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# "We can't reclaim what we don't understand": Teachers' Perceptions of Advocacy and Voice in a Rural Institute of the National Writing Project

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“We can’t reclaim what we don’t understand”:  
Teachers’ Perceptions of Advocacy and Voice in a Rural Institute of the  
National Writing Project

“We can’t reclaim what we don’t understand”:  
Teachers’ Perceptions of Advocacy and Voice in a Rural Institute of the  
National Writing Project

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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## **Abstract**

This study examines teachers' perceptions of advocacy and voice in a summer institute of the National Writing Project. The Rural Advocacy Institute, a first-time initiative through the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project, offered three weeks of professional development centered on rural education and teaching English language arts in rural public schools. The study is a grounded theory study; grounded theory forces the researcher to stay "close to the data," compare data sets, and use reflective writing to identify conceptual categories in the data. Data collection in the study included semi-structured interviews with six K-12 teachers participating in the Institute and twenty-seven hours of video-recordings of all whole-group discussions and writing activities. The grounded theory generated in this study incorporates Robert Brooke's work with "underlife" and Homi Bhaba's concept of "third space" in maintaining that researchers, teacher educators, and professional development coordinators must consider the ways teachers negotiate the "hybrid" discourses created in professional development opportunities. For example, participant-teachers in this study demonstrate an affinity for discourses of advocacy for rural schools, while demonstrating an "underlife" discourse that often resists the role of advocate. Through Peter Elbow's concept of "resonant voice" and Bakhtin's concept of "answerability," the grounded theory also explains the role of voice in the teachers' discourses on writing and how teachers perceive advocacy. The study argues that analyzing how teachers discuss and view voice, and its relationship to writing and professional agency, is a means of better understanding how and if teachers are able to perceive themselves as advocates.

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## Chapter One.

### Exigence, Situating the Study and Rural Public Schools

“A greater interest in the best things pertaining to country life needs to be awakened, and to this end rural communities should be better organized, socially, economically, and educationally.”

—Joseph Kennedy, *Rural Life and the Rural School* (originally published in 1915)

We presume to know the rural. By “we” here, I refer to most Americans, those of us who do not currently or have never lived for extended periods in rural areas. We presume to know the isolated, vast stretches of plains or mountains or swamps or hills where rural people live. We sometimes drive through these rural areas on our way to anyplace else. This is “flyover” and “drive over” country. We have seen rural areas and rural residents portrayed on our televisions or in various news media. Too often, it seems, we see rural areas on the news after catastrophic environmental tragedies, such as tornadoes or floods. Most recently in Arkansas, the world saw the effects of an EF4 tornado (a 4 out of 5 on the Enhanced Fujita Scale that rates a tornado’s devastation) ravage the communities of Mayflower and Vilonia in the central part of the state. President Obama visited the storm-devastated areas and offered these comments to residents of Vilonia: “I’m here to make sure that they [the media/the world] know, and that everybody who’s been affected knows, that the federal government is going to be right here until we get these communities rebuilt. Because when something like this happens to a wonderful community like this one, it happens to all of us, and we’ve got to be there for them” (Goldfarb). Often, what is created by these images, and our collective imagination, is a mix of rustic simplicity, isolation, unfortunate despair, and otherness. As this study will attempt to show, these perceptions are more than simple stereotypes and are not limited to those who live outside of rural areas.

Arkansas is a state that is defined as much by its rurality as anything else. Apart from Little Rock’s role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s or the University of Arkansas

Razorbacks nickname and sports teams, Arkansas's national identity is woven with the state's lack of population, its poverty, and its rurality. Therefore, it is no surprise that rural education in Arkansas is a key concern for teachers, policy makers, and local communities alike. The most recent *Why Rural Matters 2013-2014: The Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States*, a biennial research publication sponsored by the Rural School and Community Trust, sheds some important light on the challenges facing education in the state of Arkansas. The report labels the state as the eighth highest "priority" state in all its gauges of need in rural education. According to the report, over half of Arkansas schools are considered rural, and over one-third of students in Arkansas attend rural schools. Rural Arkansas students face many challenges—poverty and an uncertainty of living situation being chief among them. Poverty in rural Arkansas is severe: "The state has the fourth lowest rural median household income in the US, one-quarter of its rural students are eligible for Title I, and nearly two-thirds are eligible for free or reduced priced lunches" (Johnson et al. 45). Not only do rural Arkansas students face poverty and difficult living situations, but the state ranks as the lowest in teaching expenditures, which is a problem for rural areas already facing teaching shortages. Educational outcomes are suffering as well, as Arkansas rural eighth-grade mathematics test scores on national assessments were the fifth lowest in the nation. Thus, the exigence for more focus on rural education and for giving voice to rural students, teachers, administrators, and communities becomes clearer.

These statistics are helpful in considering the large-scale problems confronting the state of Arkansas—among states ranging from Arizona to Florida that face challenges in rural education. Yet, like all statistics, they do not tell the entire story. The rest of the story comes from on the ground, in the communities and schools where rural education is played out in the most tangible of ways. By way of the discipline of rhetoric and composition, I came to focus on

literacy studies in my doctoral work. I was particularly taken by the work of Deborah Brandt, Ellen Cushman, Marcia Farr, and Luis Moll; these respective researchers and teachers were doing research in communities and with “real” people in ways I had never before imagined could exist within our field. With these previous works in mind, I sought out projects and research areas that would allow me to gain firsthand knowledge and accounts of rural literacy and writing pedagogy in rural schools. Later in my doctoral studies, in a fortuitous sequence of events, I became aware of the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project’s inaugural Rural Advocacy Institute.

The Rural Advocacy Institute, which took place in the summer of 2013, was designed to give professional development to rural teachers in the areas of writing pedagogy. Furthermore, the Institute sought to address some of the concerns for rural education of the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project (NWAWP) and its director Dr. Christian Z. Goering of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas. These concerns mirrored the state of rural schooling set forth by such studies and reports as *Why Rural Matters 2013-2014: The Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States*. NWAWP serves teachers from some of the wealthiest urban schools and some of the poorest and most remote schools in the Arkansas Ozark Mountains. The National Writing Project (NWP), one of the oldest and most respected professional development organizations for K-12 teachers, already has a history of addressing the needs of public school teachers of English language arts from all fifty states. In short, the Rural Advocacy Institute, the summer institute that this study examines, is not the first attempt by the NWP to address concerns in rural education and literacy.

In 1992, the Rural Sites Network began as a conversation among members of NWP and teachers and leaders from rural areas. The genesis of this initiative came about through similar concerns and challenges as those that created the Rural Advocacy Institute: “[D]ifficulty in

implementing new ideas and school reform; tough economic circumstances such as declining populations, school closings, and high poverty levels; and large service areas that made it difficult to attract teachers to summer institutes and maintain continuity programs” (“About Rural Sites Network”). With significant contributions from the Annenberg Rural Challenge (now the Annenberg Rural School & Community Trust), the Rural Sites Network was able to support six rural sites of NWP in creating relevant pedagogies for rural schools, primarily in the form of place-based pedagogy from 1996-1999. The result is the Rural Voices, Country Schools project, which “resulted in the creation of dynamic strategies for fostering community involvement in student learning and school reform” (“About Rural Sites Network”). This project included efforts from eighty-eight rural NWP sites that surveyed “the needs of their areas and worked with local institutions and organizations to strengthen community involvement in learning and educational issues. Sites tailored their efforts to the unique characteristics and cultural context of their locale” (“Rural Voices, Country Schools”). This unique opportunity allowed teachers to generate “place-inspired” and place-based pedagogies in their efforts to help rural students and communities celebrate their local cultures and express local concerns. As a researcher and teacher of English language arts and rhetoric and composition, I particularly am interested in initiatives such as Rural Voices, Country Schools and the Rural Advocacy Institute from which this study was born.

Before, *though*, I outline the study and its methodology, I would like to share a bit of my personal experience with rurality and rural schools. This personal experience serves to acknowledge some contexts for teaching English and language arts in rural schools in the United States; and, perhaps, this mini-memoir on rurality will help to lay bare any unforeseen biases or generate areas of reflection and personal relevance for the reader and myself.

## **Situating My Own Experiences with Rurality**

For the first sixteen years of my life, I grew up and lived in rural America in the coastal plain of North Carolina. My mother taught for thirty years at an elementary school in one of the most rural counties in North Carolina; in fact, I attended this same school during my K-5 education. The school building was more than one room (not quite the schoolhouse of the early 1900s), but its brick façade and wooden flooring, creaky and full of ghosts, gave it an “old timey” and quaint ambiance. Although a new and more modern schoolhouse is used today, the original school building still sits behind the First Baptist Church and is a small town landmark for local residents. Today, the building is used to instruct at-risk youth from around North Carolina in an educational institute that incorporates a militaristic style. I spent most of my early childhood afternoons in that school building—visiting the library, doing homework, playing basketball in the tiny gymnasium, or creating games to play with other teachers’ children in the pine tree-lined playground. Many of my schoolmates, however, would leave school in early fall and spring to cultivate fields of tobacco, soybean, and corn on their family farms. It was typical of the first week or two of the school year for many students to be absent due to harvesting duties. In this sense, I suppose, my existence was perfectly situated that I might understand the benefits and tensions of rural education.

Despite this situatedness, I recall from an early age feeling a sense of ambivalence towards my rural existence and identity. I was fully aware that I lived and attended school in the country. While the only city in the county, our county seat, would be considered “fringe” rural by common measurements, the county seat felt significantly more modern and metropolitan than the county road where I lived and the rural school district that I attended. Perhaps it was this self-awareness that caused me to fall victim to resisting rurality. I often longed for more excitement

and opportunity, although I had not the slightest idea what constituted any of those unnamed longings. Many of my classmates and I, falling prey to our youth and cultural ignorance, would often create cultural stratifications for those children that appeared to be “farmers,” “hicks,” or “rednecks.” Even in the most rural of places, cultural and social stratification exists. The irony of these misguided adolescent taunts (many farmers did better economically than the majority of local workers) has not been lost on me in subsequent years. Moreover, I often felt similar pangs when being labeled a “nerd,” “square,” or “teacher’s boy.” However, when I was thirteen, I worked my first job on a tobacco farm. For two sweltering, sticky, exhilarating summers, I learned a great deal about my own capacity for hard work and about the good people I had spent my life living around.

When I was sixteen, I left home to attend a state-sponsored, public boarding school for “gifted” students in one of the few truly urban cities of the state. For the first month or two, my own rurality was brought to light in a way that I had never known before. In short, I did not have the right dialect, clothes, musical tastes, or any immediate cultural capital outside of sports to easily assimilate into the broader cultural norms of adolescents from around the state. I recall my roommate telling me, perhaps in an act of warning or an act of psychological testing, that the captain of the soccer team had knowledge of the soccer team from my county seat high school and had this appraisal: “All the people from there are rednecks.” I bore this challenge to my teenage identity by assimilating as best I could, carrying with me lessons learned in order to adapt to cultural norms from broader areas and building what James Paul Gee calls “secondary discourses,” in order to fit in among a social milieu of increased educational opportunities and cultural capitals.

These experiences might have been useful to me as I completed my secondary licensure in the teaching of English from a public university in eastern North Carolina. More importantly, these experiences could have served me well in teaching my students during my years of teaching at a rural county high school in northeastern North Carolina. This school district, which consisted of portions of the Outer Banks and agricultural inland areas, was at that time typical of many rural school districts. There was evident wealth mixed with dire poverty; I taught students who lived in palatial beach homes and students that wore their clam digger boots to school, fresh from an early morning attempt to aid in the family's small fishing business. Yet, not only was I not prepared to consider the socio-cultural and socio-economic forces at work where I taught, I barely considered such forces. My teacher education had prepared me to teach a few books, such as *The Lord of the Flies*, and more specifically, how to teach to the burgeoning influences of the testing of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). My most vivid memories of this teacher education are of taking versions of the state end-of-year assessments as part of our course test assessments and preparing to teach my future students how to take these tests. While I learned many skills related to the teaching of English in secondary schools, based on my teacher education "teaching to the test" was how one was to teach no matter where one taught. I am left to ask myself a decade later, having studied rural education, literacy studies, and rhetoric and composition in my doctoral work, *how* could I have taught my rural students differently? *How* could I have acknowledged their individual and group identities and designed curricula that might explore these identities in constructive ways?

This personal experience serves to acknowledge and offer some contexts for teaching English and language arts in rural schools in the United States. My personal rural narrative involves many of the relevant issues and possibilities for teaching language arts and composition



pedagogy in rural schools. This narrative includes complex aspects of socio-economic and cultural change, development of identities and discourses (both for students and teachers), and perceived and real differences in rural and non-rural education.

### **Problematic and Productive: Further Revealing Exigence for Rural Places**

My personal story with rurality is one part of the stories of people from all over the US and around the world. Rural places are, and will continue to be, places of change. Currently, the world population is nearly split between rural and urban populations: approximately 3.42 billion urban and 3.41 billion rural (“Urban and Rural Areas 2009”). However, population trends reveal that by mid-century, the growth of urban areas will greatly exceed those of rural areas around the world. In America, the trend towards urbanization is growing also. According to 2012 census data, approximately 46.2 million people live in rural areas, which amounts to about fifteen percent of the total population, although over seventy percent of the land in the US is considered rural (Miller). As the US and world populations continue to grow, more and more people appear to be moving towards metropolitan areas to find work, as other rural areas are being merged with suburban and urban areas that are expanding into megalopolises. Areas of the rural Midwest and South are facing the most significant population declines.

These shifts in population densities coincide with a shift from more stable infrastructures in rural communities, which coincides with a shift away from small-scale agriculture. Although the US has more arable land than any other nation on earth, there are major concerns about the sustainability of US rural farms, specifically family farms. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s Agriculture Center, some 3,000 acres of farmland are lost to development every day (“Land Use Overview”). These losses of agriculture in rural communities impact the socio-economic infrastructures of these rural areas: “For many rural places this

economic restructuring has resulted in out-migration, labor market contraction, the prevalence of low-paid service-sector employment contributing to rising inequality, increased levels of household poverty, and economic insecurity” (Schafft, Killeen, and Morrissey 97). With increases of corporate farms, there is fear that our food and our natural resources may not be under proper stewardship. What is certain is that the loss of agriculture in rural communities impacts the socio-economic infrastructures of these areas, in turn affecting our national geographic and economic landscapes. Losses in rural agriculture economies mean that these rural areas face even stiffer rises in unemployment and poverty. Furthermore, decreases in tax revenues and an inability to attract the most qualified teachers may contribute to future concerns for rural schooling and literacy education in these schools.

While rural populations are shifting towards the suburban and urban, a strong percentage of schools fall under the rural category. This variance of data foregrounds the dynamic and problematic nature of current educational philosophy and literacy research. Rural schools are at once perceived as homogenous vacuums, contact zones of immigration and diversity, and cultural poles to their urban neighbors. Not all of these perceptions are unfounded, yet none tell the whole story. Literacy in rural schools and rural education in general are the foci of a great deal of research with whole journals and numerous scholarly volumes focused on the topics. Rural regions *do still* exist and rural students attend schools every day from Adak, Alaska, to Hiawassee, Georgia. Rural regions and towns may inevitably merge with suburban and urban locations, but this is no cause to simply cast them aside as nostalgic locations from a dying historical context. Rural schools and the students who attend them may be as important to our nation’s and our world’s socio-economic future as those in New York City and Los Angeles. It is

also possible that the work done in rural schools can offer to literacy theory and literacy education as fertile a ground for change as any suburban or urban setting.

### **Defining Key Terms**

Throughout this work, *rural education* and *rural literacies* will be used in closely-related ways and contexts. This approach is not to assume that rural literacies and rural public education are exactly the same phenomena nor are they under exactly the same pressures, nor do they share the same status in policy making and public opinion. Although rural school-based literacies have not been researched as thoroughly as non-schooled rural literacies or rural education in general, there are obvious and complex similarities between these respective places of study in the discourses and rhetorics on rurality and education. Therefore, in using the terms in related ways, this study seeks to address myriad concerns in relation to rural education and rural literacies (schooled and non-schooled).

This work will refer to *discourse* by using the definition offered by James Paul Gee. In *Sociolinguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourse*, Gee defines discourse (for Gee, with a big “D”) as “ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities” (3). This study will also use William A. Covino and David A. Jolliffe’s definition of *rhetoric*: “*Rhetoric is a primarily verbal, situationally contingent epistemic art that is both philosophical and practical and gives rise to potentially active texts* [emphasis in original]” (5). By viewing discourse(s) and rhetoric(s) as “ways” and “art,” it is possible, and logical, to use these terms as plural when distinguishing between various speakers, discourse communities, and institutions. This view of rhetorics and literacies aligns with the current view of these terms in literacy studies.

## Research Questions and the Dissertation Chapters

In my own quest to better understand these parallels, I offer this dissertation study as a means of “getting at” questions and issues surrounding rural public education and rural literacies. In grounded theory (which is more thoroughly outlined in Chapter Three), researchers start with initial questions at the same time that data collection begins (Charmaz 11). My initial questions sought to combine my curiosity around the teaching of English language arts with some *anticipated* topics of rurality, advocacy, teaching, and writing that might arise in the Institute. I presented the following research questions to my dissertation committee in our final meeting before data collection began.

- What do teachers perceive as the benefits and challenges of teaching in a rural context? Do these perceptions change after the Summer Institute, and, if so, *how*?
- How, if at all, do these teachers perceive of advocacy for rural schools, students, communities, and themselves? Do these perceptions change after the Summer Institute, and, if so, *how*?
- How, if at all, are these teacher’s professional personas and self-perceptions transformed by this particular professional development?
- How, if at all, are these teachers’ writing and views on writing transformed in this particular professional development?
- How, if at all, do the Common Core State Standards inform these teachers’ professional development and discourses of writing, advocacy, and rural education/literacy?
- How, if at all, does this professional development translate to practices in the classroom and teachers’ professional lives?

These questions served as a “starting point” for the study but evolved as I began to code the data and develop conceptual categories through writing reflection memos to myself (see Chapter Three). As categories emerged, these initial questions took on more and less importance. For instance, my initial question about Common Core was not represented in the data as I had anticipated. Meanwhile, I began to see in the data the need to focus more on how teachers’ perceptions of their roles as advocates aligned or conflicted with the goals of the Institute. Also, I

began to acknowledge the extent to which the Institute was allowing teachers to engage in conversations about voice. In this way, the developing grounded theory categories took precedent over the research questions, as I further coded the data and made connections between data sets. Kathy Charmaz explains how developing categories goes beyond initial questions: “We cannot assume to know our categories in advance, much less have them contained in our beginning research questions. Grounded theory logic presupposes that we will construct categories through the comparative methods of analyzing data” (100). As I compared my data sets, I began to see tensions in how the teachers perceive issues of rurality and advocacy where they teach. Furthermore, I began to recognize the importance that the teachers placed on their developing sense of voice, as it relates to their writing, their teaching, and their roles as advocates. Writing reflective, conceptual memos to myself (see Chapter Three; see Appendix F) helped me develop new questions that both drew from my initial research questions and moved along with my growing awareness of the conceptual categories emerging in the data. My initial research questions, though, were helpful in helping me generate initial interview questions (see Chapter Three; see Appendix A).

Overall, this study reflects upon my experiences as participant-observer in the Rural Advocacy Institute, offers conceptual categories built from grounded theory, and delivers relevant discussions and implications for the teaching of English language arts in rural schools and the professional development of teachers in rural areas. Chapter two of the dissertation relates extant literature on what will be referred to as *rurality*, while also addressing literature on rural schools, advocacy in education, and the National Writing Project. Chapter three explains the methods of the study, which are based in grounded theory methodology. Chapter four begins relating the grounded theory developed in this study by looking closely at the perceptions on

rural school advocacy from the teachers participating in the study. In doing so, I take as the theoretical frameworks for this chapter Robert E. Brooke's work with *underlife* and Homi Bhaba's *third space* and *hybridity*. The chapter considers these frameworks as it analyzes conceptual categories on advocacy and rurality drawn from the data. Chapter five focuses on the professional development in writing pedagogy that took place in the Institute. More directly, the chapter also explains a grounded theory on voice, using as its theoretical frameworks Peter Elbow's theme of *resonant voice* and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *answerability*. Chapter six, which will serve as a brief conclusion, brings together these grounded theories to discuss the implications of hybrid discourses and writing and literacy pedagogy for rural teachers and rural students.

## **Chapter Two.**

### **Review of Literature**

The preceding chapter of this study is meant to open up a discussion of how concerns surrounding rural places and rural education are tied to geographical, geological, social, and culture phenomena and are consistently in flux. Consequently, it is imperative that this study considers the multiple contexts in which rural places and rural schools exist and in which teachers may serve as advocates in their rural schools.

### **The Conceptual Argument as Framework for the Review**

This study argues that the National Writing Project, along with other professional development initiatives, should consider the discourse of rural teachers and how these teachers discuss rural education and advocacy in an effort to implement the most effective professional development for rural teachers. In doing so, we are better able to view and predict the tensions that teachers feel in relation to advocacy and where they teach. Additionally, the study argues that analyzing how teachers discuss and view voice, in relation to writing and professional agency, is a means of better understanding how and *if* teachers are able to perceive themselves as advocates. In developing these conceptual arguments, conceptual categories developed to explain the theoretical frameworks of the study. The following review of literature stems from these categories of the grounded theory of this study. In this way, the review of literature serves as an attempt to highlight issues of rural identity, teacher perceptions and discourse, and the role of writing in the National Writing Project. Additionally, grounded theorists, such as Kathy Charmaz, maintain that the review of literature should take place after theoretical concepts are dealt with in the data: “The intended purpose of delaying the literature review is to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on your work” (Charmaz 165). This is not to

say that I had not read any literature related to the focus of the study prior to data collection or data analysis. In fact, I did a preliminary literature review as part of a proposal for the dissertation study. However, after adopting grounded theory as my primary methodology, I forwent reviewing more literature until I had coded and begun to analyze and write about my data.

In this chapter, I review the extant literature on what is meant by “rural” in the contexts of national population demographics and school reform trends, while also reviewing how these meanings relate to issues of identity for rural residents and rural teacher perceptions of rural education. Next, I examine the literature that focuses on language arts and composition pedagogy in rural schools, particularly on place-conscious education. Then, I turn to literature related to advocacy, which focuses on teachers advocating for their students and the profession. Finally, I look at the literature on the National Writing Project (NWP), which relates to teachers teaching teachers, writing to learn, and the effects of the summer institutes on how teachers perceive themselves and their teaching. These areas of focus for the review of literature are meant to serve as discussions of the issues and debates surrounding conceptual categories and theories in this study. For example, the focus on the socio-cultural context of the NWP adds a layer of insight into my later theoretical analysis in Chapter Five on the role of voice in the Institute. In similar ways, this chapter is offered as an *evaluation* of other studies in an effort to reveal *gaps* that my present study can help fill. Also, this review of literature is meant to help position my study and clarify its contributions to relevant fields.

### **What Do We Mean when We Talk about “Rural” Education?**

Rurality is a matter of population demographics, geography, and rhetorical and discursive spaces. To begin, “rural” is a classification that is often used in explaining population



demographics. Defining the rural is an important matter for policy makers and has been an area of uncertainty and concern for education and literacy professionals. Much of the defining of rural has been in contrast to (some would argue in deference to) “urbanized areas.” According to the US Census Bureau, “Urbanized Areas (UAs)” consist of “50,000 or more people,” while “Urban Clusters (UCs)” consist of “at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people.” Therefore, in this classification system, “Rural” encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area” (“Urban and Rural Classification”). Defining rural as measured against urban areas is indicative of larger discourses that bring with them a rhetoric of “lag and lack” in relation to rural places and rural literacies.

***“anything but stimulating”: National School Reform and Rural Deficit Models***

Recent statistics show that for the first time in human history the majority of the world’s population lives in urban areas instead of rural ones. The increased globalization of free trade markets and the urbanization of the world’s populations threaten to exacerbate what has been a consistent trend in American educational reform—to view rural education in deficit models and attempt to transform rural school students to meet standardized or urbanized models (Schafft and Jackson 2). Throughout the history of theory and research in rural education, the “problem” of rural deficit models has been addressed. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, education scholar and rural school reform advocate Joseph Kennedy envisions the traditional rural school as both problematic and anathematic:

Small, Dead School.—In many a lone rural schoolhouse may be found ten to twenty small children; and behind the desk a teacher holding on a second or third grade elementary or county certificate. The whole institution is rather tame and weak, if not dead; it is anything but stimulating (and if education means anything it means stimulations). It is this kind of situation which has led in recent years to a discussion of the rural school as one of the problems most urgently demanding the attention of society. (16)

Dating back to the late nineteenth century, education reforms have sought to eradicate this perception of rural schools as “weak” and “anything but stimulating.” As with issues of physical or psychological health, rural schools and rural literacies have been deemed unfit, chronic, and/or dysfunctional. Penny Smith explains, “In the late 1890s, the National Education Association (NEA) established the Committee of Twelve on Rural Schools to determine the nature and causes of the public’s concerns and to suggest remedies” (31). Smith goes on to explain that rural school reform was part of a larger shift in national education in the twentieth century:

“[T]ransformation would help nurture the industrial development of the nation as a whole . . . Rural schooling was not an alternative paradigm to urban schooling; it was a variation on an accepted dominant theme . . . ‘one best system’” (36-37). Such an approach to rural schooling reflects the trends in American educational history to normalize rural schooling in order to fit a business, factory model that would place rural schools in line with the city schools.

Paul Nachtigal has done extensive socio-historical work in the area of rural education. In “Rural School Improvement Efforts: An Interpretive History,” Nachtigal explains how early reforms sought to normalize rural schools:

In the 1890s, the National Education Committee of Twelve on Rural Schools took steps to prescribe remedies for the rural school problem, many of which are still being applied today: “consolidation of schools and transportation of pupils, expert supervision by county superintendents[,] . . . professionally-trained teachers.” The rural school would teach country children sound values and vocational skills; the result was to be a standardization, modernized “community” in which leadership came from professionals. (15-16)

Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell explain what Nachtigal’s work means for rural schooling: “‘Standardization’ is code for erasing differences of culture, race, ethnicity, and linguistic usage” (*Rural Literacies* 23). Consolidation, normalization, and/or standardization

demonstrate the notion in broad school reforms that rural schools and rural uses of literacy are obsolete and in need of being brought back to standards of industrialization and urbanization.

Attempts to “correct” the problem have been far-ranging. Rural literacies researchers Donehower, Hogg, and Schell discuss reform movements related to rural schooling and rural literacies in classifications that relate to the perceived outdated mode of rural education and/or an urban/rural dichotomy:

Three different types of solutions to the so-called problems of rural literacy have sprung from this tension. The first is to “modernize” the rural population by bringing them into line with the technological, economic, and cultural systems of urban life—a trend that is seen today in the tendency to believe that technology can solve many of the problems of rural school districts. The second is to recognize rural culture as a thing apart from urban life and work to preserve its difference. This manifests itself in modern-day curricula that focus on oral history and other preservationist projects that isolate the historical particularities of the rural experience. The third and most radical solution advocates abandoning rural settlements, consolidating school districts, and making city centers the locus of educational activity. (*Rural Literacies* 27).

In all of these solutions, the tensions can be seen between preserving the historical, often agrarian, elements of rural education and literacy and updating rural schools to fit urban/industrial and global markets. These reforms speak to what the literature demonstrates about rural deficit model thinking.

Deficit models, linked to concepts of the global over the local, work in conjunction with labor-market approaches to schooling to place rural education as raw material from which to draw for purposes outside of the local setting: “Old structures for rural education are being changed not only by national development but also as a response to global trends in (and shifting sites for) economic production, social organization, and mass culture” (Crump and Twyford 212). Some literacy theorists point to an “urban bias” that clouds the realities of rural literacies. Donehower, Hogg, and Schell view this urban bias as “predominately a class bias, which

stigmatizes poor urban culture as well as rural culture. The ‘city’ metaphor uses the city not so much as a symbol of a particular configuration of space but rather as an exemplar of a rich, diverse, and varied culture” (*Rural Literacies* 17). Such status quo thinking belies the complexities of rural communities and the different uses of capital, information, and resources in these rural communities.

### ***Developed and Developing Rural Identities***

Given the tensions that exist in considering the role of rural schools in a national and global matrix, recent literature has looked closely at how these tensions are mirrored in or affect rural residents and students. The rhetoric of school reform clearly casts rural schooling as the *other*, an “other” that is in need of standardization. But what does this mean for rural schools and rural students themselves? Do rural school students and teachers feel this otherness? Paul Theobald and Kathy Wood believe that they do: “Somewhere along the way, rural students and adults alike seem to have learned that to be rural is to be sub-par, that the condition of living in a rural locale creates deficiencies of various kinds” (17). Theobald and Wood look as far back to feudalism to the “historical roots” of rural peoples being considered “hayseed, hillbilly, cracker, yokel, hick, or country bumpkin” (18). The authors link these historical perceptions to current education curricula and teacher education:

Anti-rural bias frequently comes out in textbooks commonly used in teacher preparation programs. Most often it exists merely as omission; the idea that some schools are small and rural never emerges as a topic for study or discussion . . . The obvious implication is that sophisticated individuals do not farm or fish for a living. We routinely accept this stereotype because it is deeply engrained in our culture. We give no consideration to how this colors the aspirations of rural youth, despite the fact that this generalization does not stand up to even minimal scrutiny. (28)

The authors conclude that a “good deal more research is needed if we are to make progress exposing the forces contributing to lessons about rural life and the ways these lessons are

learned” (32). Indeed, other author-researchers are attempting to make clearer the relationship to issues in rural life with how rural identities are being shaped.

For example, Craig B. Howley and Aimee Howley have taken up the “othering” of the rural poor in a study focusing on rural communities in Ohio that are “economically disadvantaged but comparatively-high achieving” (39). Howley and Howley start with the premise that they must understand the ways that the rural poor understand themselves or are understood and/or marginalized by globalized views:

Rural communities, by virtue of their (albeit quite partial) ability to define themselves culturally and to determine rules of inclusion and exclusion, hypothetically offer a generative alternative to globalized *society*, that is, in accord with rural commitments to land, family, and nature . . . One might indeed assert that such a world is exactly the one that globalization has intended to ruin on the strength of an ideology that associates global free trade with global improvement [emphasis in original]. (37)

The authors find that in poor rural places existing tensions are played out between living in rural areas and perceiving oneself as poor and rural. Schools play their part in maintaining these difficult identity issues: “Schools facilitate out-migration, in part, by shaping *identities* that willingly embrace departure . . . Schooling denies [impoverished children] identification with the (bad) places where they are and simultaneously excludes them from the (good) places they hear about in school [emphasis in original]” (46). In rural places and schools, the ethos of self-sufficiency, frugality, and agrarian work is often downplayed in favor of “outside” locales and ways of living and being—outside discourses.

With their own cultures and local identities being downplayed, rural students often out-migrate in a phenomenon that has been called rural “brain drain.” Michael Corbett’s work reveals that the schools rural students attend rarely value local knowledge. Researching rural coastal schools in a fishing community called Digby Neck in Nova Scotia, Corbett finds that

modern schools seek to extract students pedagogically, if not physically, from their rural contexts in an effort to normalize students to urban or foreign norms or to state-regulated assessment levels. Students are taught that their local knowledge, their knowledge of place, is antithetical to proper learning. Therefore, students spend a great deal of effort learning how to “leave” their coastal community in terms of learning goals or in terms of literal relocation after their schooling. Issues of out-migration have a complex relationship with local economic development and local history, a history that is often of utmost importance to residents:

Many Digby Neck men resist and reject schooling both because its practices are nonsensical and alien, but also because the entire organized project of civil society has never delivered on its promise to enrich life at home. What it has offered is an allegedly enriched life elsewhere. School offers youth its legitimized identities and its mobile credentials, but in the end these credentials have never been particularly attractive or inviting to be born and bred community members, who have access to more immediate and familiar resources. (268)

Issues of identity, culture, and socio-economics create unstable situations for many rural school youth. Students often feel pulled between the tensions of these “mobile credentials” and the more familiar resources and knowledge in local areas.

In other rural places, students do not wish, or rather expect, to migrate out of rural areas. Research on future aspirations and expectations of rural students is an important aspect to the extant literature, one that gains increasing importance in the current standardized approach to increasing college readiness. Pamela MacBrayne’s review of literature from the 1950s through the 1980s reveals that rural students’ post-high school aspirations are higher than their expectations: “Aspirations are defined as an individual’s desire to obtain a status object or goal such as a particular occupation or level of education. Expectations are the individual’s estimation of the likelihood of attaining those goals, plans, ambitions or dreams” (135). This leads MacBrayne to consider these concluding questions: “A satisfying life may be achieved in a

variety of ways other than through educational and occupational attainment alone. Educational and occupational aspirations, expectations and attainment would then be examined as a means to the end” (139). Nevertheless, more recent literature demonstrates a debate among researchers as to what causes a lack of educational and vocational aspirations among rural youth. Some researchers have found that there are deficiencies in rural education or traditional values that limit the aspirations of rural youth. For example, Robert Cobb, Walter McIntire, and Phillip Pratt find that rural high school seniors are less likely than their urban counterparts to aspire to higher education and their levels of confidence in completing post-secondary degrees are lower than urban students (15). Moreover, rural students are more likely to be influenced by parental and community expectations:

The expectations rural adults hold for their youth are reflected clearly in the aspiration statements of rural high school seniors. Rural parents, teachers and counselors evidently do not hold career and educational aspirations for youth that are as high as those held by urban and suburban adults, and their students' goals are not as high as those of urban and suburban students. (15)

However, Caitlin Howley’s research complicates, or adds to, these findings by suggesting that ties to place and community are a primary factor to consider:

Rural children come of age in families for whom attachment to place is clearly an important consideration. Rural parents are more likely to refuse jobs that require a move elsewhere and are less likely to plan a move in the next several years. Taken together, these measures suggest that remaining in one's community is important to rural parents, in some cases more than economic possibilities. (76)

Findings such as these demonstrate the need to examine local, rural perceptions from within *and* without the school context in making curricular decisions.

Standardized curriculum and testing, particularly NCLB and the debates over Common Core State Standards (CCSS), have been criticized for their lack of accounting for rural people’s lives. Efforts to standardize rural curricula construct a kind of double-deficit model, a

self/identity-fulfilling prophecy of negating local knowledge and accepting that the standard way is the best way: “In most cases, rural schooling avoids pushing back against the state, federal, and world-class standards that embed rural deficiency as if it were an existential certainty” (Howley and Howley 46). Rural students and rural residents are one of the disenfranchised sectors of the public whom reform and standardization movements often overlook in decision-making processes. Yet, given the focus on teacher perceptions in this present study, how do issues of rural education and identity affect rural teacher perceptions?

