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THE EMERGING SCIENCE OF WELLNESS IN THE COLLEGE WRITING  
CURRICULUM

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

to the faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

of

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Peggy Suzuki

Date Submitted \_\_\_\_\_

Date Approved \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peggy Suzuki

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Granville Ganter

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## ABSTRACT

### THE EMERGING SCIENCE OF WELLNESS IN THE COLLEGE WRITING CURRICULUM

Peggy Suzuki

This dissertation argues that the college writing curriculum – and indeed any educational program---would benefit from an emphasis on human wellness and the arts. Wellness consists of one’s emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and vocational well-being. Additionally, students’ environmental circumstances, like home life, finances, diet, exercise, and work obligations play a huge role in balancing personal health, especially in marginalized communities. Since one’s physiological and psychological connection impacts one’s identity and health, improving writing in the classroom requires holistic and creative approaches for rewiring individual thinking. I draw from positive psychology, where concepts like complex optimism and positive emotions nurture the groundwork for forming resilience and increasing one’s range of thought responses, and from neuroscientific application, where brain plasticity opens the ability to restructure thinking. I place an emphasis on creative thinking with concepts such as “flow,” where one’s interests guide learning and growth, and explore arts-based research methodologies by illustrating art and project examples for the expansion of embodying new avenues to learning. After surveying 20<sup>th</sup> century education and composition theorists who emphasize creativity and play, I evaluate the critical writing stages of invention and reflection which shapes the writing process. Along the way, I

highlight the memoirs of Jesmyn Ward's, *Men We Reaped* and Jimmy Santiago Baca's, *A Place to Stand* to demonstrate various components of wellness and composition strategies such as developing character strengths, positive emotions, and interests, examining mindful self-perception, as well as embracing arts-based research projects, and practicing metacognitive reflective writing. I then turn my attention to ideas from the educational theorist, Margaret Naumburg, whose two professional careers reinvented education, art, healing, and innovation. Wellness is unarguably a growing need for colleges where the dropout rate continues to escalate up from 40 percent and where one in two students face mental issues in their lifetimes which peaks during college. As wellness theorists Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols' research shows, reducing toxicity in physical settings like colleges through preventative measures greatly impacts lifelong health. Cultivating one's health through connecting with arts-based research practices positively influences present and future health, motivation, self-efficacy, creativity, and happiness.

**DEDICATION**

For my students

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my family - my dear husband, Yasu, who has been with me on this journey for so many years. My darling daughter, Coco, who was a big help and a lot of fun to work with on these writing exercises! My sweet parents, who have been lifetime role models and have given me abundant encouragement, inspiration, and many hours of patient listening. My brother, sister-in-law, and niece, whose support lifted me up during the process. My extended family, whose kindness gave so many different perspectives to consider along the way.

Thank you to my visionary mentor, Dr. Granville Ganter, who believed in this project's success from the beginning and whose architecture set up the framework because he saw wellness as an important project worthy of undertaking.

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## INTRODUCTION

Wellness is unarguably a growing need for colleges where the dropout rate continues to escalate up from 40 percent and where one in two students face mental issues in their lifetimes which peaks during college. Wellness, as defined by Dr. Halbert Dunn, consists of one's emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and vocational components. Developing relationships, enhancing certain qualities (better focus, more zest), or adapting healthier behaviors (more exercise, more sleep) are areas where wellness growth could be improved. Moreover, environmental life domains, such as home life, financial, diet, exercise, and workload, play a huge role in balancing health and well-being, especially in marginalized communities, as wellness theorists Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniels Stokols' research shows. They suggest reducing toxicity in physical settings like colleges through preventative measures. Wellness behaviors can be learned. For example, Yale University's online course, "The Science of Well-Being," cultivates positive active strategies like finding one thing for students to savor and enjoy every day. One in four students at Yale has taken the course since 2018 and the course has had 2.2 million participants and 23 million views since March 2020.

My dissertation investigates how an awareness of how one's mental and bodily health fostered in an arts-rich curriculum is a principle engine of student success. Improving one's health positively influences identity growth, which has a strong bearing on one's ability to write. I take a creative approach for revaluing individual thinking and learning in relation to harnessing wellness by focusing on

students' interests through arts-based research projects. Real interests foster critical thinking and intrinsic motivation, as well as giving students control over their learning. In doing so, students develop emotional intelligence, increase problem solving skills, expand creativity and social emotional learning, and improve writing in the process.

I draw ideas from Positive Psychology, where the essential premise is to build on what is going right in life. Concepts such as complex optimism lead students to shift their perspectives for thinking about what is possible and enables them to develop resilience by reframing problems with a new set of reactions to meet their challenges. Over time, a person's brain plasticity allows for gradual shifts in thinking to become a more automatic practice and this is how quality of life and longevity fit in. Moreover, since thinking and mood strongly effect writing and learning, I highlight recent studies on positive emotions where cognitive shifts occur, such as better memory and higher verbal capacity as well as more varied thought responses. For example, play can add to a person's physical, social, and intellectual thinking and patterns of behavior more than an average person's ability to respond.

After viewing the broader scope of wellness, I focus on composition movements in The United States over the past century related to self-awareness. Theories presented by the Expressivists, who emphasized "life-adjustment" and the Progressives, who focused on "student-centered learning," gained traction in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and while some forward-thinking schools reached major milestones in their programs with these ideas, they all faced varying challenges

which limited their scope of influence. However, the value for self-expression through writing found its way back into the classroom in the 1970s with Peter Elbow, who was an early proponent for the concept of “freewriting,” where students write about a given topic freely, and Toby Fulwiler who emphasized students’ personal writing in their journals as a key to their growth as intellectuals and polished writers.

I then apply Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada’s sociological concept that physiological and psychological health impacts identity to the teaching of writing practices. I point out how health is not a separate skill but is an intricate part of the dynamic of writing because writing is informed by all parts of the brain and body. Jason Wirtz, whose neuroscientific metacognitive focus on writing revision illustrates the physical connection that is associated with identity when he shows how student writing can greatly improve through self-questioning techniques. I further add to Wirtz’s approach in my emphasis of the personal narrative where writing invention and experienced memories that inhabit the body influence and contribute to learning.

Drawing from the educational theorist, Margaret Naumburg, who claimed that the cultivation of self-knowledge engages students on the highest level, I argue that the broader perspective which informs writing requires more insight than fixing a mechanical skillset. Instead, I look to creative thinking for deepening self-knowledge and intuition. I extend writing practices beyond the page for the inclusion of art, arts-based research practices, and community projects that are student driven for emphasizing student creativity and engagement. Patricia Leavy

articulates how arts-based research gives rise to ideas that cannot be solely expressed linguistically but are more concept-based or emotionally-shared experiences, such as art, music, dance, and theatre express. The power of art and art practices are further evidenced from James S. Catterall's, *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*. Catterall's 12-year study of arts education followed more than 12,000 students from the eighth grade up until the age of 26 and highlights how students who engaged in art and art practices such as performance, fine art, music, and academics had higher achievement levels and were more motivated and engaged. I show how cultivating authentic interests through creative personal memoir and unique project-driven work contributes to self-awareness and concentrated writing and is a means for improving one's writing process as well as one's health.

Throughout my dissertation, I highlight the memoirs of Jesmyn Ward's, *Men We Reaped* and Jimmy Santiago Baca's, *A Place to Stand* to illustrate varying concepts and resources for wellness and composition strategies. I have included writing exercises for the development of invention, metacognitive reflection, social emotional learning, character strengths, positive emotions, and interests, as well as techniques for examining mindful self-perception such as visualization and self-talk, and inspiration for arts-based research projects such as artist Beth Campbell's work, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances*.

In Chapter One, entitled, "Emerging Discourse of Wellness and Writing Classroom: Why Not Think about Fostering "Life" as well as "Skills?", I survey the reasons why many colleges have begun to think about adding *wellness* as a part

of their curriculum. I will give an in-depth view of the science behind optimism and why students are depressed in the first place. First of all, I will show the changing demographics and economic pressures on students have put our college students in harm's way in school---no longer able to concentrate purely on school, most students hold jobs, attend to family obligations, and confront numerous non-traditional obstacles to their educational formation, like illness, disability, and poverty, and they often drop out. As a result, colleges have begun to think about *wellness* principally as a student-retention program. However, I argue a recognition of the value of wellness points toward a more profound insight into learning that I will address in each chapter in this dissertation: wellness is a basic building block for human growth and higher learning in general.

In this chapter I show how wellness is composed of several parts: physical health and safety; zest for life; meaningful community; and most importantly for educational curricula, *opportunities to play and express oneself creatively*. Along the way, I examine the researchers who study the sociological life domains of wellness, cognitive psychologists of written expression, and sketch a few ways colleges have responded to this growing *science* of learning. For example, in a study headed by psychologist Barbara L. Fredrickson, who coined the Broaden and Build Theory, it was shown that positive emotions are related to better health over time and produce resilience under pressure. Social psychologists Kristen Gallagher and Shevaun Stocker, who have cultivated a series of social emotional learning writing exercises, claim that “academic buoyancy,” or resilience is a quality that students need to adapt for conquering their stressors. Moreover, by documenting



the wellness programs implemented at Yale University, New York University, University of Southern California, and the University of Pennsylvania, administrators and researchers can look to prominent models for success stories to combat issues faced by students by lifting them up.

By emphasizing wellness, I make the case that powerful writing comes from complex thinking directly connected to self-awareness. I draw attention to how writing classrooms are optimal spaces for cultivating wellness and could alleviate the burdens colleges and their wellness centers are overcome by showing how writing instruction could apply concepts from wellness and the field of Positive Psychology for improving broader long-term health associated with the stress of college life. For instance, happiness is shown to produce better quality health and higher success rates. Thus, in looking to Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, a pioneer in creativity who has done extensive research on what makes people happy, he illustrates how the concept of “flow” represents the elongated space of time when people are so absorbed in what they are doing that nothing else seems to matter.

Although this dissertation focuses on the value of wellness for college level education, I conclude with an example of the benefits of wellness on the secondary school system in Finland, where the student’s holistic growth and happiness is emphasized through the integrity of centralizing wellness and creativity in classrooms, which American universities would do well to emulate.

In Chapter Two, “Rethinking the Writing Environment and Curriculum,” I build on the cognitive insights of James Gee and Linda Flower to show the yield of basing collegiate First Year Writing (FYW) as a course focusing on student

wellness. I survey the revolution in holistic student-centered education from John Dewey in the 1930s to Margaret Naumburg in the 1960s, I argue the cognitive approaches of Peter Elbow in personal voice, and Toby Fulwiler in journal writing should lead us to appreciate college writing as part of students' whole development, not simply the mastery of technical skills in academic prose. In reviewing past influential methodologies of composition throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, previous models have traditionally seized, reduced, and categorized writing into a mechanical skillset. However, writing is a complex discipline of study which requires a more nuanced approach.

After combing through the work of these humanist theorists of education, I turn my attention to contemporary research in health and neuroscience for the link that Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada make between the physical body in relation to mental capacities, identity, environment, and health. Because writing is physical, all aspects of it are connected to memory and are intermeshed with previously learned experiences. I show how writing about emotional topics has been shown to reduce stress while positive emotions influence health and success and effect one's ability to write. Thus, I argue for a *return* to creative memoir in the writing classroom as both an example of the transformative power of the creative arts, and a legitimate practice of student writing in the form of intentionality. Adolescence is a crucial time for developing identity and foundational health which appears throughout one's life. I put forward a range of meaningful writing methods aimed to develop the prefrontal cortex to respond positively, which will enable the brain to grow. I conclude with an analysis of

Jesmyn Ward's *Men We Reaped* as a kind of narrative that can help students visualize a path through the emotional and academic impediments they face in their own lives.

In Chapter Three, "The Role of Creative Writing & Reading: Baca's Memoir, *A Place to Stand*," I unpack the critical role that environmental life domains play in one's health and show how art is a place to rebuild a shattered world. Jimmy Santiago Baca experiences extreme circumstances in his life, such as abandonment and prison which he recalls in his memoir, *A Place to Stand*. It is through his curiosity to learn and his defiance against the limitations placed on him, where he becomes not only literate, but rises as a prolific poet who reaches out to mentor students who have experienced troubled pasts.

I first view Baca's memoir through the lens of Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols' work on preventative behavior and reducing toxicity in life domains, which refer to environmental places where people spend their time, the activities that take place, and the social circles that are involved. Baca's memoir illustrates the duality of negative environmental toxins and how art and literacy are an impactful way out. Baca describes his joy and physical connection with words in saying, "I can't describe how words electrified me. I could smell and taste and see their images vividly. I found myself waking up at 4 A.M. to reread a word or copy a definition" and "I too was flourishing, my body physically affected by my words" (185, 239). Moreover, Baca says of his artistry that, "Language was opening me up

in ways I couldn't explain and I assumed it was part of the apprenticeship of a poet” (239).

Throughout this chapter, health and environmental impact will be coupled with art. Arts-based research is the embodiment of ideas that are expanded in non-traditional methods, such as dance, music, painting to “give voice to that which cannot be communicated or completely known through words or logic” (Leavy 68). I show how students can expand individual interests in a creative way that intersects with Baca’s memoir and how their act of creation/creating something is fundamental towards developing ownership and deepening their ever-growing identity and sense of self. I highlight one such model for generating conscious actions through Beth Campbell’s art work, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances*, where she sketches the “what if” scenario of choices to bifurcate out to multiple possibilities so that the entire framework of her design is representative of cause and multiple effects that could occur from one single event.

In pointing out how Jamner and Stokols underscore how the marginalization effects of race and social class are disproportionate, health is a large determining factor for overall morbidity and mortality. Thus, the potential to “reduce toxicity in physical settings” and help influence “individual knowledge and attitudes” by addressing these problems could be situated in higher education (Jamner and Stokols 138, 182). Writing classrooms are an optimal physical setting for influencing and promoting change because writing is a vehicle for self-expression to occur and a playground for research skills to be developed. Thus, as artists like Beth Campbell convey and Chapter Four will further detail, art is a powerful means for

converging behavioral preventative practices because it allows for creative expansive thinking and exploring problems from a grounded perspective. Baca's memoir credits art as part of his educational opportunity, an insight often missed when the range of wellness is discussed, and this can foster the best education in how ideas and actions can be re-imagined.

Within Chapter Four, "Margaret Naumburg, Art & Creativity as a part of Wellness," I examine Naumburg's work as an educator and art therapist in relation to creative thinking by investigating how Naumburg's philosophy evolved and by combing through the evidence James S. Catterall provides in his valuable 12-year study of art education in the classroom.

Margaret Naumburg, who is known as the "mother of art therapy," was also a pioneer in education. Influenced by John Dewey and Maria Montessori, Naumburg argued that the goal of education should focus on bringing the individual's natural abilities forward to focus on the whole person. She explained how making and doing leads to real thought and this comes from motivation. Naumburg examined the concept of the mind and body connection as it pertained to learning about oneself and applied it to education in saying that art and physicality were as necessary as developing mental capacities. This chapter assesses the overarching question posed by Naumburg, "Education for what?" Naumburg's educational philosophy strove for honoring a person's individuality, much like what the educational system in Finland strives to do, where the emphasis is on creative play and finding one's happiness. Hence, Naumburg's rudimentary question uproots the idea that skills precede purpose; for Naumburg education starts with exploring the

potential of the person, not hammering them into a cog in a machine. Societal values are derived from educational values. Naumburg strongly felt that education should be about discovering one's authentic self. Naumburg then challenged for educational revision where the creative process informs valuing the mastery of oneself. With individuality in mind, Naumburg reinterpreted Dewey's ideas for experiential learning projects as the individual learner's choice for creating a project. If students designed them, they would be motivated to see them through. Both Naumburg and her sister, Florence Cane, radicalized the idea as to how the body, the brain, and art connect people with their surroundings in terms of meaning, learning, and experience.

Through her work, Naumburg discovered the interconnection that psychology had with teaching and gradually shifted her work from the field of education to develop art therapy. She wanted to understand why particularly difficult students behaved in the ways that they did and developed techniques to help them where other approaches had failed. Naumburg came to art therapy through her study of Freud's work, which was common knowledge in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But what Naumburg discovered was that children who had difficulty articulating what they were experiencing were able to put their feelings into drawings. This representation could then be a window into their thinking. The distinction for Margaret Naumburg, though, was that the patient was the interpreter of the images they created rather than the practitioner. Through drawing and writing, then, children could shed their troubles and lessen their burdens more so than was previously done.

Margaret Naumburg eventually helped to shape the art therapy program at The New School, where her lifework remained constant for honoring the individual person. Because of peoples' vast complexities, Naumburg found it all that much more essential that people develop "insight and self-awareness" (Box 97, 9). At the center of Naumburg's work is the nurturing of the heart, which contributes to one's motivation, joys, passions, learning, and so forth. To encourage self-discovery as a means of self-preservation was the ideal core of Naumburg's work and creativity was the means for this discovery to occur. Throughout her life, she believed that "Art as [sic] the groundwork of a true education" (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes for *Democratic Education on Trial*, unpublished).

I then focus my attention on James S. Catterall, who was inspired by Naumburg's theories and applied them to neuroscience. He points to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences to coordinate the importance of deepening one's naturally inclined mode of learning. Catterall's neuroscientific findings provides further evidence for his study as to how art impacts students greatly in showing how the brain is literally able rewire itself more efficiently when it is tasked with arts-based learning. This is because there is an emphasis on continual practice and follow through for achievement. Catterall's study confirms, "that gaining mastery in the arts leads children to feel a sense of accomplishment, and that such beliefs may spill over into non-arts areas of life" (Catterall 71). Their achievements develop self-efficacy. It is the creative process, though, that ultimately gives students meaning, and thus, motivation and positive well-being is derived.

This chapter will further address the neuroscience in how learning takes place. Jason Wirtz illustrates some the findings in Catterall's study by explaining how invention is not only a creative exploration, but is a process of discovery where meaning making happens. Accessing optimal thinking and writing is done through the metacognition of observing one's own patterns of working. The implications for broader innovations are ripe from artistic endeavors.

Developing a stronger emphasis on valuing and engaging with the arts promotes self-preservation and wellness. My findings show that the outcome could result in better overall health, increased positivity and happiness, higher student retention rates, and a stronger economy. In other words, by connecting with the arts, students would feel better, be healthier and more creative, live longer, and be happier. Wellness can be a choice, given the right tools. Margaret Naumburg's insights remind us that authenticity of self is the most valuable asset a person has. The composition classroom is an ideal dedicated safe space where students are open to learning and where new habits can be formed. Students can develop and strengthen their writing through the suggested methods to expand creative thinking and nurture wellness. In doing so, the self will be valued and preserved.



CHAPTER 1: EMERGING DISCOURSE OF WELLNESS AND WRITING  
CLASSROOM: WHY NOT THINK ABOUT FOSTERING “LIFE” AS WELL AS  
“SKILLS?”

In this chapter, I survey the reasons why many colleges have begun to think about adding *wellness* as a part of their curriculum. First of all, I will show the changing demographics and economic pressures on students have put our college students in harm's way in school---no longer able to concentrate purely on school, most students hold jobs, attend to family obligations, and confront numerous non-traditional obstacles to their educational formation, like illness, disability, and poverty, and they often drop out. As a result, colleges have begun to think about *wellness* principally as a student-retention program. However, I argue a recognition of the value of wellness points toward a more profound insight into learning that I will address in each chapter in this dissertation: wellness is a basic building block for human growth and higher learning in general. In this chapter I will show how wellness is composed of several parts: physical health and safety; zest for life; meaningful community; and most importantly for educational curricula, *opportunities to play and express oneself creatively*. Along the way, I will examine the researchers who study the sociological life domains of wellness, cognitive psychologists of written expression, and sketch a few ways colleges have responded to this growing *science* of learning. Although this dissertation focuses on the value of wellness for college level education, I conclude with an example of the benefits of wellness on the secondary school system in Finland, where the student's holistic growth is emphasized. American colleges would do well to learn from their example.

### **Situating the Problem**

Mental health issues among students is a broader, more immediate, unspoken problem, and requires a much more active approach on campuses for all students. A staggering fifty percent of public school and forty percent of community college undergraduate students drop out, which means that one in three do not earn their degree and are saddled with large debts. Many of these students are “minority, poor, and first in their family” to go to college (Strauss, “A Dereliction of Duty”). Moreover, one in every two people face mental challenges in their lifetimes, and this peaks in college when students are attempting to balance life skills, including their academic, social, financial, and health needs, claim authors of *U Thrive*, Daniel Lerner and Dr. Alan Schlecter (Schlecter, Online Lecture). Many of these students have never been away from home before and are faced not only with the pressures of academia, but also with the responsibility of balancing their budget and paying bills while working a full-time job and have the additional chore of cooking and cleaning up after themselves. They are also trying to fit in and make new friends. Higher education does not reach out to students help but it expects its students to seek the services they need. This is quite the opposite of K-12 schools, where mental health resources are structured in, particularly in the lower grades.

Wellness may or may not have been emphasized in the past for many students. While university wellness centers have served as accessible safe spaces for meeting student needs, oftentimes, students who most need these services do not venture out to these buildings. J. Wharf Higgins’ study, “University Students’ Wellness - What Difference Can a Course Make?” argues that “College campuses

may represent the last chance for educating a large segment of the adult population on health and wellness” (772). It could be even more difficult for students to seek support when it is needed beyond their college years without having learned about mental health and wellness practices. I propose a reexamination that defines and situates wellness as a central practice within writing classrooms which could provide an intersection for lasting healthy transformation.

### **Wellness**

The emerging discourse of wellness is already occurring in the new field called medical humanities, where storytelling skills and narrative have been emphasized to address the high stress and empathetic demands placed on medical care-workers. There is a strong emphasis on accountability within the medical humanities because the medical field is particularly susceptible to burnout due to lack of wellness. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicted depression as the number two cause of global disease in 2020 and that it will likely become the number one cause by 2030 (Jensen 2). Academia is not without immunity to high stress, both for students and faculty.

The National Wellness Institute (NWI) defines wellness as “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices towards a more successful existence.” Dr. Halbert Dunn, known as the father of the wellness movement, originally conceptualized the idea of “wellness,” which means having a “zest for life,” and consists of six dimensions which include one’s emotional, social, spiritual, physical, occupational, intellectual well-being. All of these dimensions are intricately dependent on one another for full mind and body

functioning. They are also inherently interrelated in terms of how individuals respond to and within their environment. Reactions to events depend on how reactive a person is to stressors which directly relates to how environmental influences impact the body mentally and physiologically. Thus, it is crucial to emphasize that people's responses in relationships and to events are individually processed. This point explains why some students adapt to college easier than others.

Emotional wellness means that people are independently aware and able to manage and express their own feelings. Ideally, they are also able to communicate positively while being open to hearing what others have to say. It is the ability "to arrive at certain choices and decisions based upon the synthesis of feelings, thoughts, philosophies, and behavior" (NWI). Additionally, by developing one's emotional well-being, a person can form healthy relationships based on "mutual commitment, trust, and respect" (NWI). Social wellness stems from emotional wellness because it is how an individual connects to others. Social wellness "encourages contributing to one's environment and community" (NWI). By being an active participant in one's community, a person develops social wellness and enriches their surrounding environment. Becoming a contributor to one's environment often happens because a person develops a particular skill that is considered valuable for the framework of society. This skill can be occupational or otherwise. Occupational health is the dimension of wellness which "recognizes personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work" (NWI). Choosing a life career that matches one's "interests, values, and beliefs" is more satisfying

and raises one's vocational wellness. Intellectual pursuits can enable a person to determine their career path and is a dimension of wellness that strengthens through challenging oneself through "problem solving, creativity, and learning" (NWI). Intellectual wellness directly supports emotional, vocational, social wellness. The physical dimension of wellness supports all of these dimensions as it reinforces one's physiological health. Movement and nutrition boost brain power and body functions, allowing a person to perform all tasks more optimally. The spiritual wellness component ties in with all of the wellness dimensions because it represents one's overall life purpose which provides meaning and motivation. By developing spiritually, one takes an active part in honing this dimension. Further, the spiritual wellness dimension enables people to internalize their own "beliefs and values" and helps them "adapt" to stressors and develop their outlook in terms of "world-view" (NWI). Wellness requires work and critical thinking and can be more accurately summarized by becoming more authentic and self-aware. The distinction I want to make here is that wellness does not simply mean "being happy." Wellness is also not something that is achieved as an end goal, but rather, is consistent continual behavioral practices over the course of one's lifetime. However, the awareness of wellness and developing skills that complement how wellness dimensions function could be a key to health within academia as a whole.

First Year Writing (FYW) classrooms emphasize the development of writing skills. Part of this development consists of developing ethos, or the expression of one's "self." By studying wellness through writing about it, students would develop critical thinking skills and contemplate their own wellness practices at the

same time. Writers internalize their thoughts and think more deeply as the process of writing occurs. In pairing up the concept of health with writing by initially focusing on the students themselves, they could develop self-awareness, interests, strengths, motivation, meaning-making, perseverance, complexity, confidence, happiness, set process-related goals, and ultimately, develop longevity, make better choices and ideally enact positive behaviors for a more inclusive society that is progressively moving towards tolerance and active social justice. Higgins' study broadly reiterates this in saying that "Beyond the ability of a health and wellness course to improve the well-being of students during their university career, health education will prepare them for their lives after school" (772).

### **Positive Psychology**

The leading field for wellness development in universities has been Positive Psychology where there is promise for building learning opportunities. Positive Psychology is known as "the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between" and can be broken down into three main areas which include "positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions" (Peterson 4, 20) The field examines quality areas in a person's life such as happiness, character strengths, values, interests, interpersonal relationships to wellness, institutions, including families, universities, and religion (Peterson 4). Although there are many areas within the framework of positive psychology which remain open for future research, the study dates back to the Greeks, Confucius, and Lao-Tsu for pondering the philosophical question, "What is the good life?" In his *Ethics*, Aristotle called it eudaimonia, "living well" or

“happiness,” and defined it as the highest good for human life, the goal towards which all human purposes aspire. According to Christopher Peterson, author of *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, the subject of positive psychology is not all “smiley faces,” but research that is composed from a system of more complex thinking that requires contemplative work. During the past 60 years, the emphasis for the field of psychology at large has primarily focused on the problems people encounter, which still remains essential and beneficial.

However, taking a closer look at what is going right in life helps people to recognize the things that are working and gain perspective and insight. This is where positive psychology and optimism begin. Optimism is formed through perseverance, emotion, and motivation (Peterson 124). Perseverance is important because challenge is necessary, but challenges have to be overcome rather than defeated (Peterson 129). There are different theories of optimism, such as “learned hopefulness, learned industriousness, learned mastery, learned relevance, and learned resourcefulness,” as well as what Peterson names “little” and “big” optimism, which is tied to individual outlook and worldview (126).

### **Pessimism**

Pessimism cannot be ignored because in confronting it, the entire perspective can come into view (Peterson 125). While pessimism is associated with having a negative viewpoint, psychological researcher Barbara L. Fredrickson explains that, “negative emotions can be viewed as evolved adaptations that aided our ancestors’ survival in life-threatening situations” (Undoing 1). This is partly why the emotions associated with pessimism have been traditionally studied, whereas

emotions equated with optimism have not. “Pessimism,” says Peterson, “has a role to play, both in society at large and in our own lives; we must have the courage to endure pessimism when its perspective is valuable” (127). This is because pessimism is a self-directed reflection of what needs to change. If students’ overall perspective comes into focus, what might at first glance appear as unsurmountable could shift. A pessimistic viewpoint is only one piece of the puzzle to help gain awareness and understanding. Recognizing and acknowledging students’ varied challenges supports students in feeling heard and can encourage them to redirect pessimistic focus more positively whereas inflexible policies under certain circumstances can cause more harm. Moreover, it is important to examine “resilience,” which is highly dependent on interpersonal relationships, because some children who experience extreme prospects still manage to flourish (Peterson 126).

### **Optimism**

In looking at optimism, one must look at the “relationship between optimism and reality” namely because, “Positive social science should not become so focused on optimism as a psychological characteristic that it ignores how it is influenced by external situations, including other people” (Peterson 126, 127). In other words, reality is a part of the picture that cannot be ignored. Thus, the “father of positive psychology,” Martin Seligman refers to this as, “flexible or complex optimism,” which is an approach to apply when there are situations out of one’s control. This means that although circumstances may limit peoples’ power for action, people can adapt to make choices that maximize their options within the given framework. For



example, Covid-19 has forced the world to social distance and largely stay home. A way of using flexible or complex optimism is in choosing how to maximize the time to one's advantage. Instead of getting stuck in thinking about what is not possible and what cannot be done, people can choose to shift their perspective and use their time wisely to focus on what else is possible by learning new things, enhancing their current living environment, and health.

Another facet of optimism is termed "social learning" (Peterson 129). Social learning means that people learn in their environment by watching others perform tasks. An example of social learning that is practiced in the educational field is "modeling." This is where students learn specific tasks, such as developing an essay, by seeing examples shown from their instructor having performed the task first. Peterson writes that "Big optimism makes society possible, and a pessimistic civilization cannot survive for long" (129). Societies that are in turmoil because of dire circumstances where there is little hope for improvement are overturned in time. Although Peterson clarifies that more research is needed as to how optimism affects individuals and societies, flexible or complex optimism is armor for being well because readjusting one's thinking can alter the course of actions taken in terms of how one responds especially if circumstances are unpreventable.

Optimism is certainly variable cross-culturally (Peterson 130). But, to frame optimism in another light societally, Peterson concentrates his attention on asking, "What are the goals that a society holds up as most desirable, and how optimistic are members of that society vis-à-vis those goals?" (130). He proceeds to answer

that American commercial values hold a higher level of importance over social values because material values are integral to the U.S. capitalist society.

But the staggering impact, Peterson writes, is how it is “no wonder depression is on the rise among young adults” (130). He makes the frightening claim that everything is a commodity and has a monetary value, and this includes a person’s negative experiences, and certainly one’s health. To bolster a change of values in America, though, Peterson affirms that reaching towards “traditional religion, volunteerism, or philanthropy would facilitate this change, so long as people do not ask what is in it for them” (131). What Peterson is suggesting is to devote time and energy towards spiritual wellness. Peterson poses “strategies” to intervene in uplifting current habits and elaborates on how “Optimism takes hard work and takes practice to perfect” (132). Peterson is essentially advocating for the utilization of flexible or complex optimism because this positive response method is a way to expand ideas for newly imagined possibilities (132). Peterson’s strategies offer a clear direction for thinking about approaching wellness. Reframing problems with a new set of reactions, as mindful self-perception does in Chapter Two, can help to adjust current circumstances, despite hardships or unwavering circumstances.

### **Positive Emotions**

From the perspective of Positive Psychology, the role that positive emotions play is more complicated and worth exploring further in relation to wellness (emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational, and environmental elements involved). There are varying emotions and lengths of time that emotions

last in terms of differential impact for both (Peterson 56). Positive emotions not only involve “subjective feelings but also characteristic patterns of physiological arousal, thoughts, and behaviors” (56). The study of emotion is still largely influenced by Charles Darwin’s book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, where Darwin references the “fight” or “flight” response and the similarity that emotions play in humans and animals in terms of “adaptation” (56). As a result of this historical context for understanding emotions in psychological studies, negative emotions have been emphasized while positive emotions have faded into the background (57).

