

ENACTED IDENTITIES:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO TEACHER WRITERLY BECOMING

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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MAY 2018

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO TEACHER WRITERLY BECOMING

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Acknowledgements

I owe my largest debt of gratitude to my five committee members who, in varying stages of their own academic careers, undertook the time and effort to mentor me in my academic becoming.

Dr. Amy Lannin, when I first approached you (in my typical panicky fashion) to ask if you'd become my committee chair in light of Dr. Fox's retirement, you responded with your characteristic kindness and took me on even though you'd never had me as a student. In these last three years, you have generously involved me in every aspect of your work—the Campus Writing Program, the teaching of Reading and Writing in the Content Areas, and the Missouri Writing Project. You hastened my scholarly becoming by inviting me into these spaces and trusting my often hesitant expertise. More importantly, though, you demonstrated to me that there is room for kindness *and* scholarship in academia. You provided me models for dealing with students, colleagues, and peer reviews with grace. Every August, we talk about how much we miss public school teaching, and you remind me that I can—and should—still proudly wear the title of English Teacher. I'm so grateful that I get to continue learning from you post-PhD through our work in the Conley House.

Dr. Roy Fox, it seems serendipitous that I arrived at the University of Missouri at the end of your tenure. How much I would've missed out on had I not had the opportunity to learn from you. You showed me that a serious scholar need not sound overwrought, and you led me to find my own writer's voice in our Teaching, Reading, and Writing History course. I remember the first time I asked you if what I was doing was *real* research, and you responded, "Of course it is. What

else would it be?” You provided me many models of scholarship, and I often hearken to *Facing the Sky* to remind me that, yes, I **am** doing *real* research here. Your comments on my dissertation work not only made me a better writer—they made me a better thinker. Thank you for mentoring me to the end.

Dr. Carol Gilles, when you agreed to join my committee, I knew that you would help me remember what is *most* important about education scholarship—the students and teachers. Throughout our classes and work together, you encouraged me to create a research agenda which celebrates teachers. You’ll never know how much I valued our impromptu meetings in your office. Whether you were reassuring me that I was a strong candidate for a job or giving me tips on writing a section of this dissertation, I always knew that you supported me as a student, but more importantly, as a person. I tell every new doctoral student I meet that you are *the best* teacher in the College of Education. I have learned how to be a college professor from you.

Dr. Lily Gurton-Wachter, when I stumbled into your Essay as Experiment class my first semester at MU, I had no idea that the ideas we explored would become instrumental not only to my doctoral study but also to my thoughts around writing—thoughts which ultimately lead to this dissertation topic. I was nervous to be an English Education PhD student surrounded by English literature PhD students, but you made it obvious that you valued my pedagogical knowledge and encouraged my education-centric approaches to literature. Thank you for asking me the good questions, for introducing me to Montaigne and Benjamin, and for finishing this journey with me.

Dr. Marty Townsend, you are—without a doubt—my biggest cheerleader. My career trajectory would've been drastically different had I not met you during your last WAC/WID seminar. You provided me with the language of Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines, and in doing so, you opened up an area of scholarship I didn't know existed. Thank you for joining my committee even in your retirement and for constantly encouraging me to think bigger—and to think better of myself.

To the five high school teachers who embarked on this work with me, I am eternally grateful. You let me into your histories and your classrooms, allowing yourselves to be honest and vulnerable in this strange space of research. I sincerely hope that I have completely and accurately shared your stories.

Glen, after I met you, I knew my teaching would never be the same. There is no pair of colleagues who talk faster about more dense topics than us. You push me to answer the *why* questions, and you lead me to problematize all that I know to be true. You are my thought-leader in this work.

Aspen, I will never forget your smiling face popping into my classroom on my first teacher workday. From the start, I was drawn to your kindness and your brilliance. Through our years of teaching together, working out together, and drinking together, you became one of my dearest friends. I am a better person because of your presence in my life and teaching.

Sylvie, when you came to our school, I quickly knew I would learn more about teaching writing from you than you would from me. Your quiet presence and

creative approaches to *Techniques of Writing* gave me a model to follow. Thank you for embarking on this journey with me.

Neal, I will never forget dragging you to meetings you'd otherwise miss or when you called me your "work wife" in front of the entire faculty. As a hesitant young teacher, you inspired me to think outside of the box. When you invited me into your home for dinner, you showed me what intellectual discourse looks like. Your impact on my teaching is immeasurable.

To Ginny and Stu McMains, thank you for supporting me in each step of the last few years. Ginny, your thoughtful celebrations of even the smallest milestones encouraged me to keep going. Stu, your earnest questions about my research and teaching—and your celebration of the education profession—supported my scholarly becoming. You asked earnest questions, and you reminded me to be kind to myself. How lucky I am to have you as my second set of parents.

Mom and dad, thank you for, well, for *all* of it. For indulging my love of reading, for supporting my dreams of becoming a teacher (even when some folks told me I was "too smart" to *just* be a teacher), and for holding my hand while I jumped into this unknown world of doctoral study four years ago. Even though I'm an only child, I've never felt alone because of the many books you surrounded me with and because I'm the sole recipient of your limitless love.

