January 2018

Teacher-Writer Perceptions On The Essence Of Writing: Influences, Identity And Habits Of Mind To Sustain A Writing Life

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TEACHER-WRITER PERCEPTIONS ON THE ESSENCE OF WRITING: INFLUENCES, IDENTITY AND HABITS OF MIND TO SUSTAIN A WRITING LIFE

by

Shari Lynn Daniels

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

August

2018

This dissertation, submitted by Shari Lynn Daniels in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the School of Graduate Studies of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Dr. Grant McGimpsey, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

July 11, 2018
Date

PERMISSION

Title Teacher-Writer Perceptions on the Essence of Writing: Influences, Identity and Habits of Mind to Sustain a Writing Life

Department Teaching and Learning

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Shari Lynn Daniels
July 2, 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not be possible without the countless individuals that have played a role in my journey as a teacher, student and learner. Throughout this last leg of the voyage, when I would lose hope, there was always someone who appeared to lift me back up. People believed in me when I forgot to believe in myself. Family, friends, teachers, authors and students have all been a guiding light, and for this, I am grateful.

I give gratitude to the University of North Dakota, a university which provided me with the critical knowledge that pushed me to keep growing. The more I learned, the more I realized how much I don't know. The world of education is constantly evolving and shifting; to ride this wave, a deep foundational layer is necessary to recognize where we've been, where we are and where we might be going. The professors of my coursework not only opened my eyes to new avenues that I did not realized existed, but they encouraged me to create my own meaning with that knowledge.

I'd like to give gratitude to Dr. Shelby Barrentine, my first advisor, who so generously gave of her time and never-ending encouragement. We shared a love of books and writing; she sparked this dissertation topic for me. Dr. Jodi Holen's introduction to Maxine Greene and aesthetic learning will stay with me forever. Dr. Mark Guy's kindness and willingness to try out poetry from a lesson I taught will always remain a sweet memory. Thank you, Dr. Swinney, for introducing me to Parker Palmer, an author of who now shapes what I do and who I am. And, Casey Ozaki's high expectations raised the bar for my writing – and always, I'll need to keep working at this academic writing game. Each professor played a part in the whole of me.

I'd like to give gratitude to my dissertation committee who took many hours to read my writing, much to their dismay I am sure, as I attempted to convey meaning to the reader and

discover what it was I was trying to say. Dr. Joshua Hunter, I thank for his knowledge of qualitative research and the asking of hard questions. It was these questions that marinated in my mind as I walked and attempted to sleep at night. Dr. Kim Donehower's past experiences as a teacher-writer was invaluable as we sought to frame this research around questions that made sense, and Dr. Mary Baker, I appreciate your enthusiasm for this project and your attention to details that most of us miss. From the beginning, you were a cheerleader. The collaboration from our meetings stirred new understandings about research and quite frankly, pulled me "out of the tall weeds" to a clearing where I could see.

I have a word to say about my advisor. Settle in.

I cannot begin to describe the gifts of intense learning, collegiality, devotion and friendship I have received from Dr. Pamela Beck. I am continuously and completely awed by her relentless commitment to me and my work. I came to each meeting with her, feeling I did not have enough to share with her, that I was not doing enough or was far enough along, but she always made me feel like a rock star. She listened, had just the right words, in person or through email, to make me feel that I could do this and she motivated me to keep going. She helped me create a road map to make it all possible, setting deadlines and keeping atop of where I was. As the first reader of my writing, I know I made her suffer, but she did not let this show – and she moved us forward. Without her mentoring and guidance, this all would not be possible. She truly showed what it means to work with integrity, professionalism and grace. You are my role model as a professor.

Finally, I am so give gratitude to my husband, Scott, who has coauthored my life since I met him as a young, starry-eyed 15-year old. He has supported and encouraged every new venture I have pursued in our marriage without a complaint. He would entertain my thoughts and

provide nourishment to eat (pizzas and popcorn), while attempting to understand where I was in the process. He would give me the gift of solitude to work, yet also had the ability to pull me away from my desk when I needed a break. Continually, he asked if I was okay. I know, there was not a moment he did not doubt my ability to complete this work. I do this work, not only for me, but for him. He is truly the light from the light house made visible for me, this reachable goal.

ABSTRACT

This body of work contains three articles that support the need for K-12 teachers to write professionally and personally. The research sought to explore the questions of initial influences to write, essentials to sustain writing and the relationship of teacher-writer development to self-authorship. Much of the previous literature produced by scholars, authors and teacher-writers focus on the benefits for students when teachers are confident as writers. Student motivation to write rests on the beliefs of the teacher who provides a model for writing as this shapes student beliefs about themselves as writers. However, there is little research that provides substantial reasons for teachers to write as a benefit for their own professional and personal lives. The following articles present research findings to fill this gap.

While few teachers identify themselves as writers or feel confidence in writing themselves, there are teachers that do. These teachers write with their students, blog, and write as a daily practice for educational and personal purposes. Once awakened to the writing life, these teachers become advocates for other teachers to write as well; they promote best practices on social media, provide professional development, participate in writing conferences and write books to motivate teachers to write. When teachers write themselves, they discover a sense of agency in using writing as a tool for both professional and personal growth.

Two of the articles for this dissertation are based on qualitative case studies that explored the perceptions of ten K-12 teachers who write. These participants provided supportive data through a series of three interviews, two face-to-face and one through writing. The first study sought to examine the initial influences of each teacher-writer to understand the necessary

conditions for teachers to be influenced to write, whether in childhood or as an adult. The second study, more phenomenological in nature, explored the essence of what *keeps* teacher-writers writing, including habits of mind and tools to develop these habits. The third study, a literature review, compared the relationship of teachers' development as a writer to the phases of self-authorship. Each study intertwines as they support one another and contribute to the overall finding that writing, for teachers, is a path to discovering a meaningful and purposeful life.

Data analysis revealed that initial influences for teachers to write included positive feedback from teachers or family members, a love of reading, or the early need to express creativity or satisfy curiosity. Teacher-writers with strong writing identities as children or young students received positive feedback that enabled them to continue to grow as writers, while those who were more challenged with the mechanics of writing or had teachers who were product focused, had a lack of self-efficacy in writing. If a negative writing identity was developed early on, revisiting writing histories to reshape their beliefs transformed their identity. Once teachers take steps to develop a writing identity, sustaining their practice is necessary to their growth as writers.

Findings also unveiled four main purposes that drive teacher-writers to sustain their writing practices: to discover meaning, connect with others and themselves, as a commitment to learning, and for emotional well-being. Essential habits of mind included living with a sense of awareness, overcoming perfection, development of habits and rituals and ample time for solitude. Participants all described the personal joy writing brought them through discovery writing, creative play in writing and for expression of thoughts and emotions. Through each purpose, writing was a path to being alive in the world and in maintaining an energy that brought fulfillment and personal growth.

Literature review findings in the third study describe the relationships of self-authorship and teacher-writer development stories of well-known teacher-writers. These teacher-writers began at an absolute knowledge stage with a limited knowledge of writing until a triggering moment caused cognitive dissonance. These crossroads propelled teachers to write themselves. Through writing, teachers cultivated their internal voice and learned to trust this voice over external authority. In continued writing, confidence and self-efficacy grew not only in writing, but in other areas of their lives. Their writing voice became their internal voice which was previously veiled or suppressed due to social contexts and expectations.

Multiple implications are suggested for the integration of writing in teacher education programs. Ongoing practices can be more likely in a university setting as opposed to shorter professional development sessions in K-12 settings. Possibilities include creating safe writing communities in literacy courses and providing authentic purposes for pre-service teachers to write. Advisers who meet with students can model and suggest journaling as a way to explore big questions and to nurture an awareness of their thoughts and the world around them. Writing groups can be established to offer community and connections for pre-service teachers to write alongside of others. Faculty can teach the writing habits of mind to encourage a writing practice for pre-service teachers. Finally, teacher education faculty can develop curriculum that includes tools writers use to nurture the habits of mind that writers find are necessary to achieve their purpose. More research needs to be conducted in the area of purpose for teachers to write. This will continue to build supportive data to influence curriculum designers and faculty to place an emphasis on writing in their teacher education programs.

Keywords: teacher as writer, writing habits of mind, writing attitudes, solitude, awareness, overcoming perfection, well-being, committed to learning, connection, discover meaning, essence of writing, joy, fulfillment, reading-writing connection, writing influences, sustaining writing practices, energy, aliveness

The Path to Self-Authorship: The Pre-Service Teacher-Writer

"Through writing, I continue to learn about myself, because I describe in detail the everyday issues around me and end up discovering my own point of view. I begin to acquire a voice and a sense of assurance about what I know of the world around me. The more I see and understand, the more I am free to wonder, to be struck by mystery, to express doubt. Writing is too important to be relegated only to children; it is important enough for us all to include it as a basic part of our own lives."

-Donald Graves (1990) *Discover Your Own Literacy*

In the beginning of Thomas Newkirk's book, *Minds Made for Stories* (2014), Thomas Newkirk writes, "Our theories are really disguised autobiographies often rooted in childhood (p. 3). To emphasize his point, he begins with a story. Newkirk, one of my writing mentors, has helped me to frame my own theories. So, I too begin with a story from childhood. I am a believer in story. Story helps wisdom stick.

My father is a mason man. I grew up watching him build the foundations on which houses would be built. I recall his careful work. He was a perfectionist in his craft and held strong beliefs in how important solid foundations were. Never would he build a house on the surface of the soil. It would shift with the earth over time.

My father would spend days preparing the soil for the foundation. With heavy machinery, he would excavate to clear away brush, existing structures, trees and rocks. Quite often a tree root hampered this work. Those old roots needed to be dug out and extracted as they could eventually regrow and push against a new foundation. This was a risk he avoided at all cost. It awed me how far the roots of trees spread. Roots show up in places unexpected.

Once this digging began, space was created. New space. There cannot be a new foundation without created space for it to be formed. The farther down we dig, the stronger the foundation. My father believed that if you are going to build a house, you should always have a basement. It was "free space," he declared. Yes, it takes a little more time and more money, but in the long run you will have more room to move around in and a safe place when the tornadoes rip through our plains. We are safe in our basements.

As that massive hole was being dug, I remember watching, as a little girl, the giant scoops of landfill being added to the top of the dirt pile from the hole. Chunks of compacted dirt and clay would tumble down the side of the mountain of landfill. I'd sneak up to the edge and pick up a chunk of clay and haul it off to the side, somewhere safe and out of the way. These balls of clay were cold, yet soft, a potter's dream. I sat for hours molding this clay into bowls, shapes and animals. Much of what was dug out of the space was moldable, much of it not – just black dirt, sand and more rocks. It was the moldable clay that gave me something to work with. These were the chunks I gathered for creating new worlds.

My father did not believe in building foundations from wood, as many people do. Wood was cheaper, but could crack, rot or mold. Even poured cement walls were sketchy as they could crack and shift. He trusted only heavy cement blocks, laid one by one over long steel bars meant to keep the block from shifting. Even these blocks were set on cement footings to avoid all possibility of movement. Every detail played a role as a piece of the whole. With the confidence in the strength of the foundation, the house could be built upon it.

I come from this. It took me years to recognize the importance of foundations, but I realize now that without it, we are building a house on a layer of shifting sand. This story resonates with my work as an educator in countless ways and it provides the backdrop of this

research: one of foundations, beliefs, values and purpose. All of the decisions we make as teachers are based on these foundational beliefs and values we carry in both our professional and personal lives. For myself, writing has become that foundation, but that is not the case for all teachers.

Research surrounding the state of writing instruction in elementary schools over the past several decades is disheartening. In 1985, one such study claimed only 15% of the day was devoted to writing in the grades one, three, and five (U.S. Department of Education, 1985) and of this writing, two-thirds of this writing was copying from work books, word-for-word (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2012). That study was over 30 years ago and, unfortunately, one trip online to visit sites such as Pinterest and Instagram to view the popular trends of "writing creativities" is evidence of little progress. In a more recent study by Cremin & Oliver (2015), a systematic review of empirical work on teachers as writers, evidence suggested that teachers have a narrow understanding of writing (2015). Writing is superficial and is not understood as a resource to reflect, generate meaning, to learn or think creatively (Geekie, Cambourne & Fitzsminnons, 1999, p. 219). These studies bring up the need for more writing instruction for teachers. But, I wondered if there was more that teachers needed than instruction.

My vocation as an educator began 30 years ago as a kindergarten and early childhood teacher, then a literacy specialist, to a Title One teacher, an elementary classroom teacher and to a literacy coach. Currently, I teach pre-service teachers at a university. Always, my primary purpose for what I do is to serve the best interest of the child; however, I was also once a teacher who assigned product centered writing. In my training at Ohio State University as a Literacy Collaborative coach 15 years ago, I learned the difference between teaching writing and teaching

the writer and I immediately revised my beliefs about writing, writers, and writing instruction and was awakened to developing my own literate life.

My writing life has influenced my teaching life, especially in the area of teaching writing, so choosing a research topic to support the benefits of being a teacher who writer felt natural. When teachers write, they experience the emotions, the struggles, and the joys of writing themselves. These experiences create empathy for the students they teach when they write themselves. When teachers write, they develop their own internal curriculum from which to teach. They become their own experts, and responsive teaching takes the place of teaching from manuals (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1990; Murray, 1978). Self-efficacy develops when a teacher-writer gains confidence to teach from their own experiences.

Initially, this research purpose was anchored in the serving students better. However, to serve students better in what it means to be an authentic writer, teachers need to have authentic experiences as writers themselves. Yet even forty years since the work of Murray (1978) and Graves (1983) suggested teachers should write, studies show teachers are still resistant to writing themselves (Cremin & Oliver, 2015). They might be initially inspired, but for many it is too difficult to keep it ongoing (Cremin & Locke, 2017). What is missing in helping to convince teachers of this need? What is necessary to truly ignite and keep teachers writing? I hypothesized it was habit. Perhaps teachers needed to make a commitment to writing and set aside daily time to develop a habit. Or, perhaps because of past experiences, their beliefs about writing and themselves as writers needed to be revisited and reshaped. Then I wondered, what was the relationship of being a teacher-writer to personal development? Was it possible that writing enabled a teacher to discover and claim her voice to navigate the terrain of the profession? To

explore these questions, I listened to the voices of teachers who are writers. Listening to their stories gave me a peek into the windows of the essentials for teachers to write.

From this research, three articles were composed to share the findings. In the following sections, the research questions, conceptual framework and methodology are detailed.

Research Questions

My study is to explore these research questions:

Article #1

1. What are the key experiences of teacher-writers that influence them to write themselves? A first awakening to the writer's life?

Article #2

2. What are the necessary essentials that enable a teacher-writer to develop an ongoing writing practice?

Article #3

3. What is the relationship of the development of a teacher-writer identity to the phases of self-authorship?

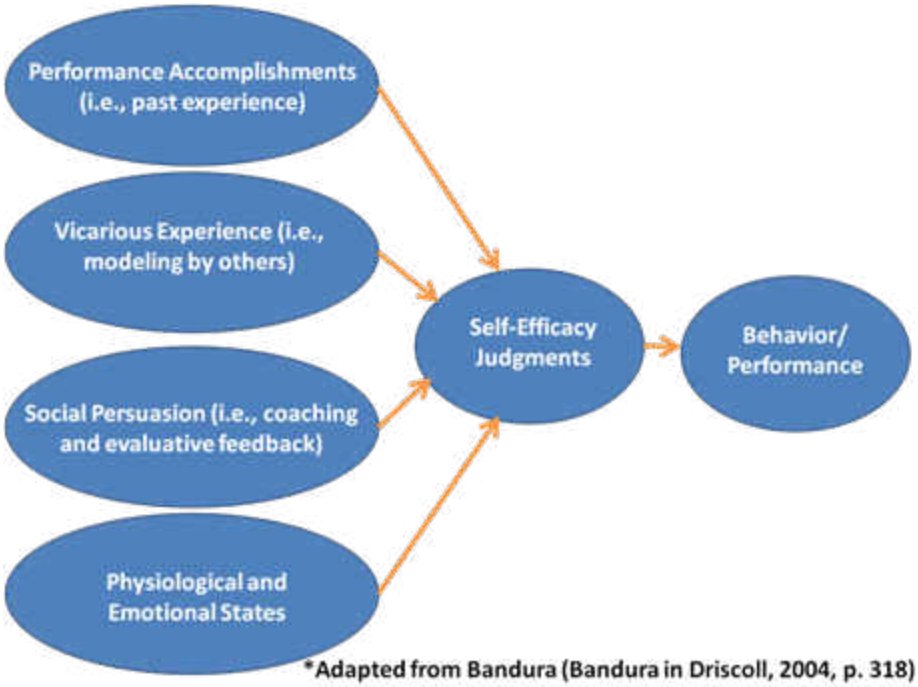
CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social Cognitive Theory

Layers of theory reside within this study. To being with, the research is framed around social cognitive theory, which focuses on individual agency (Bandura, 2002). Upon entering teacher education programs, teaching candidates have already been subject to a wide range of pedagogical methods in the teaching of writing and have had multiple opportunities to write. Their attitudes, skills, beliefs, and values about writing have been shaped by these experiences, effecting their writing development, and how they instruct writing as a teacher (Norman & Spencer, 2005). These beliefs, attitudes and skills also determine a person's self-efficacy (See Figure 1). Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in their ability to accomplish a particular task (Bandura, 1977, 1989, 1994), and past research has demonstrated that it can affect how people feel, think, and behave (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy greatly effects a teacher's writing identity.

Figure 1. Self-efficacy



Writing Identities of Teachers

Teachers' writing identities also shape their writing instruction and effects the attitudes and values passed to their students about writing. The teacher identities essentially are main factors in the development of their students' writing identities. It is important to draw from an identity perspective to illustrate how "people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being" (Holland et al., 2001, p. 5). Like self-efficacy, identity is shaped by past experiences as a student and from observations, along with interactions with other people (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Danielewicz, 2001). "An identity framework recognizes that learning is not only about understanding a set of skills and strategies but is also a process in which people construct and negotiate identities in order to become members of particular communities, such as a school"

(Zoch, Myers, Lambert, Vetter & Fairbanks, 2016, p. 2). Students and teachers alike take on the beliefs, values and behaviors of those they associate with directly and indirectly.

Frank Smith (1998) argues that identity is at the core of who we are. He refers to the communities to which we identify with as “clubs” (p. 5). He writes that if we do not identify with the members of a club because of discomfort, we will go out of our way to demonstrate we are not members of the club. Therefore, it is necessary to provide opportunities for teachers to observe, think, and talk about their writing with other teachers through reflective practices to help them redefine what it means to be a teacher-writer (Burke, 2006). Teachers who lack self-efficacy as writers will make efforts to avoid writing and navigate towards other teachers who match their beliefs. Their misunderstandings about process and real purposes to write are not sought out as their beliefs strengthen with more members in “the club”.

Teachers of writing and writers who possess a writing identity naturally model what they do as writers, and instill in their student writers the belief that ‘we are all capable of writing and of being a writer’ and thus, ‘we are all members of the club’ (Smith, 1998, p. 5). When we teach as a fellow writer, we teach from a stance of, “Here’s what I do,” rather than “You need to do.” Lessons delivered from a teacher who writes are stored within and readily available to flow when the situation calls for them. On the other hand, a teacher that does not have a writing identity may be inclined to depend on scripted, core curriculum. Tim Gillespie (1985) argues that teachers need to write so that their teaching of writing can be "based on knowledge we have earned ourselves. . . . We don't need to give up our curriculum to experts. We can just watch ourselves write" (p. 2).

Donald Graves (1990) urges teachers to do more than just write alongside of students. He suggests that living the literate life of a writer is necessary to foster the habits of mind that are

essential to write (Graves, 1990). Writers learn an awareness to recognize “literate occasions” that emerge throughout our day. These small, seemingly insignificant details of our lives are the beginnings of meaningful work if we pay attention, write it down and create conditions to write until we discover its meaning. This requires daily writing, if only for 20 minutes, as “every day missed makes it doubly difficult to get back to it – it takes time for the mind to reengage itself with the notion of writing” (Graves, 1990, p. 33). This investment in daily writing enables one to begin to see the world differently and allow writing to become a part of who we are.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for each article varied as such: article #1, qualitative case study; article #2, qualitative case study through the lens of phenomenology; and article 3#; literature review.

The first two articles used similar study designs, yet participants, methods and data analysis measures varied slightly due to the additional layer of phenomenology for the second research article. The third article explored the relationships between autobiographical stories of teacher-writers to the phases of self-authorship. What follows is an overview of the methodologies with case studies and phenomenology overlapping.

Article 1: Qualitative Case Study

A case study as defined by Robert Yin (2009) is "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson & McCarton, 2016). I explored the work of several teacher-writers, yet a single phenomenon was being explored. A flexible design was adopted to allow for alterations that depended on the "interaction of what I am studying where data collection and analysis intertwine" (Robson & McCarton, 2016, p. 45).

There were multiple participants in this case study, each with their own perceptions. Collective case studies are studies that involve multiple cases in an effort to examine data results for likeness to offer understanding into a matter (Creswell, 2012) and enable exploration of a

phenomenon, population or general condition (Glesne, 2011). Through the gathering of data from various sources, my intent was to examine similarities and themes to gain insight into the phenomenon of what influences a teacher writer to begin to write and the necessary ingredients that keep them writing. In essence, this was one case study with multiple participants to shed light on a phenomenon.

Article 2: Phenomenology Case Study

Phenomenology is the essence of a person's lived experience. Phenomenology seeks to find meaning into *the heart of things*, or a search for the essence of where meaning originates, yet it is not recognized through direct observation (VanManen, 2007). In the case of this research study, my intention was to seek out the essentials that probe teacher writers to sustain a writing practice, whether professionally (in the classroom) or personally.

According to VanManen (2007),

> In doing phenomenological research, through the reflective methods of writing, the aim is not to create technical intellectual tools or prescriptive models for telling us what to do or how to do something. Rather, a phenomenology of practice aims to open up possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact." (p. 13)

By studying the phenomenon of teacher-writers' practices, I was able to gain insight into this relationship between the teacher-writer's *being* a writer and an understanding of what was missing in curriculum for teaching pre-service teachers in the area of writing.

Vygotsky's (2012) constructivist theory also guided the development of this study. Through the lens of constructionism, the understandings and beliefs teachers obtain about themselves as writers and teachers of writers are created through these interactions. Teachers'

prior knowledge in learning to write are based on their experiences as students (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Their beliefs guide their teaching through their negative or positive perceptions about writing. As a researcher who seeks to gain an understanding of how teacher-writers come to be and sustain a practice as a writer, the words of Crotty (1998) resonate, in that this research invites us to approach the object (phenomenon) in a "radical spirit of openness" to gain new or richer meaning (p. 67). With knowledge, we can gain an understanding of how to build on or shift a teacher's previous understandings about themselves as writers and as teachers of writers.

