

**UNPACKING WRITER IDENTITY: HOW BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
INFORM WRITING INSTRUCTION**

by

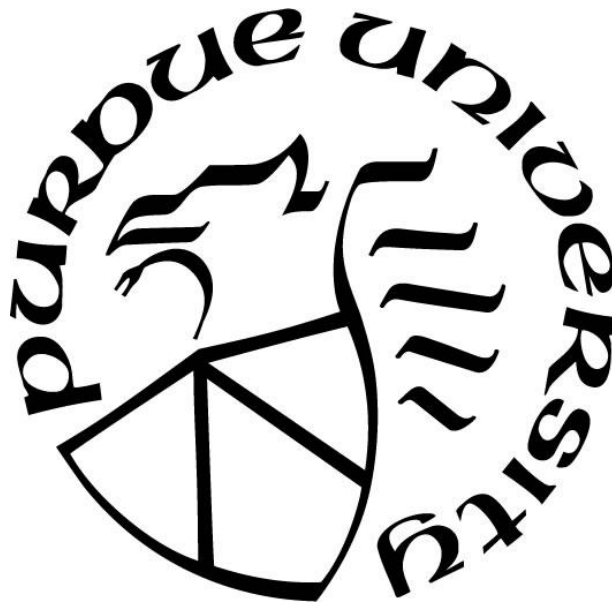
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Dedicated to my wife and kids. Thank you for your support and love.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the writer identity of four preservice teachers from a large midwestern University. I utilized the narrative inquiry methodology. I interviewed participants four times: Once in January 2019, January 2020, March 2020, and May 2020. I also asked participants to submit a visual metaphor and reflection. Additionally, I observed participants teach in the secondary classroom. Primarily, the findings reveal that participant writer identities largely influence their secondary writing pedagogy. The findings also indicate that participant writer identities were strongly influenced by their k-12 English teachers. Lastly, the findings suggest that participants experienced trouble navigating tensions in writing instruction. The implications suggest that teacher educators can highlight identity work in teacher education courses to strengthen writer identity. Similarly, I recommend in the Implications section that teacher educators design activities to strengthen preservice teachers' writer identities so they can strengthen the writer identity of future secondary students. The implications also underscore how teacher educators can highlight the tensions that preservice teachers may encounter as a secondary writing instructor, and how to navigate such tension. This study complements the research on writing teacher education and provides new possibilities to effectively prepare writing instructors.

INTRODUCTION: INQUIRING INTO NEW RESEARCH

In the fall of 2017, I (unknowingly) began my dissertation work as I read about secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers who felt uncomfortable as writers and teachers of writing (McKinney, 2017; Whitney, 2017). This was news to me. I graduated from an English education program where a strong emphasis on writing and writing instruction imbued confidence in my writing and writing pedagogy. As a secondary teacher, I regularly implemented strategic approaches and process writing activities that I learned throughout my teacher education program. Specifically, I drew inspiration from methods courses that were designed for the teaching of writing and the teaching of grammar. This need not mean that I was flawless; on the contrary, I reflect on my first few years as a secondary ELA teacher and can identify contradictions and shortcomings according to my current—and strengthened—understanding of writing pedagogy. Even so, I enjoyed opportunities to write, both personally and professionally, and I had confidence in my ability as a writing instructor. I attribute my confidence and preparation as a writing instructor to my university professors who sufficiently prepared me to teach secondary writing.

I thought every secondary ELA instructor had a similar experience as I did: An experience where knowledgeable and confident writing professors led them through a course on composition pedagogy. Similarly, I thought each secondary ELA teacher, after having completed this course, was a confident writer and writing instructor. Imagine my shock when I read the literature that suggested that many writing teachers do not like to write nor do they prefer to teach writing (e.g., Whitney, 2017). This was not only surprising, but, I felt, inherently problematic. How could secondary ELA instructors successfully prepare students to think and compose like authentic writers (see Langer, 2011) if they could not model that same behavior? My inquiries led me to a conversation with one of my writing mentors, Dr. Deborah Dean, during an informal conversation

at the 2017 convention for the National Council of Teachers of English. She wondered how writing instructors navigated time in the classroom if writing instruction was not emphasized. This conversation helped to shape my thinking and inquiry as I continued to pursue writer identity.

To that end, issues in identity, writer identity, and identity development then became a focal point of my research and scholarship. Many of the regular conversations I had with my advisor, Dr. Janet Alsup, focused on these topics and similar inquiries. After much consideration and conversation with Dr. Alsup, I designed a pilot study to explore the possibilities to facilitate a strong writerly identity with preservice teachers (PSTs). To my surprise, I found most of the PSTs who participated in my study had a rich history of writing: They wrote for a variety of purposes and to a variety of audiences beyond their required academic coursework.

This pilot study only led me to reconsider my inquiry. If these PSTs already had rich writer identities, then I determined that I had asked the wrong question. I sought out additional insights and support from Dr. Anne Whitney and Dr. Alsup who both led me to a new inquiry: How do ELA PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identities and the teaching of writing in secondary schools? Instead of designing a study to facilitate a writerly identity for these PSTs—an identity they already claimed—I found it necessary to inquire how their unique writer identities influenced their writing pedagogy. Even more, the literature I read in preparation for my preliminary exams spoke to this very idea. Indeed, if teacher identity “*is a pedagogical resource*” (Morgan, 2004, p. 174, emphasis added) beyond the second language acquisition Morgan draws from (see Simon, 1995), then I was determined to explore how writer identity influenced writing instruction.

Equally as important in this inquiry were the possible implications: If one’s writer identity does, in fact, influence their writing pedagogy, then what does that mean for the teaching of writing

and for writing teacher education? Specifically, how might teacher educators leverage this phenomenon to explore writing instruction in secondary methods courses? I conducted this study with these questions in mind.

CHAPTER ONE

The 2012 NCTE/NCATE standards for the preparation of secondary ELA teachers require ELA PSTs to demonstrate a strong command in writing, both as a writer and as a teacher of writing. According to the standards, PSTs should be able to compose for a variety of purposes and audiences and through a variety of genres (p. 1). Further, PSTs should also be able to design writing experiences for future students that (a) are grounded in relevant theory and practice, including the use of grammar in context; (b) extend secondary student thinking with informed feedback (p.2); (c) utilize appropriate digital writing tools and opportunities to frame experiences for “multimodal discourse” (p. 1), and (d) implement appropriate assessments that enable secondary students to grow. Though this is not an inclusive list of every possible writing opportunity teacher educators should frame, the standards aim to prepare PSTs to enter the secondary classroom as effective writing instructors. Implicit in the goals outlined by the NCTE/NCATE standards is the transfer of skill, approach, and perhaps even attitude towards writing and writing instruction.

However, despite the attempts of effective teacher educators (see Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, & Rush, 2018), and their adherence to the NCTE/NCATE standards (2012), many PSTs view writing negatively and consider themselves to be poor writers (e.g., Morgan, 2010). This is problematic because the way a teacher identifies as a writer is a powerful influence in the quality of their writing instruction (Morgan, 2017). PSTs are not alone as uncertain writers and writing instructors. Indeed, many practicing ELA teachers also do not identify as writers (e.g., McKinney, 2017; Whitney, 2017) or writing instructors (e.g., Whitney, 2017). Because of this, there is a need to understand “how teacher-writer identities are enacted in school contexts” (Cremin & Oliver, 2016, p. 292) because “few studies focus on teachers’ identities as writers in school” (Cremin & Baker, 2014, p. 31). To that end, I focus my primary inquiry on the intersection of PST

writer identity and writing pedagogy during their student teaching semester in order to understand how teacher educators can prepare effective teachers of writing.

Statement of the Problem

Inherently problematic to the teaching of writing is that many secondary ELA teachers and PSTs do not identify as writers (e.g., McKinney, 2017; Morgan, 2010; Whitney, 2017). Cremin and Oliver's (2016) review of the literature from 1990-2015 suggests that "there are insufficient data to support the oft-advanced tenet that teachers of writing must write" (p. 291). Simply put, writing teachers are not writing. McKinney (2017) offers support for this statement, contending that many ELA teachers today do not consider themselves writers. In fact, Whitney (2017) argues that many writing instructors "dread and avoid writing, and some by extension dread and avoid *teaching* writing" (p. 67, emphasis in original). The fact that many writing instructors do not write is not a new phenomenon: Emig (1971) claimed that secondary writing teachers "do not write" 50 years ago (p. 98).

The dearth of writing teachers writing may be a result of the general lack of writing instruction in English education programs (see Morgan, 2010; Myers et al., 2016, Pasternak, personal communication). Though some teacher education programs strengthen PSTs' writer identities (Myers et al., 2016), the National Commission on Writing (2003) and an exploratory study on writing teacher education (Myers et al., 2016) reveal that the instructors in teacher education programs¹ generally underperform in preparing students to be strong writers and writing instructors. Myers et al. suggest multiple significant reasons why university instructors may

¹ Most of the instructors noted in the study by Myers et al. (2016) taught either literacy courses (n=55) and/or reading methods courses (n=51).

ineffectively prepare teachers of writing: Among them are a focus on reading instruction (p. 318), and only a “little time” for writing instruction (p. 323).

The finding that teacher education programs do not effectively prepare teachers of writing may be due in part to insufficient writing methods courses. According to Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, and Rush (2018), most PSTs enroll in at least two methods courses (4-6 credits) to fulfill graduation requirements; however, this does not necessarily mean their journey will include a writing methods course. Indeed, some PSTs advance through their program by taking one general ELA methods course and then another (Pasternak et al., 2018, p. 32). Though there may be much to admire about completing two general English education methods courses which integrate many aspects of English teacher education, such a model echoes Morgan’s (2010) fear about PST writing instruction preparation: She claims that some PSTs’ experiences in writing instruction are relegated to only a couple of classes in a literacy course.

To exemplify this point, Myers et al. (2016) found 80% of teacher educators (n=63) implement writing instruction within “reading courses” (p. 323). Morgan and Pytash (2014) problematize this approach, suggesting that without a methods course on writing instruction “the topic of writing is ‘sandwiched in’ the semester . . . this provides PSTs with, at best, surface understandings of and experiences with teaching writing” (p. 30). Even more indicting, it may provide only surface experiences with writer identity, too. In light of these and similar circumstances, it may not be hyperbolic if “one might conclude that colleges and universities simply do not prepare teachers for the teaching of writing” (Hillocks, 2006, p. 74).

The dearth of dedicated courses on writing teacher education is problematic because this single course “can positively impact preservice teachers’ sense of self as writers, their attitudes toward writing and sense of self-efficacy” (Morgan, 2010, p. 363). Similarly, Zimmerman, Morgan,

and Kidder-Brown (2014) underscored how a dedicated course on writing positively influenced PSTs' writing beliefs, enhancing their knowledge of composition pedagogy. In other words, both Morgan (2010) and Zimmerman et al. (2014) document how a specific course on writing instruction can positively influence PSTs' writer identities.

In addition to the lack of writing instruction broadly, Alsup (2006) has long called for more identity development to be conducted in teacher education courses. Generally, identity work may be necessary to effectively prepare writing instructors given that identity does not emerge naturally as part of a student's journey through the university (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2004, p. 53). Even more, PSTs who engage in identity work might more fully come to know "the significance of their professional identity, what is meant by developing a teacher identity, factors influencing their identity development and the changes they experience in their identity" (Izadinia, 2013, p. 696). And, perhaps most poignantly, PSTs who graduate from their teacher preparation programs without a clear identity are more likely to struggle as early career teachers (e.g., Alsup, 2006; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Danielwicz, 2001; Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Significantly, direct work in identity construction can help PSTs stay in the profession (Alsup, 2006).

Thus, it is imperative that teacher educators accept the responsibility to help PSTs establish a strong writer identity (Morgan, 2017) and transition to strong writing instructors (Morgan and Pytash, 2014), perhaps for no greater reason than because identity affords clarity in both direction and goals (Izadinia, 2013). However, Whitney (2017) argues that "scholars and teacher educators" are inadequately supporting the identities of teacher-writers (p. 68). My research is aimed to understand writer identity and how such identity is enacted in the secondary classroom. Ultimately, my goal in conducting this research is to learn how to effectively prepare strong writing instructors.

Statement of the Purpose

Cremin and Oliver (2016) contend that the field needs additional research examining “how teacher-writer identities are enacted in school contexts” (p. 292). Thus, my research strengthens the body of empirical research on how writer identity is enacted in school contexts, or, more specifically, how writer identity acts as writing pedagogy in school contexts. Ultimately, my research is *less* about identity construction and *more* about identity influence. Specifically, I study how PSTs writer identity influences their writing pedagogy during their student teaching semester. Further, my research aims to support PST teacher-writer identity, and writer identity at large, through the stories they share and their opportunity to create and reflect on a visual metaphor that represents their writer identities. In sum, I seek to help teacher educators effectively prepare future writing instructors.

The research questions are as follows: How do ELA PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identity and the teaching of writing in secondary schools? Sub questions include (a) what writing opportunities do PSTs frame for students and how does that connect to the PSTs’ personal writing habits? And (b) what leads PSTs to write?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework rests on two primary pillars: Constructivism and narrative theory. Foremost, I describe how constructivism influenced my thinking and orientation to the research. Following, I highlight narrative theory as both an epistemology and ontology.

Constructivism

I utilized a constructivist lens to ground my theoretical understanding throughout my research. Constructivism uniquely aligns with the work of narrative inquiry in that “narrative

inquiry seems consonant with constructivist and interpretive perspectives” (Jones, Torres, and Arminio, 2014, p. 86). Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (1994) contend that “the aim of inquiry is *understanding and reconstruction* of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold” (p. 113). This aligns with one of the foremost goals of narrative inquirers in that they aim to understand (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Thus, the purpose of my research is to understand the writer identity of PSTs—including how PSTs connect their writer identity to their classroom writing pedagogy—by “[examining] experience with an eye to identifying new possibilities within that experience” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 55). In other words, my goal is for participants to discover new possibilities for their writing pedagogy by examining their writer identity.

Beyond this, Schwandt (1994) argues that constructivists create knowledge, and Jones et al. (2014) build on this understanding by claiming that constructivism reflects “how individuals learn and make meaning linking to new knowledge to existing understanding” (p. 17). In other words, a constructivist lens “points up the unique experience of each of us” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Indeed, this lens enables people to create—or construct—knowledge based on the way new knowledge uniquely informs previous understanding or experience (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Significantly, the insights and understandings others gain are “subject to continuous revisions” which allow people to continually refine their understandings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This is important because there is no one correct answer from a constructivist lens, but an “informed and/or sophisticated” understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

Under the umbrella of a constructivist lens—a lens that allowed both myself and participants to construct new understandings with new experiences, learning, and insights—I also drew from Morgan’s (2004) understanding of teacher identity as pedagogy. Morgan synthesizes Cummins’ (2001, 2002) framework this way: “If we are to make teachers aware of identity as

having pedagogical implications, then we should attempt to convey that information in ways closely related to teacher's own pedagogical experiences and ways of knowing" (p. 177). Specifically, teacher educators can encourage PSTs to consider how their writer identity may influence writing pedagogy through intentional reflection. Thus, a constructivist lens from which I draw may help PSTs consider their experiences in writing and the teaching of writing to identify the connection between their writer identity and their writing pedagogy.

Narrative Theory

I provide a more robust literature review of narrative theory in Chapter 3, but I offer a brief statement about the significance of narrative thinking here: Freeman (2017) contends that narratives at large are noteworthy because they must be internalized and interpreted to make meaning. To that end, "narratives can help bring order out of chaos, provide explanations for unexpected events, and also spark reflection, critique, and rearticulation of events" (p. 36). Participants not only shared their narratives reflectively and critically, but my interpretation of their narratives—their meaning, significance, and implications—was grounded in narrative thinking. In other words, I examined and interpreted participants' stories about writing and writing instruction to learn more about how their identity influences pedagogy (e.g., Freeman, 2017).

Narrative Theory as Epistemology and Ontology. In addition to utilizing the theoretical lens of constructivism, I also focus on narrative theory as epistemology and ontology (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Epistemology has subtle differences in definition according to various scholars, but in general, I draw from this understanding: Epistemology underscores "philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 9). Narrative inquirers implement "storied accounts" for meaning making (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.14). Indeed, narrative

inquiry “seeks to examine experience with an eye to identifying new possibilities within that experience” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 55), underscoring “the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures” (Bell, 2002).

Moreover, it is imperative that narrative inquirers commence their research by examining experience ontologically (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Similar to epistemology, there are multiple definitions of ontology. I frame my understanding of ontology as the “nature of reality” (Jones et al., p. 15). Ontology stakes its importance in narrative inquiry for multiple reasons: Some researchers argue that narrative inquiry is “oriented toward ontology more than epistemology because [it is] about developing an understanding of experience” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2011, p. 59). Narrative inquiry as an ontology addresses the ways narrative inquirers understand their phenomenon. In other words, narrative inquirers examine experience as a way of being. This is exemplified in their approach to storied data, which allows them to examine the experiences of the participant (and even their own experiences) for new insights.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature will address four primary aspects of my research. I highlight the following in my literature review: (a) identity broadly and identity in the context of writing teachers, (b) the dearth of identity construction in university sponsored secondary ELA programs, (c) writing teacher preparation, (d) effective writing practices, and (e) writing activities in the secondary classroom.

Conceptualizing and Defining Identity

People are always in the process of “becoming,” and that becoming is comprised of multiple identities (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Gee, 2000; Wenger, 1998), sometimes even at odds with each other (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10; Morgan, 2004). The literature surrounding identity at large makes clear that identity is multifaceted and convoluted (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Alsup, 2006), subject to change (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Morgan, 2004), contextual (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Alsup, 2006; Gee, 2000; Morgan, 2004; Trent, 2010) or community-based (Colliander, 2017; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Wenger, 1998), and iterative, occurring throughout the course of one’s lifetime (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

Identity is not easily defined (Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt, 2000). In fact, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) note that one of the main challenges in understanding identity is anchoring it with a strong definition. Even so, multiple scholars define it according to their understanding. For example, Danielewicz (2001) defines identity as an “understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are” (p. 10). Gee (2000) views identity differently in that he believes it is “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person,’ in a given context” (p. 99). Still, others view identity as a

holistic representation of the self. For instance, Mishler (1999) considers identity “a collective term referring to the dynamic organization of sub-identities that might conflict with or align with each other” (p. 8). Similarly, Glenn, Ginsberg, and King-Watkins (2018) synthesize and summarize Weinreich’s understanding of identity as follows: “Identity is not a singular representation of the self but a mediation of the totality of experiences and one’s responses to those experiences within the context of the world” (p. 309). The various definitions and conceptions of identity serve to demonstrate its complexity and ability to transcend professions, and within disciplines across the same profession. Indeed, these nuanced conceptions of identity underscore Beauchamp and Thomas’ (2009) claim that identity is challenging to define.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is a lifetime experience (Alsup, 2019; Richardson & Alsup, 2015) as it is ever-changing, contextual, and consists of multiple sub-identities (e.g., personal and professional identity). Professional identity has strong implications for the future of the teacher: It influences growth (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000) and helps teachers to stay in the profession (Pietsch & Williamson, 2005). As such, it is important that a teacher’s “sub-identities” do not “conflict.” In other words, personal and professional identities need to “harmonize” for the optimal teaching experience (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, 2004, p. 122).

Contributing Factors to Professional Identity

There are several factors that contribute to professional identity. For example, Volkmann and Anderson (1998) found multiple ways professional identity can be established: In one sense, it is tied to having strong content knowledge, but it also weaves together one’s history and understanding of teaching. Similarly, Pietsch and Williamson (2005) claim that a teacher’s

professional identity is “honed” in the schools through teaching experience (p. 368). Coldron and Smith (1999) add to the discussion by noting that a teacher develops a professional identity by forming ethical conclusions, and from the narratives of their professional career (e.g., their lived experiences). Also, Alsup (2006) and Danielwicz (2001) note the implications of sexual orientation on professional identity. Specifically, Alsup’s (2006) study raised important questions about the connection between sexual orientation and professional identity because one PST did not feel comfortable as a self-claimed lesbian in a predominantly heterosexual professional community. This is important because Cattley (2007) noted how a teacher’s efficacy and ability to develop strong relationships in the professional community are significant factors in a teacher’s sense of professional identity.

It is not only important that the teacher find and establish an identity, but there is sufficient literature that documents how important it is that one’s perception of identity aligns with others’ perceptions in the same professional community (e.g., Coldron & Smith, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Gee, 2000; Maclean & White, 2007). In other words, it is important that a teacher and their colleagues are aligned in respect to their professional identities. Maclean and White (2007) suggest this can be accomplished through evaluations and a shared vernacular.

The Personal and Professional Synthesis of Professional Identity

The merging of one’s personal identity in a professional teaching context is important (Korthagen, 2001). In their review of the literature, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) found many scholars who note the importance of synthesizing personal and professional identity. In fact, their definition of professional identity specifically connects the personal with the professional, defining it as “an ongoing process of integration of the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’ sides of

becoming and being a teacher” (p. 113). Pietsch & Williamson (2005) think similarly, suggesting that personal and professional identity is “intricately bound” (p. 365).

Additional researchers have further advocated this position. For instance, Goodson and Cole (1994) believe that one’s personal and professional ideologies influence “teacher development,” noting that their perception of professional responsibilities is grounded in “personal and contextual interpretation” (p. 88). Similarly, Coldron and Smith (1999) posit that the decisions teachers make in the classroom are continually being informed by their personal and professional beliefs. Yet, they also note that others such as school personnel or legislators may require teachers to perform certain acts. These mandated requirements do not necessarily work with one’s professional or personal identity development.

However, weaving the personal with the professional for the teacher is no simple matter (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). In fact, Alsup (2019) cautions readers not to “oversimplify” this merger (p. 44). Volkmann and Anderson’s study highlights the deleterious effects of a first-year teacher whose personal and professional identities conflict. Specifically, the personal identity of the first-year teacher did not conform to the professional identity of what she believed “others” expected. As a result, she struggled that first year until she harmonized her personal and professional identities to create a compassionate, yet demanding teacher. This teacher discovered in the act of teaching that, and as Britzman (2003) states, “one’s past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension” (p. 31). Unfortunately, not all teachers experience a happy ending. Britzman (2003) details a student teacher whose personal and professional identity were moving in different directions, underscoring her struggles as a teacher. This student teacher was unable to “move beyond the constraining dualism that becoming a teacher means not becoming who you are” (p. 123).

These examples highlight the importance of Alsup's (2006; 2019) work and her claim that teachers must merge their personal and professional identities. In other words, teachers ought to bring *who they are* into their profession, for such identity work "results in a more effective physical and emotional embodiment of teacher identity as well as increased intellectual competence (Alsup, 2006, p. 27). Alsup (2006) exemplifies these claims in a foundational study with PSTs in which the epicenter is focused on "borderland discourse," or "discourse in which disparate personal and professional subjectivities are put into contact toward a point of integration" (p. 205) Simply defined, borderland discourse is "a space in which to experience a richer, fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other" (p. 15). Borderland discourse is critical because it elevates what it means to reflect in a manner consistent with the personal and the professional self (p. 125).

Precisely, Alsup (2006) found that the three PSTs who engaged most with borderland discourse were the three who pursued a traditional teaching position after completion of student teaching. However, the result of these PSTs alone is not sufficient. Alsup encourages teacher educators to design activities that enable PSTs to engage in borderland discourse. One potential result could be a more critical or personal pedagogy for the student—a pedagogy in which their practice is interrogated and subjected to critical analysis. Such a reflection may be the nascence of a professional identity (p. 127). Regardless, guiding students to occupy the spaces of the borderland will likely lead to "metacognitive awareness and identity growth" (p. 9). However it is put, Alsup's (2006) study underscores the significance to merge professional and personal identity, for such a merger is helpful, if not essential, for teachers to succeed in the classroom.

Highlighting Professional Identity Construction in Education

One critical question remains: Where do teachers establish an identity? Or, in other words, where can PSTs learn to merge their personal and professional identities? Izadinia (2013) believes

teacher education programs have the capacity to influence PSTs' identity, so that may be a good place to start. Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1991) build on this idea by suggesting that such spaces "may provide the opportunity to explore a few alternative visions of teaching" (p. 186). Though English teacher identity work gained traction in 1995 (Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, & Rush, 2014), teacher identity work is rarely emphasized in ELA PST education programs; instead, their focus has traditionally been on "learning theories and pedagogical approaches" (Alsup, 2006, p. 4). This approach favors "the future students of the preservice teacher, not on the development of the teacher him- or herself" (Alsup, 2006, p. xiv). Alsup (2006; 2019), though, is not alone in inviting identity work to be done in teacher education courses: Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) Graham and Phelps (2003), and Kanno and Stuart, (2011) all advocate for focused identity construction in these same spaces.

In fact, Kanno and Stuart (2011) place a high priority on identity: They claim that new teachers are better served establishing a strong teacher identity than they are enhancing their content knowledge. For example, Danielewicz (2001) found the construction of identity so profound that she redesigned a literacy course to underscore identity, which leads one to believe that her thinking aligned with both Kanno and Stuart (2011) and Izadinia (2013). A case in point of this thinking can be exemplified in Britzman's (2003) study with PSTs. Specifically, one student teacher's struggle with her identity regularly overshadowed her pedagogical concerns.

The absence of teacher identity construction in PST education programs has direct consequences. Specifically, Kanno and Stuart (2011) claim that new teachers struggle to claim an identity. Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1991) suggest that PSTs expect to create their teaching identity "while teaching", which creates additional challenges in the classroom (p. 186). Further, a lack of a teacher identity may also lead to oversimplification of the profession. For instance, both

Alsup (2019) and Danielewicz (2001) describe the problematic nature of playing the “role” of teacher rather than identifying as a teacher. The difference is palpable. When one plays the role of teacher, then the standard conventions and preconceived notions of the teacher are accepted and enacted (Alsup, 2019), and the teacher is less effective (Danielewicz, 2001). Yet, when one identifies as a teacher, there is a “commitment of self to the enterprise” in a way playing a role cannot meet (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10). Though Alsup and Danielwicz problematize the word *role*, it is not always used pejoratively in the literature (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991).

My study addresses the gap of identity work in PST education by focusing on the writer identity of PSTs in their student teaching. Specifically, I draw on Morgan’s (2004) understanding of “teacher identity as pedagogy” (p. 78) to explore the way PSTs’ writer identities are enacted in the classroom. Alsup (2019) also offers support for Morgan’s concept, noting that one’s identity indeed can function as a pedagogical approach to classroom instruction.

Writer Teacher Identity

One subset of professional identity is writer teacher identity. The research on writer teacher identity is a well-rooted and growing body of literature. The concept that “teachers of writing must write” (or teacher as writer as Whitney [2017] says) has mixed origins according to the literature. Whitney (2017) traces it back to the commencement of the Bay Area Writing Project in 1974 while Cremin and Oliver (2016) and Cremin and Baker (2014) tie it to the work of Emig (1971) slightly before. Regardless of its origin, one of the potential benefits of establishing a strong writer teacher identity is identifying as a writer, or teacher-writer. Whitney (2013) posits that identifying as a teacher-writer is “different than being a teacher or being a writer” (para 4). Teacher-writer’s “claim the title of ‘writer’ deliberately, write frequently, and consider writing to be a professional activity”

(Whitney, 2017, p. 67). By all accounts, teacher-writers view writing as an “integral” component of teaching (p. 70).

Morgan (2017) has a similar perception of the teacher-writer, but considers the title “teacher as writer,” or one who infuses writing experiences with classroom writing instruction (p. 49). This provides secondary teachers with opportunities to “write, take risks, and talk to view their potential as writers” (Street & Stang, 2017, p. 55). Morgan (2010) envisions teachers who write regularly and talk powerfully about their writing to strengthen secondary students’ writing (pp. 49-50). Furthermore, Dawson (2017) conceptualizes a teacher-writer differently than Morgan (2017) and Whitney (2017). Dawson agrees that a teacher-writer is one who writes regularly, but she believes the purposes for composing are “to explore relationships and make sense of experiences that matter to them” rather than to inform pedagogy (p. 98). Regardless of the different principles that guide the writing, “if teachers do not identify as writers, then the kind of quality of teaching they provide is likely to be limited” (Morgan, 2017, p. 40). Significantly, scholars of writing instruction advocate that the best teachers of writing are, in fact, writers (See McKinney, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Whitney, 2017).

Benefits of Identifying as a Teacher-writer. There are many benefits of identifying as a teacher-writer that influence both the teacher and the secondary student. Whitney (2017) explains that teacher-writers can benefit “in terms of professional identity and professional development” (p. 72). For example, she describes that, as a writer, she can talk to a class about her strategies and approaches to writing, including the successes and failures. As a teacher-writer, “[her] business was no longer primarily to convey information, or to plan and then execute plans; it was to guide people as they wrote, using [her] experience as their guides” (p. 72). Secondary students can also benefit from the experience of teacher-writers as teachers vocalize their approaches and mindsets

of writing (Dawson, 2017) and understand how to best help students in their writing experiences (McKinney, 2017). Indeed, the cumulative experience of teacher-writers is necessary because “the field of education—and society as a whole—needs the contributions of teacher-writers now more than ever” (Hicks, Whitney, Fredricksen, & Zuidema, 2017, p. 8).

Writing Instruction Preparation

The following two sections transition from identity, identity construction, and writer teacher identity to writing instruction preparation for PSTs. I underscore such instruction both formerly (i.e., in 1995) and currently. I begin by illustrating how writing teachers were trained to teach writing in 1995, primarily referencing Smagorinsky and Whiting’s (1995) research. Following, I underscore how writing teachers are currently prepared to teach writing, primarily noting the research by Pasternak et al. (2018).

Writing Instruction Preparation in 1995

Smagorinsky and Whiting’s (1995) study on the preparation of English teachers served as a landmark publication because nothing similar existed. Prior to their publication, the knowledge of ELA PST education in 1995 was “informal” at best (p. 2). Smagorinsky and Whiting designed a national research study in which they examined 81 course syllabi from university methods instructors across the United States, analyzing the ways PSTs were taught. Before proceeding, I define the university methods course as

Primarily focusing on the representation and teaching of English language arts content. A methods course often also involves inquiry into the beliefs or opinions of participants regarding concepts of English language arts at the secondary level, the planning of lessons or courses of study, and classroom management related to content-specific methods. (Pasternak et al., 2018, p. 25)

Many secondary English education programs had only one methods course during this era² (Pasternak et al., 2018). As such, instructors generally approached its teaching in one of several ways: Survey, workshop, experienced-based, theoretical, reflective, or some combination of the four (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995, p.10). The majority of instructors approached their course as either a survey (n=27) or a workshop (n=23). The survey approach “attempts to cover a great many issues and topics during a single semester” (p. 9), which inherently is an approach that lacks depth in any one topic. The workshop approach emphasizes the integration of the ELA core items including, “literature, composition, grammar, and other topics” (p. 12). Students in the workshop course routinely participated in activities and practices that “the instructor hopes to encourage them to promote among their own students” (p. 14). For instance, the skills and approaches they utilized were meant to prepare them as practitioners.

Beyond the survey and workshop approaches, Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) found a pattern that included reflective writing, portfolio projects, and “open-topic papers on issues of interest to the students and two-to three-week instructional units” (p. 43). As such, students reflected about a variety of factors that influenced their dispositions. This might include “a literacy autobiography, developing a personal teaching philosophy, writing about a favorite teacher, and otherwise thinking about the experiences that had shaped their own reading and writing development (p. 35). Additionally, some students submitted a portfolio project. One instructor encouraged PSTs to “consider themselves as writers” through “personal and reflective essays” (p. 40). Specifically, this instructor required a minimum of 12 pieces of writing, including all notes and drafts. In another course, the professor required students to submit “reflections through an

² Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) also explain that “for a few universities, a series of such courses actually took the place of the methods class; rather than taking a single course in teaching methods, the students would take two or three courses that focused separately on literature, writing, language, and perhaps some other strand of language arts” (p. 8).

initial statement of purpose, a series of selected papers, and a final statement of direction” (p. 40). Finally, Smagorinsky and Whiting share that, for those who were required to write instructional units, they were composed with “one or two weeks [in mind], and cover a specific topic or area” (p. 43). As an example, they suggest that students may have been asked to write a one-week unit focused on composition pedagogy.

Specifically, the writing instruction that Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) synthesized across a national survey brings mixed impressions. On one hand, there were a number of PSTs engaged in opportunities to think and act like authentic writers for a variety of topics and purposes in that assignments required “students to make decisions in the process of composing, such as selection of topics and audiences” (Skerret & Warrington, 2018, p. 425). These authentic activities seemed to coincide with professors whose teaching approach reflected a workshop, experience-based, theoretical, or reflective model (i.e., all of the approaches beyond the survey approach). As such, students seemed to actively engage in writing activities that encouraged them to synthesize, reflect, and revise often.

However, the students whose only methods course reflected a survey approach—the highest single approach identified among the 81 syllabi—raises serious concerns about the preparation and pedagogical implications for PSTs. The survey approach is especially problematic in that topics such as “grammar” and “writing” (p. 9) are “covered” in such a short amount of time. Therefore, it is unlikely that many students who graduated from universities that employed the survey approach *as their only methods course* were prepared to be strong writers and writing instructors. This is problematic not only for them as writers and writing instructors, but also for the future students they will teach.

Current Writing Instruction Preparation

Nearly 25 years after Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) published their study, Pasternak et al. (2018) followed their research with a similar, updated study “that takes into consideration the changing contexts and content for the teaching and study of English” (p. 15). Whereas Smagorinsky and Whiting relied heavily on course syllabi to direct their findings, Pasternak et al. triangulate their data with syllabi, focus group interviews, and a questionnaire. It is not necessarily the triangulation of data itself that strengthens the research: It is the focus group interviews where teacher educators can respond to and extend their thoughts that engenders such strong data because “syllabi in this century are inadequate maps of the territory that teacher candidates traverse on their voyage to become teachers” (p. 39).

The findings from Pasternak et al. (2018) reflect the preparation of ELA teachers in all stages of teaching secondary English. However, I focus on PSTs’ *writing* preparation only in that I refer to the “136 syllabi analyzed for instruction in reading and writing skills (p. 97). Pasternak et al. (2018) coded the syllabi according to their “rankings for instruction in reading and writing skills” (p. 97) represented by the numbers 1-4 (with “1” representing the lowest ranking and “4” representing the highest). Twenty-nine percent of the syllabi make the reading and writing instruction explicit in “course objectives, calendar topics, readings, and [application]” (p. 97), or a ranking of 4. Another 24% show less, but nonetheless some emphasis in reading and writing instruction in “planning, instruction, or presentation” (p. 97), or a ranking of 3. The remaining 47% of course syllabi have either a minimal exposure and application (25%), a ranking of 2; or no evidence (22%) of reading and writing instruction, a ranking of 1. Assuming that the content of each syllabus reflects the content of the course, education at large—and secondary ELA teachers specifically—needs more than 29% of its teachers to know and understand strong reading and writing practices.

An important change in philosophy from Smagorinsky and Whiting's (1995) study to the present landscape of PST education is the shift from one to multiple methods courses. Indeed, Coughlan et al. (2017) note that "more than 75% of bachelor's programs have 4 or more credits of methods required" (p. 277). The current landscape on average requires ELA PSTs to enroll in at least two methods courses. However, this does not necessarily mean that they matriculate in specialized methods courses (e.g., the teaching of writing, the teaching of literature, etc.). Indeed, some ELA PSTs advanced through the ranks by taking one general ELA methods course and then another ELA general methods course in a subsequent semester (Pasternak et al., 2018, p. 32). Specifically, these courses integrate the teaching of "literature, composition, and language" (p. 32). Even so, there are universities that still offer multiple specialized courses (p. 33).

Pasternak et al. (2018) frame the ideal methods course as an integration of reading and writing instruction. Many teacher educators also consider this their "preference" when teaching the methods course (p. 98). In fact, one survey respondent noted that "reading and writing skills should be at the heart of English methods courses. . . . integration of reading/writing should also be stressed" (p. 95). Still, another shared that "reading and writing should be supported through all activities, discussions, and programs" (p. 98). Significantly, Pasternak et al. ground the general preference of integrating reading and writing from one teacher educator: This teacher educator integrates reading and writing instruction even though their course is designed specifically for composition pedagogy (p. 99).

Though many teacher educators today prefer their methods courses to include the integration of reading and writing instruction, there is not one standard approach. Pasternak et al. (2018) identify one teacher educator who focuses on a strategic approach, noting that the "methods class should teach teacher candidates how to find and articulate the types of strategies that expert

readers and writers use in a variety of genres, for a variety of purposes, accounting for a variety of audiences” (p. 101). Another teacher educator utilizes a more traditional approach, positing that “students should be introduced to literature workshop and writing workshop as well as more traditional classroom structures. Students should come away from both courses with a deeper understanding of how and why to model and what they do as readers and writers for their students” (p. 101). These teacher educators exemplify the many and varied possibilities to integrate reading and writing instruction.

The latter two syllabi also reflect one of the hallmarks of the highest rated syllabi: The instructor’s intention is to “engage students in consistent practical application of knowledge to lesson planning or practice in terms of reading or writing instruction” (Pasternak et al., 2018, p. 99). Indeed, these teacher educators designed strong reading and writing instruction and application to enable PSTs to “see themselves as writers or readers” (p. 104). Similarly, effective teacher educators may require PSTs to participate in writing workshop. This includes “drafting several pieces of writing, receiving feedback from peers, and reflecting on the writing workshop model” with a goal in mind to implement it with future students (p. 104). Students, then, are learning and applying the central tenets of identifying as a writer and becoming a strong writing teacher through such instruction.

Despite the strong work that many teacher educators conduct in preparing PSTs to be effective writing instructors, there is yet room for improvement. For example, 47% of the course syllabi that Pasternak et al. (2018) analyzed have either a minimal exposure and application to writing (25%), or no evidence of reading and writing instruction (22%). What is more, the methods classes that integrate both reading and writing instruction inherently divide the time between the two. Morgan (2010) problematized this approach, claiming that PSTs’ instruction on writing

pedagogy is relegated to only a couple of classes in a literacy course. As such, it is necessary that secondary teachers have robust writing experiences in their teacher preparation programs, preferably in a specialized writing methods course (e.g., Morgan, 2010; 2017). Inclusive of this experience is the possibility to develop PSTs' identity (e.g., Alsup, 2006; 2019). My research uniquely addresses the writer identity of PSTs, specifically, and how their identity acts as pedagogy in the secondary classroom. In the future, PSTs can learn about effective writing instruction in tandem with building their writer identity in a writing methods course. I now turn my attention to effective writing instruction.

Effective Secondary Writing Instruction

The following sections illustrate both empirical data and prominent researchers who identify effective approaches to secondary writing instruction. For instance, I elucidate Hillocks' (1986) experimental research on (a) grammar instruction, (b) feedback and goal setting, (c) the use of models, and (d) free writing in the mid-1980s. Further, I underscore Graham and Perin's (2007) and Graham's (2018) experimental research, which provides an updated and current snapshot on effective writing instruction. Beyond this, I illustrate leaders in the field of English education such as Gallagher and Kittle (2018) and Dean (2017), including their practices and theories as well. However, I first provide a brief review of the literature on process writing because much of the effectiveness of writing instruction today incorporates process writing.

Process Writing

The latter part of the 1970s included "an increased interest in the process writing and in the teaching of writing" (Applebee, 1981). Still, it was not until the early 1990s that many secondary teachers shifted towards process writing, which enhanced secondary writing instruction (Applebee

& Langer, 2009). Many prominent writing researchers have documented the “steps” in process writing as a series of prewriting activities, drafting, redrafting, and sharing writing with others (e.g., Applebee & Langer, 2011; Applebee & Langer, 2013; Murray, 2011). Further, many have commented on the flexible nature of the writing process. Dyson and Freedman (2002), though loathe³ to refer to it as the “writing process”, refer to it as “a flexible process, one influenced by the kind of writing being attempted, the writer’s purpose and the situational conditions” (p. 974). In other words, “[the writing process] is not a rigid lock-step process” (Murray, 2011, p. 4).

Graham and Perin (2007) found that implementing process writing in secondary classrooms improved student writing. Cumulatively, they examined three studies in which the effect size⁴ was .32. However, the effect size jumps significantly when teachers are trained properly in the process writing approach (.45). Yet, when teachers were not adequately trained in the process writing approach, the effect size dropped to .27. Regardless of the varying effect sizes, all reports are considered statistically significant and effective writing practices.