The perceptions of rural teachers on where they teach are often linked with issues in rural education. Rural schools often face teacher shortages in addition to failing to attract the most qualified teachers. Research on teacher perceptions of teaching in rural schools has primarily focused on this phenomenon. Betty Jo Simmons has written about pre-service teachers’ perceptions of rural school from a teaching program set in rural Appalachian Virginia. In Simmons’s study, forty-six pre-service teachers were surveyed and the results show that these teachers were concerned about isolation, housing, and pay (48-50). Simmons concludes: “Rural schools that wish to attract well qualified teachers must undertake an active recruitment program with a strong educational component. . . Far too many people, especially those in their early- to mid-20s, tend to hold stereotypical ideas about rural life” (51). In addition to demonstrating why some teachers are not willing to teach in rural areas, the literature also offers insights into teacher perceptions on the potential and benefits of rural teaching. For example, in an article in the *Journal of Research on Rural Education*, J. David McCracken and Charles Miller interviewed teachers about their experiences in rural public schools. The teachers replied that some “desirable characteristics of the schools and students were smaller class sizes, better disciplined students, student respect for teachers, desirable student attitudes and motivation and close relationships



between students and teachers” (25). These benefits are consistent with other literature in considering the benefits of rural teaching. Such perceptions from teachers in rural schools are relevant to this current study and allow us to consider how perceptions relate to teaching practices. The next section of the literature review considers how language arts and composition pedagogies are considering these issues and how they are developing in the process. One can see in these approaches how these perceptions of teaching in rural schools are taken up by practitioners of literacy education.

### **Standards in “Place”: Approaches to Rural Literacy Education**

The story of rural education, in addition to deficit models and identity formation, is characterized by shifts in education reform that are affecting all of public school education. Common school policies and standardized curricula are an inevitable and relevant part of the extant literature on rural school literacy. In an interpretation of a “montage” of case study research on rural education, Paul Nachtigal determines that rural schooling, as conceived by and under the approaches of standardization, has done little to reflect socio-cultural differences in rural communities:

One hundred years of implementing a common school system policy has resulted in more similarities than differences. The differences, however, are critical, as they have persevered in spite of efforts to provide equal—which has generally been interpreted to mean identical—educational opportunities. The differences have persevered because linkages between rural schools and communities are still strong enough to offset the pressures of standardization that come from the one best system. Here again the differences are related to economic resources, cultural priorities, commonality of purpose, and political efficacy. (“Rural America” 275-76)

Indeed, this tension between the similarities brought about by standardized curricula and the differences that exist in rural places is part of growing scholarly interest in the history and pedagogical effects of standards in American schooling; also, the differences to which Nachtigal

refers are part of pedagogical approaches meant to account for the homogenization of standardized curricula.

Jal Mehta's recent work on standardization helps us think critically about rural schooling. For example, Mehta has taken up issues of professionalism in public school teaching—building upon work by theorists such as Henry Giroux—in an attempt to show how the growth of standardization reform is exacerbated by the “underprofessionalization” of American teaching. Calling the field of public school teaching a “semi-profession,” Mehta is not attempting to deride teachers, but is demonstrating how a growing pressure of accountability works in conjunction with a decentralized teaching profession to create and perpetuate a “downward spiral” in education: “Particularly where students are most unable to reach the targets, teaching to the test becomes the norm, and a reform initially advanced in the name of improving educational quality can drive practice toward the most anti-intellectual and least academic of ends” (5). While “teaching to the test” is an oft-debated pedagogical phenomenon to be taken up by all areas of schooling and theory, it is particularly salient when one considers rural schooling. Yet, standards are the *standard* in compulsory schooling in America. Mehta further explains, “Reformers have repeatedly claimed that by setting standards, using tests to measure progress towards those standards, and holding teachers accountable for progress, student achievement would improve and schools would better satisfy the goals of their external constituents” (248). These external constituents—whether they be federal, state, or district—have generally made decisions based on perceived “lag and lack” in American schooling—and rural schooling—thus contributing to a rhetoric that places schools at the center of “curing” the masses. As these issues demonstrate, rural schooling has been in the extant literature a geographical and theoretical “place” for

considering how to best deliberate and take on geographical, ecological, economic, and socio-cultural places/spaces in schooling.

### *Place-Conscious Pedagogies and Writing the Community*

Place-conscious pedagogy, often called place-based pedagogy, originates with rural education history expert Paul Theobald, whose 1997 work *Teaching the Commons: Place, Pride, and the Renewal of Community* has sparked a mini-revolution in K-12 schooling. Theobald creates the concept of “intradependence” that marks human relationships with both communities of people and the natural world: “Intradependence means to exist by virtue of necessary relations *within a place* [emphasis in original]” (7). Like Theobald, many education theorists connect place-conscious education to the work of John Dewey. One can see the seeds of place-conscious education in Dewey’s widely-read book *Experience and Education*:

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile. (40)

For education theorists, place-conscious pedagogy offers students a means to gain knowledge, primarily from outside of the classroom through interactions with place, thus diminishing the “ability of schools to be the primary location for collective socialization and the transmission of local community values to youth” (Shamah and MacTavish 1). To composition theorists, place-conscious education contends that “writing instruction should be more localized, individualized, and responsive to and dialogic with individual place, context, and experience” (Ball 19). Add “reading” to this definition and you have a working definition for a literacy approach to place-based pedagogy.

Gregory A. Smith offers one of the most detailed outlines of place-based approaches to K-12 education. The first of five approaches is *local cultural studies*, in which students focus their studies on local cultural and historical phenomena. This approach does not eliminate non-local knowledge; instead, it allows students a vantage point to offer developed perspectives on regional, national, or international phenomena. The second approach is *nature studies*, which allows students a visceral connection to the world and connects their learning to local natural phenomena. The third approach *real-world problem solving* again gets students outside of the classroom and into their school or community at large to identify and conduct important projects. The fourth approach *internships and entrepreneurial opportunities* allows students to find economic and learning experiences in their communities; therefore, students realize that they can enrich their communities and create better roots. The fifth approach *induction into community process* is the most comprehensive and draws student into the decision-making processes in their communities. This allows students to become intellectual resources in the community. By teaming with local establishments or organizations, students can lead and conduct projects needed by the community (588-93). What all of these approaches demonstrate are learning contexts that are attuned to local places, customs, and communities.

The notion of what makes community is at the heart of place-conscious and place-based pedagogy. This is especially pertinent to rural schools in rural communities where schools are “an essential element in the community and the community’s support makes success possible, often with fewer fiscal resources” (Barley and Beesley 10). Indeed, Robert Brooke has done considerable work in composition studies in local collaborations with K-12 teachers through the Nebraska Writing project. In the introduction to *Rural Voices: Place-Conscious Education and the Teaching of Writing*, Brooke builds upon his reading of Theobald and offers some ways of

considering the role of place-conscious pedagogies. Brooke explains the implications for place-conscious education for students' writing, communities, and the outside world:

Place-conscious education asks us to think of context as something more than the personal background and interests that each individual brings to writing (though this is certainly true, as the success of process pedagogy attests). Place-conscious education also asks us to think of context as something more than sociopolitical realities as defined by race, class, and gender (though this also is certainly true, as the success of critical pedagogy attests.) Place-conscious education asks us to think of the intractability of individual, classroom, community, region, history, ecology—of the rich way local place creates and necessitates the meaning of individual and civic life. (10)

This “civic life” is a key for Brooke who outlines his vision of place-conscious education in three guiding principles. Firstly, students must be “active,” meaning that the pedagogy seeks to engage students in community inquiries, as “students need classrooms where they have a say in the civic work of education” (13). Secondly, place-conscious education seeks to engender a “place-conscious citizenry,” as “place-conscious education centers schooling in a deep understanding of local place, spiraling outward to include more distant knowledge in all areas of curriculum” (13). Thirdly, this citizenry takes on specific characteristics through intractability: “Place-conscious citizens should be people who can live well in intractability—that is, people who know enough about their natural and cultural region to fashion lives that enhance the communities located there” (13). Students engaged in this type of pedagogy are active in both their learning and in pondering the relationship of themselves to their communities and to local and global contexts through which their communities are shaped and impacted.

As an example, Brooke writes about work he conducted with senior high school students in Nebraska. The project called “Voices of Young Citizens” was a place-based collaboration between Nebraska Educational Telecommunications-Television (NET-TV), the Nebraska Writing Project (NeWP), and the Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC). The issue that the high

school students focused on was out-migration and economic opportunities in their rural place. Students wrote essays and then worked with videographers from NET-TV to produce video segments. The subjects about which students wrote involved family places, changing needs of ranchers, and choices after high school. Brooke shows how all of the seniors “craft their stories so that their families’ experiences can represent wider patterns in history and community” (“Voices of Young Citizens” 170). One of the seniors was asked to read her essay at a ceremony for a new heritage center, which was attended by a senator. Brooke’s work demonstrates how place-conscious teaching and learning can help students engage in “citizenship work” to address problems: “If Nancy Welch is right that the crucial task facing citizens in the coming decade will be the creation of persuasive, public rhetorical spaces for open debate and actions, then schools need to provide ever more opportunities for the creation of rhetorical space” (“Voices of Young Citizens” 172). Place-conscious pedagogies, especially in composition and rhetoric, are a means of creating these rhetorical spaces for rural youth to engage in relevant discourses and with issues important to them and the community. The Rural Advocacy Institute in this present study brought into the rhetorical space of the teachers’ discussions a sort of introduction to place-conscious pedagogy, one in which they can envision their students and themselves occupying. Furthermore, place-conscious pedagogies become an avenue to consider when evaluating the Institute and its future role in professional development for rural teachers.

The next section of this review of literature will look at advocacy, as it relates to education and rural education. Given that the Rural Advocacy Institute focused specifically on ways of advocating for rural schools, it is vital to understand the role of advocacy in education history. A brief look at the intersections of advocacy and education should broaden our understandings of the potential and gaps in advocating for schooling and rural schooling.

## Advocacy in Education and Teachers as Advocates

The literature on advocacy in the schools starts with advocating for students. As educators, teachers and writers on education begin the discussion there. The term *advocacy* is used in much of the literature as advocating for those students who do not have the support systems, infrastructures, and collective voices needed to speak for themselves. These students include students with disabilities, English language learners, and gifted students. Educator Noreen M. McAloon explains the students-first viewpoint this way: “Advocacy can mean defending or promoting a child or an educational process. Acting in defense means supplying needed support, and promoting refers more to the active advancement of the child or program” (318). McAloon goes on to describe how she has observed in her school setting “teachers acting as advocates for their profession, assisting another professional in making improvements or in representing their profession to the community” and has observed also “a group of out-side advocates, some speaking for a child and some for the educational system” (318). In this way, McAloon describes the primary means of advocating in the extant literature on education: 1) advocating within; 2) advocating teacher-to-teacher; 3) teacher-to-community and parents; and 4) advocating from without from third-parties (318-20). McAloon complicates the role of teachers advocating towards the community in stating:

This seems more like a political role than an educational one. We can certainly see it in our community where people can't control federal taxes but can control their local taxes (translate that mainly into school budget) by a town meeting. It's easy to cut a program. Dollars are black and white. Students don't scan on paper except as numbers. Manipulating numbers can be bloodless and removed from the students. (319)

Indeed, given the nature of the data collected in this grounded theory study, the notion of teachers as advocate, including this “political role,” becomes a pivotal focal point.

Focusing on *teachers as advocates* allows for a consideration of how teachers can advocate for their students but also for their rural districts and the profession itself. Likewise, teachers' roles as advocates has not been a primary concern of policy reforms. Cathy Fleischer comments, in an essay on educating English teachers to become advocates, that "the voices of teachers, even knowledgeable and caring teachers, have been very nearly dismissed in the public discussion of our nation's schools" (79). While Fleischer looks specifically at how teachers can learn to advocate for students by speaking to parents, the author's words also speak to teachers-as-advocates for their students and themselves amidst broadly-ranging "attacks" on their professionalism:

Because teachers feel unable or unwilling to "become political"—to take on the often well-organized forces which are behind such attacks—a cycle begins and even escalates: Many teachers teach quite separately from their surrounding communities, certain groups raise objections, the media jumps on the controversy, school boards respond and issue edicts . . . and teachers go on teaching, the more informed ones continuing in the practices they are convinced work, the less certain changing practices to satisfy these edicts. (80)

The previous section of the review of literature on rural education reveals the need for and tenuous rhetorical spaces that rural schools face in a globalized and urbanized society. Given deficit models and lack of representation in standardized approaches to schooling, teachers serve as a crucial voice for rural schools. However, teachers often feel threatened by the notion of "becoming political."

With this in mind, some researchers and practitioners are creating literature to help teachers speak out. For example, a recent piece written by Nathan Bond and Alexander "Sandy" Pope seeks to inform teachers on how they can become advocates. Considering teachers as professionals and voters, Bond and Pope offer a "five-step process" to help scaffold advocacy for teachers who "may feel like they would like to be stronger advocates, but do not know what to



do”: “Effective advocates (1) work with others, (2) understand the legislative process, (3) study the issues, (4) get to know their representatives, and (5) communicate with their representatives” (64). This type of advocacy goes beyond teacher-to-teacher perspectives and asks teachers to be public voices, something that is key to the present study of the Rural Advocacy Institute. The authors acknowledge the tensions teachers’ feel as “lone” advocates, yet point out the potential avenues for speaking out:

Education is a public effort. Although teachers may think they work alone, they are representatives of a larger society. Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, famous educators and thinkers like John Dewey have argued in favor of teachers taking more of a direct role in influencing society . . . We believe that teachers are the experts on education; to have an impact on educational policy and practice, they need to join other like-minded individuals, learn about their government, identify personally relevant issues, get to know their elected officials, communicate with them regularly, and make their voices heard. (69)

Yet, as we will see in the subsequent study, making “their voices heard” may be perceived by teachers to come with complex questions that need answering or with costs that are too steep. However, finding a voice and learning to use that voice are at the core of the National Writing Project and the Rural Advocacy Institute. With this in mind, I will review the extant literature on professional development in the National Writing Project.

### **Teachers at the Center: The NWP Approach to Professional Development**

The terrain of the landscape of professional development in relation to advocating for American schooling has not been mapped thoroughly. In fact, the research literature on professional development in education began less than thirty years ago. Nevertheless, professional development has been an increasingly important feature of public schooling as standards such as NCLB and CCSS have taken on higher roles in our educational systems. The common perception among educators and education scholars is that professional development is inadequate: “The phrase ‘one-shot work shop’ has entered educational parlance as shorthand for

superficial, faddish inservice education that supports a mini-industry of consultants without having much effect on what goes on in the classroom” (Sykes 465). Indeed, the notion of inservice” professional development, in which practicing teachers are the focus, comes under fire quite often: “Teachers are ‘in-serviced,’ as if teaching were merely a set of technical skills that could be memorized and applied in all times and places” (Lieberman and Wood 3). Furthermore, as Gary Sykes argues, professional development is highly institutionalized and accounts for a wide-ranging accountability and business structure:

Teachers are frequently the targets of reform, but they exert relatively little control over professional development. The system of professional development is deeply institutionalized in patterns of organization, management, and resource allocation within schools and school districts, as well as between districts and a range of providers that includes freelance contractors intermediate and state agencies, professional associations, and universities. Moreover, the system is increasingly structured by means of federal, state, and district policies. (465-66)

Yet, this “top-down” approach to professional development has prompted researchers to consider how professional development can be reformed. For example, Deborah Loewenberg Ball writes about “stance” as a measure and critical framework when considering professional development. Ball classifies stance by first looking at the stance of traditional professional development: “Traditionally, professional development (e.g., inservice workshops) and professional forums (e.g., journals and state meetings) assume a stance toward practice that concentrates on answers: conveying information, providing ideas, training in skills” (505). Ball likens these approaches to “style shows” for the presenters of the professional development, as opposed to any sort of critical dialogue and idiosyncratic approaches from participant-teacher groups. The author calls this a “stance of certainty” and advocates instead for a “stance of critique and inquiry.” In a stance of critique and inquiry, three aspects are brought to light. Firstly, this type of professional development begins with considering the “viability” of a new idea through debate and discourse.

Secondly, new knowledge is considered skeptically through existing scholarly research. The third aspect of the stance of critique and inquiry centers on *adaption of ideas over implementation*: “Given the uncertainties and underdeterminedness of the reform visions, local interpretation and invention are both inevitable and desirable. A critical stance would acknowledge this fact and embrace it, using the broadly outlined reforms as a resource for developing inspired but locally tailored innovations” (506). This critical-inquiry stance is particularly relevant to an analysis of the Rural Advocacy Institute. During the Institute, ideas of advocacy and writing were 1) debated and considered, 2) critiqued using scholarly literature, and 3) placed under further scrutiny in relation to the local knowledges of where the teacher-participants teach. Although non-uniform, the approaches to the NWP appear to work via the critical-inquiry stance, while adding the approaches of *teachers teaching teachers* and *learning through social interaction* and *professional networks*.

The National Writing Project is a self-described “network of sites” that offers professional development in writing, typically for K-12 teachers. NWP consists of over 200 sites that are co-directed by university and K-12 faculty and exists in every state in the US. The NWP website offers the network’s mission statement: “The National Writing Project focuses the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation’s educators on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners” (“About NWP”). First-time participants, or “fellows,” are invited to attend the site “Institutes” that are led by veterans of the Institutes, or “teacher consultants.” The core principles of NWP reflect a clear focus on extensive writing and a firm belief in interdisciplinarity and the power of teachers to serve as leaders and reformers:

- Teachers at every level—from kindergarten through college—are the agents of reform; universities and schools are ideal partners for investing in that reform through professional development.

- Writing can and should be taught, not just assigned, at every grade level. Professional development programs should provide opportunities for teachers to work together to understand the full spectrum of writing development across grades and across subject areas.
- Knowledge about the teaching of writing comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing.
- There is no single right approach to teaching writing; however, some practices prove to be more effective than others. A reflective and informed community of practice is in the best position to design and develop comprehensive writing programs.
- Teachers who are well informed and effective in their practice can be successful teachers of other teachers as well as partners in educational research, development, and implementation. Collectively, teacher-leaders are our greatest resource for educational reform. (“About NWP”)

NWP is the brainchild of James Gray, a distinguished secondary English teacher and teacher-educator at the University of California, Berkeley, who created the Bay Area Writing Project in 1974. Disappointed in the ways professional development was executed in English literature and composition curriculum, Gray sought a different path. Ann Liebermann and Diane R. Wood have written extensively about NWP and sum up the early and prevailing vision of the Writing Project:

What was needed was to develop some opportunities for teachers to teach teachers. Crucial to this seemingly simple idea was the understanding that teachers now had to become the learners—learning from other teachers as well as teaching them. Teachers had to become readers and writers themselves, experience what their students experienced, in order to become sensitive to their own teaching. (6)

The approach of “teachers teaching teachers” writing and literacy practices is important to the social contexts built into NWP. These social contexts in NWP foster “highly participatory, teacher-centered” designs set forth by Gray (Liebermann and Wood 14). Therefore, NWP is particularly democratic in its approach to professional development. As Lieberman and Wood explain, the democratic ideals and principles of NWP allow teachers of writing to write and become part of a collective network of professionals: “Together, the core activities transform

solitary work into public performance . . . This curriculum stresses learning as a *social* phenomenon and teaching as a *collective* responsibility [emphasis in original]" (15). The primary “public performance” generally takes place in five-week institutes that offer teachers exposure to “teacher demonstrations,” or “demos.” These demos are introduced by teacher consultants, and, subsequently, the teacher-participants are asked to give their own demo: “Overall, as the demonstrations unfold, fellows recognize collective professional expertise, build knowledge, and rethink and revise their own practices” (Lieberman and Wood 15). Teachers are also asked to write a variety of pieces, some of which are called “quickwrites.” Quickwrites offer open-ended writing opportunities on in various writing modes, including fiction and nonfiction. In addition to demos, fellows are asked to produce a number of “texts” for review and sharing, which again can take on multiple genres.

### ***Social Contexts for Learning in NWP***

Writing, sharing, listening, reading, and investigating are central to the workshop-model of the institutes, a model that privileges social contexts for learning. But what, more exactly, does a “social context for learning” mean? In terms of the relevant literature that focuses specifically on NWP, the social context is a collaborative approach—teachers teaching teachers and supporting each other. Lieberman and Wood, who conducted a longitudinal study of teachers from sites at the University of California, Los Angeles and Oklahoma State University, connect the social practices of the NWP with a professional learning community. These social practices include:

- Approaching each colleague as a potentially valuable contributor
- Honoring teacher knowledge
- Creating public forums for teacher sharing, dialogue, and critique
- Turning ownership of learning over to learners
- Situating human learning in practice and relationships
- Providing multiple entry points into the learning community

- Guiding reflection on teaching through reflection on learning
- Sharing leadership
- Promoting a stance of inquiry
- Encouraging a reconceptualization of professional identity and linking it to professional community (22)

One of the major learning outcomes for teachers through this learning community is that “teachers come to see that authority need not always come from outside,” as teachers “gain confidence in their professional judgments because they weigh their decisions and actions in light of ultimate aims for students, and discuss them with professional colleagues” (Wood and Lieberman 266).

In following teacher-consultants into the classroom, Wood and Lieberman discovered some interesting paradoxes in the way teachers use their new knowledge. Firstly, the researchers found that teachers, “despite a recently strengthened sense of professional authority,” were de-centering themselves in their classrooms (267). Teachers commented on this change in practice as stemming from the social interactions in the Institute. Secondly, Wood and Lieberman found that “this awakened sense of authority does not seem to lead to unwarranted complacency” (267). Instead, teachers are stimulated by their institute experience and want to question their own approaches, given that students’ learning situations are often quite different from one another. Lastly, the researchers found that “just because teachers surrender their dependency on outside knowledge does not mean they are unwilling to avail themselves of it” (267). To the contrary, teachers responded that working with professional and scholarly texts in the institute allows them “to hold new ideas in dialogue with their own experiences and contexts, and eventually choose whether to use or critique them—or both” (267). The shared learning and dialogue in the institutes help teachers develop and critique their own authority as a teacher.

*Authorization: Bringing Out Teachers' Voices*

Furthermore, Wood and Lieberman contend that the “authorization function” of NWP helps teachers develop autonomy and voice. The researchers further explain this authorization function, as constituted in NWP:

To “authorize” is to lend approval, justify, sanction, or imbue with authority. In other words, authorization bestows credibility. From its inception, the Writing Project has fulfilled this function for Writing Project teachers. It has accomplished this by building important affiliations, a solid reputation, and by expecting and preparing teachers to go public with what they know. (269)

This authorization is also linked to the social “network” of the NWP, as fellows become teacher-consultants and build partnerships with universities and, subsequently, weigh these partnerships with their new teaching experiences and practices. One teacher noted this authorization in relation to her experience with NWP: “It [the network] gives you a sense of having control over the decisions you make and the actions you take for kids . . . This power comes from all the things the Writing Project does; it’s like a support system” (Wood and Lieberman 269). The result is a “chorus of voices” that “culminates in shared values and professional community.” This community has the power “to authorize its members to act on these values with a sense of autonomy” (Wood and Lieberman 269-70). In result, teacher-consultants take on leadership roles where they teach and develop more public voices. Authorization is essentially a growth in courage to speak out. One site director explained this phenomenon to Wood and Lieberman: “. . . a philosophy of the Writing Project that there is no great truth that those in the Writing Project have to share with others. But if the Writing Project is asked to come share their ideas, they will do so . . .” (270). Ideally, NWP helps support teacher-consultants by offering the opportunity to attend and lead future workshops. Additionally, teacher-consultants frequently are asked to help in conducting research and creating publications.

*Social-Epistemic and Expressivist Rhetorics: Looking at NWP with Additional Lenses*

The socially-mediated nature of the writing and learning in NWP lends itself to critical analysis through theory in composition and rhetoric, especially social-epistemic rhetoric. Yet, studies of the summer institutes invoke the rhetoric of expressivist pedagogies, also. As this review of literature and study seek to demonstrate, the NWP offers a physical and rhetorical space in which teachers can take “time out” to learn from one another concerning issues and possibilities in their own writing and in the teaching of writing. The Rural Advocacy Institute sought to bring into the NWP format a discussion of existing socio-historical perspectives on rural education and, in doing so, opened up avenues for critical thinking on rhetoric and ideology. James Berlin has written extensively about the imbrication of ideology in rhetoric. Berlin tells us that most rhetorics acknowledge “the role of rhetoric in addressing competing discursive claims of value in the social, political, and cultural” (679). Since the “social turn” in rhetoric and composition, this assertion can hardly be denied. Rhetoric and ideology are theoretical and pedagogical “peas in a pod” when it comes to teaching rhetoric in composition studies. However, the research on NWP rarely addresses rhetoric with much focus. The grounded theory in this study, however, finds that the study of rhetoric is critical to better understanding discourses in the Rural Advocacy Institute. In this study, elements of social-epistemic theory are brought out into the open, as the subsequent analysis seeks to make sense of consensus and dissensus in the perceptions of teachers as they discuss rural education and writing pedagogy. Furthermore, looking at the social-epistemic rhetorical features of the Rural Institute offers insights into what is at stake for the participant-teacher fellows and what discourses are privileged and/or underprivileged in their existing professional discourses and in the NWP itself.



Berlin's explanation of social-epistemic theory as pedagogy focuses on "dialectical interaction": "For social-epistemic rhetoric, the real is located in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence" (692). For example, social-epistemic rhetoric stands in contrast to psychological-epistemic rhetoric, which holds that knowledge is "always located in the transcendent self, a subject who directs the discovery and arrives through it finally only at a better understanding of the self and its operation" (693). Most literature on NWP privileges more of the psychological-epistemic (e.g., looking at psychological transformations in fellows as revealed in their writing and interview responses); therefore, looking at the Rural Advocacy Institute with another lens (or set of lenses) might offer broader understandings of the meaning-making in the Institute.

Berlin goes on to complicate the "self" in the contexts of the social:

For social-epistemic rhetoric, the subject is itself a social construct that emerges through linguistically-circumscribed interaction of the individual, the community, and the material world. There is no universal, eternal, and authentic self that beneath all appearances is at one with all other selves. The self is always a creation of a particular historical and cultural moment. (693)

Indeed, the Rural Advocacy Institute does allow for participants to think critically about their respective *selves* in the context of the historical and cultural moment, thus allowing for the social-epistemic to be placed into the current analysis.

Therefore, it is a goal of this study also to consider the "hermeneutic circle" of the social-epistemic, as this concept interprets "knowledge as an arena of ideological conflict" and "inevitably supports economic, social, political, and cultural democracy" (Berlin 694). The Institute opens up discourses—or allows for them at least—that promote an "awareness of the ways in which rhetorics can privilege some at the expense of others, according the chosen few an

unequal share of power, perquisites, and material benefits” (Berlin 694). This is especially salient as the study analyzes the ways that teachers discuss and perceive these “unequal shares” in relation to rural education and rural literacies. Berlin uses the work of Ira Shor to further outline the manner in which social-epistemic rhetorics help students—and in the case of the present study *teachers*—better understand any “false consciousness” that prevents democratic ideologies to be privileged. In particular, Shor’s discussion of “reification” seems relevant for this study: “In falling victim to reification, students begin to see the economic and social system that renders them powerless as an innate and unchangeable feature of the natural order” (695). The rhetorical space of “reclaiming the rural” that pervades the discourses in the Institute addresses reification in relation to how rural teachers and students view themselves in relation to broader education standards and policies. In sum, social-epistemic rhetorical theory is another lens that offers a complementary, if not contradictory, way of talking about NWP. As we will see in the following section, most of the work done in studying NWP tends to focus on the “universal self” that Berlin’s discussion of the social-epistemic complicates.

In addition to social-epistemic rhetorics, though, the study incorporates work in *expressivist rhetoric* and *expressivist pedagogy*. Expressivism, which Berlin labels *expressionism*, locates existence “within the individual subject” (688). While expressivism does not disregard linguistic and social factors outside of the individual, these factors “are considered significant only insofar as they serve the needs of the individual” (688). Composition theorists such as Ken Macrorie, Donald Murray, and Peter Elbow were critical of the social and cultural power structures of the 1960s and 1970s. In voicing this criticism, expressivist theorists believe that “power within society ought always to be vested in the individual” (Berlin 689). *Voice* in writing as seen as the mechanism by which this power comes to the individual. As Peter Elbow

states in *Embracing Contraries*, “If I want power, I got to use *my* voice [emphasis in original]” (qtd. In Berlin 689). This study and the current literature review acknowledge criticisms leveled at expressivism by social-epistemic theories, Berlin included, for its “naivety” on how “economic, social, and political arrangements can lead to the marginalization of the individual who would resist a dehumanizing society, rendering them ineffective through their isolation” (Berlin 697). Still, expressivist rhetoric and pedagogy does offer a critique of hegemonic power structures, if not in the same ways as social-epistemic rhetorics and pedagogies.

### ***Teacher Transformation and Teachers’ Writing in NWP***

Scholarly research on NWP has tended to focus on the effects of the professional development on individual teacher fellows and teacher-consultants. Recent work by Anne E. Whitney demonstrates the *transformations* teachers go through in the institutes that allow them to develop within these learning communities. In her study “Teacher Transformation in the National Writing Project,” Whitney sets up her findings by first discussing the NWP “mystique,” in relation to how participants “feel” during and after their professional development:

For as long as the NWP has operated summer institutes for teachers, those teachers have voiced claims that their lives were changed or that they were transformed by the NWP. These claims have tended to add to the mystique and attraction of the NWP for potential participants or to detract from its reputation as a site for serious learning and cast upon it a sort of cultlike aura, depending on those hearing the claims . . . [I]f you ask teachers what happened to them at the NWP Summer Institute, more often than not you get a standard narrative of change, so uniform across participants that it seems almost canned—and these narratives, while celebrated among NWP insiders, have the unfortunate effect for researchers of obscuring more than they reveal about the particulars of the Summer Institute experience. (145)

Whitney studied seven teachers in a summer institute of NWP to see *what* changes occurred in these writers and, more importantly, *why*. Using Jack Mezirow’s theory of transformative

learning and “writing-to-learn” theories, Whitney uses case study methods and collects data through sequential interviews, participant-observation, and textual analysis.

The NWP thrives on the vision that writing is for everyone, that writing is a basic human activity and right. Therefore, Whitney’s findings are particularly relevant to how the NWP realizes its vision of “a future where every person is an accomplished writer, engaged learner, and active participant in a digital, interconnected world” (“About NWP”). Whitney establishes that accepting the invitation to write is more than the physical act of writing; rather, teachers are giving themselves the permission to move past “being stuck” and the worry that their work would not be “good enough.” For example, Whitney believes that five of the seven teachers “transformed” through this accepting and sharing. This transformation was linked to overcoming anxiety about writing, sharing and receiving feedback on writing, and self-examination and reflection. In addition, “reframing” was a core process in the transformation of meaning perspectives: “By first interrogating current frames and then adjusting those frames or discovering new frames, the teachers acquired new possible lines of action and new ways of positioning themselves in relation to various others” (164). For example, one teacher had the trigger of feeling unsatisfied with the school climate and administration where she teaches. Through writing and discussion, the teacher was able to take on a more active role and produce new perspectives and “lenses.” Whitney explains that these new lenses allowed the teacher to reevaluate how she was viewing these trigger issues. Now, the teacher feels “fully qualified” to “talk back” to colleagues, administrators, and policy makers, as opposed to “talking up” to administrators and legislators to whom she feels disconnected (166). Teachers also reframed themselves in terms of writing and self. Several teachers, for instance, reframed their view of

themselves as writers. In doing this reframing, teachers take on a new sense of authority and “author-ity.”

Ultimately, reframing helped teachers take on new roles. These new roles relate to their experiences in the learning community of the Institute and in their own writing. Furthermore, the study finds that teachers “made a commitment to reorienting not only their teaching but also their lives” (175). Whitney’s study also helps to reframe our thinking about how NWP affects classroom teaching: “This study helps to clarify that while classroom practice is of course an important indicator of change in teachers, it is not in and of itself a sufficient criterion for deciding whether transformation has taken place or even whether learning has taken place” (179). Moreover, Whitney’s work makes clearer for researchers what changes in perspectives take place in the summer institute and in what forms; this is research that helps support the present study. As my study looks at how teachers’ perspectives may change during the Rural Institute, Whitney’s work serves as a useful lens through which to consider how rural teachers perceive and reframe their roles as advocates and writers.

### ***The Power of Personal and Professional Exigencies in NWP***

Whitney has also studied the role of personal writing in the NWP professional development setting. The roles of *both* personal and professional writing are focal points of conversation and practice in the summer institute. In a case study of one teacher’s negotiations of personal and professional writing in a summer institute, Whitney finds that the “dichotomy between ‘personal’ and ‘professional’ topics and forms of writing as a false one, producing significant tension for teachers embarking on such writing in a summer institute” (“Writer, Teacher, Person” 235-36). Breaking down dichotomies of personal and professional writing and identity, Whitney instead argues that exigencies for writing in context require, often, both

professional and personal writing in tandem. Whitney's subject in the case study, Laura, became more confident in her writing through self-expression in "personal" genres, such as poetry and journaling: "In writing about mothering, she validated that role and came to see it is a feature of her professional, capable self, rather than as a distraction from it or as something altogether outside of her professional identity" ("Writer, Teacher, Person" 247). Whitney infers that Laura's experience with personal writing contributed greatly to her self-perception as a public writer:

Professionally, [Laura] reported moving from an understanding of herself as a teacher caught between the competing interests of her students and administrative expectations who was struggling to implement and integrate curricula whose rationales were frequently at odds with one another, to an understanding of herself as a competent professional whose insights could help other teachers. (248)

Laura followed up with this newfound confidence and self-perception by taking on leadership roles in her professional teaching life after the institute.

Whitney concludes that the sharing and listening that took place in the Institute helped with Laura's confidence. Moreover, the writing groups in the Institute helped Laura feel more comfortable with her pieces on "mom stuff," thus allowing her to explore future topics that were both personal and professional. Through reframing her "personal stuff" as identity forming, Laura began to reframe herself as a writer and teacher. By giving herself permission to write about topics that were meaningful for her, Laura blended her personal and professional selves. Whitney acknowledges, however, that more study needs to be done on the relationship between the types of writing created in the Institute:

If, as Laura's story and others like it suggest, professional growth and insight are fostered in part by writing not overtly tied to professional concerns, then when teachers are not encouraged to experiment with that kind of writing, a potential site of inquiry and the accompanying professional development may be lost. In other words, a barrier to teachers who would write professionally is not only the challenge of putting insights into seemingly inaccessible academic prose but also the potential inaccessibility of those

insights themselves when they are pursued solely through academic prose. For teachers to learn through writing, they need opportunities to engage in the full range of writing. (256)

It is important and fair to note here that Whitney's study does make reference to socio-cultural views of learning and writing. With this in mind, my study seems particularly suited to further address some of these concerns. In looking at the "talk" and multiple, hybrid discourses surrounding issues of rural education and teachers' writing and pedagogy, the present study further analyzes the existing and potential exigencies available to rural teachers in and outside of the Rural Advocacy Institute.