Article 3: Literature Review

The third article was a literature review that explored the relationship between teacher-writers' autobiographical stories of teacher-writer development to self-authorship theory. A literature review "seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify and/or integrate the content of primary reports" (Cooper, 1998, p. 107). As well, literature reviews lead to new work that enables the writer to represent knowledge construction (Lather, 1999). My purpose for this literature review was to explore additional purposes for teachers to write. If the development of a teacher-writer identity aligned with the phases of self-authorship, this knowledge would be additional support for an emphasis on integrating more writing in teacher education programs.

The perimeters of this study include the autobiographical sketches, or personal narratives, of teachers' development as writers to gain a sense of the stages of self-authorship that are embedded in the stories. The autobiographical sketches used were written texts of well-known teacher-writers who have written extensively about their journeys as writers and have to writing theory and practice in the field. As a foundation for self-authorship, the literature from the research of Baxter-Magolda (2004, 2009) was used as a main source as she has the most

extensive research that stretches over 20 years of data. The context for this analysis resided in the area of pre-service teacher education.

This literature review also prefaces the understanding of a teacher-writer as one who writes for both professional and personal reasons and models authentic writing for her students in order to take part in the classroom's writing community (Cremin & Myhill, 2012).

Design of the Study

The following sections describe the participants of this study, the procedures for data collection, how data will be analyzed, and validity techniques.

Participants

Purposeful sampling specific to the settings, individuals, or events was chosen intentionally to offer information that is most relevant to my questions and purpose of study (Maxwell, 2013). These participants embodied specific traits that seemed to make them exceptionally great sources in providing information (Orcher, 2005). These teachers were either recommended by professors or are recognized writers in their teaching field from my own knowledge and experiences. "Criterion-based case selection researchers specify characteristics and attributes of the population to be studied" (Roulston, 2010, p. 81). Participants were given opportunities to opt out of the study to ensure the offering of data freely, yet, each of these participants were extremely willing to participate. They each were assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

By email, I explained the purpose of my study, interview processes and informed consent policies. Each of the teachers who consented to be interviewed represent a broader population of the overall teacher-writers at Midwestern universities and schools in which the research was

conducted. There were ten participants from grades K-12, with some diversity, in order to maximize the range of perspectives.

Data Collection

The importance of triangulation cannot be underestimated. Maxwell (2013) suggests gathering multiple sources of data ensures valid results. He describes triangulation as collecting data through the use of "a variety of methods…to reduce the risk of chance associations and systematic bias" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 128). Efforts are made to avoid contradiction between the modes of analysis, and the intention is to bring them together to shed light on any chosen social research topic" (Olson, 2004). Interviews and writing artifacts were one source of triangulation. This is described in more detail in the validity section.

Interviews. Interviews made up a significant amount of data for this research project. Interviews allowed the researcher to directly ask questions to participants that are connected to behaviors and facts, along with beliefs or attitudes (Robson & McCarton, 2016). To ensure validity, a series of interviews were conducted, both face to face and in writing. Shenton (2004) suggests, "Different methods in concert compensate for their individual limitations and exploit their respective benefits" (p. 65). The first interviews were semi-structured with a prepared interview guide that served as a checklist of topics to be covered yet order was modified based on the flow of the interview. Additional unplanned questions were asked to follow up on what the interviewee says. The second set of interview questions were developed from first interview responses. The third interview contained two main questions for all participants and participants responded in writing.

Artifacts. Written artifacts were requested, but not required, to analyze for triangulation with interview statements to provide a cross-validation to either support or

disconfirm. Humans "reveal something of themselves through artifacts; these items contain clues about the nature of society's lifestyles" (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 347). These artifacts included: notebook writing samples, published works of teacher-writers, blog posts, essays or papers from graduate work, and memos of my own observations and thinking during the research process.

Data Analysis

The first stage of analysis was to draw up writing profiles of each participant as evidenced through the data: interviews, writing history, artifacts and context specific observations. These descriptions aimed to establish the teachers' writing identities. I transcribed the interviews as the primary researcher to gain a sense of deep understandings along with intuitive meanings. I listened to and read the written transcripts and compared them to the digital recordings to confirm or disconfirm my inferences throughout the analysis (Locke et al., 2014).

The second stage took place in analysis involving an examination of transcribed interviews, artifacts and memos. Throughout the analysis, notes and memos were be kept on what I saw or heard in my data. This allowed me to develop possible ideas about categories and relationships (Maxwell, 2013). Researchers use this method to generate and suggest hypotheses about a general phenomenon (Glaser, 1965).

Eidetic analysis of data was utilized. The memos that followed each interview enabled me to dwell on the initial experience of interview with each participant (Wertz, 1985). Summary sheets documented main concepts and intuitions. Descriptive and conceptual notes were made upon immersion of the data: summary sheets, memos, interview transcripts and artifacts. Reflective and reflexive open coding took place looking for distinct concepts and categories of code families. It was necessary to categorize codes in an effort to label data to make sense of

participants' behaviors and responses (Turner, 2010). Categories of information about the phenomenon being studied were formed and themes emerged from the categories to represent new meanings. Data analysis included peer debriefs and member checks.

Validity Techniques

Qualitative research has limitations and therefore must consider techniques to ensure validity convincing the audience of a credible study (Creswell, 2007). Techniques used in this study include triangulation, audit trails and member checking (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation included using a wide range of informants to obtain individual viewpoints and experiences that could be verified against each other. This created a rich picture of the teacher-writers' experiences (Shenton, 2013). Also, obtaining written artifacts were able to support or disconfirm interview statements and the series of interviews, orally and written produced this same result.

During the observations and artifact analysis, and upon analyzing interview transcriptions, detailed notes with thick descriptions provided extensive data that may, in future studies, be transferable. Participants were given the option to review transcript notes, allowing them to change or clarify words. I consistently requested guidance from my university adviser at my University of work to conduct and external audit of my coding process.

I recognized my own experiences and beliefs as a writer, elementary teacher, literacy coach, and university instructor could play out to be an asset or a hindrance in this research. It was important for me to set aside my own beliefs to gain an unbiased understanding of my participants' experience as a writer and teacher of writers. Each interview was approached with an open mind with the goal of honoring participant voices, lived experiences and beliefs. I used my own notebook to continuously record my thoughts as I processed information gathered in an effort to recognize any bias in my interpretations. As an experienced educator of 30 years, I was

consistently aware of the host of assumptions I might inject in my research through observing, interpreting and reporting findings (Crotty, 1998).

CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY AND FINDINGS

The articles that describe this research focus on the needs of the teacher, in an effort to contribute empirical and literature review based literature that supports the need for more writing influence in teacher education programs. All articles thread together and play a part in the overall purpose for teachers to write. What follows is a description of what each article attempts to do and how it contributes to this body of knowledge.

Article #1: Perceptions of Teacher-Writers: Initial Influences to Write

The first article, discusses the initial sparks of writing influence. Empirical findings indicated that teachers with a strong identity as a reader and/or writer as a child often received positive feedback which encouraged them to continue to grow as writers. Teachers who struggled with mechanics throughout their K-12 experiences as students often received negative feedback which discouraged them from writing. These teachers, as adults, later had experiences in which their writing histories were revisited to reshape their beliefs about writing and their identity as a writer. This study suggests practices to help pre-service teachers to develop a sense of writing identity, self-efficacy and confidence as writers. They also create conditions that foster habits of mind that can shift one into a present state of being, heightened awareness and personal joy (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher, 2017).

Understanding of what is necessary to influence teachers initially to write is important as it provides the support for utilizing time to reflect on past writing histories to examine negative

beliefs. Integrating love of books and creating conditions for a safe community that encourages and supports writing prepares conditions for the development of a writing identity.

Article #2: Perceptions of Teacher-Writers: Sustaining A Writing Life

Considering initial influences to write have been addressed, this article provides empirical evidence to support the overarching purposes for sustaining a writing life.

Findings shared in this article demonstrate that teacher-writers committed to a writing life do so for the purpose of 1) discovering meaning, 2) connections to others 3) commitment to learning and 4) well-being, with an overall purpose of feeling alive both professionally and personally.

Pre-service teachers need to develop their own reasons to write; however, using the research shared in this article, a conceptual understanding can be shared with pre-service teachers to help them shape purposes these purposes.

Habits of mind or attitudes of participants were also cultivated to sustain a purposeful writing life were 1) a sense of awareness and curiosity 2) habits and rituals 3) solitude 4) overcoming fear and perfection. Each of these must be modeled, taught and practiced in teacher education programs for a deeper understanding of writing attitudes to be experienced.

Article #3: The Path to Self-Authorship: The Pre-Service Teacher-Writer

The final article, a literature review to support the relationship of teacher-writers identity development to self-authorship. Self-authorship is a path for adults to "develop an internal voice to navigate life's challenges" (Baxter-Magolda, 2009, p. xi). This purpose intertwines and overlaps with the findings in article #2 which states purposes to write include finding meaning, connections with self, commitment to learning, and well-being. In our current educational system, trends come and go, and information from many directions flood in our direction.

Baxter-Magolda writes, “In our complex and diverse society, the moral terrain can be obscure and sometimes treacherous” (2009, p. xv). This could not be more true in the demands of teaching and pre-service teachers need to learn ways to hear their own voices to make the decisions that come with the profession.

The journey to self-authorship does not come naturally and many college graduates enter their adult lives challenged in their professional and their personal lives. Writing can serve the pre-service teacher as a tool to propel the journey to self-authorship. Every instructional decision made rests on the foundations shaped by the personal and professional development of the teacher. Baxter-Magolda & King, in their book, *Learning Partnerships,* urge us to be “better company for young adults on their journey towards making meaning in their lives” (2004, p. xi). This article suggests possibilities for faculty to integrate more writing into teacher-education programs as a tool to propel the journey to self-authorship.

Each of these articles individually support existing research in teacher-writer identity and contributes to the over-arching goal of this research study which was to explore influences and essentials for sustaining a writing practice as a teacher-writer.

CHAPTER V

ARTICLES

Article #1: Perceptions of Teacher-Writers: Initial Influences to Write

ABSTRACT

In light of increased interest in the writing identities of teachers, this qualitative case study explores perceptions of teacher-writers' early writing histories and examines their initial influences to write. Research suggests K – 12 teachers should live literate lives as confident, avid writers to be effective writing teachers. Despite its importance, there is concern at the number of teachers who do not write or see themselves as writers. Interviews, along with writing artifacts of ten K-12 teacher-writers who write both in their profession and personally, serve as the primary data source. Findings indicate that teachers with strong identities as readers and/or writers as children of young students often received positive feedback which encouraged them to continue to grow as writers. Teachers who struggled with mechanics through their K-12 experiences as students often received negative feedback which discouraged them from writing. These teachers, as adults, later had experiences in which their writing histories were revisited to reshape their beliefs about writing and their identities as writers. This study suggests practices to integrate into pre-service literacy courses to examine writing histories and to develop and nurture writing identities.

Keywords: writing teachers, teacher-writer identity, teachers who write, initial influences to write, writing histories,

Perceptions of Teacher-Writers: Initial Influences to Write

Our beliefs can be altered by the power and immediacy of personal experience. You can begin to understand something when you experience its essence. It becomes a knowing.

~Brian Weiss (2001)

The implication that teachers should write has become foundational in teacher effectiveness in the area of teaching writing. This insight has been echoed by numerous scholars, researchers and writers (Emig, 1971; Geekie, Cambourne & Fitzsimmons, 1999; Graves, 1983; Hairston, 1986; Murray, 1982). Teachers of writing are urged to take off the teacher hat and surrender to the challenging work of writing themselves (Arana, 2003; Graves, 1983; Hairston, 1986; Murray, 1982). Marie Arana (2003), book editor and writer, claims teacher-writers must be able to function in both worlds – one as writer and one as a teacher of writers. Arana empathizes,

> It is not easy to go about the business of stringing words together, one by one, until something emerges. We must always keep a foot on the other side of the fence, to remind ourselves as often as possible that writing is an excruciatingly difficult enterprise (p. xiv).

As a teacher-writer, one can understand the emotional stages students go through, while empathy and compassion are given to those who struggle.

Donald Graves (1985, 1990) also recommends that teachers live a "literate life" as writers and readers (Graves 1985, 1990). This goes beyond solely writing alongside the students in the classroom during classroom time. It means writing purposefully outside the context of the classroom and sharing writing with others. Living literate lives enables teachers to show students

what they have been writing in the real world of writers and to model "what they do" rather than just "what writers do." Teachers redefine their role from giver of information to writer, reader, and learner (Kaufman, 2009; Murray, 2003). Teresa Cremin (2017), in her recent book, *Writer Identity and the Teaching and Learning of Writing*, defines teachers who live a literate life through writing as "teacher-writers." This term will be used throughout this article when speaking of teachers who write.

Regardless of the literature supporting the necessity for teachers to live writers' lives, pre-service teachers typically receive scant instruction related to teaching writing. The National Commission on Writing (2003) urges more writing preparation (Dismuke & Martin, 2016, p. 1). However, few university teacher education programs offer stand-alone writing courses (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). Instead, writing instruction is woven into reading courses (Morgan, 2010).

Beyond pre-service training, outside experiences encourage teachers to write. Examples include the National Writing Project (2017); writer-teacher groups, both face to face (Grainger, 2005; Kendrick & Forler, 1997; Pajares, 2003; Robbins, Seaman, Yancey & Yow, 2006) and online (Whitney, 2003); writing conferences; and dozens of books for self-study. Yet, most teachers must take initiative to seek these experiences on their own.

There seem to be conflict between the research that urges teachers to write, and the lack of support in universities and lack of professional development in K-12 contexts provided by public school districts. Questions arise in how teachers are then influenced to write. Much has been written on the initial writing influences of *professional* writers. Marie Arana (2003) has authored such a book. It includes interviews with authors asking them how they came to be a writer. Mary Higgins Clark believes she was given the gift of story-telling at birth (p. 35). Muriel Spark is quoted as saying she "could write before she could speak" (Arana, 2003, p. 52).

It is a common theme for writers in the book that writing is a gift they were born with. This perspective does not help teachers.

For others, such as Joyce Carol Oats, writing grew out of a love of reading (Arana, 2003, p. 12). David McCullough's life as a biographer grew from his work as a journalist and his insatiable need to find things out (Arana, 2003, p. 164). Arana quotes McCullough in an interview, "There isn't anything in the world that isn't inherently interesting – if only someone will frame it in a story," (p. 163). Donald Murray (1990) has organized his book, *Shoptalk*, by practicing authors and quotes their initial influences as well. Cremin & Locke (2017) have also done extensive research on teacher-writers and, in their recent book on writer's identity, include a chapter on the perceived influences of formal education and early reading on professional writers' identities. All of this research on writers can give us a peek into a path to the writer's life.

And yet, teachers are not professional writers, nor are they academics that reside in higher education institutions with expectations for publishing research. Professional writers, although also busy, can craft their working schedules to allow for writing to happen. Classroom teachers have students from 8:00 am. – 3:00 pm., and sometimes longer, with additional commitments or duties that go along with the profession. A research study by the University of Wisconsin (1997-1998) found that teachers already work, on average, an additional two hours a day beyond their contractual hours (Drago et al., 1999). And, focusing on elementary teachers alone, these teachers need expertise in *many* subject areas and not just writing (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2011), Yet, while motives and obstacles can be hurdles that keep teachers from writing, there still *are* teachers who write.

What seems to be missing is more pragmatic that theoretical. While it is clear that teachers need support to explore their own writing histories and beliefs, to experience writing, and to develop a purpose for writing, there is less professional literature that shows teachers how to go about beginning this writing life. "Although teacher-writers' pedagogy is discussed in education circles, few studies highlight how teachers in training negotiate their identities as future teachers of writing" (Collier, Scheld, Barnard & Stallcup, 2015, p. 96). If pre-service programs do not provide opportunities for candidates to practice literate lives and to live the lives of writers, what influences teachers to write in the first place? Teachers need a sense of agency and a desire to improve their practice for professional development to be effective (Elmore, 2008).

This qualitative case study explores the perceptions of teacher-writers who write both professionally alongside their students and personally outside of the classroom. Explorations include: (a) teacher-writers' early writing histories, (b) teacher-writers' first influences in the development of their writing identity and (c) continued influences in developing their writing identities.

Literature Review

Self-Efficacy Theory and Emotions

Social cognitive theory focuses on individual agency (Bandura, 2002). Teacher candidates have been exposed to many pedagogical methods in the teaching of writing upon entering their pre-service program. Their understandings about what defines a writer is one that includes publishing, rather than one who generates text and seeks to communicate meaning with words. These experiences have shaped their attitudes, skills, beliefs and values about writing, writing development and writing instruction (Norman & Spencer, 2005) and this can determine a

person's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in their ability to accomplish a particular task (Bandura, 1977, 1995), and it can affect how people feel, think and behave (Bandura, 1995).

Emotions, both positive and negative, can have a strong impact on self-efficacy. In the process of learning to write, sharing one's writing can provoke a range of emotions from elation and joy to frustration, embarrassment and fear. Thomas Newkirk (2017), in his most recent book, *Embarrassment,* devotes a chapter to the close association of writing and shame. He shares painful stories that emphasize the exposing and embarrassing potential we risk experiencing in the act of writing. Newkirk quotes "Plato in his dialogue *The Phaedrus* (1990) compares writing to sending out your child into the world, unprotected from misunderstanding and criticism" (p. 136). Mem Fox (1993), in *Radical Reflections*, writes "Many of my teacher education students, after twelve years at school, come to me helpless and fearful as writers, detesting it in the main, believing that they can't write" (p. 21). The traditional culture of teachers pointing out errors produces feelings of anxiety and inadequacy imparted on the student and can disable them for future acts of writing.

There are other teachers who have a positive writing identity, yet find themselves in the classroom unsure of how to teach writers. According to Troia & Maddox (2004), a large number or teachers are conscious of their lack of knowledge in the ability to teach writers. This awareness attributes to a lack of self-confidence and greatly impacts teachers' self-efficacy in the teaching of writing (Pajares, 2003). This influences the decisions a teacher makes in the methods of teaching writing, or if teaching writing is avoided altogether. However, when teachers revisit these existing writing beliefs and past experiences, it is possible to reshape the narratives they

carry in their capabilities as writers and teaching writing (Burke, 2006; Cremin & Oliver, 2016; Cremin & Locke, 2017).

Identity (Innate and Outside Influences)

It is important to draw from an identity perspective to illustrate how "people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being" (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner & Cain, 2003, p. 5). Four key components contribute to the development of teacher identity: Role models, previous teaching and learning experiences, childhood experiences and family activities (Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1991). "An identity framework recognizes that learning is not only about understanding a set of skills and strategies but is also a process in which people construct and negotiate identities in order to become members of particular communities," (Zoch, Myers, Lambert, Vetter & Fairbanks, 2016, p. 2).

In his book, *Artistry in Teaching*, Louis Rubin (1985), describes how the development of our identity as teachers creates an intangible artistry. This artistry involves attitudes, intentions, knowledge, intuition, perceptivity, shrewd judgment regarding educational goals, spontaneity, and improvisation. "Inspired teaching cannot be fabricated" (Rubin, 1983, p. 47-48). Parker Palmer emphasizes the importance of developing a sense of personal identity "as we learn more about who we are, we can learn techniques that reveal rather than conceal the personhood from which good teaching comes" (1998, p. 25).

Kaufman and Gregoire, in their book, *Wired to Create* (2015) suggest there are innate identity traits that feed the soul of writers and other creative professions. These authors describe

a University of California study in which high-profile creators were observed and common traits became evident. They write:

> "The common strands that seemed to transcend all creative fields was an openness to one's inner life, a preference for complexity and ambiguity, an unusually high tolerance for disorder and disarray, the ability to extract order from chaos, independence, unconventionality, and a willing to take risks" (p. xxiii).

Given the complexities of writing, it seems to align that this wide array of characteristics would be beneficial to those that embrace writing in their lives. Kaufman & Gregoire (2015) also found that creative people "flourish by making the best of the wide range of traits and skills they possess" (p. xxv). People with these traits seek personal meaning making, mental stimulation and are epistemically curious.

Ian Leslie, in his book, *Curious* (2014) describes intellectual curiosity characteristics as a "need for cognition" or NFC (p. xvi). He contends that people with high NFC have "restless inquiring minds and are constantly on the lookout for new intellectual journeys" (p. xviii). For the creative and the curious, these traits can lead to experiences that "delight and provide sustenance for the soul" (p. xxi). These internal traits of curiosity, creativity and seeking intellectual challenges are a seedbed for the development of a writer.

Frank Smith (1998) refers to the communities of which we identify with as "clubs" and this can become the core of who we are. He suggests that we will go out of our way to demonstrate we are not members of a club if we experience discomfort when we are a part the club. Opportunities for teachers to observe, think and talk about their writing with other teachers can help them redefine what it means to be a writer (Burke, 2006*).* They can then be awakened to the realization that prior beliefs about what constitutes being a writer is a narrow definition and

through their revisions of this definition, their own sense of agency increases. This new definition encompasses much more: journal writing, writing letters, notes, documenting, writing to think and learn, story-telling, poetry and the simple act of generating text on paper. Teachers want to write. When they realize they are writers already, they begin to write and can then identify themselves as a writer.

Methodology

Study Design

The methodology of this study lends to the construct of a qualitative collective case study. Collective case studies involve multiple cases in an effort to examine data results for likeness to offer understanding into a matter and enable exploration of a phenomenon, population, or general condition (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2005). The gathering of data from interviews, allows for similarities and themes to be examined to gain insight into the influences of teacher-writers in their development of writing identities.

Participants

Ten K-12 teacher-writers, each with their own writing history, agreed to take part in this case study.. The teachers were three males and seven females. All participants have had additional schooling or training beyond their undergraduate degree and come from diverse teaching experiences. All teachers teach or have taught in Midwest elementary or high schools and represent a broader population of the overall teacher-writers at Midwestern K-12 schools in which the research was conducted. Each participant was extremely willing to participate in the study. They were each assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Table 1. Teacher-Writers Participant Synopsis/Key Influences

Teacher	Innate-Identity Traits	Teaching Experience	Education	*Key Influences to Write Types of Writing produced

Melissa	wrote as a child avid reader "creative DNA"	Elementary teacher grades 4/5 9 years Present: Creator of TeachWrite, a site/blog for teachers to write as a community	BS in English and Elem. Education Masters Children's Writing Institute	*National Writing Project *awareness of not knowing how to teach writing leads Twitter chats, social media
Patty	Avid reader Enjoyed writing as a child Enjoys challenge in writing	Spanish/Russian Language Teacher High School 27 years	BA in Languages and Science Masters	*National Writing Project Published poems NWP leader/participant
Nicole	Wrote as a child, was restless Reads to figure things out, mostly NF	ELA Teacher High School 31 years	BS in Journalism Teaching Masters	*always a writer – led to journalism degree, had a desire to say something NWP co-director and writer in resident (teacher affect)
Erin	Avid reader Wrote as a child Large vocabulary creative	ELA Teacher 9 years Coaches speech	BA in. Education Eng Masters	*National Writing Project *Mom influential
Jackie	Avoided writing as a child from negative experiences Avid reader as adult	Elementary Teacher 4th grade 5 years	BS in Comm. Went back to school for Elem. Ed.	*Literacy Training *Reflection on Writing history and coaching
Larry	Avid reader Wrote as a child Enjoys the puzzle side of writing	ELA teacher High school and College in the HS Speech coach 10 years	BS in Eng. Education Masters in English	*elementary teacher *graduate school professors National Writing Project influential as a teacher
Dennis	Avid reader Wrote as a child introspective Negative experiences in HS	Teaching in Japan 4 years ELA teacher High school 8 years	BS in Elementary Education & MS- ELA	*undergraduate adviser *National Writing project Journal *reading an influence
Rick	Avid reader Wrote as child Storyteller	ELA teacher High school and College Comp in HS 15 years	BS in ELA Masters	*ninth grade teacher *teachers in college *National Writing Project Journals *family
Joline	Avid reader Wrote as a child Introspective Creative	Elementary Teacher Literacy Coach 5+ years	BA in Psych BA in Elem.ED Masters ECE	*personal traits influenced writing identity
Cari	Negative experiences in elem. altered self-confidence as a writer	Math Teacher 3 years Elementary teacher 4th grade 8 years	BS Elem.ED & MS-math Masters	*7th grade teacher – poetry displaced after flood *literacy training in new school journals

Data Sources and Analysis

For each participant, a series of three interviews was the main source of data for this study. The first interview utilized a semi-structured interview guide, while the second interview was developed from the transcripts of the first interview to probe for more elaboration and clarification. The third interview contained two questions and participants responded in writing. After the interviews were conducted, memos and session summary sheets were prepared to document specific answers that may have been generated to the focus questions. These summaries included "who was involved, issues that were covered, new questions to follow up with in follow up interviews, and implications for subsequent data collection" (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 467).

