writing might contribute to workplace learning and well-being in a contemporary corporate work environment. The study's design compared individual and guided writing experiences and utilized customized writing prompts based on recommendations from past reflective writing research and practical application. As this study emphasized understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences with reflective writing, it did not evaluate any specific learning, well-being, or reflective writing interventions. Nevertheless, the findings suggested that reflective writing may inspire workplace learning and well-being, and the research outcomes propose theoretical and practical implications discussed further in the following section.

Implications for the Experiential Learning Model

Framed with a focus on applied knowledge through partnerships with others, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model emphasized the importance of learning outcomes on future results. In the study, participants suggested preferences for learning with others and identified the need to better utilize learning experiences in their work. In the guided writing sessions, constructs from the experiential learning model, such as allowing participants to connect with others to share ideas, give and receive feedback, and learn from others' experiences, were primary

considerations for introducing the facilitated approach. The findings support that for some workers, there are benefits from learning experiences that involve social connection and exchanging ideas and knowledge in the workplace.

Experiential learning theory offers two specific tools that may benefit the structure and facilitation of future reflective writing experiences. The first tool, the core experiential learning cycle, represents stages in the learning process, including “experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting,” and provides a simple framework for designing a learning experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2018, p. 8). It defines an approach for selecting an opportunity that needs improvement, then developing effective criteria to aid in its analysis. To implement the experiential learning cycle, the second tool, the “educator role framework,” outlines individual roles that coordinate and facilitate the learning cycle phases (Kolb & Kolb, 2018, p. 12). Furthermore, incorporating reflective writing into the design might involve substituting one or more purposeful forms of reflective writing in the reflecting phase, then introducing peer reviews or guided writing experiences to capture specific process knowledge for future use. Leveraging the structure of the experiential learning model and the flexibility of the purposeful forms of reflective writing may enable subject matter experts and other cross-functional roles to collaborate and interact more intentionally to inform options and actions for continuous improvement.

Some researchers have contended that the experiential learning model could be an asset in defining and developing competencies or combinations of skills like the multiple forms of communication skills that are critical for organizations in the business or corporate sector (Obi et al., 2022). Kolb and Kolb (2013) posited that the theory supports the whole person, including the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of learning. The study’s findings suggested pairing experiential learning approaches with purposeful forms of reflective writing may help shape new approaches to problem-solving and learning. Moreover, the findings may indicate that workers need learning experiences that are practical and quickly applied in their roles. Combining the experiential learning model with reflective

writing experiences to further define learning needs and preferences can inform and promote better investments in continuous learning.

Implications for the Double-Loop Learning Model

Leveraging reflective writing to uncover problems and opportunities within an organization is promising. For example, reflective writing may help workers make connections among people, technology, and other resources through critical thinking and intentional writing that helps them plan and structure ideas and new ways of working. In addition, reflective writing may help workers renew emphasis on how they can solve common and complex problems individually and in collaboration with others. My objective was to understand the participants' experiences with reflective writing; therefore, I did not attempt to explain or facilitate double-loop learning. Yet, the findings suggested that reflective writing experiences can stimulate opportunities for double-loop learning, like revealing “theories-in-action” which compare espoused and actual behaviors (Argyris, 1976a, p. 638). For instance, specific texts noted awareness of experiences in which values were misaligned and described how the understanding was not enough to impact decisions that drove change. Correspondingly, unexpected insights uncovered by the study like shifts in preconceived notions of feelings following the reflective writing experiences also suggested the possibility for reflective writing to help individuals understand the need to challenge their thinking with expanded knowledge gained from the deeper inquiry.

I identified salient themes, including self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release, and each concept may have a substantial role in facilitating double-loop learning. Argyris (1977) emphasized the possibility of internal struggles and tenacity required of individuals shifting from single-loop to double-loop learning. Argyris suggested that most individuals are single-loop learners, meaning that they focus on rational thinking and more concrete, well-defined, and easy-to-support solutions. In contrast, double-loop learners may enter into emotional debate and incur significant risks to achieve innovative solutions best suited to a problem. An overemphasis on precision and clarity can block the creative thinking process and inhibit double-loop learning (Argyris, 1997). Some

questions during the interviews and examples from the reflective writing experiences suggested that some participants may be reluctant to start something new without precise details. For example, several of the participants in the study questioned the purpose and approach to freewriting; many probed for a specific structure to guide the quality of their writing samples. In comparison, the findings also suggested that participants had a tolerance for risk and a willingness to share knowledge and expertise to challenge the status quo, as the reflective writing topics explored multiple complex workplace issues that offered the opportunity for problem-solving and continuous improvement.

Double-loop learning is rooted in values and transparency and can be challenging to achieve in organizations when power, control, and opposing views present barriers to change (Argyris, 1976a, 1976b). The study findings revealed opportunities for closer inspection of some cultural factors in the workplace, such as organizational models or leadership styles that might impede learning outcomes. I observed the possibility of conditioned behaviors in texts and conversations with the participants, such as several experiences that explained participants had intentionally repressed feelings or held back insights since others might view them as complaining. Argyris (1976a) described conditioned behaviors as “programmed,” meaning they may be influenced intentionally (p. 639). In addition, the potential for inauthenticity represented by decisions participants made to please or satisfy others’ needs may be worthy of further study. Openness and desire for change required for double-loop learning may have been encouraged by the reflective writing experience as the participants were at times eager to provide their writing samples and as evidenced by the depth of the texts that explored challenging organizational issues. Reflective writing experiences may contribute to facilitating the double-loop learning model helping workers, and organizations increase transparency and accountability for managing risks and barriers to improved results.

Implications for the Job-Demand Control Support Model

The essence of the original JDC model compared the stress caused by work pressures with the autonomy to make decisions to reduce or eliminate it (Karasek,

1979). Identifying workers' need for "co-worker social support" led to an expanded model and empirical evidence that social support, such as whether workers could talk or work together, impacted well-being, including physical health (Johnson & Hall, 1988, p. 1336). The model continues to influence knowledge of workers' needs in the modern workplace, including more diverse roles like those of entrepreneurial workers (Zambrano-Santos et al., 2023). A tenet of the JDCS model is that workers who manage stress well tend to have support to make critical decisions about their work, such as allocating tasks within their available working hours (Theorell, 2020). Similarly, the JDCS theory maintains that workers who engage in meaningful connections with others at work may experience higher levels of well-being. The current study's findings provided evidence that reflective writing experiences can surface workplace pressures and identify worker stressors. In addition, the results also suggested reflective writing experiences provide coping mechanisms to aid workers' offering insights into their needs and opportunities to ideate improvements. The findings suggested that reflective writing has the potential to help workers manage job demands and improve well-being by assisting them with a better understanding of the nature of their work and how they might influence desired changes.

Participants highlighted well-regarded learning opportunities and coping mechanisms provided by the organization to help them build their awareness and influence changes to improve their well-being. In contrast, the findings also exposed how some participants felt frustrated and overwhelmed by demands. The experiences shared in this study acknowledged the mental and physical implications of pressure and stress and may support the theory behind the JDCS model. The reflective writing experiences gave insight into the participants' values and offered advice for coping with stress. Meaningful experiences like talking with mentors, spending time with family, and pursuing hobbies emerged as everyday experiences that provide support. The study's reflective writing experiences influenced the release of emotions and feelings. They encouraged dedicated time for intentional thinking about well-being and opportunities to help workers think logically about their perceived and actual workplace experiences. The JDCS model

argues perceptions about the prevalence of high demands or other pressures are detrimental to well-being (Johnson & Hall, 1988). The study offered evidence to support the theory with examples of participants describing how the reflective writing experiences helped them see alternatives to how they initially viewed some situations. Coupling reflective writing experiences with the JDCS model and leveraging complementary assessments might offer insights that help workers with additional ways to understand and cope with the demands of their roles.

Similarly, a combination of insights from the JDCS model and reflective writing experiences may influence changes in roles that support well-being. For instance, besides the social support systems needed in the workplace, the JDCS model suggests that control and decision-making are critical for workers. Excessive job demands and conflicting assessments of the value and nature of workers' performance can stifle positive aspects of career calling (Vianello et al., 2022). Even if workers find their roles fulfilling, they may not achieve well-being (Vianello et al., 2022). Varied approaches to reflective writing experiences increase focus on emotional release, presence, and positivity. The elements of the JDCS model can uncover workers' needs and inform opportunities to improve well-being. In addition, the purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to explore* or *writing to see*, can generate insights into the work's more interesting aspects. They may help workers visualize more meaningful career aspirations. Finally, reflective writing experiences can further inform the JDCS to help workers and organizations evolve jobs and roles for the future.