Writing Strategies

One of the strongest approaches to the teaching of writing is to equip secondary students with an array of writing strategies (Graham, 2018; Graham & Perin, 2007). Dean (2017) highlights these strategies: exploration (e.g., investigating and “mapping” texts), composition (e.g., examining mentor texts and “considering audience”) and revision (e.g., revision on the paragraph level and on the sentence level). Indeed, specific writing strategies “create strategic writers who can adapt their writing to a variety of needs and situations” (Dean, 2017, p. xvii). Some of the most

³ Dyson and Freedman (2002) believe there is no ‘writing process,’ but a flexible process” (p. 974) (i.e., they reject the singular approach that “process” suggests).

⁴ An effect size is “the average difference between a type of instruction and a comparison condition. They indicate the strength of the effect” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 13). .80 or higher is a “strong” effect; .50-.79 is a “moderate” effect, and .20-.49 is a “mild” effect (p. 13).

effective writing teachers (a) instruct possible strategies that students can employ in their writing; (b) clarify “the purpose and rationale” of the strategy; (c) demonstrate possible applications of the strategy; and (d) provide support as students practice the strategy “with the goal of independent and effective use” (Graham, 2018, p. 252). Graham (2018) found the effect size of teaching students writing strategies to be 1.26. About a decade earlier, Graham and Perin (2007) found that writing teachers who emphasize writing strategies for “planning, revising, and editing their composition” (p. 15) had an effect size of .82. In both studies, the teaching of writing strategies was the single most effective approach to writing instruction (in terms of effect size).

Grammar Instruction

Research on the teaching of grammar is well-documented, and much of it suggests that direct, isolated grammar instruction has little value on writing proficiency (e.g., Hillocks, 1986). This position has been defended for over 100 years as Noguchi (1991) argues that Hoyt (1906) first documented the inefficient practice of direct grammar instruction in 1906. Nearly 30 years later, NCTE recommended that “all teaching of grammar separate from the manipulation of sentences be discontinued . . . since every scientific attempt to prove that knowledge of grammar is useful has failed” (as cited in Weaver, 1979, p. 5). Hillocks (1986) offers further support, finding that isolated grammar instruction “has no effect on the improvement of writing” (p. 225). Recent research also suggests that direct grammar instruction “is not the best way to help students make their writing more effective” (Weaver & Bush, 2008, p. 6). Similarly, Graham and Perin (2007) conducted research in the teaching of grammar in a similar time frame and found that direct instruction “raise[s] serious questions about some educators’ enthusiasm for traditional grammar instruction as a focus of writing instruction for adolescents” (p. 21).

Noguchi (1991) argues, however, that teachers should not cease grammar instruction simply because it is ineffective. Instead of direct instruction, “teaching a minimal amount of grammar, mostly while guiding students throughout the writing process, not only enriches and enhances writing, but empowers writers” (Weaver & Bush, 2008, p. 6). In other words, secondary writing instructors ought to use grammar in the context of writing—in situations where students can apply conventions in meaningful writing activities to explore the possibilities that conventions have on the writers intended effect (Dean, personal communication).

Sentence combining is another possibility within grammar instruction that is considered a strong writing practice (e.g., Anderson & Dean, 2014; Graham, 2018; Graham & Perin, 2007; Hillocks, 1986). Hillocks’ (1986) defines sentence combining as the act of “[generating] new sentences from already-formed sentences” (p. 229). Sentence combining is an effective way to approach writing instruction, demonstrating “significant gains” in student writing (p. 229). Even more, scholars’ recent research continues to advocate for the use of sentence combining activities as Graham and Perin (2007) found it to enable students to write “more complex and sophisticated sentences” (p. 18) with an effect size of .50. Additionally, Graham’s (2018) work further suggests the effectiveness of sentence combining as his studies resulted in an effect size of .50 as well. In other words, writing instructors can explore effective possibilities of grammar through sentence combining activities.

Feedback and Goal Setting

There are multiple sources from which a secondary student can receive feedback (e.g., from the teacher or a peer), and the way students receive feedback matters dramatically. For example, teacher commentary in the margins of student work has little effect on student writing performance (e.g., Bardine, Bardine, Deegan, 2000; Hillocks, 1986). Instead, a stronger approach may be to

hold writing conferences. Gallagher and Kittle (2018) hold writing conferences regularly because they believe “writers grow more when [teachers] give them feedback in the midst of drafting,” (p. 110). Further, writing conferences are also conducive to setting student writing goals. Graham (2018) found goal setting to be a statistically significant strategy with a .80 effect size. In his studies, students created goals such as “[adding] two reasons to refute ideas that run counter to your thesis” and “add three new ideas as text is revised” (p. 246).

Models

The implementation of exemplars as part of writing instruction invites students to “analyze [writing] examples and to emulate the critical elements, patterns, and forms embodied in the models in their own writing” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 20). Many researchers and practitioners today recognize the implementation of models as strong writing practice. However, prior research did not indicate as much. Hillocks (1986) found the practice of examining models underwhelming. Indeed, he argued that “the available research into process would not lead us to expect the study of models to have much impact on improvement in writing” (p. 228). Hillocks argued that students can learn the form quickly, but the composing process requires thought and attention beyond the rhetorical strategies of examining a model (p. 228).

Recent research, however, suggests otherwise. Graham and Perin (2007) and Graham (2018) both document the effectiveness of implementing models through experimental and quasi experimental research. Graham and Perin (2007) examined six studies and found model texts to be one of the 11 components of effective writing instruction as studies produced an effect size of .25. Nearly a decade later, Graham (2018) examined “seven true- and quasi-experiments” focusing on the use of model texts as part of writing instruction for students in grades 3-12 (p. 247). Essentially, “the use of model text has a small, but positive and statistically significant impact

in enhancing writing quality” (p. 247). Writing instructors can use exemplars to explore possibilities to write on the sentence level or to imagine various approaches to, say, an introduction of a narrative text (e.g., Hillocks, 2007).

Free Writing

Hillocks (1986) argues that free writing provides “little evidence” to be an effective writing strategy (p. 231). However, Yagelski (2011) writes about an ontological approach to writing in that writing—even free writing—can positively influence secondary students. Yagelski argues that “as we write, we engage in a moment of intensive meaning-making related to the larger, ongoing process of making meaning of our experience of ourselves in the world” (p. 115). Further, Graham’s (2018) research also suggests a positive influence from free writing activities. Graham argues that “students in exceptional teachers’ classrooms write frequently and for a variety of purposes” (p. 244). Therefore, free writing may play a part in the cumulative effect of writing, which “emerges as a result of *the regular practice of writing*” (Yagelski, 2011, p. 120, emphasis in original).

Secondary Writing Instruction

While the previous section outlined the research in writing effectiveness in secondary schools, this section aims to provide a snapshot of the historical and current state of writing instruction. I primarily draw from Applebee (1981) and Applebee and Langer (2011) to document the reality of writing instruction in the secondary classroom.

Secondary Writing in the 1980s

Applebee (1981) describes one of the problematic features of writing instruction in the late 1970s and early 1980s: “Prewriting activities averaged just over three minutes . . . those three minutes were spent writing the essay topic on the board, or passing out and reading through a dittoed assignment sheet, followed by student questions about task dimensions” (p. 74). Applebee’s research suggests that the most consistent approach to prewriting instruction “was to have [students] begin their writing in class, so that they could ask questions about what was expected if they found themselves in difficulties” (p. 78). In other words, many students did not adequately reflect and prepare for upcoming writing experiences. Further, most writing instruction occurred either before or after students drafted and submitted their writing (p. 80). For instance, superficial items were most emphasized during writing instruction (e.g., page requirements) while more meaningful and helpful strategies (e.g., models) were infrequently discussed. This exemplifies what Gallagher (2015) refers to as “the crucial difference between *assigning* writing and *teaching* writing” (p. 66, emphasis in original). Beyond this, the most common “drafting strategy” was to allow students to write in class “either by segmenting the task or by simply being available as a resource when the student [needed] help” (p. 80). Though helpful if students had questions, merely being present did not prepare students to think and act like authentic writers.

Applebee (1981) shares an example assignment where the students were tasked to complete a book report, paying specific attention to character and plot. This assignment outlined the focus of each paragraph including a minimum number of sentences students were to complete. This resulted in fragmented ideas about the book, choppy, unnecessary sentences (presumably to reach the minimum sentence requirement), and little continuity from paragraph to paragraph. Applebee notes that “such techniques were used regularly by about a third of the teachers surveyed” (p. 83). As such, many students were tasked with what is commonly referred to as busy work. Further,

inviting students to submit multiple drafts of an assignment varied from teacher to teacher. Applebee found that 59 percent of ELA teachers created opportunities for students to resubmit their work (p. 83). However, most students did not use this as an opportunity to rethink their ideas or imagine new possibilities within their writing. Instead, many focused on cosmetic changes (e.g., spelling) that did little to improve their writing holistically.

In general, the late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by a dearth of strong writing instruction and writing activity. For instance, students did not learn appropriate drafting strategies (Dean, 2017), observe their teacher modeling writing (e.g., Gallagher, 2015), or reflect on who they are as writers in order to learn more about themselves as writers (Whitney, McCracken, & Washell, 2019). There is, however, some evidence of strong writing practices as ELA teachers conferenced with students and helped them think about strong approaches to their writing (Applebee, 1981), but those experiences were few and far between. In general, teachers seemed to focus more on the mechanical accuracy of the writing rather than to help students craft their message. Because of this, students did not have opportunities to wrestle with challenging, extended writing responses that required critical thought and the rethinking of ideas. In fact, many of the teachers took “over all of the difficulties inherent in using language appropriate to [ELA classes] . . . and [left] the student only the task of mechanically ‘slotting-in’ the missing information” (p. Applebee, 1981, p. 99). Applebee suggested three key points to improve secondary writing instruction: (a) “More situations in which writing serves as a tool for learning rather than as a means to display acquired knowledge” (p. 101); (b) more teachers need to be aware of and implement the strategies for process writing (p. 103); and (c) teachers need to create more meaningful, organic writing experiences for students. Ultimately, students need more time and

extended writing opportunities to wrestle with critical thought, confer with peers and teacher, and write in an environment open to risk-taking.

Student Writing Frequency. In addition to the research on secondary writing instruction, Applebee (1981) also collected data to document the volume of secondary student writing. Applebee reports students wrote consistently across the 56 ELA classes that were observed. However, student writing alone does not constitute meaningful writing experiences. Though the mean percent of writing-related activities across all classes were calculated at 41.1 percent of the time, a further analysis reveals its shortcomings. For example, that mechanical activities (e.g., multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank) occupied 16.1 percent of the time, informational writing occurred 23.4 percent of the time (15.1% of that was note-taking while 8.3% was classified as “other”), and personal or imaginative writing (e.g., stories and poems) occurred 1.6 percent of the time (p. 31). Significantly, little writing of any substance regularly happened in secondary ELA courses. In fact, “In the academic subject areas, writing-related activities were used . . . least in foreign language and *English*” (p. 32, emphasis added). However, ELA courses were the most likely of the academic disciplines to include writing of at least a paragraph in length; yet, this only “[averaged] 10 percent of lesson time” (p. 32). Instead, a large portion of the writing was considered “writing without composing”, which includes worksheets, note-taking, and fill in the blank activities (i.e., the mechanical uses of writing). In other words, students were rarely exposed to the many hallmarks of extended writing, including the possibilities of critical, extended thought, revision, and choice, among others.

Secondary Writing in the Modern Era.

Nearly 30 years after Applebee (1981) published his findings on the state of writing instruction in secondary schools, he coauthored multiple and updated reports on both writing

instruction and the volume of student writing (Applebee & Langer, 2011). One of the main differences the updated report emphasizes is the shift to process writing in writing instruction. In 1992, an estimated 97 percent of 8th grade teachers employed the process approach: Seventy-one percent implemented it as a foundational component of writing instruction while another 26 percent found process writing to “supplement” writing instruction. The findings were similar six years later in 1998 (Applebee & Langer, 2009, p. 24). Moving forward, Applebee and Langer (2011) found that 90.6 percent of teachers utilize prewriting strategies while 90.1 percent of teachers teach drafting strategies (n=176). Inclusive of the process approach is the opportunity for students to work collaboratively (60.4 percent) or as part of a writing workshop (43.9 percent). Considered together, the prewriting, and collaborative work is all supported by research and can enhance student writing (e.g., Graham, 2018; Graham & Perin, 2007).

However, the robust number of teachers who implement effective writing instruction does not necessarily mean that students have powerful writing experiences. In 72 ELA classes observed, Applebee and Langer (2011) found that “students would have on average just over three minutes of writing instruction related to explicit writing strategies [in one 50 minutes class], or a total of 2 hours and 22 minutes in a nine-week grading period” (p. 21). In other words, appropriate writing instruction occurred, but the lack of time and attention to the writing instruction compromised the entire instruction. In these instances, it stands to reason that such instruction did little to build student writers or student writer identities. Further, one can argue that very little changed from Applebee’s study in 1981 to the present study (Applebee & Langer, 2011) in terms of the growth in writing for secondary students. Such short, ill-conceived writing instruction and practice runs counter to the flexible nature of process writing (e.g., Dyson & Freedman, 2002).

Writing Volume in the Modern Era. Applebee and Langer (2011) report that secondary students in ELA courses compose “more for their English classes than for any other subject, and at the same time, they write more for their other subjects combined than they do for English” (p. 15). In short, students are not writing enough in their ELA classes. In the typical 9-week marking period, students in ELA courses compose roughly 5.5 pieces of “a page or less”, 2.6 pieces of “one or two pages” and 1.1 pieces of “three pages or more,” for a total of 9.2 pages per marking period (p. 15). Further, Applebee and Langer point out that secondary students write 8.9 pieces of a “page or less,” 3.5 pieces of one or two pages, and 1.1 pieces of three pages for a total of 13.5 pages per marking period across the remaining academic disciplines (i.e., social studies, the sciences, and mathematics). In one sense, it is uplifting to consider that writing occurs beyond ELA courses, which is “likely to have an important impact on how they write and the qualities that they consider important in their writing” (p. 15). However, students need more powerful writing experiences in their ELA courses by a teacher who is trained to provide strong writing instruction and where the emphasis of the class can be building the writer identity of the student.

Although disciplines beyond ELA enable students to have more frequent writing opportunities, the fact remains that students are not writing as much as they should (Applebee & Langer, 2013). Applebee and Langer (2011) collected data from 8,542 writing assignments from 138 students across the four major disciplines, noting that “only 19% represented extended writing of a paragraph or more” (p. 15). Further, only 7.7 percent of the classroom observation was dedicated to writing “at least a paragraph” (p. 15). Specifically, only a mean percent of 12.3 and 8.8 of instructional hours were dedicated to “writing of at least a paragraph length” in high school and middle school, respectively. Instead of extended writing activities, students completed “fill in the blank and short answer exercises, and copying of information directly from the teacher’s

presentation—types of activities that can best be described as writing without composing” (p. 15). This is similar to the writing activities that Dyson and Freedman criticize in that some students today participate in “a well-learned, fairly routinized, mechanical activity; its purpose for the students was not to communicate to someone about something or to help them grapple with difficult new material” (Dyson & Freedman, 2002, p. 974).

Perhaps one of the reasons student writing “remains distressingly low” (Applebee & Langer, 2011, p. 16) is due to the increase of high-stakes testing, which is considered a “competing priority” (p. 21) for many ELA teachers. Applebee and Langer (2011) note that “80.8% of the teachers of English . . . reported that the students in a typical class would take a high-stakes test *this year*” (p. 17, emphasis in original). As such, these tests influenced more than 80 percent of teachers’ curriculum (Applebee & Langer, 2011). It is possible that high stakes testing directly influences writing curricula since “relatively little writing is required even in English (p. 17). Teachers who allow high-stakes tests to influence writing curricula may not emphasize extended writing activities because such activities are not reflected on standardized tests. Instead, they likely create shorter writing activities that mirrors what students will encounter on the test. As a result, “this creates a powerful momentum away from the teaching of writing” (p. 18).

Connection to My Research

This review of the literature underscored the salient components of my research. Succinctly, I synthesized the literature on (a) identity and identity construction, (b) writing teacher preparation, (c) effective writing instruction, and (d) the state of writing instruction in secondary schools. The research on writer-teacher identity is a growing body of literature that still has gaps that need to be addressed. As mentioned previously, Whitney (2017) contends that teachers need more support developing a strong writerly identity. Such support can come from their teacher preparation

courses, especially considering that it is incumbent upon the teacher educator to help PSTs establish a writer identity (Morgan, 2017). Beyond this, teacher education programs are powerful influencers that have the capacity to encourage PSTs to identify their writing beliefs and better understand who they are as writers (Cremin & Oliver, 2016, p. 292). Whitney (2017) and Morgan's (2017) much needed call for teacher educators to build the writer identity of PSTs align with the much-needed work on identity solicited by other researchers (see Alsup, 2006; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

Though I do not attempt to engage in identity construction in a writing methods course, my research uniquely extrapolates the writer identity of PSTs, and helps them consider how their identity acts as pedagogy. I engaged in multiple interviews with four PSTs across a 15-month span that enabled both myself and the PSTs to grow as writers and writing instructors. Ultimately, my research aims to support PST writer identity through their stories about writing, and my reflections and reconstructions of those stories (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The methodology and methods section is twofold: Foremost, I describe qualitative research at large before I narrow my focus to the foundational components of narrative inquiry. This includes its origins, and how it acts as a methodology. Additionally, I share my rationale for implementing the narrative inquiry methodology. Beyond this, I address the methods of the study. Precisely, I underscore the (a) context and participants, (b) data collection and procedures, (c) data analysis, and (d) trustworthiness.

Qualitative Research

I conducted a narrative inquiry research study. Even though my research utilizes the primary storytelling component of narrative inquiry (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), my data analysis also merges components of qualitative research at large that may not necessarily be specific to narrative inquiry. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) help to situate narrative inquiry within the broader umbrella of qualitative research by first describing the central tenets of qualitative inquiry. The objective of qualitative inquiry seeks “understanding” in which the research is underscored by certain “assumptions about interpretations and human actions” (p. 4). To that end, narrative inquiry is uniquely anchored within qualitative research.

Specific to my research, description and interpretation are both common possibilities for data presentation in qualitative work (Jones et al., 2014), and I analyzed the non-narrative descriptions and general information that participants shared, interpreting their statements for their writing beliefs, habits, and practices in the context of the literature on identity and writer identity. In other words, I coded, analyzed, and thoroughly reflected on participants’ non-narrative statements to support the narratives they shared. This enabled me to recognize how participants

“make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 15). Precisely, thoroughly evaluating non-narrative statements led me to understand more about participants’ writer identities and their influence on writing pedagogy than *only* an evaluation of their narratives would have allowed. Even so, this work was guided by the narratives participants shared, and the stories that encapsulated their writing and teaching experiences. In this section, I provide a full account of narrative inquiry, including (a) its origins, (b) its functions as methodology, and (c) my rationale for conducting this study with the narrative lens.

Origins of Narrative Inquiry

By many accounts, D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly are the pioneers of narrative inquiry in educational research (see Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011). John Dewey’s emphasis on experience influenced their conception of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). At its core, narrative inquiry is driven by storied research (Schaafsma et al., 2007) and holds close to its heart the belief that “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Barone (2007) explains that narrative inquiry in education has grown in part because of the “long overdue recognition of the sound of silence” from “all sorts of school people” (p. 463). Indeed, the storied lives people live are important because they “fill our world with meaning” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35). Thus, narrative inquirers “seek ways of enriching and transforming experience” both for the researcher and for the participants (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42).

Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

The appropriate methodology in a research study is foundational in qualitative research because it is the means by which the research design is directed, uniquely informing the way the

data are collected (Jones et al., 2014). Significantly, narrative inquirers rely on eliciting storied data as their primary method of data collection (Polkinghorne, 1995) and accept that stories are the “fundamental unit that accounts for human experience” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 4). Indeed, narrative inquirers constantly pursue story: From the initial question, the data collection and subsequent analysis, and finally the way in which stories are represented as research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2011). Narrative inquiry then seeks to illuminate the voices of the participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013) in ways that naturally co-construct the story among participant and researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber et al., 2013; Schaafsma et al., 2007).

Similar to the stories narrative inquiry elicits from participants during their co-constructed relationship is the widely addressed understanding that the narrative acts as both the method and the phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Clandinin & Huber, 2007; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; 2006; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Phillion, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain this concept, noting that “narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon ‘story’ and the inquiry ‘narrative’” (p. 2). In other words, narrative inquirers collect their data (method) via stories and then examine those same stories (phenomenon) for meaning.

Rationale for Utilizing Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) make clear that when a researcher decides to engage in narrative inquiry that the researcher needs “to be prepared to give an account of what we learn about our phenomenon that is special, something that could not be known through other theories or methods” (p. 123). I believe that the qualitative study with which I engaged was best captured

through participant stories, allowing me to discover how the participants' history of their writing—their beliefs, habits, practices, and vulnerabilities—influenced their writing pedagogy in the secondary classroom. Inherent in narrative inquiry is the willingness to understand others' experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990): Who they are, how they became who they are, and their trajectory. Whitney (personal communication) suggested that researchers must first understand before conducting research with interventions. The ability to understand will inform the interventions that may be most appropriate for future studies and for the field at large. As such, I explored the intersection of writer identity as pedagogy and how it is “narratively composed, embodied in a person, and expressed in practice” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 124).

Beyond my desire to first understand the phenomenon, narrative and identity are often connected (Alsup, 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2007; Goodall, 2005); in fact, it is through narratives that researchers have the capacity to underscore “complex explanations of student and teacher identities” (Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011, p. 1) since “personal identities are complicated narrative constructions consisting of a fluid and continual interaction of the many stories and fragments of stories that are created around things that seem most important” (Nelson, 2001, p. 106). In other words, the narratives we share about ourselves construct our identities (Cortazzi, 2001; Hendry, 2007; Huber et al., 2013; Smith & Sparkes, 2008; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992).

Moreover, narratives are not restricted to only *disclosing* identity. In fact, the stories we tell have the capacity to inform the identities we hope to one day embody. As such, participants shared ideas and possibilities of identities they hope to one day embody in the same way Cortazzi (2001) suggests that narratives tell us “what they are or what they wish to be, as they tell so they become, they *are* their stories” (p. 388, emphasis in original).

Methods

This section will address the methods I implemented in my research. Specifically, I highlight the context and participants, data collection and procedures, and data analysis in this section, respectively.

Context and Participants

I originally identified the participants in this research through a pilot study I conducted from September 2018 – January 2019. Dr. Christian Knoeller, who taught the University's writing methods course, allowed me to visit one of his classes to explain my research study and to invite students to participate. He agreed, and graciously allowed me the majority of a 70-minute class to facilitate several activities⁵ that enabled students to consider their writer identity, and to explain my research study and invite all to participate.

A total of seven students consented to participate in my study, which allowed me to examine their writing from the activities I delivered. Additionally, they agreed to participate in one interview that did not exceed one hour. After examining all seven participants' writing, interviewing them, and reflecting on those experiences with Dr. Alsup, we determined that four of the seven participants align with the purposes of this study⁶. I offer additional context and information for each participant below. I initially met each of the participants in a course I taught, EDCI 434, in the fall of 2018. This semester-long course enabled me to familiarize myself with

⁵ Though, I must admit, this occurred during the nascence of my journey with writer identity. As I reflect upon the activities I implemented, I am embarrassed to admit they were poorly designed for an audience who likely had little to no experience concretely thinking about their writer identity.

⁶ One of the participant's use of and facilitation with writing and writing instruction is an outlier when compared to the remaining six participants, so after conversing with Dr. Alsup, I decided to remove her from possible consideration for my dissertation study. Additionally, two of the seven possible participants plan to complete the requirements for student teaching out of state. Since my relationship with each participant requires face-to-face meetings and observations, I removed these two potential participants from consideration as well.

the participants prior to conducting my research. I believe having previously established a strong relationship with each participant and the familiarity we shared enabled our interviews to be more natural than it would have been otherwise. It also stands to reason that they were more comfortable talking to me from their heart—to tell me what they truly thought and experienced rather than what I might hope or expect to hear.

Darren. A white male, Darren is loquacious, hard-working, and often demonstrated a keen thinking ability. Darren student taught at a local high school, teaching freshman and junior English classes. As a writer, I was impressed with his writing purposes and his reflective nature. During the time period in which I collected most of my data (January – May 2020), Darren also worked at a part-time job and was immersed in preparations for his wedding. Suffice it to say that Darren had his hands full this semester.

Gwen. Gwen, a white female, is an intelligent and responsible young lady. Gwen completed her student teaching responsibilities at the same middle school she attended as a student, exclusively teaching 8th grade English. As a writer, Gwen composed for a variety of purposes, including moments where she felt anxiety and moments where the realities of life weighed on her mind. Gwen was the first participant I interviewed in January 2019 that began the process to reconsider my inquiry.

Joe. A white male, Joe has a background in teaching English as a second language in Vietnam. As a student teacher, Joe taught junior and senior English at a local high school. As part of his student teaching responsibilities, he taught creative writing classes, which naturally led to more opportunities to teach writing. As a writer, I was impressed with the writing goals he created for himself and the volume of writing he composed.

Todd. A white male, Todd is a hard worker whose participation in my research study afforded me opportunities to learn quite a bit about him. As a student in my fall 2018 class, Todd was reserved, speaking only when necessary. His willingness to not only participate in my study, but also to demonstrate thoughtful, detailed responses was appreciated, if not unexpected. Todd completed his student teaching at a nearby high school, where he taught freshman and senior English. As a writer, I was impressed with the opportunities he sought and his purposes for writing.

Context of the Research

I worried my plans had been compromised the moment Covid-19 began to overwhelm the country. My research hinged in large part on the classroom teaching of multiple student teachers, so when the pandemic caused school closures in mid-March, I worried that the data I had collected to that point would be incomplete—and thus insufficient in the eyes of my committee—given that the student teachers would complete their student teaching requirement online.

To add to that concern, I began to question the importance of my research amidst the global pandemic. Given the upheaval the virus caused in our routine—in everyone's routine—I felt selfish continuing with my research, which would present an outcome that I questioned the importance of while people lost jobs, loved ones, and, in some cases, their sense of safety. Personally, I wondered if it was worth the sacrifice for my family. My wife has been more than gracious in finding me pockets of time in her work schedule for me to conduct interviews, code, and to write during her full-time employment. But was it worth all of that effort? Might it be easier for me to focus on taking care of the kids without the persistent thought that there was another email I needed to see, a review I needed to complete, or writing I needed to do? On top of that, I still worry that the complex nature of writing a dissertation will require me to spend more time away from my family in a time when they desperately need my support without standard childcare services available. Is writer identity (and ultimately my degree) that important to me and is it that critical to the field of English education that such a sacrifice is warranted? These questions have lingered in my mind more times than I'm willing to admit. (*Premont, 2020*)

The above citation is a portion of an essay I wrote for *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education* a few months after the pandemic started. I feel it aptly describes my

feelings, concerns, and considerations as I navigated the pandemic amid writing my dissertation. The reality is the context of my research drastically changed in early March 2020 when the World Health Organization official declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. I had roughly collected nearly half of the data I initially intended when I realized that the pandemic may entirely derail my research. I still needed to collect an entire round of interviews for each participant, and continue observing all of them in the classroom.

I worried that participants in my research would either not be able to continue teaching, or, at best, their experiences would be so far removed from “normal” that our final interview would be hollow (since the latter half of their student teaching experience would be inconsistent with the standard rigors of secondary teaching). Independent of my concerns, each participant completed the standard length for student teaching. However, they all completed the second half by teaching remotely. This was a drastic change not only for them, but also for their students. It would be unreasonable to believe that they continued with their teaching unaffected. Every student, every teacher, every administrator, every caretaker—everyone—was affected by the pandemic to some extent. With that in mind, though, I believe that all the participants in this study taught to the best of their ability with the resources they had access to.

Data Collection and Procedures

This section underscores both the data collection process and the procedures for collecting data. The primary mode of data collection was conducted via interviews. To complement and triangulate the interview data, I also collected data in the form of a visual metaphor and reflection, and through observation. The following sections discuss in detail these treatments.

Interviews. The focal point of my data collection was a series of four interviews with each participant. I first interviewed each participant in January 2019. The second interview did not occur

until January 2020. Afterwards, I interviewed participants for a third time in March 2020 and finally in May 2020. I intended each interview to be face to face; however, the pandemic necessitated that the final interview be conducted online due the safety restrictions set forth by the Purdue Human Research Protection Program. Gwen and I also decided it would be in our best interest to conduct her March 2020 interview online as well. With the exception of a few non-consequential technology glitches and a few minor distractions (e.g., a dog barking, a person entering the room, etc.), each participant's online interview was consistent in time, depth of responses, and overall comfort as their previous face to face interviews. I audio recorded and transcribed each of the 16 interviews, which totaled 638 minutes, or just over 10 and a half hours. In general, I invited participants to tell me about their current and historical writing habits, their writing beliefs, their work as a writing teacher, and their growth as a writing instructor. A full list of my interview questions can be found in the Appendix.

Visual metaphor. In addition to the interviews I conducted, I also invited students to create a visual metaphor that represented their writer identity. I initially became intrigued with visual metaphors after reading Alsup's (2006) research on teacher identity discourses, and the identity work her participants engaged in through the creation of and reflection on visual metaphors. Such work seemed apropos in my research, too, given that metaphors and narrative are often associated, inviting participants to "reconceptualize abstract beliefs or ideas in concrete language or imagery" (p. 279).

I initially shared with participants the requirement to create a visual metaphor prior to their signing of the consent form in November 2019; however, I did not share in detail the precise requirements until immediately following their interview in March 2020. At that time, I advised participants that their visual metaphor should require narration/extrapolation in order for others to

understand. In other words, they should avoid cliché metaphors such as “writer as coach” or “writing is like a bridge” since such metaphors may be transferable to many others. I also required students to submit a reflection of their metaphor the night before we scheduled the final interview so I could examine their visual metaphors and read their reflection to prepare possible clarifying questions.

Further, I advised students that they should make the process of creating their metaphors as part of their daily life. Or, simply put, they should consider the items they interact with daily as possible metaphors. Unfortunately, the pandemic was thrust upon us shortly after I invited students to create their visual metaphors, restricting much of their day-to-day travel and, I feared, limiting the possibilities for their writing metaphor. However, the circumstances brought upon by the pandemic required that participants be more creative in their visual metaphors, which, after conferring with Dr. Alsup, I thought may turn out to be a positive change amidst so much global uncertainty.

Observations. Unfortunately, the pandemic nearly entirely thwarted my intention to observe participants’ teaching of writing. I aimed to observe each participant’s writing instruction five times across the spring 2020 semester. Yet, I only observed a portion of the classes I initially intended. Specifically, I observed Joe and Darren each teach two writing lessons, and I observed Todd teach once. I did not, however, observe Gwen’s writing pedagogy. I was particularly excited to observe participants’ writing instruction in the secondary classroom because one of the limitations on writing teacher education is that limited research exists beyond the university level (Morgan, 2010; 2017). Similarly, Cremin and Oliver (2016) specify the need to explore “how teacher-writer identities are enacted in school contexts” (p. 292). I looked forward to the opportunity to add my research to this limited field. Despite this setback, I will save this work for

a future time when circumstances permit. Regardless, I included the few observations as part of my data collection, composing about these experiences in Chapters 4 and 5.

Data Analysis

I chose to “honor participant’s voice” (Saldana, 2013, p.91) by utilizing In Vivo Coding, a coding strategy that directly uses the language of the participant (Saldana, 2013). I applied In Vivo codes when participant stories and statements “[stood] out” (Saldana, 2013, p. 93). Codes that “stand out” are nebulous because there is not a scientific way to determine whether a code “stands out” given that there is not any criterion. The codes I identified to stand out resonated with me in some way that I found important. These were often statements that demonstrated participants’ beliefs, writing habits and practices, experiences, or teaching writing philosophies.

I coded each interview shortly after I transcribed them and created memos for multiple transcripts. Following, I proceeded to code, utilizing the In Vivo Coding method. Specifically, I read through the transcript and highlighted sentences and phrases that stood out to me. I copied and pasted these excerpts into a new Word document so I could visually examine them one by one. From there, I organized the excerpts thematically, which enabled me to visualize the volume of statements that I coded under a certain theme. I created the name of the themes, but the codes that fell under the umbrella of the theme were the In Vivo Coding⁷. Finally, I reviewed all codes and themes to confirm they were significant and relevant, removing any that were isolated. Figure 1 highlights this process.

⁷ For example, under the theme “Purposes for Writing” I included Gwen’s quote from the interview in January 2020 where she says, “first and foremost I want them to grow as people and writing is just another way I can do that.”

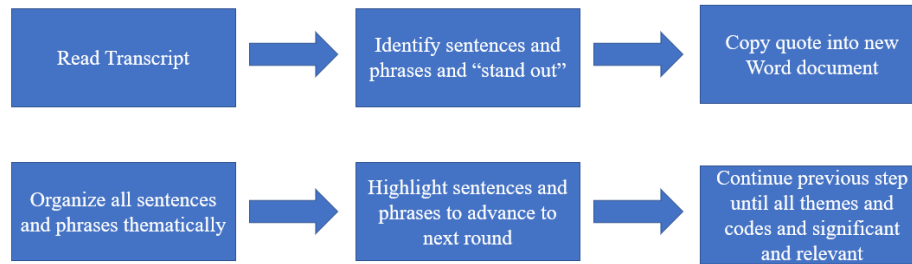


Figure 1.Coding Process

To make this process more concrete, Figure 2 illustrates an example of my coding process from Gwen’s second interview. Foremost, I read the transcript multiple times, keeping an eye for anything about writing or writing instruction that I found interesting, relevant, or noteworthy. For instance, Gwen made this comment that piqued my interest: “I’ve been journaling a lot more because of my students.”⁸ As such, I copied and pasted this quote into a new Word document. As I continued reading the transcript, I copied and pasted additional statements that “stood out” about writing or writing instruction. Following, I organized each of these statements thematically⁹. I categorized the statement in consideration under the theme, “Personal Writing.” After thematically categorizing all statements that piqued my interest, I began the process of cutting any irrelevant statements or themes¹⁰. The quote in consideration advanced to what became the final round of coding for this interview. In other words, I found it relevant and necessary to include in my research findings.

⁸ For brevity sake, I only included one independent clause of her quote.

⁹ I eventually came to a point where I could organize thematically during initial coding during my last set of interviews.

¹⁰ Though this is an accurate example of my coding, it suggests a much more linear process than reality. I reread my transcripts so frequently that I lost count. I highlighted words and phrases in the transcripts often. I composed multiple memos within the same transcript about a certain story, statement, or assertion in order to make sense of them and to build connections, especially in the first few interviews. I also returned to many transcripts to reexamine them after spending significant time away from them (say, a month).

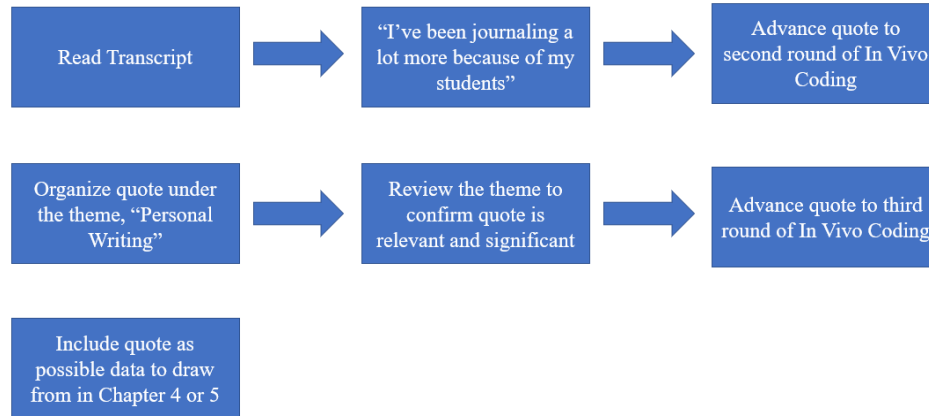


Figure 2. Coding Example

Thematic coding naturally helped me identify the pertinent themes from the data. I found it particularly challenging to analyze the preliminary data after the January and March 2020 interviews given that the (poorly designed) system I created required me to open eight separate Microsoft Word documents on my computer. The physical act of navigating to each of these documents and comparing participant interviews was overwhelming. To that end, I learned how to utilize the NVivo software program to, if nothing more, consolidate the codes into an easily accessible program. I copied the themes and codes from the Microsoft Word documents I created for the January and March 2020 interviews into the NVivo software program. Following this, I conducted the final interview where I similarly coded thematically in a Microsoft Word document. Afterwards, I manually transferred the themes and codes from the final interview into the NVivo software, similar to how I did previously, so I could examine these codes alongside the previous two interviews in NVivo. Shortly after I added the codes from the final interview into NVivo, I realized that I had not yet repeated this same step for the pilot interview I conducted in January 2019. Thus, I retrieved these set of interviews and recoded them to align with the same process and methods as I had coded the most recent interviews.

Foundational to narrative inquiry are the stories that participants share. The analysis of my data is incomplete without coding participant stories. I employed the same coding strategy to recognize and highlight the consequential stories as I did with participant belief statements, philosophies, tensions, etc. In other words, I coded the stories thematically utilizing the In Vivo Coding approach. I repeated this process for each interview with one exception: Initially, the participant stories underwhelmed me, and, for a time, I decided not to include them as part of my data analysis. However, it felt methodologically inappropriate to conduct a narrative inquiry study without highlighting participant stories. Narrative inquirers such as Clandinin and Connolly emphasize stories as necessary components of narrative inquiry. To remove participant stories felt unacceptable. Thus, I returned to the data to identify and underscore their stories in my research.

After the themes and codes were consolidated into the NVivo software, I read them profusely to internalize the data. Beyond this, I utilized the benefits of the software program to make notes, compare codes across themes and participants, and create visuals. Specifically, I explored my data through visualizations in NVivo by making and analyzing matrices, concept maps, and hierarchy charts. I found the hierarchy chart to be most influential because this visual simply and directly helped me recognize the volume of codes for each theme. Examining the data visually complemented my understanding and added nuance to what I had previously internalized. Figure 3 presents the picture of the hierarchy chart. I have manually created and included a legend with corresponding numbers for clarification of the codes. For instance, the number 1 in the legend in the upper left-hand corner correlates with the number 1 on the hierarchy chart and so on. I explain in detail the codes outlined in the hierarchy chart in Chapter 4 under the heading, “Description of Data Collection.”

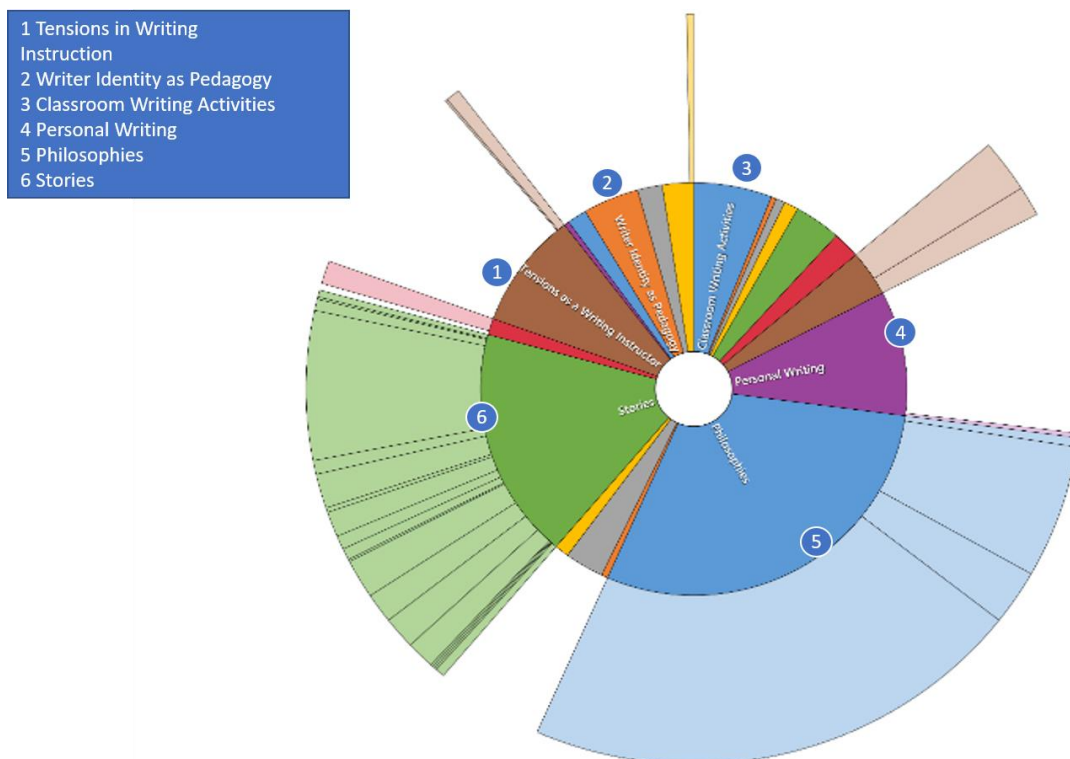


Figure 3. Hierarchy Chart

Finally, I created a Microsoft Word document that included all three of my research questions (i.e., how do ELA PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identity and the teaching of writing in secondary schools? What writing opportunities do PSTs frame for students and how does that connect to PSTs' personal writing habits? And what leads PSTs to write?) and the themes I identified that directly responded to each question¹¹. This helped me organize and clarify my thinking so I could have a plan for writing.