Artifacts were also requested for analysis in an effort to support or disconfirm interview statements (Robson & McCartan, 2016). These artifacts included:

1. Notebook writing samples from writer-teacher participants
2. Published or completed works of teacher-writers

The interviews were transcribed by the main researcher in an effort to generate a deeper relationship within and between the collected data and in the process of analysis. Repeated readings of each interview transcript were conducted, led by intuitive and reflective introspection (Moustakas,1994). Following open coding, categories with similar themes emerged and each theme was labeled to represent the common characteristics of the units of meaning within the group. Data analysis included peer debriefs and member checks.

Findings

An overall finding surfaced upon the first few rounds of analyzing data: experiences of 7-12 English Language Arts (ELA) teachers showed similarities that differed from elementary teachers. Most of the ELA teachers shared the perception that their childhood, early experiences

in school, and/or their own personality traits shaped their identity as writers positively. Elementary teachers shared common experiences of ELA teachers. However, they also recalled more vivid memories of negative experiences as young writers that began the shaping of their beliefs about themselves as writers – which was negative. Later, as a teacher, these writing histories were revisited and reshaped to form more positive identities.

Upon analyzing categories of data, five main themes emerged regarding factors of initial influences in identifying the self as a writer:

1) Family members or a teacher who affirmed their writing abilities early in life
2) Personality characteristics of curiosity, creativity, or imagination
3) A love of books and language
4) Experiences such as the National Writing Project where participants are immersed in experiencing writing themselves
5) Revisiting personal writing histories for those who experienced negative experiences throughout their K-12 years as a student

These themes intersect and overlap. For example, it may have been a family member who encouraged a love of reading as well as instilled a sense of curiosity, or it may have been at the National Writing Project that writing histories were examined, therefore reshaping writing beliefs. A combination of role models, family activities, and examination of previous learning experiences echo Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) argument that four key components contribute to the development of teacher identity. While several participants experienced multiple factors in the initial development of their writing identity, in this study each finding is examined separately.

Nurturing Family Members or Teachers

Several teachers had family members and/or teachers who were influential in shaping their initial early identities as writers. Participants reported these family members were educators themselves, avid readers, or storytellers. Rick, a high school ELA teacher, revisited his memories of his family upbringing in his essay from his master's thesis:

> I have always lived creative nonfiction. Coming from a family of storytellers, narratives defined us. At our evening dinners, Mom, Dad, and I gathered our stories - new and old. Meals were heaped full of stories more than casseroles and hot dishes. Suppers were so alive with stories that we doled them out between bites, adding our own revisions between helpings. Finally, the average meal would end with Dad telling another tale between sips of Folgers while I would bring up new stories between glances at my homework stacked on top of the refrigerator and Mom chiming in commentary between dishes at the sink.

Rick had a combination of influences as a younger self. Not only did he come from a long line of storytellers, he was an avid reader, and had influential teachers and mentors, primarily in college where professors invited him to writing groups or mentored him on writing projects. However, in his interview, he describes his most influential teacher from 9th grade English class:

> In my 9th grade year of English, we had a young teacher . . . and she was really unorthodox in her assignments. I remember, we read a horror story and she had us rewrite the ending or write a conclusion to it. She really liked mine and she scrawled comments all over it that weren't just run on, capitalization errors. And that just kind of filled me with confidence.

Another time, this same teacher chose Rick's essay as her favorite essay and she read it aloud in front of the class. He described his apprehension as she read the words he had written:

> She started to read my words, and I just about fainted. And, you know, it was a lot of fun to see, to get the recognition in a subject that I'd never really had before, and she placed the essay on my desk. And, I still have it in a drawer here. And, people just looked at me differently and I had felt like I had done something worthy and worthwhile. I think that was a key moment - it was kind of an epiphany for me.

While having your own writing chosen as the teacher's favorie and read aloud to the class would be memorable, it was the words of affirmation from this teacher that proved to be a pivotal moment in defining Rick as a writer:

> My pivotal moment in getting me thinking about writing was when [sic] she had one comment on an essay where she wrote, "You know, if you keep practicing, in 20 years I'll look for your name in bookstores." And at that time I thought 20 years! I'll be dead by then!

Even though this teacher was not specific in her appraisal of Rick's early writing, his perception was that his writing made an impression on her. This new teacher recognized Rick's writing abilities, made him aware of his capabilities, and nurtured his development of growing a writing identity. She also made him feel like he was part of a writing community, and her words gave him a motivation to want to keep writing and to make being a writer a goal, a dream.

Larry, also an ELA high school teacher, attended and elementary school in which his K-grade 7 experience was in a four-room schoolhouse. He only had four people in his grade, so one teacher taught multiple grades in one classroom. He described his experience in elementary school as influential to his writing identity due to the amount of one-on-one instruction he received and three consecutive years with one teacher. In his interview, he recalled a key moment in his one of his initial experiences as a writer:

> One of the first things that got me going as a writer was with [sic] this one teacher. I remember the assignment. She had us [sic] do a geography lesson on Canada, and we had to write like we were doing a trip. I did this journal narrative through Canada doing all the steps and she got done reading it and she said, "For your level this is really, really good."

Like Rick, Larry was able to share these stories, remembering many of the details clearly. Their voices were excited in the sharing of these memories. Early on, they developed strong self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as writers due to the positive emotions connected with writing.

Cari, a fourth grade teacher, shared that writing was not a positive experience for her during her early education. She described her beliefs about her abilities as a writer and felt that during these years, if you were not good at the mechanics of writing, you were not a good writer. Her first positive experience as a writer was in 7th grade when her family had endured a flood. She had to leave her home and attend school in a neighboring town. She recalls:

> I never felt like I was a good writer. I always struggled with it. I really liked writing personal stories, that was my love. When I was a 7th grader, we went through the flood and I had to go to a different school for 3 weeks because we closed our school. They [sic] were working on poetry at that time and this was very helpful for me and powerful because I was going through all the emotional hardships with our family and losing our house so I started to write poems [sic] and I still have them. All my poems about the flood and my feelings at the time and it was a really neat [sic] for me to kind of jump into. That was a very positive experience. I still don't think I was very good at it, but I really enjoyed it. After that, [sic] I was always a kid that had a diary or a journal by my bed, and before I went to bed, I'd always write.

While Cari did not recall if the teacher gave her positive feedback on her poetry, or even specific lessons her teacher taught her about poetry, she remembered the emotional connection in the act of writing poetry. The feelings she wrestled with due to the flood and the uncertainties of what would be left of her house when they returned came out in her poems. Although her self-efficacy beliefs were not strong as a result of prior experiences, the lack of focus on mechanics allowed her to freely express her thoughts and emotions without fear.

These participants were respected by their teachers, not only as writers, but as human beings. When writers are accepted for who they are and what they write, they are more apt to take risks and continue to write. Freedom to take risks without fear of critical feedback allowed them to be creative and, in turn, develop positive attitudes and beliefs about themselves as writers.

Personality Characteristics: Curiosity, Creativity and Imagination

Many participants described their personalities as curious and creative, and also enjoyed spending time using their imagination to write stories. This played a critical role in their identity as writers. While these are traits that typically are seen as positive traits, some participants received negative responses for this behavior. However, this did not dampen their passion for creating, wondering, and imagining. Jolene, an elementary teacher for several years and now a literacy coach, described her personality:

> I think that is personality driven. I've always had a very imaginative mental life. My mother used to kind of scold me for daydreaming. But, I had all this stuff going on up here. So, I think I was just drawn to writing [sic]. I felt like imagining and creating [sic] was discouraged in my home as a child because it was not productive. So, I felt almost shamed for being creative and imaginative. As a child [sic], I remember stepping on an

> anthill and having this whole story play out in my head, "What if ants have evening news like people do, and that night on the news they're going to talk about how this whole village that was wiped out by this human!" I had this whole thing play out in my head. I mean who does that? That's the kind of kid I was.

Jolene continued to detail the ways she is creative, even in the items she chooses to place on her kitchen windowsill. Her creativity comes out in her writing as she enjoys adding vivid imagery in her writing and using descriptive language to write stories.

Nicole, an ELA high school teacher, describes her personality as needing to always be trying to figure things out. In other words, a strong sense of curiosity drives her identity. In one of her interviews, she describes what she was like as a child when asked if she was an avid reader.

> I was restless. My parents tried to get me to read. They bought me Childcraft when I was little but I was too restless to read. So, I was not an avid reader [sic]. And, even now I don't read novels, I read almost exclusively nonfiction, lots of instructional things because I'm trying to figure something out. I read poems . . . but mostly instructional stuff.

When asked if she considered herself a learner, she replied that fundamentally, this was her identity. She went on to share that she is always creating or in the process of figuring out something, so if she is not writing she is gardening, making new recipes, or reading in response to solving a problem.

Melissa was a 4/5 elementary teacher for nine years and is now creator and facilitator of a teacher-writer social media company that supports and encourages teachers as writers. She believes her identity as a writer is something she was born with. However, it was not nurtured in

her family. She describes herself as a very creative person who also loves to crochet and quilt. She recalled memories of making books as a child as she dreamed of being an author:

> I remember taking notebook paper and strings of yarn and tying together books and trying to sell them at garage sales. It's just something that's always been - it's in my DNA I think.

As Melissa shared these experiences, there was a sense of delight in her voice. She smiled and laughed throughout the narration of her story as a child creating books. Her love of authors was apparent.

Jolene recalled a similar story from her childhood in which she created a special place to do her writing:

> You know, as far back as I can remember, I had been intrigued with writing. I mean I remember as a 7 year old, going down to the basement in my mother's fruit cellar [sic]. I remember going down there and pushing the jars aside. I took a lamp down there as it was dark, and a chair and a notebook and I would write! I just enjoyed conveying my thoughts. I always had a diary. I just liked to write.

This passion for creating books and stories, along with the immense drive to transfer thoughts onto paper was intrinsically driven for Melissa and Jolene. Neither appeared to have creative mentors, yet both found ways to satisfy this inner urge to write.

Participants shared other personality traits that they felt contributed to their writing identity. Patty and Larry both talked about how they enjoyed problem solving and trying to figure things out. Patty described how writing challenges her:

> I really like what a challenge it is to try to approximate how to describe people when I'm [sic] writing really great poetry. And, to find the exact right word with its meaning, its

meter, its sound and quality. It's really a big puzzle to put that together and that's challenging. Hours go by because I'm trying to think – that's really engaging for me.

Larry confessed that he loves math as much as he enjoys writing because of the challenge in working out the puzzle. He compared this to the puzzle side of writing in which he finds it fun to find new ways to incorporate craft into his writing. He talked about this challenge:

> It's finding a way to introduce a character and as bad as it sounds, to kill off a character – or if I should say this here or there, or if this concept needs to be brought over here. How do you put the dialogue in to get to this point without making it feel forced? That's where I find it fun because books for me come alive with dialogue rather than bouts of description.

Patty and Larry seemed to have epistemic curiosity that infected their drive to write. While some participants did not share how the revising stage of writing contributed to the pleasure they derived, a few found this stage to be highly rewarding. The intellectual challenge of puzzling through a piece of writing to find a precise combination of words to communicate ideas to the reader was emotionally fulfilling.

Creativity, curiosity, engaging in problem solving, puzzling, and harboring an imagination all are common personality traits that contribute to the characteristics that writers embrace. Evidence of these traits was present in the language, story-telling, writing, and descriptions of how they live. For these participants, a need for cognition and creativity is a "way of life, and a style of engaging with the world" (Kaufman & Gregoire, 2015, p. xxix).

Based on these narratives, we can see how personality traits play a part in the development of a writing identity. Participants enjoyed the creative process of making books and became engrossed in the mechanical aspect of writing. This creative self-realization contributed

to their identity and well-being. Curiosity also feeds a writing identity as it encourages a need to aside perfection in order to try things out. Feelings of satisfaction resulting from trial and error to finally solve "the puzzle" of a language task can be the epitome of writing.

Passion for Books and Reading

All of the participants currently have a passion for reading and, for most, this began in childhood. Many of them perceived that books were a key influence in developing their imagination and in increasing their vocabulary. This fed into the ability to write with more ease than other students. Rick describes this well:

> I was really attracted to reading and I fell in love with *The Sword and Sorcerer* type books. Louis Lamour, I would devour those. Really in terms of writing, that started with 9th grade. But, I think early on, because I had been a strong reader in elementary school and in 7th and 8th grade, that once I finally sat down and had some motivation to write, I found I have a much larger vocabulary than my friends because of all my reading. I remember using a lot of interior dialogue with my characters because I'd read a lot of Stephen King and he's kind of famous for that - interior dialogue going in his characters. So, I think all of that kind of bled through at the right time for me.

Jolene became an avid reader at a young age because her father was an educator and he paid her $10.00 to read 100 books the summer she finished first grade. In 1968, that was a lot of money. She was not sure if he did this to encourage her to read or to keep her out of her mother's hair. However, she did it and has been a reader ever since. She says:

> To be honest, my mother had a lot on her plate, so she was often impatient and wanted me out of the way. So, books became my refuge. So, I kind of turned to books as something to do, but then I fell in love with them. So, yes, I absolutely think that being a

> reader fostered that innate imagination. Absolutely. And, I connected with it. . . My reading territories were very descriptive with imaginative language [sic]. Never got into Suess. It was just silly to me. Tell me a story!

Jolene's father attempted to teach Jolene to read at an early age with flashcards and such, but it was the actual book that enticed her to learn how to read. She found a hunger for books that fed her imagination. In times of solitude, this love of reading and writing intertwined and became a part of who she was.

Patty, a high school Spanish teacher, admitted that she preferred reading over writing when she was young, and she believed that eventually her writing was an outgrowth from her reading life.

> I just loved to read a lot, and I think as an outgrowth of that, I just started doing some writing. When I was young, there wasn't quality literature for kids and even young adult literature, and the books we had in school for skits and plays were just boring, so I actually started writing skits and plays so we could do those instead of what was [sic] available.

These recollections recall how emotions play a factor in writing attitudes. An early love of books grew into a desire to play with language and create stories. Participants valued writing because they valued the books they read. This shaped their attitudes and sense of self-efficacy when picking up the pen to write. Currently, all participants are avid readers and insist that reading plays a factor in their writing identities.

Immersion Experiences such as National Writing Project (NWP)

Although several teachers recalled an early love of writing as young students, when they began teaching many of them realized they struggled in how to teach writing. Melissa, teacher-writer and social media creator, describes this realization:

> I've always loved to write and when I was a little girl I wanted to be a writer and an author as many little girls do. And when I started teaching in the classroom, I was shocked because I was not prepared for teaching in the classroom. We did not have a curriculum, we did not have PD and thought [sic] how do I teach my students to fall in love with what I fell in love with when I was their age? My very first year of teaching, because we didn't have any kind of PD support, my students only wrote one writing assignment the whole year. We wrote a poem for mother's day because I thought we cannot end the year and I not teach these kids anything about writing. So after that point, I made it my goal to learn as much as I could about teaching writing because I felt horrible that year that I had done such a terrible job.

This cognitive dissonance prompted a search for opportunities to learn how to be more effective writing teachers. This was evidence of a commitment to learning and a needing to know more for the benefit of the students they teach. The National Writing Project summer institutes heightened their awareness of how their own writing practice plays a primary role in their confidence in teaching writing. To be more effective writing teachers, they began to revisit their own writing practices for new purposes.

While teachers pursued the NWP to gain understandings in teaching writing, what happened within the three-week retreat-like institute was a transformation for the teachers as writers themselves. One of the key features of the NWP includes the act of writing. Teachers write every day in free writes, explorations, and on meaningful topics. They are involved in

hands-on implementation of writing mini-lessons and participants learn from one another through feedback. A second key feature includes the social aspect of the writing community. Safe and supportive relationships are developed which encourages sharing writing publicly. Teachers grow in self-efficacy, confidence and expertise as they shape their own writing identities (NWP & Nagin, 2003). Patty, high school Spanish teacher and participant in several NWPs, described her transformation at the NWP she attended:

> We really dug in to why people write, and what writing can do for people beyond what we think of as publishing, or writing to pass classes or as requirement for classes. So, when we started digging into those different aspects of writing, it changed some of the things that I thought I could do. I discovered the generative side of myself as a writer. I also discovered things through writing. And when I started to think about topics more deeply, I came to some truths that I hadn't realized before and that was really interesting. I had [sic] ah-ha epiphanies are still with me today.

Patty's statement supports the ideas of Burke (2006); teachers need opportunities to spend time thinking and talking about writing through reflective practices. Through writing and dialogue with others, she redefined what writing meant for her, personally and as a teacher.

When asked why participants felt the National Writing Project was such a transformational experience in developing their own writing identity, various responses were shared. Patty believed it was the length of time and being fully immersed in the experience:

> I don't know if there could be a better model than the writing project. The thing about the project is it took place in the summer when people were more free [sic] to concentrate just on that. It was so intense and we got so involved in that environment. There was a lot

> of buy in and people just became immersed in that. I think that's probably my cue right there - immersion.

The immersion and intensity of writing for such a length of time supported writers to develop new habits of mind that were necessary for sustaining writing. Without outside factors, such as the daily responsibilities of teaching during the school year, teachers were able to focus their time, thoughts and energy to the task of writing.

Erin, ELA high school teacher who also attended a NWP, attributed the emotional aspect of the writing project as a primary factor in the transformational experience for her. She described the friendships made, the vulnerabilities that were exposed, and the mentorship of the facilitators and experienced writers who supported them:

> The first couple times we all wrote together, there were tears. We wrote and then we cried. So, we then decided, we couldn't start each day off like that, so we put this ban [sic] on emotional writing (laugh). I think the group that we were together - we were just very welcoming of what each other had to offer. One of the ladies who was with us [sic] was doing it for her last set of professional credits she had to take before she retired and she was just a phenomenal writer and poet! She was just this master teacher and she was just really affirming of the younger teachers. There was just a lot of friendship that happened.

Erin's story shows the importance of developing a safe community in order to forge emotional connections with fellow writers. Deep and meaningful learning takes place when emotions play a role in the context. Writing deepens their relationship with their self along with others involved in the act of learning. Receiving positive feedback on early writing also contributes to self-efficacy to keep writing. Risk-taking is encouraged and the need for perfection subsides.

Rick, Larry, and Nicole developed writing identities early in their lives and chose their path as English teachers because of their interests in literature and writing. However, it was the National Writing Project that influenced their work as teachers. Their development as teacher-writers grew when they began to share their own writing lives with their students.

Revisiting Writing Histories and Beliefs about Writing

About half of the teachers recalled negative experiences in writing early on in their education. Some of these histories were revisited during their participation in National Writing Projects, while others experienced this with an instructor at graduate school or a literacy coach during literacy trainings. Jackie, a fourth grade teacher, remembered her writing experiences in her elementary years:

> It was very much a teacher driven "write this" or "complete this" [sic] product driven kind of assignments in writing. It was very prompted. I felt like the only thing that involved writing was making sure my spelling words were spelled correctly and making sure my sentences were cohesive. So, I didn't like it at all. The only things I remember from writing in my childhood were lots of red marks.

Revisiting these past histories for Jackie brought to the surface the dark emotions she associated with writing. These were new realizations about her emotions, feelings, and beliefs about herself as a writer. Jackie continued to describe the experience when this happened:

> It was my first course on teaching literacy (with my literacy coach) and she had asked us to write about our early experiences in writing. And, until that moment, I had never really reflected on how any of my past experiences molded my attitude toward writing. So, it was really through the act of writing about what my past experiences were and allowing me that time to reflect that was eye opening for me. I just kind of gasped, and thought,

> “Oh my gosh, that is why I fear teaching writing, and why I myself don't like writing.
>
> But, it wasn't until I wrote about it that I confirmed all of those things.

Revisiting these past histories and old perspectives can be transformative. The initial realization that our histories shape our beliefs triggers the process of analyzing, questioning and reshaping the stories. New narratives are written that support a broader context. Dirkx (2012) suggests this transformation is grounded in the emotional subconscious and sees this as ‘soul work’. Once this transformation is experienced, writers are awakened to how past histories play a role in other areas of life. This becomes a purpose for writing, as a need for continued self-discovery.

Patty recalled similar experiences in revisiting her own writing history from in high school that focused more on her understanding of the writing process:

> Once the actual sentence was written down on a piece of paper, I don't think there was a lot of, “I'm going to move this paragraph or move this sentence.” So, it's has to be pretty good the first time. You turned it in and got it back and there was no fixing it and if you got a bad grade there was no fixing it. We didn't engage in a revision process.

While ELA teachers typically have a basic understanding of the writing process, for other teachers, such as Patty, a high school Spanish teacher, learning about the writing process was influential in her understanding of how writers really work. A shift from believing that writing was supposed to be perfect, to the new understanding that a first draft should not be perfect, was a huge revelation for her. She learned about the many kinds of writing and how to write for different purposes. An entire world of writing opened for herself and her teaching, where before she had a narrow perception of what it looked like. She continued to describe this experience:

> I know from my own school, and teachers are trying to change this now, but I never saw a draft process. I only saw published work. I had no idea that authors went through a poem

> maybe 30 times before it got to where I was reading it. Or a novel - how many times that writing had to be revised and maybe even by other people. And when it came to the revision process, I don't think most people realize that when they sit down to read something, that they are not reading the first draft. Until the writing project, nobody ever said, just write-write-write, you can always change it afterwards - we are just going to get it down.