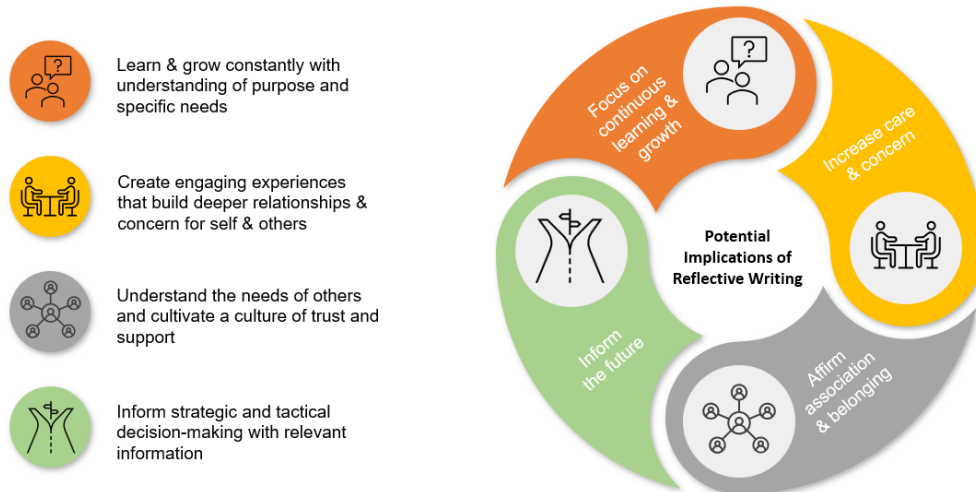
Practical Implications

Several practical implications of reflective writing previously discussed revealed examples of the potential needs of workers and organizations. Notably, determining the value of reflective writing for an individual or an organization depends on distinct needs and circumstances; therefore, designing future reflective writing experiences requires continuous knowledge of workers and organizations, including insights into predominant cultures or significant change initiatives underway. The reflective writing experiences in the study produced numerous examples of current and future needs offering detailed analysis, identifying specific

barriers, and making recommendations for improvement. The findings suggested the potential for future reflective writing experiences to complement diverse needs, including how they might influence continuous learning. Figure 6 illustrates examples of practical implications.

Figure 6

Selected Implications of Reflective Writing



Focus on Continuous Learning and Growth. Reflective writing experiences from the participants in the study provided evidence that suggested workers have astute business knowledge, awareness of human needs and behavior, and ideas for improving the organization's products, services, and systems. Equally important, increasing awareness and continuous learning, including further understanding through Argyris's (2004) double-loop model, may provide a more robust opportunity for competitive advantage. Double-loop learning involves changing actions, mindsets, and values (Argyris, 2004). It shifts the current state of an organization by removing barriers to learning and change adoption, including the "organizational defensive routines" that block access to accurate information, conversant options, and consistent attention to valuable and informative results (Argyris, 2004, p. 10). The study findings suggested that despite access to numerous learning opportunities, there may be a desire for different learning experiences to enhance performance. Moreover, there may be an opportunity to

better apply existing and new knowledge in partnership with others in the organization.

Reflective writing may have the potential to help organizations address the need for both single-loop and double-loop learning, such as increasing specific technical skills or communication competencies. One example from the findings suggested a need for single- and double-loop learning to build the organization's capacity for improved communications. The results encouraged using existing communication skillsets and knowledge to increase awareness of organizational change initiatives. In addition, they suggested the need for more tailored communications that incorporate "well-rounded" quality elements, including using a "human lens instead of a corporate lens." Purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to explore*, may help workers identify more effective business requirements and formatting techniques that improve the content of communications. Similarly, other purposeful forms of reflective writing, like *writing to inform* and *writing to explain*, may offer workers the chance to practice drafting, revising, and editing written communications.

Reflective writing experiences might include facilitated knowledge sharing provided by communication experts to promote double-loop learning and to assess the needs of more complicated communication preferences. In addition, the reflective writing experiences might introduce new processes, such as collaborative peer reviews or technology-assisted reviews, to further illuminate the complexities involved in drafting effective messaging. In addition, facilitated guided writing experiences may help organizations incorporate workers' input into more effective comprehensive communication plans with more thoughtful analysis of organizational conditions and other factors like phasing and timing that promote better understanding. Furthermore, introducing collaborative approaches to learning, communication, and organizational change may demonstrate an organization's commitment to partnership in continuous learning and improvement.

Another finding from the study that may support reflective writing as a catalyst for continuous learning and growth is the need for learning experiences where workers can engage subject matter experts who teach and inform future

possibilities through shared insights. Researchers have supported reflective writing experiences comprised of business-focused content and private thoughts to promote awareness of self and others and to forge better connections to the actual context of the work (Carden et al., 2021). Combining purposeful forms of reflective writing with interaction and collaboration may produce innovation, especially when trusted colleagues who share diverse knowledge and perspectives partner on collective goals. Yet, learning with subject matter experts who have extensive knowledge and expertise can present challenges. More casual, conversational partnerships and writing to capture knowledge can improve collaboration and lead to a better understanding of the work and the value individuals add to specific responsibilities (Rice-Bailey, 2016). The study's findings support that there are feelings of inferiority among both experienced and inexperienced workers in the corporate workplace and that some may have difficulty sharing or articulating their ideas in some circumstances.

Reflective writing experiences can help workers develop their skills and confidence regardless of their experience level by incorporating flexibility and careful attention to perceptions of inferiority and other feelings in the workplace. Easily adaptable to specific learning and well-being needs, reflective writing experiences can elicit the logic needed to define and inform actions with valid information and allow clarity to emotions and well-being issues that may be barriers to learning and action. Purposeful forms of reflective writing may introduce the meaningful thinking that Argyris (2004) described as "productive reasoning," which can better inform messaging elements and shape more productive communications (p. 12). In addition, reflective writing experiences designed with guided writing offer opportunities for participants to practice their writing and cultivate the necessary social support they need through sharing their experiences. The vulnerability and support systems that accompany the social aspects of some reflective writing experiences can trust and courage and boost performance in the workplace.

Another example of reflective writing's potential implications on continuous learning and growth involves layering complementary tools to enable

data that informs needs. Data analysis tools like the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), which collects day-to-day “experiences, behaviors, or physiological states of individuals in their natural environment” already inform workplace practices in many organizations (Seifried & Rausch, 2022, p. 20). Combining writing samples with other forms of information might contribute to the design and implementation of a robust, proprietary, and continuous system of knowledge that can add value to the organization by offering proximity to and visualization of the actualization of the work and influencing constant process improvements. Moreover, the unique designs and customization of the experiences can inspire best practices that are helpful to share with other organizations or even market for profit.

Learning and growth with reflective writing can span careers and lifetimes, as it can help workers and organizations maintain vital professional competencies that inspire more robust capabilities (Carden et al., 2021). The current study’s findings suggested that purposeful forms of reflective writing can capture valuable information to enhance learning and performance. Future reflective writing experiences designed with learning outcomes and cost considerations, such as reducing training time by identifying needs upfront and reinforcing learning outcomes with informal feedback loops, might help organizations reduce education costs and improve efficiencies. The information gleaned from writing samples and opportunities for workers to participate in designing reflective writing experiences may also influence decisions. Implementing reflective writing experiences can produce and enhance workers’ and organizations’ knowledge and encourage new ways of working with flexibility for individual needs. They offer opportunities for continuous learning and growth of the workforce and for designing more efficient and sustainable solutions for the future.

Increasing Care and Concern for Others. Reflective writing experiences enable flexible designs tailored to emphasize the individual workers’ needs and those of the organization. Some words cannot be spoken, but might be articulated in writing (Bolton et al., 2006). Demonstrating care and concern for others is not inherent among workers and organizational cultures, and it develops through trustworthiness and respect within the workplace (Caniëls & Hatak, 2022). As

culture can drive adaptability and innovation for an organization, knowing and trusting workers and consistently treating them with respect and dignity is imperative (Caniëls & Hatak, 2022). The findings produced evidence of high regard for colleagues, including trusted mentors and caring leaders in the organization. They suggested the potential for reflective writing to expand awareness of the positive aspects of the organization's culture. Implementing reflective writing experiences that accentuate meaningful interactions—with or without a formalized element of sharing—may enhance the understanding that accommodates more care and concern for others.