Trustworthiness

Specific to narrative inquiry is the sharing and resharing of stories (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Interestingly, some participants shared the same story (unique to them) in

¹¹ For instance, in order to respond to the first research question, I aimed to explore participants' writing history, purposes for writing, and personal writing among other themes.

multiple interviews. For instance, Todd shared a story about a time when his first-grade teacher invited him to compose a story book, and how that experience helped him feel like a writer, *three* times across our four interviews (i.e., Interviews, January 2019; 2020; May 2020). Similarly, Gwen shared an experience in early elementary school that shaped her writing history in two separate interviews (Interviews, January 2019; 2020). The act of sharing and resharing these stories is a staple of narrative inquiry, and providing space for students to reshare such stories strengthens the trustworthiness of my study.

Beyond this, I believe that our consistent conversations about writing and teaching writing in the secondary classroom enabled myself and the participants to co-construct the story (e.g., Connolly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber et al., 2013; Schaafsma et al., 2007). For instance, my invitation to participants to talk about, say, the moments when they shared writing with their classes helped them think of specific possibilities when they might share their writing in the future. Specifically, Darren considered multiple possibilities to write about the way he experiences and fits into the world, and then share that writing with students. In other words, I am not the “mighty” researcher standing over them, critiquing their language and pedagogy. Rather, the act of talking about these possibilities together is part of co-constructing the story together.

The act of co-constructing the story is further evidenced by the ways my interview questions transformed over time to fit participants’ unique experiences. Significantly, I created questions in subsequent interviews to follow up on their classroom teaching, and their pedagogical goals and beliefs. For example, Gwen mentioned that she wanted students to “focus on themselves as writers,” so I created space in the following interview to share her pedagogical experience.

Finally, I demonstrated trustworthiness by triangulating my data. However, I acknowledge that the intent is not to create a replicable study. Rather, I intended to gain a depth of knowledge

for one specific group of PSTs and how they experience writing and enact that writing in the secondary classroom. Even so, I triangulated my data (a) primarily by interview, and also through (b) visual metaphor and reflection, and (c) classroom observation.¹²

Limitations

This study has certain limitations that preclude me from broadly generalizing my research (e.g., Marshall & Rossman, 2011). James and Slater (2014) discuss two limitations that I highlight within my study: (a) The limited number of participants, and (b) the limitations in the research study. Foremost, the applicant pool was originally limited to PSTs who enrolled in English 391 in the fall of 2018. Narrowing the scope further, I was also bound to those who agreed to be in my study, which included a total of seven possible participants from that class. Two of the seven participants preferred to complete their student teaching requirements out of state. At the time I originally designed this research, well before any semblance of a pandemic emerged, I planned to conduct in-person observations and interviews. It simply did not make sense to include participants who would be out of state.

Further, the context of this study only reflects the experiences of four PSTs within a limited time frame. As identity is constantly in motion (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), participants may have a different perception of their writer identities in different circumstances. For instance, if I had conducted most of the interviews either before or after their student teaching experiences, then it is possible that participants might have viewed their writer identities differently. For instance, without the context of being regularly immersed in writing pedagogy, it is possible that

¹² I intended to observe participants a total of 20 times (i.e., each participant five times). However, I only reached 25 percent of the total number (i.e., five observations) due to the global pandemic.

participants would have thought differently about who they are as writers and/or how their writer identity influences their writing pedagogy.

Additionally, the methods of the research were also limited. The global pandemic limited my ability to observe participant teaching. Though my data is not incomplete without a more robust observational data point, I do believe more observations would have led to more insights in how writer identity influences writing pedagogy. For example, the few times I observed Darren's teaching led me to identify more of his pedagogical approaches that underscored his writer identity. These observations complemented the interviews, and, quite candidly, provided more depth than what I could glean simply from the interviews alone.

I also believe that limitations exist within the visual metaphor activity participants completed. For example, Joe did not complete the visual metaphor activity according to the instructions I provided. My relationship with him in the context of this research precluded me from asking him to reconsider and revise. I felt this way in part because he presented his metaphor in our final meeting, and I did not consider it appropriate to ask him to revise and meet with me again. I also recognize that if he did not want to follow the directions, then I could not force his hand.

Finally, I recognize that I only identified participants who demonstrated a rich writer identity as determined from the pilot interviews in January 2019. There was one possible participant who participated in the pilot interview who did not have a robust writing history or demonstrate a strong writer identity. Inviting her to participate in the research study might have changed the way I examined writer identity as writing pedagogy. Additionally, her voice may have made my recommendation for teacher educators to design activities that enable PSTs to wrestle with their writer identity¹³ more urgent.

¹³ I discuss the opportunity to wrestle with writer identity within methods courses in the Implications section.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

I did not find the literature on stories in narrative research particularly overwhelming. There are plenty of sources to read and copious researchers who make explicit the connection between stories and research, but none resonated with me. However, in returning to my review of the research, I reflected on Pinnegar and Hamilton's (2011) assertion that stories inherently describe what it means to be human. Perhaps this is powerful to me because, as a first-semester graduate student in the summer of 2014, I learned how texts and the stories therein help readers examine what it means to be human. It was a powerful learning experience for me as I embedded this idea as a salient theme within the secondary curriculum I planned to teach in the upcoming school year. It had never occurred to me until recently, though, that the stories *we* tell also underscore what it means to be human. Specifically, the stories that participants shared across the four interviews I conducted, and the stories from my life within this research, all embody our humanity. If stories do in fact make us human, then we ought to pay more attention to *which* stories others share since it stands to reason that therein lies what it means to be human in their eyes.

The stories Darren, Gwen, Todd, and Joe shared amplified their "beliefs and experiences" (Bell, 2002, p. 209) in powerful ways. They contextualized and magnified the importance of their philosophies, actions, and discourse through story. It was their stories that initially encouraged me to redirect my research questions to focus on writer identity as pedagogy as opposed to facilitating a rich writer identity (an identity I quickly learned they already claimed). However, after I initially discovered that each participant maintained a strong writer identity, I struggled to connect the stories they told to their writer identities. This gave me pause and caused me to reflect and reexamine the transcripts. Despite this struggle, there was enough evidence that led me to believe that their stories would be important. This was made evident when I discovered the stories they

shared, both collectively and individually, illuminated their rich history as writers. It was evident again as I organized the stories that embodied their personal writing habits, their personal and teaching writing philosophies, the tensions they experienced, and their classroom writing activities. The stories they chose to share were powerful and stressed the role of writing in their understanding of what it means to be human.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to understand the writer identities of Darren, Gwen, Todd, and Joe. I explore this primarily through the stories and discourse they share. Specifically, I include vignettes for participants across the six major themes I identified to guide my exploration. Additionally, I examine their writer identities through visual metaphors they created, which include a written reflection and follow-up questions in our final interview. I also include a few observations I conducted prior to the global pandemic. I begin by highlighting each participant's writing history and their rich personal writing experiences and beliefs. Following, I identify and explore the participants who had the most well-articulated teaching writing philosophy statements and visual metaphors. Afterwards, I select the participants who most strongly voiced their tensions in writing pedagogy. Finally, I emphasize the writing activities that each participant created both prior to and during the global pandemic.

Description of Data Collection

I designed this narrative inquiry research with three data points in mind: Interview, visual metaphor, and observations. The primary data source were the participant interviews that I conducted in January 2019, January 2020, March 2020, and May 2020. The interviews that occurred during January, March, and May 2020 coincided with each participant's student teaching experience, so they could talk about their writer identities in connection with their classroom

teaching. Figure 3¹⁴ represents the salient codes I identified across all four interviews, and I provide a more detailed breakdown. Consistent with narrative inquiry, participants shared an abundance of stories—183 total—that I examined to guide my thinking of each theme for each participant. For example, under the theme “Writing History” I include a story for Darren that exemplified his history as a writer.

The most abundant theme was participant philosophies. In sum, I coded 299 philosophy statements. The overwhelming majority were philosophies about the teaching of writing (n=213), followed by personal writing philosophies (n=58), sharing writing philosophies (n=24), and mandatory writing philosophies (n=4). Additional salient themes include “Personal Writing” (97 codes), “Tensions as a Writing Instructor” (85 codes), “Classroom Writing Activities” (60 codes), and “Writer Identity as Pedagogy” (43 codes). These themes, in addition to participant stories, primarily guided my analysis and interpretation of the data, though I also draw from other themes I identified with fewer codes that Figure 3 does not specifically highlight due to the infrequent volume of codes (e.g., “Writing History” [19 codes]).

I also invited participants to create visual metaphors that represented their writer identities. I initially discovered this concept when I read Alsup’s (2006) work on teacher identity discourses. The PSTs in Alsup’s study experienced so much growth through their participation in creating and reflecting on visual metaphors that I thought it would be appropriate to transfer a similar idea to PSTs’ writer identities. As such, I explained in detail and invited participants to create their visual metaphors following our interview in March. I encouraged them to be creative in their metaphors and to select a metaphor that required narration. In other words, I wanted them to think deeply about their metaphors and select one that cannot be generalized. I invited participants to compose

¹⁴ Many of the unidentified portions represent themes that do not have a thickness and richness as the others. Also, some themes are assumed into others (e.g., “Sharing Writing” was assumed into philosophy statements)

a reflection explaining their metaphors, and invited them to submit their metaphor and reflection shortly before our final interview in May. During the final interview, I asked follow-up questions about their metaphors and from their reflections in order to better understand.

Finally, I intended to observe each participant's classroom teaching five-times throughout the semester. My purpose in doing so was not to confirm whether their description of their teaching aligns with my observations. Instead, I wanted to examine (a) how participants talk about writing, (b) how participants position themselves as writers and writing instructors, (c) the writing opportunities they frame for students, and (d) whether they experience tension. Unfortunately, the global pandemic significantly curtailed my opportunity to visit their classrooms. However, I observed both Darren and Joe's teaching twice, and I visited Todd's classroom once prior to the global pandemic. Regrettably, I did not receive an opportunity to visit Gwen's classroom. Yet, I include my observations as appropriate in the findings section.

Research Questions

The research questions were as follows: How do ELA PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identity and the teaching of writing in secondary schools? Sub questions include (a) what writing opportunities do PSTs frame for students and how does that connect to PSTs' personal writing habits? And (b) what leads PSTs to write?

The primary research question I posed enabled me to identify six salient themes that helped me understand how PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identity and the teaching of writing in secondary schools. The six themes I found were (a) writing history, (b) personal writing, (c) teaching writing philosophies, (d) tensions, and (e) classroom writing activities. Intertwined in each of these themes are participant stories related to each. However, I do not explore every theme for each participant. Instead, I identified the participants who best

articulated each theme and who provided the richest data. In some instances, I explore all four participants' data under one theme (e.g., Writing History) while I chose to explore only two participants' data in another theme (i.e., Teaching Writing Philosophy).

I synthesized the data for the primary research question (i.e., how do ELA PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identity and the teaching of writing in secondary schools?) in Chapter 5 under the heading of "Writer Identity as Pedagogy." I respond to the second research question (i.e., what writing opportunities do PSTs frame for their students and how does that connect to their writer identity?) in the theme I titled, *Classroom Writing Activities*. Finally, I explore the last research question (i.e., what leads PSTs to write?) in the sectioned I titled, *Personal Writing*. The remaining sections are salient themes that pushed my thinking and helped me evaluate how participants' writer identity influenced their writing pedagogy. I begin by describing participants' writing history.

Writing History

The participants' rich history of writing resonated with me throughout the whole of our interviews. In fact, I first noticed each participant had a rich writing history in my initial interview in January 2019. This connection across participants demanded I reexamine my research question¹⁵. In the end, these data helped to inspire my inquiry. Furthermore, they all shared poignant stories of themselves as writers within and beyond the classroom, establishing the foundation of their respective writer identity. This section comprises significant moments of their writing history, including the personal and classroom writing they conducted, and the influence their secondary

¹⁵ Originally, my inquiry was to facilitate a rich writer identity among participants.

school teachers had on their attitudes and identities as writers. This section highlights the writing history for Darren, Gwen, Todd, and Joe, respectively.

Darren

When I was in high school, I would sit down at my family's desktop computer and just write for hours after school because it felt good. Throughout the years I've reflected on that and understood that even though it was fictional creative writing not even about myself, it was pouring myself into something. It wasn't until late middle school that I started reading fiction books that weren't primarily about sports and that opened a whole new world of personal expression for me because I knew that I could write about anything that happened in my life. So, I think it was my freshman year when I started writing this YA dystopian novel at my parents' desktop in the living room. Every day I would come home and sit down after school and start writing again until I got writer's block and then I would go do something else and then I would come back before I went to bed and start writing again or editing. I did that for 100 pages of a word/excel document and then wanted my whole family to read it. That was probably, I would say, Mount Everest of my writing—of my creative writing experience in the entirety of my life. (Interview, January 2019)

This vignette is comprised of two stories that Darren shared in the same interview in January 2019, but the details to the story evolved with additional interview questions and between tangential stories. In sum, this interview elicited 12 stories from Darren, which represent the single highest volume of stories from any one participant during a single interview.

Powerful Writing Experiences. Darren's vignette also illustrates the significance of personal writing. I find two items worth noting in this story: Foremost, this was an unassigned writing project that Darren insisted on. He valued writing and continued composing daily for an unspecified time, concluding with 100 pages of writing. Secondly, I give pause to reflect on the feelings writing elicited: Darren described that this writing experience enabled him to "feel good." I look back on my own writing experiences, and I can recognize similar moments when non-mandatory writing empowered me, primarily reflecting about what I experienced in my life and

how I felt about such experiences. For Darren, however, writing a Young Adult (YA) dystopian novel was a powerful moment in his life. He characterized this and other writing experiences from this time period as life changing moments. He suggested that these “experiences with the joy of writing in late middle school and early high school” led him to pursue writing as both a focal point in higher education and for a “professional career” (Interview, January 2019).

Darren’s decision to identify a career where writing is a central component happened over an extended period. For example, Darren’s earliest memories of writing occurred in elementary school as a young 4th grade student when he confidently told me that “creative expression” was the reason he “started writing ever in the first place” (Interview, January 2019). He shared a story wherein he

Had to write a creative short story and my friend and I thought that we were particularly advanced in our creativity. So we wanted to see who could write the most pages, which kind of reflected the two of our experiences in 4th grade because [laughter] we liked talking a lot in class and we frequently got in trouble for talking, so that led us to writing it all down on paper. And so it moved to sort of a competition in an assignment to this space where we can just write on our own to express our ideas. (Interview, January 2019)

Darren’s initial interest in writing was fueled by the limitations his teacher placed on talking during classroom instructional hours. However, this experience led him to compose more abundantly during assigned classroom writing activities and on his own volition to express ideas. The opportunity to express creativity in writing was the fabric that wove Darren’s writing history. Indeed, such occasions inspired him to value writing, hoping his career may be saturated with rich writing experiences. Unfortunately, Darren also experienced limitations in his writing opportunities during his secondary education that negatively influenced his perception of writing (and which I illustrate momentarily). His writer identity ebbed and flowed until he changed his college major from communications to English education. Surprisingly, the transformation of his attitude towards writing came about because of the opportunity to design lesson plans:

For whatever reason writing lesson plans is what ignited writing at all for me again, and I think it's because it's something that was moving to the future; it was something that I could write and it was a creative outlet that sparked my desire to write again. And since then it's been in this gradual increase of constantly thinking how the world interacts with my desire to write lesson plans, and that has again sparked some writing things again and made me go back to journaling for myself and just several different things that have built my personal expression in writing. (Interview, January 2019)

Darren's experience writing lesson plans was a pivotal moment because it engendered the creativity he sought in writing, leading to growth in his writer identity. The inspiration he received from designing lesson plans transferred to future journaling and writing opportunities.

Limited Writing Opportunities. Additionally, Darren described moments when secondary teachers placed restrictions on his creativity, which caused tension. He noted, "I remember writing in forms that aren't creative and having those be this weird dichotomy—this weird tension between enjoying writing and doing something for a purpose that I don't really care all that much about" (Interview, January 2020). The tension became so constricting that Darren stopped trying altogether. He described his work ethic in these situations as follows: "If [teachers] are asking me to be personally expressive, but not giving me the ability to really do it, then I'm not even going to be personally expressive in the slightest" (Interview, January 2019). In other words, Darren created a personal writing philosophy as a high school student that he will write with the freedom to make writerly decisions or he will not write at all. Truly, the mandatory school writing activities were fundamentally different than the writing he composed on his own time as described in the vignette.

Unfortunately, many school-sponsored writing activities cheapened the composing experience for him and negatively influenced his attitude towards writing. He felt this way "until [his] Junior year of high school" when he and his friends "took it in [their] own hands" and "started expressing themselves creatively through screen play writing and movie making" (Interview,

January 2019) as part of their classroom writing activities. This enabled Darren to salvage his writing experiences in high school as he still believed in the power of writing, pursuing it as a viable career outcome.

Conclusion. Darren’s rich writing history is as complex as it is fascinating. His experience as a young elementary student was foundational to his writer identity in that he arguably discovered his interest in writing during these moments. He continued to build his writer identity, recognizing that writing made him “feel good” during moments of personal, unassigned writing as a secondary student. However, the teachers who limited his creative expression through the writing activities they assigned hindered his writing growth. Indeed, Darren discovered that identity is subject to change (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) and his writer identity undoubtedly changed during his years as a secondary student. Even though it was his choice to determine his writing habits and attitudes, the writing pedagogy of his teachers strongly influenced his actions. I find it interesting that school sponsored writing activities, which are intended to build writing skills, had a negative effect on him as a writer.

Gwen

There was a story I wrote in 4th grade that really stuck with me because everyone loved it and then [laugh] at that point I’m like cool I’m a writer [laugh] and after that I would write. [The story] was the first thing I wrote in school that I was really, really proud of, and I think I still have it. Everyone in my family wanted a copy of it and that was nice. And I remember that year, too, keeping a journal under my mattress [laugh], and I would write every night with this glowy pen, and it was writing and drawing. I remember [laugh] doing that every night. I remember sitting in bed writing. That’s one of my most vivid memories of it ever—like having a good time in writing recreationally. (Interview, January 2019/2020)

The vignette I identified to represent Gwen’s writing history illustrates a positive writing experience she had in the 4th grade, which enabled her to identify as a writer at a young age. This

vignette comprised two interviews, a year apart, that I parceled together. The flow of the vignette moves seamlessly because Gwen shared the same story in two interviews that occurred in January 2019 and January 2020. I consider the “good time” Gwen experienced writing in her room, without expectations in grammar, length, or other artificially crafted guidelines. I believe experiences like this laid the foundation for her positive writing experiences throughout her life.

Positive Writing Experiences. Gwen noted that she was “very much in a community of writers growing up” (Interview, January 2020). Significantly, she was surrounded by friends and family who valued writing. In fact, Gwen noted that “my mom wrote, and all my best friends considered themselves writers so we would share stories and poems” (Interview, January 2020). Gwen’s social circle and family positively influenced (and likely expedited) the growth of her writer identity. She recognized the power of participating in a writing group, suggesting that “you learn a lot just by doing and experiencing other writing” (Interview, January 2020).

Beyond the personal writing she composed, Gwen also recognized the powerful opportunities to journal as part of classroom activities. Gwen noted that “I honestly feel I got some of my best work from my teachers who did that” (Interview, January 2020). Part of the power of writing in journals, for Gwen, was connected to the opportunity to write according to the proposed prompt or to “write about whatever you want” (Interview, January 2020). To add to that, journal writing was a “safe space” for Gwen because she could write honestly and meaningfully:

My freshman year [of high school] I had a teacher who would have us journal every day. And we could share if we wanted to or not share . . . her classroom gave such a safe feeling for myself and for so many other students that I kind of attributed a lot of that to the journaling just because she gave us a place to be ourselves and to express things. (Interview, January 2019)

Informal journal writing opportunities were important to Gwen’s growth as a writer since it provided solace and an avenue to explore meaningful questions and experiences. She felt safe writing in journals because she chose the audience (i.e., whether to share or to keep private).

Beyond this, the informal journals created spaces for therapy. Gwen shared a poignant story where she journaled in school after the death of a student:

We had a student in our class who passed away from cancer that year and it was hard for a lot of the students. . . . It's a hard situation when somebody who's 15 passes away and those journals and everything she gave us were wonderful. And I've always wanted to be a teacher because I want to be there for students in times of need and because that's what teachers have done for me. And I think [pause] I want to aid them in that through writing like she did with those journals. (Interview, January 2019)

Gwen acknowledged that she did not have a relationship with the young student who passed away, but it was still hard to navigate her emotions. Writing offered respite from these feelings as she explored her thoughts and composed the feelings of her heart. In fact, these journaling opportunities were so influential that they piqued her interest in becoming an English teacher. She had such powerful writing opportunities that helped her navigate difficult circumstances that she considered teaching as a career so she could help youth navigate their lives through writing.

Related, Gwen also mentioned the influence of her teachers' feedback, specifically those who valued her voice: "There were teachers who would read something and be like, 'I can't hear you at all. I should be able to hear you in this. I should be able to know who wrote this without seeing the name at the top'" (Interview, January 2020). Gwen did not specify, but I understand these writing experiences to be "formal," school-sponsored activities such as research papers or standardized writing. Regardless, the teachers who valued her voice helped Gwen understand that her voice was both validated and needed to be amplified.

Negative Writing Experiences. Despite the positive writing experiences, Gwen also expressed hard moments as a secondary student where she felt constricted as a writer. These moments discouraged her from identifying as a writer:

I remember [11th and 12th grade] being mostly research/non-fiction kind of papers and I struggled a lot with that and I didn't—I didn't want to write that kind of stuff because I got told a lot how formulaic it had to be, and how I couldn't have a voice. And I remember [laugh] getting peer edits being like this is terrible this. This is way too informal. (Interview, January 2019)

Formulaic writing had a negative impact on Gwen's writer identity. In fact, some of her distinct memories were "writing at the table senior year [of high school] and just dreading it because it was just formulaic crap" (Interview, January 2020). Writing with limitations made her believe that future writing need be conducted in a formulaic manner as well (Interview, January 2020). Despite her positive school-writing experiences, the sum total of those that occurred during high school eventually became so constraining that she "didn't identify as a writer at all because it had been so drilled out of [her] and [she] didn't write for a while" during the onset of higher education (Interview, January 2019).

I give pause to consider her inability to identify as a writer at the conclusion of high school. Gwen shared poignant and powerful stories of her writing experiences that led to a strong writer identity, both within and beyond academia. Yet, the limitations imposed upon her as a secondary student severely weakened her writer identity. In fact, it stands to reason that it negated the many positive writing experiences she had prior to becoming a high school student.

Conclusion. The anecdotes Gwen shared demonstrate that her writing history is comprised both of personal and school-sponsored writing opportunities. The course of my interviews with Gwen suggested that many of her most memorable writing experiences—for better or for worse—occurred during classroom writing opportunities. She experienced powerful moments that enabled her to compose openly and honestly, and to discover therapeutic writing purposes. Yet, she was also expected to comply with a rigid, unforgiving formula in high school that limited her writing choices and denied her opportunities to build her writer identity. Unfortunately, the latter

experience thwarted her positive attitude towards writing and mitigated her desire to write for a period of time.

Todd

One of my earliest experiences and most impactful experiences for me writing was in first grade. The teacher kind of approached me out of nowhere and asked me if I would like to compose a story book. I'd write it and illustrate it. I could write about whatever I wanted and then they would get it laminated and everything in an actual spine. That was a really cool experience and it was one of the moments where [teachers] asked me to do something [that] made me feel like I was a writer. I started to see myself as a writer because, before that, I didn't. I didn't really think anything of it. But once they asked me, and I was like maybe the only student, or, maybe one other student, in class that she asked to do that that, it made me feel like I started to recognize my own identity as a writer. (Interview, May 2020)

Todd recounted this story three times across our interviews (Interviews, January 2019; January, 2020; May 2020). I found it interesting that Todd's teachers had such a strong impact on his writing unlike Darren and Gwen who both found happiness writing in the spaces beyond school. The majority of Todd's writing experiences all occurred during traditional instructional hours. He shared 13 stories across our four interviews that highlighted ELA teachers who positively influenced his writer identity, which is the most of such narratives across participants.

Positive Teacher Influence. Todd shared multiple stories about the ways elementary and secondary teachers positively influenced his writer identity. Teachers not only helped him to identify as a writer, but they also helped him understand that he can identify as a writer in addition to the other identities he claimed. In addition to the story he shared in the vignette, Todd shared another where a teacher in high school positively influenced his writer identity:

I believe [as] a sophomore in high school a teacher asked me to submit some poetry I had written to a conference writing contest. And then the next year they did the same thing. So that was like another instance of me not really seeing myself as a writer, but because of the teacher approaching me and asking me to write something for them, that kind of made me realize that I can be a writer. (Interview, May 2020)

Similar to the story in the vignette, Todd shared this story twice with few distinctions (Interview, January 2019; May 2020). The two stories juxtaposed against one another underscore the connection between classroom teachers and his writer identity: “That’s always been a theme for me with teachers just like believing in my writing when I didn’t think that I was that good of a writer” (Interview, January 2019). In the first grade, represented by the vignette, Todd’s teacher invited him to compose and illustrate a children’s story. It was a defining moment for his writer identity. Similarly, and after some time where he “kind of got away from [writing]” (Interview, January 2020), a tenth and eleventh-grade teacher helped to restore his emerging writer identity.

Equally as important to Todd were teachers who primed him to understand that he can identify as more than *just* a writer. Todd noted:

I was more interested in sports [than writing], and [sports is] what all of my friends were interested in. It wasn’t really seen as cool or anything to put time into writing, [so] it was great when my teacher showed me that [writing] was a viable identity to have. (Interview, May 2020)

It is unclear whether Todd wanted to identify as a writer as a high school student and felt pressure from social circles *not* to, or if he simply did not recognize that he can claim multiple identities (e.g., Moje & Luke, 2009). However, he noted that teachers helped him understand that he can claim multiple, meaningful identities without sacrificing the qualities of others. Indeed, it was the actions of his teacher that helped him to understand that he “can still have all these other personality traits, but [he] can also be passionate about writing” (Interview, January 2020). Significantly, the stories that comprise Todd’s writing history illustrate how fundamental teachers are to his writer identity.

Additionally, Todd’s teachers provided frequent writing opportunities that he believed influenced his writer identity. Specifically, Todd spoke about the experiences during eighth grade on multiple occasions (Interview, January 2019; January 2020), especially the impact of daily

writing in middle school: “That made me such a better writer because I had the freedom to explore and push myself and do whatever I wanted to” (Interview, January 2020). Further, he noted the opportunities to transform his shorter, daily writing into extended writing because each day he chose to add to the story he wrote. Todd described the influence of his teachers positively, claiming that their approach to writing instruction helped him enjoy the writing experience and “really [make him] want to write” (Interview, January 2020).

Peer Influence. In addition to the teachers who encouraged and supported his writer identity, Todd also shared a story where peers influenced his writer identity:

We were writing poems and everyone’s poems were very dark and depressing emotionally. I decided I was going to throw that out, and I literally wrote a poem about what would happen if Arnold Schwarzenegger and Chuck Norris got in a fight. Everyone was just dying laughing, and I just remember that as being a really, really fun time for me because I just got to be different and everyone still appreciated that. My classmates appreciated that and that was just one of the most fun times—the most joyous times for me was sharing my work with my fellow peers. (Interview, January 2020)

The response Todd received from his peers influenced his overall writing experience. The ensuing laughter after reading his poetry validated his writing experience and led him to talk about this experience as “fun” and “joyous.”

Conclusion. Todd’s writer identity was largely influenced by the teachers in his life and the invitations they provided. I found it interesting that simple invitations to compose or to submit writing to authentic audiences was a primary catalyst for the nascence and growth of his writer identity. Such opportunities stand to be available to all secondary teachers and need not be overcomplicated. This experience makes me wonder if writing instructors recognize the power they wield in helping students identify as writers. Significantly, Todd’s teachers not only encouraged him to identify as a writer, but they further provided spaces for him to compose that enabled him to explore what he values in writing.

Similarly, the most recent story exemplifies the impact that his peers had on his writing experiences, too. Considering the invitations from his teachers to write and the positive response from his peers—and how much of a positive influence that had on his writer identity—this leads me to believe that the perception of others influenced his writer identity. Notably, Gee’s (2000) understanding of identity comes to mind because he conceptualizes identity as “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person,’ in a given context” (p. 99). It was imperative for Todd that teachers recognized him as a writer, and his peers who did likewise also supported his growing writer identity.

Joe

I feel like the teacher’s comments I had in high school sometimes weren’t very helpful in actually improving myself as a writer. But I had one really good teacher who encouraged us to change our syntax and write sentences differently and I feel like just as a writer like the mechanics of it that really helped. (Interview, January 2019)

The stories I coded for Joe’s writing history were either overwhelmingly positive or negative. As such, Joe’s vignette represents both positive and negative writing experiences as a secondary student. Thus, the vignette shapes the discourse of his writing history as I illustrate both his positive and negative writing experiences.

Positive Writing Experiences. Joe spoke highly of one secondary writing instructor who positively influenced his writer identity. After finishing an unspecified school year (presumably high school), he noted the impact of this writing teacher:

I feel like there’s more of a realistic understanding of writing after the course. I feel like when I was done with it I actually grew as a writer. She set a good base for what she expected of academic writing and then throughout the year she continued. (Interview, January 2019)

Joe did not engage in specific detail about his writing experiences that year; however, he

did speak about the writing pedagogy of the teacher in that she effectively scaffolded writing instruction. The teacher started with whole class instruction followed by group work, which enabled Joe to work independently with confidence. Similarly, Joe noted the way this teacher scaffolded poetry also helped him become a better writer (Interview, January 2019).

Joe identified this teachers' effectiveness analyzing both literature and poetry. Joe felt that the "deeper analysis" the teacher provided as part of her literature instruction was meaningful, and he provided clues on how such learning opportunities influenced his writer identity:

I feel like as a teacher-writer it's definitely helped. I've been trying to write more within the last year or so, and I've noticed it's even helped how I'd analyzed literature. I [used to] take things for granted, like, oh this is just like a coincidence this is here but really you notice how purposeful the moves the writer's making actually are like small details. There's reasoning behind it; there's intention, and I think as a teacher-writer there's a lot to gain just by being a writer. (Interview, January 2019)

Joe's use of the phrase *teacher-writer* is intriguing. Joe had recently completed a course that I taught, and towards the latter part of the semester we had discussed the influence of "teacher-writers" in secondary writing instruction. I suppose the readings and discussions were influential for him as he adopted the phrase to describe himself. Equally as important are the effects of identifying as a teacher-writer. Joe described his elevated ability to notice the intricacies of writing as a consequence of identifying as a teacher-writer.

Negative Writing Experiences. Joe shared multiple negative experiences as part of his writing history. Specifically, he believed that secondary education limited his ability to write freely:

In some cases there was too much structure. Like we were kind of taught towards the AP lit exam. Like write an effective verb here, introduce it with this and this, which is what you should do I guess, but I felt like it was kind of constricting. (Interview, January 2019)

This story speaks specifically to standardized writing and erroneous beliefs that writing need be conducted in a specific way in each circumstance. Joe spoke briefly to the moments when

teachers imposed too much structure and the corresponding negative effects. Such instruction contrasted the writing instruction that Joe valued—instruction that encouraged him to “change [the] syntax and write sentences differently” (Interview, January 2019). Specifically, this sheds light on Joe’s comment that English teachers are “in a unique position to teach kids and to teach them really *how* to think, not necessarily what to think” (Interview, January 2019). In other words, Joe believes that he can teach writing to help students understand possibilities and choice rather than following a specific formula. Importantly, encouraging students to return to their writing, revising their work, even on the sentence level, exemplifies the possibilities and stylistic choices students can make in their own writing.

Conclusion. The stories Joe shared about his writing history are largely influenced by the teachers in his writing courses. However, he shared one story about a personal writing experience he had as a youth detached from any classroom assignment, but I chose not to include it because it was an isolated story that did not contain the thick description that other participants described in their personal writing. The classroom writing instruction in the stories he shared seemed to be the most influential experiences he had during his writing history. I find it especially interesting that he noted the structured writing limited his creativity, but he also conceded that it is “what you should do” (Interview, January 2019). This makes me wonder how this might influence his pedagogy in the future: Is it more valuable to teach students tried and true words, phrases, and structure in order for them to score highly on a standardized test, or is it more beneficial to help students recognize choice and possibilities within writing? I echo Dean’s (2017) sentiment: “It’s tempting to go there, to reduce genre to forms, when the students are struggling . . . still, the rewards of some of them getting it seem to make it worth it. I think. I hope (p. 42).

Analysis Across Participants

Darren, Gwen, Todd, and Joe all expressed memorable writing histories throughout their lives. Quite candidly, I was unprepared to discover both the positive and negative influence their teachers had on their writer identity and writing attitude. For instance, Gwen experienced such positive writing experiences in elementary school that she ultimately identified as a writer. However, she also underscored the deleterious effects of standardized writing instruction from secondary teachers, describing how it discouraged her from identifying as a writer later in life. Similarly, Darren spoke of multiple positive writing experiences he composed during his personal time; yet, secondary teachers eventually limited his creativity and created tension in writing—an activity he once valued and found “joy” in doing.

On the other hand, Todd’s experience with secondary teachers empowered him to identify as a writer. Todd’s experiences highlight how teachers have the capacity not only to help students build writer identity, but, and perhaps more importantly, *engender* a writer identity. Indeed, his writer identity flourished with the invitations and support of his teachers. Interestingly, Todd’s teachers did not perform Herculean acts to influence his writer identity. Instead, they merely provided invitations that changed its trajectory. Significantly, these invitations encouraged him to view himself as a writer when he otherwise did not. Beyond this, the actions of his teachers helped him to understand that he can embody multiple identities in addition to that of a writer. Similarly, Joe experienced positive experiences from some of his teachers, too, especially those who demonstrated depth in their literary analysis. Specifically, this imbued him to consider how identifying as a writer, or “teacher-writer,” might further enable him to identify the moves writers make, and to help students learn how to think.

This brings to light implications for all writing instructors across k-16 education. I do not know if secondary teachers understand the power they hold in influencing writer identity for better

or for worse. It also raises important questions for teacher educators to consider as part of preparing PSTs to enter the classroom. When PSTs begin student teaching and when they transition to fulltime instructors, they stand to influence student writers similar to the way participants' teachers influenced them. The invitations they extend, the activities they assign, and the pedagogy they develop can all influence future secondary students' writer identities. To that end, teacher educators need to prepare PSTs to recognize the power they wield.

Finally, I was impressed with the language participants utilized to describe their writing experiences and histories. Darren and Todd both used some variation of the word *joy* when they described their writing experiences. Darren spoke of "joy" to illustrate his feelings to write a dystopian novel while Todd said that sharing his writing was one of the most "joyous" moments. Additionally, Gwen discussed the "good time" she had writing recreationally. Such language offers a glimpse into the attitudes they have towards writing, and its emotional influence. These stories and language can positively influence secondary students to build their writer identities, too. Equally as compelling, the experiences that Darren and Gwen shared when they underscored their feelings and attitudes towards writing were both non-school sponsored writing activities. In other words, they were not obligated to write: These were truly moments when they chose to write because they valued writing.

Personal Writing

The personal writing that Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd compose strongly influences their writer identities. Initially, the stories they shared about their current writing habits and practices gave me pause and helped me to reevaluate my research question. I had initially wanted to research how teacher educators can imbue a strong writer identity for PSTs, but their stories helped me realize that they each claimed a strong writer identity: Their purposes and occasions for writing

were multiple and varied, and they found solace and satisfaction in their writing. This section explores their personal writing beyond that required for academic purposes. Importantly, it answers my second research question: What leads PSTs to write?

Darren's Personal Writing

I was at a retreat this past fall. It was a retreat with a group that I'm involved with on campus and we were in a retreat building in a wooded area [with] different activities, but one of them was going off on our own into the woods for an hour for isolation time—a refresher/mind-recycle. And I have a leather notebook that my dad got me for Christmas last year—something that I cherish because he is someone who has encouraged me to journal a lot in my lifetime because he knows the value of reflection. . . . So I walked out into the woods and walked out quite a ways and just had some processing time and I found a stream at the very back of this woods, and there was this tree laying across this stream but there was no entrance point to this stream anywhere so I thought it'd be really fun to kind of shuffle my way down this muddy hill that led to this stream and climb across the fallen tree to the middle of the stream and just sit and dangle my feet over the water and be able to look out on this beautiful stream with cool waters. . . . I had this notebook with me and I was looking and I decided it's just kind of time to write. I had been processing internally and I thought it's just time to put something to paper, and I don't know what it's going to be or anything and I just kind of started writing. I thought I am here in a forest and above a stream and there are a lot of cyclical processes going on here, and I want to write about all the things this stream does for the world. And it ended up becoming this poem that I really, really enjoyed writing and got really lost in. And we had a two-hour time period and it took half an hour to walk down to this stream. And I just began writing and writing and writing and by the time I looked up the two hours were over and I was like this felt like seconds—I got so lost in the work. (Interview, January 2020)

I chose this vignette as a representation of Darren's personal writing because it exemplifies his writing purposes and goals. Specifically, this vignette underscores that one of his purposes for writing is "processing internally." During our interviews, Darren routinely emphasized writing for an "intrinsic reward" (e.g., Interview, January 2020) or an "emotional reward" (e.g., Interview, March 2020). My analysis of these conversations led me to believe that Darren has ample experience writing for such rewards. In fact, during one of our interviews, Darren simply said, "for me it's easy to have the intrinsic reward because I enjoy writing" (Interview, January 2020). When

Darren feels the desire to write he does so “because of how it makes [him] feel as opposed to because of some requirement” (Interview, May 2020). The remainder of this section describes his personal writing. I organize it according to his journal writing and digital writing.

Journal Writing. As a writer, Darren values “intentionality and writing reflectively,” which is part of how writing becomes “fulfilling” for him. However, he acknowledged that he does not necessarily have to be intentional about writing: “It can sometimes be more of an emotional state where it’s more of a feeling where I feel like I need to write,” or when he is “inspired” (Interview, January 2020). My understanding of his current writing habits and practices leads me to believe that he writes primarily in a personal journal (such as the experience described in the vignette). Darren claims that he writes in his journal “when I’m inspired to reflect through poetry or thinking critically, especially about the world that I see in the news or in my life or something that I feel just needs written about” (Interview, January 2020). For instance, Darren highlighted an experience that exemplifies this thought:

I was just thinking last night at work—I work at [employment] and stack fruit, so I get a lot of time to process. And I was thinking about everything that happened at [School] yesterday and this week [teacher misconduct allegations] and was wondering if there was a way to take personal writing from that because I plan on just writing some poetry just to process that whole situation for me. (Interview, March 2020)

Though my interactions with Darren never confirmed that he wrote about the events he specified, this story exemplifies a moment when he felt inspired to write. Regardless, Darren thought it may help to write poetry to process the way his life was disrupted in the workplace. Such writing is meaningful to him personally, and it helps him better understand his place in his world.

Beyond the moments he feels “inspired” to write, he also writes for “personal expression” in his journal. Darren’s writer identity is significantly influenced by personally expressive writing.