Patty's story supports the necessity of overcoming perfection plays in writing. Her original understanding of the writing process did not include drafting and revision. It only included getting ideas down on paper that were well written the first time. Without the understanding that writing does not have to be perfect, writers are unable to generate enough text to lead to discoveries. Fear of being wrong leads to surface level writing that feels safe.

Some participants enjoyed writing early on in their childhoods, but later, in their high school years, beliefs about their writing abilities changed when confronted with their capabilities to complete assignments. Dennis spoke of this when asked to elaborate experiences that made him question his writing abilities. His examples included learning how to identifying parts of sentences:

> I just remember suddenly feeling frozen in the idea of writing at that point. If became all about being right or wrong and it was. And, I remember thinking, I just can't do this. This just isn't something that I'm good at. And, I don't want to sound negative, but the experience shut down almost all of my desire to write.

Like Dennis, Rick shared a similar story. Although he had highly influential mentors and teachers in his high school and college experiences, once he began teaching as an ELA instructor, he stopped writing. He explains this:

> When I first started teaching, we were big on the five-paragraph theme, you have a topic sentence, three supporting sentences, a concluding sentence and then you expand that out to the essay. And, something odd happened during those first few years if teaching. I'd stopped writing. I'd written all before, but something about that formulaic approach just really squashed my love for writing.

These negative experiences impacted self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes towards writing in powerful ways. For Rick, it was not until he began graduate school that his love of writing was rekindled. Teachers, mentors, and the research of Peter Elbow (1998), Donald Murray (1985) and Tom Romano (2000) shed light on the fact that there were many ways to write. Following graduate school, he attended a National Writing Project and his new understandings were solidified even more.

Discussion

Findings from this research illustrate the complexities of each teacher-writer's influences in their early identification of being a writer. As participants shared their emotional stories of early writing histories and first influences in feeling empowered as a writer, some commonalities began to emerge among these ten teachers. These include three main concepts: 1) emotions; 2) teachers/mentors at key moments; 3) and for teachers whose early experiences were negative, a reshaping of beliefs or understandings about what it means to be a writer and how to teach writing was necessary. Recalling Badura's work (1977, 1995, 2002), teachers and mentors enabled participants to gain a sense of self-efficacy through their positive feedback, guidance, and instruction and by reshaping their association with writing from a negative view of anxiety and avoidance to one of possibility. When participants realized their own potential in accomplishing writing, they felt capable of writing themselves and learned more about

themselves through the act of writing. All three of these concepts interweave in a tapestry that makes up the complex identity of each teacher-writer. Each thread will be examined as to how they impact the writing identity formation of writers.

Emotions in Writing

The participants in this study all shared a variety of emotions, implicitly and explicitly, in their early identification of themselves as writers. Several of the study participants reported pleasure in writing stories from their imaginations and "making books" in their childhood years. Because of their avid reading lives, their vocabulary was large and mechanics were not a struggle, at least in their perceptions. Jolene described her experiences in the cellar writing stories as joyful and intriguing, while Melissa's stringing yarn to bind her books and sell at garage sales brought feelings of pride. These early joyful emotions contributed to their feelings of self-worth and confidence in the context of writing. Repeated experiences strengthened these attributes of their writing identity (Cremin & Locke, 2017). Other participants described their emotions when their writing was recognized as exemplary by teachers, especially in the presence of their peers. These emotions were not only related to their achievement in writing, but also in the social context in the relationship with their teacher and their peers. Pride, self-worth, and confidence were all evident in these stories.

Most of these teacher-writers had a love of reading early on in their lives. Jolene described how books became her refuge, just as Rosenthal (1995) reminds us that books can enable us to escape the family stresses and "frees its readers from their own lives by propelling them into distant worlds peopled with characters they would not otherwise met" (p. 1). Rick fell in love with books such as *The Sorcerer and the Stone* type books and kept the public library in business during the summer months. They spoke of these books as treasures in their lives.

Rosenthal emulates, “aesthetic pleasure in relishing the sound and structure of language … becoming lost in mental imagery” (p. 1). In college, the books Dennis read fed his writing, which was his key point in time in which his writing identity developed.

For participants whose writing lives began or were rediscovered with experiences in the context of the National Writing Project, a transformational experience was evident while in the company of other writers. Erin described the strong emotions of writing together with a group of women that she became very connected with. Over the course of the project, while immersed in writing together, she felt safe and respected enough to be vulnerable in her writing. In addition, writers in her community supported her learning about herself through writing. A goal of the National Writing Project is to provide opportunities to “consider the teacher as a whole person who has valuable insight about herself and her practice” (Collier, Scheld, Barnard & Stallcup, 2015, p. 131). This supports the concept of how emotions, context, and relationships play a role in the learning process (Mezirow, 1991).

Three of the participants in this study experienced negative emotions in their early K-12 experiences as writers and this developed fear and anxiety in writing for them. Jackie and Cari both felt that mechanics were not strengths for them as writers and recalled the scarring of “the red pen” on their papers. Jackie recalls not being able to remember being taught how to write effectively which brought feeling of uncertainty along with her anxiety. Dennis remembered struggling with grammar lessons in which he had to identify parts of sentences. His feelings of frustration forced him to believe that writing was just something he was not good at. For these participants, it took a teacher or mentor to help them examine these past experiences and recreate a new relationship with writing. When teachers examine their writing histories, they teach from a place of empathy for their students since they understand how hard writing is. Sharing these

stories with students will create a culture of trust and safety and create conditions for risk taking in a writing community.

Responsive Teachers and Mentors

The majority of study participants had a teacher or mentor who knew who they were as writers and offered appropriate feedback, teaching, or were able to provide an experience that transformed their beliefs about themselves as writers. Rick and Larry had teachers who recognized their abilities as writers at moments in their lives when they were forming attitudes about their writing identity and gave them admission into the writing club. Cari had a seventh grade teacher who offered the landscape of poetry in a non-restrictive way at a time when Cari needed an emotional outlet for the uncertainty and worries she was carrying. Jackie's literacy coach invited her to explore her own writing history to help her become conscious of the way her past experiences created her own reality about herself. Dennis's advisor saw the apprehension and anxieties about making decisions in college and suggested he begin to journal these thoughts and feelings and other areas of interest to learn more about who he was. Each participant, somewhere along their journey of development as a writer, had an influential person that played a role at a time in their lives when they were vulnerable. Banduras (1997) reminds us of the influence of emotion and social persuasion in self-efficacy. When participants recognized writing could be a tool for discovery, their sense of agency increased and they became more motivated to continue to write.

The importance in a teacher knowing who her students are as writers and having an understanding of writing tools, strategies, and processes cannot be understated. Ralph Fletcher

(2017), in his book, *Joy Write*, describes the work of skilled writing teachers who have the capabilities of reading and rereading their students' behaviors. These teachers:

> . . . slowly and carefully build understanding of (their students) favorite genres, struggles, handwriting woes, breakthroughs and triumphs. They make careful note of when the energy goes up and when it goes down. This knowledge informs their teaching. The best teachers 'teach at the point of their learning'. This careful observation informs their instruction and reveals what students are ready to learn next (p. 9).

When these teachers are writers themselves, they can recognize the emotions and the phases students encounter during writing. They look for these as evidence of what a student feels and can do as a writer. This deep understanding contributes to the development of teacher-student connection and this, in itself, can form relationships were risk taking is safe and students feel free to explore who they are as a writers.

This portrait of responsive teaching is echoed by Louis Rubin (1985) in his book, *Artistry in Teaching,* when he describes pedagogical excellence in strong teachers. He emphasizes that these teachers are keenly aware of knowing their students and also have the ability to "manage whatever techniques they use with great skill – that is, they are able to use the devise expertly, so that its usefulness is maximized and utilized in the appropriate contexts" (Rubin, 1985, p. 5). His overarching thesis is that these teachers "have a 'feel' for the right thing at the right time and this is the benchmark of expertness" (Rubin, 1985, p. 5). Teachers take the lead from their students through listening to students and they employ a stance that "demands a waiting, responsive type of teaching" (Graves, 1984, p. 29). The teacher-writer has developed this awareness, skill and technique through the act of writing herself. Through listening to her students, relationships are nurtured and a safe community is created.

Donald Graves (1978) teaches us that writing, more than any other subject, can be transformational for students. In Grave's research, he shares the words of a student he observed to emphasize this shift in belief about one's identity. "When the teacher read one of my paragraphs in class, until then I had no idea I could write . . . and I began to think I could do something right for a change" (Newkirk, 2013, p. 22). Rick, a participant in this study, had a similar response to his teacher reading his work when he noticed people looked at him different and he had felt like he had done something worthy and worthwhile. This realization of newly found abilities in writing lifted the confidence of these students in more ways than writing and offered a springboard for the development of each participant in the area of writing. Meaningful learning is grounded in emotional connections with ourselves and our social context (Dirkx, 2001). It appeared that each teacher paid attention and placed a premium on taking time to know his/her students well and was an expert in the recognition of quality writing beyond mechanics.

Reshaping Writing Beliefs

Many teachers are unconscious of how their negative writing histories play a role in their beliefs about themselves as writers and in their pedagogies of teaching writing (Yeo, 2007). In fact, until teachers are provided an opportunity to explore these histories in the context of writing, teachers may have unconsciously forgotten these negative experiences altogether or even considered the experiences as negative. For the participants in this study, the teachers who had difficulties with mechanics in their early years of writing felt discomfort and anxiety in writing and labeled themselves as ones who "are not good with mechanics" or "struggle with grammar". As participants entered new ways to think about writing, they began to identify themselves in ways that are realized in their writing (Carbone & Orellana, 2010). Writers begin to see themselves as members of the writing community and move from recipients of writing to

agents of the written word. Teachers realize their agency and power in writing (Moje & Luke, 2009).

As young children enter school, most believe they can write (Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1983). Many elementary teachers have had years of "schooling" and episodes with the red pen that have damaged this self-belief and so they shift to the belief that writing is not something just anyone can engage in (Cremin & Oliver, 2016; Zoch, Myers, Lambert, Vetter & Fairbanks, 2016). Teachers in this study had opportunities to reflect on their writing histories and new narratives were created. They recognized their understanding of writing was limited and how this effected their teaching of writing. "The beginning point for building student writing motivation rests in his/her teacher beliefs about writing" (Bruning &Horn, 2000, p. 30). If a teacher lacks self-efficacy in writing and adopts a negative writing identity in herself, writing becomes an act of compliance rather than one of meaning.

Implications

Darling Hammond and Bransford (2005) argue that students deserve an expert teacher on year one of a teacher's career. They contend that "these students are entitled to sound instruction and cannot afford to lose a year of schooling to a teacher who is ineffective or learning by trial and error on the job" (Darling Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 3). With this premise in mind, we propose the implications for practice focus on preparation of pre-service teachers in the area of writing during their pre-service teacher education programs. Universities need to examine the gap between what pre-service teachers believe about themselves as writers and their abilities as teachers of writers, and the expectations of what the students they will teach are expected to do. From the research and the findings in this study, immersion opportunities, such as the National Writing Project, over an extended period of time is effective in developing writing self-efficacy

and reshaping writing identities. These kinds of experiences are difficult to make possible for in-service teachers due to the demands of job duties and time constraints during the school year. However, because of semester long courses, pre-service teachers could meet these expectations within the coursework of pre-service teacher education programs.

Despite the National Commission on Writing's (2003) call for better teacher preparation in writing instruction, current pre-service teacher literacy courses emphasize reading methods and embed writing methods into reading courses (Morgan, 2010). There is a greater need to expand beyond the teaching of reading and writing methods altogether. Courses must first create conditions for pre-service teachers to be readers and writers themselves in order to develop their own reading and writing identities (Miller, 2009; Morgan & Pytash, 2014). Dewey (1933) reminds us, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment; whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference" (p. 22). It is necessary for teachers to experience writing that meets a wide range of authentic purposes and introduces a range of effective methods and tools for modeling, teaching and creating conditions for students to be motivated to write (Pressley et al., 2007).

A teacher's practices are a result of the beliefs which she holds about herself and about how students learn (Cremlin & Baker, 2010; Palmer, 2004). Several of the participants in this study originally held negative beliefs about their identity as writers, and thus avoided writing themselves and did not have the confidence to teach writing. In an effort to reshape these beliefs, intentionality about our goals in pre-service literacy courses is essential. Restructuring literacy courses for pre-service teachers should include opportunities to:

1. Feel safe within a writing community in order to share vulnerable writing. This creates an atmosphere of trust and emotional safety. Writing identities and beliefs about themselves as writers can change in response to the low-stakes, safe environment in which they can share their work and freely express their anxieties about themselves as writers and as teachers of writing (Zoch, Myers, Lambert, Vetter & Fairbanks, 2016).
2. Examine past writing histories, or writing literacy autobiographies, to explore past experiences as a writer, and reflect on the emotions attached to writing and why they exist. As young children enter school, most believe they can write (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1983). Years of "schooling" and episodes with the red pen can damage these beliefs to ones that suggest writing is not everyone (Zoch, Myers, Lambert, Vetter & Fairbanks, 2016; Cremin & Oliver, 2016). The teachers of these scarred histories must first engage in experiences that can transforming these beliefs and mindsets about writing through the exploration of their writing histories (Norman & Spencer, 2005).
3. Model and teach what it means to be creative, curious and how to embrace problem solving in the act of writing. Ralph Fletcher, in his book, *Joy Write* (2017), argues that our education systems do not offer enough opportunities for low stakes writing where the sole purpose is to generate writing in order to discover the meaning or significance of an image, thought or question. Pre-service teachers need to see value and purpose in the act of writing for their eyes only rather than to view it always as an assignment to turn in.

4. Model and advocate a reading life. Book talks using children's books or novels, young adult literature, adult books or books to influence writing can all ignite a dormant pre-service teacher to begin reading again. Reading feeds writing and writing feeds reading.
5. Utilize strategies to know students as writers to identify their strengths and areas to grow. This may require separate courses for writing, mandatory smaller class sizes in literacy courses, writing conferences and writing based assignments. As a program, teacher education faculty can discuss ways to model, teach, and nurture pre-service teachers in living a writers' life in all their courses.

Each of these practices help pre-service teachers to develop a sense of writing identity, self-efficacy, and confidence as writers. They also create conditions that foster habits of mind that can shift one into a present state of being, heightened awareness and personal joy (Fletcher, 2017; Calkins, 1994). The goal is to inspire pre-service teachers to not only love writing themselves, but to create conditions that inspire their students to love writing. These goals are well worth our energy and time.

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Article #2: Perceptions of Teacher-Writers: Sustaining A Writing Life

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to explore the perceptions among ten K-12 teachers who teach writing and also write themselves. What are the key purposes for teachers to sustain a writing life? What habits of mind or attitudes are necessary for teachers to sustain a writing life? Interviews served as the primary data source along with writing artifacts from the participants' own writing life. Findings indicate that teacher-writers committed to a writing life do so for the purpose of 1) discovering meaning, 2) connections to others 3) commitment to learning and 4) well-being, with an overall purpose of feeling alive both professionally and personally. Habits of mind or attitudes that were cultivated to sustain a purposeful writing life were: 1) a sense of awareness and curiosity 2) habits and rituals 3) solitude 4) overcoming fear and perfection. Findings suggest that teachers need personal reasons to commit to and sustain a writing life along with a cultivation of attitudes or habits of mind to sustain a writing practice.

Keywords: writing teachers, teacher-writer identity, teachers who write, purpose for writing, writing attitudes

Perceptions of Teacher-Writers: Sustaining A Writing Life

"Teachers should write themselves if they teach writing," has become a cliché in some education circles (Calkins, 1983; Emig, 1971; Geekie, Cambourne & Fitzsimmons, 1999; Grainger, 2005; Graves, 1990; 2005; Murray, 1978; Smith, 1988). Most often, scholars, theorists, administrators and those living outside of classroom walls urge teachers to adopt a particular practice because it produces positive results, supports a proven theory, or is best practice. Prior research (Cremin & Oliver, 2015) reports that the majority of teachers do not write themselves alongside their students or live a writing life. However, some teachers do write. They journal, write blogs, and participate in online writing groups, and some publish. Do they only write to impact their teaching? What are their key purposes for writing? Research that continues to affirm the finding of how students benefit when teachers write themselves will continue to accrue; however, it is not worth our time if it does not convince more teachers to live a writing life.

The argument for teachers to write is strong. Gillespie (1985) argues,

> When we write, our classroom writing program and our interactions with our young writers can be based on knowledge we have earned ourselves rather than received from others. We don't need to give up our curriculum to the experts. We can just watch ourselves write (p. 2).

While this may be true, for the teacher who feels the stress of overwhelming responsibilities, the hat of "writer" skeptically, looks like one more thing (Jost,1990). Most likely, as programs come and go, if teachers hold off long enough, this too shall pass and something else may come along that teaches students to be better writers (Evans, 1996). Or, teachers may feel the ping of inspiration and initially write, but fail to keep it ongoing (Hairston, 1986). This affirms these teachers' beliefs that, "I'm really not a teacher who writes" or contribute to the guilt and frustration for teachers as now "they feel guilty they are not writing and frustrated because they don't know what to do about it" (Hairston, p. 62). The emotional feelings of guilt and lack of confidence that teachers carry regarding writing themselves and teaching writing can cause avoidance of writing altogether. Their beliefs about what defines writing and what writers do seem like unreachable goals to teachers.

If influencing teachers to write is important, then it is essential for them to revisit their writing histories to reshape their beliefs about writing and their own abilities as writers (Ivanic, 1998). Research (Cremin & Oliver, 2016) also suggests teachers need experiences, as adult writers, to experience writing. There are National Writing Projects, online teacher writing groups, writing challenges, and countless books to encourage teachers to write, with prompts to get them writing. One key element is missing if teachers are to develop an outside of school, personal writing practice in order to live a literate life. They need to have a purpose and know why. What is really in it for them, personally? If they write enough, these purposes evolve on their own. However, for those afraid to dip their big toe in the water, that is too much time to waste in order to find out.

This study is not about the students except in an indirect way. This study was conducted for teachers. It is not about seeking ideas for telling teachers what to write or how to write, or

what might happen if you do. It is not about seeking how to get teachers to write or compare students' work of the teachers who write and teachers who do not. There is enough guilt for teachers to carry. The purpose of this study is to seek purpose. Every day and for every teaching moment, we ask ourselves, "What is our purpose for doing this?" Teachers need a purpose for writing themselves if they are ever going to freely and authentically pick up a pen and write inside and outside of the classroom. They need to know why.

Literature Overview

The notion that teachers should write alongside their students is not a new philosophy, theory, or best practice pedagogy. Murray (1968) wondered aloud why our young people are not taught writing in the way that professional writers write. Emig (1971), Graves (1983), Atwell (1987) and Calkins (1986) followed suit with studies, teaching, research and writing about the idea that teachers should write themselves. Their studies have suggested that when teachers write alongside students, they gain confidence in teaching writing. They develop their own toolbox of strategies from their personal experiences and can feel empathy for students who struggle with writing. The students of teacher-writers receive more writing instruction, have more expert one-on-one instruction focused on individual need, and ultimately develop the same passion for writing as the teacher (Cremin & Oliver, 2016). When teachers write themselves, students benefit.

However, far too many teachers still do not write (Geekie, Cambourne & Fitzsimmon, 1999). Researchers continue to wonder why. Cremlin and Oliver (2016) administered a critical analysis of over 400 papers, from the years of 1990-2015, containing empirical work on "teachers' attitudes to writing, their sense of themselves as writers and the potential impact of teacher writing on pedagogy or student outcomes in writing" (p. 1). They found that "teachers

have narrow conceptions of what counts as writing, being a writer and that multiple tensions exist, relating to low self-confidence, negative writing histories, and the challenge of composing and enacting teacher and writer positions in school" (Cremlin & Oliver, 2016, p. 1). Additional studies confirmed this meta-analysis to include the emotional stance of teachers in the context of teaching writing. "Not only is writing challenging for the inexperienced author, but it creates anxiety, avoidance, and frustration for those who teach it" (Troia & Graham, 2003, p. 75). As teachers learn to teach writing, what is often overlooked is the fact that their own identities as writers (or non-writers) also need to be important to address – just as much as the methods themselves (Cremin, 2017; Zoch, Myers, Lambert, Vetter & Fairbanks, 2016).

Graves (1985) goes further than to urge teachers to write themselves. He recommends that all teachers live a "literate life" as a writer and a reader (Graves 1985, 1990). This requires more of the teacher than solely writing alongside the students in the classroom during classroom time, it means writing purposefully outside the context of the classroom and sharing writing with others. Living a literate life enables teachers to model to students their own writing in the real world of writers. They can also model what *they* do rather than just what 'writers' do. Teachers redefine their role from that of giver of information to that of writer, reader, and learner (Kaufman, 2009; Murray, 2003).

Teresa Cremin (2017), in her recent book, *Writer Identity and the Teaching and Learning of Writing*, defines teachers who live a literate life through writing as "teacher-writers", and shares her extensive research and the work of others about "the connections between self-identity or self-efficacy and writing motivation" (p. 53). Addressing the teacher-writer as a whole person and creating conditions for them to explore the many possibilities for writing in their lives "can help them experience and compose ways of being in the world" (Dawson, 2017, p. 4). Teacher

writers live the writing life themselves, therefore are able to put into language for students the authentic craft moves they make, the habits of mind writers have and how writers work through the process of writing in various ways. They can share the joys and the struggles they personally have in their writing to build community that feels safe to share their writing work.

Some teachers have sought out and participated in National Writing Projects (NWP), which have been in place since 1974. This professional development has led to thousands of teachers transforming into writers themselves and being inspired during these institutes to lead more writerly lives (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003). The NWP has supported teachers in writing and helped them to transform their practice in teaching writing for over 40 years. "During summer institutes, inservice teachers come together and learn by engaging in writing themselves, inquiring into their own teaching, and reading current research and theory about the teaching of writing" (Zoch et al, 2016). Yet, studies show that once removed from the energy of the institute setting and back in the classroom, energy wanes and a writing practice is difficult to cultivate (Hairston, 1986).

Graves (1994), in his book, *A Fresh Look at Writing* entitled a chapter, "Why would anyone ever want to write?" He suggests that,

> Most of us associate writing with what schools have taught us about it, we lose out on learning about the purpose and place of writing for ourselves. Writing is a highly personal medium through which we communicate the facts and meaning of our experience (p. 36).

Graves attempts to teach us early on where writing comes from, how to live awake in the world as writers and, more importantly, how to keep writing. Murray (1985), in his book, *A Writer Teaches Writing,* explains how to follow a thread and listen to the writing, finding meaning in what the text has to say. He emphasizes that writing is about discovery and he exclaims his joy in

that. He writes, “This is the writers’ addiction: we write because we surprise ourselves, educate ourselves, and entertain ourselves. Writing, we see more, feel more, think more, understand more than when we are not writing in our head or on the page” (Murray, 1985, p. 7). Murray, as well as other professional writers (Cameron, 1998; Elbow, 1973; Maran, 2013), admit that writing was a way to achieve sanity and became a psychological necessity. Graves (1990) teaches us that writing takes dedication and is a way for others to reach the goal of life long wonder of learning. Writing becomes a path to “explore the wonder, complexity, and mystery in the world” around us (p. 124).