With an open, informed, and flexible approach, purposeful forms of reflective writing can enable clarity that encourages partnerships, coaching, and knowledge sharing. By identifying relevant issues, allowing questioning, and encouraging thinking, reflective writing can help workers better understand the importance of responsiveness and compassion for themselves and others, especially since interpersonal skills may be hard to teach (Gill et al., 2015). Care and concern are needed in the contemporary workplace (Walton, 2021). Listening and responding thoughtfully to workers' concerns is vital, especially because they typically bring forward only their most profound issues (Walton, 2021, p. 16). They look to others for input and guidance about their "sense of purpose and meaning...standing and status in the workplace...and how they can influence the course of events" (Walton, 2021, p. 16). Reflective writing may encourage the identification and exploration of workplace issues. Moreover, the design of reflective writing experiences can be intentional, carefully considering the needs of the individuals and providing for the psychological safety and facilitation of conversations that reinforce workers' sense of security.

Fostering workers' willingness to bring issues into the open with sensitivity and respect is vital. The experiences shared in this study reflected participants' concerns with learning and trying new things to stay relevant in uncertainty. Some felt guilty for sensing satisfaction or contentment in work and home life. The findings indicated that reflective writing could help with processing or better understanding feelings highlighting Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical concept

of dwelling that contends being-in-the-world is not simply seeing it but acknowledging it. Reconsidering the double-loop learning model, Argyris (2008) advocated for workers to express grievances, as they are a source of continuous improvement. Issues inspire improvements and a collaborative process that involves people, conversation, and diverse ideas coordinated effectively, even when the discovery process may introduce the risk of perceived chaos (Argyris, 2004). The current study's findings produced evidence of opportunities, such as dealing with feelings of inadequacy, frequently changing roles, and concerns about ongoing high demands. These issues present challenges and reflect relevant opportunities to acknowledge workers' needs for transparency, care, and concern. Reflective writing experiences tailored for the personal and social needs of the workforce can make it easier for workers to surface issues and initiate the learning and problem-solving that bring necessary change.

Complexity and uncertainty also introduce unique needs that require deep thinking attuned to increased awareness, as professionals are often "unaware of things of which we so need to be aware (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018, p. 41). Sharing problems and issues identified from reflective writing in the workplace, including those individually focused on needs like intergenerational issues at work, spirituality, or other specific well-being challenges, may be risky for both workers and organizations. Reflective writing experiences may be designed and implemented with intentional safeguards that offer safety and protection for both without ignoring or avoiding critical issues that underpin the workplace culture.

Building Culture with Association and Belonging. As culture shapes the worker experience (Wilson, 2022) and competitive advantage, even during ambiguous global market conditions (Lin et al., 2022), comfortable associations among workers can impact stable emotions at work. They may decrease the likelihood that some workers are excluded or ostracized (Jahanzeb & Newell, 2022, p. 244). The findings of this study suggested that workers need the opportunity to build relationships exemplified by the affinity for the guided writing experiences where a participant described the group writing and sharing as a chance to "hear others' emotions and experiences and find connection." The design of reflective

writing experiences may promote casual and regular connections that stimulate bonds among workers and provide needed social interactions especially considering the potential for long-term virtual work. The intentional groupings of workers and the longevity of reflective writing experiences informed by a feedback loop may also help workers cultivate deeper relationships to enhance the reflective writing experience. Finally, customizing reflective writing experiences to the particular needs of workers may be a benefit of reflective writing experiences compared to other learning methods.

Unlike formal learning, designing and introducing reflective writing experiences can be creative and flexible. Varied and distinct forms of individual writing prompts and the loose structure of the guided writing sessions may have influenced the value of the collective experience for the individual participants in the study. The findings suggest that sequencing layered reflective writing to underpin workers' experiences may enhance their understanding of the context of particular situations, enhancing their ability to overcome adversity. Intentionally allowing participants to write individually to release emotions first, followed by facilitating guided writing that encourages shared experiences with dialogue, may improve social interaction and expose workers to others in a more inviting and accepting way that encourages future associations. Pairing workers in reflective writing experiences like peer reviews or advisory partnerships may also influence connection and assist workers with gaining a needed perspective to support each other in the workplace better.

The culture within an organization forms around the human resource policies and procedures that encourage workers' behaviors and learning and well-being are integral considerations (Singh et al., 2019). Policies can inspire support, promote resilience, and underpin sustainability when there is attention and advocacy for workers' well-being (Singh et al., 2019). The current study findings suggested that workers need opportunities to release emotions and escape work and home life pressures to facilitate clearer thinking. Moreover, guidance and support are necessary to define better options and actions that help them concentrate on the details of their work and respond to the demands of their responsibilities. Reflective

writing experiences can surface perceptions and enable factual communications to help workers pause to plan and inform their responses.

Informing the Future. Organizations leverage workers' knowledge and experiences to influence strategic and tactical decisions and build a competitive edge. Collecting and formalizing the information from reflective writing experiences with workers' permission can be a powerful supplement for business decisions, including informing policies and processes. For example, gathering ideas or issues from purposeful reflective writing samples can supplement and further define feedback received through traditional worker sentiment or listening surveys. Many organizations already leverage formal worker sentiment surveys voluntarily or in compliance with regulatory requirements "to increase opportunities for employee voice" and to assess organizational change (Larsson & Holmberg, 2021, p. 413). Although workers' opinion data collected from surveys may enable organizational strategy with valid and reliable results, it is also subject to interpretation and inaccuracy, such as being over-indexed or perceived as a constraint within the organization (Larsson & Holmberg, 2021). Surveys may not be the best practice solution for understanding workers' needs and opinions, especially for understanding unique concepts like learning (Seifried & Rausch, 2022). The use of complementing surveys with information captured in reflective writing experiences might present a more complete and reliable view.

Added context and examples from reflective writing may increase the availability of details which can drive accuracy, understanding, and utilization of data. The data from reflective writing experiences may inform improved problem-solving capabilities and enhanced organizational performance. The findings suggested workers can gain a greater awareness of the depth and impact of issues, increasing their awareness and reinforcing the need to "step back to look over the situation and not jump in to make a decision" too quickly. In addition, the findings suggested that reflective writing experiences allow participants to recreate situations to define opportunity areas and construct alternative outcomes. During the study, participants shared that formally writing to capture competing thoughts in their minds helped avoid excessive rumination and led to more straightforward,

actionable options. Elaborating on the importance of considering multiple possibilities, one participant wrote that the experience of reflective writing helped nurture a broader perspective.

Reflective writing experiences may promote improved problem-solving with a closer inspection of the root causes of problems. When designed with the intentional inclusion of the workers most intimate with the intricacies of the issues, reflective writing experiences may be a simple and efficient means to identify and solve current organizational challenges. Furthermore, considering the detailed data and potential for large quantities collected in some organizations, adding artificial intelligence capabilities such as natural language processing might assist in the collection and analysis of writing samples to generate insightful information for the future of work faster. Finally, organizations might consider implementing reflective writing experiences to demonstrate a commitment to partnerships with workers recognizing their input and expertise as valuable assets that fortify performance outcomes and enable sustainability.

Several practical implications of reflective writing for learning and well-being highlighted its flexibility and potential usefulness to organizations. It can produce tangible and assessable information to inform workers and organizations through adaptable designs tailored to specific needs. Although it is essential to design reflective writing experiences with a rationale informed by the organization's needs, including cost considerations, when used with larger groups of workers, reflective writing may enable the influence of decisions and action plans more informed by workers' needs. The outcomes of the study's reflective writing experiences suggested mutual benefits for workers and organizations partnered in the strategic and operational aspects of the organization. In the following section, I provide recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the nature of the phenomenon of reflective writing and the depth of the methodology used in the study influenced layered data and the possibility for endless interpretation, there are numerous possibilities for future research. Many examples with potential for future research emerged within the specific context of

the findings shared in Chapter 4. Other examples in the layered data include unexpected insights, experiential themes, and Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical constructs. In addition, the bridling journal and questions generated during the focus group also illustrate multiple ways to understand further how reflective writing can benefit workplace learning and well-being. The following section briefly discusses three specific opportunities, including a recommendation to expand on the current study using alternative methodologies.