### **Making a Place for the Current Study**

The Rural Advocacy Institute of the NWAAP, while not the first NWP site to address issues of rurality in NWP, is, nonetheless, a unique phenomenon. For the first time, a group of K-12 teachers from Northwest Arkansas and the Ozark region of Arkansas were brought together to discuss issues of rurality and rural literacies, while also engaging in the professional development traditions of the NWAAP and its inherent social interactions. Grounded theory, which the following chapter will address, seems especially suited as a methodology for this study. Additionally, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between NWP and rural districts, schools, and teachers. This present study will serve to fill, as much as it can, this space, while also building the body of knowledge about NWP. In doing so, this study also seeks to address a gap in the NWP literature in regards to rhetoric, composition, and sociolinguistic studies. Building upon the work of previous researchers, the following study also seeks to focus on the "talk" and hybrid discourses in the Rural Institute, in order to paint a more complete picture of the NWP experience and teacher dialogue in the summer institute.

## Chapter Three.

### Methods

In *Dust Tracks on a Dirt Road: An Autobiography*, Zora Neale Hurston writes, “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world they that dwell therein” (143). When beginning this research study, I knew that my “formalized curiosity,” or what I could call it then, would entail as much “poking and prying” as I could muster. There is a lack of extant literature on perceptions of rural teachers and NWP, and the Rural Advocacy Institute was a phenomenon that was new for the NAWWP and rural teachers in the northwest region of the Arkansas Ozarks. Put simply, there was going to be a rich amount of data that was not like data I had seen in other studies. The driving force, then, in my attempts to identify the appropriate methodology and methods was the knowledge that I was researching a phenomenon that was unique in research on NWP and teachers’ perceptions of advocacy and teaching writing in rural schools.

It was clear from the beginning of my research planning that qualitative methods would serve me best. This became confirmed quickly as I began reviewing the literature on qualitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative research as such:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible . . . [These practices] turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their naturalistic settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (3)

Indeed, my research setting was a “situated activity,” both theoretically and spatially; I also expected to study a wide range of “interpretive, material practices” in a professional development setting such as a NWP Institute. Most importantly, I aimed to gain as much



understanding as possible of the “meanings” or perceptions that the participating teachers would bring to the Institute and study.

### **What is Grounded Theory?**

I choose grounded theory methods as my primary qualitative research approach to this study. Kathy Charmaz, a leading contemporary grounded theorist, defines grounded theory this way:

Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories “grounded” in the data themselves . . . Thus, data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct. Grounded theorists collect data to develop theoretical analyses from the beginning of the project. We try to learn what occurs in the research settings we join and what our research participants’ lives are like. We study how they explain their statements and actions, and ask what analytic sense we can make of them. (*Constructing Grounded Theory* 2-3)

Grounded theory offers to this study the required focus on the data, through which all of the participants’ perceptions and professional development are demonstrated. I was very interested in how the participants would “explain their statements and actions” and wanted to make “analytic sense” of my participant-observations and gathered data, and, as Charmaz makes clear, “Grounded theorists start with data” (*Constructing Grounded Theory* 3). In order for me to study teachers’ perceptions about rural literacy education and how these teachers take up issues of rurality, I knew that I would likely need to collect a large amount of data and to be able to work with that data in systematic ways. Grounded theory is a major form of what Michael Quinn Patton calls “inductive analysis.” Patton’s explanation of inductive analysis reads much like Charmaz’s explanation of grounded theory: “Immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions, and interrelationships; begin by exploring genuinely

open questions rather than testing theoretically derived (deductive) hypotheses” (40). Inductive analysis of data leads to conceptual theories.

Sharon B. Merriam describes theories garnered from grounded methods as “substantive” theories. As Merriam explains, substantive theories focus upon “everyday-world situations such as an innovative middle school science program, the coping mechanisms of returning adult students, or stages of late-life development”; these theories have “a specificity and hence usefulness to practice often lacking in the theories that cover more global concerns” (17). Thinking of my study in these theoretical terms helped me approach the project with the understanding that I might not find “global concerns,” yet might be able to benefit from the “specificity” and “usefulness to practice” in a study that focused on a small group of public school teachers in a brief, but organized, professional development setting.

Furthermore, grounded theory is particularly inviting as it helps beginning researchers develop unique theories. As Charmaz explains, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, the originators of grounded theory methods, advised “novice grounded theorists to develop fresh theories and thus advocated delaying the literature review to avoid seeing the world through the lens of extant ideas” (*Constructing Grounded Theory* 6). Given the unique phenomena of this Institute, I wanted to bring “fresh life” to my theoretical concepts garnered in the data. While I conducted some preliminary research in order to begin designing the study and to develop my initial research questions, I focused on coding the data and comparing the data sets before venturing into the extant literature again.

### **Adapted Case Study Methods**

In addition to grounded theory methods, I also incorporated a modified version of case study methods to aid me in organizing and executing the research. Case study is particularly

suited to investigating contemporary phenomena as it happens. According to Robert Yin, the case study method is especially effective when the investigator wants to “cover contextual conditions” because “phenomenon and context are not always distinguishable in real-life situations” (13). The phenomenon that the Institute offered, with its intrinsic uniqueness, made case study a complementary approach to grounded theory. Where this study differs from more traditional or standard case studies, is that the study did not establish a *hypothesis* or develop any *propositions* that point to what a researcher should study (Yin 21). Instead, I used the grounded theory methods of data analysis that helped me raise codes to conceptual categories. Nonetheless, my initial interview questions were generated with case study methods in mind (see Appendix A).

As grounded theory privileges being “open” to the data, I knew that I needed a clear understanding of how I would collect data. I adapted case study methods to help me “contain” the study in the beginning. In other words, I knew that I would be studying various “units” within the Institute, which I viewed as a single case. Therefore, the present study incorporated elements of what Yin calls an “embedded single case study design” (41-43). As I outlined the study in its early stages, the Institute, although a single case, might entail data that could be gathered in many contexts and from multiple participants. Therefore, it was imperative that I study other “embedded” units of analysis within the overall holistic case (Yin 39). These embedded units include individual participants, group discussions, particular writing activities, products of these writing activities, and participant-observations. I view the case study as part of my grounded theory methods. In sum, case study methods helped me consider my data collection, while grounded theory methods helped me consider my data analysis and writing strategies, which I describe later in this chapter.

## **Research Site and Participants**

The primary setting of the case study is the Rural Advocacy Institute of the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project (NWAWP). This setting serves as an important information-rich opportunity to study professional development and literacy in conjunction with issues of rural education. This Institute is the first iteration of this particular professional development; therefore, there is intrinsic value to this setting. Additionally, given the possibilities for this type of professional development to focus on relevant issues in rural education and literacy, there is an instrumental value to this site as well. NWAWP was founded in 1997 by Samuel Totten of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas. Totten served as director of NWAWP until 2007. In 2009, Christian Goering became director and still serves at the present. NWAWP is the longest running site in the state and has made a commitment to the teachers, students, and schools of Northwest Arkansas and the Ozarks.

The Rural Advocacy Institute was held in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, a tourist town nestled in the Ozark Mountains. Eureka Springs is a particularly historic and quaint location for a writing professional development. The town is recognized as a National Historic Site, as its Victorian architecture and natural springs have attracted visitors from across the nation since its incorporation in 1880. The town has only around 2,000 residents and is rural in its surroundings. Yet, the town offers a unique and pleasant cultural and geographical terrain for writing. The specific physical site of the Institute was a small, rural Protestant church within the town limits. For three weeks, the church members gave us the chance to use the facilities and write on the premises. The setting seemed ideal in many ways. We were able to meet in a small meeting room for our primary discussions, but were also able to use the congregation hall when we needed more room and a place to view presentations and videos. While most of the conversations took

place in the meeting room, the deck of the church offered a wooded setting for discussion groups and individual writing. We also made use of the shaded areas in the front of the church, including an area made up of large boulders we would use for benches for writing and conversation (see Figures 1-4).



Figure 1. Front of church



Figure 2. Boulders, "benches"



Figure 3. Back deck of church



Figure 4. View of woods from deck

The study focuses on seven participants, six of whom were first-time fellows of a NWP institute. On the first day of the Rural Advocacy Institute, I invited all of the participant-teachers and the teaching consultants to take part in the study. They all agreed within a matter of days. My primary focus in the study was on the participant-teachers, for it was their professional

development and perceptions that I was most interested in analyzing. I choose the term *participant-teachers* in order to keep the analytic focus on the “teachers teaching teachers” model of NWP and to distinguish the first-time teachers—the fellows—from the teacher consultants. The teacher consultants, the “leaders” of the Institute who have completed an NWP summer institute, became an increasingly important part of the data as the Institute and coding progressed. While they are not the primary focus of the study, their comments are taken into account when applicable to the context of discussions and where their own perceptions help to illustrate or illuminate how the participant-teachers perceive issues of rural advocacy and writing pedagogy. In fact, some of the conceptual categories discussed in Chapters Four and Five, and the title of this study, come from comments made by the teacher consultants.

### ***Barbara***

Barbara was in her twenty-seventh year of teaching at the time of the study. Barbara teaches at a high school in a small town in the Ozarks, which is over an hour’s drive east of the University of Arkansas. Barbara teaches “resource” courses to high school students in need of “remediation” for certain subjects. Her job is to facilitate digital programs for the students to work on during each class period. These programs are predetermined and do not require her to create any new lesson plans. In fact, Barbara describes herself as an “expensive babysitter” multiple times during the Institute. This is Barbara’s second summer institute, her first occurring in the 1990s. Barbara attended all days of the Institute.

### ***Clara***

Clara is the only teacher of special education in the study. Clara has been teaching in a rural school district for four years, but does not live in the district. She has also taught in a larger urban district in Northwest Arkansas and in a large city in Louisiana. Clara has been teaching

elementary grade children over previous year to the study. She does occasionally work with middle school children, but this is not always guaranteed. Due to a prior engagement, Clara attended missed two days of the Institute.

### ***Karen***

Karen is a high school history teacher at an alternative high school in an urban city in the Northwest Arkansas metropolitan area. Karen has taught primarily “at-risk” students but has also taught in rural England. While Karen admits that her school is not rural, she wanted to attend the institute since there are, in her words, similarities between the “isolation her students feel” and the isolation inherent in many rural locales. Due to a prior engagement, Karen missed two days of the Institute.

### ***Linda***

Linda is a new teacher; in fact, she was entering her first year of full-time teaching in a very small rural district in the north-central part of the Ozarks. Linda had completed her licensure program the year prior to the summer of the Rural Institute. She proclaims, “I am rural,” having grown up in the rural Ozarks and now teaching in a rural district. Linda holds a non-traditional licensure and expresses the difficulties of obtaining the “right” degree after many years of raising a blended family. Due to prior commitments, Linda missed two days of the Institute and left at lunchtime on a third day.

### ***Martha***

Martha has taught for fourteen years, most of which has been in fourth-grade language arts. Martha is transitioning to sixth-grade languages during her participation in the Institute. Martha has a master’s degree in reading from a university in Arkansas. She is originally from Michigan. Martha places a high premium on professional development. The school district where

Martha has taught for many years is very close to the Northwest Arkansas metropolitan area, but is rural in its population demographics and physical setting. Martha attended all days of the Institute.

### *Valerie*

Valerie had completed her third year as a certified science teacher in sixth grade. Valerie, teaches in the same rural school district as Barbara. Shortly after the Institute, Valerie was asked by her middle school principal to teach sixth-grade language arts, which she accepted and taught the following year. Valerie's biological children attend the school district where she teaches; she had been a substitute teacher for several years before obtaining her licensure and becoming a full-time teacher. Valerie attended all days of the Institute.

### *Donna*

Donna is the leader of the Rural Advocacy Institute and is a teacher consultant. She holds a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Arkansas and now teaches at a small private college in the Ozarks. Donna has taught for eighteen years and finished her doctorate in 2008. Donna has worked in public schools for seventeen years, mostly as a teacher of English and language arts and in rural schools. She has also been a literacy specialist during her time working in public schools. Donna is a highly-regarded teacher consultant; thus, she was sought out to lead the Rural Institute by the director of NAWAP.

### *Tim*

Tim teaches middle school language arts and is a teacher consultant like Donna. Tim has been quite active as a teacher consultant with NAWAP for several years. He did not attend three days of the Institute but he gave two teacher demonstrations. Tim teaches in one of the largest and most affluent school districts in Northwest Arkansas. In this setting, Tim has received a great



deal of professional development and even has worked with University of Arkansas education faculty in research projects. Tim has experience working with various TCs from NWAWP and is highly regarded within the NWAWP network.

### ***My Role as Participant-Observer***

As a teaching fellow myself, I was committed to experiencing the Institute as a teacher teaching teachers. I wanted to grow as a writer and a teacher of writing. At the beginning of the study design, it was clear to me that I would be engaging in the discussions of the Institute and would be experiencing many of the feelings of the other participants. I, also, would be generating my own perceptions of issues in rural language arts pedagogy. Therefore, I made the decision to include my interactions with other teachers in our discussions and writing groups as part of the data. As I reviewed and coded the audio-video recordings, I included bits my contributions to the discussions, and my own writing that I shared, as my contributions engendered responses from the other participants. However, at the time of the Institute, I was not teaching in a public K-12 school; therefore, I do not focus on my own perceptions as they relate to the topics of rurality, advocacy, and writing.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data for the study include interviews, audio-video recordings of the Institute, and sample writing collected from participant-teachers. Here is a more thorough description of the data collected:

- ❖ An initial interview conducted during the Summer Institute period; all seven participant-teachers participated in these interviews.
- ❖ A follow-up interview with five of the participant-teachers, ranging between three and ten months following the Institute during the subsequent school year; two participant-teachers did not respond to my emails requesting a follow-up interview.
- ❖ Twenty-seven hours of audio-video recordings from the Institute.

- ❖ Writing responses (such as quickwrites) and writing samples from participant-teachers of writing completed in Institute.

### ***Gathering Rich Data***

Charmaz describes the process of grounded theory methods like a camera that incorporates a variety of lenses: “first you view a broad sweep of the landscape” and then “you change your lens several times to bring scenes closer and closer into view” (*Constructing Grounded Theory* 14). Charmaz’s description was helpful in my initial attempts to conceive the methods. Ground theory was particularly helpful in allowing me to use concepts I came to the study with, such as my interest in how teachers perceive advocacy in relation to rural education, as “points of departure” that would allow me to “follow leads” in the data to generate definitions and categories (*Constructing Grounded Theory* 17). As I followed “leads,” more patterns were discovered and the understandings that more data might be needed became clearer.

*The Interviews.* While I took to heart the concern for grounded theorists like Charmaz that the researcher must allow methods to reflect emerging ideas, it was clear early in the research question generation phase of the study that one-on-one interviews with the participant-teachers would elicit rich data. As Irving Seidman states, interviewing as a qualitative research method is a “powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues” (14). Additionally, as Seidman suggests, interviewing as a “method of inquiry” is “most consistent with people’s ability to make meaning through language” (14). I knew that I could ask questions of participants that would allow them to make meaning through their expressed perceptions on relevant issues in rural literacy education and the teaching of writing.

The initial interview protocol (see Appendix A) was designed as a semi-structured interview, which consists of a “mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam 74). This is

very similar to what Charmaz calls an “intensive interview,” which can be conversational in nature, but remains “in-depth”:

For a grounded theory study, devise a few broad, open-ended questions. Then you can focus your interview questions to invite detailed discuss of topic. By creating open-ended, non-judgmental questions, you encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge. The combination of how you construct the questions and conduct the interview shapes how well you achieve a balance between making the interview open-ended and focusing on significant statements. (26)

The initial interview questions were designed in overlapping “sections” of initial, intermediate, and ending questions. This detailed list helped secure Internal Review Board (IRB) approval, but also allowed me to ask a set of questions that would 1) get the participants talking about themselves and their past experiences; 2) get participants thinking about why they entered the Institute and how they thought about themselves as writers; and, finally, 3) have more difficult questions about teaching in rural schools and rural education that offer participant-teachers a chance to reflect or return to previous questions and ideas (Charmaz 30-32).

The follow-up interview protocol (See Appendix B) is intended to demonstrate how participant-teachers perceive the ways, if any, the Institute affected their perceptions and abilities as writers and teachers. The added focus on *where* teachers teach is a product of early analysis and coding of the data. Early coding identified the potential for teachers to think or talk in greater length about where they teach. These questions, too, were approved by the IRB. In addition to the follow-up protocol and in accordance with grounded theory methods, other questions were asked of participant-teachers in relation to emerging categories and conceptual theories. These questions tended to be follow-up questions to the protocol questions. This allowed for the most rich, useful data to emerge as I was analyzing data by the time of the follow-up questions.

*The Audio-Video Recordings.* There are two primary reasons for using audio-video recording for data collection in this study. First, given my role as participant-observer, I was

concerned that I would not be able to be a “teacher teaching teachers,” a writer, and a researcher at all times during the Institute. In fact, I was concerned that my role as a participant-observer might hinder my own writing and interpersonal communication or that of the writing and communication of the other participant-teachers. Qualitative researcher John W. Creswell explains, “An overwhelming response is surprise by beginning qualitative researchers about the amount of time needed to collect extensive data” (128). Indeed, I foresaw time as an issue. The amount of time it would take to make extensive notes during the Institute was a concern. Also, I knew that coding and memoing would be time consuming once the analysis began. The potential for rich data and my own professional development as a teacher of writing during the Institute prompted me to include the audio-video recording as part of the data collection and as part of the informed consent for the participant-teachers. While teachers were initially shy about an audio-video recorder being in the meeting room, within a day or two, participant-teachers were admitting that they “had forgotten it was there.” A second motivation for using the audio-video recorder was to record data from the discourse of the participant-teachers *in situ* and to capture any writing that teachers shared in the group setting. This is a method of data collection that is lacking in the extant literature on NWP and promised to offer rich data on how participant-teachers take up issues of rurality and the teaching of writing in the context, and “real time,” of the Institute itself.

The audio-video recordings were treated in similar ways to the interviews. I viewed the recordings in three separate passes, taking as many notes as I could that related to my coding. In the first pass, I coded the notes line by line. In subsequent passes, I took additional notes and focused my coding for developing categories. The focused codes for the audio-video notes were used in the constant comparison method and in developing the conceptual categories of the

grounded theory, along with the other data. A further discussion of this coding process takes place in the following section *Data Analysis in Grounded Theory*. Any references in the subsequent chapters to the “Institute days” or “during our discussions” relates to the data contained in the audio-video recordings.

*Participant-Teacher Writing and Sharing.* These types of samples take on a number of forms. Mainly, there was the day-to-day writing that we did in the Institute via methods such as the quickwrite. The quickwrites, for example, were transcribed as needed from the audio-video recordings. These “extant” writing samples, texts that the researcher does not ask the participants to write, were viewed as rich data, as they might shed light on how participant-teachers’ writing developed and on their perceptions of issues of rural school literacy practices. Charmaz views texts and textual analysis as key components of data collection in grounded theory:

Texts draw on particular discourses and provide accounts that record, explore, explain, justify, or foretell actions . . . As a discourse, a text follows certain conventions and assumes embedded meanings. Researchers can compare the style, contents, direction, and presentation of material to a larger discourse of which a text is a part. As accounts, texts tell something of intent and have intended—and perhaps unintended—audiences. (35)

While these written responses were not judged for their composition or artistic qualities, I included them in my data in order to ascertain what changes in perceptions occurred in relation to how teachers view their roles as advocates and where they teach. The written texts were viewed as part of the larger discourse of the participant-teachers’ perceptions of writing, writing instruction, and advocacy. Additionally, personal emails written to me that discuss writing in multiple contexts were included in the data. For instance, Clara wrote to me concerning her professional piece during the Institute. Clara and I also exchanged emails and face-to-face correspondence about some professional writing she did in conjunction with an issue she was having with her principal during the school year following the Institute. The potential for

“embedded meanings” and “embedded units” within the participants writing and sharing of that writing proved relevant to a constant comparative analysis of the interviews and audio-video recordings.

### ***Data Analysis in Grounded Theory***

Coding. Although the study covered approximately a calendar year of data collection, the use of *qualitative grounded theory coding* allowed me to stay close to the data throughout the study. Charmaz explains the grounded theory coding in anatomical terms: “Grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton. Thus, coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis” (45). I chose *line-by-line coding* as the first step in the coding process. I employed line-by-line coding to the interview transcripts, my written memos, and the observation notes generated through the Institute. Line-by-coding is a rigorous, yet integral, part of building categories and concepts (see Appendix C and Appendix D). Also, coding each line of the data allows for stronger analysis and theoretical sampling: “Through coding each line of the data, you gain insights about what kinds of data to collect next. Thus, you distill data and direct further inquiry early in the data collection. Line-by-line coding gives you leads to pursue (Charmaz 51-53). I also focused on creating *in vivo codes* grounded in the language and “symbolic markers of participants’ speech and meanings” (Charmaz 55). This was important to the data analysis, as I was particularly focused on how participant-teachers talk about and give meaning to their perceptions on advocacy and writing. I coded by using the Microsoft Word comment function, which allowed me to highlight lines and phrases and make comments that visually connect with the lines of data.

Next, I employed *focused coding* to the early codes and categories generated from the line-by-line coding. Focused coding allowed me to make decisions about which early codes and categories made the most analytical sense and how to condense the data (Charmaz 57-63). A second, focused approach to coding allowed me to become more familiar with the data and feel more comfortable and confident about choosing which categories to raise to conceptual and theoretical levels. I include in Appendices C and D represent all of the initial and focused codes from the interviews and audio-video recording notes.

Categories. If we take Charmaz's metaphor of codes as constituting the "bones" of a study and theory, I would make the claim that *categories* are the musculature by which the skeleton moves. Categories are conceptual in nature, meaning "categories in grounded theory are more than simply names or labels which we attach to things in order to identify them" (Dey 48). By using the constant comparative method between data, categories create passages through which the researcher can build theory. Appendix E represents categories generated through constant comparison of the data, along with focused codes that go along with these categories. These categories charts allowed me to consider which categories were most salient to the emerging theories. Comparing the categories and codes in this way was vital in allowing me to write the theoretical concepts and chapters with the categories clearly in mind. It also helped me connect (or remind myself) which codes went with which category.

Memo-Writing. Learning how to develop categories from coding is a particularly dicey step for beginning researchers using grounded theory. For this reason, the writing of *memos*, or memoing, is a vital step in grounded theory. Charmaz explains that memo-writing "constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process" so that "codes stand out and take form as theoretical categories as you

write successive memos” (72). I chose to follow the look and “feel” of Charmaz’s memos as examples. Writing these memos helped me to better understand which codes might be subsumed under a category, the nuances of categories, and how categories-- once compared—could help build theory. Memo-writing helps build the larger written study and the theories of studies themselves. I used memos to return to the data for focused coding and constant comparison: “By writing memos on your focused codes, you build and clarify your category by examining all the data it covers and by identifying variations within and between other categories” (Charmaz 93). Appendix F demonstrates a sample memo entitled “Defining Advocacy Takes Multiple, if not Ambiguous, Perspectives.” This early memo demonstrates how I began to tease out future codes and categories related to both advocacy and voice. In this memo, it became apparent that voice was an integral part of the data that needed to be examined further in future coding and memoing. From here, I began to broaden both my understanding of advocacy and voice in the data.

*Saturation.* As in a good deal of qualitative research, finding patterns is integral to grounded theory. Yet, staying close to the data, coding in multiple iterations, and constant comparison can make it difficult for a grounded theorist to find an ending to the data collection and analysis. This is where the concept of saturation lies in grounded theory. Saturation means that “categories are ‘saturated’ when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (Charmaz 113). Memoing was an important method in my attempt to saturate the data. For instance, later in the analysis and writing processes, I would use memoing to compare data and to see if I indeed had saturation. Furthermore, I was able to use theoretical sampling to help satisfy myself that saturation was occurring. For instance, in my second interview with Karen, which took place ten



months after the Institute, I was able to ask questions specific to core categories of geographical and pedagogical isolation and voice as a way of connecting that I had sorted and written about in memo and draft form. Along with constant comparison, this proved to be the means by which I was able to determine that no new categories were emerging from the data.

*Data Storage and Sorting.* Following the work of Nancy La Pelle, I used Microsoft Word to store and sort my data. This approach allowed me to perform the following procedures:

1. Format the data into data tables including participant ID information and utterance sequence numbers.
2. Develop a theme codebook in tabular format to define linkages between numeric codes and theme categories. Logically organize the codebook based on your framework or report outline
3. Determine face-sheet data categories on which retrieval will be done and add columns to the data tables to accommodate coding for these.
4. Do the thematic coding the theme code column, modifying the table as needed to handle text that should be coded with multiple themes.
5. Sort the data by desired face-sheet data and theme code categories to look for patterns.
6. Validate the coding within a data table, correct, and re-sort.
7. Merge appropriate data tables and validate coding across data tables. (85-108)

Once I began to merge appropriate data tables, I was able to incorporate Charmaz's suggestions for sorting in grounded theory. For example, I made a category chart from the data tables (see Appendix E). I made color-codes for each emerging category and applied those to my focused codes lists. Then, I used the focused codes to identify conceptual categories and used the focused codes to bolster the chart. I was then better able to compare categories and write more clearly about the connections between them. Sorting by hand was very helpful in "seeing" how the categories worked together. Next, I considered the order of the categories as I wrote related memos and the draft of the study. This allowed for the best possible balance between categories and participant-observation, which helped significantly in the writing process.

## **Writing the Grounded Theory**

I conclude the methods chapter with, perhaps, an unconventional section dedicated to writing in grounded theory. As a novice to grounded theory, I found staying close to the data and constant comparison a bit daunting at first. For months, I had the feeling that I was getting mired in the data and would never be able to “draft.” However, as I dedicated myself more to writing the memos and continued to code and compare, I began to see the “picture” of the study differently. I, in a sense, became less chained to my original preconceptions of what the dissertation study would be. Emerging categories led to new memos, which led back to the categories for clarification. For example, the theoretical frameworks employed in chapters four and five were not considerations at the beginning of the study. In fact, these frameworks came to fruition from the writing itself. As Charmaz states, “Writing your manuscript presents opportunities for drafting new discoveries with each revision” (151). The following chapters offer a glimpse at this process, as they are divided primarily into categorical sections, most of which came from writing memos and drafting.

## Chapter Four.

### **“You end up having to go it alone”: Tensions in Teacher Advocacy in Rural Schools**

As noted in the preceding review of literature, the overwhelming consensus in the extant studies on NWP Institutes is that teacher consultants leave with renewed confidence, vigor, and self-awareness. Such transformative professional development is a key to the NWP’s success and why participants are eager to share their experiences with other professional teachers. At the 1987 Writing Project Directors’ Meeting held at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) annual convention, Dixie Dellinger delivered these words in a talk about how the NWP changed her views on teaching and writing:

I look at life today with clearer eyes, more serenity, greater confidence, and deeper trust in my fellow man. The NWP did not tell me to think that, it simply showed me how to trust my students, and from such small beginnings I learned to trust everyone else a little more. Thoreau said, “I think we may safely trust a great deal more than we do.” The NWP has taught me the truth of his words.

Dellinger, a long-time high school English teacher and teacher consultant (who passed away in 2014), expresses the powerful effects that the NWP has had on so many teachers for the past forty years. Yet, in her speech, Dellinger goes on to lament the effects that North Carolina state mandates were having on the teaching landscape in the early 1980s: “I would say the deepest concern of teachers today is with the loss of ownership, autonomy, trust, and confidence under the onslaught of the state-mandated reform movements that are sweeping the country.”

Dellinger’s words are somewhat prophetic given our current national testing controversies and serve as an appropriate beginning point for this chapter’s discussion of teachers as advocates in rural schools and the teaching landscape of rural Arkansas today.

This chapter will explore the Rural Advocacy Institute’s teacher-participants’ perceptions of rurality and advocacy, as well as considering the potential avenues and barriers teachers face

in advocating for their students, schools, communities, and the profession. The prevailing method of analysis in studies of NWP and its teacher-participants is to focus on teachers' writing and their views of their writing through interview data. Indeed, much has been gained through these efforts. Where this study and present chapter seek to expand this growing body of work is to look closely *also* at teachers' discourses during group discussions focused on writing, where teachers teach, and the role of advocacy in rural schools and literacy education. In her work on teacher transformation in the NWP, Whitney explains how studies that focus on teacher "meaning perspectives" help us to go beyond simply tracking professional development to explaining it: "By shifting our attention toward issues of epistemology and the accompanying issues of authority and agency," we shift "our focus from documenting what behaviors teachers display to understanding why those actions happen" and therefore "gain insight both into how the learning occurs in the first place . . . and into how the learning is then enacted in the classroom" ("Teacher Transformation" 179). The original intent of the NWP professional development, as viewed by its originator James Gray, was that "*teacher knowledge was to be the starting point for learning* [emphasis in original]" (Lieberman and Wood 7). Therefore, studies such as the present one that focus on teacher knowledge can logically analyze and evaluate the discourses that create and sustain such knowledges. As noted in the previous review of literature, grounded theory methods are particularly suited for developing these epistemological and conceptual understandings.

### **Theoretical Frameworks: "Underlife" and "Third Space"**

The triangulation of interviews, participant-observation, and audio-visual recordings offers layers of data that allow for getting at what is driving and at stake in teacher-participant perceptions of rurality, schooling, and advocacy. What develops is a grounded theory that locates

and makes use of what Robert Brooke, among others, calls the “underlife” of educational and literacy settings. Drawing from the work of Erving Goffman, Brooke views underlife this way:

[T]he concept of underlife rests on three assumptions about social interaction. First, a person’s identity is assumed to be a function of social interaction. Second, social interaction is assumed to be a system of information games. Third, social organizations are assumed to provide roles for individuals which imply certain kinds of identities. With these assumptions in mind, “underlife” can be understood as the activities (or information games) individuals engage in to show that their identities are different from or more complex than the identities assigned them by organizational roles. (142)

Such an underlife would appear to be as much a part of the Institute as any other organization, especially considering the complex roles assigned to teacher-participants in this high-level professional development. The “information games” played in the social setting of the Institute rely heavily on “what each person chooses to reveal about [himself/herself] in each context” (Brooke 142). As Brooke explains, added to this element of identity representation, organizational roles are placed upon individuals in various organizational and social settings. For instance, the NWP Institute places teacher-participants into the role of “teachers teaching teachers” and professional peers with embedded assumptions that all individuals are capable of and prepared to serve the role of advocate. Therefore, institutional underlife reveals that “actors in an institution develop behaviors which assert an identity different than the one assigned them” (Brooke 143). This certainly is not to say that the teacher-participants in the Rural Institute were attempting to “assert” their “different” identities on a complete and consistent basis. In many cases, instead, teacher-participants demonstrated also a more “complex” identity than that assigned to them. As this chapter will show, teacher-participants did undeniably struggle to negotiate the tensions of identity placed upon them in the social setting of the Institute.

For what is at play (and at stake) in the underlife of the Institute are teachers’ identities. Brooke, again relaying the work of Goffman, explains that “institutional underlife must be

understood as an activity closely related to individual identity” (143). Brooke further clarifies: “For Goffman, looking at those activities through which individuals resist or reject the identity assigned them by institutions is a way of looking at how individuals form their sense of identity” (143). In taking on the theoretical and pedagogical implications of advocacy, the Institute is itself taking up a *disruptive* underlife, one that is often set against the traditional and organizational modes of education in the United States. Goffman finds disruptive underlife “where the realistic intentions of the participants are to abandon the organization or radically alter its structure” (qtd. in Brooke 143). The Institute, although not directly organized by national and state teaching bureaucracy, is financially, ideologically, and rhetorically situated within the organizational structures of public literacy education. In this way, adopting advocacy as a focal point goes against traditional means of teacher professional development, pedagogies, and assessments. Given the disruptive nature of the Institute, it is not surprising that some teachers could find this disruption problematic, as these new discourses likely clash with their teacher education, district organizational structures, and state and national assessment measures. What we see from the teacher-participants, as Brooke sees with college composition students, are examples of *contained* underlife, “a form which (as Goffman would say) attempts to exist within the existing structure without introducing too much friction” (Brooke 151). Thus, the Institute is asking the teachers to go beyond the more familiar contained underlife to explore the more disruptive.

In addition to using underlife as a theoretical umbrella for this chapter, it proved necessary to consider the pedagogical, social, and cultural *space* of the Institute. Looking to the theoretical underpinnings of underlife made it clearer that a closer examination would be needed of where the Institute stood in professional and socio-cultural terms. For this reason, I chose to go back to the literature after developing conceptual categories which brought to mind the

theories of underlife. In doing so, the theoretical concepts of “hybridity” and “third space” offered additional theoretical lenses. Pulling from the postcolonial literary and cultural studies of Homi Bhaba, third space theory offers a theoretical basis for further discussion of the professional and cultural discourse transactions in the Institute. Bhaba explains third space in part through hybridity:

[A]ll forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the “third space” which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom . . . The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable [sic], a new area of meaning and representation. (211)

While there is some risk in using Bhabha’s concept given its primary focus on colonizing and colonized groups, there are strong similarities to what the participant-teachers experienced in the Institute. What is particularly interesting in Bhabha’s development of third space is a lack of binaries that might limit what we identify as a “new area of meaning.” In thinking of the ways that participant-teachers experienced third space, it was clear that teachers were asked to combine various discourses, including their primary/home discourses, professional/secondary discourses, scholarly discourses from readings and conversations, and perspectives of other teachers. In turn, these hybrid discourses are shaped by myriad discourses.

In order to confirm the applicability of the concepts of hybridity and third space, I reviewed the work of researchers dealing with hybridity and education and organizations, including the work of Rob Hulme, David Cracknell and Allan Owens. These author-researchers use the concepts to analyze inter-professional group members’ endeavors to creative new approaches to integrating services for the initiative Every Child Matters in the United Kingdom.

This present chapter and the longer study share these authors' understanding of the transformative nature of hybridity:

The notion of "hybridity" then, examines the condition of being "in-between" several different sources of knowledge. Within this construct, discourse can be both productive and constraining in terms of social and cultural practice and the development of identity. Hybridity applies to the integration of competing knowledges and discourses; to the reading and writing of texts, and to individual and social spaces, contexts, and relationships. It does not imply the successful unproblematic production of 'new' knowledge or the production of harmonious, uncontested relationships. (541)

The hybrid nature of the Institute as third space places teacher-participants in the "productive and constraining" contexts of competing and complementary discourses. In order for "new" knowledges to be created in the teachers' perceptions of advocacy in rural schools, there were key moments where knowledge production was problematic. Bhabha explains this cultural phenomenon: "The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation" (10). I posit that the hybrid discourses of third space in the Institute indeed created spaces for "insurgent acts," as teacher-participants attempt to translate the various discourses they experience in the professional development.

The following discussion incorporates conceptual analyses of the categories that emerged in the data on rurality and teacher advocacy in the Institute. The Institute created a space, a third space, for teachers' to exchange hybrid (sometimes positive in nature and sometimes transgressive) professional and cultural discourses. In negotiating this third space, teachers both explore new identities and complicate the identities provided to them by the Institute, via underlife. Underlife takes on particular importance later in the grounded theory of this chapter, as some teachers' perceptions reveal a hesitance and resistance to becoming advocates, thus complicating the roles provided for them by the Institute. As Brooke explains, underlife enables



“individuals to take stances towards the roles they are expected to play and to show others the stances they take” (144). Ultimately, a grounded theory emerges that takes into account these theoretical umbrellas, layering them with the conceptual categories garnered from the data, in order to reveal how these teachers’ discourses inform our understanding of rural teachers as advocates.