Purpose is essential for teachers to write if they are to commit to writing in their non-teaching time writing. The current rationales focus on student outcomes and teaching effectiveness, but scant is research that gives teachers an honest answer when asked, “Why should I?” There needs to be more than carrots or sticks or inspiration to start and sustain a practice, something more needs to drive commitment and momentum. People ultimately need know why, how and what the results will be if a practice of series of actions are implemented (Sinek, 2009). Many business organizations utilized this model, yet we often fail to apply it to education and personal practices.

This study explores the perceptions of ten teacher-writers, why they write and the essentials for them to stay committed to writing. Few studies focus on these deep underlying personal purposes for the teacher-writer to write, along with the essentials that enable them to sustain this writing life. This research is guided by these questions:

As a teacher-writer:

1. What is the primary purpose for committing to a writing life?

2. What necessary habits of mind, attitudes or tools are necessary to sustain the life of a writer over time?

Methodology

Study Design

A phenomenological case study approach was adopted to explore the preceding research questions. In phenomenology, the goal is to seek more than an individual's subjective account of an experience. The phenomenologist combs through the data to discover the universals that lie underneath the subjective experience (Crotty, 1998). "We inspect them, and while inspecting them we can observe their essence, their constitution, their intrinsic character and we can make our speech conform in a pure measure to what is *seen* in its full clarity" (Husserl, 1964, p. 24). Husserl (1931) describes intentional phenomenology as "a concept which at the threshold of phenomenology is quite indispensable as a starting-point and basis" (Crotty, 1998, p. 79). The intentions of this study aim to arrive at this starting point for teacher-writers and seek to understand the essence of what sustains their writing lives and gives purpose to writing.

Multiple cases were examined for likeness to gain understanding (Creswell, 2013) and explore a phenomenon, population or general condition (Glesne, 2005). To ensure validity, a series of interviews were conducted, both face-to-face and in writing. Supporting data from participants' written work was also obtained to provide background and support for data collected through interviews. Data from interviews and artifacts were analyzed through an eidetic process to explicate the lived experience of the participants in the study. In essence, this was one case study with multiple participants to shed light on a phenomenon.

Participants

Ten K-12 teacher-writers participated in this study, three males and seven females. All teachers teach in Midwest K-12 schools and represent a broader population of the overall teacher-writers in the area in which the research was conducted. Participants have all had additional school or training beyond their undergraduate degree and come from diverse teaching experiences. (See Table 1 for demographics and summaries.) Participants were give opportunities to opt out of the study to ensure the offering of data freely, yet, each of these participants was extremely willing to participate. Each was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Table 1. Teacher-Writers Participant Synopsis/What Sustains Writing

Teacher	Themes to Sustain Writing	Teaching Experience	Education	Tools to Keep Writing
Melissa	Daily writing Online community Triggers –social media #WOD (word of the day) To inspire others Reflect/learning Discover what I think	Elementary teacher grades 4/5 9 years Present: Creator of TeachWrite, a site/blog for teachers to write as a community	BS in English and Elem. Education Masters in Children's Writing Institute	*blogging *leads Twitter chats, social media *daily writing *#WOD *reading *solitude *sentence a day journal
Patty	Discover meaning Write to learn Connect with people - grandfather	Spanish/Russian Language Teacher High School 27 years	BA in Languages and Science Masters	*reading *goals *writing groups *challenges
Nicole	Discover meaning Create/curiosity Committed to learning Connections	ELA Teacher High School 31 years	BS in Journalism Teaching Masters	*reading *goals *publishing *writing group at revising
Erin	Connections-NWP Committed to learning Well-being Discovery/reflection	ELA Teacher 9 years Coaches speech	BA in Eng. Education Masters	*sentence a day *writing partner *blogging *reading *conferences/retreats
Jackie	Well-being/emotions Connection-31 day ch. Discover meaning Aliveness/joy	Elementary Teacher 4th grade 5 years	BS in Comm. Went back to school for Elem. Ed.	*reading *challenges *place *blogging

Larry	Need to create Committed to learning Unfulfilled when not writing	ELA teacher High school and College in the HS Speech coach 10 years	BS in Eng. Education Masters in English	*time and place *plans *goals/project (book) *reading
Dennis	Solitude Discovery/reflection Committed to learning Connect to self	Teaching in Japan 4 years ELA teacher High school 8 years	BS in Elementary Education & MS- ELA	*reading *time and place *goals/project (book) *conferences *social media
Rick	Connections Committed to learning Discover meaning Aliveness/joy	ELA teacher High school and College Comp in HS 15 years	BS in ELA Masters	*blogging *reading *writes with students *social media
Joline	Curious/committed to learning Emotional need connection	Elementary Teacher Literacy Coach 5+ years	BA in Psych BA in Elem.ED Masters ECE Doctoral Student	*blogging *time and place *reading *goals (dissertation story)
Cari	Connections Emotional well being Committed to learning	Math Teacher 3 years Elementary teacher 4th grade 8 years	BS Elem.ED & MS-math Masters	*notebook out *writes with students *writers notebook *fodder

Data Sources and Analysis

A series of three individual interviews were the main source of data for this research project. The first interviews were semi-structured, while the second set of interview questions were developed from first interview responses. The third interview contained two main questions for all participants and participants responded in writing. Written artifacts were also requested to analyze in an effort to support or disconfirm interview statements and findings (Robson & McCartan, 2016). These artifacts included published or completed writing of teacher-writers

Eidetic analysis of data was utilized. First, memos followed each interview to dwell on the initial experience of interview (Wertz, 1985). Summary sheets documented main concepts and intuitions. Descriptive and conceptual notes were made upon immersion of the data: summary sheets, memos, interview transcripts and artifacts. Reflective and reflexive open coding

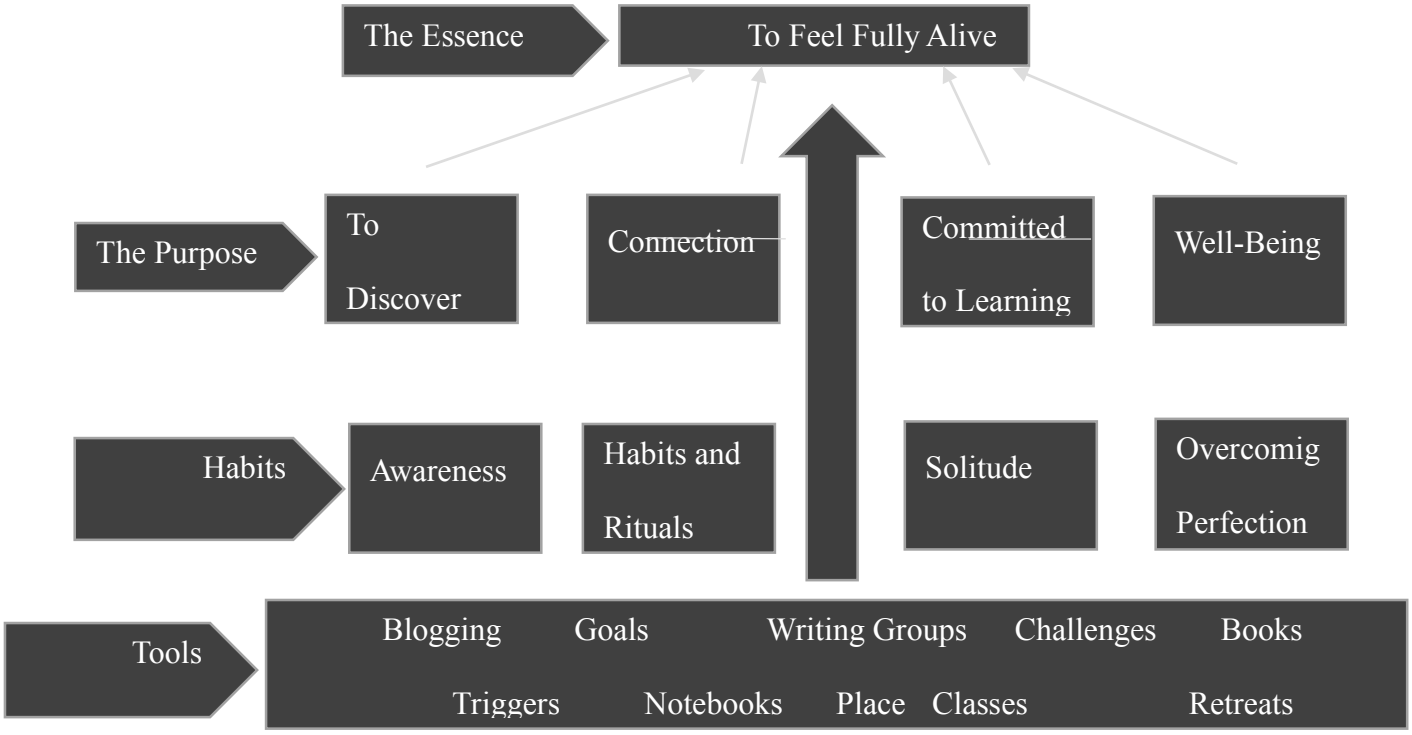
took place looking for distinct concepts and categories of code families. Themes emerged from the categories to represent new meanings. Data analysis included peer debriefs and member checks.

Findings

An initial picture of the teacher-writer emerged from these interviews and the discoveries of what kept these ten teacher-writers writing was nothing short of diverse. Twenty-five categories surfaced and through repeated dwelling on the data, a conceptual framework emerged (see Figure 1). Four main concepts surfaced as *purposes* for what kept these teacher-writers coming back to their writing: 1) to discover meaning, 2) connection, 3) a commitment to learning and 4) for well-being.

Through discerning the interrelationships of these concepts, its parts and wholes, a glimpse into an unfolding development arose of feeling fully alive and full of energy. Teachers repeatedly spoke of 'energy' when in the act of writing, upon completing writing, and when talking about writing. Participants that could not write as often as they wished described a lack of fulfillment in their lives. After clarifying this main essence and purpose concepts, several categories of attitudes or *habits of mind* became apparent as necessary essentials to achieve a writing practice. Finally, many tools were shared for achieving these writing commitments and developing the habits of mind, such as blogging, writing groups, scheduling and solitude. Each concept is discussed in more detail throughout the data findings.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Sustaining A Teacher-Writers' Life



Purposes for Writing

Discover Meaning. In many ways and contexts, participants experienced the discovery of new understandings through their writing practices. This strategy was intentional in some respects and a surprise in others. Writing was used to clarify thinking about a topic, arrive at solutions to a problem, discover significance in a specific thought, image, or memory, and to reflect on an event. Through writing, participants were able to follow the threads of their writing, in a free write method, to witness epiphanies that seemed to emerge.

Melissa, once a teacher and currently a creator of an online social media site that supports teacher-writers, attempted to explain how writing helps her clarify her thinking. She used writing when her emotions seem to be attached to an event or a thought in her life:

> I write for so many different reasons because I don't know how I feel about something until I write about it. I believe writing can clarify my thinking, especially when emotions get in the way. If I can write about it, I can see things more clearly.

In this way, Melissa used writing as a tool for thinking, clarifying and sorting out emotions and feelings. Writing enabled meaning to surface and guided her in making decisions.

Jackie, a fourth grade teacher, also used writing as a tool to resolve unsettling issues that caused her distress, whether she realized it or not. She explained how it was a way to unleash some blocks that might be going on with herself:

> Writing helps me to conjure up what's going on and sometimes I don't know why I feel the way I do until I write it down. I can go back and identify themes and it might even come up in my writing and I wasn't even aware of it.

Using writing as a way to find out what she did not know was a strategy that Jackie often used in her journaling. Like Melissa, emotions led her to the act of writing, yet uncertainty in the meaning that would surface is common.

Dennis, a high school English Language Arts teacher (ELA), echoed this purpose for writing as a way to navigate in his life. He claimed writing was an important piece in his life in terms of reflection and in attempting to sort out who he is, at least who he thinks he is. He emphasized that gaining new perspectives and seeing things in a different light contributed to this growth. He attributed writing to enabling him grow in his own personal development. He asserted:

> Writing is thinking and so often you end up discovering things as you're going through the process of writing. I really feel like those are the flames of inspiration that are the

> moments that bring you back to the page again. When that happens, it's easy to come back again and feel like – okay, I'd like to experience that again.

In this way, Dennis attributed writing to enabling him grow in his own personal development. However, he also described the surprise part of writing as the experience that brings him back to his notebook.

Rick, a high school ELA teacher as well, also shared the experience of discovery, and he knows it well. He claimed this was the joy in writing for him. In graduate school, he shared an essay he wrote, entitled, "Adventures in the Next Sentence or Moment" in which he described this process of discovery:

> Writing is the divine invention. It is creating something out of thin air. It is relishing to spontaneity. It is the thrill of seeing ideas take form. And it is craft – often, the painstaking craft – of revision. It is the beauty of seeing my thoughts take shape; it is the divine pleasure of knowing I can shape, re-shape, and re-re-shape my thoughts. That I can squash those thoughts and start all over again. And again. And again.

In Rick's interview, he spoke frequently about discovery in his writing and the excitement in not knowing what was going to appear in his writing each time he wrote. When asked if this was something that kept him writing, he answered:

> Yes, absolutely, I think it's the surprise in what' going to come next. I'll have this event that happens and I won't really know the significance of it until I've been able to sit down and kind of shape it in my writing. Writing is an art – there is a magic that happens and stories take on a life of their own, whether it's fiction, non-fiction or creative non-fiction. I just love seeing that come to life.

Rick's energy and enthusiasm was palpable when he talked about the mystery of meaning that shows up in his writing.

Like Rick, Patty, a high school Spanish teacher, also used writing as a way to discover meaning. She described how she would start with a simple image or one memory and do free writes with a goal of discovering more about her past, the people in her lives and who she is:

> It's interesting to learn more about the world, without necessarily needing to do research. I can write [sic] and discover what's already inside of me and synthesize what I'm thinking from my memories, and something new comes out of that. In some ways there are some things that I have discovered through writing that, until I'd put the pen on the paper, I hadn't realized I knew. And, so that was interesting. I remember specific moments where I was, "Oh, wow! I didn't think about that before and now that I wrote it down, it's true!"

Patty talked about an experience that took place at her first National Writing Project that was highly influential in her understanding of how powerful writing is and how it could help her to discover so much about the people in her family. When asked if she thought she would be able to arrive at this discovery about her grandfather without the act of writing. She explained:

> You know, I don't think I would have because life is so busy that I just don't take time to ponder some of those things. But, when I sat down to actually reflect for the purposes of writing, then I was able to do that. So, had I not been writing, I don't think I would have gotten to that point. I would not have been reflecting on that I don't think ever.

After her NWP experience, her grandfather continued to show up in poems she wrote. This one is her favorite:

The Shop

Grandpa stood at his work bench, tall,
gaunt silhouette in blue
grime-streaked denim shirt and coveralls.
Brown, scuffed boots rooted him
to the cool concrete floor of the shop
as he tinkered, his grizzled head bent
under the bare-bulb glow,
reaching for tools,
turning, adjusting.

At the door of the shop, I stood, framed
in bright August,
greeted only by pungent oil.
I wanted to skip across rainbow-hued
grease puddles patterning the floor, get close,
see what Grandpa was doing.
I wanted him to talk to me,
explain the fixing,
the tools he was using.
But I, ten years old, observed
my grandma's kitchen-door-called reminder:
“Don’t bother Grandpa while he’s working!”

And so I stayed in the doorway,
riveted.

For most of the participants, discovery and searching for meaning were key purposes for writing and continuing to write. Their discoveries led to new learning about something intellectually, about themselves or others, or was a creative act of narrative writing, essay, or poetry. They experienced an energy and aliveness when these points of discovery emerged on the page, as if they were not the ones holding the pen, or clicking the keys on the keyboard.

Connection. For participants, countless connections were made through the act of writing. Some connections were obvious; writing was used for communicating with other people in their present life. However, other connections were not so transparent, such as connections to oneself, to those that had departed, and even to those in the future.

Melissa described how connection to others was the fuel for the energy that keeps her and many of those she connects with writing. As a teacher-writer, she found herself alone and isolated in her passion for writing at her school, as other participants also described, and her connections to others online in social media groups were a necessary part of her writing life. She explained this in her interview:

> I felt very different than everybody because this was a passion that I had, that other people quite honestly didn't understand. Their own feeling about writing, their own histories were not good ones, so they didn't understand how someone would want to torture themselves and get papers back with red pen all over them – because that was their memory. I was able to erase that.

Melissa's passion for inspiring and supporting teachers to write led her to leave her position as a classroom teacher and to create several online social media sites to encourage and support teachers who want to write. What started as a passion has grown into a large community of teacher writers. She remarked that the teacher-writers in these communities have a strong sense of belonging and connectedness. These connections feed their writing lives, hold them accountable, and push them to grow as learners.

Jackie also described in her second and third interviews the power of connection in writing groups online. In her first interview, she confessed that writing for herself and her students was satisfying for her and she had no desire to venture outside of those perimeters. With

some encouragement, she joined a 31-day writing challenge online with hundreds of other teacher-writers in which they blogged and shared their writing each day. She shared this experience afterwards:

> Being surrounded by such powerful, effective writers allowed me to elevate my writing. The powerful language, unique craft, engaging dialogue, and the strongest voice I have ever read! Every time I come to this haven, I am encouraged by others that share the same beliefs on writing as I do. I am motivated by those around me who are walking the same writer's walk.

This was a new and invigorating experience for Jackie. Previously she was fearful of sharing her writing publicly due to negative feedback in her past. However, joining an online writing community that was encouraging motivated her to keep putting more writing out there for them to read. She received positive feedback and members noticed her absence when she missed a day, telling her they missed her words. Her quality of writing improved because of the quantity she was writing; she was writing routinely and experienced writing growth, which encouraged her to keep writing.

Erin, a high school ELA teacher, echoed Jackie's feelings in connecting with a community of writers during her experience as a part of a writing community in her first National Writing Project institute. Her energy was high as she talked about this experience:

> I never had my writing so affirmed by other people who actually knew what they were doing. It was just this beautiful experience of learning. This conversation was going on and I had no clue what was happening! Friendships were the biggest effect outside of the classroom. I have made many writing friends.

Erin's experience with a community of writers provided support and encouragement for her as she developed as a writer. Receiving validation from more experienced writers gave her confidence to write. She gained more enthusiasm to write from the energy she felt when surrounded by other writers.

In the past, Patty had led writing groups and summer workshops to follow up National Writing Project institutes to keep energy going. She claimed teacher-writers need a "booster-shot" now and then to rejuvenate their writing. However, for herself, along with Nicole, Dennis and Loren, writing groups were more so used at the point of revision in a writing piece when they needed another set of critical eyes to give them feedback. Nicole described this:

> Sometimes I don't know what to do. I've gotten myself this far along and I don't know the next step. You need someone who can help you through this and propel you, someone to say, "You've done this trick 50 times and it was boring at time 5." You figure something else out."

These writers have been writing for years and involved themselves in projects – some for publication. The need of a writing community to write was not necessary for them, yet when they did meet with writing friends, they voiced how fellow writers pushed them to accept critical feedback and enabled them to grow as writers. During generation or first draft writing stages, they felt that meeting in writing groups to share was not as helpful.

As discussed previously, one main purpose for these writers to write was to discover more about who they are. Almost all participants talked about using writing as a tool to develop a closer relationship to the self in order to grow personally. Erin and Jackie described this:

> Erin: It also allows me to honor who I am because yesterday I took some time to just sit with a story I had been avoiding. When I try to make the story how I think the story

should be instead of sitting with the story, I learn so much about the character and about my own life.

Jackie: The process, the reflection, the solidifying thoughts, what you learn about yourself through writing that is powerful.

Using writing as a tool to shape identity and gain perspective were common with all of the participants. These teacher-writers had a deep sense of who they were from a result of the amount of writing they did. In essence, they became more of a human being through the act of writing.

Connecting to others in the past or the future also was a means to keep participants writing. Documenting happenings from their lives for family and loved ones to read in the future was a common theme throughout all of the interviews. There was a sense of agency in leaving behind a part of who they are. More intriguing though was how some participants wrote to keep relationships alive, especially with those who have departed. Patty shared this sentiment in her words about her grandfather mentioned prior. She wanted to know him more, who he was, and why he was the way she remembered him to be. Rick, a high school ELA teacher, also described this purpose in talking about his father, who passed away several years ago. He believed that writing can deepen relationships with people we lose.

My father died in 2006 and when he was diagnosed with cancer, I started chronicling our journey together and I would write a blog post every day. When he passed away I went back and looked at it and I was amazed at all the stuff that I'd forgotten. I think that's the power of writing. A friend gave me a quote once that read "Nobody a writer loves is ever really dead," and so whenever a friend loses somebody,[sic] I help them to see how you can deepen your relationship with that person [sic] through writing. You get to relive

those experiences. That's what I do with my writing is I deepen my relationships with my loved ones who are no longer here with me. I think that's often an aspect of writing that isn't taken nearly as often as it should be.

This form of connection with others in the past or the future (our children, grandchildren and beyond), created a deep sense of purpose for Kurt. His relationship with his father was strong and he did not want to forget how that felt. By continuing to write about his father, he kept their relationship alive and this brought him a sense of peace.

Others made a conscious effort to document memories, thoughts, and events for those to read in the future. Melissa, Jackie and Cari, a fourth grade teacher, emphasized this in their interviews:

Melissa: Writing is telling my story and it's preserving it for generations to come. By not writing my story, I'm robbing my future great grandchildren the opportunity to know me. There is no other way to preserve or to become eternal or whatever.

Jackie: When I became pregnant with my daughter, I just wanted to document some of these things, because how incredible. And, now going back into those entries, it seems dreamlike until you read about it. And then, it's just this beautiful documentation of one single moment. If I hadn't captured that on paper – I just want to treasure those things. " In her last written response, she said, "Writing allows me to relive those moments in the vivid detail and with as intense emotion as the moment in which the event actually occurred. And, when I reread the entry from my engagement night, I feel the heat in my face and I can see the haziness. It's so powerful.

Erin: In the summer, it's more observation/documentation writing. "Just writing all the funny stories and random things and the "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I just did this! Now when I go to Shutterfly and I've got all these stories, I can put them with pictures.

Most of the participants emphasized how documenting these memories or connecting with others was important to their own development of who they were. By documenting their own lives, they felt they were leaving evidence of their living here on earth for generations to come and this brought purpose to their writing.

Through the perspectives of others and emerging meanings in their writing, participants were able to see parts of themselves in relation to others that they may not otherwise be able to notice. Participants shared these stories through smiles and laughter, and other times in melancholy. A wide range of emotions was exhibited in retellings and in talking about the satisfaction of recording these memories and discoveries.

Committed to Learning. All participants shared evidence of a commitment to learning as an intellectual in their field of education and as a human being. Writing was their tool to help them continue to grow. These teacher-writers also sought avenues to continue their growth as writers through reading, conferences, attending National Writing Projects (for some, more than once), book studies, blogging, publishing writing, and in providing professional development for their colleagues or at conferences. They also were very active in areas outside of their writing lives.