Designing Experiences with Writers

A prominent reoccurring question that emerged during the research process was whether the participants might have benefited from the knowledge of the broader context of the study to promote specific learning and well-being outcomes. Participants were aware of the study's focus on encouraging reflective writing. Still, they did not receive information about the associated theories, philosophical constructs, or preconceptions within the bridling statements. The first recommendation for future study involves presenting the current research, including the detailed methodology, to the participants and reviewing the findings, implications, and suggestions for their input. With more context, the participants' feedback may be more valuable to designing a subsequent reflective writing experience for the organization drawing on existing questions and opportunities identified from the current study findings. Combined with knowledge gained from the study's experiences and new knowledge, the past participants might suggest specific research questions framed by their needs and ideas.

The findings of the current study suggested that a specific topic might be explored in more depth, intentionally applying the learning and well-being theories and reflective writing to help the organization inform and respond to current challenges. For example, in future research efforts based on the present study, investigators might leverage the experiential learning framework to explore Heideggerian philosophical implications in the corporate workplace focused on a particular learning or well-being gap, like the need for more courteous behaviors. In addition to the current findings, an extended discussion among the past participants might identify other unique issues the participants want to explore with reflective

writing. Notwithstanding the risk of information withheld by workers, designing new research with experienced workers who also understand the potential value of reflective writing may enable more valuable outcomes from reflective writing experiences. Implementing future research to expand on the current findings may allow the past participants to apply what they learned in the present study by continuing to use reflective writing and encouraging others to try it.

Leveraging Experiential Themes

The second opportunity for future research involves revisiting the experiential themes that formed the context of the reflective writing samples. Table 9 provides examples of the experiential themes presented with the purposeful forms of reflective writing interpreted from the analysis in the current study. The experiential themes represent current challenges in the workplace that may affect learning, well-being, and other components of the workplace, such as culture and productivity. Further inquiry into these themes to assess their prevalence on a larger scale and to compare the themes with phenomena such as job satisfaction, attrition, retention, absenteeism, engagement, resilience, or other factors relevant to workers and organizations may have further implications for theoretical and practical application. In addition, a better understanding of the experiential themes through different reflective writing experiences that leverage the purposeful forms of reflective writing identified in the current study may add relevance to the knowledge related to reflective writing.

Similarly, empirical evidence from quantitative or mixed methods research leveraging the study's findings might benefit future understanding. For example, integrating an assessment instrument such as the JCQ of Karasek et al. (1998) or similar measurement tools could illuminate specific opportunities for workers and organizations. Karasek's (1979) job demand-control theories linking psychological and physiological concerns to workplace stress remain relevant in contemporary organizational research (Alves et al., 2015). The JCQ remains applicable and reliable for researchers when modified to suit specific needs and used in conjunction with other scales (Briciu et al., 2023; Dutheil et al., 2022). Combined research methods, including the purposeful forms of reflective writing, might

influence new knowledge to distinguish the most relevant and prevalent stressors impacting well-being in the contemporary workplace. Moreover, even though it is challenging to separate work stress from “general stress” (Kim et al., 2022, p. 1359), workers may be interested in the quantitative scales since measures may inform specific individual goals and inform new approaches that eliminate or reduce stress.

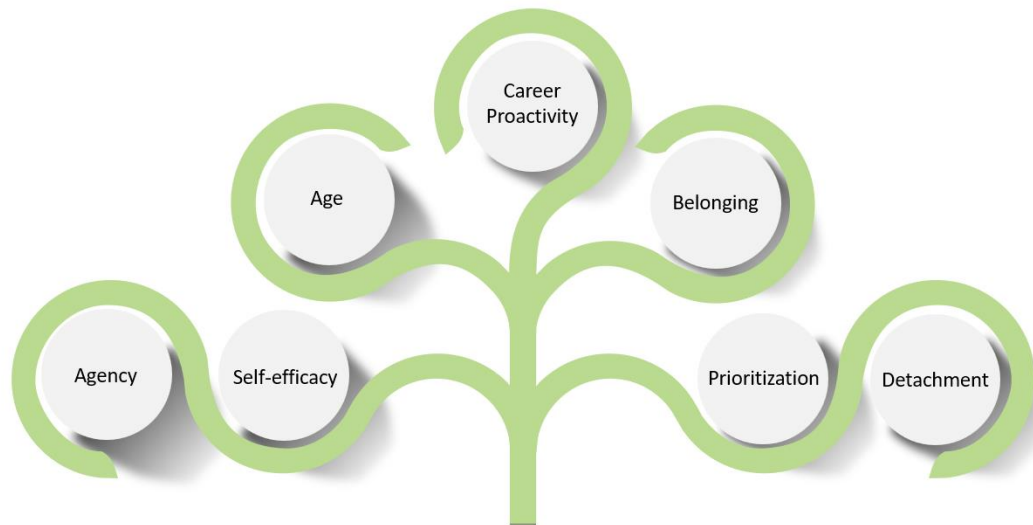
Another consideration for future research involves the relevant scholarly research that has emerged since the current study began. Some unexpected insights and notes recorded in the study’s bridling journal, such as the perception that venting or ranting is inappropriate without making recommendations for improvement or offering solutions, sparked attention to evolving human resources issues and additional research outside the scope of the study. Further exploring topics such as detachment (Skurak et al., 2021), abundance mindset (Mohammed & Abdul, 2019), promotive voice (Jahanzeb & Newell, 2022), career proactivity (Jiang et al., 2023), and the phenomenon of conditioned or programmed behaviors (Argyris, 2004) may also have promising findings with insights to inform workplace policies that help workers and organizations thrive. Two of the most salient experiential patterns from the current study involved the need for improving support to address the intergenerational factors impacting collaboration and refining the awareness and policies associated with remote and hybrid work. Numerous research questions and combinations of methods could produce unique understandings.

With the possibility of intergenerational issues discovered in the current study, future studies might inform a better understanding of the impacts of tenure and experience among workers and the need for support for all workers on both ends of the age spectrum. Similarly, investing in future research to explore the ongoing impacts of the remote and hybrid workplace may be imperative, as recent literature contended that the location of work is a factor in the viability of organizational performance (Šmite et al., 2023). Another immediate need that I identified in the current study may be a simple intervention such as an unstructured focus group to facilitate reflective writing and open dialogue with groups of

workers who may feel isolated or excluded with permanent remote assignments. Figure 7 represents examples of the experiential themes recommended for future research with potential value for the participants in the current study.

Figure 7

Examples of Experiential Themes with Potential for Future Research



Integrating Knowledge and Learning Outcomes

The third recommendation for future study is to address unique needs by integrating existing knowledge and specific learning outcomes with purposeful forms of reflective writing. Reflective writing is a commonly practiced technique in some fields like education and healthcare; however, limited research on this topic has been in a business or corporate context. Implementing future research to understand how particular reflective writing experiences might improve professional development opportunities could inform future learning and development strategies. In addition, introducing modern data analysis techniques like machine learning to evaluate reflective writing might reduce the time to uncover new organizational knowledge (Ullmann, 2019) and help workers and organizations realize additional benefits of reflective writing beyond the scope of the current study. Most importantly, future research with data from reflective writing and machine learning may more quickly assist workers and organizations in better understanding options to address urgent and essential needs.

One opportunity to integrate existing knowledge with a focus on reflective writing and a specific learning outcome might leverage findings from the current study and influences on workplace stress identified in Piao and Managi's (2022) longitudinal study suggesting that workers' responses to stressors are mediated by "a comprehensive well-organized workplace environment" comprised of adequate organizational support for a myriad of needs including elements of the JDCA model and other psychological and social needs (p. 1). In addition, introducing a study to assess an individual reflective writing intervention for a specific condition, such as a perception of injustice in an organization's compensation policy, might incorporate a sequence of purposeful forms of reflective writing following the model represented in Figure 5. The results could uncover additional benefits of reflective writing, helping workers better understand specific workplace policies while alleviating stressors and promoting well-being. Moreover, the model may be helpful as a support for workers to engage in "thinking positively, changing mood, and avoiding directing feelings of anger and frustration toward others" (Piao & Managi, 2022, p. 1). Finally, introducing reflective writing to explore specific learning outcomes with groups of workers and alternative inquiry forms such as ethnography or case study research may also produce engaging and impactful insights for workers and organizations.