### **“We can’t reclaim what we don’t understand”: Cultivating Perceptions of Rurality and Rural Schooling**

Given the theoretical and practical focus of this particular iteration the NWP Institute, the Rural Advocacy Institute created a unique opportunity and challenge for teachers to consider and discuss issues heretofore not privileged by their previous teacher education and professional development. The Institute was designed by Goering to address perceived needs for teacher professional development in rural schools districts in Arkansas. The initial email invitation from Goering explained the Institute this way: “[T]his work is part of an ongoing initiative to help rural teachers and schools in this time of unprecedented change in education. Participants will work towards college and career ready writing practices while also delving into critical stances on rural schools.” As part of a United States Department of Education Seed 1 grant, the Institute was one component of a larger project on college and career readiness, which is also a tenet of the Common Core State Standards.

To add to the pending discussions in the Institute, texts were “assigned” that would allow the participants to be exposed to scholarly work in the fields of rural literacy and literacy education. The main text that was intended to open up conversations about rural issues and rural literacies is *Reclaiming the Rural: Essays on Literacy, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy*, a collection of

scholarly essays edited by Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell. Selections from this anthology carried these theoretical purposes outlined by the authors/editors:

Without a doubt, this is an important time to be working on rural literacies, rhetorics, and pedagogies as we confront environmental and economic challenges of unprecedented scope and impact: global climate change, the end of peak oil, rising food prices, and a worldwide economic recession, to name a few. How rural communities will participate with urban and suburban communities in fostering the kinds of literacies needed for global citizenship and sustainable economic development is a challenge that scholars in rhetoric and composition are taking up already. As the essays in this collection demonstrate, rural people and organizations have long worked to reclaim the rural, despite media representations that sometimes still erase the ways that rural people, spaces, and collectives across regions and locales must work together in a global culture. (xv)

While it cannot be discerned from the data if all of these issues were intended to be discussed in the Institute, what is clear is that many of them were highlighted, addressed, and written about throughout the three week period and beyond. In fact, the theme of “reclaiming the rural” was an important focal point in conversations about the readings and participant-teachers’ professional practices.

In addition to chapters from the book, participant-teachers were asked to read two pieces from scholarly texts in *English Education* pertaining to NWP Institutes. The first, “Learning to Speak in a Political Voice,” an editorial by Gina DeBlase, addresses the writing that teachers of the Wayne State Writing Project created which demonstrate an emergence of “political voice.” DeBlase relates how the newly “graduated” teacher consultants were “reporting back” the following school semester “about the proactive ways in which they are speaking out in school meetings, in their classrooms, and to other teachers about what matters in language arts education” (118). DeBlase goes on to explain the inherent and potential value of developing a political voice as teachers:

When teachers are able to name and then speak what they know in the social spaces of elite and popular cultures, they bring about the kind of critical

consciousness that allows them to see themselves as meaning makers and agents of change . . . This consciousness is both liberating and empowering. It demands that others, too, acknowledge previously silenced and marginalized voices. (119)

Accompanying this text, Rural Institute fellows were asked to read Joanna Perrillo's "Writing for the Public: Teacher Editorializing as a Pathway to Professional Development." Perillo, the Director of the West Texas Writing Project, worked with fellows on professional pieces with the goal "to use the editorial as an experiential exercise in writing-to-learn strategies and to provide the fellows with a collaborative and responsive environment that would help them to deepen and sharpen their ideas" (12). Through a process of invention and revision, Perillo found that the teachers were able to develop critical, professional, and political voices: "[B]y holding both intellectual work and education advocacy at its center, the Editorial Project pushed the fellows to investigate their ideas and account for their beliefs" (12). Judging from the foregrounded and operational natures of these texts, it is clear that the Rural Institute sought to achieve dual (and likely complementary) purposes of developing participant-teachers' professional and intellectual growth in the areas of rurality and also in political writing and voice. This hybridity of discourses was a challenging one for the teacher-participants, in which they were placed in-between multiple (and sometimes competing) discourses.

In order to negotiate these in-between spaces, participant-teachers needed to first develop, or explore, their own understandings and connections with what we mean by *rural*. Four of six teacher-participants in the Institute spoke, in our initial interview, or write, in the audio-video recordings of the Institute, of "growing up" in rural places and in rural schools. Some variations existed in these personal histories. For example, Clara spoke more than once of living a "dual" life in a small city and having a "place" in the country where her family would spend weekends and summers: "We'd go out to the lake on the weekends . . . do that city-

girl/country-girl thing. I loved the water.” Clara wrote about her “rural” side in a quickwrite on playing with other children in this rural setting. In another variation, Barbara spoke in our initial interview of growing up in one of the largest urban areas in Arkansas near the state capital. She admits to being a “city girl,” yet she later moved to a small rural town as a teenager and wrote a somewhat “Southern gothic” quickwrite about the smells of old homes and the sounds of dying dogs. Other teachers spoke or wrote nostalgically about their rural upbringings. For instance, Martha, who grew up in a rural/suburban area on the outskirts of a major college town in the upper-Midwestern United States, describes her affection for her rural upbringing and schooling: “My dad worked for the auto industry. They moved there because the schools were good and they wanted us to be in really good schools. So, I had a lot of—it was a small school—but there were lots of opportunities to do different things. I remember being in PE class one year, and we went cross-country skiing. They brought skis in.” Less nostalgically, Linda shared experiences of rural upbringing, poverty, and geographical isolation: “I lived eight country mile [sic] up the dirt road in the woods in a very small home with five other brothers and sisters and only my mother to raise us and support us. Didn’t have running water or anything until I was about ten—no plumbing, no running water, nothing. So, I am rural.”

Although in different ways, each participant experienced rural settings as children or as teachers, nonetheless, it was an important part of the Institute and each teacher’s Institute experience that we, as a group, worked to define and qualify our perceptions of rurality and rural schooling. Institute group discussions in the early stages focused primarily on “deficit models” and conservative values associated with rural places and schools. On day two of the audio-video recordings, in an open discussion that was meant as scaffolding for the next day’s reading from *Reclaiming the Rural*, Donna, the leader of the Institute, asked “When we think of rural schools,

what comes to mind?" Responses included "geographically isolated," "disconnected," "status quo thinking," "Bible classes on school property," "socially isolated," "poorer," "we take it a little bit slower," "good ol' boy system," and "lack of diversity." Regardless if these perceptions came from broader rhetorics of rural education that espouse deficit-model thinking or if these are entirely from the teachers' personal experiences, it is important to acknowledge that this type of discourse was to be taken up in the Institute.

Given that the extant literature both acknowledges and seeks to move past these views of rurality, it is little surprise that we spoke in these starting point ways. These initial discussions, though, were fruitful in our efforts to develop a collective understanding of what we meant by "rural" and "rural schools." As the literature explains, these deficit model discourses are not without their practical places in discussions of rural America. For example, subsequent discussions moved to "brain drain" in rural communities, where talented youth go away to college or for work and do not return to live and contribute to their rural home places. This discussion prompted Donna, the teacher consultant, to ask the poignant and open-ended question, "What are your students' thoughts? Are they planning on leaving?" Indeed, Donna's voice is an operative one throughout the Institute. While the grounded theory focuses on the participant-teachers' taking up of rural issues and writing, the data reveal how important Donna was in focusing our attention on rurality. Her final question for that segment of the day's discussion left the teacher-participants silent: "Is there a component in your classroom for your students to wrestle out some of these rural issues?" The teachers were left to ponder this notion, which serves the goals of the Institute and challenges the group to consider what resources and perceptions they would develop in our work in the Institute. Despite the challenge the teachers faced in answering these questions, this early discussion sets the stage for using Institute

dialogue as third space in engaging epistemological concerns where teachers can think critically about the sources and justifications of their existing knowledge. As an experienced teacher consultant and education scholar, Donna often used open-ended questions to help us engage our critical thinking. Donna's leadership and thought-provoking presence allowed the teacher-participants to wrangle with and draw from their early perceptions and understandings of rural. Here Donna engages our prior knowledge and helps us make connections with the first readings: "We can't reclaim what we don't understand . . . Being aware of what we claim to be 'rural' and take it back . . . There is a sense in every one of us, a sense of belonging . . . Part of that journey is figuring out who we are and where we belong."

Further discussions and interviews with each participant during the Institute opened avenues for reflection on issues of rurality and rural teaching. Teacher fellows developed reflections that dug deeper into concerns about rural schools. Teachers expressed concerns that rural school districts have a difficult time holding onto young and talented teachers. These concerns were not brought about by readings but through experience, yet reflect the extant literature on rural education. The commonly-held perception by the more experienced teachers, including Barbara and Martha, is that rural school districts are where older teachers "are sent out to pasture." This concern is a professional one, in which teacher-participants are concerned about rural schools being able to "keep up" with urban and suburban schools. Martha's perceptions from our initial interview are particularly noteworthy:

*JA:* So what do you think about where you teach?

*Martha:* You know...I think in the situation that I am in sometimes is that I'm frustrated because even though we pay pretty well for a rural school we don't get the "cream of the crop," necessarily, people that are really in it for the kids and really in it to be educators. It's a lot of pulling a check kind of a deal. A lot of times they will hire people that have retired from another state, and so they are trying to get dual retirement. That's really frustrating, because that's again trying

to build up your retirement, so you can pull two retirements from two different states.

Teachers were using the reflection periods of the Institute and study, including our interviews, to look at where they teach with a more critical eye. Issues of hiring were among other concerns including technology use and exposure to outside opportunities and experiences. For example, there is a notable concern about a perceived “lack of exposure” for their students. Linda, who has experienced geographical and social isolation as a student and adolescent, spoke about this concern in our initial interview:

I find that when you are geographically located, geographically isolated, your views are going to be—a lot of them are naïve. That has a tendency to keep the students where they are, when they don't go out into the world. A lot of people haven't ever left the community. Can you imagine what limited experiences they have? So, their view that they're passing on the relatives generation after generation, that's all the views that they are getting. So, if I can open up the world through books and writing, the students will find a voice.

While these perceptions may represent some deficit model thinking, i.e. rural people are naïve through a perceived lack of outside exposure, Linda is using the interview to think about her students in critical ways. Furthermore, Linda is particularly situated to express situations she has observed and experienced in rural areas. Linda was entering her first year of full-time teaching, but she had taught as a substitute in her community for several years and had her own children in the public schools. Linda also is expressing issues of “generational literacy” and is beginning to link her perceptions of her own experiences in rural schooling. Linda also is anticipating her own role as a sponsor of literacy for her rural students and plans to use literacy and literature in conjunction with her perceptions of where she will be teaching. Here, the focus is goals of using literacy sponsorship to enact pedagogical and social change, thus creating hybrid perceptions of where literacy education might serve her students, beyond the notion that literacy can lead to “getting out” of rural areas.

In addition to acknowledging areas where rural schools may “lag and lack,” every teacher was positive or optimistic in their perceptions about where they teach. For instance, all five of the teachers that teach in a rural school district (Karen teaches in an urban alternative school) mentioned the benefit of being a part of a “close-knit” rural community. Valerie’s initial interview makes the connection between the close-knit community and school size: “We have a close-knit community, which means it’s very supportive and that students are supportive of one another too and know each other. It’s like a family.” Teachers value the smaller “feel” of the rural schools and see it as a benefit in thinking about the positives and potential. Valerie continues in this part of the interview: “We are probably able to do a lot more activities.” Thus, there is a sense that teachers have more autonomy and opportunity to impact their students with smaller class sizes, one-on-one interaction, and getting to know people in the community. Linda takes up this perspective in her initial interview:

You have an opportunity to definitely make an impact, to get to know the community members. For instance, they told me that Friday night basketball is just as important to the people of Parkersburg [the community in which she will be teaching] as football is to Texas. I told them I know where I’ll be every Friday night.

For Clara, who has previously taught in a larger university town, the chance to teach in a smaller, rural district is perceived to offer her a “big fish in a little pond” opportunity:

It’s real laid back. They were a little bit behind the times on some things. Having worked in Fayetteville, I knew how things needed to be done. My special ed supervisor had come from [the university town] so I knew what she wanted. Suddenly, I was kind of in a position where they think I’m wonderful. They think I’m bringing all of these new and advanced ideas to their small district, which is true. That was such a refreshing change from, you know—they think I actually know what I’m doing.

Overall, teachers recognize value in feeling like they are able to connect on a personal and communal level with local people and students. In turn, the fellows demonstrate a reciprocal



respect for their rural communities. Martha spoke about the “small town” atmosphere that is created and maintained in her teaching community. Martha’s initial interview creates the bucolic imagery of children leaving school, flowing like an adolescent delta through safe and reliable thoroughfares: “I just think there is something to be said for a small town. You know, our kids can still walk around town pretty safely. Most of them walk from school to Boys & Girls Club downtown. I mean, it’s just a massive exodus walking through town, and I find that kind of fun.”

Some parts critical and some parts complimentary, teachers appear to be quite comfortable in sharing their perceptions of where they teach. Sharing these perceptions serves as a means of creating hybrid discourses where teacher-participants are allowed to further analyze their roles as teachers and advocates in rural schools.

### **“The further you get from the kid, the harder it is to advocate”: Defining and Coming to**

#### **Terms with Advocacy**

While teacher-participants were candid and clear about how they perceived the challenges and benefits of teaching in rural schools, when asked to think and talk about their roles as advocates, they demonstrated less concretely developed perceptions. In discussing advocacy, both in interviews and in the Institute discussions, teachers take multiple, sometimes conflicting, perspectives in defining and qualifying the term *advocacy* and its conceptual frameworks. Advocacy seems multi-faceted, if not ambiguous, to these teachers. It appears that as hybrid discourses become less familiar or comfortable for teachers, their ability to create clear or new meanings is complicated.

In the initial interviews for each teacher-participant, I asked close variations of this question: “When I say *teachers as advocates* or *teacher advocacy* what comes to mind? How would you define it?” It was virtually unanimous that fellows perceived themselves as advocates

for their students. Karen, who teaches at-risk students, stated her views, in the initial interview, this way:

I define it as are you going to be able to stand up for your kid, one of your students and I would say absolutely. Now, if they are being a schmuck, now, I'm going to say you're being a little bit of a putz. Don't do that. What's wrong with you? . . . Yeah, I think I am. I'll tell anybody who will listen, "Yeah, I teach at-risk kids, let me tell you what great kids they are."

Karen was never afraid to stand on her self-described "soapbox" in talking passionately about where she teaches and, therefore, stands as a strong voice for advocacy in alternative schooling.

Similarly, the rural teachers spoke of being advocates for their students just as consistently.

Linda views being a teacher advocate in terms of safety and trust:

I believe that you have to be an advocate for the student. We're there for the students. That's part of making the classroom a safe mode where the students know if they are having a problem, whether it be minor to you or something really major, you may have to unfortunately call the authorities about. They have to know that it's a safe environment. They can come to you; you're not going to judge them.

This view of advocating for her students jigsaws well with Linda's view that she needs to develop strong one-on-one relationships with her rural students: "Obviously, when you have that smaller class size, those students are going to look to you not only as an authoritative figure or teacher to you're a role model for them. See I'm involved—I'm a youth leader." Linda's personal views and role as a religious youth leader in her community church influences her views of advocacy, as a moral and ethical responsibility, a responsibility that can be achieved due to the close-knit and smaller nature of the rural school. In her initial interview, Martha views advocacy in a slightly different way, as a professional, legal, and ethical responsibility:

I think teachers inherently are advocates . . . I guess there are teachers who aren't, but, you know, automatically, I feel like an advocate for a child just by nature of law; I'm mandated to report abuse, which automatically sort of makes me an advocate, whether I want to be or not . . . I guess that's just how I personally always just felt like I'm an advocate for a child. I hope I am.

While the phrasing of “whether I want to or not” might indicate some ambivalent feelings surrounding advocacy, Martha is clearly dedicated to upholding her professional responsibilities as a teacher, in that she will report any abuse of a student. In her initial interview, Clara shares a similar point of view from the perspective of a special education professional: “I always felt that it was important to advocate for the kids and for special education and needs.” Valerie’s initial interview incorporates a belief that advocacy is a personal decision for teachers: “[E]ach individual teacher would have to have that desire and that love of teaching and students to continue learning how to be that type of person and that type of teacher. See, I think that is more of an individual thing. Just because they have the title teacher, does not make them an advocate.” In this way, Valerie is both applauding teachers who advocate, yet also acknowledging that not all teachers are advocates by trade.

Defining and coming to terms with advocacy as a teacher is complicated when teachers acknowledge that they do not play the only role in advocacy for their schools. Here, the third space of the Institute allows teachers to consider the complex and problematic nature of hybrid discourses. Martha’s interview perceptions complicate this matter by discussing the role of administration in the process of advocacy: “I mean, it would be awesome if our leadership were advocates to our students—say our school board—and we could let them speak for us and know that’s going to be something that is going to be true and right for the kids. In my experience, it just doesn’t seem to be the case.” In this way, then, Martha is looking to leadership as the “voice” for change and advocacy. Martha’s perspectives create a zone of ambivalence that cannot go unconsidered. Martha, like the other teacher-participants, was concerned that she faces daunting odds as an advocate. Following her comments about the lack of advocacy by those in leadership roles, Martha expresses an apprehension for collective advocacy groups: “I’m very

leery about jumping on any advocacy kind of group like that where they are going for me because more often than not they don't speak for me. Things get warped and changed and morphed into something else, and that's not what I want." This leerness, first expressed by Martha in our initial interview, became a significant aspect to the grounded theory in this chapter and beyond. In fact, through focused coding in the third pass through the data, these coded passages helped develop categories of tension. Tensions between personal and administrative motives and advocacy permeate the data. Where Martha's leerness comes from is a sense that she does not have the support systems in place to effectively serve as an advocate. She takes this issue further in relating how she feels about the infrastructure where she teaches:

My experience with leadership has been . . . again, my experience has been one district mostly . . . It's almost been manipulation. My leadership has been more manipulation. Scratch my back I'll scratch yours, kind of deal. "I need you to do this for me." I'm like, I'm doing literacy team . . . like a list a mile long, and it just keeps piling up. It's just a matter of how I can help them look better. It has nothing to do what is better for the kids, and you're putting so much on me that I'm not even able to teach effectively because all of my of my time is spent with this other nonsense.

This feeling of professional distraction and having to work within the local systems of public literacy education is a key element in how teachers perceive their roles as advocate. Splitting "time" with administrative expectations takes teachers away from issues of advocacy and leaves teachers feeling "alone" in advocacy. Here, we see evidence from the coded data that taking up the identity of teacher advocate may meet with some resistance. The underlife of the teachers' perceptions is demonstrated by Martha's "information game." Feeling uncomfortable about speaking out, Martha places herself outside of the role of advocate and places the role of advocate on the shoulders of administration ("we could let them speak for us). In doing so, the underlife of Martha's comments speak both to her identity within the existing structures of her

school district *and* her identity formation within the Institute. This is where the third space of the Institute gets trickier and harder to negotiate for teachers like Martha.

Martha was not alone in feeling “alone” in considering being an advocate for her students and school. In advocating for her at-risk students, Karen shares similar perspectives. In our follow-up interview, I again asked Karen about how she perceives the notion of *teachers as advocates*. Several months after the Institute, Karen’s feelings about how schooling limits the voices of her students appeared unchanged, if not galvanized: “My students don’t have an advocate.” Here, as with other teachers’ perspectives, Karen’s concern is that her “lone” goals in advocacy at odds also with structural limitations that do not allow for teachers to work with students to advocate for themselves. Karen extends this line of thinking, while invoking the work of children’s author Dr. Seuss:

They [schools] want widgets. Put the raw material in, push the button, and come out with the star-belly Sneetch. Then change the curriculum and take the star off their belly . . . When you start to think of them [students] as widgets, it becomes very difficult to advocate for someone that you are distanced from. The further you get from the kid, the harder it is to advocate. You can’t hear the voices.

Here the familiar rhetoric of “teachers against administration” takes on a more critical stance. In connecting administrative “distance” to issues of advocacy, Karen is creating a newly-formed set of expectations and goals for teachers who seek to advocate. Moreover, Karen’s comments about the unifying and narrowing approaches to public education for her at-risk students offer some keen insights in relation to rural public schooling.

Yet, what are the issues and tensions of advocating in rural schools? The next conceptual category expands upon teachers’ perceptions of advocacy by looking closely at how teachers perceive their roles as advocates in rural settings and schools where they teach. In offering the teachers the opportunity to reflect upon and reconsider their roles as advocates in rural schools,

the Institute brought out some tensions and hybrid discourses/texts in working in rural school districts. Primarily, the next category explains how teachers perceive their abilities to advocate for students and their profession in relation to local community norms. In considering the discourse communities of their local communities, teachers are faced with a third space more and more complex. Thus, we see evidence of underlife that struggles to both re-define and maintain identities that do not create too much friction within existing organizational structures of local schools or the Institute itself.

### **Moving the Piano Slowly: Tensions between Advocacy and Community Norms**

In defining advocacy, teachers also spoke candidly about how advocacy fits or *might* fit in their local, rural school districts. Teachers in rural schools often have to account for community norms in their teaching. Recent debates about teaching the topic of evolution in rural areas and the banning of certain books in rural school districts speak to this reality. As Patricia A. Bauch points out in her work on rural school-community partnerships, rural schools and their teachers should consider the rich connection to place and community in their local districts: “Rural families often have deep roots in a community, dense relational networks, and strong intergenerational closure that serve to strengthen community norms, values, and attitudes” (211). The Rural Advocacy Institute created a third space for teachers to begin isolating what their perceptions of teaching and advocating in rural community context really meant for them. Teachers express in their interviews that they had not thought much about the reality that they teach in rural contexts. Clara’s initial interview illustrates this point:

I’m really just now started to get a lot of meaning to that. Honestly, it was the job that I got in August the year that I had lost the previous job. Right at first teaching at rural school was, yay, they hired me. So, I was happy to have a job. You know, you kind of go into teaching at a rural school thinking, well, this will be for now. Then next year I’ll be on out to something else. What I found after I landed there and spent a year was I actually really like it.

Clara's thoughts reveal two key points: first, she voices a commonly held perception by rural teachers and researchers that rural schools are "weigh stations" for teachers who plan to move into non-rural districts; second, Clara had taught at her rural school for four years and had not considered the community norms or rural context of where she was teaching prior to the Institute.

Once given the opportunity to delve deeper into the contexts of where they teach, Institute teacher-participants bring to the hybrid discourses a variety of perceptions related to community norms and education. One case in point is the discussion of a lack of aspirations of students and local families in relation to college readiness. Valerie speaks to this point when I ask her in our initial interview what teaching in a rural school means to her:

In my sixth grade this past year, I only see a handful of those so far that are inspired to go to college. They don't have the desire or see the need to do . . . in the class I had this past year, but maybe somewhere along the line they may see that need or have that desire . . . I have mixed emotions on that, because most of the boys I have in class are very intelligent in my science class. But, I can see them as a productive farmers or electricians at maybe the trade schools in the area they are going to live in, because we need those too. They have yet to discover the need for some of the things we have to learn. They are not making the connection to the real world yet how they will use that. That is my mission too is to make that real world connection.

Valerie's perceptions of the importance of college aspirations and readiness take into account the local context and offer alternate, yet bright, futures for her students, regardless of their college and career goals. Her "mixed emotions" stem from a real objective to blend community norms and pedagogical ambitions.

Such framing of one's teaching objectives in relation to community norms becomes a critical part of the discourse of the teacher-participants. In particular, Linda's initial interview reveals the tangible and valuable implications for considering where and *whom* one teaches. As

in her thoughts on defining advocacy, Linda relates a religious, spiritual relationship to community norms and how they might influence a teacher's role as advocate. Our interview took place along a dirt and gravel road adjacent to the rural church where we met for the Institute. Amidst this pastoral and rural setting, Linda felt at ease, often taking walks during our lunch periods. In this excerpt from the transcript, Linda offers an anecdote from her rural community church that speaks to the issue of community norms and a teacher's role as advocate:

At my church, this one small church, somebody prominent within that church had purchased a piano. The piano was right in front of the podium. The one preacher left; they hired someone else. Every time—like, they hired twenty different people—because every time they'd bring someone in obviously that's not the ideal place to have a piano is right in front of the podium. They'd [the new preacher] move it over to the side. Well, my pastor got there, and they [members of the congregation] had asked [him], because guess where the piano was. It was over to the side, and [the preacher] had been there for years. They said, "What was your secret." They'd say, "Every pastor before you within a very short time after moving that piano was no longer there. They voted him out." He said that each week he moved that piano an inch or half an inch each week to where they [the church members] just kind of got comfortable. So, when you go into a new school, any new environment whether it be big or small, especially in small communities though, don't try to make too many changes. Not at first, not something too drastic.

This anecdote resonates in the discourses of the Institute. It succinctly and vividly encapsulates the sometimes tenuous relationship between community norms, teaching, and advocacy in rural places. This conceptual feature of the Institute data is a key component in better understanding the tensions perceived in the teachers' hybrid discourses of teaching in rural schools. Linda elaborates on her anecdote: "We were talking about voice in that article. When you first go into a school, it doesn't matter how much education you have. It doesn't matter if you have 200 point IQ. It doesn't matter. You better keep your mouth shut and listen to them. Then, just like the piano incident, gradually they'll start to ask your input." Attuned to her community's cultural norms, Linda sees advocacy as a partnership with the community from which the norms arise.



Yet, there is a clear tone that accompanies Linda's perceptions on community norms, a tone that acknowledges limitations placed upon potential advocates, if not outright censorship: "Of course, being in a small school district is—like I said, same thing with the piano—don't go in there saying you're going to make all these changes. They'll kick you out in the street. You weren't born and raised here. Who are you?" Although Linda has yet to step into a classroom as a full-time high school English teacher, she is already keen to the potential for censorship where she will be teaching.

Given her perception of where she teaches, one is left to wonder how Linda will negotiate the pressures of community norms. Later in this interview, Linda talks about how she will look to her district's administrative support in teaching decisions: "My particular thing is I'm going to try and include the principal and the superintendent in my lessons." But where does this leave her in terms of advocating for her students, for serving as a voice for change should it be needed? Again, Linda's perceptions acquiesce to community norms: "Never go too far from what they [the community] are used to. Otherwise, it's a shocker because nobody really likes change. You don't want to get them on the defensive like 'What are you doing here? You're trying to change our community. You're trying to change our children.'" This description of the community norms where Linda teaches are based on her own acceptance of a hegemonic stance in her community, that of culturally conservative values and the "our way or the highway" system. Linda did not agree to a follow-up interview, so I could only speculate what, if any, tensions between being censored and having to "keep her mouth shut" could have surfaced for her the following school year.

Nonetheless, the data support the conceptual category that tensions exist even if Linda does not feel those tensions as acutely as others might. What Linda is describing is a power

struggle between the discourses of change and hegemony, one that she feels has a place in her future teaching. The work of Alecia Youngblood Jackson explains how residents of Garner, a rural town in the Southern United States, responded to initiatives to “globalize” their students’ public education. Using a Foucauldian analysis, Jackson shows how Garner residents demonstrate “ferce resistance to structural, impositional threats to rural identity” and do so through discursive strategies:

The point here is that community resistance to globalization can, in turn, limit the lives of the people whom that very resistance attempts to “protect.” Discourses make visible the ways that values, beliefs, customs, and so on become normalized and normalizing in a community . . . In Garner, the desire for perpetuation is grounded in the historical, yet it remains relevant through its control of schooling. (73)

Teachers become “surveillance systems” in rural places like Garner in physical and cultural ways: “Most of these teachers are highly visible in the community so their surveillance extends beyond the walls of the classroom: they also shop, attend church, and raise their families in Garner” (Jackson 86-87). Linda’s desire to follow the community’s norms is akin to this kind of normalizing discourse in that the result is a silencing of differences. In this way, Linda’s adherence to the cultural norms of the community may be a form of complicity, a contained underlife that does not want to create friction within the local schooling organization. In addition, in using the discourse of her rural home church, Linda is participating in the underlife of the Institute. While it does not appear to be antagonistic in this part of the data or even intentional, Linda is essentially refusing to go against community norms in playing the role of advocate. Where the Institute places Linda in the role of “teacher teaching teacher” to become an advocate for change, Linda is voicing her own identity as a normalizing member of her own community.

In another way, these perceptions help in opening discourse avenues in which teachers admit to feeling pressured, fearful, complicit, and isolated. Staying close to the data and

performing focused coding, memoing, and sorting helped me ask the question “Why do some of the rural teacher-participants experience these tensions?” The next category emerged after the third pass through the data as I began to put together the focused category chart on teachers’ perceived tensions in the hybrid discourses of Institute advocacy and community norms. In doing so, it may be easier to explain how teachers like Linda move the piano slowly or not at all.

### **Going It Alone: Tensions in Teacher Autonomy and Isolation**

Perceptions such as Linda’s on the effects of community norms help to better explain the role of discourse communities in rural schooling. Teachers begin to wrangle with the hybridity of third space by acknowledging the difficulties in advocating for rural schools, especially on the borderlines where their perceived desire to advocate collide with rhetorical and *real* situations outside of the Institute. In doing so, the discourse of advocacy within the Institute becomes more centered on epistemology, authority, and agency. This category looks at the discussions of the Institute which include teacher autonomy and isolation in rural schools. In some ways, teachers feel that smaller, rural schools offer the feeling of freedom and aspects of individual pedagogical control. In other ways, teachers recognize that this autonomy can come at the price of a geographical, social, and professional isolation. In some cases, this isolation, and the perceptions that come with them, lead teachers to resist the identity of advocate altogether.

In discussing the benefits of teaching in rural schools, teacher-participants spoke of close-knit and supportive atmospheres in their school districts and feeling a sense of autonomy in planning their lessons in this “laid back” environment. Martha spoke at some length about teacher autonomy in rural schools during our initial interview:

In my experience, it is very autonomous. If you are doing a good job, great; if you’re not doing a good job, nobody really—either one. One person may do this for English; one person may do this for English. Everybody at times is doing their own thing, and there is really not an overarching person or group to come in and

say you will all do this. Whether that's about money or whatever . . . I know in talking with friends of mine that work in districts that are bigger that would never happen. It can be frustrating and it can be liberating, depending on the type of teacher you are. I like teaching there because in some ways I don't have the pressure of some of the teachers in the bigger districts. I take my job seriously. I want the kids that I teach to be as competitive as any kid in Arkansas, wherever you come from—or, actually, in the nation. So, I put myself in places like this, in graduate work, and on and on and on. In fact at one point, I'm like "Gah, I'm so tired of taking classes." But, I don't grow if I don't do that. I'm not really caring so much about myself, but if I don't keep doing that my students are just going to lose out. That's how I feel about teaching there.

While teachers perceive they have the freedom to make pedagogical decisions without the constant scrutiny of administration, this autonomy comes at a cost. Working in small, rural schools places teachers in often lonely roles, roles in which autonomy's merits are placed into question.

While it is clear that Martha feels autonomous in her teaching decisions, she also expresses the isolation this autonomy can render. Martha, like most rural teachers, is part of a small faculty in language arts. Of the five teachers that teach in rural schools, no teacher worked with more than two teachers in their grade level in the same content area. Professional isolation, then, can accompany autonomy. During one of our early whole-group discussion in the Institute audio-video recordings, Martha talks about how a lack of professional collaboration is isolating for her: "I think every now and then a [teacher] that wants to get help, that wants to pursue a level that is higher than the norm . . . then "sharing" is not well received . . . You end up having to go it alone." Frustration arises when too much autonomy leads to perceptions and feelings of isolation. These perceptions of isolation, which are taken up on day two of the Institute, become a conceptual focal point for teachers. Over the course of several days, issues surrounding autonomy and isolation are taken up further, thus complicating the perceptions of autonomy that teachers initially felt.

One facet of this complication of autonomy is that teachers begin to realize that they may face difficulty in sharing their “stories” from the Institute. For example, on day five of the audio-video recordings we discuss our reading of the DeBlase’s editorial on speaking in a “political voice.” Martha discusses how in her graduate work she and other teachers would share stories and ideas. Now, however, she does not feel the same level of professional collaboration where she teaches: “That doesn’t exist where I teach.” This leads Donna to ask, “Whose responsibility does it become? Why does it become my responsibility to locate a workshop that will benefit me as a teacher?” Autonomy and isolation are fully complicated by this point in the data, leaving teacher-participants to tease out their perspectives from this hybridized third space. The multiple perspectives of teachers as advocates, the autonomy and isolations of such a prospect, and the layering of discourse communities create a matrix of constituents and agents with which teacher-participants must consider. In particular, teacher-participants begin to acknowledge the very “real” disconnect between the advocacy discourses of the Institute and the day-to-day settings of their teaching.

Teachers now take up the issue of being “silenced” by fears of “speaking out” in their local school districts and the punitive damages they perceive as results of speaking out. In our discussions of the potential of collective voice that might arise from our work in the Institute, teachers also express their concerns about using their political voices in the contexts of discourse communities outside of the Institute. In the audio-video data, Donna asks the teacher-participants another open-ended question: “I wonder what our collective voice will look like and even what that means exactly. Any thoughts on that?” Issues of feeling “stifled” in their abilities to speak out soon surface. Martha responds: “We do have that common thread . . . in our situation and the people I work with feel like the board is completely out of touch . . . and yet never do they ask us

. . . most times the answer is no . . . That's the voice I'd like to have; that's my biggest frustration." Again, Martha feels stifled by a perception that her school board and administration should serve as the leadership voices of advocacy to the point that she has practical concerns about job security: "I need a job. That stifles my voice." Martha's perception is that the discourse communities of local control serve as "walls" against teachers being their own advocates. She feels like she needs to be "part of a team" and asks, "Can one person make a difference?" Barbara adds, "What just came to me is that we are waiting for someone else to fix it." Donna returns our attention back to the reading of DeBlase, noting the "grassroots" efforts of teachers using their political voices in that context. Still, Donna is aware of the growing wariness of the teachers and makes the point that perhaps "we do need to be careful how we collect our voices." Donna's perception is that the NWP and the Institute serve as our best means of collecting our voices: "I think the power of our voice is through the reading and the writing that we learn and do here."

Teacher-participants then take up the notion of "staying connected" through the Institute. Tim and Donna offer words of inspiration on this matter during our whole-group discussions, yet there is still the perception that the isolating structures of teaching can prohibit that connection. Tim, who has published creative nonfiction and op-ed pieces, offers these words of encouragement to all of us: "I encourage you to get published . . . I'm sick to death of people treating my fellow teachers like less, like fools." Martha's perception is that translating the work of the Institute will be difficult when she goes back to teaching in her rural school: "There is something about both of us doing it together . . . That's the thing that seems to get stifled really quickly is that excitement." Martha brings to the discourse on advocacy her experiences in previous professional development; in so doing, her perceptions are both skeptical and, again,

leery. What is at stake for teacher-participants is two-fold: first, there is the perceived reality that speaking out will make them a pariah in their local school districts and communities and could perhaps result in punitive measures; second, the underlife of their information games reveal a resistance to taking on the public and political identity provided to them from the Institute.