While positive emotions are still in need of study and don’t readily correspond to action in the way that running is a universal action that follows in response to fear, studies of positive emotions have shown having a concrete effect on people and hence, is important for student wellness. For example, an initial study done by Barbara L. Fredrickson and Christine Branigan, where participants in a laboratory were to respond to brief film clips associated with the emotions: “amusement, contentment, anger, or anxiety,” have exhibited how the mere observation of positive mental emotions actually created cognitive shifts, better memory, higher verbal capability, and more open attention for processing new information (58). These results are significant to consider because they correlate with fundamental writing skills. Another study, which focused on the cardiovascular effects of fear and was led by Fredrickson, with Branigan, & Tugade, showed how “Positive emotions undo the physiological effects of negative emotions” (Peterson 58). They demonstrated through a series of film viewings that

in relation to positive and negative emotions, the subjects' responses show how the effects of positive emotions make an impact in response to a cardiovascular system that had previously generated negative stimulation. Within the study, subjects were initially shown film clips where fear was invoked followed by a film clip that highlighted one of four themes: "contentment, amusement, neutrality, or sadness" (Fredrickson, Undoing 3). Negative reactivity stimulates a strong physical need to respond and "produce(s) heightened cardiovascular reactivity that redistributes blood flow to relevant skeletal muscles" (Fredrickson, Undoing 1). Conversely, reversing this stimulation by way of positive emotions changed the blood flow (Fredrickson, Undoing 1). Hence, watching the two positive film clips literally caused the difference in "the fastest cardiovascular recovery" (Fredrickson, Undoing 3). What this means is that the body's physiological response was able to recover a range of emotions with positive treatment following a stressful event faster than the typical automatic response that follows fear. Moreover, if the body is continually overstressed, it is unable to respond appropriately to stressors, making behavioral response options limited, and this causes a range of problems within the body's system, such as lowered immunity and susceptibility to diseases.

The "Broaden and Build Theory," proposed by Fredrickson, refers to the physiological mechanics that correlate with positive emotions. Fredrickson writes how,

This theory states that certain discrete positive emotions – including joy, interest, contentment, pride and love - although phenomenologically distinct, all share the ability to broaden peoples'

thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Role, 2)

Physically, positive emotions are not always recognizable, but are instinctive and retain similar facial impressions. Within her work, Fredrickson has been able to show how positive emotions uplift intellectual, social, and psychological resources to improve outlook, motivation, resilience, coping methods, and overall health for long term results and increases dopamine in the body and how play builds social resources. Additionally, positive emotions are associated with “personally meaningful circumstances” and when combined with adverse situations, can provide deeper meaning (Fredrickson, Role, 218, 223).

Fredrickson’s work corroborates scientific proof of the impact of positive emotions, but raises further questions such as, to what extent do cognitive shifts towards beneficial adjustments occur, such as flexible thinking and coping? And, what types of long-term results are possible physically and emotionally? These questions are worth further study with regard to student well-being.

Additionally, positive affectivity, which is the focus on moods, relates to positive emotions. Overall, positive affectivity encourages the cultivation of friendship and more involvement with community (Peterson 63). The leading scholar in this field, David Watson, says that, “To improve mood, we should be more attentive to our actions than our thoughts, that we should appreciate that striving toward goals creates more good cheer than actually achieving these goals, and that knowledge about moods and how they work can only help” (65).

The research findings by Ed Diener, Laura King, & Sonja Lyubomirsky, demonstrate how happiness leads to higher success rates and connects to positive affect: “Positively valenced moods and emotions lead people to think, feel, and act in ways that promote both resource building and involvement with approach goals” (804). Fredrickson’s Broaden and Build theory applies in Diener’s study because, as they explain, when things are going well, more things will continue to go well, such as relationships and resource building, thus more opportunities can be expanded during this juncture (804). Within the study, three research categories were created: work life, social relationships, and health (822). The characteristics attributed to positive affect were described as “confidence, optimism, and self-efficacy; likeability and positive construals of others; sociability, activity and energy; prosocial behavior, immunity, and physical well-being; effective coping with challenge and stress; and originality and flexibility” (Diener et al 804). It was theorized that happy people are more influenced by “rewards in their environment...and are more likely to approach, rather than to avoid, rewarding situations” (Diener et al 820).

### **Flow**

One method for generating lasting positive framework is the idea of creating “flow.” This idea was coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly when he investigated the question, “When do people feel most happy?” (*Flow 2*). Csikszentmihaly defines flow as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (4). Flow, explains Csikszentmihaly, “is

important because it makes the present instant more enjoyable, and because it builds the self-confidence that allows us to develop skills and make significant contributions to humankind” (42). In order to find flow, Csikszentmihaly makes the reciprocal case that the self is controlled by attention and attention is driven by the self (34). Thus, “deciding what is *really* important” and by “ordering one’s consciousness and choosing meaning-making activities, greater enjoyment and happiness in life is achieved” (Csikszentmihaly, *Creativity* 358 and *Flow* 6). Two facets that work congruently to maximize flow are 1) to work towards optimizing environmental conditions that align with one’s goals and 2) to alter how the environment is perceived to match one’s goals (*Flow* 43). In other words, “To improve life, one must improve the quality of experience” (44).

The idea of flow is especially crucial for student wellness because finding enjoyment can mean identifying one’s life purpose which creates meaning. The eight elements that make meaningful enjoyment possible include 1) an achievable project, 2) undisturbed focus, 3) an end goal, 4) receiving constructive criticism, 5) worry-free absolute attention, 6) a fulfilling experience that offers autonomy, 7) lack of self-consciousness, and 8) unawareness of time passing (*Flow* 49). However, enjoyment will be lacking if there is a failure to set initial intentions or if there is an inability to productively respond to criticism (*Flow* 55). Thus, developing positive strategies in “courage, resilience, perseverance, and mature defense, or transformational coping - the dissipative structure of the mind - are so essential” (*Flow* 202). The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is a necessity for survival. Additionally, Csikszentmihaly explores the importance of creativity

for shaping a more enjoyable life in his book, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. He explains how extracting the problems in life is not enough to harness meaning. Instead, creativity can offer “one of the most exciting models for living” (Csikszentmihaly, *Creativity* 10). Creativity will be discussed more in detail in Chapter Four.

Essentially, what all of these positive theories signify is that there is a great deal of value in researching and applying these concepts as interventions for student wellness because students will form positive habits that center them both physically and mentally. This will allow students to intrinsically build on their own resourcefulness to expand their communities for their work and in their lives because they will be given many techniques to lift themselves up.

### **Societal Inequities**

The psychological issues that students experience when entering college are tremendous and when students face vast income inequalities, the adjustment is even greater. Covid-19 has exposed some of these issues. For example, in an interview on *The Daily*, in May 2020, *The New York Times* podcast with Michael Barbaro, one college student reported how her parents’ once successful food truck business was going broke due to the virus’ spread. As a result, her school work was suffering. What should have been a celebration during her last semester at college where she had a full scholarship was becoming an afterthought. This student expressed her anxiety and sadness privately in an email to one of her instructors. She tearfully explained that she could no longer complete her work in a timely manner because of the larger distractions and problems in her home. She



questioned whether finishing college was even possible or worth it and wondered how she could help her family, given their great difficulties.

This story is not singular or unique. psychologist Barbara Morgan explains how “Contemporary students are dealing with the fast-paced and sometimes overwhelming stimulus of technology, the economic downturn with associated financial stressors, and worries about student debt and future employment” (Morgan 276). The types of problems that arise are not just a matter of individual responsibility, explains Adewal Troutman, MD, the Director of Louisville Metro, Public Health and Wellness, but that “social determinants are the major sources that shape the health outcomes...the bigger issues are the social conditions that drive the ultimate health status of populations. Power is a public health issue” (Adelman *In Sickness and in Wealth*). Thus, the goal for college administrators should be to create social conditions that support mental health which will maintain student retention rates and influence income equality.

### **Environmental Life Domain**

The environmental wellness factor which is a core life domain, plays a large role that is often out of an individual’s control. Moreover, outside stressors that have accumulated over peoples’ lifetimes greatly contributes to their internal responses in new situations. Richard D. Ashmore and Lee Jussim, authors of *Self, Social Identity, and Health* highlight how, “stress is not randomly distributed in society and that race in the United States is a marker for increased exposure both to traditionally measured stressful experiences (e.g., bereavement, occupational stress, legal problems) and to stress in the form of unfair treatment that stems from racial

discrimination” (13). A short period of stress is physically useful, but when things are out of one’s control over a long period of time, there is lasting damage to the body. This impact absolutely effects student attendance, participation, and academic achievements. Students cannot be separated from their experience during college nor can they be protected within the ivory towers. They bring their lives with them and continue to live them fully alongside college. According to documentary film director, Larry Adelman,

When we feel we don’t have control of our lives, the stress response happens in our bodies releases cortisol. This is a good thing because it enhances motivation and memory, but continued stress over time can prevent immune function and impair memory and can reduce parts of the brain. These stresses cause aging and diseases (*In Sickness and in Wealth*).

### **College Intervention Methods**

University awareness of the complex factors contributing to student problems is one that is more often than not misunderstood and misdirected. In my initial attempt to address wellness in my own FYW courses, I began to assign more journaling work where students could write more freely about any number of given personal prompts. Having this additional writing work allowed students to open up about their triumphs and difficulties. In this way, my class offered introspection. From this exploration, I came to the realization that student wellness was a more complex, unaddressed issue that students greatly struggled with and didn’t know where to turn. They felt safe in my class talking to their classmates and myself but

they didn't seem comfortable going to counseling centers, if they existed. It seemed like students needed an organic, supportive community who could participate and contribute to their growth.

But there is evidence for intervention by opting for curriculum shifts. Wellness measures have been researched and documented with lasting measured impactful results. Yale's wellness course, "The Science of Well-Being," taught by Dr. Laurie Santos has been viewed on Coursera over 23 million times since March 2020. Moreover, 36% of the students who participated improved their life circumstances. Santos asks students to measure their happiness based on PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement) and then to complete daily writing for each week on topics such as gratitude, savoring, doing exercise, meditating, and performing random acts of kindness. Later in the semester, students are asked to repeat the exercises they found the most useful and at the end of the course, they are asked to measure their PERMA levels again. David Williams, a sociologist at Harvard School of Public Health writes how "Economic policy is health policy and when we improve economic circumstances and narrow the economic gap, we improve the health" (Adelman, *Sickness*). This is precisely why restructuring the focus on wellness is where institutions can build new infrastructure to support the influx of rising problems that exist and will inevitably grow in the future. This positive preventative care will create health, wealth, and happiness. Accordingly, "This mixture of newfound freedoms and responsibilities makes for an excellent time to educate students regarding healthier lifestyle choices" (Krugar, Roeder, and Brubaker 581). Rather than waiting for the

problems to crop up, colleges could work to shape new approaches. “Educators and researchers have long advocated for increased student involvement to achieve optimal growth and learning” (Morgan 277). Perhaps students could be given surveys for indicating interest in a health class or a wellness class could be offered for credit as a pass/fail choice. These options are a start for programming to go forward.

In the context of college freshmen, the conflicts that often occur are due to students experiencing the demands of college and where skills for resilience and coping have not been cultivated. Barbara Morgan, author of “Stress Management for College Students” warns how “Poor coping skills and associated mental health issues may have serious consequences including suicide which is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15-24 years and the second leading cause of among college students (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2012)” (277). As a result, these problematic issues are handled on campuses by counseling centers. Accordingly, a lot of time and money has gone into developing counseling and wellness facilities.

It is assumed that “students are generally ‘healthy’” (Higgins, et al. 766). However, this assumption is a lie that fails our students and faculty on every level. The truth is that wellness is personal and social, time-consuming, often race and class related, and a bigger issue than any one person or department wants to deal with. The article, “Optimizing College Health Promotion in the Digital Age” shows how “Results from the Spring 2015 NCHA (National College Health Association) indicated that anxiety, sleep difficulties, and stress were the most

commonly reported health impediments to academic performance” (Armstrong et al 7). These major issues should not be minimized since “Stress has negative effects on medical, psychological, and cognitive functioning” (Morgan 285). Wellness needs longer, more supervised support where students are actively participating in their own health choices because “What is generally known about promotion and prevention programs, namely that knowledge alone might not be sufficient to produce desirable outcomes” (Conley, Travers, and Bryant 83).

### **Counseling Centers**

Counseling centers are an important start, but these services do not reach the crux of the problems at hand. Debora R Baldwin, et al found that “Although liberal arts colleges and research universities provide their students with wellness information, and/or website, the message may not be reaching the intended audience” (Baldwin 6). Psychology researchers Colleen S. Conley, Lea V. Travers and Fred B. Bryant concur in that mental health departments solely use a one-on-one counseling method for their approach. While interpersonal relationships are supportive for developing resilience, their findings show that there is little to no “prevention” work being done and worse: “Students might not recognize their need for mental health services, or they might hesitate to seek help for various personal, social, or culture reasons. Given these challenges, it is not surprising that mental health services are greatly underutilized on college campuses” (Conley Travers, and Bryant 76). Working as a research team, Shelly Armstrong, and her colleagues’ 2019 study, “Optimizing College Health Promotion in the Digital Age,” which references the ACHA data of over 93,000 students from 108 colleges,

reiterates this point in saying,

35% of respondents reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function in the last 12 months, with over 50% reporting overwhelming anxiety and over 60% reporting very sad in the last 12 months.

However, only 15% of students experiencing anxiety and 13% of those experiencing depression reported being treated or diagnosed by a professional within the last 12 months (271)

These lopsided findings show there is an unequal amount of need and treatment, and still student treatment services are overwhelmed by students' needs. The ability to handle the life challenges students experience in college shows up in students' wellness or lack therein (Baldwin 6). In recognizing this conundrum, Higgins' study "recommended that health education 'be incorporated into the curriculum if the initiative is to have a significant impact'" (766).

Like other studies on the topic of wellness centers, Terry Nguyen's article in *The Chronical of Higher Education* addresses how the demands at counseling centers are overwhelmed and should not be the only location for addressing wellness issues. Instead, "Given challenges faced by college mental health services, many college campuses could benefit from empirically supported, generalizable, and portable interventions" (Conley, Travers, and Bryant 84). Such an intervention practice has recently been established at University of Southern California. Ashley Uyeshiro Simon, an associate professor of clinical occupational therapy at USC describes their wellness class as "a form of self-processing" (Nguyen 3). She goes further in explaining how mindfulness enables students to

re-evaluate what is important. Moreover, they examine larger meaningful questions such as “What does success mean to you?” and “How do you live your best life?” (3). At the end of the day, getting students to feel comfortable reaching out for the resources they need is a desired outcome for wellness classes (4). Joanne M. Crossman, a tenured professor at the School of Education and Social Services at Saint Leo University who has set up and led new education programs including student outreach initiatives, claims that “teaching health behavior change provides real-life opportunity for planning, practicing, and prioritising wellness” (1). In other words, Crossman is making the argument that health education is an important access location for developing life-long motivation for adapting continued wellness practices (2). In so doing, students are “taking responsibility for their optimal health and vitality” (2). Consequently, many larger problematic chronic health issues are preventable, such as the three primary preventable risk factors deemed by The World Health Organization which are “unhealthy diet and excessive energy intake, physical inactivity, and tobacco use” (2).

### **College Wellness Classes**

A handful of colleges have already begun to implement college wellness classes and are at the forefront of this much needed curriculum development. University of Southern California and Emory University now require a wellness course. University of Pennsylvania Law School also requires a wellness course for second- and third-year law students as a “legal skill” (Nguyen 1). The decision for implementing the course, stated John Hollway, Associate Dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, was “academic” (3). The schools’ reasoning was that

lawyers who are in the career of helping others legally manage their lives should be healthy so that they can provide their clients with deliberate counsel. Their program is invested in “resilience training, optimistic vocabulary training, and stress management” (4). Overall, there has been a 30% increase for the demand of counseling on campuses from 2009-2015 (1). These administrators are now treating these demands as “life skills” which need developing because the need for wellness extends beyond students’ lives during college (1). “Mental-health awareness isn’t a skill learned once...it requires practice and consistent exposure to build a culture of care explains the instructor of Health, Balance, and Talents” (2).

A successful wellness course which was originally conceived to educate future educators about wellness was implemented at the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education at the University of Victoria. The course was then expanded to the general college population because of the crucial need for teaching self-care and responsibility (Higgins et al. 766). The course was evaluated in J. Wharf Higgins’ study entitled, “University Students’ Wellness.” Their findings showed an impact on “students’ quality of life in three broad areas – physical spiritual, and psychological ‘Being,’ physical, social and community ‘Belonging,’ and most notably practical, growth and leisure ‘Becoming’” (Higgins et al. 767). The recommended findings in Higgins’ study demonstrated how students can take control of their health by claiming that “Enabling students to take control of their health and shape it in a positive direction can enhance both their academic and personal lives” (767). Psychologist R.F. Baumeister explains how belonging to a community is an essential part of developing wellness and life skills,



in saying that “belongingness appears to have multiple and strong effects on emotional patterns and cognitive processes” (497). Moreover, belonging is associated with a more powerful immune system, motivation, and one’s strongest emotions (Baumeister 508). Higgins further highlights how college campuses are an “ideal setting for health education” and “The value of a health and wellness course could potentially go beyond the acquisition of health knowledge, extending to impacting students’ life potential outside of basic health domains” (767). Further, the students in Higgins’ report state that their studies were important, but caused “time, stress, and financial concerns, forcing them to sacrifice aspects of Being and Belonging to realize their dreams” (770). However, the wellness class that they took through the study focused on topics such as these and enabled the students to adjust with areas of concern because they spent time directed towards balancing life issues such as these.

### **Health is Physical**

Physical health largely contributes to mental health and intellectual performance. For example, in addition to helping people stay in shape, decreasing stress and curbing appetite, running improves reasoning skills, memory, and lasting mood elevation. Most of the studies on physical health indicate that students who consistently exercise “have higher reported grade averages, better mental health, less reported depression, and higher levels of self-esteem and overall academic performance” (Harmening 4). Conversely, lack of exercise and good nutrition are the biggest risks for continued health issues (4). Silas N, Pearman, et al’s research study entitled, “The Impact of a Required College Health and Physical Education

Course on the Health Status of Alumni” provides the results of having monitored students who took a required health and physical education four to ten years after the graduation. They found that the “health status and behaviors reported that the course positively influenced their attitudes toward and behaviors in smoking, eating and exercise” (Higgins et al. 771). Similarly, in Higgins’ study, the “students realized their own being by listening to the human potential of the special guest speakers, raising their self-awareness and providing them with inspiration and motivation towards becoming their full potential” (771). These compelling documented case studies imprint the inherent importance of requiring a wellness class. From a broader perspective, the Higgins’ study highlights how teaching students to care for themselves and developing projects that impact community in relation to health helps them to become an integral part of their community (773).

Physical responses are very complex and ongoing stress causes bodily reaction, such as lowering one’s immune system and increasing the risk of diseases. English Education professor Jason Wirtz writes about how the “Lack of and low quality sleep contribute to negatively impact mood – an important element of writing” (89). However, when a significant deficit is present, “Sleep deprivation induces negative cognitive states, including declines in focus, judgement, and muscle coordination, which can lead to injury. Neurons become overburdened and lose their ability to coordinate new information and recalled previously learned information” (89). Moreover, “Different stages of sleep help to consolidate different types of memories” (89). David S. Anderson’s *Wellness Issues for Higher Education* makes the claim that 75% of college students experience difficulties

with sleep (Harmening 4). This example illustrates how powerful a person's mind responds in relation to the physical well-being it has.

By opening physical health as a channel of communication at the university level, programs could establish health as an essential priority for students. The decision to implement a wellness course would not only benefit students, but would benefit the schools where the courses are in place because, as Barbara Morgan, author of "Stress Management for College Students: An Experiential Multi-Modal Approach" rationalizes how, "good stress management support at colleges and universities is essential for the retention and success of students and for their health and well-being" (285). Additionally, Morgan claims that stress reduction should combine a physical element: "In general, effective stress management programs should include a focus on the physiological and cognitive aspects of the stress response and emphasize establishing balance between physical, mental, and emotional health" (277). For instance, Morgan provided a research study model that combined stress reduction with lectures, yoga, hiking, meditation, and equine-assisted activities (285). Meditation is useful for developing self-awareness because it reduces stress, controls anxiety, promotes emotional health, lengthens attention span, and improves sleep (Healthline). I have seen meditation and breathing exercises work for my FYW students first-hand when I have had my students practice a five-minute breathing exercise and write about it. What students have mostly shown is that they had overwhelmingly positive experiences which resulted in better focus and becoming calmer. Another related strategy that could be applied is visualization. Both meditation and visualization "show promise for

increased self-awareness, concentration, improved mood and sleep, reduced fear and anxiety, and pain reduction” (Margolin 235). Hence, by developing more focused consciousness, the process of writing could be made clearer.

Expanding the physical wellness dimension could be put into place in combination with university wellness facility or off campus with another program, or with a writing teacher who is qualified to teach yoga or some such exercise, or even by simply incorporating walking into the course. Many public speaking and theatre teachers incorporate moderate movement work for releasing bodily tension for optimal functioning. As a professional exercise trainer and actor, I have also incorporated stretching exercises and vocal warm-ups prior to students giving presentations. As a result, students have felt less stiff and more relaxed with their bodies and voices and more comfortable presenting their topics in front of their classmates. They have also formed closer friendships in class. The exercise portion could also be paired with students writing a reflection about their continued outside experiences with exercise throughout the semester.

The wellness movement has only recently been taken seriously by a few of the larger prestigious universities in making health and wellness a part of their curriculums, despite its importance and the impact that it is having. However, there is a growing value for wellness in the marketplace, which is also referred to as “emotional intelligence” by human resource managers. Author Harvey Deutschendorf details how employees with this skill are able to handle pressure, can cooperate, listen more attentively, are more open, more empathetic, set an example, and make thoughtful and thorough decisions (1, 2). Developing these

assets of communication enables a person to become a more well-balanced match for companies and certainly more diplomatic in forging community bonds. Professional communication skill-building can be initially developed from self-expression writing. Personal expression writing is a positive physical means that has been shown to reduce stress and is a release for grappling with long-term trauma. Writing is a journey where the discovery of learning is part of the process that happens along the way. Self-expression is like physically exercising the mind because the exploration of thoughts allows for new ideas and perspectives about the past to form.

### **Social Emotion Learning and Academic Buoyancy**

Figuring out how to approach wellness behaviors in a college setting is vital to happiness, success, and health later in life. Social psychologist researchers, Kristen Gallagher and Shevaun Stocker wanted to support the emotional challenges that students were facing so they expanded the development of social emotional learning in higher education by devising their manual, “A Guide to Incorporating Social Emotional Learning in the College Classroom.” All of the exercises Gallagher and Stocker include in their manual explain why each exercise is important, why it works, what needs doing, the time required to do the exercise, reflection writing about the exercise, and follow up reading material (46, 47). Overall, claim Gallagher and Stocker, students need “academic buoyancy,” which means the “everyday academic resilience” and “the capacity to overcome setbacks, challenges, and difficulties that are part of everyday academic life” (6). Academic buoyancy is similar to the positive psychology term, realistic optimism. Since the

brain is still growing until the age of 24, the capacity for strengthening emotional learning still needs work for a student's overall development. Fostering social emotional learning at the college level is important in conjunction with developing interests and increasing positive emotions.

Many of the exercises Gallagher and Stocker created could be simulated in a FYW classroom to encompass all of the wellness dimensions, since they are positive and reflective, incorporate realistic optimistic, aim for overall positive affect, and develop emotional intelligence, character strengths, and self-awareness, and could be further enhanced with creativity by devising more exercises to incorporate Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow which is the seamless enjoyment of an activity and creating individualized projects. One such exercise from Gallagher and Stocker's manual is entitled, "Meaningful Photos." The exercise asks for students to spend ten minutes taking photos of meaningful subjects for five days. Then students are to upload their photographs and write about each one of them in order to describe what the picture represents and why it is meaningful. The exercise connects students with a larger purpose, can help motivate them to achieve their goals, and can also provide resilience in the face of challenge. Additionally, it is a means for including multimodal learning which means that more senses are engaged. Thus, the visual aspect of this exercise might appeal to more visual learners (Gallagher and Stocker 54, 55).

Another exercise from their manual focuses on character strength development and asks students to examine a particular character strength of their choosing and spend time each day devising a plan in writing for enhancing that

strength by describing how that strength will be utilized. At the end of the week, the student then analyzes what was done, the feelings that occurred, and what was learned by completing the exercise. This exercise is shown to increase happiness and decrease depression (Gallagher and Stocker 56, 57).

Yet another exercise, “Stress reappraisal,” which is ideal for coping with end of semester finals, asks students to first watch the *Ted Talk*, by Dr. Kelly McGonigal entitled, “How to Make Stress Your Friend.” The next step given is to imagine and write about a stressful event in the near future by describing what makes that event seem stressful. Following McGonigal’s *TedTalk*, students are asked to write about stepping into the actual event and writing about the emotions that might be occurring, and then write about how those emotions might be interpreted as productive. The final part of the exercise separates the stressor into two categories: “threats” and “challenges.” If the stressor is considered a “threat,” participants are to write about a time when a threat was overcome and to dig for internal resources that help the participant devise a strategy for handling the immediate stressor. If the stressor is considered a challenge, then the participant is to write about challenges that have been successfully overcome and to write about how these were worked through (Gallagher and Stocker, 46, 47).

Gallagher and Stocker’s manual, Peterson’s *Positive Psychology* text, and Lerner and Schlecker’s book, *U Thrive* where “PERMA” (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement) is emphasized, are all excellent resources that provide many concrete wellness writing exercises which could easily be assimilated into mainstream college curriculums. Lerner and

Schlechter point out how each element of PERMA is crucial for wellness and that students need to learn what each are and adjust to the right level for each part for themselves so that they can “thrive” in college. Additionally, combining alternative practices which increase student focus, such as meditation and visualization could be easily included with the use of YouTube and other apps, such as HeadSpace.

Overall, all of these models build on how, “Happiness, friendship, and doing something you love” are part of what makes us thrive, so identifying and continuing in these areas will enhance “well-being” (Lerner and Schlechter 12). By incorporating these multi-layered approaches, students can be personally fulfilled and achieve Dunn’s vision of what “zest for life” means in terms of deepening the wellness dimensions in emotional, social, spiritual, physical, and intellectual, vocational, and environmental well-being.

### **Character Strengths**

Yet another part of Wellness Writing classes could examine the development of character strengths because what makes people successful are the characteristics, mental health, and resources valued by others, as psychologists Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener explain. Character strengths are the degree and quality of expressing various personality traits and can be emphasized more deeply with awareness and practice and will be further explored in Chapter Two. An individual’s happiness level is derived from the impact that societal values and views place on that individual regarding his/her success. Composition theorist James S. Gee writes that “Identities thus are neither fixed nor static; they are multiple and fluid, enacted and achieved according to social context, with



power playing a crucial role in what identities get recognized, enacted, and legitimated” (Baron 90). Thus, a wellness course could reinforce one’s sense of self for cultivating confidence, cultural capital, and happiness. Alternative methods suggested by Barbara Morgan, “should be an integral component of the college curriculum” because “the benefits of learning useful stress management strategies extend beyond college life and may help to sustain students in their future personal lives and career” (286). Adapting multiple approaches such as developing the awareness of character strengths and learning stress reduction techniques in the framework of a writing class would serve student populations by teaching valuable life skills while teaching writing strategies. Writing classes could serve the community as a safe space where health could be addressed in conjunction with formal academic writing. Developing writing skills is about honing one’s own process which means that a person becomes more self-aware of their initial skills in order to develop these further.

### **Health and Writing Classes**

Personal expression is a meaningful part of health and can be easily included in FYW classrooms for developing self-awareness, resilience, and wellness. Initial writing assignments could start by asking students to write about their connection with writing – how they learned and what they would like to improve upon. Students could then journal various experiences, such as describing a joyful event, a friendship, or something that was life-changing. Writing about a pleasurable experience supports a positive outlook towards writing and gets students starting to write. Personal expression can also be encompassed in fun and creative ways. For

example, students could design a “me” board where they include pictures and images that tells a story about themselves. Self-expression not only encourages student growth, but also engages positive participation and builds community. The time investment for personal expression writing is a commitment for engrossing the class and each person in it with writing from their unique strengths. This writing exercise mirrors an exercise that the author of *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, Christopher Peterson does with his students on the first day of class. Peterson steps beyond the clichéd introductions that students and faculty alike are accustomed to by instead having students tell a story about themselves being at their best. What this does, according to Peterson, is shows the strengths of the student’s character. A student’s voice is the most important component for writing. Maya Angelou writes, “If you don’t know where you’ve come from, you don’t know where you’re going.” By actively seeking out images and writing about them for a “me board,” students are able to define and share who they are. This writing exercise supports and encourages positive development at the beginning of a course so that students will gain the confidence needed to tackle unfamiliar strategies and more complex work that can then be introduced. Often, students feel isolated in their thinking. Creating and sharing a “me board” additionally builds classroom community and trust by opening communication among students. For instance, talking about their lives provides meaning, connection, and opens up more authentic topics of concern. Critical thinking and talking about these various issues could be further launched through critical pedagogy, or problem posing, and where students could explore their stances through writing about the controversies they present. Once students

investigate their stance on a topic, one way to foster and progress how they evaluate their own writing is through metacognitive reflection. It is often assigned through reviewing a series of self-response questions. This positive, approach of self-inquiry holistically develops writing through students' own implementation of revision which will be further examined in Chapter Two.

### **Self-Designed Projects and Deeper Meaning**

Problem posing offers a means into problem solving, which is cornerstone for navigating life skills. Problem solving project work, such as was proposed by John Dewey and the Progressives highlights community building skills. Involving students in their communities while creating something worthwhile offers the capacity for experiential learning. Moreover, projects serve a vital role in the expansion of deeper meaning and life purpose, according to Peterson. Additionally, leadership projects develop strong leadership, business skills, and confidence and can be actively approached through problem posing, research efforts, and writing. Further, projects such as university driven academic service learning projects are designed to be deeply meaningful learning experience where reflection contributes to their overall experience. However, projects need not be solely developed as a leadership or academic service learning project. Opening more possibilities for project work gives students the opportunity to be creative and access their unique strengths for personal expression, such as featuring arts-based research projects which will be illustrated in Chapter Three. As found through Higgins' "University Students' Wellness," study, "In designing their own project, students had control of what they wanted to change, involved a health aspect that was personally

meaningful, and had direct relevance and consequences to their quality of life and well-being” (771). The autonomy that is derived from taking control is a strong motivator for educational habit building and ultimately creates a life-long practice of taking initiative. Additionally, Higgins’ study “highlighted by their experiences with the project, the course offered students a unique avenue to build social skills, interact and share ideas with others from different departments, learn ways to contribute to the community and develop a sense of belonging” (772).