Limitations

Hermeneutic phenomenological research cannot confirm a singular and absolute interpretation of meaning as interpreting experiences is continuous, and "the whole truth" may never be exposed (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021, p. 151). Instead, it unveils the individual experiences of a phenomenon (Kafle, 2011). In the current study, I used "distinctive rigor" or objective reasoning techniques to guide and protect the intents of the participants (van Manen, 2014, p. 356). The findings suggested that reflective writing experiences have beneficial implications for learning and well-being in a corporate workplace. The innate limitations of the qualitative method used in the study, such as the small number of participants, the subjective and cumbersome nature of the data, the influence of my bias, and the natural inclination to realize preconceptions, must also be carefully evaluated

(Morse, 2015). Criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research consider the researcher's responsibilities to the method and quality of the inquiry and that the participants themselves play a role in the integrity of a study, noting that the "credibility...[or] the trustworthiness of the inquiry" might always be questioned (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 329).

Two limitations of the study that I noted in Chapter 1 acknowledged the potential for the lack of generalizability of the study given the single organization used for the participant selection and the possibility of quality issues or inter-subjectivity between myself and the participants. I understood both constraints and addressed them within the study design through guardrails such as participant selection criteria and ongoing communication to ensure shared access to information about the reflective writing experiences. Respecting the current study's findings within the organization's context was essential. Still, it is noteworthy that one of the participants identified value in expanding the research to increase its diversity, including participants from other industries and demographics. In addition, even though the bridling journal was helpful throughout the analysis to reflect and respond to the texts without judgment, remaining open-minded to the "distinct meaning" of reflective writing (van Manen, 2014, p. 356) was difficult given the intensity of the other phenomena presented within the participants' experiences.

Another limitation of the current study was the need for ongoing feedback from peer reviewers and other researchers with knowledge of the organization. Leveraging a trusted human resources subjective matter expert or experts in the facilitation of reflective writing in the same context may have been helpful to introduce "member checking" in the analysis where additional perspectives could have offered alternative views on the findings (Morse, 2015, p. 1216). Even though researchers have responsibility for the ultimate findings (Morse, 2015), collecting further insights may have offered a more significant opportunity for layers of "inceptual epiphany" or additional unique discernments beyond that of a single researcher (van Manen, 2014, p. 356). Extending the duration of the study and

incorporating other focus groups may have created a more robust influx of feedback to enable more insights from the participants.

Conclusions

Contemporary work is ambiguous and competitive, requiring workers to give continuous attention to learning that keeps their skills relevant (Schall, 2022) and organizations to provide coping mechanisms to cultivate and promote well-being (Piao & Managi, 2022). Just as job demands and stress can tear down workers' productivity and well-being, learning new ways to approach ambiguous work and the ever-changing workplace can also build up workers' engagement and enhance their work experience (Harju et al., 2021). In the current study, I explored how reflective writing may benefit individual learning and well-being. The findings suggested that reflective writing experiences in a corporate environment may encourage self-awareness and critical thinking necessary for learning. In addition, they may facilitate the release of emotions essential for well-being. Moreover, purposeful forms of reflective writing, such as *writing to focus* or *writing to be open*, may customize specific experiences for workers encouraging a multifaceted experience.

Purposeful forms of reflective writing can challenge workers by uncovering complex and difficult emotions that generate stress. They can also assist workers with formalizing thoughts and ideas, providing valuable perspective, and creating the presence and positivity that foster change agility, personal and professional growth, and resilience during adversity. Comparably, reflective writing experiences designed for organizational purposes can emphasize exploration for process improvements or capture information to promote knowledge transfer. Unlike traditional workplace learning, which is difficult to apply or that is "partly unconscious" (Seifried & Rausch, 2022, p. 19), ongoing and expansive knowledge rooted in the context and synthesis of workplace productivity is increasingly connected to global competitiveness (Pylväs et al., 2022).

The participants in this study experienced reflective writing as a way to free their emotions and focus their attention. They connected in guided writing experiences despite remote physical locations. Reflective writing independently

and in small groups may have been a catalyst for concentration, the generation of new ideas, and a deeper understanding of personal and professional circumstances. Understanding workers' unique learning needs, especially at different career stages, is critical (Le et al., 2022). As uncertainty and other contemporary issues like disengagement and turnover demand attention in organizations (Formica & Sfodera, 2022), the need for tools and techniques that effectively encourage mental health and well-being continues (Piao & Managi, 2022). Addressing workers' current and future needs remains challenging for organizations amid constant change, and leveraging all forms of data to understand and provide an environment conducive to learning and well-being underpins the performance and sustainability of organizations (Sorensen et al., 2021, p. 2). Shaping knowledge through reflective practice and experiential learning with social interaction is promising for developing business leaders for the future (Humpherys et al., 2022). Similarly, partnering with workers to explore their workplace needs and motivation can now streamline and better inform workforce decisions that enrich learning and well-being (Harju et al., 2021). Reflective writing experiences that frame purposeful ways of writing "a structured writing process" can help professionals learn. Navigating and interpreting meaning from real life involving the intricate complexities of human experiences is never complete (Gadamer, 1960/1998), as every nuance introduces "encounters with significances that we did not know before" (van Manen, 2014, p. 18).

Summary

Contemporary workplace challenges require unique learning and well-being solutions to help workers and organizations adapt and thrive. In the final chapter, the study's findings, including responses to the research questions, discussed reflective writing's impact on workplace learning and well-being. Purposeful forms of reflective writing identified by the study can encourage self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional release. Theoretical and practical implications considered how reflective writing might leverage existing learning and well-being concepts like double-loop learning and the job-demand-control model to offer workers and organizations more insights into their needs. The potential for reflective writing to

complement the existing practices employed by workers and organizations to facilitate learning and well-being is promising. Considering the combined needs of workers for learning and well-being in the modern workplace, reflective writing experiences may offer an adaptable solution that gives individuals the space to notice the intricacies and quality of life in their experiences at work and home.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Forms

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Background:

You are invited to take part in one or more individual interviews related to your experience with reflective writing in the workplace. The interview(s) will be conducted by a researcher, Gina Pell, who is a student at Southeastern University. You were chosen for the interview(s) because your leader or another colleague identified your interest in learning as a potential fit for this research study. Before electronically signing and returning this consent form to the researcher, please read the form completely and ask the researcher any questions you may have.

Purpose:

The purpose of individual interview(s) is to understand your experience with reflective writing and how, if at all, it has impacted your learning and well-being at work. The information learned in this focus group may be used to inform future learning and well-being interventions in the workplace. Your participation in this qualitative study on reflective writing practices is entirely voluntary and not in any way a condition of or related to your employment with [the organization - name intentionally omitted]. The study is not being conducted on behalf of [the organization - name intentionally omitted] or sponsored by [the organization - name intentionally omitted], and [the organization - name intentionally omitted] is not in any way associated with this study, its results, or the dissertation. The questions and topics that are part of this study do not necessarily reflect the views of [the organization - name intentionally omitted] and should not be interpreted as such. [The organization - name intentionally omitted] will not be made aware of which individuals are participating in the study and the data and information collected from the study will not be provided to [the organization - name intentionally omitted] except that [the organization - name intentionally omitted] will have the ability to review the aggregate results of the survey wherein the participants' information will be de-identified.

Procedure:

If you agree to participate, the interview(s) invitation(s) will be sent to you via an Outlook appointment including a Zoom link. The duration of the interview(s) is approximately 40 minutes. The interview will be conducted by the student researcher with you as the single participant. The facilitator will ask a guiding question and support a conversation about your experience. The intent of the interview is for the student researcher to hear your unique experiences and there are no specific expectations or outcomes and no correct or incorrect responses.

At the beginning of the interview(s), the student researcher will remind you of the purpose and initiate the conversation. As approved through Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board, the interview(s) will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken by the researcher to ensure an accurate transcript. The transcript will not be shared with Allstate nor with other researchers.

Voluntary Nature of the Focus Group:

Your participation in the focus group is voluntary. There are neither incentives nor compensation for agreeing to participate. If you decide to participate now, you can change your mind and decide to stop participating at any time in the future.