In my follow-up interview with Karen, she spoke about the tensions that the Institute created for teachers in their perceptions of themselves as “regular” teachers and political voices. She observes: “The advocacy in the writing project seemed to be about being public and being published.” Although Karen seems undaunted by this type of advocacy—she feels that she has more confidence to advocate for her at-risk students and wants to create action-research initiatives—the same cannot be said for all of the teacher-participants. For Martha, months later in one of multiple follow-up interviews we shared, she admits to being apolitical: “I’m just not a political person. Part of it is that I don’t think I get the truth from anybody so I just choose not to get involved with any of it all.” Martha’s perceptions do not change in the Institute, or beyond, in that she is untrusting of groups that might speak for her.

Herein lies a paradoxical perception that speaks to the underlife of the Institute. While feeling a sense of autonomy in pedagogical decisions, Martha feels like she cannot speak out alone, nor does she trust “groups” to speak for her. Martha resists the identity role offered via the Institute, choosing instead to remain stifled by what she perceives as discourses and discourse communities that will not support her. Furthermore, Martha clings to her identity as a non-political person as a way of feeling comfortable with her own identity, even at the expense of a political, advocacy role. While Martha speaks out in the Institute about her perceived frustration with isolation and lack of administrative support, her perceptions fit into the contained underlife

that seeks to produce little friction within the organization of the rural public school, despite the third space of the Institute with its own organizational relationships.

### **Implications of Third Space and Hybrid Discourses**

Identity, as a vital component of all social interaction, proves to be essential when considering teachers in their developing roles as advocates in rural schools. In NWP institutes, teachers are asked to reevaluate their own personal and professional identities as writers and teachers of writing. Moreover, the Rural Advocacy Institute creates even more hybridity that ultimately “ups the ante” on the identity formations of teachers. Examining the underlife of such professional development offers to us a way of analyzing and critiquing the ways that teachers negotiate both the disruptive and constrained underlives in the very human social interactions in such professional development.

Figure 5 offers a visual representation of how the third space of the Institute offers new identities and tensions between hybrid discourses for teacher-participants. The third space of the Institute is by no means a linear process. A professional development setting, such as the Rural Advocacy Institute, that allows for complex negotiations of meaning-making and identity formation, likely would resist a formulaic approach to professional development. The figure is designed to demonstrate the constant negotiations through which the teachers must address the tensions they are experiencing in the hybrid discourses. A viewer, then, may regard the central position given to *negotiating hybridity and third space*. These negotiations are both socio-linguistic *and* personal. For instance, the data clearly demonstrate that Martha is a firm believer in professional development, yet she struggles to come to terms with her own role as an advocate in the Institute and in her professional career. Considering the ways that the teacher-participants begin to negotiate (i.e. orally, aurally, intellectually, in writing) the hybrid discourses, such as the

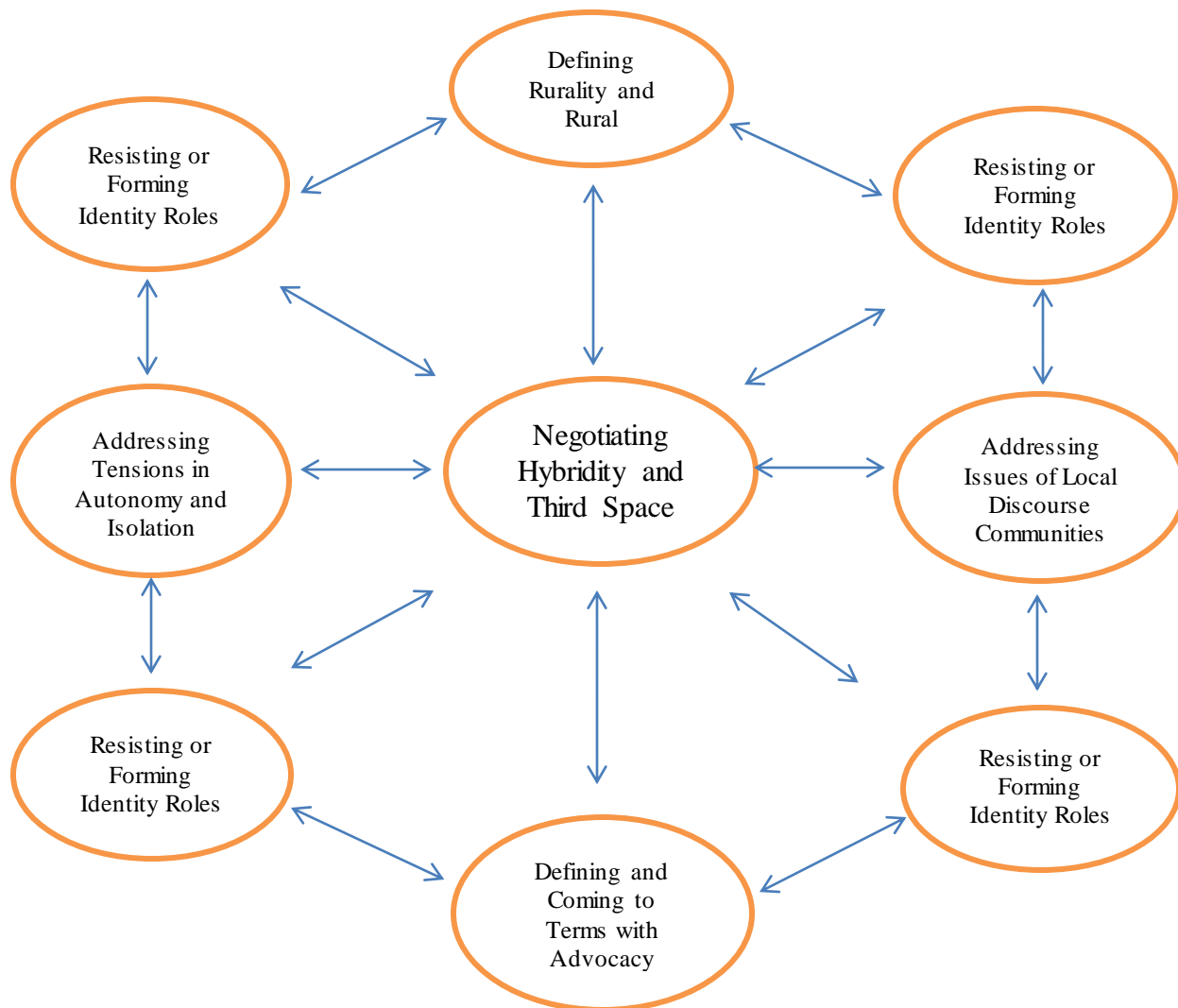


discourse of local district bureaucracy and their developing identities in the Institute, suggests categories by which teachers begin to make sense of their experience. For example, being able to discuss what is meant by rurality appears to be a key moment in which teachers begin to negotiate (again, represented by the hybridity of third space) the potential and problematic phenomena in the contexts of where they teach. Also, the prevalence of *resisting or forming identity roles* as a feature of the figure is linked closely to the underlife. The underlife of the Institute, indeed, helped make this feature of the discourse and third space for “visible” or “audible.”

This chapter seeks to demonstrate the importance of addressing the rich teacher discourses—including the underlife—that live underneath the design of professional development. As Whitney explains, the “talk around writing, and not simply the content or form of the writing itself,” contributes greatly to how teachers view their own roles as writers in the NWP (“Writer, Teacher, Person” 254). Similarly, this chapter makes the case that a focus on participant-teachers’ negotiations of hybrid discourses serves as a valuable research and developmental tool in helping increase the benefits of such professional development. Moreover, studies like this one offer another set of lenses to better understand how rural teachers may struggle in or benefit from NWP institutes with particularly ideological focuses. A grounded theory of professional development such as that of the Rural Institute demonstrates that the third space of the Institute offers hybrid discourses that challenged teachers’ perceptions of their own roles as advocates. At the heart of these tensions, are the complex matrices of local discourse communities and the newly-appropriated rhetorical situations that these “outside” and “real” discourses create for teachers in their perceptions of applying the work of the Institute in their socio-cultural, pedagogical settings. In chapter six, this tension between the discursive and

rhetorical third space of the Institute and those of the teachers' pedagogical settings will be taken up again. This chapter, though, focuses on the discourses of the Institute itself—a third space that reveals both productive and problematic discourse hybridity and the underlife of teachers' negotiations of their own identities as rural school advocates.

**Figure 5. The Third Space of the Rural Advocacy Institute**



## **Chapter Five.**

### **“The spark that kindles the spark in someone else”: Taking Up Voice, Writing Self and the Collective in the Rural Institute**

It is day four of the Rural Institute and it is a Monday. It is only our third meeting at the church, as the previous Institute day (a Friday) was a “writing marathon,” a writing field trip of sorts, in the hilly and artsy tourist town of Eureka Springs. Day four in the audio-video data begins with a demo lesson, or “demo,” a demonstration on the teaching of writing from an NWAWP Teacher Consultant, whom we will call Angelina.

#### **Voice(s) at the Center: The “Demo” as Catalyst**

Angelina teaches high school English at a large high school in one of the four major cities of Northwest Arkansas. Relatively new to the profession, Angelina proves herself enthusiastic and well prepared. Her demo takes place in the congregation hall and is entitled “It’s Not What You Say, It’s How You Say It: Voice and Purpose in Writing.” She uses a PowerPoint for her audio-visual demonstration, as the teacher-participants sit in the pews, writing instruments in hand. Angelina asks us to perform a quickwrite, a form of invention writing that has become a staple of the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project. The quickwrite begins with a “starter” or “prompt,” in this case, “What do you believe in? What gets you fired up?” As we, the participant-teachers, have been instructed on days one and two by Tim and Donna, the initial purpose of the quickwrite is to get writers to list responses that can become writing topics. We make our lists and then share them. From there, writers choose a selection from the list and begin writing in whatever genre they choose and on any aspect of the selection.

On this occasion, we share some of our “beliefs” from our respective lists. Valerie shares, “I believe anyone and everyone can do what they determine in their mind. I actually believe

anything is possible, if one determines in their mind to do it and then perseveres until they arrive at their destination.” Karen shares, “I believe we are losing touch with people.” I share, “I believe we are not having the right conversations.” Clara shares, “I believe in the arts.” Sharing is a key performance in NWP, one that allows for writers to build confidence and allows for teachers to begin teaching teachers about writing.

Angelina, next, reveals her two learning objectives for us and, subsequently, for our students, should we choose to adapt the demo: “1. Students will point out examples of voice; 2. Using your own voice, tell us what voice is and why it is important in writing.” In order to get us talking about voice, Angelina shows us a YouTube video of John Mayer’s song “Belief,” which plays the audio of the song while the lyrics stream on the screen. Prior to viewing and listening, the teachers are given a transcript of the lyrics and asked to annotate the lyrics as the video plays. After the video plays, we discuss our annotations; in doing so, we begin to talk about the voice in the lyrics. More specifically, Angelina asks us to consider our annotations of the “words of the song” to explain the voice in terms of beliefs. For example, Karen states that the lyrics imply that “You really can’t change anyone’s mind on anything . . . By trying to sway them to your way of thinking, they are going to build up a wall, which then leads to division.” She then asks rhetorically, “How do you fight a belief?” Karen next refers to the lyric text with the line “What puts the folded flag in his mother’s hand?/Belief can,” which leads Karen to ask the rhetorical question “Is there anything bigger than himself [the persona behind the voice/Mayer]?” Clara ponders, “How do you influence others? How do you go about doing that and be effective? . . . My youth director used to say, ‘You can’t beat people over the head with the Bible.’” Angelina quotes a passage from the song that “really hits home” for her: “Belief is a beautiful armor/But makes for the heaviest sword.” Angelina asks us to consider our reactions to these lines. Martha

responds, “Belief comes from more than me telling you what to believe . . . Belief is embedded in who you are. It is not a superficial dialogue . . . They are going to reconstruct that dialogue inside themselves.” We are then asked to write a quickwrite for five minutes with the emphasis of using voice to convey our own beliefs. We share our quickwrites. Karen shares a quickwrite about “isolation” and relates it to the millennial generation’s attention to digital devices and her own relationship with her teenage daughter. I share a piece in which I express the belief that we are “not having the right conversations,” relating to the polarity of our current political system and a lack of cross-pollination between differing rhetorics.

After sharing our quickwrites, Angelina refers to Anne Lamott’s chapter on voice from her widely-read and widely-taught book on writing *Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Lamott’s chapter entitled “Finding Your Voice,” like the demo, serves as a catalyst for future discussions of voice in the Rural Institute. The short chapter is intended reading for that day, and a photocopy exists in our Institute binder. Having read Lamott’s chapter, Karen responds, “She [Lamott] says it [voice] is a way of connecting. So, I tell you about my secret, and you are like ‘Holy cow, I have that too,’ and you actually connect with that other person.” Angelina takes up Karen’s close-reading and connects it with Karen’s previous quickwrite piece on isolation and connecting with one another. Angelina makes the remark that “Voice is your home.” Next, Donna contributes by referring us to the voice chapter’s section on “surfaces.” Donna prefaces the excerpt, “There was one part I really like about writing. I think I’m going to share this with my high school kids”: “We do live our lives on surfaces . . . I want writers to plunge through the holes—the holes . . . In those holes and in the spaces around them exist all sorts of possibility, including the chance to see who we are and to glimpse the mystery” (Lamott 197). Donna responds to Lamott’s words by saying, “Some people can do these surfaces and pull

it off, but most of us can't." Donna goes on to read more of the passage which interests her, an excerpt in which Lamott writes about her students attempting to write "surface" voices:

[T]heir stories tend to be lukewarm, and I say to them, Life is lukewarm enough! Give us a little heat! If I'm going to read about a bunch of people who drive Volkswagens and seem to have mostly Volkswagen-sized problems, and the writer shows them driving around on top of the ice, I want a sense that there's a lot of very, very cold water down below. I eventually want someone for someone to crash through. (197)

Donna responds to, or answers, this passage in relation to her own writing and that of her students: "How do I take my Volkswagen-sized problems or everybody's in the same vehicle and make something stand out? How do you clamp on to that? That is to crack the ice, to turn up the heat. Find that voice . . . A lot of times these lukewarm stories, the thing that sets them apart is that voice." Donna's own voice in the discourse of the Institute once again stands out. Here, her perceptions give us both new ways of thinking of voice and complicate our understandings. She continues, "I tell my students, 'Your voice is your fingerprint.'" Donna is able to take this viewpoint of the "unique" voice and relate it to language arts pedagogy: "I know we talk a lot about mentor texts . . . They are great for training wheels . . . Writing is like that. We imitate that balance with training wheels for a while. Then, we take them off slowly, get our balance, and we're off."

I find Donna's metaphor of the bicycle with training wheels as full of potential now as I did as a participant-observer. In the Institute data, I respond saying, "If we take that metaphor further, and we take those training wheels off, muscle memory sets in. You know that old saying, 'Once you learn to ride a bike you never forget.' I think maybe voice is like that." Donna responds to me, to the conversation, "It becomes to where I call it an innate balance . . . It's that diction and that voice and all the cool terms we assign to it . . . It's just deep breathing through

the pen.” Deep breathing through the pen. Donna offers a physiological and meditational view of voice here.

I offer this brief narrative from the audio-video recordings as it proves a fitting starting point for this chapter and is integral to the ways that the participant-teachers began to discuss voice. The data suggest that this moment constituted a sea change in our conversations—where voice becomes a key component of the work we did in the Rural Advocacy Institute. Karen and Angelina’s brief exchange about voice being “a way of connecting” serves to activate our negotiations on the importance of voice in hybrid discourses, individual expression, and writing pedagogy. Furthermore, Donna’s discussion of voice touches upon any number of interesting perceptions of and debates on voice. Is voice, as it is addressed at times in the data, a socio-cultural, interpersonal “way of connecting,” or is it a process of apprenticeship, where one learns from the masters until one finds one’s style? Or, still yet, is it a personal challenge, a meditation, a fingerprint or breath brought out through the pen or keyboard? This chapter will explore questions like these by offering and contextualizing relevant data on voice, writing, and writing pedagogy.

Chapter four of this study shows that the participant-teachers may struggle with newfound understandings of their potential roles as advocates; yet, a consensus evolved among the teachers that a collective voice is needed to foster individual teachers’ confidence in speaking out in public on matters of advocacy. *Voice* is often defined by the teacher-participants in terms of communicating one’s beliefs to others, both in writing and in interpersonal communication. NWP sites, in general, have thrived in helping teachers feel more comfortable at writing and teaching writing, yet this study demonstrates many of the tensions that teachers face in



translating this nascent voice in their Institute writing with a potential public voice that speaks for their profession, to audiences that listen outside of the Institute's church-setting walls.

This chapter seeks to further analyze this disconnect. Therefore, chapter five looks critically at the data on voice in the Rural Institute. In doing so, conceptual categories are unpacked that compare data focused on voice in the teacher fellows' writing and voice as a component of the hybrid discourses teachers encounter in considering advocacy and "connecting" with others. Firstly, the chapter will review literature on approaches to and genres of writing in the NWP, while acknowledging a lack of attention to how teachers in the summer institutes perceive voice in their writing. Next, the chapter will examine ways of thinking about voice in composition studies, particularly in expressivist pedagogy, in order to further build a vocabulary for future discussions of voice. Then, the chapter will explore the theoretical framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of answerability and heteroglossia. In this way, the conceptual categories in this chapter will reflect and come into dialogue with existing conversations about voice, while also laying bare a grounded theory of how the Rural Institute and future NWP summer institutes can address voice in its multiple contexts.

### **Developing Voice in the National Writing Project**

Extant professional and research literature and testimonials from researchers and teacher consultants make the case that much of the success of the NWP stems from its ability to help teachers become more confident as writers, writers who are able to identify and use their personal and public writer's voice. In her work on the NWP, Whitney uses the concept of "reframing" to explain the transformations that follow experience in the NWP institute: "By first interrogating current frames and then adjusting those frames or discovering new frames, the teachers acquired new possible lines of action and new ways of positioning themselves in

relationship to various others” (“Teacher Transformation” 164). Whitney also finds that teacher fellows are able to reframe across multiple lines, or frames, in their transformation. For instance, a teacher is able to reframe herself as a writer, while also reframing herself as a teacher or leader in her school. Whitney further makes the connection between this reframing and the writing process. Reframing leads to a stronger sense of “author-ity,” both in the sense of literally authoring one’s work and “as writers must occupy positions determined not only by their own experience but by the exigencies of audience and genre” (“Teacher Transformation” 168).

Wood and Lieberman write about the “*authorizing* function [emphasis in original]” of the NWP, which “bestows credibility” upon teacher fellows and teacher consultants (269). As Wood and Lieberman observe, “individual voices” are first authorized, and then “a chorus of voices . . . culminates in shared values and professional community” (269-70). Therefore, voice, as it is considered in much of literature on the NWP, is often connected with building professional development opportunities for teachers to find a public professional voice with a community support system. Studies such as Whitney’s and Wood and Lieberman’s demonstrate how the writing done in the NWP leads to a form of personal and professional reframing or authority. This approach aligns well with the goals of the NWP itself: “Teachers who are well informed and effective in their practice can be successful teachers of other teachers as well as partners in educational research, development, and implementation. Collectively, teacher-leaders are our greatest resource for educational reform” (“About NWP”). This voice is a public voice, the type of public voice sponsored by the Rural Institute and other NWP sites that seek to build teachers’ abilities to speak out on relevant issues.

Institute fellows, too, often seek to form a more personal writer’s voice within the social practices of the NWP. In *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and*

*Classroom Teaching*, Lieberman and Wood emphasize the NWP's acceptance of individual differences, perspectives, and voices: "[T]his social practice invites every member of the community [of fellows] to develop and raise his or her voice so that he or she has the potential to make a unique contribution" (23). This invitation to "raise his or her voice" comes with both a challenge and commitment: "When teachers are expected to contribute, they want to make certain they are continually developing something *worthy* to contribute [emphasis in original]" (23). This commitment to contributing to the discourses of the summer institute is both increased and fostered in the social practice of teachers teaching other teachers. Lieberman and Wood endorse this social practice through stressing how the communal aspects of NWP sponsor change in individual voices:

[Teachers] must share what they know and take seriously what others know, the assumption being that everyone has something both to teach and to learn. Most experience greater self-confidence as learners because they know they have capable peers on whom they can depend for advice and guidance . . . Those participating take pride not only in their own accomplishments but also in their profession. (24)

The goal of a shared knowledge, though, might not sufficiently account for *what* is being shared. More specifically, what *type* of writing should teachers be asked to *commit to* and *share*?

Whitney takes up this question in "Writer, Teacher, Person: Tensions between Personal and Professional Writing in a National Writing Project Summer Institute." Whitney foregrounds her study by reviewing critiques of the NWP that the summer institutes focus too much on personal and creative writing genres, such as the memoir and poetry; she also acknowledges that other critics believe that professional writing is too foreign for teachers to successfully develop in these areas (239). In a case study of one teacher's writing and experiences in an NWP summer institute, Whitney finds that personal writing and professional writing create tensions for teachers; however, these tensions "are not only inevitable, they are necessary components of the

transformative experiences for which NWP summer institutes are known” (240). Whitney’s subject for her case study, Laura, for instance, gained confidence in her personal writing through the sharing and feedback she received from other teachers, primary through writing groups, in the institute. This confidence corresponded with an acceptance of her desire to write about personal family matters, or “mom stuff.” This “mom stuff” allowed the case study subject to do her “best writing” and feel more confident professionally: “Laura and her group reframed her sense of self as a writer, a teacher, and a mother to reveal how these selves are not parallel or divergent trajectories, no discrete identities, but rather comprise her whole meaning” (255). Yet, how voice is implicated in this sort of reframing is not taken up explicitly in Whitney’s work. For instance, how is Laura’s “mom stuff” associated with how she or the researcher view voice in Laura’s writing? Voice is often unexplained in the literature on NWP, thus leading to a relatively static conceptual framework for voice. To be fair, though, researching or questioning what is meant by voice is not the primary research goal of Whitney’s work or the work of other NWP researchers. Still, a gap in this research may speak to a need for an understanding of voice as it relates to the NWP. This is not to say that voice is unmentioned in the literature on NWP, especially in popular articles, or that NWP participants neglect to address voice in their goals or reflections.

In fact, NWP came of age in the halcyon days of expressivism, with its privileging of the individual writer’s voice, and NWP sponsored a periodical entitled *The Voice* for ten years from 1996-2006, which gave teachers an avenue for expressing their thoughts on NWP and teaching. In an article on assessing student voice in an initiative sponsored by NWP, Anne DiPardo, Barbara A. Storms, and Makenzie Selland, proclaim that voice “remains central to what teachers seek in forming writing communities in NWP summer institutes” (171). For example, Kerry

Ballast, a teacher consultant with the Central Texas Writing Project, asked her ninth- and tenth-grade students to create digital stories from their in-class memoirs. In doing so, Ballast feels that the results were powerful writing that created a “better definition of voice” for her and that the student’s digital stories “were loaded with compelling images and powerful voice” (“Heart and Voice”). While we can make claims that teachers’ classroom experiences like these are linked to their work in the NWP summer institutes, how that happens or what it looks like is still a work in progress. Furthermore, are teachers’ expectations of voice in their students’ writing like those that they generate in their own writing in the summer institutes?

What might be useful at this juncture in the present consideration of voice is a critical look at how composition theory and pedagogy deliberate on voice. Doing this will offer a vocabulary for talking about voice(s) and the various strata within voice. Voice is a particularly slippery term in the extant literature and is used in a variety of ways. Getting at some of these meanings as they relate to the Institute will be an important first step to unpacking the chapter’s conceptual categories.

### **Expressivist Pedagogy and Rhetoric, Peter Elbow, and Resonant Voices in Writing**

Perhaps a primary reason that voice is not clearly addressed in the literature on NWP is that voice, as a concept in composition studies and pedagogy, is both ubiquitous and slippery. The “voice” of a writer, according to DiPardo, Storms, and Selland, is an “at once vexing and enduring notion, both widely critiqued and persistently indispensable” (170). While the conversation surrounding voice has deep historical roots—one could trace it back to Aristotle’s ethos—we can point to the later twentieth century and the rise of expressivist rhetoric for a more contemporary vantage point. In a review of and argument for expressivist pedagogy, Christopher Burnham explains how expressivism views rhetorical acts:

Expressivism places the writer in the center, articulates its theory, and develops its pedagogical system by assigning highest value to the writer and her imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development and how that development influences individual consciousness and social behavior . . . Expressivist pedagogy encourages, even insists upon, a sense of writer presence . . . This presence—“voice” or *ethos*—whether explicit, implicit, or absent, functions as a key evaluation criterion when expressivists examine writing. (19)

What Burnham’s explanation helps to clarify is the important role voice plays in expressivism.

One could even make the case that voice is the primary goal in what expressivist pedagogy seeks to foster in student writers.

Peter Elbow’s significant contributions to expressivist composition pedagogy and rhetoric place him at the fore of many (if not most) discussions on expressivism and voice. In short, Elbow’s focus on voice is central to his many techniques for teaching student writers. For example, in *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*, Elbow explains how he came to be invested in voice in student writing. He describes a class on autobiography in which he asked students to write fifteen pages a week and then submit selected pages for his reading; this reading was ungraded, but significant to Elbow: “[G]radually, a new and mysterious standard began to emerge. That writing was most fun and rewarding to read that somehow felt most ‘real.’ It had what I am now calling voice. At the time I said things like, “It felt real, it had a kind of resonance, it somehow rang true” (283). Likewise, Elbow admits, “Sometimes I couldn’t identify *anything* special about these passages in style or content,” but the writing “seemed to jump out at” him “as though suddenly the writer had switched to a fresh typewriter ribbon [emphasis in original]” (283). Marked by “strength, resonance, power,” the passages that Elbow identified for students in their writing he believes helped prepared them to use voice more confidently in their writing (283). What exactly, to be more specific, does Elbow mean by *voice*?

Later in *Writing with Power*, Elbow defines voice as writing that carries with it the same elements as oral speech patterns: “Voice . . . is what most people have in their speech but lack in their writing—namely, a sound or texture—the sound of ‘them’” (288). Elbow admits, also, that he is interested in “real voices,” although he admits this is “slippery ground,” (293) likely meaning that he is opening himself to criticisms that expressivism believes in a true, unified self. Undaunted, Elbow continues: “But we seldom use the power of our real voice, and we know it because of when we do—when we get power into our words” (295). This “real voice” is often used by writers and seen (“heard”) by readers in times of crisis or trauma:

It may sound as though I’m describing a case where someone finally screams or has a tantrum. Perhaps. But sometimes that frightening power comes from when a habitual screamer adopts a quiet whisper. Sometimes, that is, a scream is the sound of someone coming out of hiding, but often words from the center are quiet. Their power comes from inner *resonance* [emphasis in original]. (295)

In order to situate, *resonance*, though, it will be helpful to better understand what this resonance is in relation to what it is not.

In his introductory essay to *Landmark Essays: On Writing and Voice*, a collection of essays centered on voice, Elbow unpacks resonance as the most important of “five related meanings that have got caught up in” voice (“About Voice and Writing” xxiv). The first is (1) *Audible voice or intonation in writing*, where authors “automatically *project aurally* some speech sounds on the text [emphasis in original],” which include idiomatic expressions, rhythm, and other nuances related to orality (xxv). This meaning relates to Elbow’s definition in *Writing with Power*, in that traces of speech acts and patterns are key to written voice. Second is (2) *Dramatic voice in writing*, which is akin to the traditional idea of an implied author, not the “true” identity or “true voice.” The third meaning is (3) *Recognizable or distinct voice in writing*. Ultimately wary of criticisms about the *mystique* of “finding one’s voice,” Elbow explains this meaning in

the most practical terms he can. Elbow, for instance, does not ask his students to locate their “distinctive voice,” as “that so often leads to pretension and overwriting” (xxxix). Instead, he works to help them build “comfortable fluency” and to “notice if and where they seem to develop a distinctive *style*—and whether that style seems to be helpful to them [emphasis added]” (xxxix). Fourth is (4) *Voice with authority*—“*having a voice*.” This is writing that goes beyond the notion that a writer was able to place pen to paper; instead, we as writers have “a mind of our own that is willing to offend,” whereas the alternative may be writing that “scarcely counts as real writing (the heart is plucked out)” (xxxiii). Finally, let us return to (5) *Resonant voice or presence*, which Elbow calls “the trouble—the swamp” (xxxiii). This is the voice of “identity” and “authenticity,” yet Elbow maintains that his concept of resonant voice “does *not* assume any particular model of the self as simple, single, unique, or unchanging [emphasis in original]” (xxxiv). Furthermore, Elbow distinguishes resonant voice from *sincere voice*, which he sees as “hollow” expressions that often come from our embedded stances, such as love or political bias. Resonant voice, on the other hand, bridges a “*gap* between utterance and unconscious intention or feeling [emphasis in original]” (xxxiv). The writers that write with resonance, with power, are the writers that let “more of ourselves be behind the words” (xxxv). Yet, our *selves* are not unified, nor “singular,” in that there are differences within our *selves*:

Selves tend to evolve, change, take on new voices and assimilate them. The concept of resonant voice explains the intriguing power of so much speech and writing by children: they wear their unconscious more on their sleeve, their defenses are often less elaborate. Thus they often get more of themselves into or behind their discourse. (xxxvi)

We can try out parts of ourselves in writing, vetting them against what we know is a voice full of “the body’s resources,” our “weight” (xxxvi). Elbow admits to, even revels in, his use of metaphors for voice. However, Elbow concludes that, following Aristotle, “we are not persuaded



by implied author as such—that is, by the creation of a dramatic voice that sounds trustworthy; we are only persuaded if we believe that dramatic voice is the voice of the actual speaker or author” (xlii). It appears, therefore, that ethos is essential to resonance and, so is *listening*: “We don’t buy a used car from someone just because we admire their dramatic skill in creating a fictional trustworthy voice. If ethos is nothing *but* implied author, it loses all power of persuasion [emphasis in original]” (xlii). What Elbow is referring to here, I believe, is that it takes a *rhetorical listening* to identify ethos in a speaker’s voice, what he might call “presence” or “power.” Burnham clarifies this view of resonant voice: “Elbow connects resonance with self-identity and argues that voice in writing is a locus for power” (30). This power functions rhetorically and in the form of empowering the body, the *self*, “behind the words” (Burnham 30).

Elbow, though, anticipates criticisms of expressivism related to the “nature of self.” Expressivist rhetoric and pedagogy has been criticized for having a Romantic ideal of the unified, solitary writer. Therefore, Elbow addresses both the *sentimental* voice—“the voice that feels like me or mine”—and *sophisticated voice*—“thinking of discourse as taking on the roles and voices of others” (xlv). In discussing the relationship between these contexts, Elbow advises writers to “play” with voices in “a gradual development and enrichment of voice”:

In one case it is a matter of using, trusting, and “playing in” (as with an unplayed violin) a voice that feels like one’s own—and seeing it become more flexible. In the other one case it is a matter of trusting oneself to use unaccustomed or even alien voices in a spirit of play and non-investment—and seeing those voices become more comfortable and owned. (xlvi)

We can see, then, that Elbow moves beyond the unified notion of the writer (likely due to criticism) to incorporate an author self that is “flexible” enough to play in and pick up an array of voices.

In Elbow's expressivist pedagogy, voice is not a solitary function. Elbow makes the claim that a writer can "do justice to both positions" through considering the traces of "the mouths and other voices" of others in writing. Here Elbow quotes Mikhail Bakhtin in "Discourse in the Novel":

The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to dialogical consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. (qtd, in Elbow, "About Voice and Writing," xlv)

Elbow highlights Bakhtin's concepts of *heteroglossia* and *polyphony* in this passage. Bakhtin's heteroglossia refers to an other's language, speech, or works, often appropriated into written expression. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin explains how language exists amidst the heteroglossia: "[L]anguage is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past . . . between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth" (291). Therefore, discourse is "multi-voiced," or polyphonic, a concept Bakhtin borrows from music and accentuates his view that writers/speakers and audiences/listeners must *listen* for the polyphonic heteroglossia. As the data points out, voicing and listening are vital counterparts in the multi-voiced dialogue of the Institute.

With these concepts in mind (or in ear), it is necessary to examine Bakhtin's theoretical implications for voice in composition study in order to better build the grounded theory of this chapter. In going back to the literature, Bakhtin's expression of *answerability* became a theoretical framework in which to better analyze the perceptions and uses of voice by the participant-teachers in the Rural Institute. As argued later in the chapter, conceptual categories

developed in relation to voice in this study and provide insight into the multi-faceted nature of the concept.

### **Hello, Is There Anybody in There? Bakhtin, Answerability, and Voice**

Voice, in its most traditional sense, has been commonly thought of as the writer's tone or style (diction, syntax) or persona. Yet, poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches to composition theory have complicated the once static notions of voice by questioning the role of the author/writer, and subsequently his/her voice. Bakhtin's concept of *answerability* is one that has not garnered as much attention as his concepts of heteroglossia, polyphony, and dialogism. This seems conspicuously odd given that the intertextual carcass of Bakhtin's influence has scarcely bits left on its bones. One explanation for the lack of incorporation of answerability into composition studies is the complex and open-ended nature of the concept. In "Waiting for Answerability: Bakhtin and Composition Studies," Helen Rothschild Ewald offers an account of Bakhtin's theory with some brief practical applications for the writing classroom. Rothschild takes an *externalist* stance toward Bakhtin's work; externalists "reject [the] schism between inside and outside, and espouse a holistic perspective, where utterance as an act exists *only* within the sphere of dialogic and public interactions . . . In other words, all understanding is 'on-line' and situational" (336). Rothschild offers succinct, and self-admittedly reductive, accounts of the mutable nature of answerability: "To begin with, the notion of answerability carries with it a pun. To answer is not only to be (ethically) responsible, but also to respond" (340).

It is important to unpack answerability a bit more here. To start, what does it mean to be "ethically responsible" to utterances? In Ewald's view, this means that the individual (both creator and spectator) must accept the "double-voicedness" of answerability and become "responsible" for answering a work. Furthermore, answerability-as-response is another way of

viewing answerability, which Ewald explains in relation to authorship: “Answering is authoring. Authoring is responding” (341). The author is in a constant state of “becoming” and must be “open” to becoming a writer in the social sense. Ewald sees potential for this attitude toward answerability in the classroom:

If we were to use Bakhtin in discussing with our students what it means to be a writer, then, we would only have to emphasize the “collective” nature of authorship and the historicity of the language and thought writers employ, but we would also have to give students a sense of the “openness” of their “individual” utterances. (341)

Answerability views authorship as socially situated, as does social-constructivist theory, while also offering a focus on individual responsibility (à la expressivism).

Situating Elbow’s approaches to voice in dialogue with Bakhtin—although, they exist always already in dialogue in Bakhtinian terms—gives the conceptual categories of the grounded theory of this chapter their theoretical framework. The grounded theory methods developed these categories through constant comparison of the data. Voice could not be denied as a driving element in the data related to perceptions of writing in the Institute (as I could not deny it in staying close to the data and in coding). The categories demonstrate a heteroglossia and polyphony of individual voices on speaking about voice in writing and in their lives and the lives of their students.