Students can determine what project they would like to work on by considering where problems lie and where their interests intersect. For example, if a student likes cats and recognizes that there is a need to feed feral cats in her neighborhood, that might be the start of her project. Her research could be cultivated to explore the larger context of the problem with homeless cats. The project part might be to feed the cats in her neighborhood for a few weeks and then to engage with others to become interested and involved so that the project expands within her community. The writing could culminate with defining the problem, creating a project that intervenes with the problem in some way, and doing research about how the problem is handled and what her intervention method included. The culmination of the project could incorporate research component but could include narrative and visual images, perhaps using video that brings the reader into the conversation about the topic as well as a final reflection about the project’s results.

### **Reflection Writing**

Reflection writing has been shown to increase learning and self-awareness and is a powerful tool which complements project work and wellness. St. John’s

University, for example, asks students to work through a “4 Stage Reflection Process” on what students learned throughout the development of their Academic Service Learning projects. The students make observations about the issues, events, and their experiences, reflect on their participation and the thoughts that they had prior to the project, reflect on the impact it had on them, and finally, they reflect on what they might do differently after having completed their projects.

Neuroscientific findings show how writing a reflection about learning something is a conscious act of learning and a conscious act of doing (Carey). Thus, an excellent access point for addressing wellness could begin within the writing classroom where students could actively reflect and build more concrete plans for forming their own wellness. Wellness intersects with composition and creativity because writing is a way to articulate and make sense of a person’s well-being in relation to environmental encounters. Students could get a handle on what stressors affect them and learn strategies prior to having stressors work against them. Moreover, reflection is a large part of composition work in that authentic learning occurs through the process of writing, as shown through metacognitive reflection. Improving self-awareness enhances life skills and deepens meaning for students which builds community and student retention.

### **Writing Theorists**

Linda Flower’s social cognitive theory further illustrates how reflection is indispensable for understanding how individuals shape their writing. In an attempt to uncover what is occurring when students write, Flower’s key notions revolve around the cognitive understanding of identity and values which can be more

readily accessible through reflective writing. Reflective writing stems from the one's cognitive internal process where environmental factors have influenced values and judgement and are translated to answer external promptings. The meaning that is constructed is in a "response to the multilayers of a writer's social, rhetorical, and cultural context" (Flower 89). Flower emphasizes the importance of reflective writing because "reflection and self-awareness can be the basis for critical understanding of one's own goals, assumptions, and strategies, and the motivation for growth and change" (76).

Additionally, reflection is a crucial part of aligning with one's community, which writing theorist Elizabeth Wardle highlights. Wardle argues that newcomers must adapt their writing and themselves to fit within a new workplace or community environment, even at the risk of going against their own identities and values in her essay, "Identity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces." Oftentimes, the people that already form the newcomer's environment make the assumption that the newcomer knows how to assimilate. According to sociologist Etienne Wenger's theory of "communities of practice" that Wardle draws from, newcomers can actively become part of a community in three primary ways: "engagement," "imagination," and "alignment" (Wardle 287, 288). Engagement refers to making personal connections, while imagination means that people expand their proficiency in a way that is acceptable to the community in document creation, and alignment indicates that newcomers choose to accept the group's work methodologies. However, this is not always the case because newcomers may not possess the "authority" or "cultural capital" needed to do so

(285). The importance of belonging showcases how integral community is for providing connection and meaning. As Wardle concludes, writing in new environments requires more than “a discrete set of skills or improving cognitive abilities. It is a process of involvement in communities, of identifying with certain groups, of choosing certain practices over others; a process strongly influenced by power relationships – a process in effect, bound up tightly with identity, authority, and experience” (297). Wardle’s final point is that there is more to teaching writing than the writing itself. There are dynamics that occur within classrooms that can uplift student writers when they are supported. Thus, when students feel as though they belong, they can engage more fully.

As important as it is to participate in a discourse community, what is shared can also be somewhat disconnected because of power dynamics and the inability to understand writing expectations, as Wardle points out. For example, students may feel obligated to share personal information that makes them uncomfortable. Participation may be extremely difficult, if not impossible on many levels for students for these reasons. Moreover, discourse communities have become so specialized with their own specific terminology, it effects how people communicate. Writing theorist James S. Gee associates the understanding of the way language and literacy works further by centralizing the concepts of “society, culture, and values” in *Social Linguistics and Literacies* (1). Gee warns that these concepts represent that which is most valued at universities by students, faculty, and administrators, they could be vastly different. How language and literacy functions, then, may be ultimately disconnected from the needs and values of its

participants. Gee illustrates the tangible inequality that some students experience in school by pointing out that a lack of resources has a direct impact on students.

However, Gee, like Wardle, writes that acquiring literacy through written words is only part of the work and that, “Rather what has effects are historically and culturally situated social practices of which reading and writing are only bits, bits that are differently composed and situated in different social practices” (45).

How students interpret the “Discourse” for their major and for work in other disciplines could vary widely. Gee emphasizes how “Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or “types of people”) by specific groups, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort...” (3). Ultimately, Discourses show a person’s sense of belonging to a specific group because that person encompasses the specific terminology of that particular group and by knowing the terminology, a person gains authority. Discourses can limit the uninformed rhetorician. But writers can also break prior barriers, as Flower claims, because new meaning making can occur when a rhetorician is aware of a community’s specific and appropriate discourse. Flower writes that it is also true that a neophyte might add to a discourse community by bringing in a different perspective (75). Thus, bridging the gap in communication by forming levels of belonging, and in particular including relevant reflection writing associated with identity formation could be crucial for understanding how students are meeting their differing challenges and how they might successfully proceed.



By invoking writing theorists, Linda Flower, Elizabeth Wardle, and James S. Gee, at this juncture, I propose to open a deeper understanding of purpose and meaning as to why and how writing can impact wellness in relation to the theories they present. By applying the notions of reflection, belonging, and the weight that society, culture, and values have for the emerging science of wellness, students are more readily able to expand their foundation for advancement. Thus, the model for writing stems from the creation of meaning making for each rhetorician and from developing a supportive community for all students.

### **Finland's Model of Education**

In looking for a model landscape where wellness and art education works extraordinarily well, the country of Finland is an excellent example. However, one of the biggest fundamental philosophical differences with The United States is the idea of competition. Finland's educational system emphasizes cooperation over competition, whereas the American political system is founded on the principle of competition. But Finland is particularly valuable to examine in terms of its education, because prior to 1980, they did not have a good system. Many of the inequalities found in both Finland and the American systems pertained to class exclusionary practices which are often social determinant dividers barring access to success. However, because Finland did not have many natural resources available, they decided to invest in their citizens and to rebuild their educational infrastructure to reflect sustainable values for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to compete in a global market (Moore, *Where to Invade Next*). These carefully crafted principles reflected their change of values for societal equity and were successful. Finland shot to the top of

the Pisa Chart of reading, mathematics, and science in the early 2000s, and in 2018, they were still in the top eight. Thus, two important elements arise from the Finnish system: their entire system of existence is based on the idea of equity and their education is focused on inspiring self-discovery through creative means.

Educational writer, Anu Partanen explains how, in lifting people up, they are able to soar and do not remain reliant on the government. In doing so, citizens are able to become independent people who think creatively outside the box because these values are instilled from an early age and are part of the Finnish identity.

Moreover, countries are healthier where there is a more equitable wealth distribution (Adelman, *In Sickness and in Wealth*).

Anu Partanen's book, *The Nordic Theory of Everything* and article, "What American Schools Are Ignoring: Finland's School Success" informs this dissertation because her evidence shows how cooperation, wellness, and creativity can build a better society. In addition to education excellence, Finland has lead international metrics for quality of life, happiness, and education for the past few years. Partanen highlights how Finland's overall quality of life is more enjoyable in her comparison between Finland and America. Finnish people live relatively comfortably and have disposable income. Moreover, the Finnish are not as stressed out as Americans because there are safety nets built into their system to help people when they are in need. An example of a safety net includes their healthcare system, which is designed to cover all medical needs without hidden costs. The most surprising part of what Partanen has to say about Finland is how their society has flourished "because of their pessimism, not in spite of it" (319). This is interesting

because this idea brings forth the notion that their dark view created a virtuous society worth looking to as a model. Perhaps the United States could take the lesson that Finland offers by examining the broader view of education as Partanen argues. Listening to what Finland's educators value, such as including more imaginative work, relaxing one's brain, and physical exercise is precisely more of what is needed for holistic development in American education.

Monetary concerns and diverse culture are also detailed in Partanen's work. She dispels American myths about dysfunctional districts wasting their funds on failure and points out that Finland's "national government allocates extra funds to municipalities with schools that face particular challenges" (Partanen 154). These needs vary in terms of immigration status, unemployment, additional learning needs, and so forth. Interestingly, their population is less dependent on government for ongoing economic support. By contrast, the United States disburses and funds money based on property taxes, and as Partanen points out, "in its 2013 report the commission declared that disparities in school funding are the biggest contributor to inequality in American education today" (155). As Partanen asserts, "students' chances are taken away before they have a chance to learn" (155).

When it comes to academic values, Anu Partanen echoes educational theorist Margaret Naumburg's question, "Education for what?" when she rhetorically asks, "What is the purpose of education?" She answers her own question in saying that, "Finns still see the basic goal of public education as preparing children not for standardized tests, not for college applications, and not for specific jobs or industries, but more generally for life, although a life that takes place in the twenty-

first century. Schools aim to graduate well-rounded human beings who are creative as well as technically skilled” (140, 141). Although these are the goals emphasized in high school, many of the lessons that the Finnish are using can be applied to American college practices.

The Director of Finland’s Ministry of Education for International Mobility and author of *Let the Children Play*, Pasi Sahlberg illustrates how the Finnish secondary education system is more concerned with finding something that brings joy to a person’s life so the goal is for children to become well-rounded in many subjects. Alternatively, students have almost no homework and there is virtually no testing. Instead, creative play is emphasized and students are supported in pursuing their interests. In particular, the arts are encouraged. Finland is in fact, increasing its funding for the arts, Partanen points out. Partanen critically assesses how the Finnish are concerned with adding more arts based programs rather than cutting them, as is seen in the United States. She writes, “On the same day back in 2012 when New York City was busy publishing the scores of its teachers based on students’ standardized tests, the Finnish National Board of Education was busy, too: with an announcement that it was adding more lessons in arts, crafts, civics, and Finnish language to the curriculum” (Partanen 141). The idea of play coincides with the Nordic parental lifestyle where parents teach self-reliance instead of helicoptering which is why parents place emphasis on why education is indispensable for their children (Partanen 149). While the parents might spend time explaining the virtues of schooling and assist in quizzing a child on their work, the child is expected to manage his/her own time at an early age (Partanen 149).

Being well-rounded and joyful means being healthy. Partanen writes how, Finns also believe that their public schools absolutely need to be actively involved in securing children's health and safety-- another crucial aspect of establishing every child as a self-sufficient individual, independent of the abilities and means of their parents. This starts with the basics. Finnish public schools offer all pupils free hot meals, health care, psychological counseling and individualized student guidance (143)

Health and safety are critical because building a stronger foundation at an early age supports a child later in life (Adelman *In Sickness and in Wealth*). Thus, by advancing wellness factors creatively, quality of life can be improved for American life. Wellness is a direct reflection on the ability to achieve life balance and happiness.

American society has come to passively accept the way things are rather than use imagination to rekindle "meaningful choice" in societal design (location 1430). In contrast to how the Finnish are concerned with adding more arts based programs rather than cutting them, over-testing is still an emphasis for K-12 and colleges over arts-based research methodologies and portfolio work. However, educator Margaret Naumburg warns, "From kindergarten through college, our present educational system fails to base itself on the student's understanding of himself; and in this failure it omits the most important contribution which it could conceivably make towards human wisdom" (Box, 97, 15).

### **Student Wellness, Resilience, and Overall Life Success**

School plays a vital role for developing one's health. What is at stake with respect for valuing wellness is how societal values have the ability to influence the events of one's future (Adelman, *Sickness*). Questioning the purpose of education, as Partanen does, leads her to consider how educational aims reflect societal values and interests. The significance is that Finland recognizes the importance of nurturing joy and health for overall life success. Schools aim to graduate well-rounded human beings who are creative as well as technically skilled" (Partanen 140, 141). As shown from this chapter, the approach for universities to consider is how wellness can be emphasized and elevated in a dedicated situated space where "Wellness behaviors can be learned" (Baldwin 1). Since college students are at college to learn, arming them with knowledge for altering their own behavior is a good strategy to consider for cultivating wellness. It is the responsibility of administrators to recognize that the problem of failing student retention is not only a financial disservice, but a health crisis that is integral to the core of one's happiness and success. My suggested intervention is to create optimal situations where basic life skills and healthy behaviors can be established by coordinating efforts of self-care in FYW classes and college-wide. Organizing these efforts would equip students with positive strategies for resilience while strengthening their emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, physical, vocational, environmental wellness which in turn would contribute to greater activism for the social well-being of humanity.

## Summary

My emphasis in this chapter has been to highlight how wellness development is not solely for coping and adapting to one's learning environment, but is a positive empowering way to live and actively learn. By illustrating the broader overall spectrum for what is at stake with student wellness at the university level, I have shown how the need and demand for counseling services has outpaced most colleges' ability to remedy the situation. By contrast, in defining wellness through the lens of Positive Psychology, and in considering how sociological factors, such as environment make a significant impact, I have noted how the outcomes from responding to one's environment with resilience indicate substantial medical and growth benefits. The complex thinking needed to develop a resilient balance is a part of the growing science documented in the successes from a few university-operated wellness programs which focus on self-awareness. I make the recommendation for more involved, institutional action in the form of providing wellness classes which could be a part of, or planned within a specialty framework of FYW classes. Chapter Two will re-examine writing theorists and movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in relation to self-expression, the interconnection between physiological and psychological well-being, and will offer creative methods for implementing fundamental wellness designs.

## CHAPTER 2: RETHINKING THE WRITING ENVIRONMENT & CURRICULUM

In Chapter One I defined the cognitive yields of the science of wellness and wrote of the university's attempt to respond with wellness centers, counseling, and courses in *wellness*. In this chapter, I focus on the role of first year writing (FYW) classes in wellness. I build on the cognitive insights of James Gee and Linda Flower to show the yield basing collegiate FYW as a course focusing on student wellness. I survey the revolution in holistic education from John Dewey in the 1930s to Margaret Naumburg in the 1960s, and I argue the cognitive approaches of Peter Elbow in personal voice, and Toby Fulwiler in journal writing should lead us to appreciate college writing as part of students' whole development, not simply the mastery of technical skills in academic prose. Combing the work of these humanist theorists of education with contemporary research in health and neuroscience, I argue for a *return* to creative memoir in the writing classroom as both an example of the transformative power of the creative arts, and a legitimate practice of student writing. I conclude with analysis of Jesmyn Ward's *Men We Reaped* as a kind of narrative that can help students visualize a path through the emotional and academic impediments they face in their own lives.

### **Words and the Academic Writing “Problem”**

With the rise of mass education, in the twentieth century came the “writing problem” in higher education. The primary emphasis on grammatical correctness and the invention of the five-paragraph essay format became the dominant thrust for teaching model. This singular mechanical fixation is often still the consistent curricular aim for teaching English composition courses. This limited view gives



colleges the illusion that a single writing class can fix students' grammatical "errors" and teach them rhetorical patterns which will turn them into graceful expressive agents. The gist for this chapter will be to show why this mechanical vision lacks an appreciation for human creativity.

### **20th Century Survey of Writing Studies**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other goals, such as the value of a holistic approach to human expression attracted attention and were still persistent in writing studies and kept appearing in spurts. These themes drew on the strength of students' self-discovery. Margaret Naumburg, whose work I will highlight in Chapter Four, aligned with these ideals, and identified how the most important contributing factor in a person's life was "self-knowledge" (Naumburg Box 14). Naumburg was the founder of the Walden School in New York in 1915 and her development of art therapy in the 1940s was the basis for New York University's programmatic design and where she later taught.

As David Russell has written in his 2007 book, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*, Naumburg and the Expressivists in the 1920s and 30s envisioned focusing on students' inner voices with the hope to "unleash creativity in all students" and "Teachers [who] could individually guide students with writing experiences that not only enhanced personality but also elucidated the content of the disciplines" (208). William Hughes Mearns, whose major works were published in the 1920s, was one such influential educator whose creative work focused on child-centered strategies for individual students and was centered on enhancing personality (208). His work, although not widely hailed at the time,

inspired Peter Elbow and Ken Macrorie, and later found its way into higher education creative writing classes, general instruction, and was a precursor to Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) classes.

Schools had become more of a social reform for growth and development. The method of “correlation” or “life adjustment,” was modeled to value coping skills needed for elevating the individual spirit and brought together the academic disciplines and was promoted by Ruth Mary Weeks. Weeks, who was initially influenced by Fred Newton Scott’s “transactional theory of composition,” which sought to show that composition was “a complex organic activity incapable of being analyzed on the atomistic industrial model or taught through drill and remediation,” was President of NCTE and part of the Functional Writing Program (FWP), (Russell 222, 199). The priority for the (FWP) was on “a progressive maturing of the young people in an important and complex aspect of their behavior” (262). But the program’s country wide eight-year experiment of correlation, which attempted to bring together the disciplines through writing while “unifying” students with “whole, undivided lives,” but was dropped at the insistence of parents and administrators alike because they felt that there was “so much talking” and that combining the disciplines resulted in corrupting them (209, 220). Instead, they preferred writing that was more of a set of isolated mechanical skills (218). Additionally, parents preferred knowledge-based tests as indicators of students’ measure, as Scantron testing came with the Post War Era (220, 241). As a result, correlation disbursed during the 1940s and the McCarthy Era.

Progressives were also resistant to the test form of evaluation because there was less reading, writing, and thinking occurring (Russell 220). Instead, John Dewey saw the student as an “active participant in the process of learning” (202). William Heard Kilpatrick, a follower of Dewey, attempted to enact the project method as a means to real world problem solving for learning in order to teach students “*how* to think” rather than “*what* to think,” but it never fully reached its potential (204). Although the overall attempt to balance students’ experiences with curricular tradition was never realized in secondary and higher education, elementary schools did embrace the Progressives’ interdisciplinary approach (223).

There were, however, models that popped up that welcomed Progressive ideology, such as Antioch University, where students wrote a reflective paper both freshman and senior year where their interests and goals were evaluated and where experiential learning was initiated with local businesses (Russell 225). Bennington College and Sarah Lawrence College also promoted project learning and development across disciplines was explored further (226). Additionally, Alexander Meiklejohn’s Experimental College, which was part of the University of Wisconsin, placed correlation as the central design in an attempt to develop the “enterprise of the human spirit” (227). The courses drew from classical Greek literature and the writing focused on working through contextualizing issues through journaling, notes, and other formats. The emphasis for writing was on “doing and learning, not merely a means of showing learning” (229). Moreover, the program was student-centered in that faculty members wrote detailed evaluations about students for parents and faculty (228).

Out of the communication emphasis in the 1940s came the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) organization. It was derived from scientific interests and Post War educational reform to increase language skills and the idea that “critical thinking” fosters “facility in language” (Russell 257). While CCCC still continues bring writing instructors together across the country annually today, most of the programs that included speech/English classes from the 1940s and 50s did not lead to the observation and promotion of writing, but continued to marginalize writing instruction and deteriorated until the 1970s when the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement was formed in an effort to centralize “curricular reform and faculty development” (275).

During the Postwar Era more institutions were established with more varied instruction, more white-collar workers, and specialized jobs which demanded elevated skills. Additionally, higher education increased the implementation of tests while decreasing essay writing requirements. Writing instruction was more needed but was less emphasized in curriculums. The focus for writing became the notion of more “discipline,” “basic issues,” and “rigorous drill” with the 1955 publication of Rudolph Flesch’s, *Why Johnny Can’t Read* (Russell 269).

However, there were programs formed at both Berkeley University and Colgate University that had adopted a more complex view of writing instruction which began to develop the connection between the disciplines (Russell 261). Strang Lawson, the English Department Chair at Colgate, hired Jonathan Kistler for assisting with its FWP (Functional Writing Program) Lab under the notion that “Writing is a process involving several stages” (262). Lawson wrote how “a

progress maturing of the young people is an important and complex aspect of their behavior” and made connections between what students were learning in college and in their life experiences (262). Thus, writing served as a “development” function rather than a “remedial” one and “as a form of social behavior” (262, 263). The striking component for the program was how the entire community came together to devise writing assignments so that students were clear as to what was expected of them because “Writing is everybody’s business” (263). While co-curricular aims didn’t last, they set the precedent for the future WAC twenty years later (263).

Berkeley’s program, The Prose Improvement Committee, had its initial beginning in 1947 where they began to investigate student writing and designed a course taught by TA’s that focused on teaching developmental writing. Their aim was “The guiding of the learning process as it is evidenced in writing” which they thought would add to the depth of quality for all members of the university (Russell 265). The purpose for writing at Berkeley, like Colgate, was also on channeling ideas and not on “a set of discrete mechanical skills” (265). Unfortunately, Berkeley’s program ended in the early 1960s, as did Colgate’s. The post WWII gains of educational reform and language instruction lost traction largely because “The greatest efforts came as the pressure for access increased” as a response to barriers (271). Thus, the disciplines set more boundaries and specialization, making writing less of a communal effort and less influential (270).

However, the Harvard Redbook which began in the 1950s was a core class that had components which were multi-disciplinary and made the case that

composition and individual tutoring should be implemented throughout all of the disciplines. There was an emphasis in these classes that the classical “great books” literature courses were stand-alone classes which bore no relation to historical or cultural context. While it was taught by composition teachers and graded by TA’s, what was not specified, though, was what type of writing would be implemented although it was agreed that the tutorial section was to focus on essay writing and analysis (Russell 253). The problem was that the costs and faculty scarcity were prohibitive, so the classes were primarily held for honors students who had the privilege of taking the classes.

In the 1960s and 70s, while essays were put back into the learning system for general college entrance, medical entrance, and GED degrees, the writing was geared more for composition skill assessment rather than for the content itself (Russell 240, 241). Writing became further limited for the general population of higher education students when the Harvard Sociologist Daniel Bell recommended dropping composition and instead making the entrance to college more grade oriented (255). He deflected the responsibility for composition development insisting it was a secondary education job (256). This was the time when technical writing was emerging as a legitimate field, despite how it was looked down upon in the 1950s and early 60s (249, 250). Further problematic with the boom in education and specialized higher graduate levels, was how the lack of emphasis on writing and research left many graduates to fend for themselves from the path from ABD to the PhD degree (242). Despite the absence of writing instruction, there were a

multiplicity of self-help graduate writing books to assist the specialized graduate students with writing in their disciplines (244).

During the 1960s period, the cognitive theorists, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotski became highly influential for how education was re-envisioned and made an impact with the connection between language and cognitive development (Russell 273). Piaget diagrammed the four stages of developmental learning (sensory motor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational) until a child becomes an adult and when children can apply abstract concepts. After a child reaches the final phase, Piaget claimed that learning was more about expanding learning rather than “changing how it’s learned or understood” (Healthline). Vygotsky, on the other hand, asserted that community is integral for creating meaning and socialization happens before development. The time frame when an individual can nearly accomplish a task alone with some assistance is known as The Zone of Proximal Development. This phase is when teachers and parents play a crucial role for creating opportunities that enable children to develop their learning. Two major distinctions between these psychologists were first, how language was considered critical for development for Vygotsky, whereas Piaget considered language only to serve the function for labeling objects. The second difference is that Vygotsky believed that cognitive development differs culturally while Piaget believed it was universal (Simple Psychology). It is important to note that Piaget and Vygotsky’s ideas about learning still play a vital role in shaping how education is taught in elementary schools. What can be drawn from their

theories for higher education is how expansion, language, and community are all essential for developing student writing.

Harvard psychologist Jerome S. Bruner introduced the idea of “spiral curriculum,” which referred to the “discovery method of learning” (Russell 246). His method had strains of child-centered progressive learning, but was designed to challenge a student’s experience with “more sophisticated and abstract” knowledge (247). In essence, Bruner combined student interests with the disciplines by using systematic “laboratory” style writing instruction to create a balance between them (247). Up until this point, there had been almost no research as to the “role” writing played in “acquiring knowledge” (247).

The political upheaval in the 1960s forced schools like CUNY to undertake open admissions in the early 1970s (Russell 274). With these new rules, what became obvious was the striking exclusionary practices of the dominant uses of languages (274). As David Russell observes, “Government and industry became directly involved in those social aspects of education that bore on language and culture” to avoid social decline and to maintain decorum (275).

While one third of higher education schools had either decimated or greatly reduced composition requirements, writing theorists, Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, Donald Graves, and James Moffett who were being groomed in the 1960s exploded on the intellectual front to influence the shape of curricular change in the 1970s (Russell 272, 273). They influenced WAC towards a democratic, student-centered community pedagogy in the classroom that was once seen in the 1930s (273). Peter Elbow specifically inspired the creative writing process by expanding thinking in



promoting freewriting. This technique stimulates the ideation phase where students write whatever comes to mind on a specific topic within a given time frame in order to generate ideas. Within the process, Elbow additionally intended for writers to examine what was happening while the actual writing was taking place. Elbow strived to counter the traditional teaching methods by encouraging individual processing to occur within the ideation phase.

Two seminal texts came out in 1975, Sir Allen Bullock's, *A Language for Life* and British writing educator, James Britton's *Development of Writing Abilities*, which changed the landscape for composition writing as he bridged the importance of writing development in relation with personal writing (Russell 275, 276). With higher expectations and more specialized work in industry, writing needed to excel but these theorists had a much more student-centered vision about how that instruction would be achieved. Britton was convinced that the way children gained literacy was how it should be taught, meaning, "The classroom, like the home, must have a climate of trust and shared contexts for purposeful communication" (277). Britton, who coined the term, WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum), made the argument that writing begins with speech, so the development of writing would be best fostered by nurturing students' "expressive and poetic" qualities and then move to the "workaday" or "transactional" forms of writing (278). His student-centered pedagogy was embraced by American theorists. America's first WAC was developed in the 1970s (282). Britton's influence spread to program offshoots of WAC such as BAWP (Bay Area Writing Project) in 1971 and NWP (National Writing Project) in 1977 (281).

Toby Fulwiler, who was a director of WAC, was highly influenced by Britton's work (Russell 278). In the late 1970s and 80s, Fulwiler set up the most well-known WAC program in the country at the University of Vermont to improve writing for a tech university where many of the faculty were involved (286). He borrowed Britton's concept of self-expression, student-centered pedagogy and the urgency of language importance. Some of the techniques he utilized included journal writing to "provoke class discussion," collaborative learning, or to include the social aspects of writing such as peer review and editing, and the redrafting process which meant that students were to make "provocative" revisions by choosing a different focus to emphasize (Fulwiler 3, 6). Fulwiler's writing stressed, "The writing process" and put an emphasis on "pre-writing," writing, and "conceptual revision" over grammatical correctness (287).

Teachers were still lost in how to improve student writing skills and needed more of a coherent guide for teaching writing. By the late 1970s, in her work, *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*, Mina Shaughnessy underscored the uphill battle as to how teaching composition wavered and was "still very much of a frontier" (4). However, in 1977, Janet Emig's influential work, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," highlighted why and how writing is an activity that is learned while it is practiced. This new understanding of how writing worked gave further consideration to the process of how learning is experienced.

One year later, Sondra Perl's landmark ethnographic study, "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers," documented how teaching writing

requires figuring out the central issue for each student. She found that the problem wasn't that students weren't following a set of complex revision tasks, but that their process was at a beginner's pace. This meant that students needed more practice and direction since they were unsure as to how to maneuver through the writing process. Perl's research findings were a reminder that each student is a unique individual with a different set of capabilities and varied writing backgrounds, and that their career choices sent them heading towards varying specialized professional discourse communities.

It wasn't until the 1980s when writing was re-examined as an important thread for general education. Nancy Sommers helped to detect the primary difference between how students and experienced writers view revisions when she wrote that experienced writers make changes throughout the “*whole*” of a text while moving in a “nonlinear” fashion (Wardle 585). Her claim uprooted Britton's model of “growth, conception, and incubation,” where he followed Vygotsky's theory as to how thought preceded language in a “linear” direction (577, 578). Because writing is “recursive,” Sommers stressed, students need to experience the revision process as it is the place where “discovery” for expression between speech and language occurs (586).

Despite all this revolutionary work that was happening in the 1970s and 80s, mainstream college educators were still using the *MacMillan Writer* handbook, and drilling students on grammar! Even Toby Fulwiler used journal writing to teach the more legit “narrative modes” of research; cause and effect papers, literature papers, etc. So instead of moving in the direction of authentic learning, writing discoveries

have led to aiding students with a more formulaic language for heightening fluidity and elevating student writing which could be easily inserted into student essays, as Gerald Graff and Cathy Berkenstein provide in their 1990s practical model, *They Say, I Say*. This blockbuster glossing method was a Band-Aid for countering general writing concerns.

While this model is a useful resource, generalized “fixing” does not transcend the broader issues at stake for cultivating learning and self-knowledge for one’s gradual process of writing to develop. Furthermore, on the other end of the spectrum, instructors are limited in helping students because they find themselves intermeshed in complicated schedules where they are faced with research obligations and serving multiple committees amidst their course loads or they serve as adjuncts who juggle teaching at varying schools. For example, Gregory Semenza, author of the 2005 text, *Graduate Study for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and a professor at the University of Connecticut, admits to spending approximately five minutes on each paper that he grades. How is it possible to provide solid, detailed quality feedback with so little time spent? It seems impossible, if not a wholly disservice to his students and countless other students whose teachers find themselves in this predicament. David Russell writes, “The temptation to devote time to one’s own writing at the expense of students’ writing has been present since the research ideal restructured institutional values in the 1880s” (233). The core problem is that writing has been primarily evaluative rather than pedagogical (234).

In her five-year social cognitive study of student writing observation and collaboration, Linda Flower discloses in her 1994 book, *The Construction of*

*Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing*, how interpretation is negotiated to create new meaning with the key idea that: “Reflection and self-awareness can be the basis for critical understanding of one’s own goals, assumptions, and strategies, and the motivation for growth and change” (76). Reflection itself is the process where time is spent thinking about a task and responding to it. Learning takes place because of the critical thinking that is involved throughout the time spent during the process. This makes learning intentional because thinking about what is being written allows new ideas to form which didn’t exist for the writer previously and this makes the writing a deliberately conscious choice.

Flower refers to the final process of writing as a “negotiation” that occurs through “reproduction and conversation” (55). The larger point being raised by Flower is for instructors to observe “(1) students’ interpretations (of tasks, feedback, of situations), (2) on sites of conflict and acts of negotiation, and (3) on insights of students’ own reflection” (297). But critical to consider here is how interpretation is what not only the rhetorician wrestles with but is also in how the instructor reflects on what is being observed. There is no “neutral” observation point.