In fact, Darren stated, “I absolutely believe that my writing is a form of personal expression: My academic writing, my personal/reflective writing, [and] my creative writing” (Interview, January 2020). Perhaps he values so many writing opportunities because he believes that “the most important writing is for personal expression” (Interview, January 2019). Interestingly, much of his personal writing likely is expressive. Whether he writes about nature (as indicated in the vignette), his feelings toward school culture (as indicated in the previous example), or even a YA dystopian novel, his writing reflects his perspective, attitudes, and beliefs. Given the writing he conducts, it is no surprise that he believes personal expression is “the most important.”

Further, Darren adds a compelling reason that underscores his writing habits and beliefs: “I think [writing with a foundation of personal expression is] more healthier [sic] . . . I think it breeds a release from stress” (Interview, January 2020). Darren spoke at length throughout our interviews that he writes for an “emotional” reward, but this is one of the few times he offers mental health as a writing purpose. Beyond relieving stress, he also “believe[s] in how healthy [reflective writing] is for our minds (Interview, January 2020). Indeed, writing presents many possibilities for thinking and learning, but Darren’s purposes for writing transcend such opportunities to include mental health and a healthy lifestyle.

21-Century Writing. Darren’s perception and understanding of writing is broad, and, as such I highlight more of his writing habits and beliefs. In talking about the writing he composes, Darren mentioned his use of 21st century writing. He suggested that he is “texting people constantly all day every day, and tweeting, [and] writing stuff on Instagram” (Interview, January 2019). He also considers the emails he composes for class as part of his writing, too (Interview, January 2019). The fact that he engages in such writing is not uncommon. Many people today embrace those same forms of writing; however, Darren sets himself apart because he unabashedly considers each of

this as authentic writing practices. Many people might not consider 21st century literacies (e.g., text messaging and social media) as “writing,” and I think this speaks broadly to Darren as a writer that he does consider this as part of his personal writing.

Student Teaching Reality. Despite his best intentions, Darren acknowledged the abundant responsibilities as a student teacher, realizing that they may limit his opportunity to write (Interview, May 2020). Towards the end of our second interview—when he was fully immersed in many of the duties and responsibilities of a full-time high school ELA teacher, working a part time job, and preparing for a wedding—he lamented about the dearth of time to write: “I wish I could sit down and write a short story about a student teacher in a school, and write about that character’s challenges just to reflect on my own experiences” (Interview, March 2020). Personally expressive, reflective writing may lead to new insights about his experience as a student teacher while also enabling him to process. However, he could not maintain his writing agenda with so many other responsibilities competing for his time.

Conclusion. My analysis of Darren’s personal writing responds to my second research question: What leads PSTs to write? Darren’s writing habits and practices lead me to believe writing is a tool to navigate his life. In fact, Darren made it clear that he writes (a) to process thoughts and feelings, (b) to relieve stress, and (c) when he feels inspired. In each circumstance, he writes for intrinsic and socioemotional purposes. Though Darren never explicitly described what the intrinsic or socioemotional reward looks like in practice, I can imagine it offers him an expanded worldview and/or insight into his own life that might otherwise be unavailable. Darren is not alone in believing and experiencing that writing offers such rewards. Yagelski (2011) claims that “whatever happens to a text *after* it is written does not affect what is happening to (or *in*) the writer *as she or he is writing that text*” (p. 105, emphasis in original). In other words, Darren’s

interest in writing affords him opportunities to earn the socioemotional reward that he seeks *because he writes.*

Gwen's Personal Writing

I also write at night a lot. Like last night I woke up in the middle of the night and I was really panic-y so I just got on my journal and I wrote for a little bit and sometimes when I have these panic attacks, especially being further away from home, I'm really close with my mom, so usually when I'm at home I'll just go talk with her, but when I'm here and I can't do that I have my journal and I'll write.
(Interview, January 2019)

The vignette that introduces Gwen's writer identity is a significant story that led me to pursue my current research question. Gwen was the first person I interviewed for my dissertation research in January 2019, and stories like this led me to believe that she already claimed a writer identity. In this section, I explore the personal writing habits she discussed throughout our interviews.

Writing for Relief. The vignette I identified for Gwen's personal writing demonstrates that she writes to relieve anxiety. This is a significant discovery for Gwen because, when troubling moments arise, like the one highlighted in the vignette, she has developed a writing strategy to find peace. Indeed, she can write to "express things that [she] couldn't do otherwise" (Interview, January 2019). My initial interview with her led me to believe that she is comfortable writing when she experiences anxiety. She further noted that

I write when I get in spots where I tend to overthink, and be really hard on myself, and so when I'm in those positions and it happens—it'll happen in periods—I have a journal right next to my bed where if I wake up in the middle of the night and I need to write I can do that. (Interview, January 2019)

The opportunities that Gwen takes to write calms her anxiety, and, as addressed in the most recent story, provides clarity when she overthinks. Importantly, this story underscores her belief that "writing shouldn't be this task," and that she "write[s] when [she] need[s] to" (Interview,

January 2020). Gwen demonstrated that writing enables her to become a better version of herself—one who is calm and thinks clearly. Indeed, composing the thoughts of her heart and simply writing were powerful experiences. These stories further exemplify her personal writing philosophy. She believes that “writing exactly what you’re thinking is something I believe in very strongly, especially when you’re thinking through something” (Interview, January 2020). Significantly, the stories she shared illustrate how writing imbues clarity in her life, helps to calm anxiety, and, importantly, helps her think. She values writing and considers it a tool to navigate her life during the stressful moments.

Gwen also believes that writing is a “safe space” in part because she writes when she doesn’t “know what to think necessarily” (Interview, January 2019). More importantly, though, she values writing because “there’s no consequence.” In other words, she can compose the feelings of her heart without repercussion:

Writing for me gives me the opportunity to write things down and look at it and say if I said that to that person that would not go well, but it’s on a piece of paper. And I don’t have to feel bad about putting it there and I don’t have to show anyone and no one’s going to get mad at me for [writing] it. I can be myself or even that person that I don’t want to be. (Interview, January 2019)

Gwen’s comments illustrate that she writes “to share something or to get something worded” or that “If [she has] something stewing that [she] can’t get out of [her] head it’s somewhere to put it” (Interview, January 2019). Gwen’s purposes for writing align with many of the hallmarks of writing. Indeed, writers have choices and possibilities to consider in their composing process, and, similarly, Gwen can project “the person” she chooses to embody by the tone she selects and the content she chooses. Similarly, she can choose whether she wants to share this writing or keep it to herself. Thus, it is not surprising that Gwen considers writing a safe place.

Finally, Gwen also explained that she writes in letters (Interview, January 2019; Interview January 2020).

I've been writing letters to people. Sometimes I give them to them, sometimes I don't—sometimes I just get this urge to write a letter to someone [laugh] and then I think better of it. That's the way I've been writing recently because I can't quite think out in any other form for some reason, except for addressing someone directly, or myself. I'll do that usually really late at night [laugh] when I can't sleep. I just can't get through a problem without writing out my thoughts.

A few aspects of her letter writing habits resonate with me. Foremost, the fact that she feels she “can't get through a problem without writing out [her] thoughts” suggests that she writes to discover. This is an important realization because she previously indicated that she tends to “overthink,” and writing helps her clarify her thoughts. Regardless of the precise scenario, writing relieves her from the “problems” she experiences. Additionally, I also find it interesting that she composes letters to help her directly address someone, but, and more importantly, to directly address *herself*. Gwen did not indicate that she writes letters to herself, but analyzing this quote certainly leads me to believe that it is a strong possibility. Her letter writing habit is an important genre for her since it is one that alleviates burdens.

Sympathetic Writing. The students that Gwen taught during her student teaching also led her to write: “I've been journaling a lot more because of my students. Some of them have situations that are hard to deal with and that impacts my writing” (Interview, May 2020). Gwen did not specify what about her students' lives led her to write, but writing helped her navigate the feelings she experienced, similar to the other moments in her personal life. I think Gwen's journaling in these circumstances helps me understand more about Gwen's sympathetic nature and desire to view students as individuals with emotions. Simply put, Gwen's willingness to write about students when they experience challenges helps her better sympathize with students and may further lead her to address their needs.

Conclusion. The data I gathered for Gwen's personal writing also helps me understand the research question I posed: What leads PSTs to write? For Gwen, the primary purpose for writing

is to relieve her from anxiety, stress, and additional burdens. Yet, she also writes (a) to clarify her thinking, (b) to discover, and (c) to sympathize with students. Considered together, writing in these circumstances helped her understand that “writing is a process and can be a tool for thinking, reflecting, and exploring who she is in the world” (Van Sluys, 2003, p. 182).

Gwen’s actions demonstrate that writing acts as avenues to navigate the challenges of life, which aligns with the beliefs of other prominent writing instructors (e.g., Gallagher & Kittle, 2018), and Gwen’s experiences indicate that is a successful coping strategy. Regardless of her purpose for composing, her approach is the same: She is personal and honest.

Joe’s Personal Writing

So when I was in Vietnam it was like, very stressful, in a weird way. Ahh, it was a weird living situation. I lived with like 20 other people in this townhouse, and I shared a room with five other people, and it was always hot. It was always 108 degrees. I lost 15 pounds in two weeks. It was very [laugh] it was a weird kind of environment. I don’t know. So it was stressful in a way. And then yeah, so that’s when I started journaling. (Interview, January 2020)

The first interaction I had with Joe occurred in the literacy course I taught in the fall of 2018. Joe mentioned that he had spent time teaching overseas as part of his introduction on the first day of class; however, I did not know that writing had played such a pivotal role in that experience. In fact, Joe’s personal writing profoundly influenced his disposition and learning:

The writing I do, those are the things that I felt like most affected my education and my understanding of the world and how that helped me look at things in a way that I felt was more constructed than we had at school. You can give [students] the tools to write [and] teach them like appositives for example, but I feel like it’s more help to teach them what to look for and what to think about when they’re writing . . . that’s actually what I am thinking about when I’m actually writing. (Interview, March 2020)

Interestingly, Joe believes that the writing he conducts outside of the classroom has helped enlarge his education and worldview more so than school-sponsored writing. Since personal

writing is so critically to Joe's growth, I document his personal writing habits, which include (a) journal writing, (b) writing goals, and (c) short stories.

Journal Writing. In addition to the relief that writing provided in the vignette, Joe also described another experience where writing played a similar role. He mentioned on another occasion where he experienced a tragedy, and how writing facilitated his recovery: "Last December one of my good friends died, and I wrote about that and I feel like writing helped in like, I don't know, just helped in a therapeutic kind of way" (Interview, January 2020). Certain moments that people experience in life are hard to articulate. Joe found that writing in such moments is like art: "I feel like art is one of the reasons we have to be alive, and I feel like writing is an attempt at expressing things that are almost inexpressible" (Interview, January 2019). Joe's metaphor comparing art to writing is insightful. Art can be interpreted differently by different people, but it is the artist who decides the landscape and the subject. Such writing aligns with practices of *mindfulness*. Joe is "fully present—as a writer or a teacher—in the current moment, and not preoccupied with thoughts of the past or future" (Mathieu, 2015-2016, p. 15). Writing enabled Joe to be "fully present" in this moment of grief, leading to healing.

Moreover, Joe's journal writing extended even beyond writing for therapeutic reasons. His journal writing led him to "[think] about things in a different kind of way" (Interview, January 2020). Joe did not provide a concrete example of what this may look like in practice, but he did offer that he often journals with himself as the audience in mind. Doing so allows him to examine his own beliefs and consider how his perspective reflects himself (Interview, January 2020). This belief should not be surprising given that Joe believes "there's a part of you within everything you write" (Interview, January 2019). Relatedly, Joe believes writing is an avenue to "get your own point of view across, but then also to see how you can change that point of view, reflect on it, and

see how that could be improved” (Interview, January 2020). In other words, Joe writes to reflect on who he is and who he wants to become. This introspective approach to writing is an important component of Joe’s writer identity. It is one act to write in a journal, but it is wholly another to journal to examine one’s beliefs, actions, and values.

Writing Goals. In addition to his journal writing, I found insightful the tangible writing goals Joe created for himself. He noted that “one of my new year’s resolutions is to write 2,000 words per week” (Interview, January 2020). I was impressed with this goal because I have never been aware of any PST with such specific (and lofty) writing aspirations. Though he admitted that 2,000 words per week may be too ambitious, his goal setting is admirable. Part of the goal to write so frequently is to compose a book. Joe composed a first draft of 20,000 words, even though he admitted the writing was “horrible.” However, Joe believes strongly in revision, noting that he “can revise to make it as perfect as [he] want[s] it to be” (Interview, January 2020). As a result, he cut between 4,000 and 5,000 words to, presumably, make it more concise and focused. Joe’s goal is to continue writing and revising until “it’s beautiful: a *New York Times* best seller” (Interview, January 2020). Writing is a time consuming and challenging endeavor that requires dedication. Even so, Joe’s commitment to writing will serve him well. After all, “the best and most prolific writers have something that many others don’t: the hard moments don’t stop them” (Whitney, 2017, p. 71).

Unfortunately, the responsibilities of a fulltime student teacher limited his opportunities to write. Unprompted, he mentioned twice during an interview that he has not had much time to write. He conceded that “now that I’ve been teaching there’s no time to write anymore,” citing that he has “been so busy and tired” from his work as a student teacher (Interview, March 2020). However, the global pandemic surprisingly enabled him to continue writing. He acknowledged the difficulty

in writing prior to the pandemic, but noted his renewed strength in composing: “I kind of stopped writing before the quarantine because [I was] so busy. Right now, I’m [writing] 1,500 words a week. I want to be at a higher number than that, but it’s something I guess” (Interview, May 2020). Anecdotally, most the of PSTs and other fulltime teachers I know struggled to find personal time during the pandemic. However, Joe’s circumstances were different, and he utilized his time to continue writing.

Finally, Joe noted how his writing goals has enabled him to read like a writer:

I’ve been trying to write more within like the last year or so and I’ve noticed it’s even helped how I’d analyzed literature. You notice how purposeful the moves the writer’s making actually are . . . there’s intention and I think as a teacher-writer there’s a lot to gain just by being a writer. (Interview, January 2019)

The “moves” that Joe references is a common phrase among today’s writing teachers. Gallagher (2015) uses this this phrase often in his book to reference the intentional decisions that writers make. Reading Gallagher’s book was the first time I had come across such language, so it makes me wonder if Joe is also familiar with his work, too. It would not be surprising given that Joe believes in the power and connection of reading and writing (Interview, January 2019).

Writing Short Stories. Joe also made it clear that he has a habit of writing short stories (Interviews, January 2020; May 2020). He mentioned composing short stories at various points in our interview: Specifically, he talked about his habit of writing short stories as part of his goal for writing 2,000 words per week. He also mentioned a short story he wrote in response to an engaging article he read.

I was reading randomly about the Rocky Flatts Plant where the US government was making plutonium bombs, or cores to atom bombs. And I thought there’d be like a cool short story idea there. There was a bunch of waste there, so now there’s like radiation in the ground water potentially. I changed it so it’s like a Twinkie factory essentially now and it’s comparing Twinkies to nuclear waste because they never expire; they never degrade [laugh]. (Interview, May 2020)

This story exemplifies his penchant for writing short stories. Equally as important, it reminds me of a statement he made in a previous interview wherein he suggested that he only writes when he is interested in the topic (Interview, January 2020). The natural assumption is that he was interested in this topic.

Joe also composed short stories that he submitted for publication. For example, he wrote a short story for a creative writing class, and, after he completed the class, he revised his writing and submitted it to a University sponsored journal. Joe's explanation of his published writing made me believe that he was proud of his writing accomplishments. He said he intended to publish it in a different journal, but when that was rejected a separate journal editor reached out to him to gauge his interest in publishing it in their journal. Joe was happy to oblige.

Conclusion. My analysis of Joe's personal writing habits leads me to believe that he writes for multiple and varied purposes. I find it most interesting that he writes for relief, specifically providing examples of a stressful living situation in Vietnam and when a good friend unexpectedly passed away. Certainly, these are challenging moments to navigate, and writing brought relief in his time of need. Beyond this, Joe also wrote to both think differently and to consider varying perspectives. Though he did not provide concrete examples of such writing, his purpose for writing was clear.

Interestingly, in our final interview, Joe asked me whether it is common for writing teachers to write. He seemed surprised to find that writing teachers do not identify as writers (e.g., McKinney, 2017; Whitney, 2017). And, for Joe, it should come as a surprise. Joe graduated from a University that values writing and writing instruction, and, he too values writing. He demonstrated that through his writing goals and subsequent compositions. It makes sense that

writing teachers would write regularly, but, as Joe found, full-time teaching requires a commitment in time and energy, and, for many, that leaves little time to write.

Todd's Personal Writing

I'm sort of planning to write a longer story. I don't know how long—maybe like 100 or 200 pages—so right now I'm prewriting for that and planning that out. I would say that one of the reasons I am [planning] to write a longer book and trying to journal more is so that I will be able to help my students with that in the future because I know that's important—I do enjoy it obviously for myself—but I still want to go through all the challenges of like always trying to create something new through writing so I can give advice to my own students; sort of sympathize with them when I ask them to write something. And I feel like the more I know about writing the more I go into the process of writing myself and I can just help my students with it more and more . . . so, I guess that's like my motivation for trying to write other than I enjoy it. (Interview January 2019)

I identified this vignette to guide my inquiry into Todd's personal writing because of the direct purpose he has for writing: Todd wants to be an active writer so he can be a writer at the head of a writing classroom. Similarly, the additional writing he composes also helps him actively write in order to become a more effective writing teacher. Truly, the personal writing he composes substantiates a claim he made during our first interview: "I don't ever want to stop writing" (Interview, January 2019). In this section, I chronicle Todd's personal writing habits, leading with his experience writing a book that I highlighted in the vignette. Following, I address his informal writing and writing for a sports blog.

Writing a Book. The vignette that introduces Todd's personal writing illustrates his desire to write a book, and to establish shared writing experiences with future students. Both writing purposes are encouraging, and they stand to help him become a more effective writing instructor and build his writer identity. Todd acknowledged that most of the personal writing he composes is for this book, and his goal is to "build up [his] skills [by writing] three pages a week." He talks about this as a "fun way to sort of push [himself]" (Interview, January 2020). I find it encouraging

that Todd seeks opportunities to write and to grow as a writer. It certainly helps that he enjoys writing, a characteristic he alluded that has been true for most of his life (Interview, January 2019).

Specifically, Todd's writing is personal, claiming that "little bits of my personality or thing[s] that I'm interested in will sort of dip into my writing" (Interview, January 2020). It is not surprising that Todd's interest in history (Interview, January 2020) leads him to write historical fiction:

The book I'm writing is an alternate history of the civil war. So, I'm pretty passionate about history, [so] that's one thing where it definitely seeps into. I like to think about alternate routes of history, [so] that's kind of like my interest in writing this book. There's one general in particular who was a real person, William Tecumseh Sherman, [but] most of the characters are probably going to be fictional, but I wanted to know about [Sherman]. So, he has like a little diary you can read where he wrote down all his strategies for war and his thoughts about it, so that was cool and that was helpful. So I guess, trying to do some background research, especially if it's going to be something that's trying to represent history (and accurately) I want to get it right. And I want to be able to present to people an accurate depiction even if I'm changing some things. (Interview, January 2020)

Todd's personal interest in writing about the civil war likely leads him to become a more committed writer. Certainly, it is possible that he effectively researched the strategies of William Tecumseh Sherman because he enjoys the historical aspect. It is hard to imagine that he would do so if he had little interest in history.

Sports Blog. Similar to aligning his writing interests with history, Todd also aligns his writing with other interests such as sports, especially basketball (Interview, January 2020). He applied for a position as a sports blogger for a nearby professional basketball team, and believes that this position is a good fit for him professionally for multiple reasons: It connects with his interests outside of academia, presents an opportunity build on his writing strengths, and creates spaces to grow as a writer:

I'm very good at stating what I think and then backing it all up with the research—just building those arguments. [Basketball is] a relaxing subject to talk and think about, but learning to publish something more professional, pushing myself to

provide information that's accurate, and going and finding good sources, and presenting in a way that's easy for a reader. (Interview, January 2020)

I find it encouraging that Todd sought ways to improve as a writer. Relatedly, he mentioned that one of his goals is improving the clarity of his writing (Interview, January 2019), and it seems likely that writing for a professional blog, with an editor who reviews and provides feedback, will provide strategies to clarify his writing. In fact, his experience revising and working with an editor has already empowered him: "I think that only helped me become a better writer professionally, so that gives me confidence for when I'm teaching students that I know what I'm doing because I've done it in a professional area now" (Interview, May 2020). Significantly, Todd's growth as a writer afforded him opportunities to build skills that will empower him as a teacher. Such experiences are common for teachers who seek opportunities to write and build their writer identities. Indeed, teachers, such as Todd, "claim authority with [their] own words and [their] work" (Whitney, Hicks, Zuidema, Fredricksen, & Yagelski, 2014, p. 179).

Informal Writing. Finally, the last subtheme I identified is Todd's penchant for informal writing. Most of his informal writing occurs in a journal. He believes that he is "a pretty deep-thinking person, so [he] will usually kind of write what's on [his] mind" (Interview, January 2019). For instance, Todd explained that when he finds something interesting to informally write about, then he can "just get lost in writing sometimes" (Interview, January 2019). Todd provided the example of writing about "socialist views," but did not elaborate. He also noted that he enjoys writing in a journal in order to "organize [his] thought[s] and go through the day" (Interview, January 2019). As such, Todd demonstrates that he is a reflective, thoughtful person who utilizes writing to "slow things way down and just take a look at [his] life and take a look at everything you're thinking" (Interview, January 2019). Todd's writing not only imbues personal growth, but it acts as a way to examine and reflect on his interests and values.

Conclusion. My analysis of Todd’s personal writing helps me understand what leads him to write: (a) To become a more effective, sympathetic teacher, (b) to improve his writing skills, and (c) to clarify his thinking. I give pause to consider that one of the overarching writing purposes is to enhance his writing pedagogy. Whitney (2017) underscores the importance of writing teachers developing a consistent writing routine to become cognizant of “the emotional components of writing; in particular, the struggles associated with it. This in turn improves the instruction in specific writing processes” (p. 70). Indeed, Todd’s desire and willingness to push himself as a writer has immediate positive ramifications for his writing pedagogy. In fact, his writing experiences stand to let his experiences guide his pedagogy (Whitney, 2017), which, in turn, may “offer a vocabulary for talking about the nature of writing—planning, revising, editing—and insight into how these processes work for particular writers in particular situations” (Dyson & Freedman, 2003, p. 974). Significantly, such benefits from personal writing will undoubtedly help him become an effective writing instructor.

Analysis Across Cases

The personal writing habits and practices of all four participants demonstrate that they all have growing writer identities. The writing purpose with the most participant overlap was writing to relieve stress, anxiety, and/or grief. Simply put, I found their writing purposes to strengthen their mental health insightful and poignant. Darren, Gwen, and Joe all shared examples of how writing can either relieve stress or be therapeutic. Much of Gwen’s personal writing relieved anxiety, providing a safe space for her to navigate her thoughts and emotions. Writing offered a respite from the challenges she encountered, especially during the times when her mother was not available to talk. Further, Joe also illustrated multiple opportunities when writing relieved him from stress. Writing brought him peace when he composed in a foreign environment, and he found

writing therapeutic after a friend passed away. The fact that both Gwen and Joe cope with such emotions through writing speaks to their faith in the powerful nature of writing. Similarly, Darren indicated a similar purpose for writing. Though his purposes for writing for relief are not the same as Gwen and Joe, his habit of personally expressive writing “breeds release from stress” (Interview, January 2020). In other words, writing also enables him to find peace.

These experiences make me wonder how Darren, Gwen, and Joe, specifically, might implement such purposes in their pedagogy. They certainly are not alone in writing to relieve them of such emotions. This belief is supported by research in that studies suggest that writing about stressful moments can lead to improved well-being (as cited in Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016, p. 25). To that end, I believe their experiences and stories may offer similar coping strategies for students who similarly struggle.

Further, Joe and Todd are in the process of writing full-length books. Certainly, they must be in the minority of undergraduate students who have, and are working towards, such aspirations. Regardless, their dedication in writing will likely strengthen their writer identities in profound ways, that, too, may influence their writing pedagogy. Todd recognized this as a purpose for his writing and Joe will become a better writing teacher as he continues to write.

I also find it interesting that, during the traditional teaching schedule, both Darren and Joe found it challenging to write, while Todd created spaces for more writing. Darren and Joe found that there was not enough time in the day to successfully teach and complete his writing goals. However, Todd continued to write for the professional sports blog. It is unfair to assume that Todd values writing more than Darren and Joe, but it makes me wonder if having a writing commitment to another made his writing more urgent.

Similarly, I wonder if teachers who want to write, but find their schedules too tight may benefit from participating in a writing group. By doing so, others may positively hold them accountable to write. Dawson (2017) found that creating a writing group with teachers encouraged and motivated them to write. She also suggested that forming a writing group “may offer necessary support to help teachers overcome constraints they may face as writers, including limited time and ways of thinking about writing” (p. 10). Ultimately, the writing habits and practices of Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd demonstrate that their writer identities are moving in a trajectory that will help them grow as writers and become effective writing instructors.

Teaching Writing Philosophy

The most abundant theme I identified was participant teaching writing philosophy. Throughout my interviews I was impressed with the way participants articulated their philosophies (as long as I did not include the word *philosophy* in my question). Ironically, the one time I invited students to explicitly share their teaching writing philosophy during the interviews in January 2020, only Gwen was prepared to respond. In other words, participants had clearly established beliefs, but they could not make the connection between their informal beliefs and their “formal” philosophies. Regardless, participants shared their teaching writing philosophies throughout the interviews by verbalizing their beliefs. In this section, I highlight Darren and Gwen’s teaching writing philosophies because they had the most rich and well-articulated philosophy statements.

Darren

That dialogue scene and practice was one that I’ll remember. I wanted it to be very informal and focus on the writing process and students were sort of self-conscious about what they were writing. It’s more about the writing process, and the requirements don’t really matter for this specifically. . . . I just took a piece that I had written that had some dialogue in it from a class I took at [University]—just a

story that I had written and performed it for them in class because I was asking them to perform their dialogue scene in class so that we could all practice vulnerability together. (Interview, May 2020)

The vignette that opens this section exemplifies Darren's teaching philosophy in that he focused on (a) personal expression and (b) sharing writing. Students compose with personal expression through the process writing¹⁶ he mentions, and he demonstrates vulnerability through sharing writing. Perhaps one of the reasons Darren thinks so highly of personal expression is because students can write freely. Indeed, he says, "I think that you learn from personal expression. I don't think that you even have to build from a place of rules and of proper writing to get to a place where your personal expression is valuable" (Interview, January 2020). In this section I explore Darren's teaching writing philosophy by underscoring personal expression and sharing writing.

Personal Expression as Writing Philosophy. When I asked Darren what type of writing belongs in education, he argued that "writing in school should be done with a foundation of personal expression because I think that's more powerful, I think it's more motivating, I think it's more healthier [sic]. I think it breeds a release from stress" (Interview, January 2020). Perhaps this is in part because Darren believes that "a piece of yourself is always going into that writing no matter how detached it might be" (Interview, January 2019). Darren's belief that writing in school should focus on personal expression is consistent with his personal writing values and habits. Darren believes writing is more important than fulfilling the tasks required by the school, or to prepare for future writing or employment opportunities (Interview, May 2020). Thus, he believes that secondary students ought to gain more from writing experiences than the "limited kind of

¹⁶ I'm not confident Darren truly intended this to be process writing. Many prominent writing researchers have documented the steps in process writing as a series of prewriting activities, drafting, and redrafting (e.g., Applebee & Langer, 2011; Applebee & Langer, 2013; Dyson & Freedman, 2011; Murray, 2011). However, he only aimed for this to be "informal," so I cannot say with confidence that students experienced the writing process for this activity.

writing competence” that regularly saturates school-sponsored writing (Yagelski, 2011, p. 46).

The writing assignments he designed valued critical thought. Darren notes that “it’s so easy to want writing to be something that fulfills the requirements of . . . get good [standardized test] grades, get good SAT scores, but I don’t think that’s the basis. I don’t think it’s the foundation of writing” (Interview, January 2020). Instead, Darren hopes to create a classroom atmosphere where writing with personal expression is valuable:

I hope that I will be able to cultivate a classroom where students are able to write with personal expression to the point where they even write with personal expression on standardized tests . . . I feel like if you eventually get to the point where you’re not stressed out about getting something exactly in the parameters of what you think they’re looking for in a test, then I think you’ve learned something. (Interview, January 2020)

Darren’s writing philosophy that empowers students to write with personal expression, even in standardized writing, is consistent with his personal writing. He “absolutely believes” that “all of [his] writing” “is a form of personal expression” (Interview, January 2020).

Related to the belief of writing for personal expression is Darren’s habits and beliefs about writing for the “emotional reward because [he] can process” (Interview, March 2020). Darren spoke frequently about writing for the “emotional” reward throughout our interviews. He referenced this as writing intrinsically, writing for a socioemotional reward, or writing for an emotional reward. In short, Darren simply means that writing drives positive feelings. For reference, writing for a socioemotional reward is evident in the vignettes that opened both his writing history (i.e., writing a YA dystopian novel) and personal writing (i.e., writing about nature) sections.

Darren transfers his personal writing philosophy to his teaching writing philosophy by suggesting that he wants students “to write because I know the reward that writing has for me and I want—I care enough about them that I want them to see that reward as well” (Interview, March

2020). It is not surprising to learn that Darren tries mightily to design writing activities that enable students to write intrinsically so they can process, too (I explore these writing activities in a later section). Darren's teaching writing philosophy is sincere in that he wants students to experience writing the same way he does.

Balance. Despite Darren's belief that writing instruction should focus on personal expression, he also acknowledged that it "can't be the only thing that schools do because there is a responsibility to prepare students for experiences in working life," even though the balance "starts with personal expression" (Interview, January 2020). The only clue Darren offered that might align with writing activities that "prepare students for working life" are those assignments that are "mandated." Even so, Darren hopes to implement "choice," "inspiration," and "fun" in such writing (Interview, January 2020). Specifically, I wonder if he refers to common secondary writing assignments such as literary analyses (a writing activity he later implemented). Regardless, Darren's interest in striking a balance between compulsory work and personally expressive writing aligns with the research with millennial teacher identity. Alsup (2019) found that millennial teachers aim to find a balance between the "ideological, professional, and emotional contradictions" that make up their mindset (p. 105). Indeed, millennial teachers need to find ways to move between "understanding and belief" if they are to flourish (p. 105). In other words, Darren's teaching writing philosophy that includes the compulsory curricula, even if it does not align with his personal writing philosophy, is the balance.

The compromise or "balance" in writing teaching philosophy offers a mindset for which he can anchor in the future. The standards require that Darren implement writing beyond that which he does personally, so it would be inappropriate to *only* implement writing intended for personal

expression. I believe Darren recognizes this because he acknowledged that writing must also prepare students for other experiences.

Sharing Writing Philosophy. The vignette I highlighted at the beginning of this section also demonstrated Darren's belief in the power of sharing writing. I was impressed throughout our interviews in how often he talked about sharing writing. I have also come to value the philosophy of sharing writing in my own work, which is influenced by the work of those who led me to pursue this research study (i.e., Whitney, 2017). I believe my mindset also influenced Darren because, as a student in a literacy course I taught in the fall of 2018, Darren heard me talk about the power of sharing personal writing with students.

I recognize that my interactions with him may have influenced his thinking: He recalled, "I think you talked about doing this once in your classroom when you journaled about the events about the school and then shared it and I think that is important" (Interview, January 2019). Darren demonstrates his belief that sharing writing is "important" both with peers and secondary students. For instance, the vignette that opens his personal writing includes a poem he wrote while exploring nature. He shared his poetry with peers at the retreat, and noted that, "even though it's scary, I know that it's something that can be really rewarding" (Interview, January 2020). Importantly, this philosophy has transferred to his academic teaching. Darren articulated how his sharing writing philosophy has changed in the secondary classroom:

I think I would have thought about sharing my own writing with my students as a little bit of a boastful, like, look at this great thing I wrote; I'm an amazing writer! Try to be like me [Laughter]. And I don't want to do that at all, but doing it in a way that benefits the students by exemplifying vulnerabilities I think is so valuable. (Interview, January 2019)

Despite Darren's initial beliefs that sharing personal writing with students may be "boastful," he has come to value such pedagogical opportunities in belief and action. He noted that

he “learned through pedagogical academia that sharing writing is healthy for the writer and the people that [they are] sharing with as well” (Interview, January 2020).

Beyond this philosophy, Darren recounted multiple experiences sharing writing with secondary students. The first instance occurred during one of his visits to a secondary classroom for a field observation. He read aloud a stanza from a poem he wrote during student work time. He valued sharing his poetry because he believed that it “levels the playing field a little bit because it isn’t quite the gap between all-knowing instructor and [the student]” (Interview, January 2020). In other words, he values sharing his unpolished writing because it humanizes him to students. Students can observe first-hand that he is a writer, and that revision is necessary to improve his writing. He also shared a poem with peers in a non-academic climate, which is represented by the vignette in the “Personal Writing” theme.

Darren noted the reward he earned by writing and sharing his poetry with peers, and similar “rewarding experiences encourage me to do more of that with my own time, but they also encourage me to think about sharing my own work as a teacher in my classroom with my students just as a model of vulnerability” (Interview, January 2020). He envisioned initiating future conversations in the classroom by saying,

This is a piece that I wrote and I haven’t had any feedback on it, but I want to share it. And saying this is scary for me—it’s okay when you write and you want to share. It will be scary—it’s scary for me and I’ve written for longer than you. (Interview, January 2020)

I believe there may be powerful ramifications if Darren introduced his personal writing like this to future students. Unfortunately, though, Darren found it challenging to share writing as a student teacher. He discussed the need to provide feedback to student inquiries during independent work during instructional hours that limited opportunities to compose alongside them (Interview, March 2020). He also felt limited in his opportunities to share writing in class because,

as a student teacher, he recognized that he is in another teacher's classroom (Interview, March 2020). Beyond this, he lamented an opportunity to write and share writing with students. "I wished I would have taken [the opportunity] to write my own *Best Song Ever*¹⁷ response and share that" (Interview, March 2020).

Even though Darren initially struggled to bring his own writing into his student teaching experience, that does not mean that he did not consider avenues for doing so. He discussed the possibility of writing poetry in an instance when a teacher at the school was accused of misconduct to "process that whole situation." He wondered

Whether there was a way to just read that to my students and say hey, this is a difficult situation that is happening at our school and this is how I process it and I think it's healthy in my life; maybe it's a strategy that you can incorporate in your life in some way. (Interview, March 2020)

Writing and sharing such a composition with students exemplified his belief that "personal experiences with writing can be helpful like emotionally beyond just function" (Interview, January 2020). However, Darren decided not to proceed for fear of taking away important instructional time, even though he believes "it's really important to talk about issues like this at a school, and I think it's important to show students how I use writing to process things that are happening in my life" (Interview, March 2020). Furthermore, he considered multiples opportunities to write "as a reflection of what's happening in the world right now [i.e., the global pandemic], and then show my students this is what I could write about, this could be in this form, and I think that could be meaningful." However, he "thought it all the way through and never did it" (Interview, May 2020). Even though Darren thought of multiple possibilities to write about his thoughts and feelings in the middle of a pandemic, he suggested one more possibility: "I'm starting a new job in the fall,

¹⁷ In the following pages, I describe how Darren rectified this moment.

maybe one of the very first things I do is say hey we're coming out of a global pandemic. Here's something I wrote in reflection of that. I'm Mr. [Darren], nice to meet you" (Interview, May 2020).

Darren's inability to create a routine and share his writing with students is not due to his unwillingness or apathy. Instead, as a student teacher, there are hurdles that he did not anticipate. However, he did find the opportunity to share writing with students twice. He first shared his writing when he taught about possibilities to implement dialogue in classroom writing activities. He composed a "creative dialogue" (Observation, March 2020) in a prior course as a University student and, most recently, "performed" the composition to secondary students (i.e., read it to the class) as a model for what they were expected to write.

I also observed him write and share his writing during one of my two observations in his classroom. Darren lamented the opportunity to write his own response to an assignment I refer to as *The Best Song Ever*. He rectified this missed opportunity on a day that I observed his teaching. The assignment, a deconstructed five paragraph essay, was designed for students to write an introduction, one body paragraph, and a concluding paragraph to prepare them for an upcoming literary analysis essay. Students composed for a significant time of the instructional hour, and Darren sat at the head of the classroom composing, too, in the moments he was not directly responding to student inquiries. Shortly before class ended, Darren announced that while students were writing, he had been writing his own response to the same assignment. Darren then proceeded to read the class his prose, and then excused them when the bell rang (Observation, March 2020).

Conclusion. Darren's teaching writing philosophy is anchored by his writer identity. The same habits and practices he values are the same he hopes to implement during classroom instruction. And he provides copious opportunities for students to write, believing that writing ought to be implemented "into almost every single lesson plan [he creates]" (Interview, March

2020). He rightfully believes that writing is a core activity in the ELA curriculum, and the writing practices he brings to the classroom reflect his identity. Furthermore, his philosophies about the sharing of writing align with scholars in the field (e.g., Gallagher, 2015; Whitney, 2017), and stand to help him grow as a writer and as a writing instructor. I found it particularly interesting that he wanted to share writing as a model of vulnerability and invite students to do the same so they could all “practice vulnerability together.” Darren suggested that “vulnerability breeds vulnerability” (Interview, January 2020), so it is not surprising that he led the way with his creative writing dialogue activity. Ultimately, Darren wants to amplify his personal writing experiences for multiple reasons: To help students recognize that writing is challenging for everyone, to help students *feel* the power of expressive writing, and to consider similar writing strategies for their writing.

Gwen

We would go into the summer camp and they were students who were ages 8-11 roughly, two different classes and we had them write their memoirs. And we went in there and helped them and then we published it in an anthology which was [laugh] really cool. But it was so hard because you're just supposed to write, [and] they would always ask how do you spell this? Is this grammatically correct? Does this—like it doesn't matter. You're just getting yourself out there. Think of this as a work of art. (Interview, January 2019)

Gwen's vignette illustrates a story she shared multiple times about the teaching of writing that occurred during an internship (Interview, January 2019; 2020; May 2020). I believe she emphasized this story so often because it exemplifies a significant component of her teaching writing philosophy that I refer to, in her words, as *just write*. This story illustrates that many of the students Gwen taught are concerned about writing “correctly,” and may even feel restricted by adhering to grammatical expectations. However, Gwen believes that students should not worry about the initial details; instead, she prefers they simply *just write*. Gwen's *just write* philosophy

represents her aspirations to teach students to write with a strong personal voice. Furthermore, I also find it engaging that she compared writing to art because, similar to writing, art is neither “correct” nor “incorrect”: It is simply the intention of the artist. Thus, Gwen prefers that students examine their writing like a work of art to freely weave the tapestry they envision. In this section, I highlight Gwen’s teaching writing philosophes. Specifically, I organize them according to her *just write* philosophy, academic writing philosophy, and her philosophy to help secondary students identify as writers.

Just Write. Gwen’s philosophy in the teaching of writing encourages students “to break out of that [limiting mindset] and write” (Interview, January 2020), and to write with a powerful personal voice. This is a significant component of Gwen’s teaching writing philosophy. In fact, across our four interviews, I identified 12 instances where she suggested in some variation her belief that students need to *just write*. In addition to the story in the vignette, Gwen shared another narrative during her time as a student teacher that emphasized her philosophy that secondary students should *just write*:

I have a student who would just sit with his head down and I’d be like well can you just write what you’re thinking and then we’ll find something from it. You can complain about this assignment, I don’t care: Just write. If you just write and then we can go back and find the substance and we can cut out the things that don’t matter or that you don’t want to have in your composition. (Interview, March 2020)

This story reflects a similar experience as the vignette in that she wanted this student to demonstrate effort. Gwen wants students to make an effort because, as the story suggests, she can work with effort. She can help students revise, reconsider, and clarify their work if they *just write*. These statements reflect her philosophy that “it doesn’t matter how you write—just write. And then we’ll work on fitting into this context” (Interview, January 2020).