Benefits and Risks of the Interview(s):

Your participation in the interview(s) may benefit you and others in the workplace as the data collected may be used to better understand and inform future learning and well-being experiences. There are no significant risks anticipated. There may be a minimal risk for psychological stress experienced as part of sharing your experiences. If you should feel uncomfortable participating at any point, you may decide to end the interview(s) at any time.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous and held in strictest confidence. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this agreement. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the transcripts and subsequent research report.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's dissertation committee chair is *Dr. Bethany Peters*. You may ask questions at any time by contacting the researcher at gpell@seu.edu or the committee chair at bpeters@seu.edu. If you want to communicate privately about your rights as a participant, you may contact Dr. Jennifer Carter, the Chair of the Southeastern University Ph.D./DSL programs, at jcarter@seu.edu.

Statement of Consent:

By selecting the "I Accept" below and completing the fields below you are entering into an electronic signature agreement. You agree your electronic signature is the legal equivalent of your manual signature on this Agreement.

I have read the above information. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the interview.

Participant First Name	
Participant Last Name	
Date	

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Background:

You are invited to take part in a focus group related to your experience with reflective writing in the workplace. The focus group is being conducted by a researcher, Gina Pell, who is a student at Southeastern University. You were chosen for the focus group because your leader or another colleague identified your interest in learning as a potential fit for this research study. Before electronically signing and returning this consent form to the researcher, please read the form completely and ask the researcher any questions you may have.

Purpose:

The purpose of this focus group is to understand your experience with reflective writing and how, if at all, it has impacted your learning and well-being at work. The information learned in this focus group will be used to inform future learning and well-being interventions in the workplace. Your participation in this focus group on reflective writing practices is entirely voluntary and not in any way a condition of or related to your employment with [the organization - name intentionally omitted]. The study is not being conducted on behalf of [the organization - name intentionally omitted] or sponsored by [the organization - name intentionally omitted], and [the organization - name intentionally omitted] is not in any way associated with this study, its results, or the dissertation. The questions and topics that are part of this study do not necessarily reflect the views of [the organization - name intentionally omitted] and should not be interpreted as such. [The organization - name intentionally omitted] will not be made aware of which individuals are participating in the study and the data and information collected from the study will not be provided to [the organization - name intentionally omitted] except that [the organization - name intentionally omitted] will have the ability to review the aggregate results of the survey wherein the participants' information will be de-identified.

Procedure:

If you agree to participate, the focus group invitation will be sent to you via an Outlook appointment including a Zoom link. The duration of the focus group is no more than 60 minutes. Including the student researcher who will also facilitate, there will be twelve or less participants. The facilitator will ask several questions and guide the group in discussion. The questions will be open-ended and there are no right or wrong answers. The student researcher wants to hear the varying viewpoints and would like everyone to contribute their thoughts.

At the beginning of the focus group, the facilitator will remind participants to be respectful and refrain from interrupting others. Each participant is encouraged to be honest even when divergent opinions are offered. As approved through Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board, this focus group will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken by the facilitator to ensure an accurate transcript. The transcript will not be shared with Allstate nor with participants without additional permission from all participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Focus Group:

Your participation in the focus group is voluntary. There are neither incentives nor compensation for agreeing to participate. If you decide to participate now, you can change your mind and decide to stop participating at any time during the focus group discussion.

Benefits and Risks of the Focus Group:

Your participation in the focus group may benefit you and others in the workplace as the data collected will be used to better understand and inform future learning and well-being experiences. There are no significant risks anticipated in the focus group. There may be a minimal risk for psychological stress experienced as part of an average conversation. If you should feel uncomfortable participating at any point, you may skip questions or leave the group at any time. Should you decide not to participate fully, the researcher asks that you respect the participation of all other participants and keep any information confidential.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous and held in the strictest confidence. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this agreement. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the transcripts and subsequent research report. Although participants are

asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study, the researcher is not able to provide full anonymity and confidentiality based on the nature of the group discussion.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's dissertation committee chair is *Dr. Bethany Peters*. You may ask questions at any time by contacting the researcher at gpell@seu.edu or the committee chair at bpeters@seu.edu. If you want to communicate privately about your rights as a participant, you may contact Dr. Jennifer Carter, the Chair of the Southeastern University Ph.D./DSL programs, at jcarter@seu.edu.

Statement of Consent:

By selecting the box and adding your name and date below you are entering into an electronic signature agreement. You agree your electronic signature is the legal equivalent of your manual signature on this agreement. Maintain this copy for your records.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and accepted the conditions stated above and agree to voluntarily participate in this research.

Participant First Name	
Participant Last Name	
Date	

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval for Human Research

SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY



NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: September 17, 2022

TO: Gina Pell, Bethany Peters

FROM: SEU IRB

PROTOCOL TITLE: Tearing Down and Building Up: How Reflective Writing Informs Workplace Learning and Well-being in the Contemporary Workplace

FUNDING SOURCE: NONE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22 BE 10

APPROVAL PERIOD: Approval Date: September 17, 2022 Expiration Date: September 16, 2023

Dear Investigator(s),

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled, Tearing Down and Building Up: How Reflective Writing Informs Workplace Learning and Well-being in the Contemporary Workplace. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol pending the following change:

- Please add IRB contact information to the informed consent (irb@seu.edu)


Any changes require approval before they can be implemented as part of your study. If your study requires any changes, the proposed modifications will need to be submitted in the form of an amendment request to the IRB to include the following:

Description of proposed revisions:
If applicable, any new or revised materials;
If applicable, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions

If there are any adverse events and/or any unanticipated problems during your study, you must notify the IRB within 24 hours of the event or problem.

At present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

This approval is issued under Southeastern University's Federal Wide Assurance 00006943 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the IRB's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

 Rustin Lloyd
 Chair, Institutional Review Board
irb@seu.edu

Appendix C

Participant Interview Protocol

Initial Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Context	Content & Questions
Study background and purpose	<p>In this research, I want to better understand your current work experience and how, if at all, reflective writing might influence your learning and well-being.</p> <p>That means exploring your role and responsibilities and what it is like to do what you do on both the average and the extraordinary days. I want to understand how and what you are learning and how the experiences you are having at work are impacting your well-being inside and outside of work. I am most interested in what you are thinking about or reflecting on in your experiences, and I would like for you to write about your thoughts, feelings, and observations more so than writing the specific descriptions of situations or events. There are no right or wrong responses. What I would like to acquire from your writing is what it feels like to be you at work. What it feels like to live in your shoes.</p> <p>For example, if you are writing about a work experience, I would like for you to spend time reflecting or deeply thinking about why it was meaningful to you to capture it and write more about that rather than writing about all of the details of the event exactly as it happened. It is acceptable to write the details if that helps you, but also tell me more about how the experience made you feel and why you think that is the case. Tell me about what you will do as a result of the experience and why. Write about whether or not you took the actions you thought you would take and why. Write about what you are feeling as you are writing and feel free to reread your writing and write again about the same situation later to see if you have changed your thoughts in any way.</p> <p>I want to encourage you to think about why the experience you chose was important to you and share that with me as well as your insights about the experience.</p>
When to write	<p>Since you are writing in your personal, discretionary time, you have a choice about the timing. I would like for you to write for at least half an hour a week. You can write before, during, or after work in short increments of time or you can write for a longer duration. You can write in the moment of an experience as it is happening. Please jot down the time that you are writing and help me understand if there is a pattern or timing that is more conducive for you and explain why that might be the case.</p>
Style, quantity and quality of the writing	<p>There is not a certain style, quantity, or quality of writing that you have to follow for this study. Write what is on your mind, freestyle, and write what is meaningful to you. If you find that you struggle writing from the prompts and prefer unstructured writing, that output is also acceptable but I do want each participant to respond to the initial prompts as well so that I have some consistency across the prompts.</p>
Submitting writing samples	<p>Writing on paper vs. in a digital notebook may be an advantage; however, since we are not in the same physical location, I will need you to send me the writing via email.</p>
Getting started	<p>Every time you write, try to spend about 5 – 6 minutes “hot writing” or freewriting. That means writing about whatever comes to your mind without stopping or worrying about format or other constraints. I will send you prompts each week on the same day and time, and based on the writing you share with me, we might connect for brief touch points or might email you back some additional questions about the prompts. Any time you want to get together for a conversation, I will make time for you.</p> <p>We’ll have a few weeks of individual writing and then we’ll meet with others for two guided writing sessions and a focus group. I’d like for you to attend at least one of the guided writing sessions if not both. After the writing the group will meet for a focus group to discuss each experience.</p>
Question 1	Tell me a little about yourself and what you do.
Question 2	What about this study gained your attention and willingness to participate?
Question 3	My objective with this study is to gain a better understanding of learning and well-being in the contemporary workplace and how reflective writing might influence both concepts. Let’s start with your ideas about work. How would you describe contemporary work?
Question 5	What learning resources are available to you at work? What additional resources would you like to have and why?
Question 6	Let’s talk about well-being. It means different things to different people. Describe what it means to you.
Question 7	What experiences have you had with writing in your work before this study?
Question 8	What expectations do you have for the end of the study?