English Education instructor Jason Wirtz’s proposes that instructor and student interaction should be a clear two-way communication where students are responsible for writing a reflection about their own work and what they would specifically like instructors to comment on. This type of interaction could offer insight for how an instructor responds because, as Wirtz says it is, “a direct and

effective means of promoting metacognition” (114). Shared self-reflection about one’s own work enables writers to assess their work and directs them towards rethinking their ideation phase of writing to move into the revision phase with more depth. This aim not only alleviates the burdens encountered by the countless instructors like Semenza, but it helps to build stronger, more collaborative (writing) efforts for individual writers and classroom writing communities on campus. Additionally, more low stakes, ungraded writing exercises can get the writing process started while taking the self-conscious worries and pressures about graded writing off, as the concept of “contract grading” created by Jane Danielewicz and Peter Elbow was designed to do.

### **Metacognition and Neuroscience**

Jason Wirtz, however, tries something different, and that is his metacognitive approach which is based on neuroscientific findings in his 2015 book, *The Write Mind for Every Classroom: How to Connect Brain Science and Writing Across the Disciplines*. His work primarily focuses on adapting the concept of brain plasticity in writing classrooms. Brain plasticity is the capability that the brain has to reform its own patterns. This is valuable for students for developing their self-awareness through mindful practices and can be geared towards writing for student introspection. For example, Wirtz, assigns the assessment of writing over to his students by having them respond to intrinsically motivated metacognitive questions about their writing, writing habits, and assessing it, such as “What do I want to learn about this topic? Do I prefer writing in the morning or evening? Do I like to listen to music or do I need silence? How do I feel about my writing? What’s not in

the writing that needs to be?” (39). Although Wirtz was prompted by his hypothesis about brain development, these are the very same questions that the humanist Toby Fulwiler had his students write about in their journals in the late 1980s. This line of questioning can further cement individual learning as it is being practiced because the brain changes while the writing takes place. Moreover, Wirtz not only offers countless writing exercises which are thought-provoking and creative, such as “Journey of the Imagination,” “Chain Stories,” “Pen Pals,” and “Scattergories,” but earmarks which specific ELA Common Core State Standards of learning apply to his cleverly designed exercises. Wirtz’s scientific line of inquiry threads together student-centered creative teaching ideas that stem from Margaret Naumburg, the Progressives, the Expressivists, and Peter Elbow.

There is a need for real thinking, learning, and writing and this occurs when the student takes an active role in learning, as all of these practitioners have shown and certainly the direction that Wirtz is heading in could be taken further. Since growth comes from the action of the writing, what still needs more attention is the essence behind the ideating stage and how the physical action of reflection impacts this. After all, what are students really learning if they are merely writing to please a prompt with a formulaic pattern that has always worked for them with little or no thought given? So many student papers are essentially first drafts that are cranked out the night before an assignment is due. In focusing solely on writing as a mechanical skill where a clear thesis and implanted nuanced directional language are emphasized, there is something missing in current composition circles and that is, that the most important parts of teaching writing is fostering the intentional

thinking behind it and initiating the reflection that follows it. “The evidence from brain science is clear: there is no learning without emotional engagement” writes Wirtz (location 150). Intentional thinking requires deliberate reflection which occurs throughout the process of writing.

### **Writing is Physical**

In building onto to what has already been theorized, what I am proposing is slightly different than what has been practiced before. I argue that Ashmore and Contrada’s scientific model of thought where they claim that there is an inextricable connection between one’s physical and psychological health should be applied to how teaching writing is done because writing is undeniably physical and stems from the critical ideation phase. That is because what is reproduced in writing assignments is the interpretation of a student’s physical embodiment which has previously internalized prior writing experiences, has some understanding of the discourse itself, and is experiencing current life circumstances. In other words, one’s physical experiences are attached to one’s intellectual ability to generate a response to a given prompt. Wirtz acknowledges the concept of physical environment when he recommends for instructors to encourage student writers to examine their writing environments to ensure that best practices for maximizing brain functioning are in place (39). Brain science demonstrates how there is an automaticity of actions for an activity from practicing that activity which is nonconscious. Additionally, the connection between emotion and intuitive responses that are also nonconscious are coordinated with intricate judgments (86). What this means is that habits that are practiced become ingrained.



Incidentally, Sondra Perl promotes similar concepts such in her 2004 book, *Felt Sense* where she addresses how to intuitively communicate ideas that one is not readily able to articulate by trusting bodily instincts. She draws on Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, meaning that students are guided by instructors to learn just beyond their ability for reaching a new goal, for her theory as to how drafts are conceived through process. Perl's application of the term, "Felt Sense" from the educator and author of *Focusing* and *Thinking at the Edge*, Eugene Gendlin, is for articulating the body's responses in connection with the mind, which Perl then applies to the writing process through a series of breath work, freewriting, and timed journal responses to a series of metacognitive questions. She writes how

felt sense is always there, within us. It is unifying, and yet, when we bring words to it, it can break apart, shift, unravel, and become something else... When writers are given a topic, the topic itself evokes a felt sense in them. This topic calls forth images, words, ideas, and vague fuzzy feelings that are anchored in the writer's body. What is elicited, then, is not solely, the product of a mind but of a mind alive in a living, sensing body (3)

Like Perl's work, connections between nonconscious can be made more conscious and concrete by implementing the wellness writing-based concepts I will share later in this chapter. The metacognition that writing requires is an action that stems from the process of writing itself. Wirtz explains the recursive process as writing to learn and learning to write (21). The growth that occurs happens over time. Thus,

to value intentional thinking and reflection would mean to include these in the assessment process. With self-awareness, motivation, and practice, the ideation phase of writing can open true growth through brain plasticity, or the reorganization of the brain. For example, authors such as Victor Villanueva (*Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*), Sherman Alexie (“Superman and Me”), and Amy Tan (“Mother Tongue”) all share their “Othered” experiences and how they became passionate about writing through telling their stories. What their unique voices have in common is why they chose to write. Their writing literally knocked down walls, as Alexie claims, like “Superman” and opened doors for them. But what makes their writing most special is how they express their stories. Their narratives are as much embodied physical responses as they are intellectual reflections of these responses that have been put into words. Their originality comes from the sense of self and the intentionality of ideation that enables these writers to uncover their sense of self which is as much a physical process as a mental one. They changed their experiences by reflecting on them and writing about them and this changed their thinking about their experiences and thus, transformed their brains.

### **Life Adjustment and Self-Knowledge**

Thus, essentially, what I am aiming for is to push the narrative of metacognition further by revaluing the notion of “life adjustment” through self-knowledge because in gaining self-awareness through writing, students are better able to understand their own writing process within the framework of their own identity development. It need not be an either/or scenario for teaching writing, but rather a thoughtfully constructed method where the focus is on the “whole student.”

The curricular problem as it stands, is that there is not enough being done to acclimate freshman into the academic life to the extent that they need. While writing programs have traditionally served the larger community in “fixing” writing, they need not feel overburdened with this task because it is really a matter of cultivating awareness and this is what writers essentially need and what instructors are already doing in many ways. With self-awareness comes self-respect, trust, and ownership of the process of writing. Metacognitive writing focuses on the ideation phase and low stakes writing work emphasizes social emotional learning and sets the foundation not only for backward design for the class to build onto, but it reinforces life habits for wellness and counters many of the issues that freshman students often experience. It builds onto what Toby Fulwiler, a creator in the implementation of WAC, in speaking about his 32 years of experience of teaching writing explains as, “Learning to write is the most direct way of learning to reflect; it is not the content, but the process of the liberal arts” (10).

### **Ideation**

Writing can’t be forced. Techniques can be learned, but there must be a willingness to learn them. Some students may not choose to grow and learn and would prefer shortcuts and patterns that can work for them. For actual learning to take place, it must be meaningful for the writer or it will simply be a mindless exercise to find sources and to figure out what the instructor wants to hear. The writing curriculum as it stands is a patchwork that does not generate new learning, other than a few savvy terms and directional cues, provided students are listening

and applying the techniques. Moreover, the complicated problem with “fixing” writing in a one semester course is that each discipline’s discourse is different. Students learn writing by practicing it, or automaticity (Wirtz 2). The writing itself does the teaching because writing is as much a physical process as it is a mental creative process where learning is experienced foremost during the initial ideation phase and through considerate reflection and revision. The ideation phase is interconnected to the physical experiences a person has gained from their past. The ideation phase offers the possibility for students to tear down their own walls that prevent them from writing and opens them up to real learning experiences. Thus, implementing specific unique writing exercises that connect students’ physical responses (both conscious and nonconscious) to their intellect and wellness by developing self-awareness will stimulate writers into active learning and out of passive habits, as many of the exercises in this chapter demonstrate. Then, the social experience where meaning is created not only by the creator, but also through the interaction the reader has with the text can take place.

### **The Science of the Body**

The body is reactive to how the mind processes life events on a cellular level in that the parts of the body all affect one another. Psychologists Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada describe the stimuli as “The social, behavioral, and biological processes that affect health are interdependent” (Ashmore vi). In fact, if stressful events are suppressed, these events cause even more significant physical harm to a body’s system. “Traumas – and especially those not disclosed to others - are linked to higher levels of illness,” claim Pennebaker and Keough in

their article, “Revealing, Organizing, and Reorganizing the Self in Response to Stress and Emotion” (Ashmore 101). If problems are left to fester long term, what happens is

Inhibitions shut down processing so that a person cannot assimilate the trauma into self-concept, whereas actively confronting traumas helps people to gain meaning from and ultimately assimilate the event so that it no longer violates their fundamental beliefs about the world and about the self...one is left with a primitive and unexamined view in which the self is something that is affected, things are done to the self, rather than by the self. Ultimately, one does not learn that “I” can influence and shape the world (Ashmore and Contrada 111, 112)

Traumas are built up over time and are even passed down and effect people generationally. The anxieties caused by the outcome of war are a prime example of this. Ashmore and Contrada highlight how, if stressful life circumstances are given the opportunity to unfold either through dialogue or in writing, the mind is able to release pent up anxiety and trauma about these events:

By communicating about trauma, people can confront the threatening event and make the past experience a part of an integrated and purposeful self- narrative, rather than an event that must be repressed. Thus, self-disclosure versus inhibition regarding stressful events can mediate the link between trauma and physical well-being (Ashmore 243)

This is significant to note because writing is a tool, not only for academic work, but for developing coping strategies and building resilience to stress and life-threatening moments instead of harboring old problems. Therefore, taking time to write and reflect about prior experiences gives students the control and the space they need to deconstruct past events, self-reflect, and gradually heal.

Ashmore and Contrada's research explores how to uncover the overall pattern of a person's health in saying that "We think self and identity related constructs can contribute to the understanding of causal processes that underlie physical disease as well as those instigated by its occurrence" (8). If a person is reactive to illness, then consciously exploring how that person thinks and altering those patterns could change their health. In other words, "quality of life" is affected by reactivity to illnesses because they argue that a more positive outlook yields a more positive result in terms of health and healing and in how health outcomes are composed (viii). Focusing on positive elements for writing, then, in a course specifically focused on exploring questions of personal health would offer insight into how the writing process could unfold in the classroom. Further questions for consideration that Ashmore and Contrada seek to understand are: "(1) Why is such a new approach necessary and desirable? (2) What are self and identity? (3) What is health and illness? (4) How are self and health connected?" (246). These questions are important because they help to address how the dialogue for writing classrooms can be shaped and evolve. Since a new approach is needed to connect the self in relation to wellness, it makes sense to foster how a person learns and focus writing so that identity development promotes positive attributes of self in relation to one's

environment. The development of this concept, in essence, channels the creation of ideal conditions for developing successful students because developing one's life purpose, bridging a "social network," of resources, and building a "social environment" contributes to one's perceived health and wellness (200, 201, 202).

Taking a step back to understand exactly how a person learns would help to further shape the process of development for a wellness writing classroom. Benedict Carey, science reporter for the New York Times and author of *How We Learn*, describes that learning happens while taking a break while working, changing learning locations, distributed learning (learning over time), self-interruption, mixing up learning rather than concentrating solely on one task, blocking the background noise through the power of forgetting, perception learning (seeing patterns), and relaxing one's brain during sleep (Carey). Andrew Smart, author of *Autopilot: The Art and Science of Doing Nothing* explains that relaxation is important because there are real health issues associated with overwork. Like Carey, Smart agrees that some noise is helpful for the self-organizing aspects of the brain to maintain normal activity (Smart location 1092). The brain's network does not function in a linear pattern because parts of the brain do not communicate with other parts. In describing this complex network, Smart compares the brain's system to that of an ant colony in that while ants work individually, they are not completely aware of the whole but are moving parts that are connected (location 83, 96). Thus, Smart argues that the neuroscience shows how resting one's brain in order to innovate, is "the only real path toward self-knowledge" and concludes that society rekindle "meaningful choice" in societal design (location 52, 1430).

Additionally, Smart warns how there are real health issues associated with overwork. These facets of how the brain work to support learning could certainly be applied to how a writing program is designed.

Since writing utilizes all the parts of the brain, warm up writing exercises can be crafted for students to learn more about themselves, what they are learning, and how they are learning it. The unique challenge is that every student is different and learns differently in their environments. Thus, maximizing students' own metacognitive writing reflection processes will help them to develop their wellness practices. Psychologists James W. Pennebaker and Kelli A. Keough claim that writing can help to reveal the hidden impacts that life has and in doing so, the self is able to release those painful moments by placing them on the outside rather than internally harboring them. Further, Richard D. Ashmore and Lee Jussim emphasize how the self is the primary source for his/her own health in saying, "Probably the most important aspect of the "I" for understanding health and illness is the concept of self-regulation" adding, "Second, the links of self to health are many and diverse: identity influences disease; self moderates paths to illness; self and identity mediate causal progression to sickness; health influences self-conception" (248, 254). This examination is especially crucial to consider in relation to the college students for whom this dissertation work is directed. The key here is to reconstruct a path for students to become self-aware of their identities and learning habits so that they can apply these concepts for optimal health.

Writing is unarguably an essential skill in college. But should writing about trauma or nurturing positive emotion be avoided when expectations for college



writing is primarily academic? The answer is no, if this means getting better grades, feeling better, and ultimately becoming more successful. There are consequences to every action, which means that trauma is ongoing and does resurface during especially stressful periods, such as with college life. Ashmore and Contrada express that “traits and roles are always embodied, that individuals vary considerably in how they attend to and evaluate their material self, and that physical self-perception influences other facets of a person's overall self-concept” (253). Thus, developing conscious adaptation in a safe space is crucial at this stage of a student’s development in order to “promote effective coping, enhance one’s sense of control, and reduce one’s stress” (198). Moreover, awakening the writer’s awareness will guide the students to write from their intrinsic sensibilities rather than from an externally motivated place where they are seeking rewards. This enables students to initially conceptualize assignments. Jason Wirtz writes,

Writers who develop without metacognitive awareness are unable to adapt and transfer their writing abilities into new contexts while mystifying and imbuing the writing process with undue superstition. While a few writers may be able to get away with such an unreflective approach to writing, the writing teacher charged with parsing the writing process into manageable parts for adolescent learners certainly cannot (110)

Thus, by learning about one’s process through personal narrative writing, relaxing one’s mind and deciding what is *really* important (knowing oneself), creativity can

enter into the frame by organizing one's "time, space and activity" to one's advantage (Csikszentmihalyi *Flow* 358).

### **Social Emotional Learning**

Since people are in a constant state of transition, they must, like fractals, learn to adapt. However, how well people "adapt" and "evolve" is a matter of chance and many choices over a period" (Henning and Cillers 8).

Developing resilience is a skill that is crucial for cultivation. In educational terms, social psychologists Kristel M. Gallagher and Shevaun L. Stocker refer to it as "academic buoyancy, meaning, "Students' ability to bounce-back from everyday academic challenges" (22). For instance, academic challenges include balancing workload and social life with time management skills. Many instructors assume that students can handle unfamiliar topics where they are asked to acquire new skills independently. Academic buoyancy means that students gain resilience and grow from these experiences rather than becoming overwhelmed or anxious. For example, when students are given feedback for their writing, many of them take it personally. Their identities can get wrapped up in the writing process to the point where they are unable to separate what is meant as a constructive note from criticism. Giving students the resources they need to build academic buoyancy will enable them to compartmentalize the feedback so that it is about the writing and not an attack on who they are. This would not only benefit academic challenges, but would serve long-term physical benefits, and overall quality of life. Gallagher and Stocker's social emotional writing exercises for supporting academic buoyancy are designed to uplift positive emotions, mindfulness, and coping

because the focus is on “self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills” and are designed to lower stress (8). For example, they include exercises such as the “Raisin Meditation” where students are asked to write a description of a raisin by using all the five senses (Gallagher and Stocker 14). The exercise, “Goal Visualization,” is designed to enable students to feel as though they can achieve their goals by asking students for ten minutes of time on three different days for them to identify a realistic goal in writing and write down a specific plan for how to achieve the goal. Some of the suggested prompts include, finishing homework, allowing an hour every week on the same day to achieve this goal, turning off the cellphone, and putting on comfortable clothes and good music. This exercise mirrors Albert Bandura’s point that motivation can be enhanced by visualizing, conceiving, and strategizing a plan before it is enacted. Motivation is where self-determination is set in the direction of making positive behavioral choices. By implementing a plan of action, students develop optimism for achieving success. Motivation is tied to optimism because it enables students to realize the projects before them. Gallagher and Stocker write how optimism is a crucial element for success and is associated with “health and happiness” and “lower rates of depression, a better ability to cope with stress, and more relationship satisfaction” (42). A few other mind and body writing exercises from Gallagher and Stocker’s manual include: “Mindful Breathing,” where breathing techniques are focused on to calm the body and reflective writing follows, “Best Possible Self,” where students are asked to freewrite about their ideal future selves, and “Random Acts of Kindness,” where students are asked to

perform five acts of kindness and write a reflection about their experience (14). All of the writing exercises are designed to bring about individual student's awareness for consciously making better choices that support the student's goals and in so doing, students are actively deconstructing old habits and replacing them with positive new ones. The writing involved offers the means for creating a lasting document for students to reflect about their actions and learn from them.

An emphasis on positive emotions through social emotional learning exercises as with developing character strengths, and trying out mindful self-perception are excellent starting points for college students to forge the relationship between their identity with the physiological and psychological components of their health in a wellness writing course. While Barbara L. Fredrickson writes that current evidence is needed to understand positive emotions and their lasting effects, what is known about positive emotions is that having a positive outlook coincides with good physiological health. Moreover, the timing in a person's life for setting the foundational patterns for health are of the essence. "With regard to behavioral pathways linking psychosocial factors to health and illness, it is noteworthy that many health-related behavior patterns emerge during adolescence, a life stage in which identity formation is crucial" (Ashmore and Jussim 9). Within the framework of James W. Pennebaker and Kelli A. Keough's study, they specifically note the significance that both speaking and writing about topics that evoke emotional responses has for contributing to health and well-being for coping. "The writing paradigm is especially powerful...in general, writing about emotional topics is associated with significant reductions in stress" (Ashmore and Contrada

104, 105). Additionally, James W. Pennebaker and Kelli A. Keough write how, “Behavioral changes have also been found. Students who write about emotional topics improve their grades in the months following the study” (105). What is important to note is how individual the outcome can be. Ashmore and Jussim stress that “At the same time that the larger culture shapes and challenges beliefs about self-illness and medical treatment, individual differences in those beliefs determine the process and outcome of interactions between the person and social institutions such as the health-care system” (12). Individual interpretation is largely influenced by environment.

### **Character Strengths and Writing Exercises**

Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, along with 55 other scientists designed a new area of research within the field of Positive Psychology depicting areas where people can enhance specific aspects of their identities. These strengths would be significant to develop for how writing classes can approach wellness. Character strengths refer to common values that recognize “what’s best about our personality” and extends across nations. Character strengths consist of “wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence” and within these broad domains are more detailed categories that make up the whole. The character strength of wisdom & knowledge signifies learning acquisition and encompasses the traits of curiosity, creativity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective. For example, these particular traits could be enhanced by writing about one thing that a person savors every day for a week, which is a journal exercise designed by Dr. Laurie Santos, who teaches “The Science of Well-Being”

at Yale University. Courage, which is part of the next set of traits, means acting in the face of “adversity.” Within the domain of courage are bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality. Love, kindness, and social intelligence fall under the domain of humanity, which is described as caring interactions and relationships between people. Justice is connected to group, community relations, and work and is broken into the categories of fairness, leadership, and teamwork. Within the temperance section are the traits of forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation and it means that a person is “managing habits and protect against excesses.” The last domain, transcendence, represents connecting with the “larger universe and providing meaning” and consists of the qualities, appreciation of beauty/excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality (Peterson and Seligman, VIA Institute on Character).

While most people can identify one third of their strengths, character strengths need further uncovering (Biswas-Diener 108). Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener’s psychological study, “The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success?” regarding character strength outcomes shows that,

Characteristics related to positive affect include confidence, optimism, and self-efficacy; likability and positive construals of others; sociability, activity, and energy; prosocial behavior immunity and physical well-being; effective coping with challenge and stress; and originality and flexibility. What these important attributes share is that

they all encourage active involvement with goal pursuits and with the environment (804)

Moreover, they can contribute to worker effectiveness and happiness because societal values and outlook effect how an individual interprets his/her success, which in turn, is how a person views his/her happiness level (803). Positive outlook and happy people tend to be more successful in life overall than unhappy people. What makes positive people more successful are the characteristics, mental health, and resources valued by others (803). Additionally, being aware of one's strengths "may help people not only survive but flourish following a crisis" (Peterson 156).

A more detailed look at character strengths shows how positive response to developing character strengths can support physiological changes for shaping identity. Identity is a lived experience and works on the body, but identity can be developed as a proactive choice rather than something that just happens to a person. Instead, identity can be crafted, much like inhabiting a new character for an acting role. This gives a person agency for choosing who they want to be. Developing character strengths is a way to identify one's own values and make decisions about how people view themselves and how they would like others to view them. People can work to change their outlook and this significantly effects the body's response. This happens from the inside out and from the outside in. All of the character strengths represent not only ideas, but physical actions that can be undertaken as conscious physical choices. Taking specific actions to work on character strengths, such as some of the suggested exercises in this dissertation, and writing about them deepens them. For example, the character strength, "zest" means that the way in

which a person does activities is with commitment and joy. The same activities can take place without enthusiasm and can still get done, but the physical effect for responding with zest is a different physiological outcome for the same actions that are taken. The outcome for how activities are carried out live in one's body on a daily basis and coincide with identity. Over time, self-efficacy is effected and this reflection physically manifests itself through health and prosperity.

There are multiple ways how each specific character strength can be initially enhanced within the classroom and can be creatively launched into more complex work. For example, Tayyab Rashid and Afroze Anjum created a useful online reference, "340 Ways to Use Your VIA Character Strengths," which expands on how to apply The VIA Institute's character strengths. VIA represents "virtues in action." Below each domain within their guide, Rashid and Anjum list specific actions one could do to enhance a particular character strength. For instance, "love of learning," which falls under the domain of "wisdom," means learning for "learning's sake" and is considered contemplative and resilient and is associated with being a good student, reading and absorbing material, introversion, and healthy aging (VIA). To enhance "love of learning," Rashid and Anjum recommend watching the movies, *Billy Elliot* and *A Beautiful Mind* and listening to the song, "On the Road to Find Out" by Cat Stevens and doing some of following activities:

1. Deliberately learn five new words, including their meaning and usage, at least twice a week,
2. Visit a new museum every month and write about new things learned,
3. Read a non-fiction book monthly on



a topic you find absorbing and engaging, 4. Read and research about a topic by visiting the library at least once a week. Write one page of pragmatic ideas which can advance that field and discuss them with someone, and 5. Converse with someone on a topic of mutual interest”

(2)

The love of learning category above could be further expanded by connecting students with their individual interests and having them carve out their own writing projects guided by the instructor. This allows for student autonomy and self-mastery, deepening intrinsic motivation, which is necessary for helping students to thrive throughout their lives (Seifert et al. 9). In addition to Rashid and Anjum’s resource for developing character strengths, the VIA Character Strengths’ site provides more detailed information for each domain and explains how these core virtues can be enhanced. Further, the author of *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, Christopher Peterson provides a general guide by suggesting that the strength a person would like to develop might be emphasized every day for a week in order for that particular strength to improve (159). In the next section, I have included a more detailed concept and definition for the terms creativity, judgement, and perspective and have tailored how some of these character strengths could be further developed for writing assignments.

### **Creativity**

The strength of creativity in relation to the domain of wisdom means thinking divergently, or by being able to come up with multiple solutions to a problem by naming the problem, figuring out the implications of the problem, and

implementing a solution by brainstorming and imagining a plethora of alternative ideas by looking at it from various angles (Csikszentmihalyi *Creativity* 60). In teaching a critical pedagogy for example, the process begins with problem posing by first identifying where the contradictions lie. Then divergent thinking for problem solving can be considered. Divergent thinking means that multiple solutions are considered through a non-linear creative thought process, such as concept mapping and brainstorming. Problem solving is especially useful for all aspects in one's work environment. Creative thinkers are generally more intrinsically motivated, and their creativity leads to self-confidence and self-knowledge and inspiring others because the person doing the creative actions has a passion that motivates others and the passion behind the actions is a motivating factor. Moreover, creativity is an important facet for finding one's life purpose. Examining past accomplishments and challenges and exploring multiple interests is how a person can discover their "flow," which means that the immersion of involvement in an activity is so great that nothing else interferes during the enjoyed encounter (*Flow* 4). Thus, by finding a way to express what is important, one can invent the medium for communication for their meaningful work (*Flow* 151). Developing wisdom in the form of creativity opens the possibility for internal transformation as well as conceptualizing society from a greater perspective.

A few ways to expand creativity are to create something artistic, such as composing a song or writing a story, inventing a solution to a current problem that a friend is having, developing one new idea in chosen field of study weekly, and redesigning one's living space (Rashid and Anjum 1). Many of these exercises can

be incorporated into arts-based research and community writing projects. For example, if a student were to compose a song or create a visual art piece, this could be a way for that student to connect and write about themes within a text that they are analyzing in a literature class in connection to their art. One of my FYW students created a visual montage tour of the graffiti art in New York and recorded original spoken word and music to go with it and related his art project to the marginality theme we were addressing in one of my classes. Creating a solution to a problem could be the beginning of an individually designed leadership project where the student undertakes a need in their community and researches and implements a solution. During Covid-19, for instance, I assigned a proposal paper where students had to include a related project. One of my students wanted to deliver groceries to the elderly in her community, but her family wouldn't allow it, so instead, she reached out to a support network in her community and was put into contact with several older adults with whom she spoke with on the phone to offer support and companionship. She then related this project back to the importance of community, which was one of the themes being addressed in the class. In doing this project, the student connected specifically to the social, emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and environmental wellness components.

### **Curiosity**

Another element of Peterson and Seligman's "virtue in action" insights is that creativity is enhanced by curiosity, which is also a trait listed under the domain of wisdom that increases knowledge and means being open to "exploring ideas, activities, and experiences" (VIA). Curiosity is associated with "life satisfaction,"

as well as “happiness, health, longevity, and positive social relationships” and is a part of flexible thinking for problem solving (VIA). Curiosity is also associated with motivation, as people who are curious are interested in learning more in order to improve themselves and this often leads to long-term activities (Seifert et al. 9). Several exercises that Rashid and Anjum offer for expanding curiosity can be applied to classroom writing such as trying new cultural foods, attempting new activities to challenge current thinking, exploring a new city, and exploring a natural environment (1). These activities could be further expanded into low-stakes writing exercises. For example, food is a literacy narrative that can be written about historically, politically, culturally, economically, and by using all of the senses descriptively. The beloved author and chef, Anthony Bourdain captivated his audiences with his worldly culinary adventures. His political episode which was filmed in Egypt was censored when he attempted to show what the majority of people eat every day because the regime there did not want people to see that what the average person was eating on a daily basis. Instead of showing the food, it was then described by Bourdain as a watery lentil soup. The regime had assumed that having Bourdain show it would expose the poverty and government’s lack of concern for their citizens. The regime failed to account for the power that words have when Bourdain described the food for his audience. Additionally, taking a field trip to a museum, park, or a historical site during a class could also open up curious new thought provoking avenues and inquiry based research topics for writing. These types of projects connect to all of the wellness components: emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, physical, vocational, and environmental.

### **Judgment**

Judgment, another virtue from Peterson and Seligman's character strengths, means to view things critically by analyzing all of the evidence and weigh in on it equally (VIA). Judgment is useful for making precise choices. This strength helps people to act fairly and avoid being manipulated, which is one signature point of emotional intelligence (Emotional Intelligent People). A few activities that Rashid and Anjum suggest for developing the strength of one's judgment are: listing reasons for why a bad choice that was made, taking the opposite opinion on an issue, or, for a future challenge, envisioning different outcomes and deciding which course of action to take (Rashid and Anjum 2). In plotting out classroom strategies, community building exercises could be designed such as incorporating a court room setting in the class and staging the event with a judge and jury for handling a controversial story. Opinion writing and mock briefs could be written from each person's perspective on the judgment being made. This type of project relates to the physical, social, intellectual, and environmental wellness categories.

### **Perspective**

Perspective is under the broad category of wisdom and means to look at something from a wider lens for gaining insights. It includes thinking about "life lessons," such as learning from one's mistakes and includes considering the important questions about the conduct and meaning of life. This strength is also connected to having a larger view for helping older people (VIA). Example exercises Rashid and Anjum provide are: "to include reading meaningful quotes and applying them in a step by step method for oneself, analyzing "a world event

from historical, cultural, and economical perspectives,” and exploring “endeavors which have a significant impact on the world” (3). All of these exercises could be a part of different disciplined classes to expand on writing topics and research material for broadening one’s knowledge base and worldview. These exercises could connect to any and all of the wellness components (emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational, and environmental) depending on the angle of the writing.

### **Values and Interests**

Overall, values, which are tied to how virtues are shaped, are attained through “reward and punishment, modeling, cognitive consistency, and self-examination work in tandem to explain how we acquire given values” writes Christopher Peterson, author of *A Primer in Positive Psychology* (185). Moreover, because the media shapes arguments, it plays a vital role in shaping values (189). But what is important is for people “to choose when and how to choose” their values (190). Peterson offers an example exercise to evaluate values. The exercise examines how choices are made by reflecting on a few recent purchasing decisions that were made in relation to “how much time, research, and worry went into each decision and how satisfied” a person is about the decisions the person made (190). The next step is to write about the purchases that a person plans to make in the near future. In doing so, one can consider a few factors, such as time spent in making that decision and make final purchases so that the decision is lasting and can be reflected on by identifying whether modest decisions have become too burdensome or not so that regrets are cut down. Then, the exercise asks the examiner to search for what

provides satisfaction rather than wishing for material items that one doesn't possess. The last part of the exercise is to "write down three good things about each purchase" that was made (190). In so doing, problematic decisions can become easier, empty consumerism can be avoided, and "style" can become a choice (190). Examining Peterson's strategy for understanding and defining values can also be viewed from a rhetorical situation standpoint by viewing the rhetorician's history, wellness, environmental factors, and exigence for undertaking the judgement, why the discourse is needed, who the audience is, and what it hopes to accomplish. By considering all the moving parts, values can be even more deeply negotiated and evaluated.