I was interested in the aspect of this teaching writing philosophy in which she suggests that she will help students find the appropriate “context.” When I asked her about that, Gwen shared a

story about a secondary student who preferred to write a formal essay with the informality of a journal (Interview, May 2020). Though Gwen's response did not directly respond to my question, I believe her message illustrates that, once the student composes something (i.e., a formal essay with the informality of a journal), then she can help the student "make the connection between this personal narrative and the more formal argumentative essay" (Interview, May 2020). In other words, she can help students revise to meet the demands of the genre. Regardless, Gwen's teaching writing philosophy underscores her belief that "shutting down thoughts or ideas will keep [student] writing stagnant" (Interview, January 2020).

Gwen's *just write* philosophy is important because it reflects her experience. Gwen recounted multiple times in our interviews the pressure that she experienced as a secondary student. One poignant example occurred in our first interview, when, talking about her experience as a secondary student, she said: "I would just not write and I wouldn't turn in my assignments if I didn't know what I was writing was going to be correct. Sometimes it was just better to not try than to try, and that's hard" (Interview, January 2019). Gwen felt pressure as a secondary student writer and hopes to "take the stress out of [writing]" as an ELA teacher (Interview, January 2019). Therefore, she "encourage[s] [students] to *just write* what they want to say and then go back [and revise later]" because she believes that this philosophy may "encourage them to write more" (Interview, March 2020).

In fact, Gwen documented a time when her *just write* philosophy engendered student growth. Specifically, she continued the story of the student who sat with his head down, and whom she pushed to *just write*:

That student who was sitting with his head down, the paper I ended up getting from him was beautiful, and he doesn't turn things in: He hates writing. I've been working with him specifically because he's been so reluctant, but his paper was beautifully done. And it was very stream of consciousness. He didn't get to his

point, or his good point, until his conclusion paragraph, but it made me cry [laugh]. I was like, *well, you've got something*. My whole thing with him is to get him to send *something*, and it was gorgeous; it was a beautiful point. (Interview, March 2020)

Gwen acknowledged that this student's work was not pristine, but it was both submitted and reflected considerable insight that, together, caused her to become emotional. I also find it interesting that he wrote in a "stream of conscious" format, which reflects Gwen's personal writing habits (Reflection, January 2020). She did not indicate that she specifically taught him to compose that way, but there is a strong possibility that her writer identity influenced her pedagogy. In the end, this was a powerful moment for Gwen because she only wanted to observe this student's growth, which is precisely what occurred. Relatedly, she believes her philosophy to *just write* and then later revise is

Different than the typical way of writing, especially [when considering] response to prompts or short answer writing [because] people don't generally want that kind of stream of consciousness. But because that's such a way that I write, it's important to me I feel that people see the connection between personal writing and writing for school, or for an assessment, that they may be getting a different perspective on it because I'm in there teaching it. (Interview, March 2020)

Gwen's recognition that her personal writing habits influenced her writer identity piques my interest. The impression I received when she writes, say, in her journal is that she writes in a stream of consciousness format, and this statement leads me to believe that she intentionally transfers that habit to her classroom pedagogy. The whole goal of my research study is to explore *whether* personal writer identity influences personal writing pedagogy, and Gwen not only answered that question in this and other statements, but she also *recognized* how her writer identity affects her writing pedagogy. This leads me to wonder how she may intentionally try to implement additional writing activities that align with her writing beliefs and habits.

Academic Writing. In addition to her teaching writing philosophy that encourages students to *just write*, Gwen believes that students should be writing in all disciplines and in many

different genres. She conceded that there is room in the curriculum for traditional academic writing. This admission is important because Gwen “struggles” with much of the writing that occurs in academia because it “eliminates a lot of that expression that [she] find[s] so important” (Interview, January 2019). Specifically, she struggles with the practice of assigning traditional research papers because it is “formulaic writing,” limiting the personal expression she finds so valuable. Beyond this, I also understand that she struggles with such writing because it distracts students from her teaching writing philosophy to *just write*. Indeed, Gwen suggested that academic writing is “all grammar and ‘did you put your argument in the correct order’” (Interview, January 2020).

However, she is also conscious of the way students view her when classroom writing activities become strictly academic, suggesting that students look at her as if she were “putting them in some sort of torture device” (Interview, May 2020). She believes “students shouldn’t just be writing when they have to write like a formal essay . . . limiting it to purely academic writing in a traditional sense is also a shame” (Interview, January 2020). Instead, Gwen believes that students should be composing “little writing exercises” and “little bits of writing here and there” (Interview, May 2020). Though Gwen did not elaborate on what “little writing exercises” might look like, I find it interesting that she specifically calls for a reform on the amount of formal writing students are asked to compose.

Writer Identity. One additional component of Gwen’s teaching writing philosophy is her belief that each student needs to write their way into discovering their writer identity. Gwen emphasized her philosophy to help each student “to identify as a writer” (Interview, March 2020). Quite candidly, this surprised me. It is hard to determine whether my research interests and our conversations about writer identity led her to adopt this teaching writing philosophy, but it does

make me wonder how “our stories” intersected through writer identity. Regardless, her “big focus is wanting students to focus on themselves as a writer” (Interview, January 2020). She plans to do this by creating opportunities for each student to write informally: “I want them to journal and figure out who they are as a writer before we start writing bigger deal things. If you don’t know who you are or what you’re saying it’s just going to be nonsense” (Interview, January 2020).

Her desire to help students identify as writers is sincere. I learned from her writing history that her teachers played a significant role in her writer identity, and I learned from her personal writing habits and beliefs that writing is therapeutic (especially when she experiences anxiety). It makes sense that she wants to “give [students] the tools that they need to be successful in life” (Interview, January 2020) because, “for [Gwen], and for so many other people, that’s through writing (Interview, January 2019).

However, Gwen experienced many challenges in helping students identify as writers. Gwen found that student “needs are more focused on basic writing mechanics and basic understanding of texts than [she] had anticipated” (Interview, March 2020). One of the more thought-provoking obstacles she faced was her perception that students were “reluctant to see themselves as [writers]. You know, they write in classes, they have to, but I think they see themselves as more of students than anything else” (Interview, March 2020).

Gwen raises an interesting point. However, I wonder why secondary students view themselves that way. Perhaps it is because so few writing teachers identify as writers (e.g., Whitney, 2017). Or, perhaps students do not write enough in class to truly identify as writers. According to a study conducted by Applebee and Langer (2011), roughly three minutes were reserved for effective writing instruction per 50-minute classes. And, if students had experienced this in their young academic journeys, then it is no wonder that students in Gwen’s classes felt more like

“students” than “writers.” I believe this is the precise mindset Gwen wants to change when she encourages students to identify as writers.

Despite the obstacles she faced, Gwen discovered positive moments where she felt her efforts to help students identify as writers paid off. She observed growth with the student with his head down:

The student who put his head down on the desk the whole time . . . I’m trying to impress in [him] specifically, you know, what you’re doing is writing: You *are* a writer. And so that is important to me that they see that because I feel like a lot of students, until they make that connection, until they identify in that way, they’re going to be reluctant to [write]. (Interview, March 2020)

Gwen’s success in helping the student write is one step towards her goal of helping him identify as a writer. In the end, Gwen should not measure her success by whether students identify as writers when they leave her classroom. Instead, Gwen should be pleased that she provided opportunities in both activity and discussion to help them identify as writers. Significantly, the classroom culture she creates, which encourages students to *just write*, may help students discover their voices and to think of their writing, as Gwen suggests, like a work of art.

Conclusion. Gwen’s philosophy for the teaching of writing honors student voices and seeks to enable them to identify as writers. However, as Gwen discovered during her formative education, identity is subject to change (e.g., Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). More specifically, Gwen found that *writer* identity, too, is subject to change. The moments she could freely write enabled her to learn more about herself and to lay the foundation of her writer identity, so it is no surprise that she adopted the same teaching writing philosophy as a student teacher. As such, I found it engaging that Gwen perceived students recognized that “part of [her] role as a teacher is to ensure that they view themselves [as writers]” (Interview, March 2020). This leads me to believe that students acknowledged Gwen’s powerful writer identity and, perhaps, sought to identify similarly.

Moreover, Gwen's belief that implementing a *just write* pedagogy may "encourage [students] to write more" (Interview, March 2020) aligns with the research on authentic writing practices. Indeed, it underscores autonomy, which strongly influences student writing motivation, especially when writing about meaningful personal experiences (Skerret & Warrington, 2018). I believe such writing also leads students to embrace a growth mindset because, if they internalize Gwen's writing philosophy to write freely, then they may be more willing to take risks and ultimately grow as writers.

Analysis Across Cases

Darren and Gwen both articulated their teaching writing philosophies well and have goals and hopes to transfer these philosophies to writing activities. Specifically, Darren aims for students to write with personal expression in all writing activities, even in standardized writing practices. Similarly, Gwen wants students to *just write* and to discover their writer identities along the way. I find it fascinating that their respective teaching writing philosophies are tailored to their own writing beliefs, habits, and practices (i.e., their writer identity). In other words, their respective writing instruction philosophies are influenced by their respective writer identity.

Additionally, both participants underscored how important vulnerability is to their teaching writing philosophies. Darren sought to "practice vulnerability together" with students by modeling vulnerability and inviting students to do similarly. Admittedly, Gwen does not say any variation of the word *vulnerable* in our interviews, but she alludes to it when she talks about *just writing*. Indeed, enacting her philosophy to write without censorship to ideas or mechanical expectations is a practice of vulnerability because such writing reflects decisions and beliefs writers make. Similarly, one can argue that students must demonstrate vulnerability if they are to write their way into discovering their writer identities.

I also find it interesting that both Darren and Gwen recognize that “traditional” school writing belongs in the writing curriculum, despite their preferences and teaching writing philosophies. Specifically, Gwen stated that she “struggles with school writing” (Interview, January 2019), but, perhaps after a semester of student teaching she recognized that she must conform to the school’s expectations in at least some capacity. Similarly, Darren believes that the traditional writing experiences in secondary education is necessary to “prepare students for experiences in working life” (Interview, January 2020). Their belief that secondary writing instruction needs to include some form of traditional writing piqued my interest. Neither of their personal writing habits and practices include traditional school practices such as literary analysis or research writing. Yet, they both believe it ought to have place in the secondary classroom. Perhaps they recognize that their writing instruction philosophy only offers a portion of the writing journey for secondary students, or perhaps they found that an entire school year of writing simply cannot be limited to their personal habits and practices. It is also likely that part of this belief is influenced by the expectations heaved upon them (an idea I explore further in the forthcoming section titled *Tensions*). This belief is necessary to thrive as secondary ELA teachers because, despite their interests and philosophies, they simply cannot abandon the current writing curriculum altogether.

Visual Metaphors

I initially came across the concept of creating visual metaphors in Alsup’s (2006) work with PSTs. In her book, Alsup asks each PST in her study to “identify the metaphors that underlie and guide their pedagogies” (p. 148). Learning about the power that visual metaphors can elicit piqued my interest, so I invited participants to create a visual metaphor that underscores their writer identity. I asked participants to create their metaphor at the conclusion of our second interview in

March and to have them prepared by our final interview in May. I encouraged participants to create a visual metaphor that requires narration in order for another to understand. In other words, visual metaphors should be complex in that they require explanation. Doing so enables students to create metaphors that have sufficient depth to reflect individual identity.

Alsup's (2006; 2019) work featured students who reimagined their day-to-day lives in creating their metaphors (e.g., a soda bottle, gym, etc.), and I envisioned participants in the current study to do similarly. However, the global pandemic caused the daily lives of participants' to be drastically altered. Even so, they created meaningful metaphors that highlighted their writer identities. In addition to creating their metaphors, I asked that they write a reflection about their metaphor without providing any specific requirements or parameters. I examined their reflections shortly before we met during our final interview, and asked them clarifying questions about their metaphors and reflections during the interview.

In this section, I illustrate the visual metaphors Darren, Gwen, and Todd created. The metaphors I include encouraged participants to reify their writer identities as they considered it in a new light. I decided not to include Joe's metaphor in this writing for a few reasons: The image he selected is a copyrighted image, and it did not follow the guidelines for the project. Second, he did not compose a reflection; instead, he submitted a short story that he previously submitted for a creative writing class. Considered together, I do not have the necessary thick description for his visual metaphor, his process of creating it, and the insights to his writer identity that other participants provided.

Darren

I came up with the idea of a caged tiger while anxiously pacing around my apartment trying to come up with a beautiful, eloquent metaphor for my writer identity. For some reason, I was unreasonably nervous about attempting to

complete this task. For days, I'd gone to great lengths—bingeing Seinfeld, playing hours of guitar, completing other, easier tasks—to avoid having to engage with a task that I knew would be fulfilling, because I was overwhelmed by its potential importance and by my fear of accomplishing it inadequately. (Reflection, May 2020)

The opening vignette illustrates Darren's hesitancy to create his visual metaphor, citing the potential importance of the work and his desire "to do a great job" (Interview, May 2020).

Darren's metaphor is complex, includes multiple layers, and is inherently connected to identity. To represent his metaphor, Darren created a comic strip (see Figure 4) depicting himself as a caged tiger "who is perfectly capable of escaping his cage to pursue a filling meal, but decides to eat his junk fast food instead" (Reflection, May 2020). To illustrate the importance of choice in his writer identity, Darren utilized the concept of "muse vs amusement."

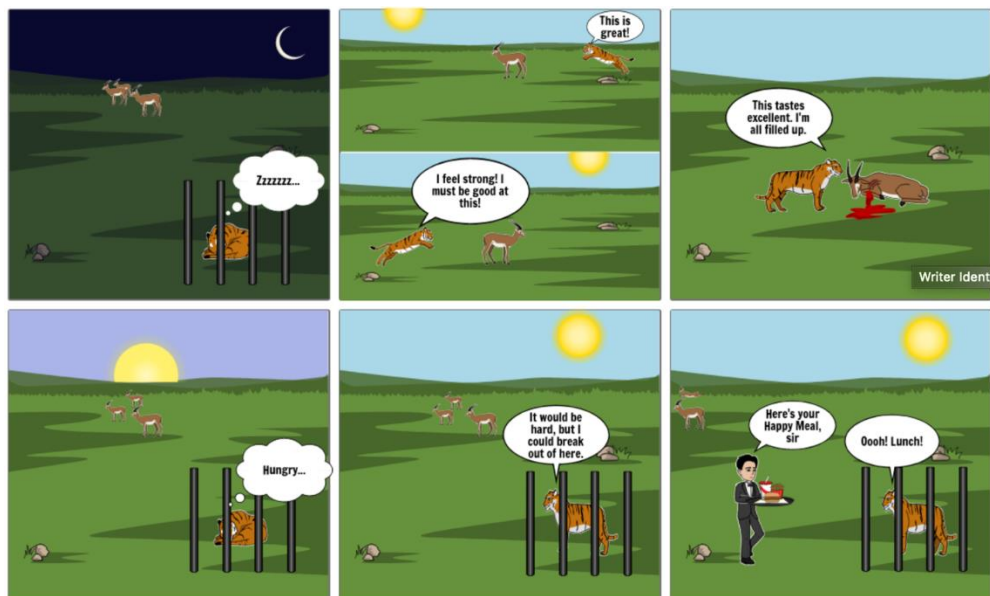


Figure 4. Darren's Metaphor

Muse Versus Amusement. Darren's metaphor underlines the significance of "choice" in his writer identity. To embody this aspect, he writes, "out of muse comes [Darren], the creator,

and out of amusement comes [Darren], the consumer” (Reflection, May 2020). Darren recognizes his options to create or consume. “Muse” represents the choice to “create,” or, in this case, to compose. He describes this as his “deepest, most meaningful desires, attitudes, and reflections,” which derive from moments of focused thinking where he can implement his “identity into [his] interactions with the world” (Reflection, May 2020). When he creates (or composes) he has the ability to influence the world with his identity. Concretely, he clarifies that the muse may be “things that make [him] want to write like reading excellent writing or thinking about my own writing, or reading my own writing and wanting to revise it” (Interview, May 2020). I understand his ability to choose the muse, or to create or compose, as moments of inspiration. Interestingly, this aligns with Darren’s personal writing philosophy as he writes when he feels inspired (Interview, January 2020).

Amusement, on the other hand, represents the “shallow, confused attitudes and actions” that he merely accepts from others, “causing the too-frequent reliance on *other* identities while interacting with the world” (Reflection, May 2020). When Darren chooses to be amused, he is being influenced by others. He clarifies what amusement may look like in practice: “Things that are easier like binge watching *Seinfeld* or turning on NBATV and watching Knicks versus Pacers 1995 game 7 Eastern Conference Finals” (Interview, May 2020). Darren finds it easier to consume something already created (or consuming live events), but the tradeoff for less effort is less inspiration: Indeed, Darren suggests what happens when he concedes to amusement: “I get through the day but it’s not fulfilling. It doesn’t lead to writing. It doesn’t lead to more excellent writing, or thinking about myself” (Interview, May 2020).

I find it interesting that Darren specifically connected his identity to the choice of muse and amusement, which, he describes as “a daily struggle” (Interview, May 2020). He expresses his

identity when he writes or thinks, and he believes that his “identity is better expressed as a writer” as opposed to a consumer (Interview, May 2020). Despite understanding this phenomenon, he still finds it challenging to act in the best interest of his muse. To circle back to his metaphor, Darren describes himself as “the tiger, a dreamer who is capable of pursuing the fulfillment of muse, but regularly chooses convenient amusement instead” (Reflection, May 2020). In other words, he often chooses to be amused rather than to be a muse.

Visual Metaphor as Growth. Darren’s visual metaphor is interesting if not complex. I was impressed with the richness of his metaphor. His visual metaphor of the caged tiger was so complex that he needed to describe it by using another metaphor, muse vs amusement, to adequately illustrate his writer identity. Despite the complexity of his visual metaphor, Darren admitted that he did not learn anything new from creating it, which surprised me. I was surprised because my experience with Darren led me to believe that he thought critically about his writing and writing experiences. I was always impressed with his ability to think through the interview questions I posed, especially when he did not have an immediate response. Additionally, my experience as his course instructor also led me to believe that he seeks learning and growth through his work.

However, that does not necessarily mean it was a meaningless experience. Darren suggested that creating the visual metaphor

Was an expression of something I knew intellectually, but it was just so hard to put into practice . . . it fleshed out the positive experiences that I have: The positive emotions and things that come through writing or when I’m writing. (Interview, May 2020)

Darren’s belief that his writer identity is now better “fleshed out” through participation in the visual metaphor exercise is a silver lining. It further aligns with much of what embodied our interviews, specifically describing how much the socioemotional reward means for him in writing.

In addition to having a more concrete understanding of his writer identity, he also discussed how the visual metaphor exercise reflected the challenging nature of writing:

[Writing is] this huge challenge that I want to do, and intellectually [I] know all the reasons it was good for me (and have lots of experiences doing it and feeling good and enjoying the process), but getting started is overwhelming for me. I wanted to convey that because it's part of my writer identity. . . . but doing [the visual metaphor] was another instance of if you just get started, [then] I feel happy with the product that I put out there. (Interview, May 2020)

Certainly, Darren is not alone in finding the beginning of a writing project to be daunting. Creating his visual metaphor served as another reminder that writing projects are hard, but the reward for doing so can be powerful.

Conclusion. Even though the creation of a visual metaphor did not lead Darren to new discoveries about his writer identity, this activity caused him to think deeper about it, making it more concrete. Specifically, his insights in creating the visual metaphor align with his history as a writer, his personal writing habits, and his philosophies for teaching writing in that the “positive experiences” and the “positive emotions” drive action. In other words, the socioemotional reward inspires Darren to write. Indeed, the positive writing experiences he has while writing are at the very heart of his writing purposes. Participation in the visual metaphor exercises underscored these components of his writer identity.

Gwen

The visual metaphor that Gwen created caused her to consider her writer identity and to identify areas where she can grow as a writer. Further, I was impressed with her learning from participating in this activity. The sections below highlight her visual metaphor, how she grew as a writer and as a teacher, and where she can continue to improve.

The Woman Swimming. Gwen created a painting of a woman swimming (see Figure 5), which is “a part of a series [she has] been working on off and on since the middle of high school” (Reflection, May 2020). She claims that it originates with a “basic stick figure” at the heart of the drawing, then “as [she] let[s] herself go, it evolves” (Reflection, May 2020). This is an apt metaphor because, as she noted, “the journey I take when creating these paintings seems to me to be very parallel with my process as a writer” (Reflection, May 2020). Gwen noted that “the form [the stick figure] takes is representative of my idea of my position in life at the time that I make it” (Reflection, May 2020).



Figure 5. Gwen's Metaphor

This caused me to wonder how her writing changes in different contexts of life if indeed her writing process is “parallel” with the painting. Could it be that the tone of her writing changes, or is it deeper, such that ideas and mindsets change? Either way, she believes her approach to writing is the same as her approach to the paintings: “Life is a constant upward journey. The world around me may change, I may change, but the movement must always be forward” (Reflection, May 2020). In other words, Gwen seeks growth, both in her personal life and her writing. It is unclear which aspect of her writing she seeks growth, but my understanding is that, as the

“movement must always be forward,” that it is unimportant where the growth occurs as long as she grows.

Visual Metaphor as Growth. Significantly, participation in the visual metaphor exercise enabled Gwen to discover new insights about her writer identity: “I have a clearer view of myself as a writer. And myself as a teacher now” (Interview, May 2020). Gwen’s writer identity has shifted and changed throughout her life. The early writing experiences in life enabled her to identity as a writer; however, the rigid curricula in secondary education caused a dramatic shift in her identity, which resulted in her writer identity being “drilled out of [her]” (Interview, 2019). However, recent writing experiences enabled her to reclaim her writer identity and participating in the visual metaphor project further elicited growth.

To illustrate this growth, Gwen removed the “top to the water” because she believes that she still has plenty to “learn, and there’s always more to change and adapt” (Interview, May 2020). Removing the “top to the water” in her painting represents a significant moment of growth for Gwen. Indeed, she indicated that she is wont to believe that she is much closer to a finished product than is accurate. In other words, she recognizes that she has erroneously believed at times that she has learned all there is to learn.

As an emerging teacher educator, I believe this is an attitude that will lead to growth. Indeed, Gwen can learn much about writing and the teaching of writing if she has access to the right opportunities. And, with the attitude she demonstrated, she can continue learning and positively influencing future writing students. Street’s (2003) research suggests that teachers who have positive attitudes towards writing instruction “simply had more to offer their students than did the other participants” (p. 46). Similarly, it is likely that Gwen’s positive attitude towards professional

development opportunities will enable her to continue learning about her writer identity and future writing instruction.

Conclusion. Gwen's experience participating in the visual metaphor activity was powerful. Not only does she have a clearer perception of her writer identity, but she also recognizes that there is continual room for growth. This attitude may aid her as she shifts her beliefs to align with that of a lifelong learner as opposed to one who has already learned how to write and teach writing.

Todd

The metaphor Todd created exemplified the day-to-day life that I expected participants to create. Significantly, participation in the visual metaphor activity enabled Todd to reify his writer identity and to embrace the components that comprise that identity. Specifically, certain interviews we conducted and my analysis of his visual metaphor and reflection led me to believe that he struggled at times to accept creative writing as an important writing genre, and, importantly, one that is part of his writer identity. However, participating in the visual metaphor activity and fleshing out his writer identity caused him to make concrete his thoughts and to think differently about creative writing. This section highlights this experience.



Figure 6. Todd's Metaphor

Froot Loops. Todd’s visual metaphor captures a moment of his daily routine in that he identified a bowl of Froot Loops cereal as his visual metaphor (see Figure 6). Todd separates two disparate parts of the Foot Loops cereal to connect his writer identity: (a) The sugary cereal, which represents his proclivity for creative writing; and (b) the “nutritious” milk, which represents professional, or evidence-based writing. He reflects:

Froot-Loops have a colorful and sugary makeup that makes them a reflection of pure childlike creativity. Just as I try to pursue unbounded concepts for creative writing in my free personal time, Froot-Loops happily reflect every wavelength possible all in a dangerous amount of sugar. I try to break conventions in my creative writing, just as Froot-Loops are carelessly and obnoxiously their own. And I think the young boy in me shines through more than it should when I write. (Reflection, May 2020)

The connection Todd creates between the sugary cereal pushing the boundaries of “creativity” aligns with the boundaries he pushes in his creative writing. Todd speaks about breaking the norms when he writes by “[making] a scene extra gory or action-movie-esque over the top” (Reflection, May 2020). Todd did not provide an example of what such a scene may look like, but the connection he makes is engaging nonetheless.

On the other hand, Todd also recognized that his writer identity is multifaceted because he writes for multiple purposes and in multiple genres. He believes that a strong influence of his writer identity is connected to the professional writing he conducts, “which [he] think[s] is best represented by the nutritious necessity of milk” (Reflection, May 2020):

I recognize the need to include good research practices, reliable sources, and a professional tone in these circumstances. Just as milk is a staple nutritional food that can give people the things they “need,” my research-based writing is something that is much more necessary than the creative writing I do. Good solid evidence and carefully considered points are what’s needed for research writing. (Reflection, May 2020)

I find it surprising that he refers to the professional writing he conducts as necessary, inherently meaning that his creative writing is unnecessary, or perhaps even unhelpful. This surprised me because Todd has plenty of experience in creative writing, and I would have thought he might perceive creative writing in the same “necessary” lens as professional writing, especially given how he identified creativity as a primary aspect of his writer identity in the visual metaphor activity.

However, his relationship with creative writing is complex. Despite writing creatively often, Todd expresses hesitancy in implementing such writing in the secondary classroom. He noted the challenge of justifying a writing activity to an administrator that is not specifically tied to a standard because some believe “students don’t necessarily always learn as much from creative writing as they would from a research essay,” which he can “kind of see that in some ways” (Interview, March 2020). On the other hand, he also believes that creative writing still has a place in secondary education: “If you can help students have that joy for writing [through creative writing], then maybe they would just take a little more care when they do something like a research paper” (Interview, March 2020). Indeed, his relationship with creative writing in educational contexts is convoluted, and it may be best understood by referring back to his metaphor since he

identifies creative writing as the “sugary” component of the cereal and the professional writing as the “nutritious” component of the cereal. However, as Todd notes, he believes there is still value in creative writing in academic settings.

Visual Metaphor as Growth. Todd’s participation in the visual metaphor exercise afforded him an opportunity for growth. He recognized and came to peace with the “duality” of his contrasting writing approaches. The visual metaphor exercise validated his proclivity to “think outside the box” and to write with fewer of the standard grammatical “rules” in his creative writing because that only comprises part of his writer identity. Indeed, Todd notes that “if anything, that makes me feel like it’s okay to go to one end of that extreme of creativity and explore that because I have another side of it that I’m working on too” (Interview, May 2020). The other “side,” he mentions, is the “academic: very structured, very formal” side that he is “working on, too” (Interview, May 2020). In other words, Todd feels that it is acceptable to write creatively because he has the other “necessary” component of his writer identity, which is the academic writing. Todd’s current position as a sports blogger necessitates that he writes professionally with a clear argument and authentic sources, so he feels justified in creative writing.

Conclusion. The visual metaphor activity was powerful for Todd in that he recognized his writing as multifaceted, and came to peace with it. I wonder if he unintentionally created a writing continuum where he placed creative writing and professional writing at each end. Thus, by writing both creatively and professionally (i.e., on both ends of the continuum), he balances his writer identity: A practice that aligns with research on millennial teacher identity (Alsup, 2019). Further, this activity enabled Todd to think more critically about his writer identity, fleshing out ideas about the writing he composes, which freed himself to write meaningfully. In other words, he can write creatively without feeling guilty.

Further, the language he used to describe the duality of his writer identity gives me pause. It makes me wonder whether he felt shame or, at the very least, embarrassment previously for writing creatively: “That’s okay . . . because I have this other whole part of my identity that’s very academic” (Interview, May 2020). In other words, this activity makes me wonder whether Todd might embrace creative writing without balancing it with professional, or “academic” writing. Speculating on such a topic is beyond the scope of this research, though. Regardless, participating in this activity brought peace to Todd knowing that he can write both creatively and academically.

Analysis Across Cases

When I initially planned to implement the visual metaphor activity in this research, I believed that each participant would discover new insights about their writer identity and experience growth in profound ways, similar to what I read in the literature (i.e., Alsup, 2006; Alsup 2019). Both Gwen and Todd demonstrated the growth that I believed was possible by participating in this activity, and they understand more about themselves as writers, too. I can also make an argument that Darren experienced growth. Even though he did not learn something new, he still “fleshed out” his positive writing experiences. If nothing more, Darren has a more concrete understanding of his writer identity because of his participation in this activity.

Beyond this, I find Gwen and Todd’s growth mindset—a concept neither alluded to specifically—to be important. For example, Gwen’s understanding of a growth mindset was concrete in that she removed the “top to the water” of her visual metaphor to represent the growth and learning she will do in the future. Similarly, the language Todd used when describing a component of his academic writer identity (i.e., as something he is “working on,”) both align with Dweck’s (2007) research on Growth Mindset: “*The view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life*” (p. 6, emphasis in original). Respectively, both Gwen and Todd believe

that they will experience future growth as writers. This is an important mindset to have because writer identity, like all aspects of identity, is continually changing and evolving (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Simply put, the writer identity they currently claim will not always remain if they do not engage in writing activities, critical thought, and discussions that nurture and strengthen it.

Tensions

The most unexpected theme I identified was participant tensions. When I set out to explore participants' writer identity, I did not expect to find much, if anything, about the tensions they experienced. I included one question in the final interview where I invited students to share any tension they experienced in writing instruction, but they struggled to articulate their tensions directly. However, their tensions, perhaps not directly stated, but exemplified through stories, filled the remaining interviews, especially the interview in March after participants conducted their first two months of student teaching. Overall, I coded for some variation of "tension" 121 times, which makes it the second most populous theme (in volume) throughout my research (behind teaching writing philosophy).

I include tension as part of participants' writer identity because tension has the capacity to influence identity construction (Alsup; 2006; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2003). This section explores the tensions of both Darren and Gwen, and how that influences their writer identity and ways of enacting such an identity. Specifically, I include their two experiences because they shared the most tensions and included rich stories in the process.

Darren

I required students to propose a topic so I could approve it to make sure that they were on the right track. [One student's] topic was about feminist representation in Gatsby, which I was all for. And then this student went forward and tried to make the second half of their essay criticizing school and how school is dumb and why do we have to read a dumb book that doesn't give us good information. And as much as I agree with some of those aspects of what she was saying—it wasn't going to fulfill the requirements for the essay in a way that I could give her a good score according to the rubric that was already made. So I had a conversation with this student saying I actually agree with a lot of your ideas here and I want to hear them—I want more than anything to hear them, and I'm so happy that you're passionate about them because that's what I want. But unfortunately, I'm not going to be able to give you a very good score if you move forward with this because of the rubric that I have to score these by. And so I encouraged this student sometimes we have to play the game of school in order to move forward through things to be able to make change. So it was a really meaningful conversation that I was able to have with this student and it stuck and I couldn't sleep the night—the student emailed me late at night and I didn't want to respond late at night. I couldn't sleep because I was like this stinks because I want to have a much more meaningful and in-depth conversation and I want to hear this essay that this student wants to write, but I also need to do what's best for this student in the immediate future and get them a good grade. And it was an interesting conversation I was able to have even if it wasn't a very satisfying result. It's not the thing I want my students to be doing is constantly playing the game of school, but sometimes it's necessary. (Interview, May 2020)

I coded 31 moments of tension for Darren across our four interviews where an overwhelming majority (26) occurred during our interview in March 2020. Specifically, the vignette I identified exemplifies one powerful moment of tension Darren experienced as a writing teacher primarily because Darren wanted students to write for a socioemotional reward rather than an external reward (i.e., a high grade). I first explain the tension he experienced in his perception that students “played the game of school,” followed by tension in remote instruction, tension in perceived expectations, and tension in planning and execution, respectively.

Tension in Playing the Game of School. As the vignette described, Darren encouraged this student to “play the game of school” in order to earn a good score rather than to compose her innermost thoughts that may have led her to a socioemotional reward. Significantly, such

instruction runs counter to his writer identity and teaching writing philosophy. In the vignette, Darren makes it concrete that this circumstance was an exception rather than the rule; however, it still caused him to lose sleep. Interestingly, Darren spoke in a previous interview about his distaste for students who “play the game of school” rather than seek learning and growth. It piqued my interest that he willingly advised this student to “play the game of school,” even despite the circumstances:

I run into these students [who] are so used to just playing the game of school and that there is an end result: A product that their teachers want them to get to and they can get to that by ways that aren’t the thread that we want to run through their learning. (Interview, March 2020)

My interactions with Darren lead me to believe that he encourages students to seek intrinsic motivations for learning. However, Darren often experienced tension when students prioritized high grades while exerting as little effort as possible, or when students ran through the motions of learning. Beyond this, Darren explained his challenge in helping students think about the socioemotional reward for writing “when everything in [his] mind and everything in [student] mind[s] is so focused on playing the game of school” (Interview, March 2020). In other words, Darren found it difficult to implement a writing curriculum that relied so heavily on intrinsic, authentic writing when students prioritized product over process and reward.

Returning to the vignette, the student’s only opportunity to experience the socioemotional reward for writing was to compose her feelings toward school culture. However, Darren recognized that such a response will lead to a poor score. As a result, Darren advised her to “play the game of school”—a game he detests—for the student to score highly. The cognitive dissonance that Darren experienced led him to lose sleep wrestling with this tension because he advised a student contrary to the very fabric that binds his writer identity. Darren discovered that “the effects

between policy, identity, and feedback are circular, fluid, and constantly being reassessed” (Feurerherm, 2011/2012, p. 133). In other words, Darren found that his identity was inherently connected to his feedback, but it was necessary for him to “negotiate” his identity with the curricular expectations imposed on him.

Tension in Planning and Execution. Unfortunately, this experience alone does not summarize Darren’s tension as a writing instructor. Darren entered the secondary classroom with high expectations that he could help students view writing in the same light as he: That writing could be an avenue to reflect, process, and grow. However, his student teaching experience informed him otherwise.

I enjoy writing for the emotional reward because I can process. I feel good afterwards. And in my mind when I’m preparing lessons, I expect my students to have that same reward, and it’s just not the case for the majority even of my students. (Interview, March 2020)

Darren hoped that his writing instruction might “engage [students] in a way that makes them want to write outside of the classroom,” but he acknowledged that was not a realistic expectation (Interview, March 2020). Darren’s goals to influence students to write intrinsically and to write in the spaces beyond academia are inspiring. However, it is daunting, and, unfortunately, became a point of tension. He further noted that “it’s really in the planning stages that I think as a writer and then plan as if I’m planning to teach writers, and then I have to adjust because I’m not: I’m not teaching writers necessarily” (Interview, March 2020). This example underscores Darren’s tension between his identities as a writer and a teacher of writing in that he sincerely wants students to wrestle with their writing, but, instead, students are more inclined to write for a score.

To that end, Darren suggested that “it’s difficult because if I’m not instructing people who are intrinsically motivated to write, [then] I have to have a focus on requirements and extrinsic

motivation” (Interview, May 2020). To exemplify this paradigm shift, Darren described a major essay as a “minimum requirement” for students to “pass the semester” in order to “get submissions” (Interview, May 2020). Darren wanted students to wrestle with their writing and to become better people because of it. Unfortunately, he needed to lead students to writing through extrinsic rewards. Alas, this is a polar opposite writing approach Darren wanted to implement.

Ultimately, the tension Darren experienced in planning and executing writing pedagogy can be summarized in one poignant thought:

In my mind all my students are me and they’re not. And that’s hard for me to come to grips with. And I know it shouldn’t be. And it’s obvious. I know that intellectually and I always have known that intellectually. My students aren’t me. [Pause] And it’s still hard to—I don’t know—it’s still hard to adjust. (Interview, March 2020)

Tension in Perceived Expectations. In addition to the tension Darren experienced in designing and executing pedagogy, another point of tension he expressed is the perceived expectations associated with his position as a student teacher. Significantly, he acknowledged that the writing he assigns is not the type of writing he composes personally. In fact, he recognized “that’s what I think the disconnect is for me” (Interview, March 2020). He feels obligated to assign specific writing activities to prepare students for future tests:

I have a final exam that’s been given to me that [students are] going to take at the end of the year, and [I] have to make sure that [I] teach them everything that is on this final exam so they can get a good grade. So, to me, I’m like well, like I gotta teach them. I gotta make sure they understand and comprehend Gatsby. I gotta make sure they know how to write a literary analysis essay because there are questions about that on the exam. (Interview, March 2020)

Darren acknowledged that he feels “pressure,” even though he does not recognize its source. In fact, he believed that conforming to such expectations impedes his ability to create meaningful assignments, such as “reflective poetry” or “creative stories,” because it “is not going to fit into

those [unspoken] requirements” (Interview, March 2020). For Darren, though, foregoing such activities, is also foregoing an opportunity to help students beyond academia.

I care enough about my students that I want them to have the type of emotional reward that comes with using writing for their personal lives, but I have to work within an academic framework, and, they know that school isn’t just fun, so it’s difficult to get them to that point of the reward within the academic framework. (Interview, March 2020)

Darren’s tension is palpable. He perceived that he is limited to certain writing activities as part of the school curriculum, but his perception leads him to believe that very curriculum limits student opportunities to experience the socioemotional rewards for writing—i.e., a significant component of his writer identity. However, that does not necessarily mean that he is relegated to his perception of writing pedagogy purgatory. He believes that, in the future, he can grow as a teacher to make standardized writing “valuable to [his] students and how to instruct in ways that do create interest and engagement” (Interview, January 2020).

Tension in Remote Instruction. In addition to the tensions Darren experienced during face-to-face sessions, he experienced different tensions teaching remotely during the pandemic. In particular, Darren noted the challenge of interacting with students online. In the face-to-face instructional classroom,

Groups would have questions and say this is what I’m doing, how do I do it better? Or [ask for] clarification on how to do it better. Those interactions were successful because I think the students engaged enough with the dialogue. (Interview, May 2020)

Teaching remotely did not enable him to have such interactions with students, and, instead, he was forced to compose detailed feedback for student writing. I explore his detailed feedback during remote instruction further in the “Classroom Activities” section.

Another point of tension during the pandemic that Darren discussed was his inability to share writing with students. Darren and I talked quite a bit about opportunities to share writing and

potential implications for student writers, so it is not surprising he referenced it again. Unfortunately, though, Darren lamented about the dearth of opportunities to share writing during the pandemic.

I was close to making an assignment that was something like writing a poem about your quarantine experiences, and that prompt would have come along with my own response. I ended up cutting it just because there was [sic] so many other things to do that week, and we had specific guidelines for how many minutes of work students should have for each day of e-learning. (Interview, May 2020)

Unfortunately, Darren's lack of opportunities to create writing activities that enabled him to share his writing curtailed part of the writing pedagogy he hoped to establish. Shortly before the pandemic caused his teaching to move online, he demonstrated more intention in sharing his writing with students, and it stands to reason he would have continued along that path. However, like so many other teaching plans that were abbreviated or abandoned, Darren missed out on additional opportunities to share writing. In other words, there might have been a stronger connection between Darren's teaching writing philosophy and his writing pedagogy had the pandemic not nullified the remainder of the face-to-face semester.

Conclusion. I had previously established that a significant component of Darren's teaching writing philosophy focused on the socioemotional reward of writing, and, in circling back to the vignette, Darren demonstrated that students' well-being (i.e., their scores) are more important than this philosophy. That is not to say, however, that Darren will forever be mired in a binary of choosing student well-being or student writing growth. I honestly believe that Darren enjoyed his experience as a student teacher. Nevertheless, to not address his tensions would not tell an accurate story. I find it encouraging that Darren's goals as a writing instructor are altruistically motivated: He wants students to experience the same socioemotional reward writing offers him. However, the current grading structure that dominates school culture today hinders his ability to do so.

Significantly, Darren found it challenging to help students understand and experience the socioemotional reward for writing because students were fundamentally unprepared to write for purposes beyond a grade. Poignantly, Darren mused that such writing instruction is “easier on [him], but it’s not what [he] wants for [his] students” (Interview, March 2020). Though this statement leads me to believe that Darren does not intend to modify his writing instruction, I recognize that this tension can lead to a point where he may become “caught between visions of what kind of teacher [he] can and should become” (Kohnen, 2019, p. 372). In other words, I acknowledge (and tremble at) the possibility that he abandons the influence of his writer identity in writing instruction in order to find a more direct path to help students earn high scores.