One way this was evident was in how they used writing to push themselves to take risks and perform small or large acts of bravery. In Jackie's first interview, she confessed that writing for herself and her students was satisfying for her and she had no desire to venture outside of those perimeters. With some encouragement, she accepted a challenge, took a risk and joined a

31-day writing challenge online with hundreds of other teacher-writers in which they blogged and shared their writing each day. She wrote about this in her third written response interview:

> Starting my own Blog and participating in the 31-day Slice of Life writing challenge has absolutely been the biggest risk I have ever taken as a writer. The consequences have been nothing short of sensational!
>
> Cause: I am participating in the S.O.L. writing challenge.
>
> Effect 1: A part of my soul, my very being, in put on display for the world to see. How liberating!
>
> Effect 2: I have developed a genuine appreciation for this community of writers. We have one thing in common. We are brave. You have to be to participate in something like this.
>
> Effect 3: I have grown as a writer. Being surrounded by such powerful, effective writers has allowed me to elevate my writing. I am continually surrounded by powerful language, unique craft, engaging dialogue, and the strongest voice I have ever read! What a big deal this is for a writer!
>
> Effect 4: I am encouraged daily. Every time I come to this haven, I am encouraged by others that share the same beliefs on writing as I do.
>
> The list is endless. There are so many benefits. This should be a MUST for all writers.

In her second interview, Jackie also described this blogging experience with a sense of aliveness and joy evident in her voice. The connections she made with other writers while stepping outside of her comfort zone to put her writing out into the world empowered her to want to do more. Energy was sparked and she wanted more.

Participants shared how they pushed boundaries in their teaching, discontent with the status quo. They used current and cutting-edge best practice methods and techniques in their teaching, even if it required more of them. Rick explained this:

> It's easy to teach sentence structure and essay with the five-paragraph theme. You can grade it and get it back to them in a day. I have my students do a braided essay where they take 3 different essays about the same topic and weave the together. It takes me about 3 weeks to grade because everyone is in a different spot and approaching it differently. There's a lot of sloppiness and messiness to that. I think it was Donald Murray who said, 'It's hard work – you put your boots on and you go to work and writing is the habit.'

Rick cared deeply about his students and wanted to give them writing experiences that were authentic and meaningful so they, too, would find value in writing. This required continued writing and improvement as a teacher of writing.

Reading professionally to gain writing knowledge was important for participants' growth as writers and as teachers. They spoke of other scholars-teachers-writers in the field they had studied or read and who had a drive to know more. Melissa talked about the authors she reads:

> I would say everything that Ralph Fletcher says is like gospel. I find him to be so smart and so in the know and so humble about the work that he does. I've met him a couple times and he's just an amazing author, an amazing coach. I adore him.

Melissa shared many of the authors that shaped her as a writer, continuing to find ways to grow and learn to be a stronger, more effective writer. Most of the participants had this strong need to keep reading professional books to learn more about their craft.

Several participants talked about needing the mental stimulation that writing provided, a need for cognition that excited them and kept them excited about writing. Getting lost in the work of revision brought them pleasure. Working to find a specific word or phrase to communicate what they wanted to say and then discovering it was mentioned as one of the great joys of writing. Loren, a high school ELA teacher, Nicole, and Patty all described this:

> Loren: I like the puzzle side of writing. I find it fun to think about if you put this piece here and this piece there and see what that does. I find that fun.
>
> Patty: I also really like what a challenge it is to try to approximate people to write really great poetry to find the exact right word with its meaning, with its meter, with its sound, quality. It's really a big puzzle to put that together and that's challenging. Hours can go by, because I'm trying to think, is it start or starting (laughs) so that engaging for me.
>
> Nicole: I have to have something creative in my life. I have to figuring something out or moving forward, so if I'm not writing, I need to have something else ~making tofu – gardening.

These teacher-writers shared a common trait of needing to be intellectually challenged and writing brought that challenge to them. When Nicole was asked if she considered herself a learner, she responded:

> Yes, fundamentally, learning is my identity. You need to be willing to go one more step – push one more time and figure out what you can do to push yourself.

Writing stimulated learning in all areas of their lives. It clarified their thinking, caused them to reflect, and pushed them to keep growing. For them, writing, thinking and learning were all part of the same process and were inseparable. In Patty's interview, she talked about this in depth:

> You are committed to learning, committed to language and using language and learning to keep defining and refining their practices for students so ultimately they are committed to student learning and improving student learning. If you are really committed to student learning, but you are not into intellectual endeavors, you are going to be shortchanging your students

A similar observation was shared by Melissa, when she described the teacher-writers that participated in the writing communities on her social media sites. She proclaimed:

> Teacher-writers are high achievers, they are go-getters, there are no slackers in those communities.

These participants and those they spoke of appeared to rise to challenges and this brought about a fulfillment both intellectually and emotionally. Their curiosity was evident through their immense reading and continued initiatives to learn. In light of Melissa's statement, there is plenty of evidence from these participants to suggest she is correct.

Well-being. Participants used writing as a tool for emotional and mental well-being. They told stories of how writing was a method for personal growth, how it let them download rambling thoughts from mind to paper in an effort to clear the mind, and how they were able to write through emotional experiences. Writing also allowed participants to slow down, sit in solitude, and be present. Almost all participants shared these types of stories.

Erin, Jolene, and Cari all voiced how writing helped them to clear their minds. Erin's mother had died seven years ago and it was through her grief she discovered poetry.

> Writing just helps me to slow down because my brain goes really fast and in a lot of different directions. It has to keep up with a lot whole bunch of stuff, so it allows me to just pause and write. I let myself grieve and cry and it was in that season that I really

> named myself a poet because I was expressing myself through poetry. Poetry became my healing genre. It also allows me to honor who I am because yesterday I took some time to just sit with a story I had been avoiding. When I try to make the story how I think the story should be instead of sitting with the story, I learn so much about the character and about my own life.

The story Erin was writing was fiction, but the character she was writing about was herself. Through writing narrative, she brought her own life story into the character's life and continued to make discoveries about who she is, why she does things she does, and what she might do next. Her character endured emotional turmoil and uncertainty, just as Erin experienced with the loss of her mother. When Erin went through periods of emotional struggle, she took those feelings to paper. Writing helped her to heal from the loss of her mother.

Jolene also voiced how she uses writing for emotional well-being. She enjoys many kinds of journaling. She talks about journaling here:

> It's cathartic for me to put things down [sic] on paper and why that is I don't know, but I've always been that way. It feels good to let it out of my head. To transfer it from the thought realm to paper, there's something physical about the written word. It makes it concrete and real, so I don't know if I need to validate those feelings to myself, but I have given them a place to rest. I learn from my own emotional journey and process. It's a documentation of things, yet deeper reflective ugly honesty, too.

Jolene is honest in her journals about what is going on in her head. In the past, she was not comfortable showing her true self on paper. However, she felt it was important for her to deal with underlying issues and writing was her way of doing that.

Cari also used writing as a tool as a way to sort out issues she was having in school or in her personal life.

> During the school year, I notice myself writing when I'm more stressed out and I've got too much going on in my head – I just need to let it all out. Just recently I was super overwhelmed and I just wrote and wrote until it sparked an idea and I went on and made some lists of things that I could try.

For Cari and others who used writing in this way, it seemed difficult for them to name what might be lurking underneath their emotional struggles until they see it on paper. They came to their notebooks open and willing to accept whatever appeared. Seeing their true thoughts and feelings on paper was an important part of their emotional work.

Jackie and Erin spoke of how they use writing to release some emotions, as if they were toxic and needed to rid themselves of the angst they carried. At other times, the emotions were joyful and satisfying:

> Jackie: If I just bubble up with gratitude or have a bad day and I need to get that out, I write about it." She says those strong emotions have to be written out.
>
> Erin: What's good about writing is it helps me process things and think about things. It's recorded and you can go back and burn it if you need to, or hit delete, but I use writing a something to process life.

These four main purposes of discovering meaning, connection, learning, and well-being all overlapped in each participant's writing life. For example, when Rick shared how writing brought him closer to his father, he was also connecting with himself as he discovered new meanings about his relationship to his father and this contributed to his own personal growth and well-being. His desire to continue to write about his father also shows his commitment to

continue to learn more about who he is. Cari stressed how writing helped her to manage the struggles she has with her professional life. Teaching can become overwhelming in the number of responsibilities and relationships a teacher must manage and teachers can feel isolated and disconnected from others in resolving the many issues that arise. Writing is a way to slow down and sort through what is really happening in order to see clearly and come to some solutions.

Key Essential Habits of Mind or Attitudes

In order for participants to achieve their purposes of seeking meaning, making connections, committing to learning, and achieving personal well-being through a writing practice, several habits of mind or attitudes needed to be cultivated. These include awareness and curiosity, habits and rituals, solitude, and letting go of perfection or fear.

Awareness and Curiosity

All participants shared habits of mind that propelled awareness and a high sense of curiosity. This awareness was apparent when they paid attention to a thought, image, scent, sound, experience or any other triggering moment. Their curiosity about the significance of these topics caused them to collect the idea in their notebooks for use at some other point in time in writing. Patty described how this happens:

> I think just thinking about a particular phrase, or if I overhear something. A scent can really activate a memory that makes me ponder things. And emotion, or sometimes just the way the light comes through the living room window, all of those types of sensory images from all different five senses can activate that type of reflection. And sometimes those kinds of moments are just ephemeral because I can't get to paper or have a way of writing things down.

Cari and Rick describe similar examples of this writers' habit of mind, the types of events that capture their attention, and how they find ways to document them:

> Cari: We took a trip one Thanksgiving and the whole way I wrote this poem in my head. I had it going for over an hour because it was a comical road trip. I wrote it all out as soon as we got to my mother in laws. I had to sit down that night and write it all out because it was spinning through my head the whole way there. I was drafting and editing it all in my head and trying to type it on my phone until we got there and I could get to a pen and paper.
>
> Rick: I think just having the writer's eye, just to notice things, things that will stick with me, whether it's the way my mom cheered me on at a baseball game or images and moments that I could delve into and explore. I think because I've written so much I've just become a noticer and just be curious to know more.

This awareness fed the participants' writing lives, but also contributed to their overall sense of well-being. Being aware of the small moments helped them shift a focus to the present moment. Writers who are keen noticers are also metacognitive and are able to see significance, both personal and universal, in the smallest thread. This keeps the writer alive in this world.

Habits, Rituals and Solitude

Participants varied greatly in their habits and rituals to attain a regular writing practice. For most, writing took place every day, but for a variety of purposes and in different contexts. Much writing happened with their students during writing workshop classes, either modeling or completing similar assignments in order to be a community member of the class. Participants also described writing to communicate or to write curriculum. Personal writing, which included anything a participant did outside of their actual teaching, was sporadic for most participants and

dependent on the need for reflection and writing to learn. However, most had some habits, rituals, or triggers that enabled them to keep writing.

Melissa was an avid writer who wrote daily. Although she is not in the classroom fulltime now and focuses her work on supporting teacher-writers, she admitted that when she was teaching, she made it a regular practice to write every day early in the morning before school. She stated this was actually easier to accomplish as her days were more routine, whereas now every day varies. She believed, for her, an everyday practice is necessary. She stated in her first interview:

> One of the things that's affected me the most is through regular writing. When I started the #DWH (daily writing habit), for the first 30 days, I did that every day. I pledged that I would do that for 30 days straight. I remember talking to one of my friends and telling her, I can't believe how much I've grown as a writer this past month, just because I've made writing a priority in my life and made it a regular practice. I felt like the level and quality of my writing just soared! I have a 5-year sentence a day journal and that's the first thing I do when I get up in the morning. I'm on year 3. If I can't think of anything to write, I'll write down what the price of gas is!

Melissa's goal is just a sentence each day in her sentence-a-day journal, although she has other writing she commits to. The sentence is a minimum and she almost always ends up writing more.

Erin also has a sentence a day writing goal, which has become her writing ritual now. She confessed that her writing practice during the school year was difficult to attain. She made her goal small so it could be reachable:

> My New Year's resolution is to write one sentence a day because I was overwhelmed with being back in the classroom and staying committed to writing. I find if it's only a sentence, I sit down and it's never a sentence – its' a paragraph or a page or two.

Erin also wrote with her students and kept a writer's notebook. She confessed that when she decided to make a commitment to writing, stories that wanted to be written tended to find her.

Rick also wrote with his students frequently during the school year as a practice. Like Erin, much of his time is consumed with teaching responsibilities, so writing alongside his students keeps his writing practice alive. He described one such episode:

> One day I was done with my prep so I just started doing [sic] the assignment and it was kinda fun. The next day, I said to the class, "Okay, I got a page and a half done, where are you guys?" And, some said, "I haven't started yet!" and I said, "Come on - I have 2 kids and a full time job. If I can get a page and a half done, how can you not get more than a paragraph?" (laughs) And so, I shared it with them and people would ask me questions about it and I was just modeling the process. Of course everything I write is longer than theirs, but you know I've written more than everybody in this room combined so it's not fair to measure it that way. I just tell them, "I'm interested in what you guys have to say, and I just want to be part of the tribe."

Rick believed that writing with his students contributed to the writing culture he was trying to build. Writing alongside of them, they were all learning from each other as well. Writing in this way also brought a sense of comradery with the class and a willingness to embrace uncertainty in where writing might go. In addition, Rick regularly drafted and revised in front of his students, not only for his students, but for his own practice.

Most participants described the school year as full of duties and responsibilities, in and out of school, and this made it difficult to commit to a regular writing practice. All of them wished they had more time to devote to writing, but summer is the time when more energy is reserved for writing. Rick writes his blog posts in the summer, Loren and Dennis are working on young adult novels, Jolene has committed to academic writing, and Cari and Jackie use the summer to document family stories. Nicole and Patty admitted to taking a break from personal writing for now, in the sense of projects for publishing. However, writing was an active part of their teaching and learning every day.

Another condition for writing as a sustainable practice was solitude. Participants needed to be intentional about planning for quiet alone time for words to formulate onto the page. Melissa stated that her friend likes to write in coffee shops, but there is just too much going on for her in these kinds of spaces. Jolene commented on needing solitude as well:

> I like that time with my own thoughts and I just feel it is restorative. If I don't have reflective personal time, it really stunts my writing I think.

Solitude was a mandatory need for most participants, whether it was public solitude in a coffee shop alone, or at a kitchen table in the morning before small children woke up. These teacher-writers honored their need to write by creating opportunities, free of outside influences, to give focused attention to what was important to them.

Overcoming Perfection

A final habit of mind or attitude these participants felt was necessary was letting go of perfection and not being afraid to write down what comes up. Each one described, in his or her own way, how this absence of fear contributes to the freedom that writing brings. Patty commented:

> It doesn't have to be anything. I know that I can just start writing and I don't have to worry about it being quality. It doesn't have to be perfect when you first get it down, so I can just type up or hand write my thoughts and if I do want to do something with it later, I can revise.

Accepting the ability to embrace uncertainty and allow whatever is written down was commonly echoed amongst all participants. A clear understanding of this as a main factor in the writing process gave them freedom to follow where their writing led.

These teacher-writers had a strong sense of who they were as writers, teachers, and human beings, and they had an attitude in which they were not afraid to fail in their writing, whether the writing was just for them or for an audience. Patty and Nicole stated this several times in their interviews, and Patty confessed that rejection letters are actually pretty nice. Jolene remarked on this absence of perfection or fear as well:

> I'm not worried about being accepted or rejected. I want to write because I want to write, not because I need to be received. It's just the joy of the journey for me to process – getting this stuff on paper.

Absence of fear can give one a sense of joy as taking risks becomes more natural. In order to be committed to learning and create conditions for discovery, participants understood that overcoming perfection was mandatory.

Discussion

The findings for this study provided evidence for the rich complexities of teacher-writers. In essence, for all participants, writing brought about an overall sense of aliveness and energy in both their personal and professional lives, yet a deep sense of purpose ultimately enabled them to believe in the practice of writing as a way of living. In listening to these participants, it was

difficult to separate their professional and personal lives; they overlapped, intersected and often blended in such tapestries that "teacher", "writer", "seeker", and "connector" all defined who they were. These ways of being seemed to be crucial conditions for contributing to the energy and aliveness that enables them to attain their well-being, not just as teachers, but as human beings.

Searching for meaning and connection to ourselves, others, and the world are basic human needs (Frankl, 2017). Individuals who are committed to learning attain "epistemic curiosity which can be a font of satisfaction and delight that provides sustenance for the soul" (Leslie, 2014, p. xxi). John Lloyd (date) says, "If human curiosity isn't fed, then you die inside. . . a quarter of your desire to be alive is cut away" (Leslie, 2014, p. xxiv). These participants displayed an inner drive to learn and be curious, not just in writing, but in all they pursued to continue to grow as an educators and writers. Beyond even this, many of these participants also taught other teachers as well, through professional development, teaching in prisons, and through conferences and institutes across the country.

The second layer of findings include necessary habits of mind or "habits of thought," as Dewey (2008) named them, to support teacher-writers' deeper purposes. In their book, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind,* Costa & Kallick (2008) state, "Life has many distractions and preoccupations. A well-developed habit is more likely to make its presence felt than a practice that always must be deployed with meticulous deliberateness" (p. xii). Cultivating awareness and curiosity, physical habits and rituals, overcoming fear and perfection, and planning for solitude in our lives do not only serve the writer when he or she is writing, but in any aspect of their lives. "High mental ability alone may serve us well when we're sitting at a desk, our pencils poised; but good habits of mind keep us going in the rest of the world" (p. xiv). These writing habits of

mind, once cultivated, do not need conscious effort to practice. They become a part of one's writing identity.

Finally, each participant described the many tools of the trade that nurtured and supported the habits of mind in an effort to habituate them. Some tools served as triggers or reminders, while others served as accountability. For example, participants who needed solitude preferred to write in an environment that they knew would suit this – early morning rituals and particular settings enabled this to happen. Fostering awareness and expecting to see topics to collect and write about later involved the need of keeping a notebook handy. Strategies for overcoming perfection, in these cases, required pep talks and taking risks to increase their bravery muscles and accomplish the next big thing.

Implications

There are many implications for the work we need to continue to do. These implications pertain to all teachers, not just ELA teachers or teachers who teach writing. Every human being can benefit from a writing practice to discover meaning, to make connections with others, to remain committed to a life of learning, and to maintain well-being. This list is not exhaustive and we invite others to add to the conversation about what is possible:

1. When teachers have a clear and personal purpose, their sense of agency for wanting to achieve that purpose is stronger. Simon Sinek (2009) in his book, *Start With Why,* writes, "When a WHY is clear, those who share that belief will be drawn to it and maybe want to take part in bringing it to life. With a group of believers all rallying around a common purpose, cause or belief, amazing things can happen" (p. 136). Helping teachers establish clear purposes in how a writing practice can be a way of feeling alive and bring personal joy to their lives may propel more teachers to believe in its power. Providing experiences

for them to empower them to discover meaning, especially in free writing to cultivate surprise, bridge connections, follow their curiosities and establish an emotional and mental well-being can result in more teachers choosing to write because they want to, rather than feeling they should (Murray, 1985). Identifying their purpose will help them to find authenticity and meaning through their writing.

2. We need to develop, model, and teach for a common terminology for the habits of mind that typical writers have cultivated to sustain an ongoing writing practice. Horace Mann (date) once said, "Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it each day, and at last we cannot break it (Costa & Kallick, 2009, p. xvii). We can explore literature such as Costa and Kallick's work on habits of mind to develop strategies and curriculum to strengthen the dispositions writers hold. Murray (1985) and Graves (1990) also write about what it means to live with a sense of awareness and both offer strategies to awaken our eyes to the world and follow the questions that arise while writing. "The writer is a receiver of information. The writer must develop the ability to lie in wait, to be alert with every sense to what is going on. The writer is spy on life" (Murray, p. 13).
3. Changing our language from "teachers should write" to an invitational tone, as Donald Grave's intended, may soften teachers' defenses when suggesting another practice for them to adopt. Graves (1990) in his book, *Discover Your Own Literacy,* compassionately invites teachers to squeeze in writing in small 10 minutes increments, a reachable goal for the busy lives of teachers. Both Murray (1985) and Graves remind us not to judge our work or our processes as each writer has their own process. Their tone is nurturing and kind, as opposed to pressure and authoritative.

Future Studies

Half of the participants were high school ELA teachers who had a passion for reading, writing, or both before they became teachers. In fact, most English/composition teachers entered their profession for that reason. Writing and composition theory seemed to be a part of their identity as a result of what they teach. The elementary teachers, on the other hand, entered the field because they enjoyed being with children and wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. A future study could focus on elementary teacher-writers only to explore perceptions within that context.

Many of the chosen participants were teachers known well in the area for their involvement in writing. They had been writing for years, were graduate students at the university, or had participated in the National Writing Project more than once. Publicly, most of these teachers are known as teacher-writers. Their names came up quickly by professors when we were in search of participants who met qualifications. There are many quiet teacher-writers who are invisible. They may not produce writing for the world, but write personally for their own purposes to be an effective teacher. This study does not intend to discredit these teacher-writers for not "doing enough," yet their voices need to be heard as well.

Conclusion

Teachers need reminders that writing is "a way" to reach the overarching purposes we all have in life, just as Murray (1985) and Graves (1990) teach us that in writing, there are many ways of writing, many kinds of writers, and many ways of teaching writers. It is important to learn how to be responsive to each unique writer. However, when considering the many ways to our purposes in living: meditation, exercise, prayer, etc., writing is one of

the few ways (along with reading) that meets them all and also benefits students by passing the torch on to them.

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Article #3: The Path to Self-Authorship: The Pre-Service Teacher-Writer

ABSTRACT

This literature review examined the relationship between the development of a teacher who writes (teacher-writer) and the phases of self-authorship. The two are closely interrelated. The purpose of this examination was to provide rationale to integrate a consistent writing practice in university teacher education programs, due to the research that suggests new teachers are unprepared for today's classrooms. This unpreparedness may be related to a lack of self-authorship. Possible avenues for integrating more writing with the lens of self-authorship into teacher education programs include advising, literacy courses and writing groups. Additional research implications are also provided.

Key words: self-authorship, teacher-writers, pre-service teachers, teacher identity, teacher development

The Path to Self-Authorship: The Pre-Service Teacher-Writer

The roles, expectations, and responsibilities of teachers today are in a state of constant flux. Research suggests that new teachers entering the field are unprepared for this and many leave the profession within five years. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) assert that teacher preparation programs need to provide pre-service teachers with abilities to be adaptive experts who can make decisions based on varying contexts, choose practices that align with their beliefs and core values, and "exercise trustworthy judgment based on a strong base of knowledge" (p. 2). Unfortunately, teacher education programs are not designed to support the transformational learning that help pre-service teachers students "learn to negotiate and act on [their] own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those [they] have uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). This developmental capacity, or "self-authorship" requires new teachers to begin to recognize their internal voices and use them to shape beliefs, how to react and base decisions from here (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). We propose that one avenue to begin the journey of self-authorship is through the development of an identity as a writer.