### **Positive Emotions and Interests**

Cultivating one's interests correlates with choosing one's values and sets the stage for tapping into positive emotions. A way to harness these emotions is through writing about interests. There are different types of activities performed during different parts of a person's daily life, but cataloguing activities when a person is enjoying their leisure time is most likely when a person will discover what they most enjoy doing (Peterson 199). Discovering delightful activities ties to the idea of flow for finding more meaning (*Flow* 46). In performing activities one enjoys, a person will be able to more readily identify places where they can excel and nurture these skills (Peterson 197). Christopher Peterson reiterates the broader point in saying, "A uniform curriculum serves an impossible goal. The school of the future should be student-centered – not in the sense that students run the show but in the sense that what a given student learns is tailored to her proclivities and

abilities” (214). Peterson explains that people who have well-developed interests tend to be more intrinsically motivated and curious. Additionally, leisure activities help with identity formation and have large psychological value beyond the classroom because many people do not have the opportunity to do what they enjoy for a living (203). However, “well-developed individual interests set the stage for expertise in any venue and certainly sustain people – in and out of school – over the many years it takes to become an expert” (203). The exercise template Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman provide asks readers to consider whether agreement is being made with the following statements:

I can’t do this \_\_\_\_\_ task now but I think I will be able to do it in the future.

I like to learn new things about \_\_\_\_\_.

I will do whatever it takes in order to do a \_\_\_\_\_ task correctly.

Learning about \_\_\_\_\_ is a great experience.

I care more about doing a thorough job at \_\_\_\_\_ than whether I receive a good grade.

Because personal interests lead you to create articulate structures of knowledge, you would probably agree with these statements about your favorite school subject:

Relative to the other things that I know, I know a lot about

\_\_\_\_\_.

Relative to the other things that I like, I like \_\_\_\_\_ a lot.



I spend as much of my time doing \_\_\_\_\_ as possible.

Working on \_\_\_\_\_ is hard work, but it never really feels like it.

I know that if I put my mind to it, I can figure out how to do \_\_\_\_\_ really well.

(203, 204)

After students complete the initial phase of answering Peterson's questions, these questions could be developed even further into longer written invention responses and intrinsically motivated projects for students. Developing purpose and meaning through self-observation of one's life skills would benefit students in a writing wellness course and add to overall positive affect because students are accessing their own abilities. Interest development is identified with resilience and "should result in greater physical and emotional well-being" (205). Thus, uncovering and developing one's skills could be done by looking at past accomplishments, movies and books that are interesting, through examining Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences as they apply (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily, personal, and social) and finally, observing these skills over a week and reflect on how they are being utilized (217, 218). It is important to continue to "nurture" interests through "specific instruction," even if interests are well formed (205).

### **Metacognitive Questioning**

Having students write metacognitive reflections about their find things enables writers to reassess their work and is a way to direct meaningful self-

learning (Wirtz 43). In connecting brain science to building a more efficient academic writing model, Jason Wirtz devises a method for his adolescent writers to consider their own thoughts about their writing. His writers are empowered through metacognition when Wirtz asks them to ask themselves questions such as,

How am I feeling about the writing? What are some ways to improve my reaction to my writing? Is there a central image or idea guiding the writing? What is it? What is my gut reaction to the writing? Am I enjoying the writing process? What are my favorite parts of the writing and what would improve my attitude? What's not in the writing yet that needs to be? Where does the writing seem to be going? (98)

In reflecting about writing by considering emotional stakes involved, this direction enables writers to honestly communicate with themselves about their writing. In doing this, students can relieve themselves of the emotional burdens they may be feeling by giving themselves permission to alleviate the overall mood of uncertainty, and instead replace it by conveying to themselves what they want to change within the writing itself, dissect it, and replace it by taking the physical action and specific steps for the process to make necessary changes for improving the writing.

### **Mindful Self-Perception**

Mindful self-perception means learning how personality can be enhanced. Mindful self-perception can be encouraged by focusing one's attention to look at new patterns of attention differently, to think new thoughts, and to have new feelings about what is being experienced (Csikszentmihalyi *Flow* 359). Neuro-

Linguistic Programming, meditation, and self-talk are forms of mindful self-perception. The distinction to be made here, however, is for students to examine their own mindfulness in their lives and choose what they optimally want for themselves by observing their own health behaviors and patterns and adapting more conscious choices. The instructor can support students through giving encouraging feedback of the student's writing about their actions.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which is the study of communication with the self and others, can literally change the brain's composition. NLP is related to the theory of neuroplasticity, which shows how thinking can bend based on circumstances. Norman Doidge writes, "The idea that the brain can change its own structure and function through thought and activity is, I believe, the most important alteration in our view of the brain since we first sketched out its basic anatomy and the works of its basic component, the neuron" in his book, *The Brain that Changes Itself* (Doidge location 193). One form of redirecting the behavior of the brain is by altering the physical movements of the body to correspond with a person's ideal, such as watching and modeling the way a role model speaks and writes. C.K. Murray clarifies how NLP could work in terms of wellness in saying that health is an idea. Thus, a person can "Achieve optimal physical and mental health...when we model a 'template' in NLP, we essentially adopt the behaviors, language, strategies and beliefs of that exemplar in order to replicate the behavioral outcome of success" (location 132, 118). By creating a specific ideal and following a role model's example, people can achieve healthier selves. In practicing an ideal, a person can become the ideal that they set out to emulate.

For the FYW classroom, the idea of mindful self-perception can be used in combination with Jason Wirtz’s writing exercise “adopting a new voice,” which “stimulates positive affect” and is a way of writing about characters and situations which are outside of the student and are imagined (96). “Practice in Front and With” is another exercise designed by Wirtz for trying out a new voice for writing. In the exercise, Wirtz describes using the acronym, RAFT to consider the role the student is playing, such as the president or a movie star, the audience for whom the writing is directed, the format or genre for the writing, and the topic (63). This exercise could be further adapted by having students choose their own writing voice to achieve desired academic effects. Modeling this exercise first, such as considering how a specific person like Ruth Bader Ginsburg might write an argument, would encourage the process forward. Students could then choose who they might like to model in their writing and have fun in the process. This clever exercise deepens the process of writing in a creative way. In terms of adapting NLP for a wellness writing classroom, an instructor could incorporate physical exercise as an outside activity that is written about in a student’s journal. Physical health improves higher level mental cognitive functioning. For example, brain imaging shows that running reduces stress, improves mood, and increases the ability to plan, problem solve, and implement divergent thinking (Martynoga). Additionally, mindful self-perception could be practiced through the use of multimodal pedagogical strategies for creating new writing voices in different mediums, as well as for promoting health by emulating healthy role models. Thus,

physiological actions would cultivate mindful results both physically and mentally for positively informing one's habitus.

Meditation is another form of creating space and for developing more focus, and enhances decision-making, mindfulness, compassion, and calmness by putting more attention on self-awareness. Meditation has been practiced since 1500 BCE. Medically, meditation has been shown to reduce anxiety, stress, depression, and pain. By continually practicing meditation, the conscious work is integrated into daily life for a more peaceful existence (Headspace). The practice of paying attention to breathing done in meditation calms the mind, which enables more concentrated focus to occur. For example, in simply taking five minutes to relax one's mind by starting with counting each breath one at a time up to ten can be the start for a meditation practice. Then more attention can be drawn towards the awareness of physical sensations and allowing outside sounds to fall away. This focused physical attention allows the mind space to relax and create from. It is a reset for the body and mind to start fresh.

Likewise, "self-talk" could help students with positively framing their writing process. Self-talk is the way in which a person communicates with herself and could be a private writing journal exercise. Self-talk alters the inner neural workings by offsetting a previous negative tracking pathway. Timothy Gallwey, author of *The Inner Game of Tennis* writes that focusing the mind's concentration on positive self-talk can narrow in on achieving one's goals and can help overcome "fears, doubts, and distractions of the mind" for playing the best game of tennis (Gallwey xv). The concepts put forth are not just for athletes, but render how

participants are able to meet challenges head on. Although it was written as a joke, Al Franken's movie, *Stuart Saves His Family* is a classic example of self-talk. In the movie, the character, Stuart Smalley repeatedly tells himself, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggonit, people like me," in order to convince himself he is worthy of achieving his dreams and helping others. Moreover, Shad Helmstetter claims that people who use "self-writing" techniques "has been one of the most enjoyable projects they (people) have ever embarked upon for themselves" (125). Writing down self-talk is a specific way to choose language to support one's self-talk.

In developing character strengths, effecting positive emotions through furthering interests, and adding specific exercises for mindful self-perception, students would be able to effectively target their own wellness because they will have connected their physiological and psychological health more deeply through reflective metacognitive identity writing. Thus, they would have learned about themselves as well as their learning as they grow emotionally. In turn, their resilience and emotional intelligence would become more developed, enabling them to become more authentic, and more powerfully explore their feelings and contemplate what to say before speaking, and meaningfully empathize, as well as helping to acknowledge others (Emotionally Intelligent People). In other words, with specific wellness pedagogy practices such as I've documented in this chapter, we can help students to rewire their brains in productive and deliberate ways.

### **Creative Memoir**

Storytelling between peers happens naturally before a class begins and the minute it ends, so why not channel this energy productively for initial writing in class? “All writing is story” (Wirtz 76). The personal genre has often been examined and celebrated by theorists like Peter Elbow but it saw its day in the 1970s and 80s and many scholars have moved on perhaps prematurely because it didn’t immediately seem to solve all the problems of student unpreparedness; faculty retrenchment; and budget cutting, but this form is perhaps the most useful in terms of its practical application for all types of occupations and speaking events and can open the door to giving the intimidated freshman autonomy, even if students initially publish their work with one draft. In following up narrative writing with metacognitive exercises that are suggested in this chapter, further reflection and active participation in the writing process will occur. Additionally, narrative writing is not as prescriptive and encourages reflection as the story is being written because students have invested personal meaning into their stories. Moreover, narrative is an excellent format for wellness. Much of a student’s identity is tied to their past accomplishments. Thus, many students will sail into the writing classroom confidently while others may feel overwhelmed. Writing about past achievements through creative memoir narrative format will open the door for positive emotions and will encourage a supportive environment, as well offer a sense of community and belonging.

A large part of wellness is being part of a community and social collaboration. Thus, belonging to a community is an essential part of developing

wellness, motivation, and life skills, as Roy F. Baumeister's research indicates: "belongingness appears to have multiple and strong effects on emotional patterns and cognitive processes" (1). The dynamics of belonging extend to all interpersonal and group relationships where a person participates.

Conversely, a lack of connection leads to adverse effects and illness. Belongingness is not only a want, but a need. People will even be willing to stay in harmful relationships or risk getting Covid-19 because of this fundamental need. People process future interrelationships differently, depending on the expected outcome. Concluding findings indicate that "many of the strongest emotions, both positive and negative, are linked to belongingness" (Baumeister 508). Conversely, loneliness negatively impacts the effect of the immune system's response (508). For example, Elizabeth Wardle, author of "Identity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces," provides the case study of Alan, an IT specialist within a humanities department, whom she characterizes as a tool in his workplace environment. The premise of Wardle's case study shows how a person's identity is tied to how they respond within any given environment because a worker must establish a mode of belonging within a workplace environment to achieve success. The case study Wardle highlights is the worker's inability to recognize and align with his counterparts to follow the protocol within his specific discourse community. As a result, he became isolated, lacking authority, and ultimately, fired from his position. Conversely, as Wardle points out, "engagement can be positive" and individuals can have some "control," even if they are newcomers (268, 269).



Community creates meaning through a sense of belonging and meaning drives motivation.

**Jesmyn Ward's Memoir, *Men We Reaped***

Jesmyn Ward's memoir *Men We Reaped* is perhaps one of the best examples to highlight this chapter's concluding findings with regard to Ward's quest to heal through her narrative writing, and in doing so, she displays the all of the major character strengths domains of humanity, wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, and transcendence. Ward is haunted by the trauma of the loss of five young Black men in her community dying from 2000-2004, including her brother, Joshua. The prologue in Ward's memoir shows her honesty, a subcategory of courage, as she grapples with the larger context of racism to understand her story when she writes, "It silenced me for a long time. To say that this is difficult is understatement; telling this story is the hardest thing I've ever done. But my ghosts were once people, and I cannot forget that" (7). Honesty is shown to deepen relationships, including the relationship one has with oneself because one is taking responsibility for his/her feelings. In sharing her story, she is revealing her emotions and relating to her audience authentically.

Ward reveals her appeal for justice, the character strength connected to group and community, when she says,

My hope that learning something about our lives and the lives of the people in my community will mean that when I get to the heart, when my marches forward through the past and backward from the present meet in the middle with my brother's death, I'll understand a bit better

why the epidemic happened, about how the history of racism and economic inequality and lapsed public and personal responsibility festered and turned sour and spread here. Hopefully, I'll understand why my brother died while I live, and why I've been saddled with this rotten fucking story (8)

Excess death occurs disproportionately within Black communities. The analogy that filmmaker David Adelman gives is that these deaths are the equivalent to one airplane filled with Black people falling out of the sky every day for a year (Adelman *In Sickness and in Wealth*). Ward recognizes this injustice at age nine when she speaks about the danger that men in her community face when she says, “trouble for the Black men of my family meant police. It was easier and harder to be male; men were given more freedom but threatened with less freedom” (99). Justice, which Ward points to throughout her memoir, is a moral value and is connected to fairness, leadership, and teamwork. Being able to balance fairness with empathy means to attempt to understand another person’s situation with an inclusive framework. *Men We Reaped* is a lesson for understanding how and why injustice has continued to be cyclical in her community. In expressing who these young people were who lost their lives, Ward demonstrates leadership, which is inspirational. Qualities pertaining to leadership are valuable, and are connected with “emotional stability, openness, good, social intelligence, and conscientiousness” and possess many key strengths, such as “zest, social intelligence, curiosity, creativity, prudence, honesty and self-regulation” (VIA). Ward notably exhibits teamwork, the last quality associated with justice because of

her “social trust” and “positive view of others.” In writing her memoir, Ward expresses all of the other qualities associated with teamwork which include: “idea creator, information gatherer, decision-maker, implementer, influencer, relationship manager, and energizer” (VIA).

Ward’s continual metacognitive reflections throughout *Men We Reaped* emphasize the domains of transcendence, connecting with the “larger universe and providing meaning” and humanity when she writes how her friend, C.J., also understood the tragedy that befalls Black men. Ward writes, “In the end, our lives are our deaths. Instinctually C.J. knew this. I have no words” (128). The subcategories for humanity consist of kindness, love, and social intelligence. Generosity and positive emotions are associated with being kind. Love “is one of the five strengths most associated with enhanced life satisfaction.” As a result of loving oneself and others, there is a benefit for “positive outcomes for the body and mind.” Social intelligence means sensing what others are feeling and being comfortable enough to observe and respond appropriately in varying situations. Additionally, Peterson and Seligman write how social intelligence leads to “better mental and physical health, work performance, and social relations” (VIA). Ward seems to know when to talk and when to listen. She agonizes over C.J.’s death. In this passage, she is replaying C.J.’s thoughts in her mind in saying that C.J. “spoke of dying young” and would say, “I ain’t long for this world” (121, 122). C.J.’s gruesome death of being stuck in a car on the railroad tracks after having been hit by a train where the signal failed to work leaves the author speechless. The loss is incomprehensible because it was negligible. Black Lives Matter. Here in this

instance in 2003, these lives were neglected amidst the fog in DeLisle, Mississippi because of the failure to keep the infrastructure working in this Black neighborhood. Ward knows that writing about C.J.'s suffering wouldn't bring him back, but it points out one more injustice that needs accountability. This truth reflects Ward's kindness, love, and social intelligence.

Ward expresses her wisdom, creativity, and spirituality when she invokes the Harriet Tubman, Tupac Shakur, and A.R. Ammons for the opening of her memoir. She borrows from Tubman's poem the words, "men we reaped," for the title of her memoir. She purposefully shares the irony of Tupac Shakur's poem to understand the unnaturally short clipped lives that reverberate throughout her community by including his line, "Why all my homies had to die before they got to grow." Tupac was murdered in his prime. The third poem by A.R. Ammons, much like a Shakespearean tragic ending, where he eloquently states, "It is life nearest to life which is life lost" is spiritual. Spirituality can include "meaning, purpose, life-calling, beliefs about the universe, the expression of virtue/goodness, and practices that connect with the transcendent." Spirituality means that "there is a dimension to life that is beyond human understanding" (VIA). These poems all share the quest for justice in demanding a stop to the systemic racial epidemic cycle of death that has been repeated for over 400 years throughout the history of the United States.

While there is much that is overshadowed with sadness, Ward deflects this emotion at times by showing humorous parts in her story with sensitivity by presenting the character strength of curiosity when she portrays sunny people like

Demond. She lifts them up with all their light, joy, and positivity when she documents their short journeys. Humor is a strength found in the category of transcendence and is defined as the ability to “recognize what is amusing in situations.” It can help to smooth over work relations and to see the bright side of a situation and can be a form of coping. Humorous people are “socially attractive to others” and tend to be “healthier” because there is “increased oxygenation of the blood” (VIA). Humor is also associated with motivation (Seifert et al. 9). This section highlights Demond, who asks Ward about her writing. He is one of the five men she writes about who was murdered because he agreed to testify against a drug dealer:

Demond sat at the table with Nerrisa and me and Charine, passed us drinks, asked me questions about what I did. “So what you doing up there?” “I’m trying to be a writer.” “What you want to write?” “Books about home. About the hood.” “She writing about real shit,” Charine said. “What you mean?” Demond asked. “They be selling drugs in the book,” Charine said. “For real?” Demond asked, took a swig of his beer. “Yeah,” I said. Laughed, drank a third of my bottle. “I told you she be writing about the hood,” Charine said. “You should write about my life,” Demond said. “I should, huh?” I laughed again. I heard this often at home. Most of the men in my life thought their stories, whether they were drug dealers or straight-laced, were worthy of being written about. Then, I laughed it off. Now, as I write these stories, I see truth in their claims. “It’d be a bestseller,” Demond said (69)

Throughout *Men We Reaped*, Ward lives the trauma of her community in her body through the consumption of drinking to dull the pain she and her friends repeatedly experience. Ward's physiology and psychology are interconnected and this is revealed through in what she says about her emotional and physical life.

One emotional example is when Ward describes her desire to be numb:

I sucked up the drink. I was thirsty and it was cold and lemony. I danced at the bar. Nerissa threw her wrist over my shoulder and danced with me...everything turned hazy then: Demond's face blurred, and I told my sister I didn't feel so good. We went to the bathroom together... I swayed and my throat burned. Something was wringing my insides out. I was wretched... I threw up...the world spun...All I wanted in the world was for it to go dark, to not exist. I wanted to black out again. Then I did (72-74)

The other clear physical example is how Ward experiences extreme migraines as she illustrates, "I'd had fun the night before, and figured the only reason I felt so weak and had almost fainted was because of the migraine medicine I was taking to treat the headaches I'd suffered from since I was fifteen" (119). These two quotes show the interconnected "idea that social, psychological, and physiological events reflect interacting systems is congruent with the biopsychosocial model's multilevel analysis of health and illness" (Ashmore and Jussim 10). Ward's body is reactive to her environment. She cannot consume the daily prejudices that she experiences in her community so she acquiesces in blocking it out through alcohol. She doesn't have the power of her words. Instead, she internalizes her pain as a victim of

extreme headaches which render her ill to the point of needing a prescription medication to cope with them and further numbing her emotions through alcohol consumption. But Ward is able to slightly separate these traumas by putting distance between those moments in the past which still live in her body through the physical action of descriptively writing about them.

Ward shows empathy, compassion, and social intelligence in naming her community's pain in writing about the lack of choice and inability to escape, which is reflected in the responses of many of the people she portrays. In doing so, she gives agency and hope for change, despite the hopelessness that is felt. Ward writes, "the culture that cornered us and told us were perpetually less, we distrusted each other...all of us hopeless" (169). She explains how they coped in saying, "I did not know that I'd seen some of what grown-ups who were poor and felt cornered and at their wits' end did to feel less like themselves for a time. I did not know this need would follow my generation to adulthood too" (98). Ward writes compassionately when she writes about Ronald's suicide in her effort to understand how lost he must have felt when she says, "He had to have thought about this, planned it, borrowed or traded or bought the gun and bullets for it, been home by himself at a certain time" (177).

Fortunately, Ward is able to stave off this cyclical behavior in her own life through her early escape into books, the chance of good fortune to receive a prestigious private school education, and with her undergraduate and graduate education, which furthers her career in becoming a writer. These critical life chances give her an outlet for meaning and solace. Ward's reflective narrative is

her introspective journey that expresses the damaging conditions and circumstances she experiences throughout the novel. At times, Ward shows the intoxicating fun of being young and with those she loves where it represents communal escape and social wellness. She says, “Call everybody,” I said.” “We’re going to New Orleans.” We left around 8:00 or 9:00p.m. in a caravan, at least fifteen of us piled into a Suburban. ... We spent the night getting drunker and drunker, walking, eyeing the doors of strip clubs that only a few of us were old enough to enter... It was 8:00 A.M. we drank. We got high” (Ward 119). Ward’s written reflection of these experiences gives her the perspective to recognize the power that community has, even if the actions and events that take place cause self-harm.

Ward’s self-awareness and wisdom works in correlation with her action to write courageously when she says, “Without my mother’s legacy, I would never have been able to look at this history of loss, this future where I will surely lose more, and write the narrative that remembers, write the narrative that says, “*Hello. We are here. Listen*” (250). This line also shows how transcendence and hope for healing is possible amidst loss. Despite her parents’ permanent separation, Ward’s upbringing is rooted because her mother constantly fights for the very best for her children. This fight demonstrates how having a stronger foundation at an early age supports a child later in life (Adelman *In Sickness and in Wealth*). She does not suffer the pain that comes from manual labor like her mother for the continuation of her adult life, though, nor does she experience child-rearing at an early age as do her sister, mother, and grandmother. Instead, the combination of the external events and the internal reflection about them are processed positively through her



writing and this helps to keep her health intact. Ward connects meaning and perseverance within the framework of her experience in saying how, “He (Joshua) taught me love is stronger than death” (232). Ward’s metacognition in recognizing her own journey and how far she has come bares her vulnerabilities, while highlighting her strengths and positive reflectiveness. Pennebaker and Keough reinforce the importance of narrative when they write, “We believe that narration (e.g., Pennebaker and Keough, this book, chapter 5) and other mental operations such as daydreams allow one to imagine and test how the self can be preserved and changed” (Ashmore and Contrada 199). In making the choice to write *Men We Reaped*, Ward is transformed. Her memoir is a testament to memorializing her community while ripping apart and exposing systemic racism for the ongoing exploitation and trauma that it causes. Ward writes, “My entire community suffered from a lack of trust: we didn’t trust society to provide the basics of a good education, safety, access to good jobs, fairness in the justice system” (169).

At the end of *Men We Reaped*, Ward’s experience culminates in a new meaningful perception of her experience in saying,

But as an adult, I see my mother’s legacy anew. I see how all the burdens she bore, the burdens of her history and identity, enabled her to manifest her greatest gifts...And my mother’s example teaches me other things: This is how a transplanted people survived a holocaust and slavery. This is how Black people in the South organized to vote under the shadow of terrorism and the noose. This is how human beings sleep and wake and fight and survive. In the end this is how a mother teaches

her daughter to have courage, to have strength, to be resilient, to open her eyes to what is, and to make something of it (250, 251)

Ward's reflection spotlights attention on humanity's resilience and the ability to heal through writing. It also underscores Kelli A. Keough and James W. Pennebaker's emphasis as to how the narrative format can reduce stress from trauma because it allows the writer to have a sense of control. Through writing, Ward is able to process her experience and give the people in her memoir a voice. Ward's mindful writing bridges her experience to greatly improve her quality of life. Moreover, by evoking generational traumas faced in the South, Ward also connects with the larger community and R.F. Baumeister's notion of belonging which strengthens the immune system and fosters engagement. Ward becomes more self-aware through her writing as she connects more deeply to her environment and her community. In turn, Ward's identity becomes more defined. She clearly identifies and articulates her values and is the driver for how she would like others to perceive her experience in using her rhetoric to critically question systemic racism. Jesmyn Ward's voice is an important one that others can celebrate and share collectively both in commiseration and for the hope of taking positive action for the people she represents and the community she portrays.

### **Identity and Health**

In highlighting Jesmyn Ward's memoir *Men We Reaped*, this chapter shows the significance of how one's identity and health correlates to one's physiology and has provided writing strategies for becoming more self-aware through developing character strengths, harnessing positive emotions through social emotional learning

and finding interests, and structuring mindful self-perception exercises. Ward articulates her traumatic life through the physical connections she has in connection with ideating and reflecting on her communities' loss in her compelling memoir. Writing such as Ward's shows how powerful, authentic, and useful reading and writing creative memoir can be in the classroom for motivation and discovering one's voice.

An individual's environment and social determinants are core factors in assessing one's health because these determinants are absorbed into the body and remain there. Thus, situating a positive central creative writing environment for students to cope and adapt with outside stressors will form and promote healthy behaviors and reduce anxiety. In doing so, students can gain control of their understanding of these stressors (Ashmore and Jussim 198). Health can be navigated in classrooms to minimize marginalization and deepen the positive effects of wellness since "Economic policy is health policy and when we improve economic circumstances and narrow the economic gap, we improve the health" (David Williams, sociologist at Harvard School of Public Health, *In Sickness and in Wealth*, David Adelman). This sobering impactful point by Ward considers the alternative abyss to wellness intervention, when she writes,

Racism, poverty, and violence are the primary factors that encourage depression in Black men, and I guess that this is true for Black women as well...Not treating these mental disorders costs Black men and women dearly, because when mental disorders aren't treated, Black men are more vulnerable to incarceration, homelessness, substance

abuse, homicide, and suicide, and all of these, of course, affect not just the Black men who suffer from them but their families and the glue that holds the community together as well (176)

These outcomes are not options for our students. Uprooting why students are unwell will take considerable focus on why this is occurring in the first place and implementing large structural changes. The start for change can begin with wellness writing to heal, build community, improve mortality rates, and increase overall life satisfaction. Wellness writing takes work and emotional investment, but opens the door for taking the time for self-care which will serve students long after they have graduated. What really matters is having a creative and fulfilling life, and this comes from inspiring health for the cultivation of self-knowledge for unique voices to express meaningful ideas (Csikszentmihalyi *Flow 2*).

The personal narrative is a valuable writing method for connecting the self to the larger wellness curriculum for healing and for developing writing. Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada's scientific findings depicting how the body and mind are connected on a cellular level solidify the justification that a new approach to writing is necessary and desirable because health self-assessment and improvement creates a higher functioning self. An identity that is more self-aware is an identity that is more conscious for framing the writing process itself. If it is a truism that one's physical and mental well-being is interconnected and both require nurturing for growth and development, then it is also true that the groundwork for the mind and body connection must also be made for students to reach their full potential for their writing process. Strong writing requires metacognitive

questioning and behavioral adjustments, and wellness writing is a training ground for this. Situating meaningful writing motivates a student's individual investment in ideation development and reflection for growth.

### **Summary**

By situating wellness writing within the architectural framework of the 20<sup>th</sup> century writing discipline in Chapter Two, I have investigated how exploring creative memoir writing is a way to heal the mind and body. By illustrating that identity is both physiological and psychological, I have shown that feeling good physically impacts greater mental capacity for overall wellness, and conversely, psychological outlook impacts greater physiological health. Thus, I conclude by recommending the expansion for positive workshop atmosphere models where key strategies directed towards building character strengths, positive emotions, and mindful self-perception could be implemented for focusing student attention, increasing confidence and self-awareness, developing productive writing, and gaining improved physiological and psychological well-being. Chapter Three will build on identity and creative memoir ideas by emphasizing how art, arts-based research projects, and problem posing can elevate life domains positively by highlighting Jimmy Santiago Baca's *A Place to Stand*.

CHAPTER 3: THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENT AND ARTS-BASED RESEARCH: BACA'S MEMOIR, *A PLACE TO STAND*

In Chapter Two I argued that *wellness* should perhaps be the central topic for 21st century college composition and I offered Jemyn Ward's *Men We Reaped* as an example of how students might use college writing to liberate themselves and grow and as people. In this chapter I do a close reading of Jimmy Santiago Baca's literacy narrative, *A Place to Stand*, and visual artist Beth Campbell's drawing, "My Potential Future," to illustrate the value of an arts-based pedagogy, which can steer students towards reshaping individual outlooks in several domains of their lives as proposed by the wellness theorists, Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols.

Baca's memoir exemplifies both the negative consequences of toxic environs, as well as vivid illustrations of some pathways out. Baca was able to transcend childhood abandonment and racial discrimination through his determination to learn and reshape his life in every aspect with intelligence, humor, and poetry. Despite his longing for community and being among friends he thought he could trust, he is set up and is wrongly accused in a drug deal. He serves five years in Florence, a maximum security prison in Arizona. Baca says, "Life in prison had killed a part of me" (235). Throughout this ordeal, he has to choose alliances to survive and endures prejudice and unfair treatment. Literacy, art, and connection to others who are positive literally rescues Baca.

I view Baca's memoir through the lens of Jamner and Stokols' work on preventative behavior and reducing toxicity in the "life domains" of home, social settings, commute, and education. Life domains refer to environmental places where people spend their time, the activities that take place, and the social circles involved,

such as family, social settings, commute, and education. A comprehensive look considers crucial life domains in specific time periods and one's sociocultural relations, and resources for a clearer assessment of that person's overall health and well-being.

### **Art as a Means of Communication**

In coupling environmental impact with strategic arts-based research instruction, students can expand individual interests in a creative way that parallels the growth in Baca's memoir. Arts-Based Research is a cross-disciplinary art practice that embodies and expands ideas in non-traditional methods to "give voice to that which cannot be communicated or completely known through words or logic" (Leavy 68). As I will show in Margaret Naumburg's work in Chapter Four, art opens doors to healing and for envisioning creative solutions to larger problems. The act of creation/creating something is fundamental towards developing ownership and deepening one's ever-growing identity and sense of self. Countless artistic connections can be made for practical use in the FYW classroom through combining music, dance, visual design, narrative, and other forms of arts-based research. One such model for generating conscious actions is seen through Beth Campbell's art work, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances*," where she sketches the "what if" scenario of choices to bifurcate out to multiple possibilities so that the entire framework of her design is representative of cause and multiple effects that could occur from one single event. As artists like Beth Campbell have shown, Baca's memoir credits art as part of his educational opportunity, an insight often missed when the range of wellness is discussed, and

this can foster the best education. Baca's *A Place to Stand* is a memoir about being inspired by art and is an inspiration in itself.

By reading Baca's memoir as an example of positive reactivity in the face of extreme illness, what is revealed is how art and hope can be re-imagined. Like Baca, students can develop art to open perspective, deepen identity, and improve health. Thus, the embodiment of positive holistic growth through art is a method for wellness to thrive.