Gwen

We have a student who will exclusively write a journal. Everything she writes is like a journal. And as much as I appreciate that there are certain things you have to do in order to pass [laugh] school, especially as you get older. . . . And as much I wish I could tell her that you can journal your way through life that’s not the case. . . . it’s that school kind of [writing] where you think of right vs wrong writing. I help her learn the “right way” of writing, which is awful. (Interview, May 2020)

I identified 33 codes documenting tension for Gwen, which was the most of any one participant. This surprised me given Gwen’s positive and upbeat nature. Regardless, the tension illustrated in the vignette, though an isolated moment, documents a poignant experience wherein she chose to conform with the expectations of school curricula rather than honor students’ voices—the latter being significant to her personal writer identity and her teaching writing philosophy. Even though she expressed tension helping this student “learn the ‘right’ way of writing,” Gwen is learning to navigate how writing in school is different than personal writing. Simply put, her instruction was in direct opposition to her belief to honor student voices by encouraging them to *just write*. Indeed, Gwen prefers that students compose their thoughts and beliefs authentically—

where all can approach writing differently and each one in and of itself can be “correct.” Gwen expressed this tension and others throughout our interviews. I organize them in three disparate categories: (a) tensions in teaching to the standards, (b) tensions in writing activities, and (c) tensions in remote instruction.

Tensions in Teaching to the Standards. Gwen lamented how the standards suppressed her teaching. She was initially excited about possibilities to have students write letters and journal regularly, both genres she writes in frequently. However, she felt constrained by the standards and those who she perceives hold her accountable to them:

They’re very aware of their standards and their grades and if I do something that’s not directly aligned with a standard . . . they reject it. And so where I might have a cool lesson plan about writing letters, or writing personally, if they can’t directly apply it or see the direct [connection] to something they’re going to be tested on, they fight me on it. (Interview, March 2020)

Certainly, the standards are approved to guide teachers in their writing pedagogy, but Gwen found them limiting. Unfortunately, she felt she needed to hide behind other standards and projects in order to implement writing activities that were personally meaningful. Gwen only implemented letter writing as part of a larger set of activities because the overall project focused on comprehension, “and less on writing mechanics” (Interview, May 2020). She further suggested that the letter writing activity not being “the main focus” also helped. Relatedly, Gwen felt pressure to prepare students for end-of-level testing both for ELA and other disciplines (Interview, March 2020). In fact, this instruction became such a tension that she had to “throw lesson plans out the window to spend weeks just reviewing figurative language” (Interview, March 2020).

Tensions in Writing Activities. Gwen also perceived tension from students in the consistency and writing routine she hoped to establish. She believed that students’ prior writing experiences were much different than how she planned to approach writing instruction in that students were used to “multiple choice.” This was especially difficult to “get them out of that

mindset of just comprehension,” especially for “assessments.” As a result, Gwen found that “a lot of [her] struggles with teaching writing were just getting them to do it.” Indeed, when she asked students to write, she perceived them to challenge her by saying “why? Why would I want to [write]? This is stupid. I don’t need to write” (Interview, March 2020). Considering how much Gwen values writing, it is not surprising that she experienced tension because of her perception of student attitudes.

Beyond this, Gwen also expressed tension in the pacing of her activities. For instance, she hoped students could journal about “Scout’s rejection of typical gender roles” in *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), but students confused Scout’s gender (Interview, March 2020). As a result, Gwen spent much more of the instructional time than she hoped for “focused on identifying basic plot points” (Interview, March 2020) rather than journaling about gender roles or even more sophisticated activities such as writing to “journal and talk about who [students] are as a writer” (Interview, March 2020).

Tension in Remote Instruction. Finally, Gwen expressed tension in the possible approaches to writing instruction during the pandemic. Shortly after schools announced the plan to move instruction online, Gwen foresaw this possible tension: “I am trying to teach writing but because I teach it so personally and then I don’t get to teach it personally . . . so I’m trying to figure out how to maintain my core beliefs about writing while still not being able to be there (Interview, March 2020). Gwen’s prescience foreshadowed her journey as an online writing instructor. She cancelled a poetry unit, disbanded a plan to have a “huge writing unit,” and was unable to share much “of [her] own writing with [students]” (Interview, May 2020). Despite these challenges, in general, I sensed the most disappointment in the day-to-day challenges that came about from the pandemic:

I think in some cases we've modified our writing to be more personal now that we can't talk to them . . . but at the same time our lessons have been way less personal. They've been way less interactive. I make videos to try to help, but it's not the same. Teaching remotely has definitely taken out a lot of that one-on-one kind of interaction that I think makes school so nice. (Interview, May 2020)

Gwen felt that her remote writing pedagogy “was a struggle” (Interview, May 2020), but I am not convinced that troubled her most. Perhaps the most significant tension Gwen faced during the pandemic was her personal attitude and disposition towards teaching writing: Unprompted, Gwen abruptly shared that “the last thing I want to do is write” (Interview, May 2020). To clarify, the context of her statement leads me to believe that she prefers not to teach writing at the moment as opposed to not wanting to write on her own time. She cited a social studies teacher, who is paired with her as a team teacher in another discipline, required “seven paragraph essays” weekly. As a result, Gwen took “a break from the writing” (Interview, May 2020). Even so, this mindset clashes with the writer identity Gwen established across our interviews and through the visual metaphor reflection.

Conclusion. Overall, Gwen's experience as a student teacher was positive despite the tension she experienced. I find the vignette that leads Gwen's tensions to be the most interesting because my interviews with her led me to believe that she does not believe there is one correct way to approach writing. Yet, she begrudgingly encouraged the student to complete the assignment in the “right way.” This causes me to wonder what makes a piece of writing “correct,” and who makes that decision. Certainly, different genres require different approaches, levels of formality, and tone, among other principles of rhetoric. But how can teachers leverage students' strengths in their writing activities? How might teachers acknowledge student strengths in the writing activities they design and encourage students to write according to those strengths?

I also give pause to consider how the standards and end-of-level tests became barriers to Gwen's writing pedagogy. I believe that strong writing instruction transcends standards, but,

specific to Gwen, if she does not directly teach students how to identify and write an allusion, then some may feel she “failed” the students. However, teaching “directly to the test” not only has a negative connotation among school personnel, but it removes the time for teachers to explore largely unexamined genres in academia (see Applebee & Langer, 2011). Specific to Gwen, this might mean the absence of letter writing. A writing activity she hoped to implement.

Analysis Across Cases

Scholars concede that student teaching may challenge PSTs’ identity construction, claiming that “there are multiple systems of relations involved in overlapping, often conflicting activity settings that make this identity formation quite challenging” (Smagorinsky et al., 2003, p. 10). So, it is not necessarily a surprise that Darren and Gwen experienced tension in projecting their writer identities during classroom writing pedagogy. Still, the course of our interviews led me to believe that they were unaware of such impending opposition. This makes me wonder how teacher educators can better prepare PSTs to experience and manage the tension they experience in secondary schools—an idea I return to momentarily.

The most striking similarity that both Darren and Gwen experienced was their adherence to the expectations of “school writing” despite their core beliefs about writing, writing instruction, and their own experience and histories as writers. For Darren, explaining to a student that her writing, though interesting and worth including, did not fit the expectations as directed in the rubric, was not just a point of tension: It misaligned with his writing and teaching writing philosophy because he encouraged the student to focus on extrinsic (i.e., grades) rather than intrinsic motivations (i.e., socioemotional reward).

Similarly, Gwen found it “awful” that she had to direct a student to the “right way” of writing, which also stands in opposition to her beliefs about writing and writing instruction. These

stories exemplify cognitive dissonance. Darren and Gwen both recognize the instruction they provide misaligns with their philosophies, but they continue regardless. They are not alone in experiencing such tension. Whitney (2011) notes that “there's reading and writing as I've known them in my private life, and then there's reading and writing as they often look in schools, and while these sometimes complement one another, they also often conflict” (p. 51).

Darren and Gwen's experience, and Whitney's (2011) statement, leads to an important question: Do teacher educators have the responsibility to prepare PSTs to experience tensions at large, and, specifically, in enacting their writer identity as pedagogy? Admittedly, there are more reading, writing, and talking possibilities than what teacher educators have time for in a standard semester course. However, I am left to consider how teacher educators can provide strategies and approaches to enable PSTs to flourish despite such tension. To start, it might be helpful for teacher educators to encourage PSTs to examine their writer identity and find where it intersects with the secondary writing standards. Doing so can help PSTs design writing activities that amplify their writer identity by balancing their beliefs with the school's expectations.

I also find it interesting that both Darren and Gwen lamented the lack of opportunities to share writing with students. Despite their challenges in sharing their writing, I find their desire to do so encouraging. Multiple scholars in writing teacher education underscore the importance of writing and sharing writing with students. For instance, Whitney (2017) illustrates that sharing writing with students allows for flexibility in the writing curriculum. Sharing writing at large includes a stronger sense of self as a writer (e.g., Morgan, 2017), and a sense of community (e.g., Street & Stang, 2017). Significantly, Darren and Gwen are moving down the path to not only enhance their writing pedagogy, but they also stand to strengthen their writer identities in the process.

A final tension I identified from both Darren and Gwen was their frustration in end-of-level testing. Both felt it was their responsibility to prepare students to succeed on this test. Though I do not believe they are wrong to think that, placing an extensive emphasis on end-of-level testing caused tension. In fact, it became a double challenge because it took away valuable time *and* limited them to specific writing activities. Additionally, it is a cumbersome burden to bear. There are many factors that influence how well (or poorly) students perform on high stakes testing.

Classroom Writing Activities

This theme underscores the writing activities that participants included as part of their writing instruction. Significantly, it also addresses the third research question that I explored: What writing opportunities do PSTs frame for students and how does that connect to PSTs' personal writing habits? The connection between PSTs' classroom writing instruction and personal writing habits is different than the connection between PSTs' classroom writing activities and their writer identities. Importantly, the connection to their writer identities involves the analysis of their (a) histories as writers, (b) personal writing, (c) teaching writing philosophy, (d) visual metaphors, and (e) tensions. I explore this connection in detail in chapter 5.

I felt it necessary to highlight the writing activities that participants employed in order to explore how their writer identity influences their writing pedagogy. I acknowledge that it is not a perfect fit for two reasons: Participants worked in connection with a cooperating teacher. Though I did not ask participants how much autonomy they experienced in designing lessons plans, I recognize that they needed to conform to the expectations of the classroom teacher. Beyond this, the global pandemic curtailed nearly half of their face-to-face teaching, so the activities look much different than they might have under “normal” circumstances.

The pandemic fundamentally altered participants' writing pedagogy. As such, I divide each participant's section of classroom writing activities in two disparate parts to reflect this change: Prior to pandemic and post-pandemic. In general, the writing instruction that occurred prior to the pandemic occurred between mid-January to mid-March 2020, and the writing instruction that occurred within pandemic occurred from mid-March to early May 2020.

Darren's Pre-Pandemic Instruction

Monday I just started the class and I said okay, everyone, just close your eyes and we did a couple deep breaths together to set up a clear mind space. And I asked them to think of their favorite song ever. I said, "think of the best song ever" and then I asked them, with their eyes closed, "what does it sound like? Think of the lyrics; think of the instruments that are being played; think of the musical line, the vocalists," everything like that. And then I said, "think of why that's the best song ever." (Interview, May 2020)

I selected this vignette because it represents one of the few stories where Darren recognized that his writer identity played an integral role in his writing pedagogy (Interview, March 2020). The theme on tension illustrated how Darren felt restricted in his writing instruction, but *The Best Song Ever* represents "one of [his] favorite things" and "something that [he] would write about" on his own time (Interview, March 2020), even though the activity was designed to help students prepare to write a literary analysis. I organize this section first by describing *The Best Song Ever*, following, I detail writing in response to literature, and finally I share my observations.

Best Song Ever. The vignette I selected to guide Darren's writing activities amplified a significant writing assignment. Darren's creativity and ingenuity in creating this assignment was palpable. After introducing the assignment, he invited students to respond to a prompt he created on the school's learning management system. He required students to compose three paragraphs to complete this activity: One introduces the song, one describes why they consider it the best song ever, focusing on the "lyrics and the instruments;" and one concludes (Interview, March 2020).

Darren believed students might enjoy this activity because they “are constantly trying to listen to music in class” (Interview, March 2020), and creating an assignment that aligns with their interests, he believed, would motivate them to write. The following week, Darren planned to return to their drafts to revise them in order to prepare students to compose a literary analysis in the future. Overall, he believes students enjoyed the activity.

Writing in Response to Literature. Beyond *The Best Song Ever*, Darren primarily invited students to respond to literature. For instance, Darren commonly invited students to respond to “prompts to have students engaging their personal lives with whatever text [they are] reading” (Interview, March 2020). To illustrate this concept, Darren spoke about two writing activities: Collins Writing and general discussion questions derived from the literature. Collins Writing, a prepackaged writing curriculum, is an activity where students are required to write “six lines or more about a time when [they] felt [a certain] way and how that relates to the way our narrator felt in this poem” (Interview, March 2020). Darren admits that students often initially resist Collins Writing activities with a “groan,” but their written responses often lead Darren to believe that they “genuinely engage” with the prompts.

Beyond the Collins Writing prompts, Darren often utilized discussion questions that afford students opportunities to think more critically about the literature. In fact, the overarching “purposes for writing in class [at that point] for [the] juniors [were] to engage deeper with reading *The Great Gatsby*, and also to demonstrate to [him] that [they] understand characters or themes in the novel” (Interview, March 2020). To that end, he specifically referenced four distinct questions: (a) a “personal link question,” which asks students to consider their “personal lives” in comparison to the “narrator or character in the story”; (b) “authors generalizations,” or the author’s intent; (c) “structure generalization,” which asks students to identify literary devices authors utilize to

describe a character or theme; (d) and a “prediction question,” inviting students to consider what might happen in the future based on what they have learned about certain characters.

Darren mentioned how much he enjoys these writing prompts because he provides unlined paper so students can choose their level of engagement (presumably because there is not an expectation to write a certain number of lines unlike the Collins Writing). Despite the informal nature of such writing assignments, I find it interesting that Darren made it a point to say that he “consider[ed] all of that writing” (Interview, March 2020). I think this speaks to his understanding of what writing is and how even the simplest writing opportunities can be valuable. It also aligns with his personal writing beliefs in that his simple compositions are considered “writing” (Interview, January 2019).

Observation. Finally, I also observed Darren provide strong writing instruction. Darren read a passage of *The Great Gatsby* to students and highlighted certain phrases that build the setting. For example, Darren pointed out the phrases “roaring noon” and “blinking away the sun” to demonstrate the author’s descriptive writing, indicating the time of day. Following, he identified Fitzgerald’s use of detail by describing the nose hairs of a character, and how that signifies “old age.” Darren’s purpose for such instruction aimed to help students write descriptively. Following his instruction, students worked in pairs to describe an arbitrary setting (which they drew out of a paper cup), and to practice “creative dialogue” (Observation, March 2020). This example of Darren’s writing pedagogy underscores how much Darren values creativity.

Post-Pandemic

It was all challenging because it was—it was things that I would be doing just in the class. I would be walking around and scanning and saying here are a couple things you can improve. And this feedback was more challenging because all of it to me seemed like it needed to be more thorough and formal because I was actually

writing something down, right? Instead of just speaking one-on-one with a student and giving suggestions. (Interview, May 2020)

Though this vignette only captures one moment, it serves to demonstrate the overall challenge that Darren experienced teaching writing remotely during the pandemic. I can appreciate Darren's struggle to compose practical, clear feedback to students frequently in part because the written feedback is asynchronous whereas verbal feedback happens synchronously, with the opportunity for students to ask questions and for Darren to clarify responses. Beyond this, some believe that written feedback can be problematic (e.g., Bardine, Bardine, & Deegan, 2000).

The way Darren described how writing instruction changed during the pandemic was significant. Prior to the pandemic, Darren created activities intended to help students wrestle with the text, and he described how that changed during the pandemic while his freshman classes read *Romeo and Juliet*: "My mentor teacher and my main focus was comprehension. *Basic* comprehension of the story" (Interview, May 2020). Darren also conceded that he did not provide many opportunities for students to "engage on a very deep level" with the text. Darren routinely curated videos from YouTube that explained various literary devices that one might find in the reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, and then asked students to write their own sentence that contained the specific literary device.

However, Darren found bright spots during this time. He regularly invited students to compose summaries and opinions about their reading of *Romeo and Juliet*. He posed questions such as "who is being overdramatic?" And "do you think Romeo and Juliet are actually in love?" He noted how much more satisfying it was for him to read these responses because he felt like he "was interacting with students instead of interacting with a gradebook" (Interview, May 2020).

In addition to working with 9th grade students, Darren often invited 11th grade students to compose what he called "deeper engagement questions." He described these writing prompts as

Guided questions to ask [students] opinions about different aspects of how *Gatsby* was written basically. So, a lot of the times it was setting them up for their essay; just asking them what do you think F. Scott Fitzgerald was saying about this topic in this chapter. (Interview, May 2020)

From my vantage point, these discussion prompts seemed like those he assigned prior to the pandemic. It does make me wonder, though, how differently he executed them. Instead of possibly engaging in conversations, inviting them to extend their thinking, or even sharing his opinion, he could only read their response and comment before moving on. Perhaps Darren and students engaged in multiple rounds of conversation prior to moving on, but anecdotal experience leads me to believe that was unlikely.

Finally, Darren invited students to respond to literature focused on the Harlem Renaissance. This activity was originally intended to be a more involved, research writing activity, but the circumstances of the pandemic necessitated change. Regardless, Darren procured literature and art from this era and invited students to respond with “their opinion about the texts.” This type of activity, one that includes “a short text and then just asking students how they are engaging with that text” has been satisfying for Darren (Interview, May 2020).

Conclusion. My analysis of the writing activities Darren assigned leads me to the third research question: What writing opportunities do PSTs frame for students and how does that connect to the PST’s writer identity? I find it interesting that Darren mentioned that he would personally compose about music, similar to the in class writing activity, *The Best Song Ever*. Still, it is hard to imagine that he would write with the same structure, however loose, that he required students to write. Additionally, Darren enjoyed the writing activities that allowed students to engage their personal life with the text. Darren enjoys such introspective writing, and, even though he never mentioned that he composes personally under the same circumstances, I can envision him doing something similar since he composes when he is inspired.

Generally, the global pandemic caused Darren to rethink his writing pedagogy. The challenges he faced were real, especially the lack of standard interaction among students. He did not explain the purposes for altering the original Harlem Renaissance research assignment, but I suspect the challenge he had in providing so much formal feedback to so many students in the prior research essay caused him to consider different possibilities.

Considering all of the activities both prior to and during the pandemic, I am left with two questions: Why did he value Collins Writing? I found it surprising that he likes the Collins Writing prompts. My experience with Darren led me to believe that he would resist such specific writing expectations (i.e., write six lines or more) because students can arguably write six terrible lines and complete the assignment. Certainly, none of his personal writing was confined to a certain amount of lines, either.

The other question I have is why does so much writing respond to literature? I think many ELA teachers construct their writing curriculum similarly, but it makes me wonder what other possibilities teachers can consider when they create different writing activities. I understand that he is connecting the writing activities to the class reading, and I believe there is value in that. However, I also wonder how many other assignments, such as *The Best Song Ever*, do not have a role in such a curriculum. I wonder how much students might think of writing differently if they consistently wrote about topics they enjoyed, even if they were challenging, as opposed to writing primarily in response to literature?

Gwen's Pre-Pandemic Instruction

Since sharing my poetry he's been [laugh] coming up to me every day on his Sway. He won't submit it to me; I don't know why, but he takes the last 2-3 minutes [laugh] after class to watch me read his poetry that he has written on his Sway. He's the only one who's interacted with it; apparently it meant something to him, and apparently he liked this format. They're not always the nicest poems, and he does

it in the form of raps [laugh]. I had to have a whole conversation with him convincing him because he would rather work on his rap than he would on his school assignments. I was like “dude this is poetry: This is literally the unit we’re doing.” And so he said fine and started writing slam poetry [laugh] about my assignment at school [laugh]. I don’t know if he wanted to get a rise out of me or what it was [because] some of it was like I’m not doing this; this is stupid. And I was like okay, but you just did it so joke’s on you, my friend. [Laugh] I mean, it did something because I never had an assignment of his to grade before and here I’ve got it because I was kind of toying with it myself. I think that’s something to show. (Interview, March 2020)

I identified the vignette above because it documents a rich story Gwen shared that came about because she made her writing public and participated in digital learning with students. Importantly, she honored the student’s voice by allowing him to write rap poetry as part of the unit. Honoring the student’s voice is an important component of her personal writer identity and teaching writing philosophy. This section further outlines the classroom activities she designed prior to the pandemic.

Poetry. This vignette chronicles a positive experience Gwen shared about the influence participating in the same activity as students, which involved her sharing a personal poem she composed and sharing a poem she found that was previously written. Students had access to this poetry by accessing her “Sway,” which is a Microsoft tool she described as “similar to PowerPoint, but it’s kind of like an online scrapbook for my more techy kids” (Interview, March 2020). The “poetry journal” assignment required students to submit “poetry that they found and enjoyed or poetry of their own” (Interview, March 2020). However, this activity was curtailed due to the global pandemic. Even so, Gwen was prepared to share poetry that she had composed previously. This was powerful because it enabled students, perhaps just this one from the vignette, to have the courage and confidence to write *and* share his own writing, too.

Writing in Response to Literature. Beyond poetry, Gwen also designed writing activities in connection to literature. One of the writing activities she assigned originated from a project she

constructed when she was a student in the literacy course I taught at the University. She created bookmarks for students to (a) identify and define words they do not know, (b) create “connections” to their lives,” and (c) “a big, [blank] section on the back” for students to compose what they want (Interview, March 2020). In short, Gwen created a bookmark for students to record and track the above items as they read. This was an activity that her mentor teacher was particularly excited about, and Gwen also appeared to be excited about it, too. Gwen noted that this was an assignment that students could use on their final test, which was an essay test.

Gwen assigned an essay test on separate occasions: Once as a way for students to demonstrate their knowledge of *And Then There Were None* (Christie, 1940) and once for students to demonstrate their knowledge after reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960). For the former, Gwen created three essay prompts for students to select: (a) A personal response prompt, which includes students “making connections between their life and the writing;” (b) a question that encouraged students to consider the influence of “social psychology” in the novel; and (c) “one that was based on text evidence” (Interview, March 2020). In addition to composing an essay as part of a summative evaluation, Gwen also assigned a similar summative test for students after the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), “but it was shorter and they had less time” (Interview, March 2020). In order to model how students might approach these assessments, Gwen “responded to a couple of those prompts with them” (Interview, March 2020). However, she did not elaborate on the process or effect of doing so. Further, Gwen had clear goals in assigning the essay tests. She explained

A lot of my assessments—writing assessments especially—have been trying to convince them that there’s no right or wrong answer, per se. And so I had them write a lot on quotes: Like why do you think this quote is significant. (Interview, March 2020)

By encouraging students to write about a quote that they found important, Gwen is encouraging them to *just write*, which is an important influence of her writer identity.

Honoring Student Voice. In addition to the cumulative writing assignments, Gwen also assigned multiple informal writing activities. For instance, students completed six-word memoirs/six-word eulogies. She did not define what a six-word memoir/eulogy is, but I can only infer that it resembles an activity I assigned as part of the literacy course I taught with her as a student. There, she composed precisely six words to define an important life mantra. This is an activity Gallagher (2011) describes in his book. Yet, Gwen noted that many students struggled to keep track of the characters in *And Then There Were None*, so they created a makeshift “file folder” to keep track of the characters, and which characters died. After characters in the story died, students created “the six-word memoir for that—for students who didn’t know what to say they did like a six-word [laugh] eulogy [laugh]” (Interview, March 2020). By allowing students to select the six words based on their understanding of the text, Gwen honored student voices.

Gwen also assigned informal writing in her classroom when she perceived students did not complete the assigned reading. For instance, “instead of giving them a pop quiz, I would ask them something that they found important” (Interview, March 2020). By doing so, Gwen honored student opinions by creating a safe environment, and encouraged them to *just write*. Further, Gwen also implemented newer technology in her classroom writing activities as she invited students to respond to PowerPoint discussions by using a program called Mentee. Gwen described the program as “a really neat tool [that] allows personal writing and reflection during learning discussion[s]” (Interview, March 2020). Students can send a text message that appears on the bottom of a PowerPoint, which Gwen found helpful, especially “because even my more shy students who won’t discuss have a way to get their voice out there anonymously” (Interview,

March 2020). Certainly, the two writing activities prioritized student voice in a respectful environment.

Post-Pandemic

I'm just figuring out how to do this distanced right now because I am trying to teach writing, but because I teach it so personally, and then I don't get to teach it personally, that's a struggle for me. And it will be a struggle for me [for] the next couple of weeks, and so I'm trying to figure out how to maintain my core beliefs about writing while still not being able to be there. And not being able to be personal with them. (Interview, March 2020)

Gwen conceded at the end of our March interview that she foresaw challenges teaching writing online. Specifically, she worried that her approach to teaching writing might not transfer to a remote setting. However, she found one overwhelmingly positive experience through online writing conferences:

I had a student who I conferenced with three or four times after the [essay] was done on Zoom, and we went through and I shared my screen. We would look through one of the things I had marked on her essay and I would say alright well let's rephrase this together and we'll see what's good about this. What maybe could we fix? What's effective? What's not as effective? Is it organized? Does it flow? Is there a different word we could use here? Just going through it honestly with her sentence by sentence. And then kind of releasing her and having her do it and finish it on her own until she was proud of it. And then turn it back into me, so that she was giving me something that she was proud of. And she could show that she had learned something from it. (Interview, May 2020)

The writing conference exemplifies a positive moment in Gwen's writing pedagogy that occurred during the pandemic. This was the only writing conference Gwen discussed in detail, and I am impressed that she talked with the student about word choice, organization, and effective writing. Or, in other words, I am impressed that she considered multiple possibilities and emphasized how choice is integral to writing. Indeed, writing conferences may have been one of the few "constants" during the pandemic in that students were able to write and talk about their writing.

Beyond the writing conferences, Gwen shared how students had an option to compose letters as part of a final project. As part of the requirement to compose a letter, students needed to “translate that letter into Elizabethan English. And then explain the differences between their life and the life of this Elizabethan-them” (Interview, May 2020). Composing letters is a writing activity Gwen hoped to conduct previously, but she felt such an activity would not align with the standards and the expectations of the stakeholders in her community. She defended her use of including it as part of a final project because “it is a big project,” and it is “more about understanding Elizabethan English and understanding the time period of Romeo & Juliet” as opposed to standard writing instruction (Interview May, 2020). In other words, Gwen is couching the letter-writing activity as part of the greater whole of understanding Romeo and Juliet because “others may be more on board with it” instead of writing letters because she finds the genre valuable (Interview, May 2020).

I am happy that Gwen finally found an opportunity to implement letter writing as part of her writing curriculum. However, it is disheartening that she felt the need to mask it in order to appease stakeholders. This is not a reflection on Gwen; instead, it reflects the restrictions that some teachers, Gwen, specifically, feel when they design writing activities, especially as a student teacher.

Conclusion. The writing activities alone that Gwen assigned have a connection to her writer identity in that she manages to include a few activities that directly reflect her writer identity. Specifically, the letter writing activity and the personal journals are hallmarks of her personal writing. Gwen documented challenges in implementing the letter writing, but she ultimately found a way to implement it. Additionally, journal writing is an important part of Gwen’s personal writing, and she made certain students would write similarly.

Beyond this, I also consider the effect of so many writing activities responding to the literature. Which writing activities are *not* being included in the curriculum because of this habit? Does she enjoy these activities, or does she believe such writing opportunities are necessary in school? I recognize that it is possible that Gwen feels limited in the writing activities she can assign, which makes me wonder how often expectations in writing instruction suppresses one's writer identity? The standards must be met, but there is enough wiggle room in its verbiage to argue the inclusion of letter-writing and other writing activities not directly specified in the standards.

Joe's Pre-Pandemic Writing Instruction

I made [the prompt] up because I wasn't prepared for class. But it was a pretty good prompt. It was "imagine you're going up an escalator in a mall and describe the things around you." And then there were some literary device like metaphors they had to use. And I gave an example that I thought was pretty good. I think I was proud of that one because I thought it was a good example and I came up with it [laugh] seconds before [mentor teacher] noticed I was struggling. (Interview, May 2020)

This vignette illustrates Joe's impulse for creative writing despite his lack of preparation. The context for the writing activities that Joe assigned is different from the other participants because he was the only one who taught a creative writing course. Inevitably, the focus and activities were different in that class, which gave him more creative freedom in instructional design. Even though Joe wrote creatively on his own time (Interviews, January 2019; May 2020) he discussed the initial struggle he experienced.

Joe's initial approach to the teaching of writing included lectures to help students understand the concept of "show versus tell" or "ways to characterize someone." However, his mentor teacher advised him to have students "constantly writing [in] different ways" (Interview, January 2020), so Joe changed his approach. Thus, this vignette illustrates Joe's acceptance of that

feedback and his routine of inviting students to compose at the start of class. I detail such experiences first. Following, I highlight a short story unit and writing games.

Short Writing Prompts. One of Joe’s frequent writing activities was short writing prompts at the start of class. For instance, he regularly invited students to compose “bell-ringers,” which provided students opportunities to write short, isolated prompts. Beyond the example in the vignette, Joe discussed another prompt he created, encouraging students to compose a poem with the word “orange” in it (Interview, March 2020). However, Joe acknowledged that routinely opening with a bell-ringer activity became “stale,” so he sought additional opportunities for students to compose at the start of class. One poignant example points to a time when, after multiple students were involved in a fatal car accident, Joe invited students to compose a poem to a friend (Interview, March 2020). Unfortunately¹⁸, Joe was able to empathize with students who suffered from these tragic events. Joe mentioned in a previous interview that writing was “therapeutic” for him after one of his friends passed away, so it is not surprising that he invited students to compose during these challenging times. Finally, Joe also focused on short writing prompts that responded to literature. For instance, during Valentine’s day he invited students to write about the ways love is expressed in the literature the class is reading (Interview, March 2020).

Science Fiction and Technology. Beyond the informal writing Joe created for students, he also implemented a science fiction and technology short story unit. Joe admitted that he does not read much science fiction, but he “thought it would be fun to integrate technology in the things that are in the news and things that are in [student] lives” (Interview, March 2020). He scaffolded this instruction so the first day he required students to find “a scientific article or a tech article” related to a “disease” or “AI” (artificial intelligence). “The next day [they] identified the

¹⁸ I use the word *unfortunately* here in reference to Joe and students both sharing the same tragic experience of unexpectedly losing a friend.

stakeholders, so the people who are affected by the technology.” Afterwards, students “spent a day looking at how technology affected different things.” As an example, Joe noted that the Tesla company only needs Cobalt for their batteries, but to get Cobalt they need “child laborers” in the “mines in Africa.” So, the ultimate goal was to help students “think about how the technology affects these random different groups of people” (Interview, March 2020). This writing activity stands to help students participate as active researchers and challenge unexamined assumptions about companies.

Games. A final activity Joe mentioned during our interviews was the games he created that aligned with writing instruction. Joe conceded that he “created good games that were educational and actually useful for [students]”, but he also created games that were “a miss for sure” (Interview, May 2020). One of the more educational games he created was connected to metaphors because students need to “have metaphors in their descriptive papers” (Interview, March 2020). Initially, Joe thought he created the game on his own, but then realized a similar game already exists (i.e., Mab Libs). In this game, a paragraph or two that comprises a story is already created, and students need to select various parts of speech without context. Joe suggested that a sentence may turn out as “love is like a broken kayak” (Interview, March 2020). Joe believed that students enjoyed this activity.

Joe also created a similar game where students collaborated with each other to complete a task. In this game, one person wrote a line of poetry and passed it to another person to write the next line. This pattern continued until each member of the group wrote a line of poetry. He noted how this activity derived from an experience he had at his University where students formed groups of five students to write a poem. He thought this activity might transfer to secondary writing instruction, specifically in connection with the hero’s journey. He explained that “one person

would write [about] an obstacle. The next person [would write] how they overcome that obstacle, and then the first person [would write] the main character, etc.” Joe envisioned students having fun with this project, but he experienced unforeseen problems when students did not have enough time to read the story and create a new portion of it in the time allotted (Interview, May 2020).

Post-Pandemic

I like the option of giving [students] constant feedback with the senior composition papers. [For instance] they do like one paragraph and I tell them how they might revise it. Because I feel like with that I can actually give them substantial help on what they're doing, so it's not just like they turning in a final draft that has lots of mistakes but [we are] actually talking it through. Right now I'm looking at someone's compare and contrast paper, and this is the second draft of what he's done. And I think this one is a lot better, and I feel like with e-learning days, we could definitely do something like that. (Interview, May 2020)

This vignette demonstrates a significant shift in Joe's writing pedagogy once the pandemic became a reality. Instead of the short bell ringers to start class or the games they often played, Joe suggested that students primarily “[wrote] on their own” during the pandemic (Interview, May 2020). It seemed that the volume of student writing increased, and, because of that, Joe provided “constant feedback.”

Immersing himself in providing such “constant” feedback led him to believe that “it's not just about writing, but it's also about [students] seeing where they're going wrong with their writing, and how they can improve” (Interview, May 2020). Significantly, this experience influenced his teaching writing philosophy in that he believed students need constant feedback. Yet, his experience teaching in the way the school day is presently constructed make such an approach too challenging. Joe elaborated by suggesting that students ought to have remote instruction once a week, and teachers can provide the constant feedback (Interview, May 2020).

Finally, Joe described how the pandemic opened additional possibilities for students to write. He invited students to “go outside and write a poem” and write a poem about “eating dinner” (Interview, May 2020). Joe noted that teaching writing during the pandemic opens possibilities to vary writing instruction that are much harder to conduct during traditional school settings. He also noted that he is not under the same stress to create games for students so frequently (Interview, May 2020).

Conclusion. Similar to Gwen, I see a connection between Joe’s writer identity and his writing pedagogy. Though it was devastating for students to return to school after multiple classmates were involved in a fatal car accident, I find comfort in knowing Joe was able to help them navigate that challenge through writing because, Joe, too, utilized writing to navigate grief after the unexpected passing of a friend. Additionally, Joe’s habits of writing creative short stories also came to light in his writing instruction. My analysis of Joe’s personal writing leads me to believe that Joe enjoys thinking creatively through short stories. To that end, the assignment he created for students to write about science fiction and technology appear to have strong connections to his writer identity.

Interestingly, Joe was the only participant who found working under a pandemic favorable to teaching in face-to-face settings. He discovered the valuable opportunities to provide feedback to students, influencing his writing teaching philosophy. Joe was the only participant who added to his initial beliefs of what school writing should look like from the start of his student teaching experience to the completion. However, I worry that Joe’s newfound teaching writing philosophy may not align with the literature. I agree that feedback is important, but doing so primarily through written feedback can be problematic (e.g., Hillocks, 1986). Instead, a stronger approach to administering teacher feedback is to hold writing conferences. Writing conferences have the

capacity to enable students to “become better writers” (Anderson, 2000, p. 8). Indeed, Gallagher and Kittle (2018), two master secondary ELA teachers, hold writing conferences regularly because they believe “writers grow more when [teachers] give them feedback in the midst of drafting” (p. 110).

Todd’s Pre-Pandemic Writing Instruction

We’re kind of taking this one very suspenseful moment in the first chapter and walk[ing] through it as a class. And I was showing them the different elements the author was using, even down to the grammar. He was using present participles a lot and just the effect that that has on the reader to make it way more intense. (Interview, March 2020)

This vignette demonstrates two important components of Todd’s writing pedagogy: Creative writing and grammar in context. Todd initially planned to have students compose a more extended, creative writing activity after reading *A Monster Calls* (Ness, 2018). However, he spontaneously decided to require students to creatively write and revise according to a close reading he conducted of a shorter excerpt in the book. Beyond this, the excerpt also highlights Todd’s goals to teach grammar in context. This section underscores these experiences and further addresses the writing opportunities centered on academic and informal writing.

Creative Writing. One of the hallmarks of Todd’s experience as a writing instructor was the creative writing he invited students to compose. Todd created an experience for students to write creatively and “have a character introduce a character, introduce a setting, build up the suspense and then at the end reveal this monster” (Interview, March 2020). Simply put, Todd modeled this writing experience through a close reading of *A Monster Calls* (Ness, 2018). Even with this scaffolding, Todd noticed students needed additional instruction, so, with the encouragement of his mentor teacher, he taught writing by modeling writing:

We wrote our own little suspense story [because] that's what I asked my students to do; write their own little few paragraph suspense stories. So that's what me and my mentor teacher did, and we didn't really say anything; we just kind of silently went up there and did it while they were doing theirs. And I think that was kind of a neat moment because they saw that we were excited about it and I think that helped them get a little excited about it too. . . . And then we both read ours at the end of class. (Interview, March 2020)

Todd's willingness as a student teacher to write unscripted in front of the class is impressive. It was a powerful experience not only to write in front of students, but also to share the writing because, according to Todd, the whole experience changed the attitude of student writers. It further "showed them [that he is] excited about writing" (Interview, March 2020). It is important for students to know that their instructors value writing, but it also served another purpose: "I just don't want to dole [writing activities] out to them. I care about the writing they do" (Interview, March 2020).

Beyond writing unscripted in front of class, Todd illustrated his belief that he cares about student writing by providing "encouraging" feedback, especially by identifying what he likes about student writing. For example, after students composed a draft of this activity, Todd "proofread" their work after both the first and second draft. He noted that he "[offered] them little bits of advice on their creative writing" by "drawing from [his] own experience writing" (Interview, March 2020). Interestingly, Todd's belief that he provides feedback by drawing on his own experience as a writer is one way he brings his writer identity into his classroom writing pedagogy. It is unclear whether he recognized it, but I found it interesting that he made the connection that he draws from personal writing experience to provide student feedback.

As part of the creative writing unit, Todd deliberately taught components of grammar and descriptive writing. For instance, Because the author often utilized participial phrases, Todd "showed [students] examples of it in the book." He further explained that he and students "did a lot of work with that" to "implement [participles] in their writing" to "really spice it up—make it

feel more alive” (Interview, May 2020). Teaching specific grammatical principles in the context of student writing is an effective way to help students not only “enhance” their writing, but “empower” them as writers, too (Weaver & Bush, 2008, p. 6). In addition to teaching grammar to enhance writing, Todd helped students examine the author’s “moves” from *A Monster Calls* by conducting a close reading of the text. He identified specific writing moves where the author

Introduce[s] the character and the setting and he’s building the suspense . . . there’s all sorts of sights and sounds to hint that [the monster is] coming and then it’s like boom: Visually you see the monster pop up in the illustration. And the author goes on this really long descriptive paragraph about the monster. (Interview, March 2020)

Examining the writer’s moves through close reading is a strong pedagogical approach because “doing so leads them to adopt the same moves for their own writing” (Gallagher, 2015, p. 202). In other words, when students are exposed to effective writing, then they have a guide to help them in their personal writing.

Academic Writing. Beyond the creative writing that Todd implemented, he also spoke at length about another writing activity focused on the movie *Dead Poet’s Society*. Students watched the movie as part of instructional time, and Todd required them to form an argument, focusing on the carpe diem theme. Todd required students to argue whether a character in the movie embraced carpe diem by committing suicide, and to analyze the teacher’s role in the suicide because he taught this concept (Interview, March 2020). Todd intentionally posed “a moral question for students [because] that’s the kind of stuff [he] like[s] writing: When it’s not always black and white. When there’s like a little bit of moral ambiguity in it” (Interview, March 2020). In other words, Todd posed a question where students can argue for either side because there is not a definitive “right or wrong answer” (Interview, March 2020).

Todd also stressed the importance of having a clear thesis. He noted that “[he tries] to be clear with [his] writing, so [he] was trying to hit home the fact that they need to have a thesis. Big

emphasis on that” (Interview, March 2020). Todd demonstrated his belief that a strong thesis statement will lead to clear writing. Further, he also loosely scaffolded student writing. I use the qualifier “loosely” because he did not identify specific writing pedagogy that targeted specific skills or processes. Instead, he relayed that he required students to form logical arguments. Students “need to have all of this evidence to back up [their] point.” Specifically, he “wanted [students] to make [a] statement that is not 100% [objective].” In other words, he aimed for students to form their own opinion that they can defend with textual evidence (Interview, March 2020).