### **Teachers’ Perceptions of Themselves as Writers and Voice**

Overall, the participant-teachers did not see themselves as writers coming into the Institute. Early in the Institute, it was common for teacher-participants to view themselves in limited ways as writers, yet all wanted and expected to find a writer’s voice in the professional development. In the initial interviews, I asked each participant-teacher to describe herself as a writer and why she wanted to be a part of the Institute. Barbara, for example, who was already a

teacher consultant from the 1990s, expressed her need to re-connect her personal identity with writing: “I wanted to get back in touch with the writer inside of me. I put that on Twitter: ‘Ooh, I’m in the National Writing Project getting back in touch with my writer self. Hello, writer self.’ For Martha, this view of the “writer self” came with some anxiety, as demonstrated when I asked her how she viewed herself as a writer coming into the Institute: “Sad, is a word . . . I think part of it is just practice. You’ve got to practice to it. I’m basic, just the facts kind of person. I haven’t learned to do the embellishments and all that. Some people just do it, you know? And I just . . . I think because it’s not something I practice all the time.” Here, Martha seems to be conflating two characteristics of writer and voice: 1) The individual writer self; and 2) the linguistic “embellishments” of voice thought to be the realm of diction, syntax, and style. While Martha feels as if she is less prepared than some other fellows, the reference to “practice” acknowledges a belief that writing can be taught. Linda expresses a similar view of her own writer self when entering the Institute: “Kind of green . . . I don’t have the experience of other writers in the class.”

Also, in their initial interviews, voice is not a primary concept or word that the teacher-participants use to talk about their own writing. In fact, in the transcripts of the initial interviews, only Barbara uses the term “voice” to talk about her own writing, although this mention of voice is related to composition courses in college: “maybe that’s when I developed my voice.” Through comparing all of the data from the Institute, however, the differences are remarkable. The follow-up interviews give an indication of these differences, as the teachers spoke about voice with more conviction and clarity:

*Clara:* One thing I got out of it this summer is finding a voice and having something to say.

*Karen:* I learned—I guess I already knew it—that everyone has a voice. I think that’s something that education is squeezing out of children. It’s five paragraphs, you know, it all sounds mechanical.

*Valerie:* It inspired me and gave me more of a love for writing. I just wanted to find my own writer’s voice and help my students find their own writer’s voice

During the audio-video recordings of the Institute and in the follow-up interviews, the participant-teachers speak of voice, as it pertains to writing and dialogue, in varied and sometimes contradictory ways. As demonstrated in the opening sequence of this chapter, from the audio-video recordings, Donna, the lead teacher, sees voice in writing in individual terms, as “breath” or as “an innate balance.” Having developed voice as a category in my first focused coding, I asked teachers in my follow-up questions about voice. I purposely did not include “in writing” in these questions to see how teachers would think of the term holistically. Karen responded in terms similar to those given by Donna earlier in the Institute: “I would define voice as individual perspective and nuance. Everyone perceives something slightly different, but how you express that is their voice.” I followed up with this question, “What are some things in the Institute that we did that helped you develop voice or develop ways of thinking about voice?” Karen responded, “Everyone came out of things with different perspectives. All of it was amazing. I appreciated it in a whole new way.” Valerie, in the follow-up interview, described voice this way: “Your writer’s voice is your own style and your own creative way of writing . . . Your thinking process, your emotions, your likes and dislikes, I think would all play a part in your writer’s voice.”

These perceptions on voice speak to how the Institute supported or stimulated teachers’ perspectives of voice in individual terms. In “Voice in the Context of Literacy Studies,” Melanie Sperling and Deborah Appleman review varying theoretical viewpoints on voice. The perspectives of Karen and Valerie, for example, would be classified in what Sperling and

Appleman call *voice as individual accomplishment*. According to the reviewers, in this view, voice takes the following meanings:

[T]he ability to write with voice and to imbue reading with voice demonstrates not only a particularly threshold of linguistic accomplishment but also a threshold of identity achievement, with identity understood to be firmly centered in the individual. Although individuals' linguistic accomplishments may be much clearer to identity than their identity achievements . . . the phrase *finding one's voice* implies the accomplishment [emphasis in original]. (71)

This perspective has been associated with Romantic, often expressivist, ideals and has come under criticism in literature in rhetoric and composition, as noted earlier in this chapter.

Nonetheless, the data support the notion that we must take this viewpoint seriously, as teachers of writing in K-12 settings often keep this perspective close to their identities as writers. Still, this is not the only way that the teachers' perceived voice in writing. Accompanying this perspective of individual accomplishment in voice, comes an understanding that voice is not expressed or spoken in a vacuum.

### **Voice as a “Way of Connecting”**

Throughout line-by-line coding, focused coding, constant comparison of coded data, and memo writing, the category of voice as a “way of connecting” proved to be a core category in the building of theoretical levels of understanding. This category is sustained by the data in two key ways. Firstly, participant-teachers talk about voice in relation to their students' abilities to be able to develop voice in their writing and in their lives. In most cases, the value placed on student voice(s) is linked to participant-teachers concerns that their students are not able to—or do not feel able to—discover or use their own voices. Secondly, participant-teachers express the desire to connect with the voices of other participants, a collective voice, through the Rural Institute in order to speak to “outside” constituents.

One code in this category that stands out is the teachers' desire to help their own students gain a clearer and stronger voice in their writing. Linda, for example, in our initial interview, expresses a viewpoint that her rural students can use voice, in writing and in recognizing it in reading, as a means of "getting out" their voices to a larger world of listeners and "opening up" a world for the students to inhabit:

So, if I can open up the world through books and writing, where the student will find a voice. Originally they said, oh well, the only opportunity for me to get out of this town is the military. Well, now, if I want to go to New York and be in theater and be on Broadway, I can do it. Give them the confidence in themselves and help them discover who they are and their voice.

Karen, a staunch advocate for her at-risk students, offers another perspective in her follow-up interview, on how she came to understand voice as it relates to her students:

I had a goal, and my goal for my students is I want to give them a voice. I want them to find their own voice. I didn't really know how to do that, but they need to be able to speak. They need to be able to write and of course they need to be able to think out a problem . . . Mostly, my students feel—again, I'm projecting—but I think they feel a little disenfranchised when they are at the big school. Then when they come to use it's more of a community. I want them to get their voice back.

Based on Karen's contributions to the Institute and the study, it is apparent that she is not projecting upon her students as much as *voicing* actual opinions of her students. Again, as with Linda, we see a teacher feeling compelled to better understand voice in writing so that she can extend this understanding to her students the following year. Where Linda sees her students as rural students who are culturally and geographically isolated, Karen views her at-risk students as socially and institutionally isolated. This type of voice is what Elbow calls *voice with authority* or *having a voice*. In relation, Linda and Karen want their rural and disenfranchised students to be able to go anywhere or speak to anyone with a voice, as if to say "Here I am." In both scenarios, these teachers view voice as a mitigating form of expression with the potential to break down geographical and socio-cultural barriers.



In addition, teacher-participants see voice as a way of connecting to other individual voices in the Institute. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Karen is the first to make this perspective known in the discourse during Institute meetings: “Voice is a way of connecting.” This perspective serves to expand the other teachers’ notions of voice, as more than the sum of linguistic features or individual accomplishment. Sperling and Appleman characterize this conceptualization of voice as *voice as social/cultural accomplishment*: “While some theorists emphasize voice as a linguistic or rhetorical expression of the true self, others emphasize that voice is inevitably shaped, informed, and mediated by social and cultural factors. Put another way, voice is essentially the result of a social and cultural mediation” (73). If participant-teachers are seeking to understand voice in ways that they can pass along to their disenfranchised or isolated students, then they are attempting to take up voice as socially mediated *as well as* individual accomplishment.

In talking about voice as a way of connecting, even if “socially-mediated” is not a common phrase in the data, participant-teachers are forming a writer self in dialogue with other voices. Moreover, these perceptions of a socially-mediated voice are akin to Bakhtin’s concept of answerability, particularly in what Ewald describes as answerability-as-response. In this way, the teachers are perceiving that the author is in a constant state of “becoming” and must be “open” to becoming a writer in the social sense. This “becoming,” though, does not appear to happen without the individual writer *becoming open* and more comfortable with sharing their own writing, writer’s voice, and writer’s stories. While teachers began to see the social implications of and social relationships in voice, the data support also the perception that individual perceptions of one’s writing are integral to opening up. The next category, *Cathartic Writing and Voice*, seeks to better understand how personal, emotional, and therapeutic writing

function in the Institute and the increasingly-complex ways teachers develop their perceptions of voice in writing.

### **“It’s like swearing at God”: Cathartic Writing and Voice**

Once again, it is essentially common knowledge by those who have a basic understanding of the NWP that teachers come away from the summer institutes more invigorated and confident in their writing. Anne Whitney has studied this phenomenon of “transformation” in her work and finds that these transformations are the results of reframing perspectives on writing and teaching *and* taking on new roles as writers. Whitney explains the ways that teachers take on these roles: “The trying on of roles occurred both in teachers’ interpersonal interactions with other teachers at the Institute and in the sense that writing always involves taking on a role or persona” (“Teacher Transformation” 170). The data in this study not only support these findings but delve into these transformations in the focal area of voice development and expression. Furthermore, this study finds that one of the “roles” that teachers take on is the role of personal life expression. To put it another way, teachers in the Institute were able to develop voice and make connections with other voices through the personal, reflective writing that took place in the Institute. Primarily, teachers perceive their ability to take on new roles and develop their own voices as enabled by writing that expresses emotion, often in the form of related personal tragedies or concerns. Karen explains this perspective in her follow-up interview: “You’ve got to be honest with yourself and say exactly what you feel. Some people will swear in their writing, but sometimes it’s ok to do that. We are told not to do that. It’s like swearing at God, but sometimes you do.”

The benefits of therapeutic writing related to trauma have been broadly chronicled. Ranging from psychology to composition studies, writing has been seen as a means of working

through personal issues by the author. By reviewing literature on the effects of writing on physical and psychological health, Joshua Smyth, Nicole True, and Joy Souto explain a pivotal feature of writing as it relates to therapy:

One broad explanation for the effects of writing is that the act of converting emotions and images into words changes the way the person organizes and thinks about the trauma. By integrating thought and feelings, the person can more easily construct a coherent narrative of the experience. Once in narrative formation, the event can be summarized, stored, and assimilated more efficiently, thereby reducing distress associated with the traumatic experience. (162)

The open-ended, supportive nature of the writing environment of the NWP often leads to teachers writing about personal matters. Often, as indicated in the data of this study, those matters are related to difficult emotional events in the writer's life.

The Rural Institute seemed to bring out this type of writing from the teachers. The topics written about throughout the first two weeks covered family struggles, lost loved ones, and financial woes, to name only a few. The case can be made that the Institute privileged and initiated this type of writing. On day one of the Institute recordings, Tim and Donna spoke to us about the "author's chair," where readers sit apart in a plush chair and read their work. Tim's explanation of the common effects of the chair on its readers and listeners takes on the air of a convert: "This is not unlike proselytizing. This is not unlike sharing the Gospel." The tone set by the introduction to writing in the Institute is that it is fully acceptable to write about any personal matter or concern. Donna adds to Tim's explanation, "I had a meltdown in the chair." From day one, the teacher consultants seek to offer a safe haven for the teacher fellows to open up and feel accepted no matter what they choose to write and share. The teachers responded to this safe environment by sharing heartfelt and some traumatic events. Most remarkable was Valerie's tearful quickwrite addressed to her first husband who had died in a car accident. "How could you leave me?" she writes, "Our children miss you so much." No eye is dry after her reading. Day

two brought out these similar types of emotions from several of the participants. Tim, who seemed committed to getting us to open up as best we could, started our day with a quickwrite with this purpose: “Write about the last time you saw an old friend.” Karen’s quickwrite response that she shared, too, was tearful, as she wrote about seeing her aunt for the last time. Karen would remark that day, drying the tears, “I never really talked about Aunt \_\_\_\_\_ before.”

Yet, what do we make of this type of expressive, personal writing in the Institute? How does it relate to other categories on voice? In terms of pedagogy, writing about emotional issues offers teachers a threshold to traverse in their own writing, thus making it easier to serve their students. Martha’s comments in the initial interview reflect this phenomenon:

I can’t get in front a class full of students and say, “I want you to write”—and this and that—“but I’m not going to do it”—because, you know—“I don’t need to or I can’t”—or whatever. I have to be willing to put myself out there if I’m asking them to do it. So, that’s kind of why I nervously signed up for this. I knew it was going to be tough, you know, for me. Probably been a little bit tougher than I thought. Um . . . I think I’ll take some good things back.

Writing in personal ways serves as a means of opening up voice, of *becoming* in Bakhtinian terms. Furthermore, it models for teachers how students might feel in beginning to write in these ways. Valerie, for instance, spoke about feeling “like a student” who might have trouble coming up with ideas for quickwrites.

Writing about emotional or traumatic issues also enables teachers to find and experiment with voice. Valerie, who wrote about the traumatic experience of losing her husband, was particularly candid on this matter. After developing *writing as catharsis* as a conceptual category, I asked Valerie in our follow-up interview about the effects of cathartic writing on her perceptions of voice. She responded, “Writing can be therapy.” I followed up with a question, “How was writing in the Institute therapeutic for you?” Valerie stated, “I think we lock a lot of

things away. We experience things in life and lock them away. I think you could write about those and it be a healing process.” Feeling equal parts inquisitive and apprehensive, I asked Valerie about her perceptions of how writing about the loss of her husband affected her in the Institute:

*JA:* You’ve had so many tough moments; I could only try to understand what that was like for you. Writing about these tragic moments; I almost hesitant to ask. What was that like writing about that?

*Valerie:* You relive the moment. But while you are reliving the moment, I think it is part of a healing too, to be able to get that out. I think our students need that as well. Although the last week of school, I had my students write “I am” poems. I learned more about my students that way than I had all year long. This next year I’m going to do it in the beginning of school. I had two papers that I had to turn into the counselor. One was about suicide and another was about a person coming at my student with a knife. The one student wrote about trying to commit suicide since she was five years old. It’s not going to prevent me because I think students need healing, but I will tell them at the beginning of the year that if they write about those types of things I will have to share it with the counselor by law. They may need that help. They may need reaching out.

Clearly, the experience of writing about traumatic events helped Valerie see benefits for reaching her students through writing. Valerie also links her own writer’s voice in these cathartic writing moments to how she feels she should teach: “Now, I’m writing to find topics to connect with the students. I think if you feel connected to something you will be a better writer. You will be able to express your emotion and your ideas better if it’s something you like and it’s something that you had experience with.” We see, here, Valerie acknowledging the perception that the writer’s voice is personal but also in flux. Despite the risks associated from writing and sharing about personal tragedies with peers, Valerie, several months after the Institute, feels strongly that therapeutic writing is critical for voice and for helping her and her students explore those voices.

This personal, cathartic writing has effects on the teacher-participant’s perceptions of voice in writing. This type of writing helps them “find their voice,” and writing about “what they

feel” helps teachers better understand the risks and rewards for student personal writing in the classroom. However, how does this perception relate back to the “connecting” aspects of voice? We see in the next conceptual category how sharing and *listening* are vital components of making this cathartic writing, and teachers individual voices, as part of a socially-mediated voice.

### **“Telling a story is telling a life”: Sharing, Listening, and Resonant Voice**

The NWP places a premium on teachers teaching teachers. The social practices of the summer institutes encourage, essentially demand, that each participant contribute in writing and the sharing of that writing (recall the image of the “author’s chair”). Lieberman and Wood explain how approaching each colleague as a potentially valuable contributor adds to the collegiality of NWP:

It is one thing to speak of a participatory community rhetorically and quite another to create a community in which every member actually *does* participate. As good writing teachers try to draw on the authentic voices and experiences of potential writers, the NWP approaches every teacher as if what he or she thinks and has experienced matters. (22)

The Rural Advocacy Institute was no different in its approach in creating a community of writers, a community of voices, where every teacher was asked to contribute and share.

Sharing was modeled early in the Institute in the form of reading our quickwrites and became a common subject in the shared discourse. The teachers quickly became used to learning from each other through shared writing and individual stories. In one example from the Institute recordings, Karen was asked to design a quickwrite, as we all were asked to, and, in doing so, Karen asked the group to write about which historical figure we would care to have dinner with and why. These quickwrite historical choices ranged from Jesse James (the Western outlaw not the motorcycle enthusiast) to Benjamin Franklin. As was our wont, the discussion moved to how

we could incorporate a quickwrite such as this one into our classrooms. The subject of storytelling emerged as the underlying theme of this discussion. Tim asks us to consider, “What is the power of stories?” To which, Karen replies, “It’s all about relationships . . . Telling stories is telling a life.”

Indeed, much telling of lives took place in the Institute in the form of the myriad stories and pieces of writing shared between the teacher-fellows and teacher consultants. The response groups, where we worked in smaller numbers on the writing we would produce for submission and presentation, allowed for another variation of this storytelling. In both the whole-group and response group settings, the emphasis was entirely on *listening* to writing, as opposed to reading writing. Listening, it appears from the data, is as important to the writing and social practices of the Institute as putting pen to paper. Karen reflects upon this in her follow-up interview. As she spoke about finding her own voice, I asked her pointedly how she came to find that voice. She responded, “By listening to everyone else and through writing.” I was somewhat startled by this response, as I had yet to consider how listening was functioning in the Institute data. So, I asked her to elaborate, to which she explained, “There’s no right way; there’s just the way. Your writing is your writing. It’s like a painter. I’m going to see one thing, and you’re going to see it another way. It gave you permission to have your own voice, if that makes any sense.” In reviewing this small piece of data, I came to two important realizations. Firstly, without having read any literature on NWP, Karen is supporting research, including that of Whitney, which shows that the summer institutes give writers “permission to write.” In addition, I came to understand that what Karen is taking up from the work of the Institute is what Elbow means by resonance. By listening, *aurally* and *openly*, teacher-participants are better able to identify this resonant voice and, therefore, become more flexible and insightful responders to other’s writing

and voices. Karen also appears to have made the connection between the benefits of listening in the Institute and her students' need to develop those same aural and receptive skills. When we talked in the follow-up interview, Karen had tried reading texts aloud and response groups with her students, with varying degrees of success: "If I talk to them they talk, but they don't want to write it down. There is a need for active listening. They don't have these skills. They are not taught to actively sustain listening. When I show slam poetry, it's over their heads. Not that they can't understand it, but they can't listen to it."

I recall in this interview *sense-ing* (as the only way I can explain it even now) that Karen was making connections between voice, writing, and listening that I had yet to reconcile. In the following excerpt from the transcript, I attempt to follow up with this sense:

*JA:* You've said in the Institute that voice is a "way of connecting." Could you talk about this?

*Karen:* The way that you use words resonates with people. It connects with something within them. If there isn't that connection, they are not going to listen to you. Think of Churchill. The way that Churchill spoke inspired an entire generation. I think that personality in your writing is the spark that kindles the spark in someone else.

For this study, I believe that Karen's perceptions helped me to clarify some of the conceptual connections I was finding in the data. In going back to the literature, I was struck by the resemblance of what Karen says in the previous excerpt and what Elbow says about resonant voice. Karen is explaining how listening to others share their writing and offer their own voices helps, as Elbow explains, bridge the gap between utterance and unconscious intention or feeling. Furthermore, Karen is espousing a perception of dialogue that carries with it traces Bakhtin's answerability—she is actually answering Bakhtin. The Rural Institute, as with other NWP summer institutes, creates a space in which teachers become writers who become listeners who then *answer* other uses of language and discourse.



Not to sound glib, but the case that is made in the grounded theory on voice in this study is that the NWP not only privileges the concept of *teachers teaching teachers* but also *writers listening to writers*. In this way, voice is a means to create, in Karen's words, the "spark that kindles the spark in someone else." This chapter offers grounded evidence of Bakhtin's concept of answerability. In the NWP summer institutes, teachers are given the opportunity, nay the *responsibility*, to be both speaker/writer and listener/responder. Thus, one's personal resonant voice is more than navel-gazing idealism or romanticism speaking through writing; it is another of the heteroglot of socially-mediated voices that must be answered.

## Chapter Six.

### **In the Highways, In the Hedges: From Grounded Theory to Practice**

The National Writing Project has prided itself in and has been applauded for its forty years of providing quality and practical professional development for K-12 teachers in writing and writing pedagogy. This study clearly supports findings that indicate this success. In the responses from the follow-up interviews, teachers spoke candidly and positively about their experiences in the Rural Advocacy Institute:

*Clara:* The confidence of it. The one thing that I loved about the Writing Project is it took you past academic writing. It allowed you to write something that someone else might benefit from reading. People like to read things. A lot of people do. Why aren't we writing for that audience?

That's what the writing project left me with. We are all writers. We aren't just teachers teaching writing. Why am I not writing stuff I want to write? When I'm not angry or angsty about things, I have a pretty funny outlook on life. People tell me that when I'm telling stories that I could write a book.

*Karen:* We thought deeply. As an adult even, it's like I didn't have permission to do that. Does that make sense? If you just sit down and start writing, people think you aren't doing something. For three weeks, I had permission to think and write.

*Valerie:* I feel confident as a writer. I'm still looking to improve as a writer and improve my writer's voice.

As a participant, I, too, was thoroughly challenged to write in creative genres that I had not written in years and was able to parlay this newfound confidence into subsequent academic writing. However, as this study shows, a critical and honest appraisal of the Rural Advocacy Institute, and perhaps NWP at large, can illuminate areas of both success and possible improvement.

This final chapter is not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the Rural Advocacy Institute per se; instead, it intends to further braid the theoretical strands of chapters five and six and to consider some of the problematic and productive aspects of the findings. In doing so,

the chapter will consider ways that future summer institutes or K-12 professional development sites, like the Rural Advocacy Institute, might incorporate the findings. In addition, this chapter will further explore the third space of the Institute in terms of answerability. Finally, the chapter and study will end with some implications for K-12 rural teacher advocacy, professional development in writing, and the future of the profession and NWP.

This study is not the first to describe the NWP in terms of third space, but it is the first to reconfigure that description. Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood write of NWP as a third space, a space removed from the spaces of local concerns (local schools) and institutions (universities):

[NWP] foregrounds the everyday, real concerns of educators against a larger horizon of educational issues, and then helps to build knowledge and expertise and distribute them where they are needed. The “third space” of the NWP, then, is both local and remote, grounded in and yet transcendent of particular institutions, and facilitative of both formal professional development experiences and informal connections. (88)

This study (and I) recognize the benefits of looking at NWP as third space in this way. Most notably, I find useful Lieberman and Wood’s focus on the “in between” nature of NWP. This sort of liminal, “out of time” view of third space is similar to Homi Bhaba’s concept. However, Lieberman and Wood do not refer specifically to Bhaba’s work, nor do they focus on the linguistic and cultural phenomena so pivotal to Bhaba’s cultural philosophy. Beyond clarifying the differences between Lieberman and Woods’ study and my own, I discuss the authors’ concept to demonstrate the value in looking “closer” at the summer institute in terms of its socio-cultural and discursive phenomena. Again, this is not intended to imply that the authors’ methods or analysis are flawed in any fashion. Instead, I mean to say that the focus of this study is on more specific discourses (Gee’s behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking) within the sociolinguistic and sociocultural third space of the Rural Institute. The data and grounded theory of this study find that such a viewpoint offers researchers a different set of lenses to judge

*why* and *how* teachers may (or may not) develop identities as advocates or develop voices in their writing and professional lives.

Furthermore, this study identifies a possible disconnect between teachers' perceptions of their "writer's voice" and their identities as advocates for their rural schools. Through identifying how underlife exists and functions in the Institute, the study is better able to account for formulations and disruptions of teachers self-perceptions of *teachers as advocates*. Teachers, like Martha, are afraid of speaking out for fear of real, practical concerns (e.g. losing one's job). It is beyond the scope of this study to quantify and qualify how these fears are played out in rural school districts. Nonetheless, the discourses of the teacher-participants call for more research in this area, as it relates to NWP and professional development. While teachers respond to thinking of advocacy in new ways, and often for the first time, the data do not support that all of the participant-teachers will advocate for their rural students and their profession in clear ways. In fact, the only teacher to offer a perspective that shows a proactive approach to advocacy is Karen, who does not teach at a rural school.

How, then, can we reconcile this with the data that demonstrate positive teacher perceptions in relation to voice? Again, thinking of voice in terms of answerability sheds light on this question and the disconnect between advocacy and voice. The case can be made that these two phenomena *simply* are not related. However, research from other NWP sites, suggests that teachers are able to take on public voices in writing pieces such as op-ed or professional presentations. Why, then, do the Rural Institute teachers appear to struggle with taking on such roles? Is it a question of genre? Perhaps not, as the op-ed was discussed as a feasible option for advocacy. The grounded theory of this study maintains that *voice* is the linchpin. In analyzing the conceptual categories related to voice, it is clearer that fellows in the Rural Institute perceive that

they develop resonant voices and are *responsible* for answering discourses of the “other.” In this way, future summer institutes or in-service professional development seminars can capitalize on this phenomenon.

Mary Juzwik writes about how an “ethics of answerability” foregrounds the unique and vital responsibility of individuals in text production. Juzwick looks specifically at students in classrooms in explaining her view of the “new direction” for literacy research: “Bakhtin’s theory of answerability focuses on the everyday processes of becoming a certain kind of person and the good or harm that comes to oneself through responding to others in certain ways” (553).

Juzwik’s view of the classroom has significant implications for NWP institutes. While NWP fellows are not “students” in the traditional sense of the word, they are wrestling with similar issues in identity formation and power relations. Future research can be done to ascertain if or how the theme of answerability can be incorporated into professional development, especially among rural teachers. Two possible future implications in point: 1) Fellows might be asked to write about their experiences in their rural schools in the same ways that they are asked to write about their family or past experiences; 2) Another possible avenue for research or professional development is to take rural institutes *to* the rural schools and areas. This geographical and rhetorical setting could add to teachers’ abilities to reflect upon and *access* their local discourses.

This study and extant literature given throughout demonstrate NWP’s effective approach to helping teachers identify resonant voices. Future NWP sites that wish to focus on rural literacies and advocacy could also bring in the voices and discourses of their local students and residents to add to the third space of NWP. In this way, NWP and professional development in literacy can remain grounded *and* able to *answer* the voices and hybrid discourses of where they teach and with whom they work and serve.

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## Appendix A. Initial Research Interview Protocol (June 2013)

### *Section 1: Personal Background.*

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me. I'd like to begin by asking some questions about who you are as a person and teacher.

- 1) What can you tell me about your personal background? Where did you grow up and where were you educated?
- 2) Where do you teach and how long have you taught there? What are your thoughts and feelings about where you teach? Administration, students, parents, community?
- 3) Coming into this Institute, how would you describe yourself as a person and teacher?

### *Section 2: The Rural Advocacy Institute and Writing*

I'd like now to briefly focus on the Institute itself and what you hope are some of the outcomes of the experience.

- 1) Could you tell why you decided to attend this institute?
- 2) Coming into the Institute, how would you describe yourself as a writer?
- 3) What do you hope to learn about writing from this institute?
- 4) What do you hope to learn about teaching and writing that may translate to the Common Core State Standards?

### *Section 3: Rural Schools and Advocacy*

- 1) What does teaching in a rural school mean to you?
- 2) What challenges do you think teachers, students, administrators, parents, and communities face when it comes to rural schools?
- 3) What benefits do you think exist in rural education?
- 4) What is your definition or what are your thoughts about *teachers as advocates*?
- 5) How do you view *advocacy* in relation to teaching in a rural school?
- 6) What do you see as the future of rural schools, rural education, and rural literacies?

## **Appendix B. Follow-Up Interview Protocol (September through November, 2013)**

### *Section 1: The rural/small school Institute and writing*

I'd like now to briefly focus on the Institute itself and what you took away as outcomes of the experience.

- 1) How would you describe yourself as a writer? As a writing teacher?
- 2) What, if anything, did you learn about writing from this institute?
- 3) What, if anything, did you learn about teaching and writing that translates to the Common Core State Standards?
- 4) Could we discuss some of the writing you did and your thoughts on those writing experiences?

### *Section 2: Your School and Community*

- 1) Would you describe the town/community where you teach?
- 2) Would you describe the school where you teach?
- 3) What do you feel are the most positive aspects of your school and community?
- 4) What do you feel are the issues and challenges facing your school and community?

### *Section 3: Rural Schools and Advocacy*

- 1) What does teaching in a rural school mean to you?
- 2) What challenges do you think teachers, students, administrators, parents, and communities face when it comes to rural schools?
- 3) To what extent, if any, have you taken on the role as "advocate" for your school, students, community, or profession?
- 4) What are your thoughts about *teachers as advocates*?
- 5) How do you view *advocacy* in relation to teaching in a rural/small school? Could you provide examples of what you or your colleagues do in terms of advocacy?
- 6) What do you see as the future of rural schools, rural education, and rural literacies?

### Appendix C. List of Initial Line-By-Line and Focused Codes from Interviews

Viewing herself as a “city girl”  
 Moved to “small town” as a senior in high school  
 Limited course offering at small school  
 Developing her voice as a writer  
 Viewing Arkansas Tech as a “small cow college”: “everyone went home on the weekends”  
 Teaching at Catholic schools for first year of teaching in small town  
 Teaching in rural district for five years  
 Moving “home” to small town due to father’s health  
 Why did it not “work out” at previous district?  
 Having “bizarre computer classes” on her due to district growth  
 Teaching for 27 years  
 Viewing where she teachers as a “weird little town”  
 Feeling uncertain about the increase in Hispanic population: “It wants to have that small town feel and sense of community”  
 Feeling disconnected from neighborhood and community  
 Feeling good about the ESL teaching at her school  
 Meeting the needs of the Hispanic population since they can’t get remediation in the English classroom  
 Seeing “fresh blood” in the English Department  
 Believing that the curriculum should go “online” more  
 Reflecting perhaps on why she was moved to remediation  
 Having thought about doing some service learning projects  
 Having more remediation students in math than English  
 Teaching remediation for past three years  
 Feeling **disconnected** from the community: “I’m not that way”  
 Having a “horrible attitude towards my job right now”  
 Feeling insecure about professional development workshops  
 Experiencing the NWP before, but not volunteering to participate  
 Feeling as if she can’t “finish” her good ideas  
 Getting back in touch with her writer self.  
 Feeling excited about NWP this time around.  
 Looking at old writing that she no longer does.  
 Experiencing Nancy Atwell “stuff”  
 Having experience with “writing as process”  
 Having difficulty with writing conferences in class  
 Wanting to expand her writing **topics beyond “death”** in this Institute  
 Feeling lack of closure with mother’s death in 2000.  
 Writing “funny” stuff  
 Writing complaints in a journal  
 Needing collaboration and readings when writing  
 Needing chances to write out of “dark places”  
 Having no **writing community**  
 Not feeling as comfortable sharing with friends

Wanting a writing community; feeling “selfish” since you would not be taking anything back to classroom

Wanting to instill better revision with her students

Having previous experience with research in graduate education

Liking the small community of her school district

Having smaller class sizes

Teaching journalism

Writing is built into the remediation software

The tests get turned in, so revision for reflection does not take place.

The parents seem to be involved and help with discipline.

Observing a “spare the rod” mentality

Feeling like everyone knows each other in her community

Having need for professional development, i.e. learning outcomes

Feeling **disconnected** from recent trends in education

Wanting continuity in the department

Feeling ambivalent about professional development.

Consulting special ed teachers

Communicating with special ed teacher; building a peer network

Feeling disconnected

Feeling subjugated by the administration

Feeling like teachers don’t “**advocate** for ourselves”

Needing a peer community, community of practice

Connecting learning for parents

Getting feedback from former students

**Rural schools** going online

Wanting more structure from administration for her courses

Graduated from a public school, a “city” school.

Learning in “rigorous standards.”

Gained a “college prep” education.

\*\* Believes **writing** “is a skill that can be taught and developed.”

Before the Institute, did not think of herself as a “good writer.”

Has trouble knowing “what” to write.

Learned editing as yearbook writer.

This helped her learn that writing could be taught.

“Listened” to advice on writing from her teachers

Grew up with a “city girl, country girl” persona.

Went to college at Louisiana-Lafayette

Experienced social elitism in “city.”

Father wanted children to have a “rural upbringing.”

Dad from Michigan, mom a “southern girl.”

Teaching in rural district for four years.

Taught in urban college town, on and off, for ten years.

First taught in racially diverse city in LA

Taught ninth-grade in the “flag ship school for Louisiana.”

Didn’t feel “prepared” by student teaching.

Not feeling mentored.

Banded together with other new teachers.  
 Students came to class “drunk” and unprepared for school.  
 Feeling “clueless” teaching at that time  
 Students came to class “drunk” and unprepared for school.  
 Quit teaching after one year and worked for a church.  
 Took master’s classes at Northwestern and Centenary.  
 Began teaching kindergarten then  
 Taught in a neo-segregation school.  
 Only observed one white child while teaching there.  
 Feels as if knowing more about writing pedagogy might have helped.  
 Worked on a master’s and certification in early childhood.  
 \*\* Lost job teaching kindergarten due to downsizing.  
 Taught at an early childhood center with kids with special needs.  
 Had not “one ounce” of training in special ed.  
 Taught through temporary certification.  
 Switched over to early childhood special ed for master’s.  
 Had a child  
 Began taking classes at LA Tech and did a lot of driving.  
 Had to move to NW AR for her husband’s new job.  
 Taught a self-contained class for a couple of years.  
 Worked in faux-finishing before returning to Fayetteville.  
 Worked as an early childhood evaluator through Arkansas State University.  
 Counselor recommended doing one jog—returned to Fayetteville.  
 Self-contained class in Fayetteville.  
 Taught there for seven years: “the kids changed.”  
 Started getting “written up.”  
 Believes that “not taking the buyout” made things difficult.  
 \*\*Admitting that teaching in the rural district would not have been her first choice.  
 Needed to return to teaching when the economy for faux finishing didn’t pan out.  
 Worked for a daycare, as a Supervisor.  
 Lost job due to downsizing.  
 Feels like rural district is “laid back”  
 Believes rural district is a “little bit behind the times on some things.”  
 Knew things needed to be done because of working in Fayetteville.  
 Feeling wanted in this setting  
 Bringing fresh ideas to the rural school district.  
 Felt appreciated by administration.  
 Feels more compelled to do more when given praise and recognition.  
 Relates this **praise** to her view on **teaching\*\*\***  
 Believes she should **immerse herself more into community.**  
 Recognizes community cohesiveness, but does not feel a part of it.  
 Has parents who have special needs also.  
 Feeling a bit frustrated because her parents don’t seem engaged or aware of their children’s needs.  
 Parents emphasize politeness and “not causing problems.”  
 Teaches students whose “wiring isn’t set up for reading and spelling.”



Questions **nature vs. nurture.** \*\*

Observing that students like writing about “fishing, hunting, the woods.”\*\*

Being able to have conversations with students about these things

Having had a lot of diverse experiences that can relate to teaching

Feels confident in her teaching: “a lot more tricks in my bag”

Can get kids to do what she wants

Approaches teaching in a more friendly manner

Gaining **life experience** as a mom

Feeling **complacent as a teacher**\*\*

Working mostly for the paycheck

Gaining new perspectives through professional development

Participation in a two-year research study, “Getting to the Core.”