### **Situating the Problem**

I have heard countless stories concerning anxiety issues from students. I discovered the pattern was largely complicated because students felt ill equipped to keep up with the demands placed on them in college. I wanted to know how and why the pressures of the world were escalating so much that people who were seemingly together were falling apart and what could be done about it. My students' continual struggles to juggle life and college pointed to deeper issues that needed uncovering and addressing. One of these students was shunned by his family for being blind because they viewed his blindness as an uncontrollable human flaw which meant that he was "less than." I had another student who narrowly escaped a drunken car ride with her alcoholic father. Many of my students relayed living between borders and being treated as though they were dumb by their teachers and peers because they couldn't speak or write English and have since lived with that stigma. Additionally, students are now working longer hours while they attend school full-time and this has caused attendance issues, inability to hand in assignments on time, and possibly not completing a course. I found these



circumstances problematic and thought about teaching methods that might work better than conventional academic “training.”

One reason offered by Daniel Lerner and Dr. Alan Schlecter, the professors of NYU’s most popular elective, “The Science of Happiness,” is that the seeds for illness are caused from becoming overwhelmed at juggling life’s newfound responsibilities and the pressures of academia all at once. As Lerner and Schlecter explain in *UThrive*, “Happiness, friendship, and doing something you love” are part of what makes us thrive, so identifying and building in these areas develops “well-being” (12). What is essential to note here is that by developing the whole student, such as with exploration of art and wellness classwork, not only do student retention rates go up, but whole communities are lifted. In *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*, James S. Catterall proves how students benefit from experiencing the arts by providing data on their life and work after having graduated from college. As a result, the measures in this study show how these students are more motivated and engaged, have higher achievement levels, and have actively participated more as volunteers and in the political arena (Catterall 4). Catterall writes that students “were more determined to get ahead and saw education as a path to this outcome. Moreover, they believed that they could succeed” (71). In contrast, if students feel undervalued, or the work is uninteresting, or they feel overwhelmed, they lose interest. By making readings, such as Baca’s memoir, and other coursework more relevant to students’ health and immediate interests, students will be more motivated and their identities will be validated in a positive way, which will make them healthier.

### **Health, Wellness, Life Domains, Prevention and Positive Thinking**

Examining health is more than just the construction of social, behavioral, organ, cellular, and molecular formation. Health also refers to environmental influences (Jamner 141). Moreover, health is a systemic race, class, and gender issue. Poorer communities have less access to quality health (13). In order to counter health related issues, it is important to consider what wellness means. Wellness consists of one's emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational, and environmental health (National Wellness Institute). Authors of *Promoting Human Wellness: New Frontiers for Research, Practice, and Policy*, and editors, Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols demonstrate how targeting preventative care towards reshaping individual outlooks and actions pinpoints the root of health-related issues and well-being (138). The means towards their suggested prevention is to "Reduce toxicity in physical settings" and build attention towards "Life domains" in order to change current conditions as they exist (138, 141). Thus, it is crucial to analyze the varying specific factors in a person's environment that contributes to his/her behavior for preventative measures to take place (78).

Research is now available for more people to learn, but social class leads to poorer health (Jamner 84). Companies specifically target low-income people for pushing unhealthy products like cigarettes and junk food (43). Lack of education, lack of affordability, lack of accessibility, and lack of accountability are ways of keeping people down rather than uplifting them, explain Jamner and Stokols (44). Moreover, they claim that, "We live in an era in which the dominant causes of

morbidity and mortality are strongly linked to human behavior at the individual, community, and government levels” (24). Therefore, these researchers posit that “changing the social and cultural environments in which people live” can help influence “individual knowledge and attitudes” by addressing these problems (182).

On the upside, there is a correlation between thinking positively, feeling good, and having good health as chapter two details. Psychology researchers Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada connect the relevance of psychological outlook in terms of how it impacts physiological results (viii). A person’s outlook matches his or her response towards illness and healing. This means that if a person has a negative outlook, he or she is more prone towards greater illness (Ashmore viii). The premise of the studies in Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada’s book, *Self, Social Identity, and Physical Health: Interdisciplinary Explorations* is focused on how the self can steer the course of health in saying, “We think self and identity related constructs can contribute to the understanding of causal processes that underlie physical disease as well as those instigated by its occurrence” (viii).

### **How to Approach Self-Care through Literary Analysis of *A Place to Stand***

In consideration of Ashmore and Contrada’s research that makes the connection between identity construction and health consequences, I was searching for a way to apply writing practices for my students to explore their voices in a healthier, more authentically grounded way to develop themselves. Since there is a direct link between wellness and creativity, art is a viable means to redirect thinking outside the box for this overhaul. Art allows for exploring literature in new ways and could be a vehicle for sparking creativity derived from students’ unique

interests. Literary analysis of Baca's memoir opened the door for art-based research practices to emerge. In my course, students viewed their own life domains and choices from the examination of Baca's life. They created their own "future potentials" map art designs. Moreover, they defined their likes and dislikes, their interests, and things in their environment they can and cannot control. Additionally, by applying some of the methods from Chapter Two, such as viewing Baca's strengths as well as viewing their own strengths and considering coping methods to handle stressful situations, another angle for implementing self-care can evolve in relation to the literary study of Baca's work. The projected outcome could result in preventative care, better overall health, higher mortality, better and more fulfilling jobs, increased positivity and happiness, higher student retention rates, stronger economy, and more racial equity.

I redesigned my FYW classes as safe spaces to help students connect with their identities through writing because it helps them to negotiate the challenges they are faced with in relation to their health. In doing this, I found that students were more motivated to learn since the work was tapping into themselves for issues they were concerned about. The process was largely discovery based in nature through the analysis of the texts read in class and in the application of art and wellness practices. As a primary literary example, my students and I explored the riveting memoir, *A Place to Stand* by Jimmy Santiago-Baca as a soul building Launchpad. Baca was able to transcend impossible racial discrimination through his determination to learn and reshape his life in every aspect with intelligence, humor, and poetry. By viewing Baca's memoir in terms of positive reactivity in

the face of extreme illness, what is revealed is how students can re-imagine art and hope through Baca's perspective and how, because identity and health are interconnected, students can connect on a deeper level with identity.

Baca's story is a surprising literacy narrative that shares raw emotions of a person who is marginalized, abandoned, and treated unjustly throughout his childhood. Because he can fight and does so while he is in jail, he spends much of his sentence in solitary confinement, where he relives his past memories and recreates his future through his determination to become literate in his rich imaginative artistic expression. Baca writes, "I can't describe how words electrified me. I could smell and taste and see their images vividly. I found myself waking up at 4 A.M. to reread a word or copy a definition" (185).

### **Overview: Analyzing Baca's Life Domains**

#### **Home Life Domain**

As a child, Baca was unable to avoid toxicity. Baca's home domain, was completely unsafe and unstable. There were three strikes against Baca's home life which were poverty, addiction, and racial discrimination. Towards the beginning of the memoir Baca explains how part of his disconnection developed when he writes, "My father always wore a pained expression and kept his head down, as if he couldn't shake what was bothering him. He snapped irritably at the slightest infraction of his rules and argued continuously with Mother. He drank every day and she sank deeper into sadness and anger" (7). Although Baca had to form his identity alone, he was influenced by the memories of his role model grandfather, witnessing addiction and experiencing neglect from his father, being unwanted and

abandoned by his mother, and being separated from his siblings. Baca's final abandonment comes when he is never told his "mother had eloped to San Francisco with Richard, fleeing into a white world as 'Sheila,' where she could deny her past, hide her identity, and lie about her cultural heritage" (17). His identity was continually stripped from him. Baca says, "except for my immediate family, I had loved [his grandfather] the most" (18).

Baca was stamped with the message inferiority because of his brown skin translated to unworthiness. He was denied and abandoned because of this racialized stigma. How could he possibly form a healthy self-image in the face of constant denial and neglect? Despite the odds against him, Baca writes that,

Language gave me a way to keep the chaos of prison at bay and prevent it from devouring me; it was a resource that allowed me to confront and understand my past, even to wring from it some compelling truths, and it opened the way toward a future that was based not on fear or bitterness or apathy but on compassionate involvement and a belief that I belonged (5)

Seeing his father in prison at an early age foreshadowed his own ghostly apparition for his future solitary confined prison home would be in a few years' time. Home meant trauma and separation. Home meant confusion. Home meant he had to figure things out alone. Home meant denial of parole and being cheated out of opportunities and being treated unfairly because there were no rights in prison. Home meant that his identity was flawed because of his skin color. Racist beliefs shaped the narrative of failure for his family and his Mexican American community.

Despite his mother's ethnic cover up, Baca, however, refused to deny his roots when he writes, "I'd rather live on the streets and keep my loyalty, my memories and stories, than take on the gringo's way of living, which tried to make me forget where I came from, and sometimes even put down my culture and ridiculed my grandparents as lazy foreigners" (29). The alienated sentiment that Baca expresses for staying connected to his family's foundation is deeply felt by many non-traditional, poor, and minority students across college campuses who don't understand how college might "work" for them.

Baca's ties to family were thwarted. As a child, he was virtually powerless. He was shuffled to his grandparents' house until his grandfather passed away. Then he was shuffled to his alcoholic father's house and then into the juvenile system. His identity was crudely shaped by having to stand up to bullies at an early age. He was an outcast in school and did not understand much of what was being taught. He wanted to be with his brother, but they were separated. Baca writes, "My brother and I were alone in the world. I was fifteen and he was sixteen and we were accountable to no one" (35). Later, when Baca saw a photograph of himself in prison, he reflects,

I hardly recognized myself. I was almost twenty-five years old, and the three-plus years I had done in prison showed on my features – I had an impenetrable indifference, an impudent disdain. My brown eyes were antagonistic, my stance confrontational. I couldn't send it to anyone – it was too disturbing. You could see the anger in my face. But it would serve as a reminder to me to fight against what prison was doing (201)

Baca lacked human relations. No one was there to support or encourage him. Community was largely absent for Baca until it is reintroduced in prison.

To reduce home toxicity and loss, Baca fought for his rights physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. He fought off bullies. He won friends by fighting. He attracted his girlfriend because he was admired for his fighting. He defended himself in prison by fighting. But he changed his physical fighting for mental fighting. He fought to earn his right to a GED in prison. This right was denied, and yet, Baca was still able to teach himself how to read. He made connections with others. He explored possibilities for his writing. He created his own new identity from his memories because he felt everything deeply. He sought peace from his family and with his father's death. He held onto his roots in saying, "I may have been a criminal in society's eyes, but privately, to honor my father's memory, I vowed never to let them break me to honor his memory, I would never let them take my pride from me, never give them the pleasure of seeing me beg for mercy" (Baca 234). He came to recognize the multigenerational oppression that bound he and his ancestors together, but consciously chose to honor his cultural roots through writing as a kind of healing. He taught his children a different worldview than he was taught that signified being proud of their roots.

Throughout the memoir, Baca's identity transformed from exerting physical anger to expressing his physical experiences through writing. His physicality became his love for learning. He was no longer fighting others, but was inventively wrestling with pen, paper, and art. He adjusted from the negative toxicity of loss and home to the positive of the spirit within. Baca's connection to self, hence



home, was in prison when realized how his identity and health were connected through writing. He writes, “I too was flourishing, my body physically affected by my words” (Baca 239). Baca goes on, “Language was opening me up in ways I couldn't explain and I assumed it was part of the apprenticeship of a poet” (239). After getting out of prison, Baca was able to reconnect and forgive his mother and he was also able to reconnect with his brother. However, he tragically loses both of them. His mother was murdered by her husband and his brother got clean, but reverted back to drinking and was murdered. But at the end of the novel, Baca was able to see past his parents’ wrongs and was able to “forgive them [his parents] for what they had done or had not done. I forgave myself for all my mistakes and for all I had done to hurt others. I forgave the world for how it had treated us” (264). His home domain, identity grew from love.

Baca provides an exemplary look at positive psychology because he reversed virtually every negative situation he experienced with a positive choice. Baca writes,

I thought about how my life had these blank spaces, as if I were blindfolded and spun around in the dark, led on by a need to discover something to anchor me. Each time the blindfold was drawn away I found myself in new circumstances, a new place, drawn there not so much by any plan or disciplined effort as by an unconscious faith that fate would place me where I belonged, where things would go right (45)

Martin Seligman, the “father of positive psychology,” explains how Positive Psychology is made up of creating positive relationships, developing meaning,

engagement, experiencing positive emotions, and having accomplishments (12). Solitary confinement was hell for Baca. Ghosts in his memory were a constant reminder of the betrayals he experienced. They haunted and tortured him. Any moment in his life could have resulted in death. But Baca slowly learned to read. He learned to finally value himself. One shining moment of surprise was when Baca published his first poem and connected to his community by buying his cellblock ice cream to celebrate his success. Once Baca achieved literacy and was validated through his correspondences and published successes, he gradually becomes self-assured that things will turn around for him. After he got out of prison, he faced his family problems head on with the hope of reconciliation. These examples show how wellness is dependent on how people perceive how they are feeling and that optimism is truly able to offset illness as shown in Barabara L. Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory (221). Moreover, having a positive outlook/happy people tend to be more successful than unhappy people. What makes them successful are the characteristics, mental health, and resources valued by others (Lyubomirsky 803). Although Baca's art was how Baca flourished, student writing is not about getting published and it is not always about what grade is achieved. But rather, at the heart of it, the writing is designed for students to gain perspective and control over their own circumstances.

### **Social Settings Life Domain**

Jamner and Stokols articulate that a person's social life settings is a distinct environmental life domain. This consists of places where people socialize and who they socialize with in their spare time (Jamner 136). In viewing Baca's social

settings life domain, his social life teetered between the paradigm of his feelings of isolation and his acceptance through his ability to demonstrate rage. Baca hungered to be accepted. Physical ability was how he received positive approval socially. He was goaded by his white peers to fight. By fighting, he was “accepted” by them. But in reality, he was no more than a show horse. Baca understood how his identity was invalidated by his community and this affected his well-being. The paradox was that fighting gained Baca acceptance, but fighting also isolated him from others. His fury stemmed from his inability to use language to express his abandonment, anger, frustration, and loss. The message that his community was unwelcome was constant. It was as though there were two realities in America. Baca writes,

I'd begun to feel early on that the state and society at large considered me a stain on their illusion of a perfect America. In the American dream there weren't supposed to be children going hungry or sleeping under bridges. In me, the state-- and society by extension-- had yet another mouth to feed, another body to clothe. I felt like a nuisance; I suspected that if basic human decency didn't warrant it, society would gladly dismiss. Yet there were people like Coach Tracy and his family who went against the grain. And while I didn't want to hurt them and was willing to go along for a while, there was no way I could let myself be adopted into a white family (29)

Numerous times this physical ability earned him a reputation with friends, inmates, and nearly helped him get adopted by the football coach, Coach Tracy. Coach

Tracy was different. Although he, too, admired Baca for his toughness and physical ability as a football player, Tracy had a kind heart and wanted to adopt and mentor Baca in life. But Baca was unable to make this transitional leap into the dominant culture and way of being. Baca's understanding of what he perceived as Coach Tracy's failure to recognize the impact that marginality, lack of confidence, and loss of opportunity for valuation meant for Baca. Baca writes, "I didn't know why, I just wanted to go back [to the detention home]" and "I wasn't strong enough to admit that I felt worthless and was nothing but a troublemaker. I quit school the next day" (30).

Although Baca was unable to verbalize these deprivations at the time, the crevasse of differences between the coach's family and Baca's life experience up until this point in the memoir demonstrate how the dominant culture often makes assumptions that marginalized people relate to mainstream thinking as the primary view. However, this lack of awareness mirrors the ignorance of race difference that is continually perpetuated in America and pinpoints why this book needs to be a continued conversation among students and teachers.

Baca attempted to counter the toxicity of loss in his socialization experiences in the social life domain through his connection with his girlfriends, Theresa and then Lonnie, his newfound friends he made in prison, with the people who wrote to him and to whom he wrote, and in his attempts to reconnect with his family. Baca reflects about his wistful longing for Theresa: "The fire, the waves, and the moon made me wish Theresa were with me" (47). But Baca acknowledged his inability to connect in his relationships: "I didn't know how to nurture a friendship, let alone

love. We really didn't have much in common except violence and drinking" (39). Baca says about his older brother, "At heart, Mieyo and I were both decent men, famished for affection and eager to live in a decent manner. And while I was slowly rebuilding my life with books and writing, Mieyo, on the other hand, was casting himself out into deeper and deeper isolation, into a place where I could not help him as I once did as a kid brother" (201). Unfortunately, Baca was unable to save his brother from despair.

Despite Baca's loss of connection with his brother, he was finding his identity through the friends he made in prison. Baca quoted his friend in prison who took him under his wing, Macaron, as saying, "Keep your mind on the present, forget about the streets and freedom, and things will work out" (116). Another friend in prison, Chelo, said to Baca, "Don't be so serious. Smile once and awhile, let go and be happy" (223). Chelo was a central figure for connecting Baca closer to his cultural roots. Chelo taught Baca "Chicano slang, Mexican/Indian words originating from Mayans, Olmecs, Aztecs. When combined, these words created our own distinct Chicano Language, a language truer to expressing and describing my experience" (223). Of Chelo's guiding influence, Baca writes,

Chelo's stories made me think a lot. I couldn't answer him when he asked if I knew the primary cause of death among our people. 'Broken heart,' he said. The more I thought about it, the more it made me wonder whether my grandfather hadn't died of a broken heart. Certainly my father drank because of a broken heart. When their dreams had been crushed, when their prayers seemed never to be

answered, when life seemed to chat them out of every glimmer of happiness, their hearts broke. And then alcoholism and despair set in (224)

Baca articulates emotional wellness and embraces the broken heart syndrome poetically in writing the story, “Healing Earthquakes” by seeing who he was in a “new context, with a deeper sense of responsibility and love for my people” (225).

### **Community**

Community, such as are developed in classrooms, can positively alter perspective and uplift people. Baca, also realized how important his service for others was: “My pen and heart chronicle their hopes, doubts, regrets, loves, despairs, and dreams. I do this partly out of selfishness, because it helps to heal my own impermanence, my own despair. My role as witness is to give voice to the voiceless and hope to the hopeless, of which I am one” (244). As Baca was leaving prison he says, “I looked in the cells at my friends, all asleep; I felt for each of them. I wanted to take them all with me. All they needed was a little help. I felt again as I had felt at the orphanage when I ran away – a despairing, horrible sense of leaving so many human beings like myself with no resources to make their life better” (256). This recognition demonstrates what Matthew Lieberman and other fellow researchers refer to as “social cognitive neuroscience” (2). By utilizing fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), they have been able to learn how people connect differently to the world around them in terms other their social network (2). The main point is reiterated in multiple sources that people are literally “wired to connect” and these connections mirror our ancient ancestors. Lieberman posits that

the brain reacts to physical and social events similarly and this was demonstrated in Baca's reactions to events related to performing because of social pressure (5). The idea of connecting can be fostered in wellness classrooms, too. The group dynamic can make a difference in confidence, courage, and overall perspective.

The seeds for mentorship were planted but didn't have a chance to take root in Baca's memoir until he himself is mentored and eventually becomes a mentor for others including his children. He mentioned several helpful writing mentors that he had along the way and who later became his friends, including Norman Moser, Deise Levertov, Joseph Bruchac, Richard Shelton. He credits Rex Veeder, who, "helped me to improve by inspiring me with the confidence that I really could write poetry" (Baca 250).

The importance of mentorship is crucial to a person's success and can shift that person's ability to navigate upward mobility as shown in Deborah Brandt's signature idea, "Sponsors of Literacy" (165). Mentoring has been shown to develop self-mastery, achievement, and belonging, which are all essential elements for motivation (Seifert 7, 9). The premise of Brandt's work highlights how mentors are responsible for either creating pathways that open doors to more specialized, higher level work opportunities through literacy or preventing those opportunities from occurring. In her ethnographic study, Brandt details how economic opportunities, environmental factors, race, and gender can all contribute to a person's access to literacy. Essentially, though, without human interactive support, it is far more difficult, if not wholly impossible to achieve growth and status. When Brandt's essay was initially published in 1998, the technological boom taking place had only

just begun. Currently, the wider range of resources available enable students to access more sponsorship. However, stark divides have become even more readily apparent with Covid-19, where accessibility to resources such as computers and the Internet stand in the way for the means to grow upwards.

Studies show how first-generation students need more involved mentorship (Tate et al. 295). However, despite the difficulties first generation students face, they identified themselves as being confident and maintained a strong sense of responsibility while recognizing that they needed to work harder than their peers to get ahead (296). This point is clearly demonstrated in Baca's memoir. Even though he had no familial connections, other mentors were present on the outskirts of his life during his time in prison and he was able to push himself to succeed.

### **Commute Life Domain**

Commute or travel, in addition to the domains home, social settings, recreation, and education, is considered another environmental life domain, according to Jamner and Stokols (140). The commute life domain refers to the time spent during travel from one location to another. It is the movement found between the other life domains, but it is also a point at which toxicity or healing can occur. Although the classroom is not traditionally part of this transition space, it could be incorporated into classroom work to explore poetry or history, for example. Experiencing movement in real locations can place an impression in a way that only reading about a location or experience is not able to do in the same way. When Baca experienced the commute life domain in his childhood, he was a recipient of the action taking place. His commute did not occur by choice, but because



grownups took him to go somewhere. His vivid recollection of riding in the car with his mother to meet her fiancé's parents was a commute filled with anxiety and dread. Baca knew that something bad would happen, but he was not prepared for his mother to abandon her children. Other rides against his will in his early life posed risk to his well-being, but Baca learned to reduce the toxicity that occurred through his imagination. Ironically, Baca discovered hints of his own blossoming of wonder and artistic vision when he first encountered the stars, despite the horror of riding in the car with his drunken father when he saw them. Baca writes, "He would toss me into the car and drive away. I never knew where we were going. We usually drove for hours on country roads. I looked at the stars, I listened to the Mexican music on the radio, I glanced at him swigging from his whiskey bottle, and I tried to pretend that none of this was happening (38).

Driving opened Baca's exploration of freedom for new possibilities and demonstrate his ability to find positivity in the commute domain. Baca writes, "When I wasn't in Santa Fe I'd be on the road, traveling all over northern New Mexico, servicing vending machines in the small one-cantina towns that clung to the dry hills or perched on the banks of the brown rivers that flowed through the high desert. Those long stretches between stops gave me my first opportunities to truly relax" (39). Before Baca was arrested, he momentarily escapes for solitary respite, "I hotwired a '63 Impala from the downtown municipal parking lot and drove northeast out of Albuquerque to the Sandia Mountain. I was petrified with fear and needed some time to drive and think. Being in the mountains gave me the illusion that everything was going to turn out all right" (37). He described his

spiritual wellness here when he contemplated how he “awkwardly pleaded with him [God] to set things straight” (36). In this passage, again, Baca connected with art and nature.

Looking up at the stars, I wished he could tell me what to do. I missed him [his grandfather], missed his Indio roots and the Indio culture that offered kindness and understanding. I wished I knew how to survive in the woods like Marcos. I wanted to take off across the snow and lose myself in the forest, moving over boulders and through trees, my path illuminated by the moonlight (4)

But in this passage, he was left by himself with no one and nothing, feeling “utterly alone (4). Unfortunately, the commute life domain of traveling from place to place with joy was cut short with Baca’s prison sentence. The only commuting he experienced was in his recollections of the past in his mind. This led to the rich but painful interiority he faced in solitary confinement.

**Possibilities and Pedagogy: Beth Campbell’s Artwork, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances***

Examining Baca’s experience through the framework of transitions between life domains is a means to highlight the development of identity and motivation. Baca writes, “The person I have become, who sits writing in this chair at this desk, has been forged by enormous struggle and unexpected blessings, despite the dehumanizing environment of a prison intended to destroy me” (5). Baca demonstrates how life choices can shape one’s direction meaningfully by evolving from his negative underpinnings in confronting his past. In turn, he reconfigures his life domains positively.

The series of life choices that Baca is faced with is much like the series of varied conceivable actions that Beth Campbell's visual art exhibit, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances* stems from. Campbell explains how her work is a visual diagram of word descriptions of life events that emphasizes possibilities (Campbell). Campbell's tenets for future actions and possibilities examine how the "what if" scenario of choices give her viewers a window into what might have been or what could be for the future by having them envision themselves in a myriad of possible real or imaginary bifurcating projected outcomes. These possibilities can be playful and humorous, but they can also be serious and introspective.

Campbell's conceptual drawing starts with an ordinary action statements such as, "I just sat on my brand new glasses while getting into the car" (Campbell). She then uses lines to illustrate her flow of thought from what could happen next represented by a diagram. These ideas branch out to multiple possibilities for what could happen next so that the entire framework of her design is representative of cause and multiple effects that could occur from one single event. It is an existential technique that offers complex consideration to simultaneous choices existing in the same time frame in life and offers an exploration of writing in an entirely new way. By negotiating situational outcomes that yield infinite possibilities, her path is chosen because identity and choice converge. And yet, the image shows how the portrait of parallel lives and possible futures co-exist in space. The following photo illustrates Campbell's work (see fig.1):

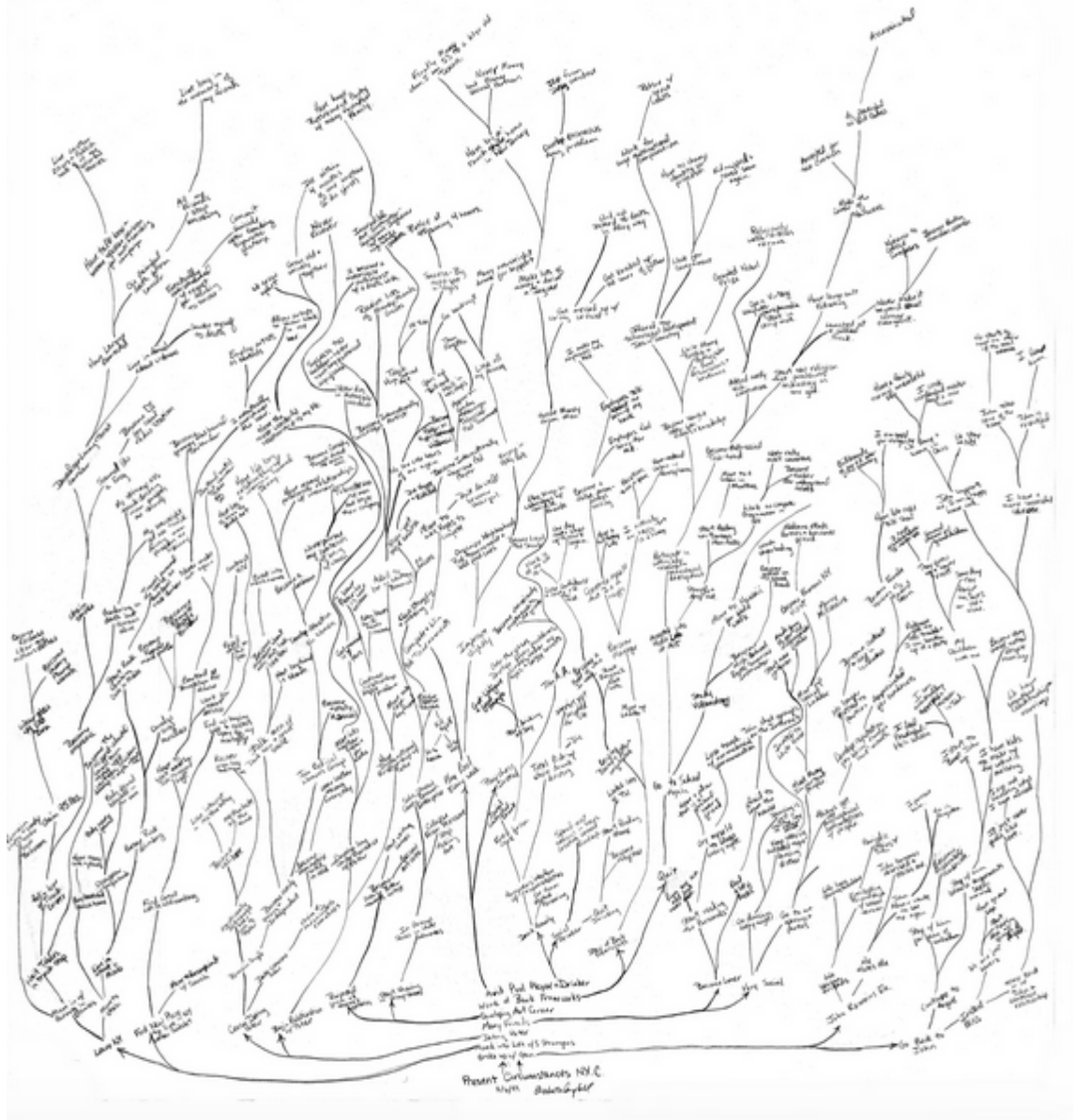


Fig. 1. Beth Campbell; *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances*; 16 August 1999. Original image courtesy of Beth Campbell.

The pedagogical model for Baca examined through the framework of life domains can be correlated with Campbell's artwork as a means to accentuate the development of student identity and motivation and can bring student health and wellness into focus. In a classroom setting I might use a design such as this to ask

students to connect Campbell's illustration of life choices to Baca's. For example, if the future potential for Baca led to his not getting arrested and serving prison time, he might have 1) worked construction 2) gone back to school 3) married 4) moved 5) found a better job 6) become homeless 7) done more drugs 8) discovered another talent 9) gotten cast in a movie 10) won the lottery. Each of these given scenarios could be formed into secondary scenarios and so forth. In working through Baca's real situation in the memoir, however, he demonstrates a constant pattern in solving his problems by finding his truth of identity and this is how he is able to heal himself. He then reaches out to healing his community of family and friends.

Exposure to art, like Baca's autobiography and Beth Campbell's visual art exhibit, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances* can more positively help FYW students to envision outcomes and shape their futures and might help bridge divided communities to re-examine values and heal. FYW students can mirror Campbell's work in examination of their own health and life domains by designing their own models in FYW classes. Students' own critical observations will enable valuable life choices from a more powerful personal standpoint. The real outcome is in making authentic choices for one's future in examining past and present decisions. In doing so, specific paths can be forged while others can be avoided. Campbell's mapping can also forge a bridge towards brainstorming ideas for writing. Thus, an emphasis on the arts can help take some of the guesswork out of identity building and health and replace insecurity with confidence by working through varying choice scenarios, such as Campbell's work shows. Furthermore, the

strategy for building arts-based research projects, as highlighted by Campbell's art, can bring students together collaboratively.

Through careful examination of the intersections where life domains occur, wellness can be achieved by altering these spaces in enacting preventative measures and making deliberate choices. Art can be a pedagogical means for this access to occur and can build on student strengths. Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ed Diener, and Laura King show how building on student strengths increases the development of self-awareness, builds confidence, optimism, self-efficacy, sociability, and strengthens the immune system, as well as encourages active involvement with goal pursuits in one's environment (Lyubomirsky 804). Baca highlights how, "Writing letters added an exciting dimension to my lackluster days and gave me a sense of self-esteem" (184).