Informal Writing. In addition to the formal writing activities, Todd also discussed multiple informal writing assignments, including the consistent use of worksheets. This surprised me. Todd implemented many strong pedagogical approaches in the creative writing and the academic writing activities. For instance, modeling writing is supported by research (e.g., Graham and Perrin, 2007). However, multiple scholars highlight how ineffective worksheets truly are (e.g., Beach, Appleman, Fecho, & Simon, 2016; Culham, 2018). Though he did not explicitly define how often students are required to complete worksheets, he conceded that, after nearly two months of student teaching, students in his senior class mostly wrote in response to literature through notes and worksheets (Interview, March 2020). For what it is worth, he had plans for students to compose an essay, but he acknowledged it must be much shorter due to the sudden school closures caused by the pandemic.

Another informal writing practice he discussed is a vocabulary assignment, which is heavily influenced by his cooperating teacher. In this activity, students applied the word in context to the literature the class is reading, and apply whatever grammatical concept the class is learning about (Interview, March 2020). Todd conceded that he does not believe this is “writing in a

traditional sense” (Interview, March 2020), but acknowledged it as a practice he would like to continue in the future.

Post-Pandemic

An overwhelming majority of the writing instruction Todd implemented during the pandemic was different than what he was able to do prior to the pandemic. However, he did his best to continue examining mentor texts and modeling writing in front of students despite the circumstances. Yet, Todd acknowledged that much of the remote instruction involved students completing sentence outlines (Interview, May 2020). For instance, freshman students completed a “sentence by sentence” outline as part of their writing instruction “because [students] were doing a research paper” (Interview, May 2020). Todd did not elaborate on specific components of the research paper, but he modeled what the writing might look like through videos he recorded and later shared with the class. For example, he might “say for paragraph A part A, you need to answer this question, and this is what it might look like” (Interview, May 2020). Similarly, he provided “paragraph by paragraph” outlines (as opposed to “sentence by sentence”) for 12th grade students because he believed they were “much more stronger writers” (Interview, May 2020). Despite the circumstances, Todd did his best to continue strong writing pedagogy by modeling writing.

Further, Todd invited students to examine mentor texts to support their writing. Todd and students read the short story, “A Modest Proposal” (Swift, 1729), and examined it prior to inviting students to compose their own satire. Specifically, students “identified a problem in modern day life and then they come up with their own sarcastic solution” (Interview, May 2020). Todd required students “to research the problem . . . [and] they had to have credible sources and factual information to tell their reader this is the problem, but I have this crazy sarcastic solution to fix it.” Additionally, he required students to provide “a real, more practical solution to it” (Interview, May

2020). In other words, he required students to compose a similar piece of writing as Swift by acknowledging a problem in today's world and utilizing verbal irony to suggest a solution. Even though Todd did not recognize this as creative writing, I can identify elements of creative writing in this activity. Specifically, such instruction speaks to Todd's writer identity in that he often writes creatively.

Conclusion. My analysis of Todd's writing activities leads me to believe that he had the strongest connection between his writer identity and the writing activities alone that he assigned. Specifically, the creative writing he assigned aligns with his personal writing habits. Though it likely would not be in response to a book, he still actively enjoys creative writing. Further, the professional sports blog he composes also necessitates that he create an informed opinion based on the data. Likewise, Todd instructed students to compose the *carpe diem* essay with the same principles. Finally, Todd mentions that the overarching essay focused on the *carpe diem* assignment was centered on "moral ambiguity." Though Todd did not mention similar, morally ambiguous writing he conducts, he directly stated he enjoys writing similarly. Finally, the assignment for "A Modest Proposal" (Swift, 1729), aligns with his identity as a creative and professional writer.

Todd's writing pedagogy is evolving. However, I found it interesting that he required students to complete worksheets, even though he recognized that they limited student writing (Interview, March 2020). Truly, worksheets are problematic (e.g., Culham, 2018) in part because they rarely enable students to engage in critical, extended thought, or revision. I also found his writing pedagogy during the pandemic curious. I believe in Todd's heart he attempted to incorporate a strong pedagogy (despite the limitations) that would help student writers grow by modeling writing through video technology. However, I do wonder if modeling the writing

“sentence by sentence”, or “paragraph by paragraph,” caused students to think that they needed to conform to his expectations as opposed to his identifying possibilities for writing.

Analysis Across Cases

There were multiple trends in participants’ writing instruction that I identified. Foremost, I identified their willingness to model writing for students. They wrote and then read their writing aloud in front of students, or, in Joe’s case, allowed students to examine his writing as mentor texts during the pandemic. I find the practice of writing and sharing writing with students powerful, and encouraging signs that they are trending in the right direction with their writing pedagogy. However, none of the participants conducted a think aloud while they wrote. Sharing the writing is valuable, but scholars argue that when teachers share the process of their writing (their approaches questions, decisions, struggles, etc.), it is an even stronger practice. Gallagher (2011) supports this belief because he found that is the single most effective strategy to improve student writing in his classroom (p.15). Similarly, Gallagher (2015) argued that modeling writing is one “crucial difference between *assigning* writing and *teaching* writing” (p. 66, emphasis in original). I am encouraged that participants *taught* writing in ways they can build on.

Another salient theme that I identified was participants’ belief and subsequent application of providing feedback. Listening to Gwen, Joe, and Todd talk about the importance of feedback led me to believe that such instruction, though not necessarily a defined writing pedagogical strategy, is important to them. Gwen referenced one student who she conferenced with multiple times in order for the student to find her own writing valuable. Similarly, Todd found it important that he provide “encouraging” feedback to students, so they understand how important their writing is to him. Further, Joe transformed his teaching writing philosophy to emphasize “constant feedback.” However, Darren felt differently about providing feedback. He felt the time

commitment and pressure to compose professional feedback during remote instruction was overwhelming. Certainly, for the class sizes that many teachers face today, feeling obligated to respond to every student with such depth and precision may lead to teacher burnout.

I also recognized that an overwhelming majority of writing activities were in response to a piece of literature (or in one case, a movie) for each participant except Joe. One of the classes Joe taught was creative writing, and even though he taught other courses (e.g., English 11), most of the writing activities he described were part of the creative writing class. Regardless, the primary purpose for writing for most participants was in response to literature. These ranged from informal writing (e.g., connecting students' personal lives to characters, responding to a quote from the novel, etc.) to extended, multimodal writing projects (e.g., writing an illustrated short story). I highlighted this in the conclusion section of both Darren and Gwen, but which writing activities may have been neglected because students write so frequently in response to literature?

Moreover, I was surprised to learn about the dearth of technology as part of participant writing pedagogy. With the exception of Gwen who implemented programs such as Sway and Mentee, no one talked about how technology influenced their writing instruction prior to the pandemic. I have experience working as a student teacher supervisor in two of the four schools that participants completed their student teaching. I can confirm that they are both 1:1 schools. The lack of technology in their writing instruction was similar to that of the other two. This makes me wrestle with a few thoughts: Is the technology teachers use becoming so commonplace that it is not worth mentioning as "technology"? Or, are PSTs simply not experimenting with and implementing new technology as part of their instruction?

Finally, I wonder how much of the writing activities participants truly designed as opposed to mandated by the cooperating teacher. Essentially, I do not know. I never asked questions to

elicit definitive answers. However, my analysis of their narratives and descriptions of their classroom writing activities leads me to believe that they had a fair amount of autonomy.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Hyland (2002) said that “academic writing, like all forms of communication, is an act of identity: it not only conveys disciplinary ‘content’ but also carries a representation of the writer” (p. 1092). This dissertation is an example of academic writing that is shaped by my identity. My interests in writer identity is a significant component of my teacher educator identity in that I want to learn how to effectively prepare PSTs to identify as writers, and to help them to *become* writing teachers by *becoming* writers themselves. This mantra was adapted from a former undergraduate writing professor, Deborah Dean, who wanted me to help future secondary students *become* writers instead of *produce* writing. This research afforded me opportunities to enact my professional and writer identity in profound ways, shaping my future teaching and research dispositions.

To that end, the stories and discourse that Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd shared across our interviews remind me of my own writing experiences. Quite candidly, I am impressed with the evolution of their writer identities at such a young age. My experience examining their writer identities and connecting them to their classroom pedagogy helps me consider my own writer identity when I was at a similar stage of life. I completed my student teaching experience nearly 10 years ago, and I am not confident that I could have articulated my writer identity as clearly as they did. Sure, I had stories of past writing experiences that led me to both like and dislike writing.

The earliest and most vivid, positive memory I have of writing occurred during my 6th grade year when I completed my portion of a group project. I do not recall the topic or any details of the assignment. I only remember that I was responsible for the written portion. I recall standing in the hallway of the school, shortly before the bell rang to start classes for the day, and my friend, who I considered especially smart because he had skipped a grade, reviewing my work. Eyes looking at my writing, he told me that my work was “good.” This was a powerful moment in my

writing journey. My formative years continued, and I enjoyed (some) opportunities to write during school sponsored activities. Beyond writing in school, I have written in a personal journal for as long as I can remember, though my writing there is sporadic at best.

This is where my stories and participant stories separate. I was impressed with their writing habits and their purposes for writing. By the time I started my own student teaching experience, I had considered myself a writer. It certainly did not occupy the same identity space that writing does for me now, but, as an English education major and one with many previous positive associations with writing, I felt inherently connected to writing. I was also working towards becoming a teacher of writing. However, I did not have the rich experiences of writing that participants in my current study do. I did not write to calm my anxieties like Gwen, or consider writing a poem secluded in the woods near a river like Darren, (I probably would have tried to skip rocks across the water), and I certainly would not have tried to write a book, like Todd and Joe. My personal writing was primarily confined to recording my experiences and feelings in a journal. On a related note, I also do not think I could have articulated my teaching writing philosophy at that stage of my professional development. I am sure I would have used “buzz words” that I learned in my undergraduate preparation (e.g., “community of writers”), but I do not know how well I could have responded to the same questions I asked the participants in this study.

Even so, I still identified as a writer. During my first year as a full-time teacher I was interviewed for the school newspaper, and I distinctly remember telling the student-journalist that, in my heart, I believe I am a writer. As the years progressed, so did my learning and personal writing opportunities. I started writing short stories after I lived through meaningful or humorous experiences. I even started sharing my writing with students. In short, I wrote and taught similar to the way the participants are beginning their careers. The difference is it took me much longer to

align my pedagogy with my emerging writer identity and the research in the field of writing teacher education.

Perhaps this is where our stories intersect again. I taught each of these students in an undergraduate course at a large midwestern university where I shared my writing beliefs and pedagogy often. I talked about what I learned as a secondary writing instructor and how I evolved over the six years I taught in a public high school. Beyond this, the questions I asked in each of our interviews reflected my beliefs, practices, and interests. To say that I did not influence them would tell an inaccurate story. And, ultimately, this is the work of narrative inquiry: To illuminate the voices of the participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013) in ways that naturally co-construct the story among participant and researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber et al., 2013; Schaafsma et al., 2007). Truly, I am honored to amplify and influence the stories from Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd.

Writer Identity as Pedagogy

My initial introduction to teacher identity as pedagogy came about after I read Morgan's (2004) research suggesting as much. By the time I read his article in the spring of 2019, though, I was in the process of designing a research study to examine how PSTs' writer identities influence their writing pedagogy. I was unaware that there was precedent for this in another field (bilingual education). Morgan draws heavily from Cummins' (2000; 2001) framework on identity as pedagogy and synthesizes his work: "Cognitive development and academic achievement are inseparable from teacher-student identity negotiation" (Morgan, 2004, p. 175). In other words, teachers' identities are inherently connected to their pedagogy, which strongly influence student learning.

My understanding of writer identity as writing pedagogy echoes Morgan's (2004). All PSTs inherently have "a writer identity of some kind" (Locke, 2017, p. 135), and their pedagogy is unequivocally linked to it. Standardized testing, legislation, and/or conforming to other expectations may arise that momentarily preclude them from enacting their writer identity as pedagogy, but those moments do not dominate the majority of classroom instruction. My analysis of the data confirms that the PSTs in my study have unique writer identities, and that they enacted their writer identities as writing pedagogy in the secondary classroom. Their writer identities often drove the design, beliefs, and goals that shaped the writing activities. Indeed, they embodied how "the identities teachers develop shape their dispositions, [and] where they place their effort" (as cited in Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

To that end, my primary inquiry was as follows: How do ELA PSTs understand the connection between their own writer identity and the teaching of writing in secondary schools? The five themes that I explored in the Findings chapter (i.e., writing histories, personal writing, teaching writing philosophies, visual metaphors, and tensions) set the stage to examine how Darren, Gwen, Todd, and Joe's writer identity influenced their writing pedagogy. I synthesize their respective writer identity and connect it to the writing activities they implemented. My analysis informs me that participant writer identities are powerful influences in their writing pedagogy. The following sections illustrates this analysis in detail.

Darren

Darren's writer identity is an integral part of his writing pedagogy. Many of the writing activities he invited students to compose reflect his identity, even if it required him to manipulate a writing activity or two to align with it. As a writer, Darren composes for the socioemotional reward, or because it feels good. He also composes to process events that occur in his life. Thus,

many of the writing activities that he designed are planned with the intent to create similar experiences for students (Interview, March 2020) “because [he] knows the reward that writing has for [him] (Interview, March 2020). In short, this section connects Darren’s writer identity with his writing pedagogy. I connect his writer identity to his writing instruction as follows: Through (a) personal expression, (b) creative writing, and (c) how his personal writing experiences act as pedagogy.

Personal Expression. Writing with personal expression is a primary component of Darren’s writer identity (e.g., Interview, January 2019). In fact, Darren stated: “I absolutely believe that my writing is a form of personal expression—my academic writing, my personal/reflective writing, and my creative writing” (Interview, January 2020). Darren’s history of personal writing is well documented. For instance, he wrote (an unpublished) dystopian novel, poetry, and song lyrics, which all reflect his writer identity because he can be personally expressive and creative in such writing. Significantly, important byproducts of personally expressive writing are the socioemotional reward he earns, and to process varying events that happen in his life (e.g., Interview, March 2020). Similarly, his teaching writing philosophy also embraces personally expressive writing. He believes that “writing in school should be done with a foundation of personal expression because that’s more powerful” (Interview, January 2020).

Darren’s proclivity to write with personal expression influenced his writing pedagogy. There are multiple assignments that Darren created for students to be personally expressive, but the one that most resonates is *The Best Song Ever*. This activity enabled students to express which song they believe is “the best,” and defend their reasoning. Moreover, this activity aligns with Darren’s teaching writing philosophy because he did not require students to “build from a place of rules and proper writing” (Interview, January 2020). Admittedly, he advised students to include

an introduction, body, and concluding paragraph in part because this activity scaffolded his teaching of the traditional literary analysis assignment. He invited students to consider their favorite songs and defend their value, which opens possibilities for students to prioritize choice in writing.

Similarly, Darren created prompts to have students be personally expressive through the “writing activities [that engaged] their personal lives with whatever text [they were] reading” (Interview, March 2020). The most salient activity that aligns to his writer identity are the discussion handouts, which “[ask] students to engage their personal lives and how that might compare to either the narrator or a character in the story” (Interview, March 2020). This presents an opportunity for students to express their opinions in connecting their “personal lives” to that of a character in a novel. Further, Darren discussed the Collins Writing activities, which invite students to compose “six lines or more about a time when you felt [a certain] way and how that relates to the way our narrator felt in this poem” (Interview, March 2020). Similar to the writing prompt previously described, this activity enabled students to express their views about themselves in comparison to another. These self-reflective and introspective writing activities align with his habit of personally expressive writing because they value the connections students make from their personal lives and their interests.

Creative Writing. Darren’s writing history and current writing habits also suggests that writing creatively is an important component of his writer identity. In fact, creative expression is “why [he] started writing ever in the first place” (Interview, January 2019). Darren’s creative process, as a teacher, initially started when he designed lesson plans since he viewed them as a “creative outlet” (Interview, January 2019). Unfortunately, many of the classroom writing expectations precluded him from truly designing creative writing activities. Darren felt

overwhelmed by curricular expectations, specifically those that required him to prepare students to take end-of-level tests, which disrupted many of the creative possibilities he preferred for writing instruction. However, he did salvage few opportunities to highlight creative writing in his writing pedagogy. For instance, Darren invited students to compose “creative dialogues” after conducting a close reading activity of *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925). In particular, he emphasized the descriptive writing in the passage he read, and invited students to write a creative dialogue about an arbitrary setting (Observation, March 2020). Further, Darren reflected his writer identity in his pedagogy when he assigned *The Best Song Ever*. Though, it was intended to prepare students to write a literary analysis, the act of encouraging students to consider their favorite music and write about it (to prepare for a literary analysis) afforded students creative writing opportunities to identify a song and write about the “musicality” in it.

Sharing Writing. Finally, I identified sharing writing and writing experiences as an important form of pedagogy for Darren. In fact, he and I talked about sharing writing regularly. He valued an opportunity to share his poetry with peers at a religious retreat, and so he hoped to transfer that practice to academic settings as a practice in vulnerability. Darren’s concept of vulnerability aligns with Hoveid and Hoveid’s (2004): “Bringing your thoughts out in public is making yourself vulnerable—and is therefore a scary process for many students” (p. 54-55). Yet, the students are not the only ones who may be intimidated by making thoughts, or writing, public. Darren admitted that sharing unpolished writing, even to secondary students, is “scary,” but he believes that “sharing writing is healthy for the writer and the people you’re sharing with” (Interview, January 2020). Darren’s belief that sharing writing is “healthy” for secondary students has the potential to be insightful and encouraging for those who have ever wondered if they are good writers. Indeed, Anderson (2017) suggested that, “we are called to share our writing

processes with [students], including our own vulnerabilities, so they can, in turn, embrace theirs and move their growth forward” (p. 14). Even though Darren did not share his writing process (to my knowledge), he magnified vulnerability by sharing personal writing to secondary students on multiple occasions.

For instance, Darren composed and shared an unpolished draft of the opening paragraph for *The Best Song Ever* as part of his pedagogy (Observation, March 2020). Similarly, he “performed” a dialogue scene for students that he previously composed as part of a creative writing course he completed during his University studies. Afterwards, he invited students to compose their own dialogue scene and “perform” it for the class as well “so that [they] could all practice vulnerability together” (Interview, May 2020). This pedagogy aligns with his beliefs about writing instruction because Darren believes that “vulnerability breeds vulnerability” (Interview, January 2020), so he is willing to demonstrate vulnerability by sharing his personal writing. This stands to encourage students to be vulnerable, too, so that they can all experience growth.

Beyond sharing his writing to the class at large, Darren’s writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy in the informal conversations he had with students. For instance, Darren claimed that students asked questions during class such as “why do we have to write all the time?” Darren answered “with something about [his] life, [such as] ‘oh I write so I can process emotionally. Maybe that’s something you can use in your future’” (Interview, March 2020). Significantly, bringing personal writing beliefs into classroom conversation is an important form of pedagogy that projects Darren’s writer identity more concretely.

Similarly, Darren discussed how his past writing experiences continue to influence his pedagogy:

I’ll sit down with individual students and they’ll say, I’m just struggling with this part of the research paper, or I can’t do this, and so I’ll tell them an experience I

have with writing a research paper, and I had to write this big one for college. And I was stuck on the same thing and this is how I got through it. (Interview, March 2020)

Importantly, Darren's writer identity *became* his pedagogy when he described his experiences as a writer. Indeed, he found that he could "share [his] own writing or even simply what it was *like* to write" (Whitney, 2017, p. 72, emphasis in original). By diving into and sharing his writing experiences with students, he not only positioned himself as a writer, but he allowed his experience to act as a powerful form of pedagogy (Whitney, 2017).

Darren enjoyed sharing his writing and writing experiences so much that he hoped to create additional opportunities to share them with students during the daily lunch break:

I'm going to just give out an invitation to say hey if you are more interested in learning or engaging a little deeper with your own writing and want to hear some of mine I'll open up my room for lunch. If you want to bring your lunch in and we can just talk about what we write personally. (Interview, March 2020)

Unfortunately, this never came to fruition because the global pandemic caused the remainder of his teaching to move online shortly after he conceived this idea. Regardless, the fact that he planned to invite students into his classroom to discuss his and others' personal writing is an extension¹⁹ of enacting his writer identity as pedagogy. Considered together, sharing his writing and writing experiences echoes Whitney's (2017) comment that her "business was no longer primarily to convey information, or to plan and then execute plans; it was to guide people as they wrote, using [her] experience and theirs as guides" (p. 72). Indeed, Darren's experience *became* his guide—his pedagogy—when he shared his writing experiences with students.

Conclusion. This section illustrates how Darren's writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy. I was impressed with the connection between the writing activities he assigned and his writer identity, despite the challenges of end-of-level testing and remote learning. Interestingly,

¹⁹ I say extension because it occurs outside of "official" classroom instructional time.

the moments I highlighted wherein his writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy occurred prior to the required remote instruction caused by the global pandemic. Darren only taught roughly half of the time in a face-to-face setting, so it is possible that, if he had the standard amount of time for his student teaching experience, then he may have found more opportunities to reflect his writer identity in his writing pedagogy.

Beyond this, I reflect to consider how sharing his writer identity (i.e., sharing his writing and writing experiences) acted as a powerful form of pedagogy. Primarily, it humanized Darren to his students, informing them that he writes and that he has room to grow as a writer. Darren recognized this dynamic, suggesting that sharing writing “levels the playing field a little bit because it isn’t quite the gap between all-knowing instructor and apprentice” (Interview, January 2020). This reminds me of Gallagher’s (2011) metaphor for the teaching of writing: In the movie *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939), the Wizard hides behind the curtain projecting himself as something he is not. Similarly, many writing teachers make writing look simple because all of the challenging work is completed “beyond the curtain” (p. 224). However, by sharing his writing and his writing experiences, Darren “come[s] out from behind the writing curtain [to] model to [his] students what good writers do” (p. 225). These practices have the potential to be powerful moments in his writing instruction, potentially even transforming his pedagogy.

Unfortunately, many secondary teachers do not write in front of their students (Whitney, 2017), so Darren’s willingness to share writing at such a young stage in his career ought to be considered that much more impressive. Sharing writing is a powerful form of pedagogy that he can build on during the entirety of his career. The next step for him is to share the *process* of his writing. In other words, Darren can enhance his writing pedagogy even more by thinking aloud to make this thought process explicit while writing during instructional hours.

Gwen

Gwen's writer identity was a significant influence in her writing pedagogy. Specifically, I was impressed how her emphasis on personal voice underscored nearly every writing activity. By doing this, Gwen honored student voices and aspired to teach them to write the thoughts and beliefs of their heart. Additionally, Gwen sought to help students to use their voice to discover their writer identity. This section chronicles the way Gwen's writer identity influences her writing pedagogy. I begin by illustrating how her writer identity inspires her to create writing activities that amplify voice and I continue by highlighting her focus to help students discover their writer identities.

Voice. My interviews with Gwen led me to believe that writing with a strong personal voice was a powerful component of her writer identity. Gwen noted that she is "so focused on the personal impact of writing and having your voice in writing" in her pedagogy (Interview, March 2020), and this is evident throughout her personal writing habits, practices, and beliefs. For example, she writes (a) the words that she "shouldn't say or can't immediately get out," (b) "unsent letters," and (c) during anxiety attacks (Interview, January 2019) to name a few. In other words, she writes in ways that honor her personal voice, similar to the writing activities she designs for students. Interestingly, Damico and Whitney (2017) shed light on writing unsent letters as a "mindful writing activity" that can aid teachers to "slow down, reflect, and make space for new insight" (p. 38). Though Damico and Whitney suggest writing unsent letters in the context of feeling overwhelmed as a teacher, Gwen has found that such specific benefits are available when she writes in her personal life, too. Regardless, composing the thoughts of her heart without constraint exemplify how powerful voice is to her writer identity. As such, Gwen believes writing is a "work of art" (Interview, January 2019) in that "there is not a right or wrong way to do it" (Interview, January 2020). As a result, she "encourage[s] [students] to *just write* what they want to say" (Interview, March 2020).

Gwen emphasized how personal voice is projected in her writing pedagogy, and I originally noticed this during our first interview in January 2019 when she shared her experience working as an intern for a nearby school district. Students were hesitant to write because she perceived that they were weighed down by spelling and grammar. Eventually, she responded by saying “it doesn’t matter. You’re just getting yourself out there. Think of this as a work of art” (Interview, January 2019). She reiterated this pedagogy again in an interview in January 2020 when she shared the same experience, echoing the familiar refrain to students: “It doesn’t matter how you write—just write. And then we’ll work on fitting into this context” (Interview, January 2020).

Inspiring students to consider their writing as a work of art (i.e., to write with a powerful voice) set the stage for her writing pedagogy as a secondary ELA teacher. In order for secondary students to write with a powerful voice they need to *just write*. For instance, I documented an experience with “the student with his head down” and his initial resistance to write in a previous section. I sensed frustration in Gwen’s experience with this student. After all, she cannot force a student to physically write despite implementing a writing pedagogy that values student voices. Over time, though, Gwen’s persistent and encouraging pedagogy positively influenced this student to write, creating strong emotions for Gwen: “I was like *well you’ve got something*. My whole thing with him is to get him to send *something*, and it was gorgeous: It was a beautiful point. I never thought I would cry” (Interview, March 2020).

Significantly, Gwen’s writer identity played a powerful role in her pedagogy, empowering this student to write with a strong personal voice. Similarly, Gwen’s identity as a writer and writing teacher is conducive to engaging “closely with the thoughts and ideas of students” (Ansbach, 2007, p. 29). In other words, as a writing teacher, Gwen is able to influence students to voice their ideas through writing.

This experience exemplifies how Gwen's writer identity is her writing pedagogy: Gwen has a personal and teaching writing philosophy that "when you don't know what to say or what to do you can write about it and express yourself that way. You can just write down your thoughts . . . in whatever way works for [students] in school and personally" (Interview, January 2020). In other words, honoring student voice is a powerful component of her writer identity that effectively transfers to her writing pedagogy. Importantly, this approach aligns with other scholars in the field (e.g., Dean, 2017) who discuss this possibility as a drafting strategy.

Furthermore, Gwen's writer identity and writing pedagogy that stresses student voice also extends to assessment. For example, many of her writing assessments are intended to influence students that "there's not [a] right or wrong answer" (Interview, March 2020). She does this by identifying quotes from a class-wide novel and asking students to explain why that quote is significant. Further, she also noted that instead of creating a quiz for students, she prefers to ask them to identify a part in the novel that they felt was important to write about (Interview, March 2020). By employing this pedagogy, Gwen enables students to voice their perspective and consider what they believe is most important, and, "what's worth talking about" (Gallagher, 2015, p. 155).

Gwen also emphasized personal voice during her remote teaching through the pandemic by inviting students to write in journals. Journal writing is an important component of Gwen's writer identity. She composed in journals under the following circumstances: (a) When she felt anxiety or stress (Interview, January 2019), (b) as a secondary student, which created "such a safe feeling" (Interview, January 2019), and, most recently (c) because some of the students in her class "have situations that are hard to deal with (Interview, May 2020). Overall, Gwen's journal writing across multiple spaces exemplify her statement that she "hardly ever take[s] an impersonal approach to [writing] (Interview, January 2020). She implements this facet of her writer identity

into her writing pedagogy by inviting students to write in journals. For instance, Gwen invited students to create a poetry journal that could be either “poetry that they found and enjoyed, or poetry of their own” (Interview, March 2020). Further, during the pandemic she invited students to compose in journals in “whatever way they want” (Interview, May 2020), echoing that writing is not only a work of art, but that classroom writing activities are not necessarily a “sit down and write until your hand hurts kind of writing” (Interview, May 2020). In other words, she encouraged students to examine informal writing opportunities as spaces to voice the beliefs of their heart without constraint. And finally, she also hoped to have students journal about gender in the literature they read as a class, but she discovered, unfortunately, that “student needs” were elsewhere, so she abandoned that possibility. All of the activities (those enacted and those not enacted) serve to help students write with a powerful voice, reflecting her personal writer identity.

Writer Identity. Beyond emphasizing a personal voice through journaling, I also found it engaging that Gwen hoped to invite students to journal as the avenue to discover their writer identity: “I want [students] to journal and figure out who they are as a writer before we start writing bigger deal things” (Interview, January 2020). Gwen never mentioned that any of the writing she composed throughout her life was intended to discover or build her writer identity. Instead, she composed because she wanted to, which fortuitously led to a strong writer identity. I believe that, since she has a strong writer identity, she also wants students to discover and strengthen their writer identity, too.

Gwen verbalized a commitment to helping students identify as writers, which she believes is “a fundamental part of [her] role as a teacher” (Interview, March 2020). Indeed, “[her] big focus is wanting students to focus on themselves as writers” (Interview, January 2020). Unfortunately, circumstances surrounding her student teaching experience and the global pandemic precluded her

from making the headway she hoped. However, I find it encouraging that she considered ways for students to discover their writer identity, and interesting that she does not believe the writing activities she included encouraged such progress.

I argue that encouraging students to *just write* with a powerful voice is an effective way to help students identify as writers, especially since many secondary students consider writing a practice in following grammatical rules and prepackaged curricula. Beyond this, she allowed for multiple revisions *after* a writing activity was submitted for the student to feel “proud of it” (Interview, May 2020). This informs me that Gwen believes that writing is not necessarily “finished,” the same way other activities can be completed. Instead, she helped the student grow until she felt “proud” of her work. In the end, my analysis of the data suggests that Gwen provided multiple activities and approaches to writing that help students identify as writers. Perhaps, however, she did not explicitly teach them such activities to build their writer identity, and thus she feels she fell short.

Conclusion. The activities and approaches that Gwen implemented reflect how critical a powerful voice is to her writer identity. I find this particularly intriguing because voice transcends genre. In other words, writing with a powerful voice is necessary for every genre, so equipping students with strategies to write in a powerful voice is a tool they can transfer to future writing practices. In fact, Gwen aspired to invite students “to write personally” both for “themselves” and later for the standard academic writing activities (Interview, January 2020).

Furthermore, my interviews with Gwen undoubtedly informed me that she wanted students to consider their voice as works of art. This approach makes me wonder if she recognized the power of enacting this aspect of her writer identity in her writing pedagogy. Yagelski (2011) documents a moment where a 5th grade teacher discovered the importance of creating space for

students to free write during class without restrictions: “During those few moments they were, almost literally, freed from typical school worries about getting it right” (p. 141). Similarly, Gwen’s projection of her writer identity encompasses a similar pedagogy in that students can write without fear of “getting it right.” In other words, students can write in ways that are personally meaningful and know it will be valued.

Relatedly, Gwen’s experience in her internship led her to believe that “student’s [do not] want to be wrong” (Interview, January 2020), so creating a writing culture where the binary of “correct” and “incorrect” is replaced with illuminating voice, or to consider writing as a work of art, have the potential to encourage more students to compose freely. In fact, multiple students in Gwen’s courses submitted their writing when they typically did not, suggesting the effectiveness of such pedagogy. I believe that Gwen’s writer identity can continue to positively aid students to write and to further help students consider themselves as writers by projecting this aspect of her writer identity.

Finally, I also find it powerful that Gwen did not assign any formulaic writing activities. I acknowledge that student teaching is only limited to a few months, and the student teaching in the spring of 2020 was limited to fewer months in a face-to-face setting, so it is possible that students completed standardized writing prior to Gwen’s arrival. However, the lack of any standardized writing, especially toward the end of the year when teachers prepare students for end-of-level testing, informs me that Gwen believes there are more valuable writing experiences. This is not necessarily surprising given that Gwen indicated how “formulaic writing” had a negative impact on her and her writer identity as a secondary student (Interview, January 2019). Even so, designing and implementing writing activities that move away from this and honor student voices is another way Gwen projected her writer identity.

Todd

Todd demonstrated his writer identity through the four interviews we conducted. I was impressed with his desire to write so he could be a more empathetic teacher (Interview, January 2019), and I was encouraged by his willingness to challenge himself and write for new purposes and audiences (Interviews, January 2019; January 2020). Significantly, I give pause to consider how the visual metaphor he created and reflected on not only projected his writer identity, but also made clear the writing activities he assigned in the classroom. In other words, the visual metaphor activity underscored his writer identity and the classroom activities he designed. To that end, I focus this section on how his academic writing and creative writing underscore both his writer identity and writing pedagogy.

Academic Writing. Todd emphasized that a significant component of his writer identity is professional (i.e., academic) writing, or writing that involves “good solid evidence and carefully considered points,” and “a professional tone” (Metaphor Reflection, May 2020). He applies these principles for the professional writing he composes through a sports blog about a regional NBA team. Specifically, he highlights the importance of creating an “entertaining” argument that is supported by the data (Interview, January 2020). In other words, he was required to sift through the data to find the story he wanted to amplify “so that readers are drawn in, influenced and persuaded” (Hyland, 2002, p. 1093). The story within the data he identified and summarily composed is neither “correct” nor “incorrect;” rather, it is merely his choice to select a topic that he can support with research. Similarly, this aspect of his writer identity is projected in his writing pedagogy.

The carpe diem assignment that Todd assigned students reflected many components of his academic writer identity because he required students to create an argument by researching, writing in an appropriate tone, and carefully considering the argument at hand. Similar to his

writing, he designed this activity without a specific “right or wrong answer” (Interview, March 2020). Instead, students needed to create an argument and defend it: “[Students] need to show their evidence for why they think that. So that’s what I was also trying to hit home, too, which is also something I try to do” (Interview, March 2020). Specifically, the question he posed for students was a moral question because “that’s the kind of stuff [he] like[s] writing: When it’s not always black and white—when there’s a little bit of moral ambiguity in it” (Interview, March 2020). None of the interviews I conducted with Todd led me to believe that he writes about morally ambiguous topics, however. Regardless, Todd discussed the importance of clarity within writing: “I try to be clear with my writing, so I was trying to hit home the fact that they need to have a thesis” (Interview, March 2020). It is unlikely that Todd creates a thesis for his professional writing in the same way it is traditionally taught in secondary schools, but the thesis illustrates one (traditional) possibility for students to write clearly.

In the end, the *carpe diem* activity reflected Todd’s writer identity because many of the same approaches and exercises he focuses on during personal, professional writing was emphasized during his instruction. Indeed, similar to his own writing, Todd invited students to (a) write about a topic that does not have a definitive “correct” or “incorrect” response, (b) find appropriate evidence to support their stance, and (c) compose clearly by creating a strong thesis.

Creative Writing. Another significant component of Todd’s writer identity is the creative writing he composes (Interview, January 2019; January 2020; Metaphor Reflection, May 2020). Todd indicated throughout our interviews that he enjoys writing creatively. For instance, he mentioned he writes song lyrics (Interview, January 2019), and he spoke highly of his former ELA teachers who instilled a passion for creative writing through the opportunities they presented him (e.g., writing about a traveling zoologist; and a poem about Arnold Schwarzenegger). Yet, the

most consistent creative writing he composes is the historical fiction book he writes (Interviews, January 2019, 2020). I acknowledge that Todd did not specifically indicate that this is part of his creative writing, but a historical fiction book by nature demands authors to have some level of creativity. For example, beyond the requirement to create fictional characters in, perhaps, a fictional community, he noted that “if I feel creative I’ll [write] more” than his intended goal (Interview, January 2020). Ultimately, to talk about this writing as anything other than a creative work seems incomplete, even though it has professional qualities inherently connected to it (e.g., research involving historical figures).

The classroom assignment that Todd discussed most with me is also the one that most aligns with his identity as a creative writer. Todd initially hoped that, after students completed the reading of *A Monster Calls* (Ness, 2018), they would write their own drafts, creating monsters and life lessons similar to that of the book. However, he chose not to have them complete that assignment for multiple reasons. Instead, he invited students to model the writing in the book on a much smaller scale by inviting students to “have a character introduce a character, introduce a setting, build up the suspense and then at the end reveal this monster” (Interview, March 2020). Todd emphasized how students could write with a focus on “sensory details” and “set up a scene to be very suspenseful” (Interview, May 2020).

Significantly, Todd made his writer identity concrete to students by modeling his own draft of this assignment, which Todd believes enabled students to observe his excitement for writing creatively (Interview, March 2020). More importantly, though, by modeling his writing, Todd enhanced his writing pedagogy by making his writing beliefs and practices visible—an important part of his writer identity (Frager, 1994). Overall, Todd was delighted in the creative work students submitted, adding another layer of creativity by inviting students to illustrate a picture. In the end,

Todd described it as a “horror movie sort of scene” (Interview, March 2020), which, again, aligns with his writer identity (Metaphor Reflection, May 2020).

Relatedly, the feedback he provided to students’ creative writing also reflected his writer identity. Todd noted that he “[drew] from his own experience writing” when he “[offered] them little bits of advice” (Interview, March 2020) during this month-long creative writing unit (Interview, May 2020). Interestingly, Todd recognized that his feedback is a representation of his writer identity, which aligns with the research on identity and feedback (e.g., Feuerherm, 2011/2012).

Academic and Creative Writing. My analysis of Todd’s writing instruction largely falls into either an academic or creative category, which both align with his writer identity. Additionally, this extends to his teaching writing philosophy because he believes that school writing should “be that balance of creative writing and pushing yourself there. . . . But on the other hand, it should also be evidence-based [in that] students should be able to back up their opinions” (Interview, January 2020). Even after his student teaching experience ended, Todd’s beliefs remained consistent. So, it should not come as a surprise that Todd found ways to merge the elements of creative writing with elements of academic writing.

After students read “A Modest Proposal” (Swift, 1729), Todd created an assignment that invited students to “[identify] a problem in modern day life and then come up with their own sarcastic solution” (Interview, May 2020). This requirement reflects Todd’s preference for creative writing where students are modeling their writing after Swift’s, with, importantly, a strong sense of verbal irony. Further, students were also required to “research the problem” prior to writing in order “to have credible sources and factual information to tell their reader” (Interview, May 2020). Overall, this one activity reflected both his professional and creative components in his writer

identity: Composing a modern problem, saturated with verbal irony and a “sarcastic solution” aligns to the creative writing he values. Moreover, requiring students to conduct research and cite credible sources integrates his professional writer identity into the assignment as well.

Contradictions. Even though Todd demonstrated how his writer identity strongly influenced his writing pedagogy, I could not help but notice a few contradictions. Specifically, one aspect of his writer identity that was illuminated during my analysis of his visual metaphor reflection was his belief that academic writing is “more necessary” than creative writing (Metaphor Reflection, May 2020). He claimed that “it’s harder to justify writing purely for enjoyment for school” in part because if “someone comes into your class and asks, ‘what are you doing?’ you have to be able to back that up.” Interestingly, he shared a belief that “students don’t necessarily always learn as much from creative writing [as compared to] a research essay” and that he can “kind of see that in some ways because when you go into college and you’re looking for a career, most likely the skills that are going to help you is if you can actually form an argument and speak clearly” (Interview, March 2020).

This stance was surprising for multiple reasons, but primarily because Todd has such a robust history as a creative writer. In fact, creative writing was foundational to his writer identity. I traced powerful experiences all the way back to first grade when his teacher invited him to write, and he chose to write about a “traveling zoologist” (Interview, January 2020), which clearly stands to be creative in nature. Additionally, he currently writes creatively for the book he composes. In fact, one of the fundamental reasons he wants to write a book is so he can empathize with secondary student writers (Interview, January 2019). The fact that he argues that creative writing is a second-rate genre within school is puzzling, if not entirely contradictory to his writer identity.

And yet, with respect to the contradiction in belief and practice, he spoke frequently and highly of the creative writing activities he assigned students. Indeed, the jewel of the writing activities he implemented was the creative writing activity when students composed in relation to *A Monster Calls* (Ness, 2018). Beyond this, the creative writing activity he designed based on Swift's (1729) "A Modest Proposal" is another example of creative writing he assigned to students. These activities certainly reflect his writer identity, but they are entirely contradictory to some of the beliefs he underscored in our interviews. However, I recognize that identity is fluid (e.g., Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004), and beliefs can evolve rapidly, especially during student teaching when PSTs make the connection between theory and practice more concrete.