Study looks at pre- and post-teacher testing and the “group” from various schools.

Experience uptake with this professional development.

Looking forward to incorporating the NWP into her classroom

Feeling like she will grow as a writer and teacher

Learning to approach individual students differently; varying approaches

Has been given a “curriculum” this year teaching ninth grade.

Learning to “individualize” teaching.

Fell in love with the individualization viewpoint

Sees education as going in that direction also.

Feels **energized** by the day’s lesson

Being interested in the Institute.

Coming in: Likes to write and started out as English teacher.

Has only taught writing to kindergarten and second grade this past year.

Focuses on spelling tests and “shared writing.”

May be teaching sixth grade this year. Ask about this\*\*

Transition/uncertainty

Felt that the possibility of teaching sixth grade was a good reason to enter the Institute.

**Professional development:** \*\*teaching reading for adolescents.

“Fills” up time with professional development since divorce.

Just came out of a relationship and her children are moving out of the house.

Feeling alone in personal life.

Using CCSS as per the IEPs

“Hits” on some **CCSS** standards through **revision**

Doesn’t know yet what grades she will be teaching.

Has to be able to adapt

Just now beginning to understand advocacy in rural schools\*\*

Viewed teaching at a rural school as a “temporary” thing.

Teaching at a rural school: more “laid back”

Found herself in a leadership position

Discovered the school district had no process for paperwork and **monitoring**...\*\*\*Ask about this!!

Being sought out for knowledge\*\*\*

Feeling valued in rural district

Believes the students are polite in district

Enjoying the “storytelling” from students.  
 Feeling comradery between teachers.  
 Challenges: **technology is lacking**  
 Has noticed improvement.  
 Getting an increase in budget.  
 Understands that all teachers need the experience of professional development but budgets limit the number of teachers getting it.  
 Has had a pleasant experience in rural school  
 Less diverse use of classrooms.  
 Benefits: closer relationship with administration  
 Sensing a “family outlook”  
 Sensing a “family outlook”  
**Advocacy**: important to speak when needed  
 Feels there’s a time and place to **advocate**  
 Sees a lot of “open” talk in her rural district  
 Administration is “open”  
 Has asked advice from principles in the district: she works with more than one school  
 Funding is still an issue  
 District is not hiring replacements  
 Hadn’t thought about **advocacy very much coming in \*\*\***  
 Felt the need to speak up but didn’t at first  
 Advocating for kids with special needs.  
 Realized that students didn’t have any training or file saving resources in Word  
 Don’t teach keyboarding until seventh grade  
 Fayetteville students learn to keyboard by first or second grade  
 Rural students only use **technology** for “**input**”  
 Doesn’t see consolidation on the horizon  
 Need for health care  
 Hasn’t received as much CCSS training as subject teachers  
 Can’t feel “fluent” across the board in CCSS  
 Feels CGI training will help with CCSS  
 Grew up in small, “suburban” setting, went to Catholic schools “my whole life.”  
 Comparing “small” Catholic schools to “small town” schools.  
 Teaching in “inner city” for first teaching job in Houston.  
 Loving the “at-risk” students  
 Feeling needed.  
 Recognizing that most teachers don’t want to teach the “supposedly trouble makers”  
 Disagreeing with that notion of at-risk students as “trouble makers”  
 Working in small rural English community.  
 Moving back to America and “at-risk” populations  
 Gaining elementary school certification so that she could help at-risk students at an earlier age.  
 Getting “put” into labor while teaching at-risk elementary students  
 Realizing the learning gap was great for these students  
 Trying to “save” her students before they go to middle school and “get lost.”  
 Teaching at a private school and “being the queen”  
 Feeling like she was not getting collaboration or **professional development**

Needing to grow as a teacher  
 Going back to at-risk public school  
 Being an instructional technology specialist in Houston  
 “Teaching teachers” as a technology specialist  
 Designing lessons and teaching teachers  
 Moving to Arkansas and not teaching for a few years  
 Teaching currently at and “alternative learning campus”  
 Reasons for kids to go to this campus include attendance...  
 Issues for at risk students: Pregnancy, drug use, legal trouble  
 Having students that are in gangs  
 Not judging the kid  
 Having 100 kids on her campus  
 Teaching smaller class sizes  
 \*\*Making connection to Institute. Feeling like students “get lost”  
**Kids falling in between the cracks and no one’s going to notice**  
 Reframing the “problem” of at-risk students; language metaphor  
 Theorizing that students’ frustrations come from “gaps” in understanding, not innate “bad” behavior.  
 Wanting to give her students a “voice”  
 Wanting the professional development in order for students to learn how to find their own voice.  
 Getting “three pieces” in the Institute.  
 Connecting her teaching situations with quickwrites  
 Believing that her students feel “disenfranchised”  
 Bringing up **voice** again\*\*  
 Not being able to get students to talk through Socratic circles  
 “Risking” the personal is an issue for her students  
 Observing that her students will not “take the lead” in conversation in class  
 Students in gang activity: “they may or may not be in some sort of organization”  
 Feeling proud of her students: “They’re tough, hardworking, incredible people.”  
 Writing a lot before the Institute.  
 Keeping a journal  
 Writing to learn  
 Writing for personal and cognitive growth  
 Not sure she is a “writer” but writing a lot  
 Wanting her students to find ways to say something—voice\*\*\*  
 Having high expectations for the institute  
 Needing a “structure”? What is this??\*\*\*Ask in next interview  
 \*\*\* Linking rural schools and alternative schools\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*Connecting the **isolation**  
 Viewing her kids as “definitely an **isolated** population.”  
 Becoming a “family” in her class  
 Treating students well is as important as teaching them.  
 Creating and maintaining rapport with her students  
 Seeing the \*\*\*similarities between rural and alternative schools  
 Believing that teachers should be advocates.  
 Wanting to promote the idea that at-risk students are “great kids”

Believing in kids is advocating for them  
**Viewing Advocacy** as helping outsiders change their perspectives of the students and schools.  
 Wanting to change public perception  
 Comparing the rhetoric of at-risk and rural advocacy  
 Advocating to a larger geographical area for rural schools  
 Getting the word out in advocacy  
 Not expecting to talk about the **Common Core** as much as we did  
 Incorporating primary documents into her class readings  
 Teaching “discovery”  
 Wanting students to have their own learning experience  
 Not liking “top down” standards or curricula  
 Incorporating close reading more  
 Wanting more vocational programs in alternative schooling  
 Avoiding pigeon holing and being more patient with students  
 Rigor and real-world connections  
 Seeing potential in CCSS to help students be more critical adults  
 Making interdisciplinary and intertextual connections.  
 Growing up in a small, rural town.  
 Having to walk eight miles down a dirt road to pick up the school bus.  
 ‘I am rural’—living without running water or plumbing for several years.  
 Learning work over school from mother.  
 Getting no support for schooling from mother. Being on her own.  
 Supporting herself financially in college.  
 Obtaining an associate’s degree in business. Wanting a bachelor’s degree but having to work.  
 Quitting her job was not an option. Feeling like the degree was unobtainable.  
 Studying for a teaching degree was not an option since it required a six-week internship.  
 Changing goals to suit exterior conditions.  
 Getting bachelor’s through non-traditional training at U of A.  
 Having trouble applying the vocational degree.  
 BS in Vocational Ed  
 Having limited options in a small setting.  
 Attributing marriage to “work ethic” from mother.  
 Finding convenience in the ready-made family.  
 Feeling like life and getting her “right” teaching degree were incompatible.  
 Twenty-one at marriage.  
 Waiting several years to begin the education process.  
 Struggling to ask the “right” questions and learn how to become a “teacher-teacher.”  
 Finding out that her bachelor’s would not allow her to be a classroom teacher.  
 Feeling compelled to wait for the economy to change before doing non-traditional certification.  
 Learning how non-traditional certification works.  
 Relating to how the state looks at non-traditional certification.  
 Feeling isolated and unconnected in finding a job.  
 Having no father and lack of parental support.  
 Having no success finding a teaching job in NTL  
 Needing to get into a traditional ed program.  
 Getting into a trad program

Finishing a bachelor's at ASU  
 Getting her first teaching job in a rural district  
 Being hampered or delayed by life  
 Receiving "Divine Intervention"  
 Getting a job after the first interview  
 Again, intentions do not match the job the school system needs  
 Having to take the secondary test for certification  
 Teaching in a small rural school district  
 Understanding the nature of rural issues of size  
 Understanding how road routes influence very small communities  
 Subbing for five years  
 Subbing at a small district  
 Explaining why the highway "killed" the town. Expressing a sense of loss and helplessness.  
 Even as a "novice," understanding that she is a life-long learner.  
 Comparing her previous education with the job she has obtained.  
 Feeling like her previous education is valued by the superintendent/district  
 Feeling limited in writing pedagogy  
 Comparing past subbing experiences with preparation.  
 "Loving" to writing  
 Developing a persona from life experiences  
 Not wanting to get "hurt" emotionally\*\*  
 Having trouble opening up and reading her writing.  
 Changing the subject from "judgment."  
 Transitioning to Common Core  
 Bringing NWP into the classroom  
 Feeling "green"  
 Feeling inadequate  
 Recognizing a discrepancy in her approach to writing  
 Viewing the Institute optimistically  
 Relating her previous English education to traditional literature courses/teacher-centered  
 Expressing some problems with Engl Ed teacher's approach  
 Looking at this experience from a student's point of view  
 Gaining a perspective from this experience  
 Demonstrating resentment of teacher's pedagogy  
 Experiencing "male chauvinism"  
 Being a victim of favoritism  
 Resenting the grade  
 Feeling thankful for a B  
 Modeling writing strategies for students  
 Learning other "modes" of student writing  
 Connecting to geographical isolation  
 Anticipating naïveté and that naïveté can limit students' potential\*\*  
 Being too "local" can limit students' experiences  
 Understanding generational literacy and legacy  
 Hoping to be a "changer" of lives  
 Relating **voice** to experiences

Hoping students feel the need to leave  
 Leaving can bring about other “worldly” experiences  
 Leaving can bring about other “wordly” experiences  
 Understanding CCSS and projects  
 Having faith in CCSS  
 Relating her personal “fear” of tests to CCSS projects  
 Believing new assessments may help students gain confidence.  
 Being “stupid” may be a concern for students  
 Gaining confidence and leaving rural places  
 Making a “difference” due to low student-teacher ratio  
 Making an impact in smaller classes  
 Giving up “messiah” illusions  
 Gaining perspective through subbing  
 Feeling watched or censored in rural schools/role of parents  
 Adapting to district *cultural norms*.  
 Gaining approval from the community\*\*  
 Stepping out of line can be risky  
 Relating religion to view of teaching at rural school  
 Telling story/anecdote of a “small church” and the purchasing of the piano.  
 Losing a job due to social norms  
 Hiring and firing based on norms  
 Preachers attempting to enact change too quickly  
 Finding out how one preacher survived  
 Learning from other preachers’ errors  
 Making small, incremental changes to avoid watchful eyes  
 Making changes slowly, less drastically  
 Referring to article from Institute readings  
 Believing that rural citizens are not impressed with teacher IQ  
 Being quiet is the way to prosper  
 Comparing to piano story/metaphor  
 Including the administration for approval  
 Including them in lessons  
 Multi-modal lessons  
 Learning through projects and multi-modal activities  
 Gaining this experience and belief through student teaching. Making learning an “act” and fun.  
 Relating the research goals of CCSS to her use of the pedagogy  
 Tying literature goals  
 Bringing in technology  
 Believing in the benefit of multi-modal learning on memory  
 Feeling good about this multi-modal approach  
 Reiterating the benefits of small class sizes  
 Getting to know the community through their norms and rituals is important  
 Expecting to participate in these rituals  
 Advocating is “being there” for the students.  
 Making the classroom a “safe” zone  
 Making the classroom a “safe” zone

Being a reliable outlet for student concerns  
 Rural schools have more of a need for advocacy  
 Being a role model for students  
 Relating church/youth leader role to being an advocate\*\*  
 Being a youth leader for years at Faith Assembly of God  
 Teaching both preschool and 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at church.  
 Serving as a surrogate parent for students with troubled home relationships.  
 Relating advocacy to the piano anecdote  
 Feeling at the mercy of the community  
 Being questioned by community members for breaking norms  
 Making changes slowly  
 Making quick changes that go against norms is too risky  
 Fearing the defensive stances of the community  
 Communities resisting change  
 Relating an anecdote from a friend that teaches in Alaska  
 Comparing rural schools to Inuit schooling  
 Encouraging students to attend college is to risky  
 Working for farms is a norm  
 Having an optimistic, romantic idea of education. "Literacy myth"?  
 Instilling a personal claim based on one's education.  
 Obtaining autonomy through education.  
 Resisting dangerous rhetorics  
 Learning to make educated decisions  
 Learning from business models in rural towns  
 Companies exploiting natural "resources" of rural places  
 Recasting a narrative about the dangers of corporate fall out.  
 Making connections between education and religion\*\*  
 Affecting generations through the education of children  
 Resisting questionable rhetorics  
 Feeling unable to trust statistics  
 Teaching autonomous thinking  
 Helping Hispanic communities  
 Generational literacies/Hispanics  
 Looking forward to projects in CCSS  
 Working to change parents' influence on children's learning  
 Motivating students is a key to this process  
 Instilling the "can do" attitude in students/work ethic?  
 Growing up in a small, affluent town adjacent to a Midwestern college town.  
 Growing up in an auto industry family.  
 Attending "really good schools."  
 Having a small school background.  
 Having "lots of opportunities" in the small school.  
 Cross-country skiing in school.  
 Receiving music education.  
 Graduating with around 200 students.  
 Appreciating the many opportunities offered by this schooling.

Feeling as if the community really valued education.  
 Receiving influence from nearby university.  
 Attending Christian university in Arkansas.  
 Having family in eastern Arkansas/Delta  
 Arkansas family leaving AR for higher paying jobs in Michigan.  
 Growing up in second generation auto industry family  
 Recognizing outmigration from rural Arkansas to better jobs.  
 Still having family in east Arkansas.  
 Feeling ties to rural, eastern Arkansas—"I get that whole area"  
 Teaching in rural district for approximately fifteen years.  
 Teaching mostly fourth grade.  
 Teaching special ed for a couple of years.  
 Earning master's in reading and certified reading specialist.  
 Wanting a more "singular" subject. \*\*Wanting to specialize and perfect a subject, perhaps.  
 Grabbing the opportunity to teach sixth grade language arts.  
 Experiencing \*\*Change/transition. 1<sup>st</sup> year teaching sixth-grade language arts/English.  
 I'm recognizing here that many of "us" are in transition. Possible theme.  
 Liking where she teachers but recognizing issues.  
 Recognizing there are likely issues no matter where you teach.  
 Feeling frustrations...see below.  
 Feeling frustrated with quality of incoming teachers.  
 Placing a focus on the kids and education\*\*  
 Hiring "retired" teachers in rural schools  
 Critiquing these approaches to teaching and hiring as not being focused on education per se  
 Questioning the practices of the district's hiring  
 Giving credit to district for valuing experience.  
 Acknowledging experience as a benefit, if teachers are still dedicated and evolving  
 Recognizing attitude toward teaching is important to pedagogy  
 Trying to improve as a teacher.  
 Reading is a strong suit  
 Not feeling as if writing will be a focal point is she does on for further education  
 Writing as "weakest link"  
 Improving as a writing teacher.  
 Modeling good writing strategies for students is important  
 Learning from the Project? Uptake?  
 Pushing through her nervousness about her writing  
 Recognizing how difficult sharing her writing was for her at the beginning.  
 Feeling positive about the experience and the results it will have in the classroom.  
 Feeling un-practiced in writing  
 Writing improves with practice.  
 Thinking that she is a "just the facts person."  
 Equating good writing with "embellishments and all that."  
 Feeling as if **practice** makes one more prepared to write and teach writing  
 Believing that I'm more advanced early in the Institute  
 Writing on demand feels more difficult for Martha  
 Exploring open-ended writing



Getting into the practice of writing is something she hopes to learn.  
 Quickwrites, experience with  
 Feeling the pressure of CCSS  
 Prioritizing what a teacher believes in  
 Rethinking her curriculum to try and fit in more practices from the Institute  
 Understanding of CCSS: self-discovery and constructivism  
 Interpreting the CCSS  
 Incorporating Bloom's taxonomy.  
 Getting the kids to think on a higher level using quickwrites  
 Referring to NWP as "class."  
 Training the brain  
 Believing that CCSS asks for higher order thinking and using the Institute to get at that  
 "Plugging" in Institute learning into CCSS curriculum  
 Feeling that her rural district jumped onto CCSS without thinking critically  
 Preferring a more gradual approach to CCSS  
 Feeling that there are elements of CCSS that have not been unpacked  
 Engaging with CCSS  
 Feeling more resources are needed  
 Using Gates Map in district  
 Feeling not "thrilled" with CCSS materials and district's approach.  
 Throwing money around in the district  
 Believing in PARCC, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers  
 Having more faith in PARCC than Gates Maps  
 Addressing **Rural Schools**.  
 Feeling autonomous in small rural school  
 Believing that administration will not reprimand unless a teacher is doing a poor job. What constitutes a poor job though?  
 Seeing no cohesiveness between the faculty curricula  
 No one hegemonic entity  
 Believing bigger districts offer less autonomy  
 Rural: Feeling both frustration and liberation  
 Rural: Feeling less "pressure."  
 Comparing to bigger districts  
 Taking role of professional teacher seriously.  
 Wanting her kids to feel competitive with other areas of the state and nation  
 \*\*Trusting that professional development will help her achieve those goals.  
 Growing is doing; doing is professional development and further education  
 Benefitting the student is the primary motivation  
 Rural: Using professional development as a means to give students "opportunities."  
 Believing that rural students don't have enough exposure to things larger districts do  
 "Raising the bar" in rural schools  
 Feeling comfortable and competitive as students. Breaking free rural stereotypes  
 Rural challenge: facing challenge of attendance  
 Experiencing increased absences during hunting season  
 Conducting home visits for attendance reasons  
 Not trusting the bureaucratic approach to fixing problems

Believes parents don't value education enough in rural school  
 Weather can prevent parents from taking kids to school  
 Anticipating absences  
 Rural challenge: Seeing a lack of computers in homes.  
 Comparing to larger districts  
 Limiting digital pedagogies due to lack of computers in school  
 Communicating with parents is key  
 Comparing to larger districts and how larger districts expect students to have computer access  
 Recognizing the needs of the community  
 Rural advantage: Having a sense of community  
 Feeling loved by rural community  
 Receiving supportive emails and communication  
 Rural advantage: Being treated with respect.  
 Speaking positively about small towns  
 Rural advantage: Describing advantage of small town safety.  
 Feeling amazed at how safely the students get walk around town  
 Releasing the kids to the Boys & Girls Club  
 Visualize a "delta"  
 Expecting students to have a small town memories.  
 Advocating in a variety of ways  
 Teacher advocates: advocating for students  
 Believing teachers are **inherently advocates**  
 Speaking personally  
 Teacher advocates: required by law.  
 Feeling like an advocate as part of the job  
 Believing that many teachers don't understand that they are under certain legal obligations  
 Understanding that some things students tell her she must report  
 Teacher advocates and rural: Seeing and addressing a need of clothing.  
 Teacher advocates: Using church funds of support to help a student  
 Networking in and out of school  
 Tapping into large church support. Experiencing a more urban connection?  
 Teacher advocates and rural: making home visits.  
 Gaining information through ESL teacher's home visits  
 Following the attendance of a student  
 Dealing with language barriers: ESL  
 Teacher advocates and rural: non-English speaking families and attendance.  
 Parents working in chicken plant  
 Communicating with parents through home visits  
 Recognizing rural issues  
 Not personally experiencing the home visits  
 Rural advantage: having some flexibility.  
 Rural futures: leadership/administration.  
 Feeling frustrated with leadership. Administration?  
 Needing leadership to model proper behavior, group mentality  
 Recognizing individual act of leadership and advocacy  
 Looking for change, progress

Finding simple solutions  
 Feeling frustration that money is properly used  
 Seeing lots of potential in her rural school district  
 Feeling that the leadership needs to step up  
 Scheduling is an issue for student performance  
 Placing emphasis on behavior  
 Inconsistent approaches to behavior  
 Feeling frustrated with bureaucracy  
 Being adaptable  
 Not feeling able to voice her opinion  
 Looking to leadership  
 Rural futures: feeling that district leaders are not advocates  
 Feeling unsupported by school board  
 Feeling leery of advocacy groups that already exist. What kinds?  
 Believing these groups lose the focus they set out with  
 Feeling that administration deals in manipulation.  
 Wanting give and take  
 Believing that **image** is more important than substance  
 Feeling that too much time is spent on unnecessary **bureaucracy**  
 Experiencing top down leadership  
 CCSS: "raise the bar"  
 Trying to raise the bar  
 Seeing challenges for students and parents in CCSS since students have to be more autonomous  
 CCSS: Parents uncomfortable with the autonomy and responsibility given to students.  
 Working in CCSS for a second year  
 Her district may be a "pilot school for CCSS  
 CCSS: district quick to act but not in depth.  
 CCSS: Time needed to collaborate with other teachers.  
 Background: death of 1<sup>st</sup> husband  
 Background: Influence of family structure.  
 Background: as a substitute, a "natural at teaching"  
 Background: sat in classroom to help young children with transition  
 Background: rural Arkansas schooling.  
 Background: a series of tragedies.  
 Background: \*\*\*Three years as a certified teacher.  
 Background: importance of subbing and teacher support.  
 Perceptions about schools/community: Val seems hesitant to talk about administration.  
 School/community: Appearances vs. substance.  
 School/community: Principal styles.  
 School/community: Students transitions to sixth grade.  
 School/Community: Eighth grade and sixth grade.  
 Teaching transition: "a whole different species."  
 Self-perception as teacher/person: comfortable and looking to add to knowledge of the CCSS  
 Self-perception as teacher/person: "English was always my favorite subject."  
 Self-perception as writer: writing as therapeutic.  
 Self-perception as writer: therapeutic writing has "power there."\*\*

Institute/self-perceptions: enjoys writing.  
 Institute: wants to learn how to encourage students to write.  
 Institute: writing comes easy to Valerie  
 Writing self: "I enjoy writing."  
 Institute goals: Inspiring students. Confidence and self-awareness.\*\*  
 Institute goals: "Secret mission"  
 Common Core goals: integrate subject areas/interdisciplinary  
 Common Core goals: only a small amount of training in CCSS.  
 Question set 3: rural schools and advocacy.  
 Teaching rural school: lack of desire for college  
 Teaching rural school: Secret mission—"Real world" connection as another mission.  
 Teaching rural school: "narrow vocabulary"  
 Teaching and rural schools: Vocabulary: multiple ways...is this context?  
 Does the situatedness/context of rural students' lives limit their vocabulary?  
 Teaching Rural Schools: Val isn't sure why her students seem to have a limited vocabulary.  
 Teaching rural schools: confidence  
 Teaching rural schools: writing to "model" writing formats  
 Effect of Institute: Likely referring to quickwrites.  
 Effect of Institute: Valerie says she will replace PODs with Quickwrites.  
 Benefits of rural schools: close-knit community  
 Teachers as advocates: "far and few between"  
 Teachers as advocates: "individual" teacher "desire" to be an advocate.  
 Teachers as advocates: Not all teachers are advocates: "Just because they have the title teacher, does not make them an advocate."  
 Teachers as advocates: \*\*\*\***Secret mission.**  
 Future of rural schools: concerns that prescribed curricula will alter the role of teachers  
 Impact of Common Core: time restraints  
 Transition/change: switch to seventh-grade science  
 Rural concerns and futures: Coaching and sports seem to take precedent.  
 Not being part of the neighborhood? Feeling Disconnected.  
 Feeling isolated professionally, departmentally  
 Lacking ties to the community as an extension of feeling negative about job role.  
 Lacking resources and professional development.  
 Reconnecting to a "writer side"  
 Feeling conflicted about loss of loved ones. Writing about loss.  
 Using humor as a "block" or catharsis?  
 Seeking out a "writing community."  
 Feeling selfish in the Institute  
 Being limited in making pedagogical decisions  
 Being "supported" by parents when it comes to behavior.  
 Viewing the school district as "set in their ways."  
 Being "watched" by administration  
 Seeing a lack of advocacy for professionalism  
 Avoiding looking "weak"  
 Seeing a lack of focus on academics in comparison to behavior.  
 Seeing limitations of rural schools; moving to online classes, for instance.

Losing “good” teachers due to trends in rural schools  
 Feeling divided between city and country  
 Being reprimanded; feeling defensive.  
 Feeling uncertain about the direction of her career.  
 Having a hectic transition between teaching specialties.  
 Struggling to find a “home” in teaching.  
 Feeling “accepted” and valued.  
 Lacking roots in the community.  
 Having things in common with the students and community.  
 Being on “autopilot”  
 Growing through professional development  
 Experiencing differences in written expectations and assessments for students.  
 Feeling energized by Institute  
 Enticed by monetary rewards  
 Always feeling in an uncertain mode/context  
 Seeking a cure for loneliness  
 Having little time to organize her classes.  
 Rural schools as a “weigh station.”  
 Being a big fish in a little pond  
 Feeling connected to a small group of special ed teachers  
 Seeing a lack of development technologically and professionally in rural schools  
 Having no hassles with administration  
 Waiting for a “time and place” for advocacy; understanding the rhetorical situation  
 Conflicting views when compared to “outspoken” teachers  
 Conflicting views when compared to “outspoken” teachers  
 Not focusing on advocacy outside of individual contexts.  
 Lacking technological pedagogy in rural school  
 Being clearly aware of differences in rural and city schools  
 Understanding a lack of community resources.  
 Feeling isolated in teaching leads to new directions  
 Seeing kids get isolated in multiple ways: through behavior and numbers.  
 Developing theories about at-risk kids  
 Recognizing learning gaps  
 Wanting to give students “a voice”  
 Understanding disenfranchisement. Thinking from a **socio-political point of view.**  
 Recognizing the classroom as a “risky” place for at-risk kids  
 Putting oneself “out there”  
 Writing a lot but not sure about status as “writer”  
 Getting more from the Institute than expected  
**Comparing the isolation** of rural and at-risk students  
 Knowing students/people on a **personal level/building rapport**  
 Defining *advocacy* as being “able to stand up for your kid, one of your students.”  
 Viewing *advocacy* as convincing those outside of the schools that the students are “awesome.”  
 The audience for *advocacy* is often an **outside agent.**  
 Having a fear of “top down” policies  
 Advocating for vocational pedagogies for at-risk students.

Making connections is learning; therefore, is discovering voice learning?  
 Having a long road to becoming a teacher  
 Growing up poor in a rural area.  
 Understanding the cultural and historical implications of rural teaching  
 Feeling like a “novice” with a strong educational background.  
 Lacking composition experience  
 Feeling “green” compared to others in the Institute  
 Being afraid to open up  
 Wanting to serve as a model for students  
 Seeing rural students as “isolated” and “limited”/deficit models  
 Linking voice to “getting out”  
 Understanding the implications of teaching in small communities  
 Not stepping “too far outside the box”  
 Moving the piano, inch by inch  
 Keeping “your mouth shut” in relation to public voice  
 Gaining approval from administration  
 Using multimodality, which is sanctioned by administration  
 Being part of the community  
 Creating a “safe environment” is advocating.  
 Serving as a surrogate parent  
 Fear of community rejection.  
 Viewing change as slow and mediated by community norms.  
 Viewing education in terms of ideals and values  
 Fear of rhetoric/persuasion  
 Viewing education in religious terms  
 Valuing firsthand knowledge over statistics  
 Motivating students through projects.  
 Growing up with a working class background; schools high on experiential learning  
 Finding issues in rural hiring; “out to pasture” approach  
 Pushing beyond limitations  
 Finding discrepancies between approach to CCSS and “moving slowly”  
 Finding autonomy and **frustration due to autonomy**  
 Growing through professional development  
 Bridging the gap between pedagogy and community access/values  
 Feeling respected by community  
 Being an advocate is a mandate for teachers...different ways to advocate  
 Advocating for students’ needs through church and community resources  
 Using home visits to advocate  
 Being frustrated with leadership and organization  
 Looking to leadership as the “voice” for change  
 Being leery about advocacy groups  
 Seeing manipulation as a method from leadership/administration  
 Beginning teaching as a “protective mother”  
 Experiencing multiple personal/family tragedies  
 Writing about tragedy  
 Being encouraged and supported by administration

Seeing “style over substance” in administrative policy  
 Writing as therapy  
 Identifying differences in writing modes and rhetorical situations  
 Creating “secret missions”: giving students’ confidence.  
 Seeing a lack of college aspirations  
 Having ambivalent feelings about college and vocational learning  
 Giving students the “freedom” to write what is on their minds  
 Not all teachers strive to be advocates; does this mean going above and beyond?  
 Viewing advocacy as a secret mission.  
 Worrying about the isolating and limiting effects of standards  
 Believing that athletics and coaching take precedent for community concerns  
 Feeling isolated  
 Feeling persecuted, isolated  
 Lacking strong professional relationships  
 Feeling treated like “a first-year teacher”  
 Seeing a lack of strong administrative leadership  
 Wanting students to find their own voice in writing  
 Experiencing a lack in strong administrative leadership  
 Being unsure what “forum” is appropriate to express herself  
 Using writing as a personal reflection of school experiences  
 Questioning the rhetorical situation to speak out  
 Wanting to be able to express herself in writing and professionally  
 Feeling the tensions between reaching out to NWP and “broadcasting” her feelings to the public  
 Gaining confidence through NWP  
 Learning through NWP that we are all writers.  
 Viewing contemporary education as contrary to teaching voice  
 Defining voice as individual perception  
 Discovering individual voice by listening to others  
 Being honest is a key to exploring voice.  
 Gaining “permission” through Institute to find one’s voice  
 Seeing a need for active listening  
 Using one’s voice to “resonate” with others and to create a “spark” in others  
 Having a voice helps groups become more adhesive  
 Connecting the Institute “advocacy” to public writing  
 Criticizing CCSS for “extinguishing” voices of teachers and students  
 Criticizing schooling for creating a lack of curiosity  
 Equating schooling to the “right answer”  
 Students feel like “star-belly sneetches”  
 Feeling like she is the lone advocate for her students  
 Being given the freedom to write allows one to think deeply  
 Trying to get her students to “write deeply” with their hearts and minds  
 All writing is personal  
 Institutional distance makes it harder to hear students’ voices.  
 Advocating requires a voice  
 Connecting complicity to being silent or silenced  
 Quick writes engage students

Freedom in writing/Choice

“Wherever your mind goes, just let your pen flow.” Freewriting as engaged writing.

Freedom & choice in writing.

Personal connections to literature.

The visceral experience of the response groups correlates well to the visceral experiences in students’ lives

Sharing personal tragedy writing with students

Writing as therapy

The personal healing power of writing

Lack of technology preparation in rural schools

Writer’s voice is personal and in flux

Developing voice requires taking stock and personal reflection

Connecting writing to joy

Sharing as a form of pedagogy

Using rhetorical situations and genre to demonstrate voice

Choosing one’s topic is a form of freedom; being free to explore topics of interest can help with voice?

Feeling this freedom and joy leads to more use of figurative writing

Understanding students’ experiences is a reason to include choice and freedom

Having the freedom to give students freedom...a balanced approach to teaching?

Having a supportive administration can lead to new approaches

Instilling self-confidence in rural students

Having confidence in students as a form of advocacy

Having “secret missions” is pedagogical, not a reaction to a lack of freedom

Advocating by not teaching to the test

Using her public voice to present at NCTE

Lacking exposure in rural areas

Giving students freedom leaves room for place-based writing



## Appendix D. List of Line-By-Line and Focused Codes for Audio-Video Recordings and Participant Writing

Discussing QWs and the difference between prompts and QWs  
 Drawing on previous experience with NWP/QWs  
 Donna believes CCSS and QWs are highly compatible  
 Choosing what to write is key to student engagement.  
 Comparing QWs and practicing to perform in sports.  
**Gaining power and the permission to write**  
 Realizing the level of engagement of students in QWs  
 Linda is engaged at beginning.  
 Promoting “sharing” of writing; QWs  
 Using *Spark the Brain* as an example; using previous NWP experience  
 Explaining demos: “hands on and minds on” Is this an NWP mantra???  
 Acting as a teacher in Demos; teachers teaching teachers\*  
 Being “open book” in the classroom; Creating a “safe place” and sharing  
 Allowing for “dark places” to be a place for writing; creating “safety” for students; she also understands that not everyone is like that; she doesn’t push students to share “dark places”  
 Giving students “control” of notebooks; notebooks stay in the classroom  
 Martha: asking questions about differentiation between genres and goals for writing. “Writing is writing.”  
 Recognizing tensions between content-based and “creative” writing  
 Writing to Learn: focusing on writing on the page beyond mere assessment. Is this an important tension throughout? Tim will let students choose what their writing projects look like. He does this on a student-to-student basis. “Transformation”  
 Understanding tensions between CCSS and NWP “writing”  
 Donna talks about using intertextual approaches  
 Choosing multi-modal writing assignments (songs) to help with content (*TKAM*) “Trying connect the text to moments in their lives. They find out what they know and what they don’t know in that writing.” text-to-self connections\*\*  
 Helping students see growth in writing: notebooks and reflection  
 Empowering student writing; connecting growth and power\*\*  
 Connecting personal growth and writing  
 Connecting writing with innate human creation/DNA “It becomes part of their DNA.”  
 Interacting with multiple texts  
 The “power” of writing; Connecting NWP writing with catharsis/self-discovery  
 Connecting discovery and writing  
 Comparing NWP to “Gospel” or religious experiences  
 Writing to learn  
 Linda is excited about the opportunities to use what she stands to learn  
 Dealing with issues of solidarity, even at the beginning  
 Karen: Mixing advocacy with religious imagery  
 Clara: Writing about personal past & “cultural” clashes  
 Karen: wanting students to be able to express themselves & “life-saving” teachers  
 Adapting to “outside life” empowering students  
 Creating “spaces” for students (and teachers) to be able to write.

Martha: Making rural connections. Death , community, & school.  
 Writing about the last time we say an “old friend”  
 Getting emotional through QW writing; tears\*  
 Using sensory imagery  
 Learning through emotions and sensory imagery; emotive responses  
 Acknowledging ranges of emotions  
 Linking emotion to the senses: Privileging emotions; tactile approaches to learning and writing.  
 What is the connection to pedagogy and the rural???