Art can open up a new series of events. As seen in Baca's memoir, the last of Jamner and Stokols' index of life domains, *education*, was purely and luckily coincidental. Baca's illiteracy was transformed because of his curiosity and determination to learn how to read in his early 20's through his correspondences. When Baca first received a letter in prison he writes,

I hadn't a clue as to who would be writing to me. It was a one-page letter written on a church notepad sheet, and I spent days trying to decipher the cursive writing, tracing words to understand which alphabets they were, figuring slowly by sounds what the sentence was. It was in English, but the writing was shaky, which made it even harder to read (183)

Writing was an inspiration for him. Baca explains how, “Letters made a big difference by breaking up the day’s monotonous tedium, and the guys waiting anxiously at the bars when mail call came” (182). Healing and the art of writing became an obsession for Baca. He complains, “The only thing that really bothered me was when the guards tore up all my journals and confiscated my books” (193). Baca’s identity evolved as an artist. He was nourished through his opportunity and accessibility to literacy. This allowed Baca to connect on a deeper level to express himself through linguistic nuances. Baca explains this transition in saying,

Language gave me a way to keep the chaos of prison at bay and prevent it from devouring me; it was a resource that allowed me to confront and understand my past, even to wring from it some compelling truths, and it opened the way toward a future that was based not on fear or bitterness or apathy but on compassionate involvement and a belief that I belonged (5)

The education life domain was transformative for Baca when he reveals: “Reading books became my line of defense against the madness” (214). Baca reversed his cultural capital through developing literacy and this changed his entire perspective. Baca recalls, “I remembered lines and stanzas from Neruda, Emily Dickinson, and Rilke. I’d go over plots, characters, styles, and descriptions of landscapes in novels by Hemingway and Faulkner” (193). Education for Baca was a pathway to survival and led to wellness in his life domains and for his emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational, and environmental wellness

components, which realigned into a positive framework. As Baca declares, “Poetry and music blocked out all other life” (197).

### **Instructor Methodology for Questioning**

For reaching students, introspection can be a means for inclusion for examining one’s personal home environment. Students can start by asking questions. The exploration of art involves asking questions because it entails creative thinking for problem solving at its core and provides Deweyian real world experience. Like educator Paulo Freire, Warren Berger, journalist and author of *A More Beautiful Question*, suggests reframing the old model of lecture style teaching by asking questions. Berger’s methodology for questioning can be applied for how students can further analyze Baca’s memoir. His methodology has three parts in rethinking problems and how their solution can come to fruition.

The first part is to understand the underlying philosophy or “why” something is done a certain way (Berger 32). In applying this line of questioning to Baca’s memoir, the analysis can be directed to the overarching context as to what caused Baca’s life to derail in the first place. Re-examination for Baca’s situation could consider what values society imposed on Baca’s family and how it impacted their choice making. The larger question that could be asked is, why were there inequities for Baca and his family? The drastic measures that were taken were not Baca’s parents’ first choice for action, but were a means for survival in reaction to their circumstances. Societal pressures and anti-immigrant status led to their actions for survival.



The second question Berger emphasizes is the “what if” phrase (Berger 32). In other words, in reframing “what if,” this question is asking to consider how might circumstances be changed for the better and what proactive behavior could be enacted to make these changes. People can’t always change their environment/circumstances, but they can take personal steps that are positive and can redirect towards their aims, or destination. By actively visiting options, growth can occur in setting up a plan. Baca enacted the “what if” in his education life domain by becoming literate. His ability to read and write opened his future for more options which were available to him. Baca’s memoir offers a model for student observation and possibilities for action for FYW students. The overarching question could be, what if students’ connection with literacy through art could be enacted as a viable means towards wellness?

The third tier that Berger sets up for his inquiry is in creating a solution, or in “how” something might be changed (Berger 32). One could consider what the ideal outcome could be if the potential for it were to exist. For Baca, this goal meant attaining literacy. He asked to take classes throughout his time in prison, but his request was denied. Despite this learning setback, outsiders wrote to him in prison and he was able to teach himself how to read and write. The higher level question for instructors might be, how might literacy in combination with art become a more valued practice?

Examining Baca’s valuable memoir, *A Place to Stand* in an FYW classroom could open inquiry into critical thinking and art exploration as this chapter has presented. Arts-based research methodology expands learning because it offers

numerous vehicles for complex thoughts to be dynamically expressed and understood. Beth Campbell's art is one concrete model that can be utilized in combination with Baca's memoir for considering life choices, as I have demonstrated. Some of my students created arts-based research projects in combination with written analysis of Baca's memoir. Their projects include composing and vocally performing a song that centrally connected with Baca's memoir, animating a graphic short that highlighted key parts of the memoir, creating a painting and interpreting its connection with Baca's memoir, and developing a computer game which depicted varying choices Baca could make and detailing an analysis as to why and how Baca's choices lead him to where he is. Student designed projects such as these showcase how to enable students to connect to writing in new ways that are meaningful for them. Moreover, many other themes could be drawn from Baca's memoir or from other literature for intertwining literacy and art for creating projects.

### **Summary**

By documenting Jimmy Santiago Baca's highly engaging memoir, *A Place to Stand*, where multiple life domains powerfully intersect and are transformed from toxicity to positive action, I have tried to illustrate how building stronger ties and bridging communities together through art and healing is a gift. Art, like Baca shows the reader, opens multiple possibilities for artistic and practical student participation in life and leads to wellness.

Health is a serious concern that needs institutional accountability and art is a positive vehicular means for this to occur. As seen from the example of Baca's

work, emphasizing and requiring humanities classes, such as literature, writing, positive psychology, art, drama, music, and general health education should be added to curriculums as essential foundations for learning to provide immediate resources for students' fundamental growth for identity building and health practices because they are excellent access points for students to begin taking charge of themselves independently. These classes are not only essential for "Adulting" - meeting challenges, developing life skills, exploring art, creating new innovations, strengthening motivation, furthering career paths and goals, and so forth, but also tap into hidden potential and provide deeper resources for creative problem solving and provide an outlet for life's enjoyment. Classes could include elements of the narrative writing format for building empathy which is already embraced by Medical Humanities departments and integrated into nursing programs. These simple but important additions could be part of the larger context for collegiate study and aspects of these elements could be partially incorporated into FYW and first year experience classes. The FYW classroom is part of the crucial educational life domain where student writing navigates the quest for literacy as praxis because literacy, as Baca teaches, is transformative.

I have emphasized why art is essential for life domain wellness and how to strategize projects for growth in writing classrooms in this chapter. Chapter Four will bring together the focus of wellness and art in correlation with one another by articulating how these elements feature individual integrity. Motivation and practice are the main drivers for learning and success.

#### CHAPTER 4: MARGARET NAUMBURG, ART & CREATIVITY AS A PART OF WELLNESS: Nosce te Ipsum

In the first chapters of this dissertation I used Wellness Theory to argue for new approaches to 21st first year writing (FYW) classes--a fairly focused and technical yield for seeing collegiate achievement as a part of students' larger growth. In this chapter I both widen the scope of my inquiry and take us backward slightly in time to one of the great inspirational foundations for wellness theory and education--the work of Margaret Naumburg, who used art as a means of opening up students psychologically and practically. This chapter benefits from a close examination of her unpublished papers, held at the Kislak library at the University of Pennsylvania. As a founder of the Walden school in New York in 1914, and then later a professor at The New School in 1960s, Naumburg pioneered art therapy to unlock students' authentic selves for "self-preservation" that they would take with them on the rest of their journey in life. By concluding with this non-collegiate insight into human growth and expression I seek to emphasize that the goal of using wellness and creativity in college goes far beyond academic achievement.

My connection with Naumburg's work came through researching the origins of creative thinking. Providing the landscape for creative thinking would give a framework for what was being said in varying ways by so many different people. Creative thinking was popularized in the 1970s by psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Since then, other fields have taken on his ideas in business, neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and education. All of these innovators have, in sense, tried to show steps to take for thinking outside the box. But what came before Csikszentmihalyi was left wide open to question, and was largely a part of

art history and science that dated back to ancient Greece. I view Naumburg's work through her own lens of creating art in that she saw it as a means of self-expression for better understanding oneself. In highlighting Naumburg's life's work, this chapter will illustrate how art can open a deeper perspective of self as means for writing and holistic wellness growth.

### **Margaret Naumburg**

In my attempts to learn more, I discovered Margaret Naumburg, (1890-1983) who was in her own right, both an educator and an innovator in the field of art therapy. While there is no published biography about her, there is an online biography in the "finding aid" at the Kislak Research Library at the University of Pennsylvania library website, where Naumburg donated her papers. Additionally, Blythe Farb Hinitz wrote a chapter about Naumburg in her edited collection, *The Hidden History of Early Childhood Education*. Within this chapter, Hinitz sets out to frame Naumburg's work and the work of others who were either hidden or forgotten in the field of education. Hinitz's introduction expresses the importance of learning and understanding the larger historical context of education. Out of this understanding, new meanings can be derived. There is also a brief web page devoted to Naumburg on the Jewish Women's Archival website.

Naumburg's writing centers around her book, *An Introduction to Art Therapy: Studies of the "Free" Art Expression of Behavior Problem Children and Adolescents as a Means of Diagnosis and Therapy*, where she pinpoints the means to assist troubled children through the creation of art. Florence Cane, Naumburg's sister, whose book is entitled, *The Artist in Each of Us*, enabled me to understand

how Naumburg applied the physicality of art to general education studies and why Naumburg explored art beyond the classroom for healing behavioral issues.

Another source, *The Modern History of Art Therapy in the United States* by Maxine Borowsky Junge, highlighted the overall history of the conception of art therapy and Margaret Naumburg's contributions. When I researched Naumburg's unpublished papers at the Kislak Library, I discovered how her initial thinking about education was critical to her later development and work in art therapy. I felt compelled to share Naumburg's farsighted thinking. Naumburg was a visionary figure whose work set out to answer many questions that educators, including myself, wrestle with. Disappointing to read was how, despite Naumburg's pioneering research in the field of art therapy and helping to set up the program at The New School of Social Research at New York University, as well as carefully documenting countless therapy cases, giving presentations, and writing five published books and many articles, she was never given a tenured position. Yet, Naumburg's work set a precedent for how art therapy is viewed today. While she had two distinguished careers in education and art therapy, what is telling is that her art therapy work clearly stemmed from her initial interest in education and her vision for social reform. It also foreshadowed so much of where education has been and is heading in the future.

Naumburg's work sets a backdrop for reinventing education, art, healing, and innovation. Naumburg, who is known as the "mother of art therapy," was initially influenced by John Dewey and Marie Montessori, and was the founder of The Walden School in New York in 1914. Later, her interest in Sigmund Freud's work

allowed her to draw parallels between freeing the unconscious mind through art expression. Her detailed, qualitative studies of the children she worked with and their dramatic art expressed her patients' interpretations of their repressed emotions, which led to their healing.

### **Models**

Margaret Naumburg's long and varied life is a model of how the self in flux is revitalized. It honors her integrity by the way she reinvented herself and her work. In her notes, she wrote about how a person must "master" oneself before mastering the world: "The law of self-preservation is certainly the first law of life" (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes for *Democratic Education on Trial*, unpublished). This observation defined her work and lent itself to what she did with this idea. Moreover, her mission built on the philosophy that no two children grow in the same way or at the same pace (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes for "The Human Side of Teaching, unpublished"). Since students' instincts guide them, Naumburg proposed, "The way to harness that energy usefully is to let the child follow its natural bents, develop its own abilities" (8). This discovery gave her the idea to emphasize a student's interests more than the curriculum of study. She propelled this highly individualized principle forward at The Walden School, which she founded in New York. As she said, "In other words, the emphasis has to be shifted from the curriculum to the production of an able, interested, dynamic human being; also, a clear-thinking, fine-fibred human being" (Naumburg papers, box 14, 8). If people are well-grounded in who they are, discover what they like, and can continue to do something with these interests, people are more apt to thrive in their

lives. Therefore, Naumburg concluded, “we must teach him (the student) to depend upon himself” (Naumburg papers, box 14).

Her lifelong search for honoring a person's unique identity had her profoundly examine the function of institutions in society. For example, Naumburg asked, "Education for what?" (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes for *Democratic Education on Trial*, unpublished). Education is informed by societal values and informs every decision that educators, administrators, parents, and students make without their necessarily having considered it. What is the real purpose of education, after all? To expand one's mind? To get a job? To socialize? In her criticism of education as depicted by Lawrence Binyon, in his book, *The Spirit of Man in Asian Art*, Naumburg stated, “We have divided life into separate compartments, each presided over by a science with a separate name; but the wholeness of life has somehow been obscured. What we seem to have lost is the art of living” (Naumburg papers, box 97, “Introduction to the Practice of Art Therapy”). In today's culture, this division translates to a loss of humanity, connection with others, and failure to make sophisticated choices. It is a reminder of the vital role that art and diverse cultures play in the expression of joy, empathy, and in understanding the human condition. The art of living means taking the time to be with people who matter and doing things that are enjoyable. The art of living means cultivating and experiencing quality of life and wellness is an integral part.

In addition to studying with Marie Montessori and being influenced by John Dewey, Naumburg drew her inspiration and philosophy for teaching and forming the Walden School from the "Romantic individualism of Rousseau." The child is



placed at the center and looks to develop the senses and feelings (Naumburg papers, box 14, promotional materials and reviews of *The Child and the World*). By contrast, she repudiated the way John Locke's view of education found its way into mainstream education in America with its formalism and blank slate method (Naumburg papers, box 50, *Crisis* Lecture 9, "Emergence of the Individual in Modern Education"). Instead, she advocated that "the formal school should consider the child's personality, his emotional adjustment, his social needs, and his power to think and express himself creatively" (Box 15, 31). However, she criticized both Rousseau and Locke in the way they were basing their philosophies on tutoring one wealthy child at a time. They were not concerned with the actual group-oriented school conditions that exist (9).

Naumburg asserted that experience occurs through "making and doing," and that is what leads to "real thought" (Naumburg papers, box 50, *Crisis* Lecture IX, "Emergence of the Individual in Modern Education"). Isn't critical thinking what education is for? Dewey applied these same principles to learning in real-world environments and had students develop projects. But despite Naumburg's applause for Dewey's principles of experiential learning, she criticized how he failed to promote individual tenets into the projects he presented to his students. While the projects were group-oriented, they were not chosen by individual students. They were not individually motivated. Motivation, she explained, is the most important factor for education. If students were interested in learning something, they would get it done. She confirmed this point, "What can be the use of presenting any

subject matter, however well organized, if the children's inner lives are not moving so as to allow either interest or attention?" (28).

Additionally, Naumburg contested Dewey's complaint that sentimentalism was deadly for education because this mindset divorced feelings from work being done, much like formalism. She contended that "As I see it unless the growth of the inner life of feeling is nurtured as carefully as that of the exterior social action, children cannot function harmoniously in the social life of either childhood or maturity" (Naumburg, *Introduction to Art Therapy*, 27). In other words, they were "coexistent and coessential with our life of action" (27). She further drew the connection between emotion and action in exalting how, "As I understand it, our own bodies as mechanisms are equally capable of transforming our life forces from an emotional energy to a physical action, or vice versa, from muscular movement into emotional states. To me, they are different manifestations of a singular force" (28). The body and voice are part of the same instrument. Attempting to separate them makes no sense. Naumburg then examined the Ancient Greeks for winning her argument in how the body was congruent with the mind by pointing out how "our so-called classical education has wandered from afield from the original Greek conception of education as the synthetic training of mind and body, has completely intellectualized it. Mental training has become the bulwark of our training; physical and artistic training are regarded as incidentals" (Naumburg papers, box 15, "The Eurythmics of Jacque Dalcroze," unpublished). Lack of attention in mainstream education, then and now, is a steep contrast to what was taught at The Walden School. Emphasis was on all parts of the whole person.

Naumburg then turned her attention to Moravian Bishop Commenius (1592). He affirmed that every educational system was founded on theories, philosophy, values of society, the meaning of existence and the relation of man to the social group/state that it represented (Box 15, 10). If these mores were what drove education, they were a vast influence on a child's growth and development. Children are in school or a learning environment a large part of their time. Naumburg questioned the fundamental basis for education when she intervened by asking, "Does our education give a philosophy of life, by which he can steer a mastery of himself a fair estimate of his capacities and power? Or is it possible that education is conceived with other goals? Consider our official forms of education, and what do we find?" (Naumburg papers, box 14, *Democratic Education on Trial*, unpublished). It seems as though she is describing the mundane and unimaginative elements found on countless, useless forms found in the tyranny of clerical work.

### **Contributions**

The significance of reconsidering educational aims and Naumburg's questions is the recognition of what is most valued by society: educational aims are reinvented to suit current circumstances. Anu Partanen, Finnish author of *The Nordic Theory of Everything*, mirrors Naumburg's thinking about what society's goals for education are. As I show in Chapter One, Partanen makes the claim that the Finnish value helping students find their happiness in life, whereas the United States is teaching to the test and attempting to drive scores upward in pursuit of competitive aims. Meanwhile, socioeconomic privilege excludes many children in the educational process. Additionally, the fundamental principle of competition

underlines much of the values in the United States which bleeds into education. In contrast, the Finns believe in equity and cooperation. Moreover, the struggles for United States' education is that in all of its advancements, much of the work is so compartmentalized, as Naumburg has written, that the basic need for joy in life becomes obscured. But finding one's happiness can enable people to discover their talents and connect with society as a more fulfilled human being. Part of the key, as wellness theorists, Margaret Schneider Jammer and Daniel Stokols point to is to examine environment and how people can thrive within it.

Naumburg had the foresight to envision how creativity plays an integral role in the relationship of learning. For one, engaging students who need more accessible modalities for understanding larger concepts opens learning to more students. And two, out of creative expression comes socialization whereby students mature in all aspects of their lives including the ability to connect with others, think critically, gain perspective, and become independent, responsible conscientious citizens. Naumburg leans into what further work that has yet to be done by stating these two significant points: [1.] "The future demands a re-examination of the nature of the creative process. Should spontaneity be accepted as playing a more decisive role in the growth of the individual than was formerly recognized [and would this] lead, inevitably, to certain modifications in our educational procedures for the re-integration of personality in behavior problem children" and [2.] "The test of the wider potentialities of such art expression lies still in the future" (Naumburg, *Introduction to Art Therapy*, 47, 49). Might this re-emphasis and importance of art in academic institutions replenish taking creative approaches for learning and

connecting with others? For educators, future study and practical methods might mean choosing specifically designed work in keeping with the interests of the students.

As Naumburg explored, taught, and administered at The Walden School, she continued to look for how to motivate children and how to find their hearts; mainly, how to make self-preservation possible for all of her students. But what she discovered was how vital psychology is to teaching. All educators are faced with classroom management, not solely content. All classes are uniquely different because the dynamics of the people involved, the environment in which the learning takes place, and the constraints all members of the group are facing. However, for Naumburg, the behavioral problems were where her most essential creativity begins because these children could not be placed in a neat little corner to do their work. They refused to be ignored and demanded full attention. She learned that "nearly all we know of the normal human being in psychology has come to us from the study of the abnormal personality" (Box 14, 70). These children required individual care and utterly inventive handling for their progress. Their lives depended on it. And because Naumburg studied aberrant personalities, she came to understand "normal" people (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes on education and psychoanalysis). In her view, education and psychology were inextricably connected.

Naumburg predicted that the relatively new field of study known as "educational psychology" was necessary. Educational psychology primarily examines the behavioral and cognitive psychological aspects of learning. Her

retrospective implication here is that art therapy is not just for children with behavioral problems, but that there are countless applications of the work for all ages. Naumburg's sister, Florence Cane, proceeded to run and teach at The Walden School after Naumburg left. Cane continued to stress the value of art and how it should be at the center of education because, as Cane put it, "We apprehend the world through three chief functions: movement, feeling, and thought" (Cane 34). Interestingly, social cognitive neuroscience shows how the brain reacts to physical and social events similarly (Lieberman 5). Both Naumburg and Cane radicalized the idea as to how the body, the brain, and art connect people with their surroundings in terms of meaning, learning, and experience.

### **Freud's Influence**

Naumburg's initial exploration of Freud's concepts began with her observations and work with behaviorally disturbed children. According to Naumburg, Freud came at a time when

Psychoanalysis has made both the artist and the general public increasingly aware of the fact that man's unconscious thinks and feels in symbolic images. It has shown most clearly that intellectualization and the exaggerated verbalisms of our culture have been imposed on the deeper and more primitive levels of our unconscious mode of imaged expression (Naumburg papers, box 53, "Art Expression and the Unconscious")

Creating pictures to represent counterproductive feelings made sense to Naumburg. Since children cannot necessarily express what is confusing and unfamiliar, Freud's

work manifested ideas for Naumburg for making sense of children's fraught behaviors. "The analytic concepts of projection, sublimation, identification, condensation," were known to the general public and the psychologist alike, in that this is how people by the 1920s, according to Naumburg, generally "think and speak" (Naumburg papers, box 53, "Art Expression and the Unconscious"). Naumburg reasoned how Freud's mainstream ideas could prove useful for helping her children to heal. She described how "Psychoanalysis seems to offer with its key to the subconscious, a means of rechanneling for education, and brings it back to the root meaning of leading forth what lay within the individual instead of suppressing the foundations of the individual that had depended on an adequate release" (Box 14, 69). The distinction for Naumburg, though, was how while Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was a breakthrough for symbolic representation, he never encouraged creating the images. Instead, he insisted on verbalization. By contrast, however, Carl Jung frequently encouraged his patients to paint their dreams as a means of nonverbal expression (88). He claimed, "To paint what we see before us is a different art from painting what we see within" (88). What if educators took this concept one step further by encouraging students to paint or make collages? Perhaps new meanings would emerge for them. Naumburg predicted that the implications of the work had not been fully explored.

Naumburg investigated this avenue further with her own patients. Naumburg showed how new artistic enterprises served to bring into conscious life the buried material of the child's emotional problems. In having the patients express themselves by creating a picture of what they were unable to communicate, they

could talk about their problems and release their inhibitions. At least, the issues could be given a different perspective. What she pinpointed was precisely how the study of anthropology and archeology, along with the development of psychoanalysis, gives rise to the notion that mentally ill people could attempt to communicate through art (Naumburg papers, box 53, "Art as Symbolic Speech").

### **Dynamically Oriented Therapy**

Art therapy, or, as Naumburg referred to her great contribution, as "Dynamically Oriented Therapy" (DOT), provided a vehicle for expression when people were unable to verbalize something. Her attempts to recreate past traumas through art in a controlled environment were successful in helping her patients come to terms with their past experiences and function better as adults and as a part of society. Moreover, she stated that having the patient discover what happens meant that the chain of therapist dependency is broken (Box 53, 7). This exploration was revolutionary in providing healing, and, gradually, the new field of study, art therapy, emerged. However, it was slow in igniting. Naumburg stated, "Nonverbal expression is the dynamic force behind all creative expression, but it is too little recognized in our therapeutic and educational procedures today" (89).

As art therapy grew as a disciplined field and practice, Naumburg was invited to help shape the program at The New School for Social Research in New York City. Naumburg's first course in 1965 claimed to "increase self-knowledge," and "help in resolving conflicts for pupils or patients," by using "various techniques for freeing spontaneous art expression" (Box 97, 1). Naumburg followed her initial idea for recognizing and preserving the self via art. She said, "My intention in this



course is to increase your awareness of the extent to which the development of “wholeness” in personality depends on a fundamental understanding of the complex factors of unconscious response. For it is the unconscious which contains those potentialities of uniqueness and originality which we hope to encourage in the individual” (Box 97, 8). People are vastly complex and inconsistent in how they behave and often go against their own best instincts. Thus, as Naumburg asserted, it was that much more essential that people develop “insight and self-awareness” since the “idealized concept of human behavior was a rationalized myth,” (Box 97, 9). Self-awareness is essential for motivation, authenticity, and wellness and can be uncovered through creating art and through meditation.

Art can take on many forms. FYW students, for example, could situate the types art forms that they present in balance with the issues they are most concerned in learning about. For a student who strongly feels that everyone needs poetry, her challenge would be to research why. Her research might include qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to get an overall consensus about a school’s views on poetry. Her presentation could include her findings and her artistic connection might be to either show or read a compelling poem to the class.

The knowledge and application of art therapy extended beyond students and patients. Naumburg also claimed that art therapy "helps art educators to become more aware of themselves as people and teachers [and] in an understanding of dynamic psychology and the unconscious are essential to the art educator not only to advance the creativity of pupils but also in order to increase, thereby the mental health of their pupils and themselves" (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes on modern

education and psychotherapy). The ability to listen and empathize, along with learning and growing are essential elements of creating art. As Naumburg put it, "Gradually his [a child's] energies are transferred from unconscious, ego-centric attachments to the wider intercourse of social life. This indeed is a function of all art: self-expression in forms that are of social and communicable manner" (Box 15, 8). Meaning comes from the notion of reaching outward in one's community to create something larger than oneself is also what positive psychologist, Martin Seligman dubs *sustainable happiness*. Seligman writes that, "The meaningful life consists in belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self and humanity creates all the positive institutions to allow this: religion, political party, being green, the Boy Scouts, or the family" (12). People want to feel valued. Being connected to something larger than themselves allows them to feel part of something that is taking place. While art can initially be a solitary undertaking, it is generally meant to be public and serves to connect people with ideas.

### **Patients and Art Therapy**

However, the key for Naumburg was in encouraging her patients to express themselves through artwork, and this was very clearly not about the art, but about their communication as to what was underlying the art:

The symbolic images projected in art therapy are not interpreted to the patient as may be done in classical psychoanalysis. Instead, the art therapist focuses his efforts on assisting the patient to discover, for himself, what his symbolic designs mean to him. The therapist encourages free association to these symbolic images, helping the

patient either to recover the mood in which he created a picture or to recall the order in which he may have placed the color in his design (7)

It was also not only to recall "the primary importance of the unconscious as expressed in dreams, daydreams, fantasies, and wishes. [It was for the patient to be] encouraged to use his spontaneous art as a means for himself of discovering the meaning of his own symbolic productions" (Naumburg papers, box 53, "Analytically Oriented Art Therapy: Its Place and Purpose"). The goal for Naumburg was never to mentor artists from any of her programs, but to encourage authenticity and joy. Artistic self-expression was another means to explore one's voice. Naumburg illuminated through her citation of psychologist and once president of the American Psychological Association, Gardner Murphy's work that "learning isn't just about reading the great books, but about knowing oneself: the very heart is missing. The heart, as I see it, is the demand of the person for life, the nourishment and enrichment of what he already is" (Naumburg papers, box 53, "Art Therapy and Art Education"). Without the heart, there was no motivation and, hence, no life, compartmentalized or otherwise. Art is developed from an inner passion in a form that is conducive to an individual's expression. This was consistent with Naumburg's encouragement of self-discovery through creativity as a means of self-preservation. "The artist, like the man in the street, is at present reacting to the stress and threats of this 'age of anxiety'" (Box 53, 10).

### **Creativity and Art**

Naumburg continued to look to Murphy for his ideas about motivation through creativity. Murphy clarified how "creativity can respond to new opportunities [and]

In particular, the type of readiness for new attachments to which we have given the name of curiosity--that capacity to respond vibrantly to new content, new relationships, new processes, new persons, and new aspects of oneself--that readiness for discovery may itself be a central element in all creativeness" (Box 53, "Art as Symbolic Speech," 18). Planting the seeds for curiosity is a way of approaching learning that is creative and intrinsically motivated. When a genuine interest is explored, new experiences can occur. Creativity, according to psychologist and author of *Creativity and Flow*, Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, is "flow" state, openness, risk-taking, flexibility, curiosity, focus, and perseverance, and delving into complexity of the work, and allowing time to relax while organizing one's time, space, and activity.

The act of creation/creating something is fundamental toward developing ownership and deepening one's ever-growing identity and sense of self. Naumburg gave us a gift in reminding us that "Art as [sic] the groundwork of a true education" (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes for *Democratic Education on Trial*, unpublished). This is critical for where education should redirect its energy. *Nosce te Ipsum*, said in Latin, the Greek aphorism which means "know thyself," is a landmark on countless academic buildings. Knowing oneself leads to greater responsibilities in the world and nurturing others. However, Naumburg criticized how the education system does not work towards this end in saying: "From kindergarten through college, our present educational system fails to base itself on the student's understanding of himself, and in this failure, it omits the most important contribution which it could conceivably make toward human wisdom" (15). What

Naumburg meant is that processing learning throughout one's growth is vastly different depending on the person. The key, though, is how personal temperaments react to the outside stimuli they are given which are formed and grow with age. Naumburg recognized this growth development when she designed the Walden School and was faced with children who had behavioral disorders. They needed to learn from non-traditional methods. Although Naumburg noted how "The difference between normal and abnormal psychology is but one of degree and not of kind" (Box 97, 19), art could be used as self-expression for all students and could be a means to revitalize self-preservation.

Preserving oneself is necessary for survival not only for those who are struggling, but also for those who are thriving in college! Engaging in authentic interests sets a firm foundation for meaningful life interactions and experiences. Art is a dynamic and versatile means for self-discovery and creative thinking about larger issues; it opens the space for positive growth and transformation by exploring the imagination.

### **Thought, Feeling, and Movement**

Naumburg addressed how thought, feeling, and movement are the means through which students learn. Her research shows how a person's feelings can be expressed through art which can then be articulated into words. This makes art a powerful tool for helping students interpret their expression of ideas for what they have to say. Often, students are unsure how to begin writing. Offering more modalities supports student engagement more deeply because it is a way to bring together the physical and psychological aspects, as I've indicated in Chapter Two

through Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada's research. For example, my student (whom I will call Kylie) developed her paper/project which stemmed directly from her thoughts, feelings, and movements. Kylie is also a dance teacher who wanted to write her paper about positively influencing the well-being of her young dancers. She researched body image and healthy behaviors. Because dancers typically receive a great deal of daily feedback for improving their art, they are susceptible to self-harm often in the form of eating disorders, such as Kylie had experienced. In order to counter her experience, Kylie focused on her students' feelings and asked them to write positive statements on post-its, such as "I'm beautiful," which she then placed all the way around the large mirror where they took class. While Kylie's students were in class, they were then surrounded by the loving affirmations that they had created. Kylie's paper and project began with her own thoughts and feelings and connected through the actions of her students in a very encouraging way. Another example of thought, feeling, and movement can be found in the health sciences where illness and recovery are seamlessly instrumental through the practice of the medical narrative writing genre. Medical narrative is the stories of individual patients which are taught to medical students to encourage developing a deeper sense of empathy for what their patients might be experiencing psychologically. Additionally, this genre format enables other patients, family members, and practitioners to understand what is happening from the inside of the body through a patient's authentically felt description.