The relationship between the phases of self-authorship and the teacher transformational development of an identity as a writer is closely interrelated. To explore this relationship and understand the necessity of self-authorship for pre-service teachers are the key questions of this study. From this discussion, we propose several possibilities for designing educational writing practices in teacher education programs to promote self-authorship in pre-service teachers in preparation for the demands of being a first year teacher. We also suggest implications for future research.

Methodology

This literature review is organized into six sections:

1) A brief summary of the phases of self-authorship theory as established the work of Baxter Magolda (2004, 2009), and Meszaros (2007), key researchers in the most recent development of self-authorship theory
2) Relevant research on the demands of new teachers and how self-authorship connects
3) An examination of the relationship of the narrative accounts of three well-known teacher-writers' autobiographical sketches as writers, along with the work of Anne Whitney (2008) and her qualitative research pertaining to participant transformations during the National Writing Project Summer Institutes to the stages of self-authorship
4) Discussion
5) Possibilities for faculty and teacher education programs to encourage pre-service teachers to develop a writing identity
6) Implications for further research

The perimeters of this study exclude the research on the impact of reflective writing for teachers, which is a key tool for developing teacher expertise. This area has been heavily researched, with an emphasis on the context of professional growth. The decision to use autobiographical sketches, or personal narratives of teachers' development as a writer was to gain a sense of the stages of self-authorship that are embedded in the stories.

This literature review also prefaces the understanding of a teacher-writer as one who writes for both professional and personal reasons and models authentic writing for their students in order to take part in the classroom's writing community (Cremin & Myhill, 2012).

Self-Authorship Development Theory

The work of William Perry's Intellectual Development Model (1970), which he began in 1968, is foundational in Baxter Magolda's self-authorship development theory. Perry's seminal research, which includes mostly Harvard white male college students, describes four stages college students journey through with respect to intellectual development: dualism/received knowledge, multiplicity/subjective knowledge, relativism/procedural knowledge and finally, commitment/constructed knowledge. The journey through these stages is complex, fluid and can be repeated in various contexts.

Due to the limitations of Perry's research, narrow participant selection and a subjective interview process, Baxter Magolda, more recently in 1986, sought to build on Perry's work, by studying 101 first year college students. Her work extended beyond college into the post-college phase. As her participants reached their early 30s, she "expanded her investigation of intellectual development to include how participants viewed themselves and their interconnections with others" (Meszaros, 2007, p.9). Her findings concluded that "the missing piece of their college experience was the lack of emphasis on developing an internal sense of self" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xxii). Her results revealed these participants had learned the content in their discipline and were able to apply it using processes for thinking about it, yet it was not until the years that followed college that their "thinking, knowing and applying their perspectives to their work all hinged on their internal values and how they defined themselves" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xxii). When college students graduate, they need to be able to make decisions based on their internal beliefs and values as opposed to continuing to follow external formulas.

Baxter Magolda (2004) defines self-authorship as a holistic way to construct meaning by "internally generating and coordinating one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties, rather than depending on external values, beliefs, and interpersonal loyalties" (Boes, Magolda, & Buckley,

2010, p. 4). A reshaping of beliefs to become self-authored through the journey of developmental transformations can enable us to meet the learning expectations of our personal growth, work and relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2004). This framework for self-authorship includes four phases in which one transforms from external to self-definition, similar to Perry's framework.

According to Baxter Magolda (2004), the first phase in the journey toward self-authorship is defined as *following external formulas* in which epistemological assumptions, or ways of knowing, is through *absolute knowing.* In this phase, students seek outside authority and use formulas from the external world to navigate their decisions about who they are, in their work and in relationships. To those in this stage, knowledge exists as "right or wrong in all areas of knowledge and those in authority hold the answers" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 27). In the second phase, students begin to recognize that these external formulas do not work to achieve their goals and enter *the crossroads.* Here students begin to realize that knowledge is uncertain in some areas and they begin to adopt a *transitional way of knowing.* These students still seek guidance of authority in the parts of their lives in which certainty exists for them, yet begin to "shift from acquiring knowledge to understanding it" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 30). The recognition of their dissatisfaction stemming from ignoring their own internal needs and perspectives prompts them to develop strategies for looking inward, which leads to the third phase, *becoming the author of one's own life.* In this phase, students "decide what to believe about one's identity, the world, and how to interact with others" in a way that is true to their beliefs and assumptions about the world (p. xix). They enter a more *independent way of knowing* as they recognize discrepancies amongst authorities and begin to see a variety of views possible. They realize there are other sources of knowledge and include themselves as valued in seeking and contributing to knowledge based on their opinions (p. 32). Continued movement through

self-authorship enables students to develop an *internal foundation,* which Baxter Magolda identifies as the fourth stage (p. xix). In this stage, one recognizes their own sense of power in their life and makes decisions based on their values and *contextual knowing*.

Baxter Magolda found that "minimal self-authorship was often the source of struggle in the contexts of college education, employment, community and in their personal lives" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 41). She recognized how important it was to achieving self-authorship in one's early to mid-20s is for success in adult life. As stated by Coughlin (2015) "Magolda's 27-year study of college students, in which she has traced student's development from the age of 18 well into adulthood found that achieving self-authorship is important, getting there is not automatic, and Learning Partners are a critical support on the journey" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 18). These findings support the struggles of new teachers encounter in their first few years of teaching.

Self-Authorship Importance in New Teachers

The skills and capabilities new teachers must attain may be more demanding and complex. When we consider the classroom context, within any given moment, a teacher needs must "develop a classroom presence and good radar for watching and interpreting what many different students are doing and feeling at each moment, skills for explaining, questioning, discussing, giving feedback, constructing tasks, facilitating work, and managing the classroom – all at once" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2011, p. 374). Teachers are continually making instructional decisions to meet their students' needs. These decisions are based on their beliefs, prior experiences and professional judgement, yet also multifaceted, due to multiple contextual factors: knowledge about students, goals of the task, context and dispositions of the teacher at that moment (Siuty, Leko & Knacksted, 2018). Schwartz and Sharpe (2010) advocate that for

teachers to have these necessary skills, they need the ability to frame a problem by applying it to their beliefs, have the skills to make adaptations, and have had relevant experiences in decision making to draw from.

These decision-making skills based on beliefs and values support Baxter Magolda's self-authored individuals. For new teachers, these beliefs and values may have been identified in their teacher education programs, but the pressures from colleagues, administration, parents and society causes them to ignore their internal voice that speaks to these beliefs. Once in the classroom, they choose practices as compliance to others or to keep the status quo, adhering to a false identity of who they want to be as teachers. Continuing down this path leads to dissatisfaction as they are making decisions based on what others expect of them as opposed to their own self-determined criteria (Baxter-Magolda, 2009).

A teacher also must have exceptional skills to initiate, build, and nurture many layers of relationships consecutively. She must strive to create strong relationships with her students, communicate effectively with parents and work collaboratively with colleagues and administration. While she is building relationships with her students, she is also creating conditions for her students to develop positive and safe relationships with each other. "Interpersonal relations have tremendous impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Students perform much better in environments where they feel comfortable and valued" (Gay, 2010, p. 232). Veenman (1984) reviewed 83 studies on perceived problems of beginning teachers, and relations with parents ranks in the top five. Parents tend to place pressure on beginning teachers voicing expectations of traditional academic work, while also receiving a lack of parental support in other cases (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Veenman, 1984). Relationships with colleagues, mentors and administration can be a significant challenge. New teachers often

report difficult interactions with colleagues attempting to seek support or meaningful feedback only to receive resentment or even hostility from veteran teachers (Fry, 2007).

To manage these relationships, new teachers need a solid foundation in knowing how to trust themselves to decide what to believe and to recognize the diverse perspectives of others. Self-authorship involves the understanding that many things are beyond one's control, yet realizing one can control their reaction to others and situations. These reactions can be shaped by committing to the internal foundation that guides them to make meaning about reality and therefore, make choices that align with this foundation (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). Adults with a developed internal foundation gives a solid grounding where they have the ability to develop mutual relationships with others yet also function interdependently of one another (Baxter-Magolda, 2004). The ability to maintain healthy relationships to others and oneself is vital in the well-being of successful teachers.

The abilities a new teacher must obtain is daunting, and "scholars indicate there are discrepancies between preservice teachers' expectations and the reality of full-time teaching" (Bentley, Morway & Short, 2013). Other studies report new teachers are unprepared. "Classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' work, relationships with parents, organization of class work, insufficient materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students" are frequently areas of struggle for new teachers (Veenman, 1984, p. 160). High attrition rates, 29% leaving the profession during the first three years of teaching, are a result of the overwhelming and often challenging conditions of a new teacher's experience (Ingersoll, 2001). Muller-Fohrbrodt et al. (1978) cites three personal causes for the reality shock that often prompt new teachers to leave the profession: "1) a wrong choice

for the teaching profession; 2) improper attitudes; and 3) unsuitable personality characteristics" (Veenman, 1984, p. 147) along with situational causes which are beyond the teacher's control.

Making career decisions based on your personal identity, developing dispositions that shape attitudes about students, teaching and the profession and recognizing that your personality traits do not match your chosen profession are all characteristics of self-authored individuals who have developed an internal foundation. If pre-service teachers do not receive opportunities to reflect on who they are and what their dreams are, they continue to conform to parents', teachers' and society's formulas of who they should be. This brings about a disillusionment and an internal battle once in the classroom as their internal self does not match their external conditions. It is common practice to blame the conditions for the distress of the job, but in fact, much may be due to a lack of self-authorship. If these teachers do not begin to listen to their internal voice, they will continue to be dissatisfied with many aspects of teaching and teach in survival mode.

New teachers that do stay in the profession often resort to teacher centered, and traditional practices in order to maintain order and control, with students working on worksheets at their desks, as opposed to utilizing the innovative methods they were introduced to in their teacher education programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Veenman, 1984). These teachers seek *external formulas* or resign to the customary methods of those around them rather than to access prior knowledge from the courses and practicum experiences in their undergraduate work (Clark, 1999). The first phase, *following external formulas*, is prevalent in the early years after college. In Baxter Magolda's study, "most participants realized the necessity of developing their own minds and voices soon after college graduation, they did not have experience in developing their internal voices" (2004, p. xvii). Opportunities for new teachers to have experiences making decisions prior to their first teaching assignment and reflecting on them was lacking.

While these teachers are aware of best practices, ample time to utilize them in practice and reflect upon them propels development of their own repertoire or belief system about what they value in teaching. Knowledge is complex and socially constructed – if they also remained in the absolute stage throughout their pre-service experiences, their beliefs about what they know came from teachers or textbooks rather than themselves. They will continue to seek outside formulas and programs with minimal critical thinking or skepticism – their decisions weigh on the belief that others know more than themselves. New teachers must be prepared to "move away from uncritical acceptance of knowledge to critically constructing one's own perspective . . . and change assumptions about the certainty, source and limits of knowledge" (Baxter Magolda, 2006, p. 50). Accepting knowledge from any source without questioning ultimately underserves the students they teach.

Teacher effectiveness predicts student success. We cannot wait for teachers to become experienced before we expect student success (Linda Darling Hammond, 2011). We need effective teachers in their first year of teaching. The students of an ineffective teacher will, on average, will learn only half of one year's material in one year, while a student in an effective teacher's classroom will learn a year and a half's worth (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009). "For a student with an ineffective teacher, the negative affect on her achievement may not be fully remediated for up to three years" (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). Our students deserve effective teachers, and our new teachers deserve to be prepared to be effective. In the following section, we analyze the development of being a teacher-writer, self-authorship attained and the shift from attending to external formulas to internal foundations.

The Self-Authored Teacher-Writer: A Transformation

The following three stories of well-known teacher-writers, Penny Kittle, Nancie Atwell, and Donald Murray, can give us a peek into how self-authorship unfolds in the context of letting go of the external formulas and beliefs and listening to our own voices. After examining the relationship to Baxter-Magolda's self-authorship phases (2004), we share the literature describing the National Writing Project Summer Institutes and how this experience also supports teachers, as teacher-writers, through the phases of self-authorship.

Penny Kittle's Story (2017)

In the mid-1990's, Penny Kittle, an eighth grade language arts teacher, in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, was handed the second edition of Nancie Atwell's, *In the Middle,* from her principal. Atwell's words urged her to share her writing process with her students, in front of them, to write with them. The eighth grade teacher resisted Atwell's message, quite satisfied with her own method of *telling* her students what to do, rather than *showing* them. Several years of floundering in the teaching of writing and the intersection of a triggering moment, prompted her to one day write an authentic, difficult, and emotional story of her lost nephew in order to defend the family who raised him. She fearfully shared it with her students and they applauded her. A teacher-writer was born (Kittle, 2017).

Nancie Atwell's Story (2015)

Flashback to 1975, Nancie Atwell, a middle school English teacher in Maine, after several years teaching, grappled with a persistent angst that she did not know enough to teach her students how to write. The reading of Donald Grave's research and her study during a graduate program prompted her to examine her beliefs as a teacher of writing. Reluctant to give up control and defending her practice of giving her students "exercises", the scary truth broke through: She liked the authority of giving out the ideas, setting the deadlines and sitting behind her big desk.

She was “the teacher” after all. She read and reread Grave’s research, finally breaking down. She told her students the story of the students in Grave’s research and asked her adolescent writers if they would like to try choosing their own topics, work at their own pace and write for real audiences, while she wrote beside them. They did. And, she began to write as well.

Donald Graves’s Story

An English major whose writing dreams were shattered by the red marks, Donald Graves received poor grades given by his professors. Yet, he persisted, and as a doctoral student, he struggled to write clear and finished his “doctoral studies with very jaundiced views about ever writing again,” (Graves, 1984, p. 3). Grappling to find his voice, it was Donald Murray, a colleague at the University of New Hampshire, who helped the doctoral student shift from a doctoral voice by listening and asking him tough questions about his writing. Murray’s mentoring and a regular schedule to write helped Donald to find his true voice as a writer and human being, transforming his beliefs about himself as a writer.

Relationship of Teacher-Writer Narratives to Self-Authorship Phases

These are the narratives of three well-known teacher-writers who have pioneered the path for teacher-writers and authored a plethora of books in the area of teaching writing. Their own personal dissonance about themselves as writers and as teachers demonstrates that no teacher is exempt from these common beliefs of self-doubt. Secondly, these accounts capture the journey of how through the act of writing, one constructs an internal sense of identity that transforms their beliefs and understandings about what is true and possible. In an interview, Stephen Greenblatt (2016), Harvard Professor and Pulitzer Prize winner, is quoted saying in an interview, “Stories about our origin are important to recount in order to understand the way we are. Humans seem to be the only species that ask themselves how they came to be. It may be a sign that we are

lost, uncomfortable in our own skin". The authors of these three stories actively constructed, evaluated and interpreted their judgments to develop their own internal belief systems (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Kegan, 2002). Robert Kegan (2002) defined this concept as self-authorship, a theoretical framework for examining the understanding of developmental transformations.

For Kittle and Atwell (2015), though reluctant to admit it, a teacher centered traditional method of teaching writing enabled them not only to maintain control of their classroom (and their writing), but also established a persona of the role they believed a teacher played, a role of authority. Kittle and Atwell resided in a position of "dualism/received knowledge, where authorities have the knowledge and students must learn the answers" (Meszaros, 2007, p. 9). Their methods went unquestioned by themselves or others. Whether through the curriculum of textbooks or the apprenticeship of former models, they were *following external formulas* and attained an *absolute model of thinking* as they accepted their methods as effective and argued against other methods that differed from theirs (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

The *external formulas* began to fall apart when both teachers recognized they were struggling to effectively teach their students to write. Both teachers recognized conflicting answers and knowledge in the area of teaching writing to be subjective (Meszaros, 2009). At the *crossroads*, it was the voices of teachers before them that triggered their initial resistance yet also began the journey of questioning their practices into this next phase. This "disorienting dilemma" caused them to critically analyze their own beliefs and recognize other ways of knowing how to teach writing, the largest realization, to write themselves (Mezirow, 1978). Beliefs about themselves as writers, Donald Graves included, were addressed, and through the partnership of a mentor, in which each writer was able to risk vulnerability through the sharing of their own personal writing with their class in order to be a model and a member of the "literacy club"

(Smith, 1988). Through writing, these teachers were able to achieve *self-authorship* and enter an *independent way of knowing* as they not only experienced these discrepancies of authorities in the teaching of writing, but through their own personal experience as a writer themselves, realizing the empowerment in teaching writing.

Self-authorship requires a triggering moment or series of moments in order to activate the journey to an *independent way of knowing.* For many teachers who teach writing, this is the angst they feel when they recognize they don't know enough about teaching writing. There is a cognitive dissonance as they realize they are teaching in a way that is inconsistent to their beliefs about teaching and about the students they teach (Festinger, 1985). For Atwell (2015), she was aware of her state of despair when her weekly writing assignments caused her dread as she avoided the stack of papers she needed to correct and grade each week. Kittle (2001) had a nagging voice that taunted her as her students wrote paper after paper littered with the same kinds of errors. While some teachers ignore this internal voice, holding true to their assumptions that this is what teachers do (correct papers) and what writers do (make mistakes), others at this transition stage of self-authorship, seek guidance. This frustration drives them to further study, either through reading, following a mentor, or participating in a writing institute like the National Writing Project.

National Writing Project

The National Writing project is a five-week institute in which teachers engage in daily personal and professional writing, reshaping frames of making meaning, examining and revising old beliefs and experiences as a writer and a writing teacher (Whitney, 2008). Several research studies show that teachers who participate in the NWP undergo transformations in their beliefs about writing, the teaching of writing, teaching and learning pedagogies, and their own identity

(Lieberman & Wood, 2003). The power of the NWP lies in its perspective in meaning making. "Normally, when we learn something, we attribute an old meaning to a new experience. . . In transformative learning, however, we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations" (Mezirow, 1991, p.11). While Kittle, Atwell and Graves did not attend National Writing Projects, they did participate in similar experiences: Atwell attended Bread Loaf's School of English Program in Writing, led by Dixie Goswami, a key learning partner in Atwell's transformation (Atwell, 2015). Kittle devoured the works of Calkins, Graves, Murray and others (Kittle, 2001). Donald Graves had the learning partnership of Donald Murray, a master teacher of writing at the University of New Hamshire (Graves, 1984). All were transformed in their identities as writers, teacher of writing and as teachers. Atwell (2015) writes, "I gained courage to change my mind and the humility to revise my practice when experience showed me there's something else I can do to help students grow" (p. 13). A *cultivation of internal voice* begins to take root.

Teacher-writers at this position "take on the role of inquirers; they are agents involved in constructing knowledge. They realize that inquiry is ongoing and that conclusions are open to reevaluation based on further inquiry" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 17). At this stage of *self-authorship*, teacher-writers begin to trust in their decisions of what to believe, establish priorities and follow their vision in how to succeed. As they continue to seek more ways to grow and learn about themselves as writers, teacher-writers and teachers, internal commitments are strengthened and a stronger foundation is developed. Kittle, Atwell and Graves continued their own growth through sharing their story, writing books and teaching other teachers through professional development, conferences and coaching. All have been recognized highly in their field.

"Writing, in itself, has been thought to possess transformative power" (Whitney, 2008). Teachers who write have also shown a shift in their cognitive, physiological and spiritual lives, in and out of the classroom (Whitney, 2008; Schneider, 2013). It is suggested that writing promotes a present mindset in which one is awakened to a more observant state enabling one to take note of what is, rather than what they think (Graves, 1990; Elbow, 1998). This actually helps teachers to shift out of cognitive narratives that may be self-sabotaging their own growth as a person and a teacher. Teachers move from awareness of, to confidence in, their internal voices multiple times as they work to trust their internal voices" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 325-26). Through writing, these internal voices are made visible, "leaving a trace" of our learning as it emerges (Whitney, 2008).

Awareness prompts more exploration and a more curious state of mind develops as one seeks to learn more not only about writing, but in other areas of teaching and in personal growth. As teachers use writing as a continued practice, exploration can sometimes lead to "shadow lands" in which one enters times of confusion, ambiguity, fear, and even despair as individuals struggle to analyze and reconstruct some aspects of their beliefs, identity, or relationships in various contexts" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 326). These life-changing points either broaden, deepen or cause one to reevaluate ones beliefs, practices and identity in various contexts, "promoting a stance of inquiry, guiding reflection on teaching through reflection on learning and encouraging a reconceptualization of professional identity" (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 22).

From this analysis, the interconnectedness between the development of a teacher-writer and the phases of self-authorship is made evident. There are many reasons for teachers to write and most research supports this practice as a means to effective modeling and teaching in the area of writing. However, the path to self-authorship is overlooked as possibly, a more important

goal for pre-service teachers. While the obvious goal of being an effective teacher-writer addresses professional aspects of teaching writing, self-authorship encompasses a teacher's development of self and confidence in the decisions she makes throughout all areas of her life, not just teaching. It is worth investing the time to explore ways to integrate writing into pre-service coursework for this benefit.

Possibilities For Developing Teacher-Writers as Pre-service Teachers

How do we design opportunities for self-development growth in pre-service teachers using the lens of self-authorship and writing? "Given the complexity and difficulty of the journey toward self-authorship and the need for it during and (after college), weaning students away from authority dependence must begin at the outset of college," (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 29). Meszaros's research suggests Baxter Magolda and King's Learning Partnership Model is effective in accelerating undergraduates down the road to *independent thinking* by walking alongside students as a mentor and as "good company" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. xvii). The Learning Partnership Model "supports self-authorship via *three principles:* validating learners' capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning" (p. xix). Each teacher-writer in the introduction stories were fortunate to have such a guide alongside of them. This mentor "challenged learners to see the composing of reality in complex terms and supported them in coordinating their beliefs, values and interpersonal loyalties" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xix). Three avenues will be described to promote the conditions for pre-service teachers to begin to transition through the phases of self-authorship, all through the act of writing. These three avenues include faculty through Language Arts courses, faculty advising, and by creating pre-service teacher-writing groups.

Literacy Courses

Despite the National Commission on Writing's (2003) call for better teacher preparation in writing instruction, our current pre-service teacher literacy courses focus on reading and lack the teaching of writing with writing instruction embedded into reading courses (Morgan, 2010). There is a need to expand beyond the teaching of reading and writing and first create conditions for pre-service teachers to be readers and writers themselves to develop their own reading and writing identities (Morgan & Pytash, 2014; Miller, 2009). Dewey (1933) reminds us, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference" (p. 22).

A teacher's practices are a result of the beliefs of which she holds about herself and about how students learn (Palmer, 2004; Cremlin & Baker, 2010). Restructuring literacy courses to include the act of writing should include: 1) reflective writing to examine these past writing histories and explore experiences in order to learn new things from it (Boud, 2001); 2) crafting personal narratives (through the writing workshop model) to write stories of significant moments in their lives that influence who they are (DeSalvo,1999; Graves,1984; Schneider, 2013); and 3) introduce and model the power of using a writers notebook in their everyday teaching, learning and living to develop the habit of awareness and creativity (Hunt, 2013). Each of these practices hold promise for pre-service teachers in not only developing a stronger sense of writing identity, but also in creating conditions for digging deeper into past experiences, examining them as "objects" and redesigning possible options for their future (Collier, Scheld, Barnard & Stallcup, 2015). As these practices become habits of mind, a shift into a present state of being, heightened awareness and personal joy can be developed from the act of writing (Andrews, 2008) all of

which lead to the opportunity creating an ongoing internal foundation to keep them grounded (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Kegan states that self-authorship is not a skill to be acquired, but instead a new frame of mind (1994).