Conclusion. My preliminary analysis of the data led me to believe that Todd's writer identity would be a strong influence in his writing pedagogy. Examining the data with a tighter focus revealed the truth to this thought. Candidly, I was impressed with how much autonomy Todd had to approach the teaching of writing according to his writer identity. Even the way he spoke made it clear that he was aware that his writer identity influenced (at least parts of) his writing pedagogy. Specifically, he suggested that everything he does as a writing teacher is connected to his writer identity: "Being in that position of creating a rubric, creating outlines, creating assignments, scaffolding writing assignments—those all required me to go back and consider [what would be most helpful] as a writer myself" (Interview, May 2020). Todd makes an important point here: One can argue that writing pedagogy, assignments, and rubrics are inherently connected to writer identity. Indeed, if teachers create activities that they personally value—and Todd did—then it is likely that the rubrics and approach to writing instruction will also model their beliefs and personal writing habits. This may not be true for every writing teacher, but, according to Todd's experience, there is a clear and distinct connection.

This makes me wonder how much influence my research had on the way he thought about his writing instruction. Anecdotally, I do not know any student teachers, without being influenced by another, who have made the connection that their writing pedagogy is influenced by their writer identity. To be fair, I do not think Todd recognized the extent that his writing pedagogy is influenced by his writer identity (how can he unless he engaged in the same analysis as I did?), but suffice it to say that he began to make the connection during our interviews and his student teaching experience.

Most of the writing activities that Todd described fell into either the evidence-based or creative writing category (or a combination), which, again, reflected his writer identity. In fact, Todd aspires to create a classroom writing community where students “consistently write as much as possible,” with a focus on creative writing and evidence-based writing (Interview, January 2020). This belief directly aligns with the writer identity he established across our four interviews and through the visual metaphor project. Certainly, Todd’s writer identity significantly influenced his writing pedagogy in that the assignments he designed reflected his writing habits, experiences, and beliefs.

Joe

The writing habits, practices, and beliefs that comprise Joe’s writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy. Joe’s affinity for writing is unquestionably genuine. I am impressed with the precise goals he set and his desire to write for a variety of purposes. Beyond his desire to write a book, I was most impressed with his interest in writing a short story after almost immediately reading an article that piqued his interest (Interview, May 2020). As such, his love of writing and the components that make up his writer identity was an asset as a writing instructor as I identified multiple experiences where his writer identity informed his writing pedagogy. This section

highlights how his writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy by underscoring his (a) commitment to writing, (b) writing habits and beliefs, (c) creative writing, and (d) feedback.

Writing Commitment. What resonates most about Joe’s writer identity is his commitment to writing, including his daily writing goals and the diversity in genre and purpose. Beyond this, he studies writing on his own time (e.g., he once noted that he viewed a lecture on writing by Brandon Sanderson), and believes that he can improve as a writer through reading (Interview, January 2020). Joe projects this aspect of his writer identity in his teaching writing philosophy: “I feel like the only way for [students] to actually get better is to write a lot and read a lot” (Interview, March 2020). We did not discuss the reading he invites students to complete, but we spoke about the daily writing assignments students constructed.

Joe noted that he routinely has “bell ringer” activities to start the class or other short writing prompts. Sometimes Joe even designs a creative prompt for students to compose (e.g., “imagine you’re going up an escalator in a mall and describe the things around you” [Interview, May 2020])” and other times short writing prompts connect to the literature and the day’s circumstances. For instance, Joe mentioned that on Valentine’s Day students responded to this prompt: “What does love look like in *Gatsby*?” (Interview, March 2020). By inviting students to write daily, even just short writing prompts, Joe’s habits of consistent writing transfers to his secondary writing pedagogy.

Writing Habits and Beliefs. One of the assignments that Joe required his students to complete is an “epistolary kind of novel or short story” (Interview, March 2020) in connection with science fiction and technology. I find this activity fascinating because it aligns with many layers of Joe’s writer identity. Foremost, Joe has an established habit of writing short stories (Interview, January 2019; January 2020; May 2020), so the connection to his writing habits is clear.

Furthermore, Joe also writes to “[think] about things in a different kind of way” (Interview, January 2020). He transfers this component of his writer identity to classroom pedagogy by helping students consider alternative perspectives. For instance, in one day of instruction Joe emphasized “how technology affected different things,” or that those who build the technology are affected differently than those who consume the technology (Interview, March 2020). As an example, he shared his understanding that the Tesla company needs cobalt to produce batteries. However, they receive the cobalt from children who work in mines in Africa (Interview, March 2020). In other words, he emphasized that, though people enjoy the product that the technology produces, others are forced to work in unstable conditions. Certainly, the examples Joe provided stand to help students “[think] about things in a different kind of way,” similar to his own writing outcomes. If nothing more, this activity may help students consider the sacrifice of others to have certain technology today. Further, this activity also reflected his teaching writing philosophy in that it reflects his belief that “knowing what’s worked for me also pushes me towards certain activities that I think will help students, too” (Interview, January 2020). In other words, writing short stories and writing to consider different perspectives is personally valuable for Joe, so he designed a writing activity to reflect these philosophies.

Likewise, Joe embraces another tenet of his teaching writing philosophy in this activity: “Understanding the human condition, and really understanding what it means to be you” (Interview, January 2019). I give pause to consider that Joe informed me that writing can help students to “understand the human condition” nearly a year prior to designing this activity. This writing activity, which encourages students to identify “stakeholders” and how they are affected by technology, afforded them opportunities to discover the “human condition,” especially in the example he provided in which some benefit from the exposure of others. In talking with me about

this activity specifically, Joe did not mention his goal of helping students understand the human condition. This leads me to believe that Joe either intentionally formed this lesson with those goals in mind without informing me, or, his writer identity has much more power and influence in his writing pedagogy than I initially thought (i.e., because it influences him subconsciously).

Creative Writing. Another aspect of Joe's writer identity is his proclivity to write creatively. Joe mentioned on multiple occasions that he enjoys writing creatively. In fact, when I asked him about his writing goals, he responded that his goals are directed towards composition that "gets [him] writing something creatively" (Interview, January 2020). As such, Joe implemented many creative writing opportunities for students. I acknowledge that one of the secondary courses Joe taught was, in fact, creative writing, but the way he embraced it and the activities he designed speak to the way his writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy. For instance, I observed an activity that Joe designed wherein he brought many cooking spices to the classroom, and invited students to smell multiple spices. The purpose of this activity was to aid students in their descriptive writing by composing about the spices they smelled (Observation, February 2020). Additionally, Joe designed a collaborative activity connected to the hero's journey where one person composed a portion of the story and then passed it to another person who read the previous writing, and then continued composing the story. This pattern continued until the story was completed.

One final creative writing activity Joe mentioned was another collaborative activity where multiple groups of students each wrote the same structure of a story, but with varying (and arbitrary) perspectives. For instance, groups were all given the same story structure that was prepared ahead of time, but students selected various nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs without context and in pre-determined areas. For instance, one group may have selected, say, a noun out of context and

placed it in the story where a noun was necessary. Each group had the same sentence, but they all chose different nouns to individualize their sentences. They continued with this pattern of selecting various parts of speech (without context) and included them in the designated areas in the story. In the end, each group had the same overall story, but student choices “inflected meaning onto it that would change it a little bit (Interview, May 2020).

The snapshot of creative writing activities that Joe shared demonstrate that his writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy. However, the fact that he taught in a creative writing classroom muddies the water. Is it possible that, if Joe did not have a preference towards creative writing, the demands of being in a creative writing classroom would have forced his hand to design creative writing activities? In other words, by virtue of conducting his student teaching in a creative writing class he was going to design creative writing activities regardless of his writer identity. Notwithstanding, having a writer identity that values creative writing positively influenced his ability to design meaningful creative activities for students.

Feedback. Finally, I also identified how Joe’s writer identity influenced his pedagogy by the feedback he provided. The pandemic influenced Joe’s teaching writing philosophy in profound ways. His beliefs evolved after spending much of his time providing feedback to student writing through remote instruction. Joe realigned his beliefs to include that student writers need “constant feedback” throughout their writing as opposed to only when they submit their final draft (Interview, May 2020). In fact, Joe validates this claim by suggesting that “it’s not just about writing, but it’s also about them seeing where they’re going wrong with their writing and how they can improve” (Interview, May 2020). For Joe, the writing is an important aspect of their growth, and newly discovered, timely feedback is imperative.

Though Joe discovered how powerful feedback is as a part of his teaching writing philosophy late in the semester, he also implemented components of his writer identity in the feedback he provided prior to the pandemic. Joe believes that his personal use of punctuation is uncommon. He justified this claim by explaining that he employs the em dash and the colon. As a result, when he provides feedback to student writers “[he’ll] suggest that to them in their papers” (Interview, March 2020). Sometimes these suggestions are meant to vary writing on the sentence level, and sometimes they are meant to clarify writing. Regardless, he acknowledges that, each time he provides such feedback, “it’s always going to be what [he] would say” (Interview, March 2020). Further, Joe exemplified how his writer identity influenced the feedback he provided in the descriptive paper he assigned. He explained that part of the requirement for this assignment was to use a quote, and one student neglected to do so. As a result, he provided an example of “how [he] would link the two phrases” (Interview, May 2020), which reflects his writer identity.

Conclusion. Joe’s writer identity influenced many aspects of his writing pedagogy. The most interesting aspect of his writer identity is the possibility that it subconsciously influenced his writing pedagogy. Joe did not indicate that part of his science fiction and technology short story unit was intended to understand the human condition (i.e., a component of his teaching writing philosophy) or to examine actions and events in differing perspectives (i.e., an outcome of his personal writer identity). However, these fundamental elements of his writer identity influenced his pedagogy in profound ways. If, in fact, he did not intentionally plan for these outcomes, then the implications for how one’s writer identity influences one’s writing pedagogy *subconsciously* needs to be further examined in his teaching as well as in others.

Furthermore, I found it intriguing to examine how additional components of his writer identity influenced his writing pedagogy. Interestingly, I did not identify a “grand” takeaway from

the connection between his writer identity and his writing pedagogy (like the way his writing pedagogy may be subconsciously influenced by his writer identity, for example). Instead, I noticed a daily connection of his writer identity influencing his writing pedagogy. For instance, Joe likes to write consistently, and he created consistent writing opportunities for students. Joe's writer identity made its presence known during the feedback he provided to students. These acts alone may not be substantial, but it further confirms that writing teachers stand to be influenced by their writer identity.

Analysis Across Cases

The most significant finding across the cases is that each participant's writer identity had a direct and consequential influence on their writing pedagogy. To be clear, participants' writer identities influenced their writing pedagogy profoundly, informing their lesson design and execution in ways that uniquely aligned to each of them. Indeed, classroom "environments and teaching decisions reflect beliefs about learning" (Van Sluys, 2003, p. 180) for Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd. Their writer identities are distinct one from another and emphasize different values, paradigms, and experiences. There is much to value about their respective writer identities and the writing instruction and activities that projected their writer identities. In other words, each of the participants have different writer identities where they developed different strengths and lean towards different emphases, but their unique writer identities all lead to powerful writing pedagogy.

Overlap in Writer Identity

One of the other significant findings I discovered across cases is the overlap in how writer identity influences writing pedagogy. For example, both Joe and Todd have inclinations to write creatively in their personal writing. Both are in the process of composing books and both enjoy

the process of doing so. Consequently, they both find meaningful ways to implement this component of their writer identity in their writing pedagogy. Admittedly, Joe had a much easier path to do so because he taught a creative writing class, so he did not have to consider how stakeholders might view creative writing the way Todd suggested. Regardless, Todd still found multiple opportunities for students to write creatively.

Relatedly, Darren also values creative writing as part of his writer identity. However, he experienced much more tension than Todd and Joe in the possibilities to design and implement creative writing activities. Though he recognized that he did not know the source of such tension (Interview, March 2020), unfortunately, it precluded him from creating such activities. Even so, his preference for writing creatively was strong enough that he found ways to implement creative writing activities within the curriculum he was expected to teach.

Darren and Gwen both shared strong beliefs that they wanted students to write personally and meaningfully. The difference, however, is the way they talked and explained such purposes for writing. Darren wanted students to write personally so that they could feel the “socioemotional reward” for writing, or, simply, he wanted them to write so that they could feel good. Similarly, Gwen connected the concept of writing personally with “[writing] something they enjoy,” which enables them to “free themselves in a way” (Interview, May 2020). In other words, she wanted students to write without fear of being “wrong” so they could find value and happiness in writing. Therefore, many of the activities both Darren and Gwen assigned enabled students to write personally in powerful ways.

I think it is important that Darren and Gwen, specifically, engineered writing activities that encouraged students to write personally because so much of their respective writer identities focused on such writing. Indeed, Darren claimed that “his writing is a form of personal expression”

and, for instance, the poetry he wrote in the woods at a retreat underscores this claim (Interview, January 2020). Similarly, Gwen clarified that she is “a very personal writer and [she] view[s] writing in all things as a very personal thing to do (Interview, March 2020). Gwen illustrated this through multiple personal writing activities (e.g., through the writing she composes as a result from anxiety [Interview, January 2019]). To that end, I believe it was increasingly important for both Darren and Gwen to provide personal writing activities for students because so much of their own writing is meaningful only because it is so personal.

Finally, the last overlap I identified within writer identity is Todd and Joe’s acknowledgement that feedback acts as pedagogy. This was one of the more interesting ways that their writer identities influenced their writing pedagogy because it was mentioned so infrequently by both (as a form of writer identity). However, they both made clear statements that led me to believe that their writer identity influenced their writing pedagogy, including their feedback to students. For instance, Todd mentioned how his writing experiences enable him to offer students “bits of advice” in their creative writing while Joe mentioned that the grammar he intentionally incorporates into his own writing influences the feedback that he provides to students.

The concept of feedback as a form of identity piques my interest. It makes me wonder whether the rubrics they created conformed to traditional rubrics or, as Todd indicated earlier, to their writing values (i.e., their writer identity). Unfortunately, I did not receive a copy of their rubrics to examine and question, so I am unable to explore this further. However, I can point to the literature that suggests that feedback can act as a reflection of identity: Hyland and Hyland (2006) synthesize Hyland (2013) and Lee, Ping, and Song’s (2017) understanding to suggest that “in giving feedback we simultaneously offer a representation of ourselves as teachers and as individuals, revealing our beliefs about language, learning, writing, and personal relationships (p.

2). Thus, the feedback Joe and Todd provided (and Darren and Gwen for that matter, too) represented who they are as writers.

IMPLICATIONS

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) make clear that when a researcher decides to engage in narrative inquiry that the researcher needs “to be prepared to give an account of what we learn about our phenomenon that is special, something that could not be known through other theories or methods” (p. 123). The abundance of interviews with Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd afforded unique insight, understanding, and discovery that I do not believe would have occurred through another methodology. Foremost, I learned that their rich writer identities influenced their writing pedagogy profoundly. This breakthrough necessitated I interview participants multiple times, which is specific to the narrative inquiry methodology. Though qualitative data are not intended to generalize across landscapes of institutions and students, the implications discovered within this research study are important. Darren, Gwen, Joe, and Todd deserve to have their stories illuminated because they will aid future PSTs to enact their writer identity as pedagogy and provide powerful writing instruction.

POSSIBILITIES IN ELA TEACHER EDUCATION

This research afforded opportunities to think about and discuss participant writer identities at length. It made me wonder to what extent participants were aware of the influence their writer identities had on their pedagogy. Gwen, Todd, and Joe all made comments at various points that made me think that our conversations allowed them to recognize the connection between their writer identity and their writing pedagogy. However, the degree to which they made this connection is unclear. I think if they are intentional about projecting their writer identities to students through informal conversation, classroom discussion, and writing activities, then they can continue to leverage their writer identities in powerful ways. It stands to reason that my conversations with them led them to pursue additional opportunities that enabled them to project their writer identity as part of their writing pedagogy—to suggest otherwise would be to discount the premise of narrative inquiry (e.g., Connolly & Clandinin, 1990).

Even so, I wonder how much more they might have leveraged their writer identity if they had direct experiences examining and interrogating their writer identity within a writing methods course. Similarly, how might work with future PSTs empower them to powerfully project their writer identity as pedagogy? Coughlan et al. (2017) suggest that, in their review of current practices in ELA preparation programs, that teacher educators focus on “developing an identity as an English teacher during the preservice period” (p. 268). To substantiate this claim, Pasternak et al. (2018) noted that the current trend in ELA methods courses suggests that teacher educators design strong reading and writing instruction and application to enable students to “see themselves as writers or readers” (p. 104).

Creating memorable writing experiences that enable PSTs to “see themselves as writers” is certainly helpful. However, a stronger, more direct approach to discovering and examining

writer identity is necessary, especially since so few secondary ELA teachers identify as writers and enjoy writing instruction (Whitney, 2017), and because one's identity is the foundation of "meaning making and decision making" (Bullough, 1997, p. 21). Alsup (2006) suggested that teacher educators rarely work with PSTs to "directly address issues of professional identity development" (p. 4), and anecdotal experience informs me that Alsup's assertion 15 years ago remains true today. If teacher educators want to help PSTs avoid the double challenge of creating an identity amid teaching full time (Bullough, Knowles, and Crow, 1991), then teacher educators must modify the way they prepare PSTs.

The following sections highlight the three implications I discovered through my research for teacher educators to consider in order to prepare effective writing instructors. First, I underscore the importance of examining and interrogating PSTs writer identities. Following, I highlight that teacher educators should address issues of tension in secondary writing instruction, including possibilities for PSTs to negotiate and balance their writing pedagogy. And finally, I describe how PSTs can influence the writer identity of future secondary students.

Examine Writer Identity

Kanno and Stuart (2011) pose an engaging question that I adapt for context: If teacher educators encouraged PSTs to "develop their [writer] identity seriously, how would it change the way we think about required courses in [English education] (p. 250)? To truly engage in such discourse, I believe a modification must occur in the approach to community that teacher educators establish within methods courses. Community is widely addressed in the scholarship within issues of identity (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Colliander, 2017; Hyland, 2002; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Wenger, 1998), and, "in adopting the practices and discourses of a community we come, over time, to adopt its perspectives and interpretations, seeing the world in the same ways and

taking on an identity as a member of that community” (Hyland, 2002, p. 1092). In other words, the communities with which we associate influence thought, disposition, and identity.

Teacher educators can create a community of interrogating and reflecting on one’s writer identity, especially those in charge of the writing methods course. Reflection informs identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004), in part because it is “the lens through which ‘being a teacher’ is understood, developed and practised” (Graham & Phelps, 2003, p. 7). The power of reflection in developing identity has an already established precedent. For instance, Antonek, McCormick, and Donato (1997) invited participants to create student teaching portfolios, requiring regular reflection. The portfolios served to recognize developing identities while their regular reflections contributed to their “professional development” (p. 24). To add to that, Cattley’s (2007) study with PSTs led her to believe that reflection on the number of teacher responsibilities leads to a stronger professional identity. Thus, it is likely that multiple opportunities to reflect on one’s writer identity both inform and strengthen it (Whitney, McCracken, & Washell, 2019). Ultimately, teacher educators must create a community of reflection in connection to writer identity if identity development is the goal.

Furthermore, teacher educators can design activities that invite PSTs to wrestle with their writer identities and evaluate whether such identity aligns with the research on writing teacher education. PSTs need not worry whether they have a “correct” or “incorrect” writer identity, but, rather, can use this space as an opportunity to interrogate their writer identity and examine how they can align it to the research on writing teacher education (Premont, Kerkhoff, & Alsup, 2020). Beyond this, PSTs can also create teaching writing philosophy statements that work in tandem with their writer identity. Simply put, PSTs can examine their writer identity to discover what they

value about writing and writing instruction, and create a philosophy statement grounded in their writer identity.

However, such identity work in teacher education courses must be completed honestly and critically. Alsup (2006) suggests that “belief and philosophy statements are viewed as relatively simple exercises in transcribing what is already inside young teachers’ minds” (p. 201). Teacher educators must change the narrative in complexity and depth of such exercises if PSTs are to engage in identity development that drives change because establishing identity is “difficult, messy, and complex, and that it must be exactly this way to be successful” (p. 5). To that end, I do not believe that PSTs can truly unlock the power of enacting their writer identity as writing pedagogy without first examining and interrogating it first.

Relatedly, none of the participants in my research revealed anything “difficult, messy, or complex” as Alsup (2006) suggests is necessary for identity development. Perhaps this is because most of our interactions were not aimed to engage in identity *development* so much as it was to talk about and explore *existing* identity. As such, participants simply shared their writing histories, habits, and beliefs as they experienced them. They did exhibit difficulty articulating their philosophy statements directly (i.e., when I specifically asked them about “philosophy”), but I attribute that to their unfamiliarity to the word *philosophy* (to substantiate this claim, participants shared established philosophy statements so long as I did not directly use the word *philosophy* in the interview). Moreover, the tensions they addressed in writing instruction revealed more about the variables they could not control (i.e., curricular expectations) rather than engaging in a “messy” identity struggle. This leads me to believe that, despite their rich writing history, current writing habits, and even their teaching writing philosophies, they could also experience growth by dedicating time to examine and interrogate their writer identities. In fact, the visual metaphor

activity I invited them to participate in enabled them to begin that wrestle to learn more about their writer identity.

For instance, after participating in the visual metaphor activity, Gwen claimed that “I have a clearer view of myself as a writer. And myself as a teacher now” (Interview, May 2020). Likewise, Todd freed himself to write both creatively and academically despite his initial beliefs that academic writing has more value. Similarly, Darren, who suggested that he did not necessarily learn anything new about himself through this activity, believed that his writer identity is more concrete. Even Joe, who I did not highlight in the section dedicated to visual metaphors, learned to concentrate on his writing and to “empathize” with characters in his creative writing by “putting [himself] in their shoes” (Reflection, May 2020).

My understanding in analyzing the visual metaphors for each participant leads me to believe that engaging in activities designed to discover “previously unexamined ideologies” (Alsup, 2006, p. 201) is part of the “messy” work that Alsup suggests is necessary for identity development. Moreover, if the participants in this study, PSTs who each have a rich writer identity, can wrestle with and discover otherwise unattainable components of their writer identity in one condensed activity, then future PSTs, regardless of the strength of their writer identity, stand to strengthen it by continually reflecting on and wrestling with it, too.

To that end, PSTs can consider their writer identity in conjunction with the course reading and writing activities through reflection, making such identity more concrete. Ultimately, they can create a teaching writing philosophy statement to evaluate the connection between their writer identity and their teaching writing philosophy. Certainly, such pedagogical practices can be beneficial for all PSTs, and lead to substantial clarity in direction and goals (Izadinia, 2013).

Address Tension in Writing Instruction

This specific research afforded opportunities to learn that teacher educators must help PSTs navigate tension in their writing curriculum. Specifically, Darren and Gwen experienced tension because they were either unable to enact their writer identities due to the demands of school curricula, or because secondary students resisted the writing activities that reflected their identities. Teacher educators need to prepare PSTs to respond to possible tension with flexibility, and to not simply replicate the traditional writing habits and practices that permeate traditional school practices (i.e., the “apprenticeship of observation” [Lortie, 1975/2002]). It stands to reason that too much tension in writing instruction may lead to teacher burnout and, even worse, low retention. Teacher educators must prepare students to respond appropriately when such tensions occur.

Morgan (2004) emphasized that teacher education courses are “deeply committed, life choices” (p. 179). Reading this statement for the first time in the spring of 2019 made me reflect: My experience progressing through undergraduate methods courses shaped my dispositions towards writing instruction and left me with interests that I pursued during my master’s thesis. However, at the time I enrolled and advanced through the required classes involved for my teacher preparation course work, I did not recognize them as “deeply committed, life choices.” In fact, some courses seemed like obstacles in the way of a degree I valued tremendously. Still, I recall how the specific methods courses I progressed through were fundamentally different because I felt like I was preparing myself for my career, even though I never considered these courses as committed life decisions. It is impossible to measure whether or how much my actions and attitudes might have changed had I viewed them as “deeply committed, life choices.” However, I *can* offer, as Morgan (2004) does, this mindset for PSTs as a future teacher educator. And, in doing so, I owe it to them to address possible tensions they will experience as student teachers and even into their careers.

The most surprising finding from this study was the amount of tension that participants addressed. In short, I did not expect to find such strong discourse of tension. In retrospect I can understand how tensions may arise given that my conversations with participants helped them consider how their writer identities may influence writing pedagogy. Scholars in the field address both tension for PSTs (e.g., Alsup 2006; 2019; Smagorinsky et al., 2003) and full-time teachers (e.g., Assaf, 2008; Whitney, 2009). My research combined with that of the literature in the field leads me to an important question: Why don't more teacher educators address the possibilities of tension in secondary classrooms within teacher education programs?

Specifically, Darren shared a poignant story where he encouraged one student to “play the game of school” by suggesting she conform her writing to the standardized rubric he created to receive a respectable grade. Interestingly, multiple contradictions within Darren's writer identity surfaced in this one interaction: He encouraged the student to approach writing in a way he loathes (by playing the game of school), and advised the student to write for an extrinsic reward (a specific grade) instead of an intrinsic reward (a feeling of accomplishment). Similarly, Gwen contradicted her writer identity by advising a student to write in the “correct” way instead of honoring the student's voice. This guidance also contradicted Gwen's writer identity because writing became a “task” to the student: One that can be conducted “correctly” or “incorrectly.” Overall, it was an experience she described as “awful” (Interview, May 2020).

These experiences amplify opportunities for teacher educators to prepare PSTs to navigate possibilities of tension in writing instruction. The truth is, as Whitney (2011) so elegantly articulates, “the dynamics and motivations of school reading and school writing are often distinct from the dynamics and motivations surrounding reading and writing in other settings” (p. 55). In other words, the writing we construct outside of school is fundamentally different—in purpose,

audience, and tone—than that which we construct in school. How might teacher educators prepare PSTs to acknowledge the difference and let their writer identities inform their writing instruction despite such differences?

Teacher educators can help PSTs to explore the goals and values of secondary writing instruction and how they can negotiate their writer identities to align with them. For instance, doing so enables PSTs to engage in borderland discourse (Alsup, 2006) where neither the PST's writer identity nor the PST's professional identity is lost; instead, they merge to create a stronger, more capable writing instructor. In doing so, PSTs retain their writer identity and can still leverage it to create meaningful writing activities for students that align with state standards. They further maintain a strong professional identity in knowing that their pedagogy is conducive to helping secondary students strengthen their writer identities.

Further, teacher educators can prepare PSTs to view school as “a special place in that [their] main task together in the classroom is to attend to learning . . . to understand how we learn, and get good at it, and talk about it, perhaps differently than we might other places” (Whitney, 2011, p. 58). Therefore, PSTs can leverage their writer identities to share their writing, both polished and unpolished, and their writing experiences. They can discuss the events and experiences that lead them to write. They can talk about the purposes for framing the writing activities they design for students, and perhaps design writing activities *with* students in the future. Such opportunities to explore possible moments of tension and to learn strategies to navigate them may help PSTs project their writer identities frequently and productively.

Finally, participants in my research also demonstrated tension towards standardized testing. This finding is well-documented (e.g., Applebee & Langer, 2011), so I do not wish to dwell on this topic. However, I highlight one important point from such tension: When teachers are “torn

between what they know is right for their students and what is being asked of them to help students pass the test, they risk dropping out of teaching” (Assaf, 2008, p. 248). Similarly, Darren and Gwen felt the same pressure to teach specific writing genres, and certain literature, in order to prepare students to take standardized tests. Assaf recognized that this one case study cannot be generalized across landscapes of teachers across the country; however, she asserts that such a case “clearly illustrates what other studies have reported” (p. 249).

I wonder whether teachers may leave the profession because of tension in writing instruction, especially if they are unprepared to navigate such tension. The participants in my research had clear goals for writing pedagogy that projected their writer identities, but they were unable to fully realize them. Some pitfalls were the perceived expectations, standardized testing, and perceived dearth of support from administrators and community stakeholders. How might such tensions influence their careers if they are unprepared to encounter them? I believe it is worth the investment to discuss such tensions and possibilities to navigate them within teacher education courses.

Recognize that Teachers Can Influence Writer Identity

The narrative inquiry methodology enabled me to gain valuable insight about the fluidity of identity development (e.g., Coldron & Smith, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Morgan, 2004) as participants expressed how their writer identities vacillated throughout their formative years. However, the reason their writer identities wavered were all connected to the pedagogy of their secondary writing instructors: Teachers who supported participants and provided rich writing opportunities that underscored choice in content, approach, and style engendered growth in participant writer identities. On the contrary, teachers who limited participants with rigid structures or content discouraged them as writers. Though the findings in this research are not meant to be

generalizable, my analysis made me wonder to what extent secondary teachers influence student writer identity. To that end, teacher educators may want to emphasize to PSTs that, whether they intend to or not, their writing pedagogy may influence future students' writer identities, too. Thus, strengthening PSTs' writer identities may help them prepare to positively influence future secondary writers.

Todd made a comment during our March (2020) interview that piqued my interest and further speaks to the possibility that secondary teachers, himself specifically, can influence student writer identity:

If you can help students have that joy for writing, then maybe they would take a little more care. If you can get them to kind of fall in love with writing just by giving them free reign to write for the enjoyment of it, then maybe that does help them.
(Interview, March 2020)

Todd's quote introduces an important implication from my research: ELA teachers can strongly influence the writer identity of students in class. He underscores an important point that students need opportunities to "fall in love" with writing, and, as a writing teacher, he feels a responsibility to aid them in that process through creative and flexible writing activities. When I chose to design this research study I did so because participants had rich habits of writing in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. Digging through the data enabled me to learn about the defining moments that informed their writer identity, which were largely influenced by elementary and secondary teachers, for better or for worse. I found this particularly engaging because it had never occurred to me that elementary or secondary teachers might influence students' writing habits, practices, and beliefs (i.e., writer identity).

Flexibility in content, style and structure positively influenced participant writer identities when they were elementary and secondary students. As such, many of the writing activities they designed as student teachers followed a similar path of flexibility within the expectations set forth

by the state standards. Conversely, the writing activities that negatively influenced their writer identities as secondary students were rigid, limiting possibilities and creativity. It is probable that such activities were “not to communicate to someone about something or to help them grapple with difficult new material” (Dyson & Freedman, 2003, p. 974).

The concept of elementary and/or secondary teachers influencing writer identity is not unprecedented. Street (2003) shares similar accounts of PSTs who likewise had their writer identities strongly influenced by former teachers. However, I illuminate one salient difference between the influence of elementary and secondary teachers in the present study and in Street’s: In Street’s research, PSTs were *only* negatively influenced by teachers. My research demonstrates that a kaleidoscope of teachers throughout formative education can cause writer identity to vacillate. In other words, the writing activities elementary and secondary teachers implemented both strengthened and weakened participant writer identities at various junctures in their lives.

Furthermore, participant comments concerning the growth of their writer identities reminds me of Gee’s (2000) conception of identity as being “recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given context” (p. 99). Two participants in my study, whose writer identities were positively influenced by others, explained how being “recognized” as writers was fundamental to their growth. For instance, Todd shared multiple stories where a teacher’s invitation to write creatively in elementary school and to write poetry in high school imbued confidence to identify as a writer (e.g., Interview, May 2020). Similarly, Gwen shared a story about a piece of writing she composed in the 4th grade “that really stuck with [her] because everyone loved it” (Interview, January 2019). Ultimately, that experience enabled her to believe she was a writer because of the positive reactions.

On the other hand, teachers also discouraged students from identifying as writers and building their writer identity. Of course, I imagine they did so unknowingly. The approaches to

writing instruction and the writing activities these teachers implemented limited participants in creativity, flexibility, and choice. Though Darren enjoyed writing in his youth, for instance, he noted the negative feelings when he was required to write “in forms that aren’t creative” (Interview, January 2020). Similarly, Gwen remarked that she “dreaded” to write during her senior year of high school “because it was just formulaic crap” (Interview, January 2020). These experiences dismantled Gwen’s writer identity in that “she didn’t identify as a writer at all because it had been so drilled out of [her], and [she] didn’t write for a while (Interview, January 2020). These activities that Darren and Gwen describe were likely what Dyson and Freedman (2003) refer to as “well-learned, fairly routinized, mechanical activity” (p. 974).

Significantly, these findings have implications for teacher educators. The core of my research established that participant writer identity strongly influenced their writing pedagogy. They taught powerfully and purposefully in the activities that most closely aligned with their writer identity. Generally, such activities honored choice, creativity, voice, and flexibility in content and structure. Interestingly, the writing activities that participants experienced as youth that positively influenced their writer identity also honored these same writing traits.

This finding echoes a previous point in that I argue that teacher educators need to help PSTs examine their writing philosophy so that their pedagogy aligns with the research. Doing so may help future secondary students think and act like authentic writers (see Langer, 2011). Even more, it stands to reason that these future secondary students will have a greater chance of identifying as writers because their experiences will mirror *only* the positive writing experiences of participants. In other words, if PSTs can identify and align their writer identity and philosophy with the research on writing teacher education, then they have a greater chance of creating a culture of flexible writing, where future students can have space to make writerly decisions while

“[offering] a vocabulary for talking about the nature of writing—planning, revising, editing—and insight into how these processes work for particular writers in particular situations” (Dyson & Freedman, 2003, p. 974).

Importantly, the understanding that writing pedagogy can influence secondary students’ writer identity creates additional urgency to design writing activities that honor flexibility and choice among other qualities of writing supported by the research. Teacher educators can help PSTs become stronger, more capable writers and writing instructors by wrestling with their writer identity and by designing a teaching writing philosophy that honors such identity. Doing so stands to create stronger passion for writing instruction. And, perhaps, aligning their teaching to their individualized philosophy statements can energize their pedagogy, helping secondary students strengthen their writer identities, too.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research afforded rich opportunities to examine participant writer identity at length. I give pause to consider the depth of writer identity each participant narrated and embodied through teaching, and this leads me to wonder about future research. In connection with the findings of the current research study—findings that suggest PSTs can investigate their unique writing history, personal writing practices and beliefs, and their philosophy statements to negotiate their existing writer identity—I believe future research should examine how PSTs understand their writer identity and its implications by intentionally interrogating and unpacking writer identity throughout the writing methods course.

Teacher educators can create opportunities for PSTs to interrogate and reflect on their writer identity across an entire semester. This can include intentional reflection on their writing habits, practices, and beliefs. Further, PSTs can intentionally reflect following each major writing activity, exploring how such activity influenced their beliefs about writing and the teaching of writing. Ultimately, such work can culminate in a deep analysis and composition of their writer identity and teaching writing philosophy. Even more, PSTs can analyze the connection between their writer identity and their teaching writing philosophy for additional insight. Teacher educators may even consider inviting students to prepare activities that project those values in ways that appropriately align with the standards.²⁰

Further, I believe this research study shed light on the transformation of writer identity. Specifically, Darren, Gwen, and Todd shared poignant stories about their writer identity, and the various factors that influenced it over time. I believe teacher educators and scholars can build from

²⁰ I undertook this research study in the fall 2020 during the Writing methods course I taught.

this idea and focus future research primarily on the transformation of writer identity. Such an analysis may lead to more insight on effective writing practices that *build* writer identity that k-12 teachers can adapt for their purposes.

Finally, teacher educators can examine reader identity in a similar light. For example, future research can explore how reader identity acts as reading pedagogy. Coombs (2012)²¹ recommended that future research can explore the transformation of reader identity, and I concur that such research would be valuable. PSTs may have powerful stories and experiences that shaped their reading habits, practices, and values. Amplifying these stories may also help future teachers build the reader identity of secondary students.

²¹ Coombs (2012) research identity and call for future research to examine the transformation on reader identity is what initially informed my thinking about the need to study the transformation of writer identity, too.

CONCLUSION

Similar to the way I felt prepared to teach secondary ELA writing courses as a first-year teacher, my understanding of writer identity and *writer identity as pedagogy* anchor my pedagogical and philosophical foundations as a teacher educator. In other words, I feel prepared to be a teacher educator. I will undoubtedly continue to learn throughout my career, and I look forward to the learning that will strengthen my research and pedagogy. In the early years of my teaching career, my writing instruction primarily focused on process writing and revision, and as my career progressed even further, I implemented more writing strategies into my pedagogy. I still value process writing and the implementation of many different writing strategies in my pedagogy, but my most recent inquiries have influenced my pedagogical and philosophical beliefs. Significantly, I believe that interrogating PSTs' writing habits and beliefs, and engaging in rich writing and reflection is the first step to becoming effective writing teachers. My work as a teacher educator focuses on strategies and experiences that help PSTs extrapolate their writer identities and connect their identity to the research on writing teacher education. Inherent in such work are opportunities to reflect on and examine the influences of their writer identities. These reflections occur in conjunction with the context of the major writing assignments they experience, wrestling with their beliefs about writing and writing instruction, until they construct their own philosophy statement based on their writer identity as a capstone project. Ultimately, I have discovered that my unique experiences that imbued my writer teacher identity and my trajectory as a researcher *is* my pedagogy. Such a discovery feels apropos.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Pilot Interview (January 2019)

1. Tell me what you think the purpose of writing is.
2. What about writing made you want to be an English teacher?
3. Tell me about the personal writing habits you have.
4. Have you ever thought about how your personal writing habits might inform how you teach writing when you're a English teacher or a student teacher?
5. Tell me about your attitude towards secondary and university class writing.

First Meeting (January 2020)

Your history as a writer/feelings about writing

1. What are some of your most vivid memories about writing?
2. What are your current writing habits and practices?
 - a. Do you have a system of beliefs that guide your choices? (Coombs, 2012)
3. How do you see your writing habits and practices influencing your writing instruction during student teaching?

Your preparation as a teacher of writing

1. How do you know what you know about writing and the teaching of writing?
2. What do you believe is important in writing and in the teaching of writing? Why? Can you share examples from your academic journey? (Alsup, 2019).
3. Can you tell me about your philosophy of teaching writing?
4. How have your ideas about the teaching of writing evolved over time?

Your future work as a teacher of writing

1. What should writing be like in school?
 - a. Is that similar to your belief in writing about yourself?
 - b. What helps you make this connection in the classroom or what prevents you from this connection?
2. What type of writing instruction are you most looking forward to? Tell me about it.
3. What type of writing instruction are you least looking forward to? Tell me about it.
4. Is there anything else you would like to say about writing or the teaching of writing that I haven't asked? (Coombs, 2012).

Second Interview (March 2020)

Your history and current practices as a writer/connections to the classroom

1. Have you brought your personal writing to share with the class? Tell me about it.
 - a. What did that mean for your writing and the writing for your students?
2. Have you composed without previous thought in front of the class? Tell me about it.
 - a. What did that mean for your writing and the writing for your students?
3. How does your writing influence the way you teach writing? Tell me a story that exemplifies this thought.

Your current work as a teacher of writing

1. You mentioned in our previous interview that you do x type of writing. What writing activities have you assigned? Why? If there's a mismatch, tell me about it.
2. Follow up questions from possible visits. Possible topics include writing, writing instruction, choices on writing instruction, discussions of writing/ writing instruction.
3. How do you think students in your classroom perceive you as a writer/writing instructor? (Coombs, 2012).
4. Is there anything else you would like to say about writing or the teaching of writing that I haven't asked? (Coombs, 2012).

Third Interview (May 2020)

Your history as a writer/connections to the classroom

1. Can you share some stories of writing or teaching writing that you remember clearly? Why do you think you remember these stories? (Alsup, 2019).

Your current work as a teacher of writing

1. Follow up questions from possible visits. Possible topics include writing, writing instruction, choices on writing instruction, discussions of writing/ writing instruction.
2. Have your thoughts about what writing instruction *should* look like in school changed throughout the semester? Please tell me a story to elaborate on your response.
3. What did you learn about yourself as a writer from student teaching?
4. What did you learn about yourself as a teacher of writing from student teaching?
5. What surprised you as a teacher of writing?
6. Tell me about the tensions, if any, that arose in the teaching of writing this semester.
7. Tell me about the writing instruction and writing activities in a typical day for you as a student teacher (Coombs, 2012).
8. How have your beliefs and actions of the teaching of writing evolved during your student teaching experience? Tell me a story to exemplify this response.
9. Were there instances when students pushed (challenged or encouraged you to think more critically) your writing/writing instruction? Tell me about it (Coombs, 2012).
10. Tell me about the visual writing metaphor you created
11. Tell me about any insights you've gained about yourself as a writer or a teacher of writing through the creation of this metaphor.

Your future work as a teacher of writing

1. What future plans do you have for the teaching of writing? Why?
2. What advice would you give to future writing teachers? (Coombs, 2012)
3. Is there anything else you would like to say about writing or the teaching of writing that I haven't asked? (Coombs, 2012).

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