### **Arts-Based Research**

Naumburg's concepts for learning can be meaningfully applied in FYW

courses by heightening student senses and tapping into their perception through arts-based research (ABR) methodology as I've shown in Chapter Three. ABR is linked to how "Aesthetics draw on sensory, emotional, perceptual kinesthetic, embodied, and imaginal ways of knowing" (Leavy 5). For instance, visual imagery can leave a new impression about a topic. Graphic essays, such as "Formation of a Caribbean Illustrator" by Nicole Miles is a coming of age reflection of how and why drawing Black characters in comic strips got created. In looking at Miles' work, her graphic essay gives the visual understanding of why Black people were so hard to draw for her. Miles had never seen any comic strips of Black people before but she wanted to invent the images so that people who looked like herself could better relate to graphic essays by seeing her work. Writing that describes visual imagery can stimulate a reader's imagination, and when these images are seen visually, as Miles' combination of her thoughts, feelings, and struggles are seen through the movements of her varied character drawings, her story is brought to life more vividly. Having students read graphic essay models like Nicole Miles' manga can be a way for them to explore their own writing and ideas more deeply with visual aesthetics such as drawing, collage work, and painting.

Heightening aural forms of ABR, such as music, rhythm, drama, and movement are fun and accessible art forms that can playfully ignite writing for songs, spoken word, poems, and playwriting. These genres add to a more meaningful experience because these types of compositions need several drafts for quality to emerge. Gustatory writing, writing about food or cooking, is another form of ABR that connects multiple senses and is a creative way to build

community while enjoying a culinary experience. The writing style could be descriptive, process-based, or narrative and could examine personal, cultural, historical, and political perspectives.

As Naumburg advocated, a profound way to connect with student interests is to let them choose their own projects individually and guide them through. Students' freedom to choose allows for a higher level of motivation and joy of discovery. As a result, they will be more than likely to originate refreshing ideas never anticipated. For example, I have led my FYW students in working on their own projects over for the past several years. Their projects have greatly affected change and have crossed boundaries of race, class, and gender by developing awareness, connecting people, raising money, creating art, and volunteering. Some of their projects have included getting others to test and sign up as blood marrow donors; hosting an anti-bullying run and blog for peer mentoring; creating a toy drive; writing "sweet" notes for elderly people in an assisted living home; creating, making, and distributing healthy snacks for roommates; raising diabetes awareness by wearing and selling bracelets; raising money for Alzheimer's research, Ronald McDonald playhouse (for sick children), St. Jude's hospital, Special Olympics, Pencils of Promise; writing letters for soldiers overseas; creating more awareness of climate change by posting images on social media; creating self-care websites; giving talks at various community events about Planned Parenthood, equal pay for women, Black Lives Matter, the demands of college for a high school senior class, and gang violence awareness; developing an animal testing pledge and petition; getting a group to wear pink for breast cancer awareness and posting photos and



research on social media; setting up an essay contest for girls for winning a hand-made prom dress designed and made by the organizer; organizing a self-defense class; and creating a website and including true experiences for building solidarity in the LGBTQ community. Not only do all of my students' project examples show variety for Naumburg's concept of "making and doing," but they also reveal how they connected with their whole hearts, as Naumburg so eloquently writes. Almost every project chosen by my students was drawn from their own personal interests and was deeply important within their community. The academic papers that our students write can be academic and meaningful at the same time. The worry that our students might not be learning how to write research papers properly points to the need for a more creative, engaging approach.

### **Motivation and Art**

By reinforcing the idea that individual motivation can spark learning, Naumburg's claim that individual interests should become the center of importance for learning over a forced curriculum because she claimed that motivation is central to learning. Motivation, according to Albert Bandura, consists of four parts: 1) intentionality, meaning, to create plan of action and realizing it, 2) forethought, representative of visualizing action, 3) self-reactiveness which means to move from thought to action and taking steps, and 4) self-reflectiveness, meaning the metacognitive ability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy to reflect on one's thoughts and actions. All of these actions are necessary to perform an artistic or critical endeavor. Moreover, motivation is developed by creating mastery, belonging, and achievement and then self-determination takes over (Seifert, et al. 7,

9). Including more art and individual project work has a direct impact on motivation, as documented in the following study by James S. Catterall by the students who participated in the arts who were more successful and engaged in their communities than those who did not.

### **James S. Catterall's Longitudinal Art Study**

Art is quintessential for depth of development and growth by exploring new facets of thinking more meaningfully. In 2009, James S. Catterall published his findings related to arts in education in his book, *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art: A 12-Year National Study of Education in the Visual and Performing Arts*. The quantitative 12-year study details more than 12,000 students who engaged in art practices from the eighth grade to age 26. Overall, Catterall's research underscores how students involved in the arts are more motivated and engaged, have higher achievement levels and have actively participated more as volunteers and in the political arena years later. Catterall points out how "A host of instructional practices suggest that, at least at a meaningful margin, the teaching at arts-rich schools is geared toward deeper and more conceptual learning" (123). While the study primarily represents the results from three groupings, arts and academic success; music and math; and theatre arts and human development, specific categories with relation to writing and reading are pinpointed. In these targeted categories of reading books and going to the public library, high levels of engagement at age 26 are confirmed for groups who participated in the arts. The study also examines race and socioeconomic status in providing data. This is a crucial element for showing measures related to art, engagement, meaning, and

academic success in diverse populations because health is unequivocally connected to race and socioeconomics.

The purpose of “doing well” refers to viewing educational levels and means, “being successful in societally-rewarded achievements,” and, “doing good,” signifies “engaging in efforts to improve communities and the lives of others,” which focuses on communal participation and political actions, such as voting (Catterall 37, 41). Catterall illustrates the results in writing, “The arts serve to broaden access to meaning by offering ways of thinking and ways of representation through a spectrum of intelligences scattered unevenly across our population—for example resonating with the multiple and differing intelligences identified by Howard Gardner at Harvard” (Catterall 5).

What Howard Gardner means by the term, “multiple intelligences,” is that children do not all learn at the same pace in the same way, like Naumburg had also indicated. Instead, Gardner proposes the concept that cognition functions on multiple level that co-exist, but some are heightened more or less, depending on the individual. The intelligences were designed after testing and evaluating each category’s ability to solve a problem. The nine intelligences consist of: “verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematic intelligence, spatial-visual, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential” (Gardner). Linguistic refers to language and using it. Logical-mathematical is an analytic organizational ability to work through problems scientifically. Musical intelligence involves not only performance but composition skills. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence encompasses the use of one’s mind/body connection to problem solve.

Spatial intelligence refers to the use of space and pattern creation. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to recognize the intentions of others as well as the ability to communicate effectively. Intrapersonal intelligence is the introspective ability for self-assessment and the regulation of feelings. Naturalist refers to the appreciation of nature and animals and existential intelligence is an intuitive connection to existence.

By referring to Gardner's work, Catterall is emphasizing the ability to deepen naturally inclined modes of learning and bridge expanded growth through art. He reveals how, "Each of the art forms engages in particular ways specific physical, cognitive, and affective processes...They apply equally to performance and creation in music, dance, and theatre" (Catterall 140).

### **Meaningful Values and Joy**

James S. Catterall makes a particular distinction for examining the good life, in declaring that there may be multiple variations in understanding what this definition amounts to. Interestingly, five areas were taken into account: "competence, confidence, connections, character, and caring" (44). Excellence in education is another way to describe the category of "competence." Tenacity is meant by "confidence." "Connections" means community involvement. "Character" refers to personal integrity as it relates to education and "caring" refers to helping others. These categories intersect with the field of positive psychology in terms of human values. What is intriguing is how 70 different nations found the same top ten values of importance. In other words, "caring" correlates with the value, "benevolence," "confidence" and "character" correlate with "self-direction,"

“connection” correlates with “universalism,” and “competence” correlates with achievement (Peterson 181, 182). All of these meaningful qualities essentially tie in with Margaret Naumburg’s point that students need to explore their inner lives to get to know themselves so that the joy of life can be experienced and expressed. Naumburg writes that a person’s “whole approach to life has a certain transformation that changes his attitude” (Box 56, Lecture, “Fantasy and Reality in the Life of Children,” 26). Tangibly experiencing the world through the arts is a way of connecting one’s inner and outer life for nurturing these traits.

### **Neuroscience, Art, and Wholeness**

Naumburg’s insights about mental development through art are further evidenced in Catterall’s study through neuroscience and quantitative research data. Introducing and sustaining art practices, such as the visual arts, drama, music, and dance demonstrate how the arts physically create highways in the brain to connect bridges for making more connections faster. As I showed in Chapter Two, the theory of “neuroplasticity” connects how the brain re-positions itself to accommodate multiple demands placed on it when needed. What happens is that the process of the neurons firing shows steps skipped along the way for making these connections to “rewire the brain and that a rewired brain may perform tasks differently and perhaps more effectively or more efficiently” (Catterall 35). This is because, as neuroscientist Lukasz Konopka clarifies, the brain is literally able to reorganize itself in the process known as “brain plasticity” as imaging data shows (1). Thus, the brain’s complex network does not function in a linear pattern and

parts of the brain do not communicate with other parts. Catterall underscores the concept of brain plasticity by applying how

Arts learning and experiences, to varying degrees, reorganize neural pathways or the way the brain functions. Extended and or deep learning in the arts reinforces these developments. The development and re-organization of brain function due to learning in the arts may impact how and how well the brain processes other tasks (142)

The relation art has with neuroscience is profound because it implies that other types of learning are expanded through and beyond the creation of art. Beyond performing tasks, deep learning could transfer to other types of learning and intuitive behaviors, such as developing empathy. Not all brains are wired the same, nor do brains stay the same throughout the course of one's life, but "the brain can change its own structure and function through thought and activity" (Doidge location 193). In essence, what neuroscience highlights of Naumburg's thinking, is how each person is unique and that art serves as a vehicle for contributing to that person's insights and "wholeness" by "learning to uncover potentialities in order to lead them to greater maturation" (Box 97, "Introduction to the Practice of Art Therapy," 4).

### **Practice, Art, and Transferable Skills**

While other fields also utilize neuroplasticity, which is still not completely understood, creating art in any form requires an emphasis on continual practice for achievement. Or as Naumburg quipped, making and doing leads to real thinking (Naumburg papers, box 50, *Crisis* Lecture IX, "Emergence of the Individual in

Modern Education”). The repetition of refining artwork is an ingrained experience for the practitioner and it is in the doing where the conscious act of learning is shaped (Carey 222). Repetition is also true for learning how to write. The brain is being utilized all the time consciously and during nonconscious states writes Jason Wirtz, author of *The Write Mind for Every Classroom*. Accessing optimal thinking and writing is done through the metacognition of observing one’s own patterns of working, he further points out. Essentially, Wirtz reiterates the findings in James S. Catterall’s study by highlighting that invention is not only a creative exploration, but is a process of discovery where meaning making happens. Catterall claims, “In the end, efforts to write almost universally prompt authors to say that they learned about their subject through the very act of writing” (140). Thus, as Catterall reasons, connections are being made with ideas and the overall purpose or subject that writers are writing about while they compose (140).

There are also applications for related fields of study and work that directly utilize artistic endeavors:

Research in the arts has shown effects of specific arts pursuits on learning in closely allied curricular areas – for example, achievement in language and reading associated with involvement in drama and theatre. Achievement gains in language during high school would probably translate to added success in postsecondary education (Catterall 35).

This applied notion of learning connects to Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences because transferable skills gained through the learning are similar to how practicing and developing art processes connect to related work skills. Thus,

the broader implications for artistic endeavors, Catterall asserts, are how “Opportunities to experience the iterative processes of ‘art-making’ or inner conversations (continually refining ideas based on formative self-assessment) may be especially valuable for enhancing students’ abilities to learn both within and beyond the arts” (140). Art, then, serves as a vehicle for complex problem solving and viewing challenges in a new way, and this has a greater impact for how creative thinking impacts innovation for problem solving.

### **Art and Self-Efficacy**

Naumburg writes how valuable mastering oneself is. While art can be an outward skill set that can be drawn on for other purposes, such as the transferring of skill sets and connecting people empathetically, it can also help students to follow their own intuition and re-evaluate their inner thoughts. In honoring the self, confidence can build knowledge acquisition. Naumburg writes, “what can happen as a child begins to move to a discovery of himself, begins to believe he has something worthwhile expressing, that he is a person, and someone believes in him (Box 56, Lecture, “Fantasy and Reality in the Life of Children,” 26). Self-efficacy is a crucial element for students in “achieving academically” (Catterall 5).

According to Albert Bandura, in creating belief, a potential visualized future can be created and this promotes self-actualizing these beliefs. “Self-Actualization,” refers to achieving one’s complete potential, is the highest level on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, while physiological needs such as food and shelter are at the base level. James S. Catterall claims how “Self-beliefs may have contributed to their evident alignments with dominant educational and social values. They [students] were



more determined to get ahead and saw education as a path to this outcome.

Moreover, they believed that they could succeed” (71). The cyclical pattern of belief springing into accomplishment opens the channel for positive actions to take place. As Catterall’s findings show, “A number of studies have shown that gaining mastery in the arts leads children to feel a sense of accomplishment, and that such beliefs may spill over into non-arts areas of life” (71). The achievement, which develops self-efficacy, gives the student meaning, and thus, motivation to develop themselves further.

### **Play and Collaboration**

In essence, “play,” contributes to knowing oneself and Naumburg’s central goal for “self-preservation” because play forms the foundation for making life decisions that align with one’s values and interests. “Play” is an excellent teaching method and a powerful means for learning where students can discover what is important to them and what they are good at. Naumburg writes, “spontaneous expression in the creative arts offers unusual opportunities in which the teacher can help his students find themselves” (Box 14, “The Human Side of Teaching: An Introduction to Dynamic Psychology,” 23). Subsequently, students engage more when they are actively part of the learning experience. After all, Naumburg reasoned, the goal of school was not to “conquer” a certain amount of material, but

I see as the school’s real function the creation of an environment in which the twofold rhythm of group and individual life may develop into a truly social form. For without the expansion of many-sided individuals there can be no vital and varied social group. And without constant deepening

of a complex group life, there can be no complete individuals (Box 15, 28).

Play, essentially the inventive practice of cultural learning where socialization is at the center, is crucial then, for fostering positive individual development, thought responses, and behavioral actions in relation to others. Vygotsky writes how, while play is equated with the imagination, oral and written language “serves for an instrument of behavior regulation,” in that there are rules for the games being played (West 62). For example, if a child cannot accomplish a specific activity on his own like riding a horse, he imagines himself achieving the action through simulated play by using a mop to ride around as though he were. Consequently, play creates memories, forms new thought processes, and develops cognitive shifts (West 62). Catterall further emphasizes how play and collaboration promote belonging and form a healthier environment than learning individually and largely add to a student’s life success and decision making process (125). In addition to forming “enduring social resources,” play is equated with expanding positive emotions, which increases a “broader array of behavioral options” and increases “resilience” (Fredrickson 220, 221, 223). Thus, not only does art increase creative and social resources, but it builds a healthier immune system and helps students to know themselves for academic success and lifelong learning.

### **Workplace Wellness**

Health is about making choices and impacts lives beyond the college years. Like some cutting-edge businesses, Arianna Huffington’s new company, *Thrive Global*, is a wellness company that emphasizes the importance of health and well-

being and works with companies to improve productivity through the emphasis of creating healthy behaviors. Huffington explains how having a work-life balance does not mean that one side is on the opposite of the other, but that they are on the same side of health. Huffington recognizes the value of health because of her own experience with being an over-caffeinated achiever. Her books, *The Sleep Revolution*, emphasize the importance of sleep, and *Thrive*, address stress and burnout that is occurring on a global scale. Her books, like her new company, *Thrive Global*, are philosophical roadmaps that redefine success through well-being.

### **Art and Wellness Theory**

Thinking and acting for oneself, as Naumburg stresses, is on every level, imperative, and therefore, the possibilities that art creates as an important expression for living can influence future outcomes for people. By including art in higher education, students' sense of play, interests, confidence, and belonging in community is nurtured. Art is basic and rooted in our DNA regardless of where people are from and what is obscured. Each era promises different challenges for learners and growth for identity to form. Emphasizing art exploration and creative thinking is important because the building blocks of foundational learning are still being formulated throughout the college years. Moreover, self-directed art projects help students uncover their vocational interests because students become more self-authenticated in creating art. Art can bring undeveloped thoughts, ideas, and problems forward which can help students and teachers alike to draw on students' true strengths and so develop in maturity and depth. Naumburg writes, "But

whatever interpretation we may give to our own 'art,' we must realize that modern man still draws from his unconscious, today, as did men in past cultures" (Naumburg papers, box, 53, "Art as Symbolic Speech," 4). Naumburg warned that the unconscious could bring up unresolved problems, but could be guided when she quoted psychiatrist Lawrence S. Kubie in writing, "the goal of preventative psychiatry is to bring children up so that their deepest moral struggles will occur in the light instead of the dark, so that the critically formative years of childhood they will learn to tolerate consciously the struggles which go on inside of them. There is no other way out of this morass" (Box 97, Lecture, "Introduction to the Practice of Art Therapy," 11). The choice for preventative intervention underscore the findings of Dori Hutchinson, who points out that in the American College Health survey of 2014, "students are reporting more depression, loneliness, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts than any other generation before them" (Harmening 2). During 2020, in the time of Covid-19, these problems are even more certainly exacerbated and will require a much more collaborative hands-on approach.

### **Summary**

The development of art and play can be encouraged in FYW and literature classrooms for a forward-thinking education model to expand positive motivation, interests, creative thinking, creativity, self-discovery, build character strengths, develop community, and enact meaning. Developing a stronger emphasis on valuing and engaging with the arts promotes self-preservation, joy, and wellness. The outcome could result in better overall health and higher mortality rates, increased positivity and happiness, higher student retention rates, and a stronger

economy. In other words, by connecting with the arts, people could feel better, be healthier, live longer, and be happier. Thus, students' wellness needs, which consist of emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational, and environmental well-being, as defined by Halbert Dunn's Wellness Theory, could be met.

As I have demonstrated throughout my dissertation, wellness can be a choice, given the right tools. This chapter has highlighted Margaret Naumburg's insights that authenticity of self is the most valuable asset a person has and directly connects to personal wellness. Moreover, I have shown how the composition classroom is an ideal dedicated safe space where students are open to learning and where new habits are formed. I have further established how students can explore their interests through play and creating art. Teacher and student modeling of play promotes scaffolded student learning, an important element illustrated by Vygotsky for child development. I have drawn the conclusion that there are significant benefits for wellness linked to motivation and learning from creating art, whereby transferable life skills deepen, self-expression is fostered, and health is improved.

## CONCLUSION

The goal in my dissertation has been to emphasize wellness and creativity as a foundation for critical academic thought and writing. Creativity opens the potential for ideas to be expressed in new ways. In turn, the ability to play, as creativity encourages, expands physical, social, and intellectual capacity for thought responses which means that a person has more possible actions that they can facilitate. Opening this channel enables self-expression to occur and in so doing, one becomes self-aware and empathetic, and one's health improves.

Moreover, designing writing exercises that tap into students' emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational, and environmental well-being allows for deeper self-discovery and engagement. Student participation in this type of work means that they are responsibly taking an active role in their health by writing about it. Participating in health is the ability to influence the events of one's future and the framework for making health choices begins in adolescence. Thus, as I have suggested, students should be encouraged to explore their own unique habitual practices and interests in a wellness writing course. Figuring out one's interests is a way to develop "flow," or raising the level of one's consciousness when doing an activity that is so enjoyable "that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi 4). One's commitment to health opens communication for learning how to strengthen life skills and the writing itself.

I have highlighted Margaret Naumburg's pioneering work as a backdrop for our reinventing education, art, healing, and innovation. Naumburg understood how to work with children and achieve positive results. She knew that individuals are

uniquely different, so they must march to their own drumbeat. For a more effective teaching method, she emphasized student interests above the set curriculum of study. A few of her troubled students led Naumburg to develop art therapy in her quest for understanding how to help them heal. The framework she applied as the “mother of art therapy” was for her patients to create art and for them to interpret it so that they could heal. Although Naumburg was not directly credited for her work about educational psychology, she was a decisive forerunner. The thread of it connected her to having two equally distinguished careers. Most importantly, though, Naumburg asked the singular question, “Education for what?” At the core, Naumburg wrote how a person must “master” oneself before mastering the world in saying, “The law of self-preservation is certainly the first law of life” (Naumburg papers, box 14, notes for *Democratic Education on Trial*, unpublished). Her mission was simply to uncover the heart. She found that if people were well-grounded in who they are, discovered what they liked and could do something with those interests, they would be more apt to thrive in their lives. In line with Naumburg’s lifelong premise to creatively spotlight self-knowledge, I have argued how wellness sets the groundwork. Wellness not only inspires student agency, but it is interconnected with creativity and the process of writing.

Jennifer A. Quarrie’s autoethnographic Masters’ thesis, “The Symbiosis of Creativity and Wellness: A Personal Journey” was Quarrie’s documentation of her own six-week journey of her physical health, which included her observation of physical behaviors such as sleep patterns and yoga and meditation practices, and how these behaviors affected her. Quarrie experienced internal improvements like

better focus as well as major shifts in her life. Quarrie's assertions confirm my overall findings that self-knowledge, which can also be interpreted as self-preservation, is integral to wellness and creativity, and is a part of "transcendence," one of the 24-character strengths that connects a person to the larger universe and gives meaning. It provides motivation and gives life a purpose. Quarrie's research highlights the valuable connection between wellness and creativity which is necessary for developing self-knowledge. Additionally, Quarrie's thesis, like R.F. Baumeister's research on belonging, affirms that physical needs and relationships must be met and nurtured for one's health. The clearest example of this relational need for the social wellness component is how people are willing to blatantly ignore science and risk their lives to socialize during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Quarrie's work synthesizes health and Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs," in correlation with Dr. Dunn's "Wellness Theory" and chakras to explain how there is a union between creativity and personal wellness. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is a triangular psychological chart that represents the different levels of need being met which starts at basic needs, such as food and shelter, and builds to safety, love, and self-esteem. Maslow places "self-actualization" at the top of the chart. Self-actualization is congruent with Margaret Naumburg's notion of self-preservation, which Naumburg stresses should be the most important goal for education. The analogy that Quarrie uses to describe the necessity of the wellness and creative journey is that of watering a plant of watering a plant (Quarrie 95). Just as a plant needs water to grow, wellness habits get stronger with continued practice (Quarrie 95).



Quarrie's documentation of elements such as I have addressed, like utilizing visualization and physical exercise, shapes creativity and informs wellness. In her successful attempt to conjoin her interest in medicine and cognitive science with compassion, she documents her own self-care. Throughout her experience, Quarrie researches her sleep patterns, movement, such as yoga, nutrition, liquid intake, meditation, and mindfulness practices and her support network for six weeks (Quarrie ii). As a result, Quarrie noticed: 1) "Significant lifestyle changes, a more holistic and balanced approach to priorities and time management, and insights towards personal, familial, and vocational goals" along with "deepening personal skills in creative thinking, creative problem solving, affective thinking, intuition and mindfulness, and forged additional steps on a path towards self-actualization and transformational leadership" (Quarrie iii). 2) She accentuates that people need to carve their wellness according to their own "circumstantial needs and goals" (Quarrie 84). And 3) "Wellness reciprocally fosters creativity" (Quarrie 97). Her individually attuned self-discoveries broadened her healthful approach to life and profoundly deepened her thinking and her ability to take action on many levels. Also, her conclusion that wellness and creativity work in tandem to advance the notion as to how teaching writing can be most usefully approached.

The key distinction I pointed out is how Quarrie's written documentation of her journey leads her to self-reflect about the impact of her journey. Not only does Quarrie perceive her health to be better, but she also experiences metacognitive learning because she is writing about her health as she physically experiences it. Her psychological and physiological connection is united through her writing.

Quarrie uses her creativity in navigating her own uniquely designed wellness journey, encounters her invention of writing about her health, and experiences good health in her self-reflection of it. Thus, in writing about her own health, her identity deepens through her learning because she writes and reflects about it. Therefore, she becomes more self-aware.

Richard D. Ashmore and Lee J. Jussim's research is underscored through Quarrie's findings in stating how, "Health protection is a matter of perceptual and behavioral activity of the 'self' (9). Quarrie keeps a record of her health and becomes acutely aware as to how her physicality manifests itself in her understanding of it. Because she is practicing healthy activities, she perceives herself as being healthier. Her documented writing confirms her awareness that not only does she perceive herself to be healthier, but that she actually is healthier. This perception of health is positive. It correlates with Barbara L. Fredrickson's research that people who experienced more positive emotions are more resilient over time than others (Role, 223). By focusing on positivity, negative emotions dissipate and retreat. Additionally, "Positive affect correlates with improved cognitive performance" (Wirtz 69). Further, Quarrie's research connects with the PERMA principles from the field of Positive Psychology (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement), since every single component of the PERMA elements was fulfilled for her. Moreover, Quarrie's study demonstrated creativity in her individually crafted model approach for wellness.

Quarrie's process can be applied to writing by tailoring concepts of health and creativity into writing exercises. Health and creativity can shape writing from

a holistic standpoint for expanding students' mindful practices. The writing process is complex and can be shaped through tapping into the invention phase of writing by focusing on identity. The emphasis of creative memoir writing in particular, can allow students to take a step back and observe themselves more objectively so that they can grow. Writing is an experience. Moreover, situating and carefully selecting exercises to support student growth opens a bandwidth of imagination for creative health intervention. As social psychologists Kristel Gallagher and Shevaun Stocker point out, it is imperative to pay particular attention to writing exercises that support students' social emotional and learning growth.

Wellness is a great start for writing because it is integral to one's consciousness. Wellness writing can render discovering clarity for oneself and finding the best way to express oneself and one's ideas through words, images, sounds, movements, and tastes. Education and composition theorist Jason Wirtz asks instructors to think through their own writing process in order to help them think about how their students write. Wirtz harkens back to a reminder of what works in writing and how to access it more readily for the students themselves. So essentially, what I'm advocating for is that the writing curriculum can see a resurgence from what the 1970s writing theorists offer and that is, a return for including writing genres, such as journaling, personal memoir, and poetic formats, which are useful for fostering student's intellectual and physical expansion. Additionally, I have suggested adding other techniques, such as developing character strengths, examining mindful self-perception, self-talk, visualization, meditation, and physical exercise which emphasize positive personality growth.

Thus, all of these writing exercises build trust for the writing process to develop and for constructive feedback to take place. Trust is necessary to build resilience. Creative work, such as arts-based research projects would further add to the forum for building students' valuable personal resources for growth potential. By expanding ideas exponentially through varying mediums, students are able to create new platforms to be self-expressed and fully articulate their ideas.

To take compositionist Linda Flower's work further in terms of how self-reflection is an act of self-awareness that is linked to social consciousness is to consider how the physical body is impacted by environmental influences and how the mind processes it. Flower frames how internalized thoughts and writing lead to the interpretative act of externalized writing. This is an incredibly powerful idea. People are intimately connected to the spaces they inhabit. As I have pointed out in Chapter Three, these spaces, which wellness theorists Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols define as "life domains," are central to understanding identity and a person's sense of belonging. Moreover, environmental life domains largely determine behavior and choices that rhetoricians make and the outlook that a person has. Psychologists Ed Diener, Laura King, and Sonja Lyubomirsky found that happy people view all of their life domains positively (825). Student writers must constantly negotiate with their own environments, both past, present, and future. Environment, then, can determine how and what writing occurs. Thus, I have shown how environment is a central part of how writing is negotiated for the writer and is central to understanding how the rhetorician functions. The role of the

environment can be specifically determined through self-reflection and can be developed on some level, given the tools to build self-awareness.

Rewiring environmental perception takes work. It takes channeling what is going right for a positive outcome. Rewiring also means that students can observe their engagement of wellness components (emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocational) and the PERMA principles (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement) through writing for enabling deeper perspective and growth to occur. I have emphasized and provided multiple ways throughout my dissertation that building resilience and cultivating wellness and PERMA will enable students to rewire their thinking for achieving their goals.

As I have shown that over the past century, writing instructors and educational theorists have wrestled with how to teach composition where ideology encompassed elevating the individual spirit, teaching *how* to think rather than *what* to think, and the “spiral” method of discovery versus “drills” and “the mechanic” focus. Writing is a means for the development of new information to emerge (Csikszentmihalyi *Flow* 131). Essentially, the thinking from the past century has come full circle with Margaret Naumburg’s life work in education and art therapy from the 1920s to the 1970s who gives further evidence as to why art and creativity expands and deepens learning.

The overall achievements gained from participation in the arts develops self-efficacy for students. Students feel good because they are part of something bigger than themselves. Art making leads to wellness because students become their most authentic selves in the process and they continue thriving in their lives because they

continue honoring what they like doing. Being authentic opens the door to happiness. Happy people are good at what they do and are confident in doing it. Additionally, they are motivated because they show “optimism and a sense of personal mastery and control” (Diener et al. 825). In other words, happy people get the job, are happy, achieve more, are more successful in the workplace, and have a higher income (822, 823).

Naumburg’s creative thinking and Anu Partanen’s view of the Finnish education values and system offer insight as to how education can change on a structural level. What is at stake with respect for valuing wellness in the writing classroom, in addition to the individual students, is how the larger concept pertaining to societal values plays a role. The self and social systems operate in relation to one another (Ashmore 12). Inequity of resources is one of the most critical factors pertaining to health (Jamner 13). Fanning critical inquiry as to how to create a more equal balance of resource distribution and power could support preventative shifts in health for more vulnerable communities and populations to address “affordability, access, and accountability,” and in the university sector, largely affects race, class, gender, disability, and those with job insecurity (Jamner 44).

The future of societal wellness depends on the approaches taken now. Institutions are largely where positive, preventative approaches can be implemented for the younger generation. Higher education might be the last opportunity where a structured environment exists for the inclusion of wellness in a person’s life, and therefore, is the most crucial for one’s future. As it stands, the traditional model for

health is currently missing the connection between behavior and outcomes because it is primarily concerned with the diagnosis (Jamner and Stokols 54). It is also crucial to reverse the negative stigma associated with mental health. Applying Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols' principles of preventative behavior in the writing classroom within higher education could produce measurable lasting results. Sociologists Richard D. Ashmore and Richard J. Contrada find that "The links of self to health are many and diverse: identity influences disease; self moderates paths to illness; self and identity mediate causal progression to sickness; health influences self-conception" (254). Wellness is certainly a demand that can be met by mainstream universities as shown through the model examples at Yale University, where one quarter of all Yale students take "The Science of Well-Being" course and at New York University, where "The Science of Happiness" course is the most popular elective.

Future study could include more qualitative student interviews from participating higher education wellness writing classes. Additionally, quantitative research could develop a solid methodology for cross-studying several diverse cultural and socioeconomic control groups of students who participate in wellness writing classes and their lives after college. Thus, opening the door to self-awareness would offer our students the advantage for starting self-care early in life and open the door wider for happiness, success, and active participation in their communities. At the end of the day, we strive to see our child grow into a person who is generous and can provide for herself, can be happy, live honestly, laugh, and love fully.

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box 14, promotional materials and reviews of *The Child and the World*

box 14, notes on modern education and psychotherapy

box 15, “The Eurythmics of Jacque Dalcroze”

box 50, *Crisis* Lecture 9, “Emergence of the Individual in Modern Education”

box 53, “Art Expression and the Unconscious”

box 53, “Art as Symbolic Speech”

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