Advising

The influence an adviser has on the growth of undergraduate student advisees has been researched heavily, both intellectually and personally. Richard Light (2001) and his colleagues interviewed over sixteen hundred undergrads seeking answers to the question, "What contributes to a quality undergraduate experience?" (p. 1). "Students pointed out repeatedly that receiving constructive, somewhat personalized advice may be the single most underestimated feature of a great college experience (Light, 2001, p. 4). Through these learning partnerships, Baxter Magolda and King (2004) recognize the influence advisers have on students in promoting the shift from depending on authority to self-authorship by "challenging learners to see the composing of reality in complex terms and supporting them in coordinating their beliefs, values, and interpersonal loyalties" (p. xix).

Advisers can ask thought provoking questions to their advisees at crucial points in their undergraduate careers in a sensitive balance of guidance and empowerment to enable advisees to be responsible (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Questions are "raised about student interests, strengths, goals, motivation level, obstacles to reaching goals and how they all relate" (Meszaros, 2007, p. 75). By posing challenges to students in response to the answers of these key questions, advisees were forced to "think about the relationship of their academic work to their personal lives" (Meszaros, 2007, p. 88), choose paths to resolve issues and reach new goals. These challenges can be met through encouraging advisees to listen to their internal voice within the context of writing.

An adviser may recommend for advisees to create a journaling practice in which they work to create habits of mind that center around an awareness of the complexities in their courses, relationships and the world and document these curiosities in writing to see what underlying ideas or realizations may surface. William Zinsser (1988) in his book, *Writing to Learn,* teaches us that "learning takes a multitude of forms – expect to find learning in the places where you least expect it" (p. 10). Learning does not only come from coursework, but from experiences with friends, adults, coaches and in world events. In taking time to reflect on these surprises or disorienting dilemmas that do not fit into existing schemas, advisees learn to listen to their inner voices and new cognitive worlds are shaped, while beliefs about their own self, relationships and the world are examined. Advisers can help pre-service teachers to focus on the kinds of writing, which self-authored, in-service teachers use in reflection. When pre-service teachers learn to use writing to make sense of uncertain or conflicting situations, then they learn to understand that professional knowledge does not fit every case and there is not a right answer to every problem (Schon, 1987). These are self-authorship pillars that can be fostered as pre-service teachers begin to develop these habits of mind.

This becomes transformative in how pre-service teachers begin to think, shifting from an acceptance of knowledge without critical consideration to a change in "ones' assumptions about the certainty, sources and limits of knowledge" (Baxter Magolda, 2006, p. 50). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) have found that teachers with these high levels of metacognitive and self-awareness "have developed habits of mind that continually self-assess their performances and modify their assumptions and actions while those who are less metacognitive rely on external feedback from others to tell them what to do and how to change" (p. 376).

While Franz Kafta (1904) is once quoted that, “A book should serve as a ice-axe to break the frozen sea within us” as does writing if used in this way. Virginia Woolf agrees, as she writes that writing can “force us into an awareness about ourselves and our place in the world that we wouldn’t otherwise have had; we are realigned to our essential nature of our being” (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 5). Writing becomes a tool for discovery, used to journey us into a tremendous adventure into the unknown (Schnieder, 2003). Zinsser (1988) argues, “Writing is not just for writers. It’s a basic skill for getting through life” (p. 11).

Many possibilities exist in the ways advisers can incorporate writing into their work with advisees. When the adviser is also a writer, she can model and share her own practice of using writing to shift the particular to something larger, thus giving advisees an understanding of how writing can take you into the unknown. Advisers could use writing to learn more about who their advisees are, perhaps requesting autobiographical sketches that map out their dreams and passions. This can be used as a window into a student’s true identity. Nurturing the adviser/advisee relationship, in itself, has shown to increase student self-advocacy and increase academic success, however, using writing as an additional tool can help students develop their own viewpoints, worldview and in essence, a voice of their own.

Pre-service Teacher-Writer Groups

Finally, a third opportunity to empower pre-service teachers in developing self-authorship through writing might be to create and facilitate pre-service teacher-writer groups. Research by the NWP (2008) has shown that participation in writing groups has been shown to have an impact on retaining best practices in writing, progressing in intellectual writing expertise and personal development which carries over into the classroom. Through writing groups, undergraduates are able to share their writing with others and receive feedback, not only on their

ideas, but in the gathering of perspectives that may conflict or challenge their own ideas. Meszaros (2007) recommends for those who are becoming authors of their own lives, interaction with others helps participants to gain perspective about themselves.

These groups become a safe community in which writers feel safe to explore thoughts and unearth feelings while receiving the guiding support and constructive feedback of others. As future teachers of writing, these pre-service teachers experience the emotions of sharing their writing with others, learn how to create nurturing conditions for learning, how to listen carefully to others and foster dialogue that creates an understanding and respect for varied interpretations of meaning (Meszaros, 2007). Pre-service teacher-writer facilitators can provide meaningful writing prompts that nudge students to write deeply into their subconscious in an effort to analyze deeply held beliefs about themselves, their relationships and their chosen path as a teacher in order to create opportunities for reflective dialogue.

Future Research

Most teacher-writer research focuses on writer identity, self-efficacy, writing communities and application to student work. Teresa Cremin (2017) has extensive research on teacher-writers identity and Christine Dawson (2017) has written about teacher-writers' personal and professional growth in the context of communities. Their work focuses on English teachers, as opposed to elementary education teachers, yet much is applicable for future research. The National Writing Project has also compiled much research surrounding the transformation of its participants. Yet, there is little, if any, research to support how a developing a writing practice in teacher education programs, especially focusing on elementary education candidates, can propel pre-service teachers toward self-authorship. This is a fresh area for research to grow.

Conclusion

At the heart of creating conditions for pre-service teachers to develop writing identities is also a goal to pave a path to self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Self-authorship requires an internal foundation in which one "yields the capacity to actively listen to multiple perspectives, critically interpret those perspectives in light of relevant evidence and the internal foundation and make judgments accordingly" (p. 303). As a beginning classroom teacher, this could not be a more important goal. Multiple voices surround new teachers in role as a teacher – many of them their own. Schon (1987) questions, in his book, *The Reflective Practitioner,* "Can higher education ever create a curriculum adequate to address the complex, unstable, uncertain and conflictual world of practice?" (p. 12). He argues in favor of teaching pre-service teachers how to make self-authored decisions under these types of conditions, yet how to teach this remains a mystery.

Baxter Magolda (2004) writes in her book, *Learning Partnerships*, "If attaining this kind of internal foundation will help today's graduates address these problems, then this will be well worth our energy and effort" (p. 304). And, the mystery Schon (1987) speaks of may not be for faculty to figure out, it may be for the pre-service teacher to discover on their own. If given the powerful tool of writing, pre-service teachers can begin to notice, recognize and honor their own voice on the pages they write. Developing writing as a practice strengthens the voice and gives confidence to have it be heard. It becomes almost impossible, if write continues long enough, to ignore a true sense of self.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Some days, I go to my writing desk expecting to say one thing and discovering another. The same can be said of this body of work. My intentions, audience and perspectives have shifted from one focused with a purpose of being a model for students to one of helping teachers find purpose for writing for themselves. My hope was to discover findings that would give teachers tools and develop habits of thinking that would develop into a writing practice. I now realize this is wasted effort without the inner desire to truly cultivate a writing practice as a goal to discover meaning about who we are and where we are going. Donald Murray (1978) writes, "Writing is a matter of continuing change and discovery" (p. 245). Understanding this deeply is what keeps me coming back to my notebook.

The newly emerged themes of purpose were the most significant findings in the study. The fact that these teacher-writers wrote to discover meaning in their lives, to keep connections with others alive, to foster their well-being, and because they were committed to learning are concepts that need to be revisited. The human need to feel fully alive was a driving force in continuing to write as writing gave participants an energy that excited them in all aspects of their lives. Additionally, the recognition of relationships between writing and self-authorship contributes to the benefits of writing for teachers.

The findings in this study remind us how writing can be a way to gain clarity when we are unable to see clearly because we are overwhelmed, bombarded with responsibilities, and feel

the pressure of time. Writing can be a way to sort out the noise and the voices of others to make sense of it and to recognize our own true voice. Writing can be a way to honor who we are by keeping the relationship with ourselves alive – our voice is transcribed to words on the page as evidence that yes, we are still here. Writing can connect us with others who may or may not reside in our school community – a link to like-minded souls who can keep us afloat when those around us succumb to the status quo. Writing can document where we have been, what we have experienced and what we have learned as a way to keep growing in our personal journeys not just as teachers, but as human beings. Once teachers are awakened to the power of writing in their lives, they realize that they are unable to live without this gift.

The articles that emerged from this work all bend toward to the advocacy of the teacher, in hopes a writing life can be born and sustained to keep them afloat in the every changing landscape of teaching. In our current educational system, trends come and go, and information from many directions flood in our direction. The diverse needs of our students can overshadow the possibilities of good teaching. Every instructional decision made rests on the personal and professional development of the teacher. Baxter-Magolda and King (2004), in their book, *Learning Partnerships,* urge us to be "better company for young adults on their journey towards making meaning in their lives" (p. xi). Not only can writing be 'good company' for the pre-service teacher and in-service teachers, it can be 'good company' on the journey of all of us. When teachers experience this genuine love of writing, only then can they provide their students with the necessary conditions for them to claim the identity of writer themselves.

Upon exploring the great body of previous work created by scholars, teacher-writers and writers themselves on the topic of writing as teachers, there are some gaps that this work can fill. First, there seems to be a missing link in literature that bridges the personal and professional

lives of teachers. Parker Palmer (1998) has worked to bridge this divide through his own writing, speaking, workshops and teaching sharing how to create communities of talk. He speaks to the heart and soul of teachers to help them answer questions such as, "How do I stay close to the passions and commitments that took me into this work, challenging myself and my colleagues and the institution I work in to keep faith with this profession's deepest values?" (Palmer, 1998, p. 211). Through his own writing, a constant echo repeats to us that we teach who we are.

We need to have tools to mine our beliefs, our emotions and our deeply rooted truths to illuminate our shadows in an effort to examine them. This is heavy work that typically is done in community or therapy; however, from my own experience and that of many other writers, a writing practice can guide you on such a journey. Somehow, we need to make known this simple, free tool for teachers. Palmer explains, "Academic culture honors only two sources of knowledge: empirical observation and logical reasoning: But we do not live by science alone. To survive and thrive, we also rely on the knowledge embedded in our feelings" (p. 208). This research can be a beginning point for more literature that explores how writing can actually help the teacher discover those feelings, ultimately leading to their voice that resides within them. Teachers need more resources that support their own personal growth.

Current workshops, literature, and teaching of writing for teachers lack a voice that speaks directly to the human-soul. It speaks to teacher, with outcomes that are student based. Other literature, designed by and for writers speak to writers, but not necessarily teachers (and teachers beginning their journeys as writers do not yet identify themselves as such). Kate Messner (2015), a teacher and now author, comes close with her book, *59 Reasons to Write: Mini-Lessons, Prompts, and Inspiration for Teachers.* Surprisingly, the reasons are sprinkled throughout the book lightly. Mainly, her book focuses on how writing ourselves helps us be a

better teacher of writing. Overall, her book is a compilation of "assignments" for the teacher to do herself and then do with her students and most focus on craft. She brings in the voices of other authors to give tips and prompts with a core reason to write as having something to say or a story to tell, and to teach our students well. These types of books are common for teachers. Most information for teachers seems to be presented as tips and lessons, as if this is all we are.

The extensive work of Donald Murray (1978), Donald Graves (1983), Ralph Fletcher (2017), Nancie Atwell (2015), Lucy Calkins (1986) and so many other frontiersman of writing have created a strong foundation for my own beliefs as a teacher, writer, learner and human being. Dr. Mary Howard (2017) a leading literacy expert, shares the story of her experience at a recent conference; she asked her crowd of teachers to raise their hands if they knew or had read the work of the experts in literacy education named above. To her dismay, no hands were raised. It is frightening to think about who new teachers (and seasoned) are following and inspired by – attracted to sparkly, shiny, quick and cute. It is a deeply rooted obligation for myself to continue to teach, through writing, to keep the legacy of our teacher-writer frontiersmen alive. Murray (1978) and Grave's books (1983) written more than 40 years ago are very relevant today, but there is nothing sparkly about them. Much of the recent teaching-writing literature and social media proclamations are founded on their work, yet they are rarely credited or cited. It is a personal goal to teach teachers to develop their own lineage of teachers, writers, and thinkers of whom they base their foundation on to continue to keep alive the work of these teachers.

Finally, the tone and language we use with teachers to encourage them to write was a shift that surfaced through this work. Moving from an urgent or authoritarian stance to one of compassion and empathy, in teacher friendly language can entice teachers to dip a toe into the writing life. While current literature emphasizes *must* and *should* with *prompts* and *assignments*

to encourage teachers to write, Donald Graves (1990) wrote with a grandfather tone and experimented with a "let me try it first" voice, and then he invited the reader to try it in a series of *invitations*. My own heart expands just reading his words. Other literature is written in academic language that is difficult for teachers to interpret and implement in the author's intended methods. My hope is for the findings in this research to be communicated to a teacher audience in a compassionate tone that speaks to their humanness in a way they can deeply understand.

This work will never be done. As we continue to find ways to bridge the teacher and the human side of our profession, the search for a larger purpose in our lives and to connect to others and remain committed to learning, I am reminded of Robert Frost's (2011) last stanza in his poem, *Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Day:*

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

During my work as a literacy coach at Ohio State University, I learned that, as a coach, it should be a goal to work our way out of a job. Coach and teach so well that teachers and students are independent in their own learning and have tools to continue learning for themselves. Writing can be that tool – for teaching, learning and living.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you so much for participating in my study. I know that your time is very valuable and I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. Before beginning the interview, I want to tell you more about the purpose of my study, let you know what kinds of questions I'll be asking you, and address issues of confidentiality.

My purpose for this research is to explore the perceptions of teacher-writers in their first experiences of influence, key essentials to sustain an ongoing writing practice and the benefits, both professionally and personally of being a teacher-writer. During our conversation, I will ask you questions about your professional and personal background to help me better understand who you are and your experience at your school. There are no right or wrong responses. Instead, I am interested in learning about your perspective.

As a researcher I will write about what you tell me. When I write about your experiences, I will use a pseudonym for you. I will quote things that you say in my dissertation, but I will never use your name. You do not need to answer every question. You can decide to skip a question, ask me to clarify a question, or help me develop a better question.

In order to be able to make sure that I can give you my complete attention during the interview, I will only make occasional notes. With your permission, I will digitally record our conversation

so that I can have the interview transcribed by a professional transcription agency. I want you to know that the only people who will listen to the recording will be me and a professional transcriber who is bound by a contract to only listen and type out our recorded conversation. If you want to see any part of the transcript, I can provide you with a copy.

Questions for Interview #1

This is a semi-structured interview and these questions are only a guide.

Personal background

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

2. What experiences led you to be interested in teaching at your school?

3. Can you briefly describe your educational history?

Professional background

4. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you worked at this school?

5. What did you do before coming to this school?

First Influences To Write

1. What initial experiences influenced your identity as a teacher-writer?

2. Have you always defined yourself as a writer? Can you talk about this more?

3. What were your early experiences in school as a writer? How did this shape who you are as a writer?

4. How have you grown as a writer? What factors caused this?

5. What writers, teachers and authors influence your writing self? Why?

Essentials For An On-Going Writing Practice

6. Describe yourself as a writer

7. When, where are how often do you write?

8. What is essential for you to keep an ongoing writing practice? Is anything more important that other elements?

9. What gets in the way of your ability to write as a practice?

10. Describe any habits, rituals or obsessions you have that are necessary for you to write.

11. Are there any habits of mind, attitudes or necessary ways of thinking you have?

12. Do you have any fears as a writer? What are they? Do you have strategies for overcoming these fears?

13. What strategies do you have when you are stuck or in a slump?
14. Describe your writing process? What parts of the process to you enjoy/dislike the most?

15. What types of writing do you feel are the most important for you do? Why? Is this the type of writing you enjoy the most? Do you do any other types of writing?

16. Is your personal writing different than public writing? If so, how?

17. Describe your goals or hopes and dreams as a writer.

Effects of Being a Teacher-Writer Professionally and Personally

18. What is your overall approach to teaching writing? Can you explain what that looks like?

19. How do you organize or structure this type of teaching? (Probes: whole group? small group? Is there a structure to your lessons? Describe it.)

20. If I were to do a walk in observation of your writing lesson, what would you be teaching? What would the lesson look and sound like?

    - How long would it be?
    - What might be a topic?
    - How would you open the lesson?
    - What would happen in the middle of it?
    - How would it end?

21. List as many topics as you can think of that you teach to your students, especially in a whole group setting.

22. Where do your ideas for your lessons or these whole group lessons, come from?

23. What do you think is most important for your writers to know and be able to do?

24. What are your challenges in teaching writing?

25. What are your strengths, despite any challenges?

Closing

- Thanks for sharing your experiences and ideas with me today.
- Do you have any questions for me? Are there any other things about being a writer you would like to share that I did not ask you?

Questions for Interview #2 will be developed from the data gathered in interview #1. These questions will be to clarify and distill further the essence of a teacher-writer.

At the end of Interview #2, teachers will be asked to respond to these questions in writing:

1. What are the effects/benefits of being a teacher-writer in the classroom? Are there other effects professionally?

2. What are the effects/benefits of being a teacher-writer outside of the classroom? In your personal life?

Questions for Interview #3 will be developed from the written response questions.

The interview protocol has been developed and adapted from Lock, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2014). 2014). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

APPENDIX B

EMAIL INVITATION

Email Draft for Research Recruitment of Study

Perceptions of Teachers Who Write: A Phenomological Study

Shari Daniels

University of North Dakota

Dear _____,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study for my dissertation. Your name was suggested for participation in this study by _____ as meeting the criteria for participants. The title of my study is Perceptions of Teachers Who Write: A Phenomological Study and I am recruiting 10-15 teachers from the Midwest states, who teach grade K-12 writing and also write themselves personally and/or professionally. Honoring the work of Donald Graves, I am interested in the key essentials that keep one committed to a writing practice along with the first awakening as a teacher-writer. In addition, I would like to gain insight to how a writing practice impacts a teacher personally and professionally.

If you should choose to participate, I would schedule a series of three interviews with you along with one written response to a question after the second interview. The third interview would be based upon your written responses. These interviews would be at a time and place of your convenience as I know your time is valuable.

I am hoping this research will fill some gaps in how to help teachers live the life of a writer themselves in an effort to grow as an effective teacher. Your story is a valuable one and I'd love to include it in my research.

I am anxious to hear back from you.

Shari Daniels
University of Minnesota University Instructor & Teacher Ed. Supervisor
218-280-8013
danielss@crk.umn.edu

APPENDIX C

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Writer: *"*Writing is a matter of mind, hand and heart – and involves complex cognitive, physical, affective and social processes. Writing is a part of the communications whole. There is no one writing process. Writers use multiple skills and strategies as they move through the stages of planning, drafting, revising and editing. Writers also present and publish their writing. People write in many written genres/formats and for different audiences and purposes in their daily lives" (Myers et al, 2016, p. 4).

Teacher-Writer: A teacher with a writer identity is one who identities as someone who writes but who also has the capabilities and skills to talk about writing and model writing in a way that helps students envision the possibilities for their own writing. Teacher-writers have the capacity to notice and name craft for their students with a goal of developing student writers that are independent in noticing and naming what they do as writers themselves (Cremin & Locke, 2017).

National Writing Project: "The National Writing Project transcends traditional professional development in that it considers the teacher as a whole person who has valuable insight about herself and her practice. In the NWP, teachers think, collaborate, and work to develop themselves as writers. As teachers develop their own practice as writers, they also think in new ways regarding their practice of teaching writing" (Collier, Scheld, Barnard & Stallcup, 2015, p. 131.)

Self-Efficacy: Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as our belief in our ability to succeed in a situation or task. This belief is shaped by our social experiences and through observation and what we have been taught.

Writing Identity: Writing is about the representation of the self. This identity consists of four aspects: the autobiographical self, our discourse self, self as author, and possibilities for selfhood. This self consists of a writer's sense of their roots and their past histories as a writer and a person (Ivanic, 1998).

Self-Authorship: Baxter Magolda (2001) defined self-authorship as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity & social relations" (p.269). Adults progress through several stages in their journey of self-authorship:

1. Following formulas
2. Crossroads
3. Becoming the author of one's life
4. Internal foundation

Phenomenology: *"*Empirical phenomenological research returns to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions. These descriptions then provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis to portray the essences of the experience. First the original data is comprised of 'naïve' descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue. Then the researcher describes the structure of the experience based on reflection and interpretation of the research participant's story. The aim is to determine what the experience means for the people who have had the experience. From there general meanings are derived" (Moustakas, 1994).

APPENDIX D

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by the assignment of a pseudonym to protect your identity. After all interviews have been electronically transcribed and reviewed by you, interview recordings will be destroyed. Data will be safeguarded in a locked cabinet in my office. Only my adviser, Pamela Beck, will have access to the data.

Any reports, articles or presentations about this study will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

If you decide to leave the study early, we ask that you call the study coordinator, Shari Daniels @ 218-280-8013 or email @ ***danielss@crk.umn.edu*** and schedule a close out visit.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is ***Shari Daniels***. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact ***Shari Daniels*** at ***218-280-8013 or academic adviser, Pamela Beck*** @ *701-777-6173.*

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at **(701) 777-4279** or **UND.irb@research.UND.edu.**

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.

Approval Date: FEB 1 2018
Expiration Date: JAN 31 2019
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking "Information for Research Participants" on the web site: http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm

I give consent to be audio recorded during this study.

Please initial: ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

I give consent for my quotes and/or photos of artifacts to be used in the research; however I will not be identified.

Please initial: ____ **Yes** ____ **No**

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

_____ _____

Signature of Subject Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date

Approval Date: FEB 1 2018
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Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

The procedures of this study include:

1. A first interview to gather information about writing identity, first experiences as a teacher-writer and key essentials to sustain a writing practice.

2. After data from interview one has been analyzed, a second interview will take place for further questioning and clarifications. In addition, you will be asked to respond in writing to a question regarding the professional and personal benefits of living a literate life as a teacher-writer. This written response is in an effort to provide thinking time in providing a more complete picture of the answer to the question. This response has no definite length and can be emailed to me before the third interview.

3. The third interview will revolve around questions generated from the written response piece and to distill further any questions from interview one and two.

You are free to skip any questions that you would prefer not to answer.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

There are "no foreseeable risks" to participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because of the knowledge that will be gained in the education field of writing.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study. I will travel to the most convenient time and location for you to be interviewed.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

Date: _____
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