James: Linking “home” history, personal interest, family  
 Karen: Helping students “find their voice”; using writing to help them learn how to expressing themselves, “find their voice,” and “this is why I believe it”  
 Valerie: Feeling like a student who does not know what to write “on demand.” This connecting with students’ feelings is something to look into, no??  
 Karen: Making connections to students’ needs/scaffolding/Wanting students to “follow the threads of history”

Martha: Researching “topics of interest” outside of school-sponsored literacies  
 Karen: Telling stories as a way to “bring people to light” and create meaning. Not relying on school-sponsored texts  
 Taking up this discussion of storytelling and relating it to personal interest in Jefferson: “all men are created equally”/irony  
 Exploring the power of stories to help us think of learning.  
 Karen says that her students like all kinds of stories: verbal? Written? Listening?  
 Making history real/ Making literacy real?  
 Viewing relationships as a the way of learning  
 Telling stories/acquisition? Karen: “Telling stories is telling a life.”  
 Karen: Having to help students find their **voice** quickly  
 Finding through research that professional development for CCSS did not lead to teachers emphasizing writing.  
 Linking a lack of emphasis on writing instruction as an aspect of lack of funding in rural schools  
 Donna discussing **teacher autonomy and the complications of autonomy.**  
 ASK Valerie and Martha about **autonomy** and the way they teach writing\*\*\*  
 “Sharing” among faculty.  
 Martha acknowledging that this sharing professional develop is not well received  
 “going it alone”\*\*\*\* / autonomy  
 Linking social and geographical “isolation”  
 Resenting the “good ol’ boy” network  
 Martha: Dictating of norms by community in rural places  
 Recognizing that tensions exist in rural schools between higher education and the status quo  
 Recognizing a lack of diversity  
 Seeing rurality as promoting homogeneity and segregation  
 Martha: using the professional development of Project RISE in multiple ways  
 Addressing media representations  
 Martha: Critiquing the use of funds at her rural school  
 Tim: Bringing up the issue of autonomy  
 Using classroom dialogue as a way to “wrestle out” issues of rurality and education.  
 Barbara: wanting to feel appreciated but losing the spirit

Martha can't understand how teachers rely on the tried and true and don't evolve.  
 Martha: Needing "self-renewal"  
 Barbara giving up on developing/growing as a teacher and person...lacking self-worth  
 Finding resources for rural schools  
 Feeling conflicted about the balance between autonomy and standardized, unified approaches.  
 Gaining autonomy from a lack of collaboration or professional development  
 Needing collaboration; the network of the NWP??  
 Having trouble defining "heritage" this makes it harder to get students engaged.  
 Martha: Attempting to make connections between students' heritage and course material on immigration  
 Martha: trying to do a traditions/heritage unit. ASK about this.  
 Finding age-appropriate readings and nonfiction to help with rural and place-based learning  
 Barbara: Recognizing the conflict between the potential of CCSS and community norms  
 Martha: Considering choice of text based on community norms/personal interest  
 Martha: Having conversations about texts through discussions of the CCSS  
 Martha: Acknowledging professional "isolation"  
 Feeling frustration due to perceived isolation  
 Tim realizes that Martha is "alone" in many ways.  
 Lacking "access" to state departments; lacking political voice  
 Valerie: Believing in individual agency, meritocracy?  
 Karen: Losing touch  
 James: Having the "right" conversations  
 Believing in the arts  
 Creating objectives for demos helps teachers see the learning outcomes; also, discovering one's own voice  
 Clara: Relating advocacy to religion/Bible  
 Martha: Viewing "belief" as "embedded in who you are." Is this similar to voice?  
 Telling your "inner-critic to shh." Is this like discovery?  
 Karen: Extending isolation from school to our social "networking"  
 Is voice related to "memory"?  
 Responding to this question is difficult. No one responds.  
 Taking up "voice." Karen: Using "voice" to connect; going beyond "static" conceptions of voice  
 Relating "voice" to going below the surface. "heat" and "danger"  
 Going on the "lukewarm" stories  
 Voice comes from sharing and adapting diction and stories from others. \*\* intertextuality\*\*\*  
 ASK about the importance of sharing \*\*\*\*  
 Imitating mentor texts to help develop voice.  
 Questioning if we have a clear definition of voice.  
 \*\* Using voice as a way of deconstructing autonomous approaches to literacy and essayist literacy  
 Meta-discursive approaches to writing  
 Innate or developed??? Discovery?  
 Developing an innate balance to establish one's voice....diction, again...  
 Comparing voice to deep breathing...physiological.....???  
 Comparing voice to "home"  
 Comparing voice to emotion. What is the symbolism of this??

Using a multi-modal approach to discussing voice in the classroom

Using young adult literacies to demonstrate and explore voice.

Referencing *Writing to Learn*

Beginning discussions of rural draw from stereotypes and media examples

Karen: criticizing “outside actors” for their role in standardizing literacy

“Fixing” as a metaphor for “outside” actors and writing standards

This relates to the “squeezing” that Karen talks about in her follow up interview.

Questioning CCSS and its connection to rural education.

Teaching rhetorical situations

**Taking up the rhetorical situation:** Martha realizes that she must **contextualize** writing for her rural students

Learning from previous teaching experiences.

Using writing to build **community relationships**: “**heritage**” writing???

Realizing that “rural” is pejorative in many parts of the US

How do self-perpetuating perceptions exist?

Stereotypes become engrained.

Acknowledging Essayist literacy

Understanding that versatility is important in writing and discourse::: **Discourse communities/rhetorical situations\*\*\*\***

*Reclaiming*: rural literacies are “old-fashioned”

Complicating our understanding of diversity

Realizing the self-sufficient and unique aspects of rurality

Discussing isolation

Recognizing globalization and population shifts

Viewing the “fabric” of rurality as being part of community

Losing rural America.

Recognizing the lack of resources in rural areas

Trying to complicate our understanding of “Rurality”

Writing to learn more about the rural: Identity? Discovery??

Getting back to local concerns; religious schools

Comparing rural schools to “weigh stations”

Clara: Recognizing how different her rural school is...foreshadows her future trouble.

Viewing rural schools as where older teachers are “put out to pasture”

Linda: linking her experience to the rural

“Putting” ourselves in our students’ roles when we give assignments.

Using personal experience or personal perceptions as a starting point

Experimenting with voice through primary texts.

Using multimodal approaches in writing.

Describing multiple forms of **isolation** for rural schools and teachers

Barbara feeling isolated due to her position in the school. She isn’t part of a “department.”

Recognizing teacher turnover

Connecting rural and alternative schools: “They have so much to offer, if someone would just listen to them”

Karen: connecting social isolation to geographical isolation

Connecting to isolation.

Connecting Project RISE and voice in the rural **\*\*ASK\*\***

Sharing diverse stories in the classroom. Creating a “safe place” for students to share stories  
Thinking about autonomy?  
Complicating autonomy; teachers are “frontline troops” for bigger decisions. So what is happening on the ground?  
Is this *complicating autonomy an issue to take up later? A category???*  
Taking up a discussion of story sharing through the DeBlase reading.  
Linda taking up from the readings  
Feeling isolated; not sharing stories in the real setting  
Having discussions through graduate work and professional development. There appears to be a real disconnect between professional development and school settings?  
Complicating autonomy  
Placing the responsibility on teachers, not school districts  
Complicating autonomy through “merit pay”  
Viewing the punitive nature of assessment and administrative decisions  
Questioning standardized approaches to teaching; autonomous literacy  
Reading DeBlase: speaking with a political voice  
Bringing up the possibility of “collective voice”  
Placing the onus on the school board; disconnection between board and teachers’ knowledge  
Silencing of teachers’ voices.  
Waiting for someone to fix it  
Seeing a culture that places teachers in an adversarial role. \*\* Does this adversarial role extend to other categories?  
Protecting oneself as a teacher  
Considering the potential of voice in Unions  
Connecting unions and the collective voice of teachers  
Reading and writing as the “avenues” for our collective voice.  
Comparing *reclaiming the rural to reclaiming collective voice*\*\*\* Write about this.  
Taking up and engaging in a discussion of the political side of teaching....  
Feeling valued but feeling stifled; fearing the loss of a job  
Relating back to Unions, as teachers feel like their voices are stifled.  
Gender inequality  
Recognizing the power of “grassroots” and building collective voices...Challenging the silencing of teachers’ voices  
Simply collecting our voices does not ensure we will express them appropriately  
Connecting the NWP with professionalization and the professional piece...a political professionalism??  
Being informed through research and reflection  
NWP changing the professional lives of teachers  
Finding resources is often uncertain  
How do we get teachers to ask good questions? To seek answers?  
Martha: Understanding the reality of incorporating professional development with others who that are “walls”...Needing to be part of a team...Can one person make a difference?  
Getting stifled in the context of one’s school  
Staying connected to NWP  
Staying connected through reading research....  
Staying positive through voice and sharing

Resorting to bitterness  
 Writing about knowledge and education  
 Being judged for class reasons  
 Not wanting to be judged  
 Comparing formal and “life” education  
 Criticizing Ruby Payne and deficit model thinking  
 Martha “taking up” the idea that Ruby Payne’s work has “created a conversation”  
 Understanding deficit model components.  
 Poverty is a key factor in Delta  
 Not wanting to leave rural places; Donna compares it to Stockholm Syndrome, but are rural places “unhealthy”???  
 Making personal connections leads to a better understanding of rural emigration and socioeconomics  
 Questioning “brain drain.” Questioning the effects of the NWP.  
 Linking SES to survival\*\*\* An interesting perspective \*\*\* Find readings? “Poor people support each other.”  
 Taking up “silences” and “hostility” in relation to the ADOHP reading...relating this to stereotypes...did the students really have a lot to talk about???  
 Attempting to define “rural” and the profession of teaching...difficult to do  
 Criticizing standardized tests  
 Linking testing to the need for a curricula/political voice\*\*\*  
 Doing what is best for the students despite testing  
 “Holding people” to “unnatural standards”  
 Making the connection between **local experience and voice**\*\*\*  
 Considering the lack of context in testing.  
 Comparing the “silence” of students with the “silence” of teachers in relation to top-down standards  
 Developing theories about the role of oral history projects in rural places  
 Making connections and “connection”  
 Instilling pride early in rural education  
 Losing pride in teaching; professionalism; the rural  
 Finding pride in the heartland  
 Understanding the difficulties for living in the rural.  
 Regarding “isolation” as more than geography or population proximity  
 Linking SES to the “problem narrative”...too much focus on money and the business model  
 Taking up the “rural” and using it in the classroom; “tapping into” a discussion of community with students.  
 Helping students build **pride**  
 Taking up/Seeing the potential for connections between community literacy and schooled literacies  
 Taking up the issue of “community pride”---finding a broader definition.  
 Comparing rural schools to the cattle mentality of larger schools  
 Getting out of one’s comfort zone in writing through NWP  
 Martha: writing is “weakest link”  
 Increasing humor through modeling  
 Changing Perspectives through monologue

The teachers seem to have trouble with the lesson since the different file folders and links are in different messages.

Tim: Revealing frustration

Feeling isolated; I'm the only one that is giving much attention to Linda here.

Tim giving us instructions, after we have tried to open up Dropbox and files in our email.

There is building frustration on both "sides."

And the frustration comes out \*\*\*\*\*

Using frustration as a teaching moment

James: falling behind trying to help Linda

Using this lesson as scaffolding for using higher-level software in the future.

Linda: not responding to efforts by other teachers to help her with the technology she has

Teachers helping teachers.

Tim: Assuming that we teachers have the same level of digital literacy.

James: seeking help from Karen, as I've fallen behind.

Differing levels of digital literacy

Is Tim used to students with more proficiency?

Incorporating formal teaching modes.

Using sequential order more specifically.

Using lesson to work on the "economy of language."

Presuming a common set of technical skills for this assignment??

Comparing Tim's kids with us.

This is a clear demonstration of frustration. This is something a student might do. No??

We are collaborating as Linda is "shutting down."

Working with Tim to get my memoir in order.

Revising: Linda could learn from this sequence\*\*\*\*\*

James: offering to help Linda again.

Linda becoming more engaged when she is able to help me.

Tim: talking about the level of infrastructure at his urban school

Lacking digital literacy in rural schools, "If they went to Fayetteville, they'd sink." "They don't use the computer lab to revise or edit."

Donna to Linda: "adapting to the teaching situation."

Linda does not appear to understand differentiation or adapting lesson plans

NWP: Teachers teaching teachers\*\*\*

Not relying on autonomous approaches to literacy. Being able to learn through teaching. The model of teachers teaching teachers.

Teaching to learn

Viewing technology as somehow "different" than subject material

Closing one's self to ideas will not allow for growth

Comparing learning technology to dissection

Putting Linda into the role of student

Comparing Linda's frustrations to that of her students

Learning how to help students.

Learning as a teacher to transform

Tim: Feeling as if Linda has not acted in a collegial manner.

Differentiating for students with different levels of software.

Using grouping to help with technology differentiation.

Building teamwork to help with learning and “keeping up”/Differentiation  
 CCSS, working in stations  
 Writing as a recursive process.  
 Testing as standard is not optimal writing situation.  
 Having students create “writing contracts”  
 Showing that technology is not an end in itself.  
 Using multi-modal approaches to writing  
 Valerie sharing a moment from her childhood  
 Martha writes a prayer journal when her son moves out  
 Donna: Looking forward to making new memories  
 Karen: Whining is not professional  
 Changing the discussion to accountability  
 Reconfiguring what a writing community is.  
 Martha: Being afraid of “being attacked”  
 Not speaking due to fear of attack  
 Valerie: Taking up from Martha’s fear and relating it to the readings  
 Martha: Fearing the negative reactions of rural schools and communities  
 Speaking out without being confrontational  
 Using our collective knowledge/VOICE\*\*\*  
 Advocating beyond oneself  
 Understanding the rhetorical situation  
 Drawing a connection between speaking out and writing\*\*\*  
 Recognizing teachers that are natural leaders  
 Developing a “leader’s” voice in the NWP\*\*\*  
 Using the NWP network to continue the conversation  
 Respecting the community can help with the rhetorical situation and collective voice \*\*\*\*\*  
 Using research on the community to help  
 Taking up the issue of community/school partnerships  
 Receiving harsh reactions from parents over teaching approaches.  
 \*\*\* Using writing as a means of professionalism and making connections with  
 community...clarity...unity????  
 Being transparent about goals for advocacy  
 Our discussions give Valerie the idea for her professional piece  
 Informing is empowering: community/school connections?  
 Stepping on toes is a real issue for teachers.  
 Building advocacy is risky for collegial relationships  
 Winning the administration first  
 Thinking about ways to develop professional pieces, professional voices  
 Using communication with parents  
 Writing to learn in the demo lessons.  
 Using *When I Was Young In*/demo lesson on tradition and heritage\*\*\*  
 Sharing individual “When I was Young writing”  
 Helping students connect to communities through positive childhood experiences  
 Feeling self-sufficient in rural settings.  
 Wanting students to write to learn how their experience and selves are unique  
 Incorporating place-based narratives/picture books



Using the writing of NWP to help create writing for students. Showing students that you can do this writing also

Martha: feeling challenged by the heritage unit

Incorporating discussion of rural into the classroom

Students sharing writing helps other students; this was true for Karen and myself!!

Identifying resources in the community through community mapping

Using community mapping in artistic ways/community

Reinhabiting the rural places

Using “centering” perspective to help students move outward

Martha: tweaking the assignment to help with heritage lesson.

Adapting for multiple learners

Clara: Creating lessons on place and pride

Not feeling qualified to talk to students about where they live

Writing about favorite places; asking opinions from family and community members

Combining art and writing

Doing writing marathons in the community.

Connecting pedagogical and natural/real spaces....third space???

Using picture books with themes/connotations.

Creating lessons focused on freedom

Feeling “out of the loop” professionally

Response groups allow teachers to “hear” what their audience hears

“Moving slower” is a rhetoric to avoid

Resisting being a public voice

Espousing a rhetoric of lack

Representing a rural agrarian perspective

Developing response groups where one teaches

Using a “camera” metaphor for perspective in writing

Developing a more democratic view of revision through response groups

Creating a rural development network

Focusing on the positives of rural communities

Recognizing that students aren’t good at “active listening”

**Listening** is a key in NWP

Breaking through the “who am I to say it?” perspective

Taking up the issue of deficit models

Focusing on creativity in US schools

Privileging differentiation

Reconsidering audience and purpose through response groups

Cultivating a sense of place as teachers

Having goals after the Institute meet with reality in the schools

Feeling like “success stories”

## Appendix E. Chart of Potential Categories and Focused Codes

### The Power and Permission to Write

Gaining power and the permission to write

Giving students/writers safety and control

Creating “spaces” for students (and teachers) to be able to write

Explaining QWs: “Hands on, minds off.”

Giving students the “freedom” to write what is on their minds

Gaining “permission” through Institute to find one’s voice

Being given the freedom to write allows one to think deeply

Quick writes engage students

Freedom in writing/Choice

Freewriting as engaged writing: “Wherever your mind goes, just let your pen flow.”

Freedom & choice in writing

Choosing one’s topic is a form of freedom; being free to explore topics of interest can help with voice?

Feeling this freedom and joy leads to more use of figurative writing

Understanding students’ experiences is a reason to include choice and freedom

Having the freedom to give students freedom...a balanced approach to teaching?

Giving students freedom leaves room for place-based writing

### Writing as Self-Discovery and Catharsis

Allowing writers to write about “dark places”

The “power” of writing; Connecting NWP writing with catharsis/self-discovery

Writing to learn through discovery and self-exploration

Learning through emotions and sensory imagery; emotive responses

Linking emotion to the senses: Privileging emotions; tactile approaches to learning and writing

Karen: Helping students “find their voice”; using writing to help them learn how to expressing themselves

Using personal experience or personal perceptions as a starting point

Helping students connect to communities through positive childhood experiences

Wanting students to write to learn how their experience and selves are unique

Incorporating place-based narratives/picture books

Incorporating discussion of rural into the classroom

Using “centering” perspective to help students move outward

Clara: Creating lessons on place and pride

Not feeling qualified to talk to students about where they live

Writing about favorite places; asking opinions from family and community members

Connecting pedagogical and natural/real spaces....third space???

Reconnecting to a “writer side”

Feeling conflicted about loss of loved ones. Writing about loss

Using humor as a “block” or catharsis?

Personal connections to literature

The visceral experience of the response groups correlates well to the visceral experiences in students’ lives

Sharing personal tragedy writing with students

Writing as therapy

The personal healing power of writing

Being Placed in the Student's Role and Feeling Frustrated

Feeling like a student due to QWs

Feeling the tensions and anxieties of writing

Putting" ourselves in our students' roles when we give assignments

Building frustration as "student"

Using frustrations as a teaching moment

Sharing and "Active" Listening

Exploring the power of stories to help us think of learning

Viewing relationships as a the way of learning

Telling stories as a key to acquisition and learning?

Recognizing that students aren't good at "active listening"

Donna: "You listen for ideas and look for mistakes"

Reconsidering audience and purpose through response groups

Seeking out a "writing community"

Feeling like a "novice" with a strong educational background

Lacking composition experience

Being afraid to open up

Discovering individual voice by listening to others

Being honest is a key to exploring voice

Seeing a need for active listening

Using one's voice to "resonate" with others and to create a "spark" in others

Having a voice helps groups become more adhesive

Sharing as a form of pedagogy

Perceptions of Voice

Taking up "voice." Karen: Using "voice" to connect; *going beyond "static" conceptions of voice*

Lamott: Relating "voice" to going below the surface. "heat" and "danger"

Going on the "lukewarm" stories

Voice comes from *sharing and adapting diction* and stories from others. \*\* intertextuality\*\*\*

ASK about the importance of sharing \*\*\*\*\*

Using *voice as a way of deconstructing autonomous approaches to literacy* and essayist literacy

Innate or developed??? Discovery?

Comparing voice to deep breathing...physiological.....???

Comparing voice to "home" and personal emotion....discovery?

Viewing contemporary education as contrary to teaching voice

Defining voice as individual perception

Linking voice to "getting out"

Criticizing CCSS for "extinguishing" voices of teachers and students

Criticizing schooling for creating a lack of curiosity

Equating schooling to the "right answer"

Students feel like "star-belly sneetches"

Writer's voice is personal and in flux

Developing voice requires taking stock and personal reflection  
 Connecting writing to joy

### Tensions in Advocating for Rural Schools/Public Voice

Clara: Recognizing how different her rural school is...foreshadows her future trouble  
 Martha: Resisting being a "public voice"  
 Creating a rural development network  
 Having goals after the Institute meet with reality in the schools  
 Understanding the implications of teaching in small communities  
 Not stepping "too far outside the box"  
 Moving the piano, inch by inch  
 Keeping "your mouth shut" in relation to public voice  
 Gaining approval  
 Using multimodality, this is sanctioned  
 Being part of the community  
 Bridging the gap between pedagogy and community access/values  
 Feeling respected by community  
 Wanting to be able to express herself in writing and professionally  
 Not being able to  
 Feeling the tensions between reaching out to NWP and "broadcasting" her feelings to the public  
 Connecting the Institute "advocacy" to public writing  
 Feeling the urge to do research in her classroom  
 Feeling apolitical\*\*\*\* Lacking trust in groups

### Gaining Confidence and Energy from Institute

Feeling like "success stories"  
 Feeling energized by Institute  
 Getting more from the Institute than expected  
 Gaining confidence as a writer through NWP  
 Broadening the scope of a writing audience  
 Learning through NWP that we are all writers..  
 Wanting to write positive material  
 Writing to learn  
 Instilling self-confidence in rural students  
 Having confidence in students as a form of advocacy

### Issues of Rurality

Recognizing that disenfranchisement exists in myriad schools  
 Taking up the issue of deficit models  
 Privileging differentiation  
 Seeing a lack of focus on academics in rural school  
 Seeing limitations of rural schools; moving to online classes, for instance.  
 Losing "good" teachers due to trends in rural schools  
 Living divided between city and country  
 Treating Rural schools as a "weigh station"

Being a big fish in a little pond  
 Seeing a lack of development technologically and professionally in rural schools  
 Lacking technological pedagogy in rural school  
 Being clearly aware of differences in rural and city schools  
 Viewing change as slow and mediated by community norms  
 Viewing education in terms of ideals and values  
 Finding issues in rural teacher hiring; “out to pasture” approach  
 Having issues of rural access to technology  
 Seeing a lack of college aspirations  
 Having ambivalent feelings about college and vocational learning  
 Making real-world connections  
 Believing that athletics and coaching take precedent for community concerns  
 Parents and students are not seeing the value of a full literacy curriculum  
 Feeling pressured by time constraints  
 Lacking exposure in rural areas

### Perceptions of Advocacy

Wanting to serve as a model for students  
 Creating a “safe environment” is advocating  
 Leading youth; serving needs.  
 Serving as a surrogate parent  
 Being an advocate is a mandate for teachers...different ways to advocate  
 Advocating for students’ needs through church and community resources  
 Being frustrated with leadership and organization  
 Looking to leadership as the “voice” for change  
 Being leery about advocacy groups  
 Seeing manipulation as a method from leadership/administration  
 Beginning teaching as a “protective mother”  
 Creating “secret missions”: giving students confidence  
 Not all teachers strive to be advocates; does this mean going above and beyond?  
 Feeling like she is the lone advocate for her students  
 Institutional distance makes it harder to hear students’ voices  
 Advocating requires a voice  
 Connecting complicity to being silent or silenced  
 Advocating by not teaching to the test

### Teacher Autonomy and Isolation

Donna discussing *teacher autonomy and the complications of autonomy*  
 Martha acknowledging that this sharing professional develop is not well received  
 “going it alone”\*\*\*\* / *autonomy*  
 Martha recognizing that *sharing professional development*—“going to the next level”—is not  
 always valued and appreciated by her fellow rural teachers  
 Linking social and geographical “*isolation*”  
 Lacking professional collaboration among teachers  
 Feeling frustration due to perceived professional isolation  
 Describing multiple forms of **isolation** for rural schools and teachers

Complicating autonomy; teachers are “frontline troops” for bigger decisions. So what is happening on the ground?

**\*\*Is this *complicating autonomy* an issue to take up later? A category???**

Feeling isolated; not sharing stories in the real setting

Having discussions through graduate work and professional development. There appears to be a real disconnect between professional development and school settings?

### ***Complicating autonomy***

Viewing the punitive nature of assessment and administrative decisions

Bringing up the possibility of “collective voice”

### ***Silencing*** of teachers’ voices

Waiting for someone to fix it

Connecting unions and the collective voice of teachers

Feeling valued but feeling *stifled; fearing the loss of a job*

Simply collecting our voices does not ensure we will express them appropriately

Connecting the NWP with professionalization and the professional piece...a political professionalism??

Martha: Going back to school with NWP development: Understanding the reality of incorporating professional development with others who that are “walls”...Needing to be part of a team...Can one person make a difference?

Getting stifled in the context of one’s school

Staying positive through voice and sharing

Making the connection between **local experience and voice**

Comparing the “silence” of students with the “silence” of teachers in relation to top-down standards

Martha: Being afraid of “being attacked”

Not speaking due to fear of attack

Martha: Fearing the negative reactions of rural schools and communities

Using our collective knowledge/VOICE\*\*\*

Advocating beyond oneself

Understanding the rhetorical situation

Recognizing teachers that are natural leaders

Drawing a connection between speaking out and writing\*\*\*

Respecting the community can help with the rhetorical situation and collective voice \*\*\*\*\*

Seeing advocacy as reciprocal

Teachers have a hard time staying focused on the rural aspects of the readings

\*\*\* Using writing as a means of professionalism and making connections with community...clarity...unity????

Building advocacy is risky for collegial relationships

Thinking about ways to develop professional pieces, professional voices

Feeling “out of the loop” professionally

Resentment vs. Reinvention

Not being part of the neighborhood? Feeling Disconnected.

Feeling isolated professionally, departmentally

Lacking ties to the community as an extension of feeling negative about job role

Being limited in making pedagogical decisions

Being “supported” by parents when it comes to behavior.

Viewing the school district as “set in their ways.”  
 Being “watched”  
 Seeing a lack of advocacy for professionalism  
 Struggling to find a “home” in teaching  
 Feeling “accepted” and valued  
 Lacking roots in the community  
 Feeling isolated in teaching leads to new directions  
 Seeing kids get isolated in multiple ways: through behavior and numbers  
**Comparing the isolation** of rural and at-risk students  
 Knowing students/people on a **personal level**/building **rapport**  
 Finding autonomy and frustration due to autonomy  
 Growing through professional development  
 Needing time for teacher collaboration  
 Feeling isolated  
 Feeling persecuted, isolated  
 Lacking strong professional relationships  
 Not being taken seriously by administration  
 Feeling treated like “a first-year teacher”  
 Seeing a lack of strong administrative leadership  
 Wanting students to find their own voice in writing  
 Being bullied by teachers that have been there longer  
 Experiencing a lack in strong administrative leadership  
 Having to follow administrative decisions; leads to a lack of sharing and collaboration  
 Relying on Gates Maps to locate texts to use  
 Using a book that relates to rurality that is not on the Gates list  
 Preparing questions that relate to the benchmark tests  
 Valuing collaboration

#### Understanding Discourse Communities and Rhetorical Situations

Understanding that versatility is important in writing and discourse::: **Discourse communities/rhetorical situations**  
 Waiting for a “time and place” for advocacy; understanding the rhetorical situation  
 Viewing *advocacy* as convincing those outside of the schools that the students are “awesome”  
 The audience for *advocacy* is often an **outside agent**  
 Adapting CCSS to help students discover their world/history  
 Having a fear of “top down” policies  
 Advocating for vocational pedagogies for at-risk students  
 Fear of rhetoric/persuasion  
 Valuing firsthand knowledge over statistics  
 Identifying differences in writing modes and rhetorical situations  
 Being unsure what “forum” is appropriate to express herself  
 Using writing as a personal reflection of school experiences  
 Questioning the rhetorical situation to speak out  
 Using rhetorical situations and genre to demonstrate voice  
 Expanding students’ perceptions of audience  
 Using her public voice to present at NCTE

### Developing Approaches to Place, Space, and Pride

*Reclaiming*: rural literacies are “old-fashioned”

Realizing the self-sufficient and unique aspects of rurality

Viewing the “fabric” of rurality as being part of community

Writing to learn more about the rural;;identity? Discovery??

Developing theories about the role of oral history projects in rural places

Instilling pride early in rural education

Losing pride in teaching; professionalism; the rural

Taking up the “rural” and using it in the classroom; “tapping into” a discussion of community with students

Taking up/Seeing the potential for connections between community literacy and schooled literacies \*\* ASK Martha

Taking up the issue of “community pride”---finding a broader definition

Comparing rural schools to the cattle mentality of larger schools

Focusing on the positives of rural communities

Cultivating a sense of place as teachers

### Teachers Teaching Teachers

Donna to Linda: “adapting to the teaching situation.”

Linda does not appear to understand differentiation or adapting lesson plans

NWP: Teachers teaching teachers\*\*\*

Not relying on autonomous approaches to literacy. Being able to learn through teaching. The model of teachers teaching teachers

Teaching to learn \*\*\*

Learning as a teacher to transform

### Wanting to Give Students a Voice

Wanting to give students “a voice”

Understanding disenfranchisement. Thinking from a **socio-political point of view**

Recognizing the classroom as a “risky” place for at-risk kids

Putting oneself “out there”

Defining *advocacy* as being “able to stand up for your kid, one of your students”

Making connections is learning; therefore, is discovering voice learning?



## Appendix F. Sample Memo

### Defining Advocacy Takes Multiple, if not Ambiguous, Perspectives

In discussing advocacy, both in interview and in the Institute, teachers take multiple perspectives to define or qualify the term and concept. Advocacy seems multi-faceted, if not ambiguous to teachers.

On Day 4, Karen stated that “Voice is a way of **connecting.**” While this discussion was in the context of teaching voice to students, this idea of a link between advocacy and voice is apparent throughout the data.

Many teachers discuss being a *voice for students* or *giving voices to their students*:

Linda in her initial interview talks about “giving the kids a voice” so that they can be confident no matter where they are.

Karen feels that she is inherently an advocate for her at risk students.

Valerie in her initial interview believes that most teachers do not serve as advocates: “that each individual teacher would have to have that desire and that love of teaching and students to continue learning how to be that type of person and that type of teacher. See, I think that is more of an individual thing. Just because they have the title teacher, does *not make them an advocate.*” This is an interesting comment by Valerie. She doesn’t assume that all teachers are advocates. In fact, she says one of her “secret missions” is to advocate for her students.

Why would a teacher feel the need to have “**secret missions**”? What is a teacher hiding and why? Why hide one’s desire to be an advocate for a student? From whom does a teacher feel the need to hide any forms of advocacy? As Valerie goes on to discuss advocacy, she mentions that “If they continue to tell us what to teach and how to teacher, we won’t have much of a role at all.” This may of the major concerns for teachers to “voice” themselves as advocates. The over-arching power of standardized curricula may be a “silencing” mechanism for teachers.

If teachers feel the initial responsibility of advocating for children and giving students “voices,” why would a secret mission exist or be needed? Are there restraints put in place to limit teachers serving as advocates? There appears to many a multitude of restraints. Yet, there seems to be an implied goal for teachers to serve as advocates, since as Karen states, “Students can’t advocate for themselves.” The role of teacher as “hero” advocate might appear to be a driving desire. Valerie voices this, but then admits that this is a “secret.”

If something is “secret,” can it be effective? Donna defines advocacy as a “collective voice.” This connects with Karen’s perspective that voice is a “way of connecting.” Can a collective come from secret or clandestine measures, voices?

Linda’s initial interview shows that she believes teachers must be aware of communities’ goals and assumptions. She says a teacher must “keep your mouth shut” at the beginning of teaching. The story of the piano leads one to believe that a “silent” advocacy may be in play.

Advocacy may be difficult to define, that is if it is not part of our common discourse on teaching, part of the teacher education, nor a primary goal of schools and school districts.

What is the connection between advocacy and voice? How is voice defined by the teachers? What are some ways we need to consider voice in this context?

## Appendix G. My Professional Piece from the Institute

### Rural Education Matters in Arkansas: A Call for Advocacy and Pride

It's a crisp October night and the familiar cheers of a rural high school football game echo through the woods and hollers of Arkansas. The familiar smells of popcorn and hot dogs from the concession stand waft through the air, as little children play games with crumpled paper cups or hide and seek under the bleachers.

For many, these are not difficult sensory images to conjure. They epitomize the dedicated and passionate support of rural (or suburban, urban) communities throughout Arkansas for their community schools.

Yet, many of these same schools are facing "fourth and long" away from the field.

The report *Why Rural Matters 2011-2012: The Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States*, a biennial research publication sponsored by the Rural School and Community Trust, sheds some important light on the challenges facing education in the state of Arkansas and its many rural places and schools. The report labels Arkansas as "Very Important," "Urgent" or "Crucial" in all of its gauges of need in rural education.

According to the report, more than one-third of Arkansas K-12 public school students attend rural schools and over half of schools serve students from rural communities. These statistics come with real-life challenges. Alarming, poverty rates for rural students have risen over the past decade, resulting in Arkansas having the fourth-highest rural student poverty rate in the nation.

In addition to becoming poorer, rural Arkansas students display a high "student mobility rate." According to the researchers, student mobility marks "percentage of households with school-age children who changed residences within the previous 12 months" and "is a measure of economic stress that disrupts consistency in teaching and learning and has been associated with lower academic achievement in the research literature."

These challenges need to be addressed with the needs of an increasingly diverse demographic in mind, including a 278% increase in Hispanic students since 1999.

In terms of educational outcomes, Arkansas's needs are "Urgent." For instance, Arkansas's rural 8<sup>th</sup>-grade test scores on national assessments were among the nation's lowest in both math and reading.

Further concern lies in the report's findings that Arkansas rural instructional expenditures and teacher pay in rural districts are among the lowest in the nation—only four states spend less on rural instruction. It would appear from this data that Arkansas is providing less financial support to the schools and teachers that face some of the state's most challenging educational issues.

However, all is not lost. No "hail Mary" is required. In fact, there is a lot to preserve in rural education, and there are important resources policy makers, educators, students, and parents can draw upon. Each of our rural communities and hamlets, from the Delta to the Ozarks, offer the close-knit support groups and dedicated citizens needed to help bring awareness to and solutions for growing needs. The same impressive support for athletics, church programs, or local businesses, can be harnessed for school growth.

This summer I've had the pleasure of working with and learn from a small group of dedicated rural teachers in a Rural Advocacy Institute of the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project in Eureka Springs. The funds of knowledge these educators bring to discussions on rural education and literacy are valuable to all of us concerned with rural education. Professional development institutes such as this are a key resource in advocating for rural students and communities.

What these teachers have taught me and can teach policy makers and their own communities is that rural education is a complex and potentially productive way of educating the future of rural Arkansas.

These teachers are able to passionately advocate for their rural schools and bring about important issues that go beyond many statistical reports. One common desire that these teachers express is for their student to have "pride in where they live and learn." Furthermore, these teachers express concerns about gender inequality in administrative leadership and the difficulties rural communities face in relation to outside influences, including assessment standards.

Let's listen to our rural educational professionals and communities, gain as much anecdotal and research information we can, communicate with our administrators and policy makers, and advocate for the increasingly complicated issues and exciting opportunities implicit in rural education.

In this way, we can best support rural school students on and *off* the field.

## Appendix H. IRB Approval Letter

May 28, 2013

### MEMORANDUM

TO: James Anderson  
Christian Goering

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 13-05-715

Protocol Title: *A Case Study of a Professional Development Institute of the National Writing Project*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 05/28/2013 Expiration Date: 05/27/2014

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Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 15 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).