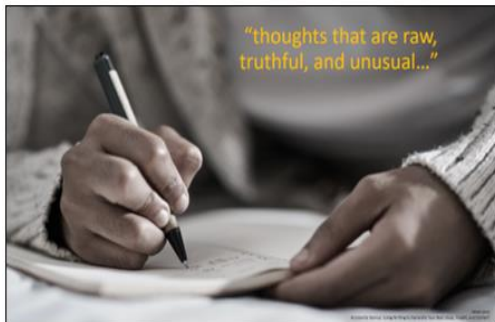
Appendix D

Individual Writing Prompts

Learning Prompts											
Week 1 Describe a personal experience outside of work when you needed to learn something new and how you approached it. How did this experience change you and why was it meaningful to you?	Week 1 Describe a work experience when you needed to learn something new and how you approached it. How did this experience change you and why was it meaningful to you?	Week 1 What was different in your learning approaches outside of work and at work?	Week 3 Describe something you have learned at work this week. Why is it important to you? How have you applied the learning to new situations?	Week 4 What new knowledge or skills would you most like to learn? Why?	Week 7 In what ways, if at all, has reflection and writing influenced your learning at work during the study?						
Well-Being Prompts											
Week 1 How would you describe your level of well-being at work today or over the last several days?	Week 2 Describe an event that you experienced outside of work this week and how it influenced your well-being. What have you learned from the experience and how might the experience help you at work?	Week 2 Describe an event that you experienced at work this week and how it influenced your well-being. What have you learned from the experience and how will it influence your future decision-making or efforts at work?	Week 2 If you could go back in time and approach either of these experiences differently, what would you change and why?	Week 6 What is the most critical issue you face in your life outside of work right now? Why?	Week 6 What is the most critical issue you face in your work? Why?	Week 6 How have both these issues impacted your well-being?	Week 6 What are you doing to address both issues?	Week 6 How, if at all, has this writing helped you with one or both issues?	Week 7 In what ways, if at all, has reflection and writing influenced your well-being at work during the study?		
Mixed Prompts											
Week 3 Describe one or two critical problems you are currently trying to solve at work. Why are they important to you?	Week 3 Describe your best and worst day at work over the last two weeks. Which one was most influential to your well-being and why?	Week 3 Write about a time in your career when you were struggling. What helped you cope and how did you ultimately overcome the issues you faced?	Week 3 If you could have written this week's prompts for the research participants, what would you want to ask them about learning, well-being, or writing at work?	Week 3 What, if anything, has been valuable to you so far in the study?	Week 4 Write about a person that you admire at work and describe why. Describe how you have interacted with the person and in what ways have you changed as a result.	Week 4 How does your current leader support your learning and well-being? What do you value in his/her approach and what could be improved?	Week 4 If you could create your next role and responsibilities, what would it encompass and why?	Week 4 During an average workday, when do you feel like you are at your best? What does it mean to you to be at your best?	Week 7 What is the most valuable outcome of this study for you and why?	Week 7 In what ways, if at all, might reflection and writing contribute to the business outcomes in your area?	Week 7 Is there anything else you want to share with me to help me understand your experience with reflection and writing during the study?
Week 5 – Reflective Prompts											
"How much do you notice and remember? What we notice becomes our world."	"Because many professionals are almost always successful at what they do, they rarely experience failure. And because they have rarely failed, they have never learned how to learn from failure."	"You can write out of your own intention or out of inspiration..."	"You can only do one big thing at a time really well, and so you better know what that one thing is."	"A strength...is an 'activity that makes you feel strong...' before you do it, you find yourself actively looking forward to doing it. While you are doing it, time seems to speed up, one moment blurring into the next. After you've done it, while you might be tired and not quite ready to suit up and tackle it again, you nonetheless feel filled up, proud."	"How have these perspectives influenced you? How were you feeling before you wrote today, and how do you feel now?"						

Appendix E

Guided Writing Session 1



"Merciless criticism often makes us dig in our heels in defense, or worse, makes us helpless. We don't change."

"We do change...when we discover what is best about ourselves and when we see specific ways to use our strengths more."

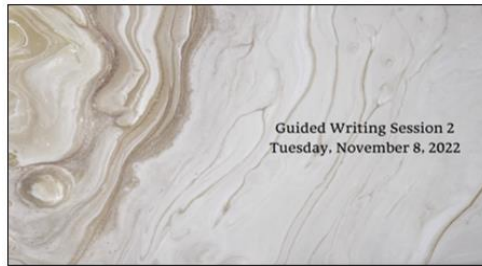
-Martin Seligman

Seligman, M. P. (2002). *Flourish: A new psychology of happiness*. New York: Free Press.

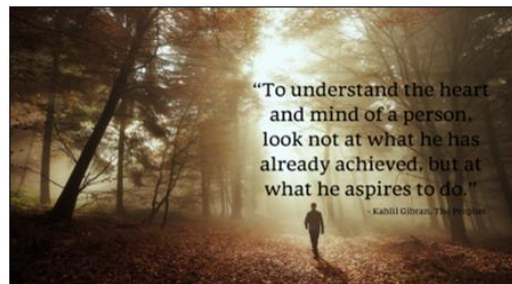
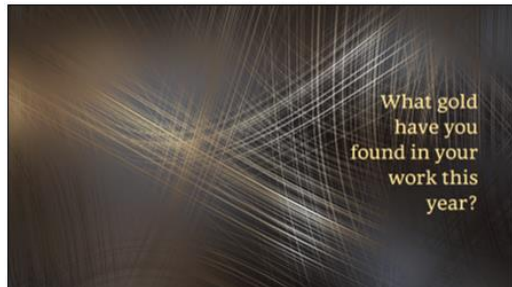
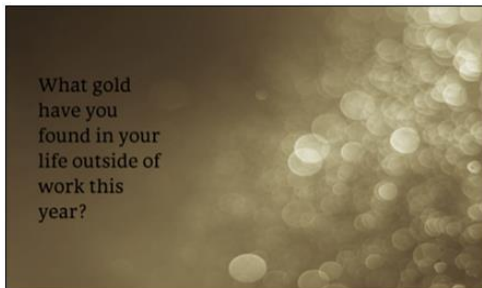


Appendix F

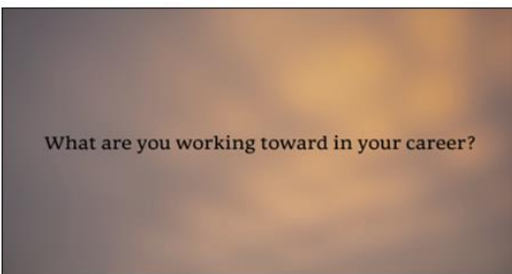
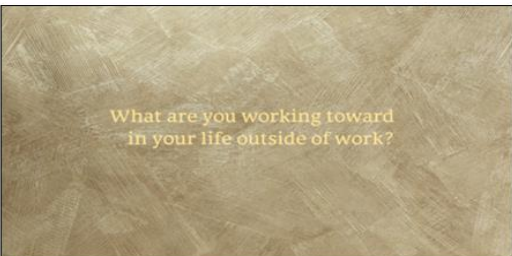
Guided Writing Session 2



Imagine you are writing a book titled, Finding Gold. Write your story line...



In Dan Roam's book, *The Back of the Napkin*, the art of visual thinking is a central theme. Roam describes many tools and techniques that can help us think in new ways and solve problems by using our instinct to see possibilities and mapping or documenting our ideas. "Start with the heart" is a key element to mapping, meaning that to really think about and act on anything, we always have to concentrate our thinking on "the core" (e.g., what is in the heart of the person, at the center of the process, what is the heart of the matter). Stop and think about what your heart says, then write your response to the prompt.



Stop and think about what your heart says. What do you really love to do? What would like to learn to be even better at doing it? Who might help you? Will you ask for help? Why or why not?

Appendix G

Reflective Writing Focus Group Protocol

Date:	November 15, 2022
Time:	7 pm EST
Location:	Zoom
Introduction:	<p>Welcome to the focus group. Today I will be asking you about your experiences with reflective writing over the last few weeks. I am interested in hearing about how it felt to write about your life inside and outside of work and how the writing process influenced you with regard to learning and/or well-being. I am interested in how you experienced the individual writing prompts and the guided writing session.</p> <p>Listen to each other's experiences and feel free to bring up anything you think of that is relevant to you.</p>
Warm Up Question 1:	Before this experience, what were your experiences with writing?
Warm Up Question 2:	What, if anything, have you learned through this reflective writing experience?
Question 1:	Share some of your experiences with the individual writing prompts.
Question 2:	What was it like to write alone?
Question 3:	Which prompts, if any, were relevant for you and why?
Question 4:	What was it like writing and sharing in the group session?
Question 5:	From your experiences, how might writing influence learning and well-being?
Question 6:	What would inspire you to continue to write?

Appendix I

Examples of Possible Heideggerian Philosophical Constructs from Texts

Philosophical Construct	Possible Interpretation
Dwelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Participant's struggle with articulating how writing feels both in terms of what is familiar and unfamiliar
Self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Participants try to manage self-talk; Heidegger's (1962) foundations of conscious where Dasein cannot "hear itself" because first it needs to "find itself" (p. 315)● Participants discuss dealing with anxiety explained as "that which threatens...is already there" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 231)
Caring for others	Seeing our peers, helping them manage high emotions, being present, and putting people over process
Caring for other things in life	Caring about family, caring about having the right skills and the right role

Appendix J

Selected Notes from the Researcher's Bridling Journal

Phase of Research	Text from the Bridling Journal
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills have the most value in the contemporary workplace? Is it technical skills or leadership competencies? Is it possible to develop both given the time constraints? • References to literature – non scholarly, narratives, socially impactful. The words matter. How can I incorporate?
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She questioned her own agility contemplating if “maybe I overthink things that I don't want to do...I want to legitimately know for sure that [it's] the right way to do it.” She discussed asking questions and looking for answers as more difficult in the remote environment and acknowledged that there have been many changes and there will be many more...she said, “you take a couple of steps back”/look back to evaluate if the way ahead is the right way...because absolutely everything about our club has changed...keeping up with that, and making sure that...we're keeping up with...business now...that's a full time job.” • “Nontech people don't understand” [are there perceptions of superior knowledge or skills sets? lack of belonging or affiliation? lack of empathy?] • “I don't like being wrong.” [rejection?]; how does this connect to the participant who discussed intentional delays to ensure the way ahead was right? Echoes Argyris and Christensen? • “The writing helped me after the fact – the questions were perfect...I was processing and inserting new ways I could have gone about the situation and that was helping me learn...I was talking to myself in my head what could I have done better...I was creating a scene in my head of what I could have done different” – voices in our heads? • “Being” is “veiled in darkness” (Heidegger, 1927/1962) and may not be defined even if time were infinite (p. 23). • Several note being concerned about their ability to communicate effectively – it seems to have impact on confidence – I don't have any issues communicating

with them in their writing nor conversation – is it obsession with “perfect” communication? Some are naturally gifted at presentation skills – are we conditioned to criticality on our opportunities rather than leveraging our strengths? Why? What can we do about it?

Data Analysis

- No associated connection of writing to learning
- Noticing increasing examples of language that is difficult to fully understand without further inquiry...adding questions marks in the interpretive notes/also seeing so many different continuums – I can’t inquire further now or in the current study.
- Design team discussion notes from the meeting “the designer’s tone was raised when she interjected” – starting to listen for more than words (e.g., van Manen’s perspective that tone is important)
- Preconception that remote work was desirable. It was not within the scope of the study to further explore the phenomenon of remote or hybrid work but there was explicit interpretive language suggesting its significance and advocating viewpoints on its value and impact on both ends indicating the need for further study? One participant suggested the need for collaboration to further define guidelines and expectations.
- Several participants described “grappling;” feeling connection and sense of belonging to the holistic experience
- Is the shifting of roles a theme (e.g., the need to always be always moving to a different role)?
- One participant’s experience recalling a recent addition of a team member who was new to the organization and stayed less than a year before voluntarily leaving for another opportunity. Related to age or experience?
- Heidegger’s (1927/1962) concept of being-in-the-world is like a spiritual or sacred state of “I myself am” (p. 80). Care or Sorge, is related to a state of “attending to something and looking after it...or giving something up and letting it go” (p. 83). Being-in- can be in multiple contexts that involve “concern,” or besorgen, meaning what it is that individual’s pay attention to or what promotes action to “perform...[or] procure” (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 83). Heidegger’s (1927/1962) being-in-the-world involves being “fascinated by the world...tarrying alongside...or holding back... (p. 88) essentially, “dwelling” on something before a

- “perception” is reached that then solidifies knowing (p. 89).
- When I could see the individual in the situations they were explaining, I was better able to interpret the possibilities for what the experience of reflective writing meant to them. Getting to know them is crucial...need more time with them.
 - Did I miss the opportunity to evaluate any significance of the reflective practice? Thinking on the surface level of the experience and seeking feedback specific to the format or type of content. Afraid of the risks associated with stirring a deeper dialogue?
 - Before the session, I had found in the interview transcripts and writing samples that the participants had openly discussed connections between their home and work lives and frequently offered unexpected insights about their personal and professional journeys including how they had come to understand aspects of learning, well-being, work, and life in general. Like Heidegger’s (1962) concept of dwelling to achieve “being-in-the-world,” (p. 78) – often wondering about the insights even though they are taking me away into other directions – additional circles.
 - Seeing more to the experiences to explore and questions about phenomenology as philosophy and as a method - Heidegger’s (1962) philosophy on being-in-the-world and its emphasis on the elements of care and dwelling are riveting; thinking with another lens introduces some elements (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021) and exposes opportunities for further research
 - Feenberg’s (2012) existential questions of essentialism and the use of technology as explored within the constructivist interpretive framework...considering both the reality that “no doubt real dangers do lurk in modern technologies” (p. x) writing to wonder...data cleansing...the existing and future capabilities of artificial intelligence technologies and how they will reproduce the same quality and authenticity of human experiences over time (e.g., what’s the impact of ChatGPT?)
 - Future study of elements of existentialism associated with meaning through the interpretive process? Involving how humans make choices or sense belonging (Finlay, 2014)?

Findings

- Placing the texts on the storyboard felt like a real connection to the participants maybe like “Dasein’s basic structures in order to treat the world-phenomenon conceptually” (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 52/77)
- Similar to Heidegger’s ideas on meaningfulness, in the contemporary world, humans may miss the meaning in the everyday shuffle of the living of life
- Talking with the participant was uplifting for me as well – it gave me a chance to offer empathy and support
- Another study in the context of how organizations attract, onboard, and compensate “high potential talent” (p. 183) contended that workers are aware of how their capabilities are perceived by the organization; having an attitude toward abundance or value for strengths “sounds noble” but may not be realistic (Yost et al., 2019, p. 184)
- Escalating and circumnavigating aspect of the story; unique in the study but common experience? Example of impact of hierarchies? Relates to Creating the Most Frightening Company on Earth – Andy Law?
- Organizing and presenting this is impossible...I’ve written and rewritten these findings 4 times; not presenting the details of the complexity of the analysis in the detailed first person...if I omit, it is disrespectful to the individuals and the context and it separates the whole.
- Wording of the writing prompts elicited experiences; mentioned by several participants and be meaningful to future designs
- Are there nonproductive conditioned behaviors in the workplace? Heidegger’s (1962) entities or things in the world such as data or descriptors like confidence, are they barriers to possibilities that lead to missed opportunity at work and at home?

Discussion

- Knowledge and experience is deep and wide - evidence of the need for the shift of organizational decision-making closer to the workers at the core of the work?
 - This is now...“adapt or die...the consequence of all this is very simple... If the world now operates as one big market, every employee will compete with every person anywhere in the world who is capable of doing the very same job. There are a lot of them, and many of them are very hungry.” (Grove, 2015, p. xiv)
 - From a final interview - there may be value for future research by increasing the size and diversity of the
-

groups, “just getting more people involved [and] maybe not people who work for the company so that you can have a little bit more freedom”