Jacob, you are the reason I even made it this far. Actually, you're the reason I even *started* this journey in the first place. When we met almost a decade ago, I mentioned to you my dream of "teaching English teachers how to teach," and, throughout the years, you gently reminded me of this goal until five years ago, you

badgered me into taking the plunge. When I came home from class my first semester in tears because I didn't think I was smart enough to do this work, you mixed me a drink, gave me a hug, let me recover, and then told me to keep going. A year later, when I was throwing papers around my office in frustration over my statistics course, you mixed me a drink, gave me a hug, and then told me to keep going. This process has been a reoccurring cycle in our lives, and I'm eternally grateful for your love. I've almost made it, and I haven't yet broken any dinner plates. Thank you and Beans for your patience, support, and mostly, for the cuddles.

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry explored the ways in which four mid-career English teachers construct themselves as W/writers and how those writerly identities are performed in their pedagogy. I curated data collected from extended interviews, journals, personal and professional writings to build narratives of these teachers-as-writers. Through these narratives and metaphorical thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), I analyzed the wholeness of each participant's experience with writing.

Then, in stage two of the study, I used data collected from teaching observations to build a continuum of process —> product, employing Goffman's (1974) frame analysis to place the teachers within that continuum. This continuum represented the stable thread that continued through the teachers' personal and professional identities and led to three insights: (1) Those teachers who identified as Writers were more comfortable teaching writing processes (2) The desire to be seen as a "kind of W/writer or teacher" brings risk writing instruction and (3) Agency provides Writers a way to mitigate the risk of teaching writing.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Inquiry

*Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)
Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"*

Almost two centuries ago, Walt Whitman embraced the messy and uncertain nature of identity in his own experimental text *Leaves of Grass* (1855) when he parenthetically exclaims, "(I am large, I contain multitudes)." Teachers, too, contain multitudes which are most apparent when we consider their writerly and teacherly stories. These stories form a narrative which encompasses their histories with writing, their personal and professional writing activities, their deeply held beliefs about writing and teaching, their curriculum, and their pedagogy. And as Whitman demonstrates, writing—that most vulnerable and intimate of acts—encapsulates our human identities. It embodies and reflects our voices, our interests, our worldviews, and in the case of English teachers, it is inextricably a part of our professional lives as well. It is in this place of multiplicity and vulnerability that I situate my inquiry.

This dissertation topic has been percolating—growing, changing, evolving—nearly as long as I have been teaching, and, in many ways, I had a topic before I even knew I'd have a dissertation with which to explore it. Early in my career as a high school English teacher, I was intrigued by a phenomenon I saw in our department. When curriculum was discussed at any length, my colleagues quickly broke down into two camps: the "writing teachers" and the "literature teachers." Mirroring the two main strands in our field, these designations seemed to reflect teachers' personalities as much as their pedagogy. As I learned about my own teaching

strengths and as I taught more lessons in more classes, I realized that I was thoroughly and undoubtedly in the “writing teacher” camp.

Throughout the decade I spent teaching in high schools, community colleges, and universities, I became increasingly more interested in the negotiation of personal and professional identities in the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. I soon noticed that teachers’ professional lives were undoubtedly and messily tied up with their personal lives, especially when we discussed writing and writing instruction.

Inquiry Rationale

Of course, the exploration of English teachers-as-writers is not a new phenomenon. In the late 1960s through the 1970s, scholars in the process writing movement (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1983; Elbow, 1973; Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1985) recognized the power of the writerly identity and, in combination with the emergence of the National Writing Project (Gray, 2000), they encouraged teachers to tap into the writerly elements of their professional identities. These process writing proponents foregrounded the multiplicity within professional identities when they considered teachers both as writers (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983) and as pedagogical experts (Murray, 1985; Smyth, 2007). From encouraging educators to use their own writing as exemplars (Graves, 1983) to building teaching models to forefront voice (Calkins, 1983), pedagogues who encouraged teachers to adopt writerly identities recognized that the “teacher’s identity remains a central part of students’ education” (Yagelski, 1999, p. 43). Murray (1985) even suggested

that when teachers become writers, their classroom confidence and writing pedagogy improves.

Though the process writing movement quickly caught on and still permeates teacher training programs and professional development (Whitney, 2009), it has faced much opposition from scholars and practicing teachers. Smagorinsky (1987) criticized these process-focused pedagogues (namely Graves) as reporting anecdotes rather than undertaking systematic research. The attack also came from practicing teachers when, in a now infamous column in the *English Journal*, Jost (1990) spoke against teachers-as-writers as best practice for the high school English classroom. Painting Murray as an academic living in the ivory towers with no secondary teaching experience, Jost pushed back against his assertion that high school teachers must write to teach writing effectively. Her conclusion—“for the full time high-school English teacher, writing is neither a realistic nor a professionally advantageous avocation” (p. 66)—set the English education world on fire and spurred many confirming and contradicting essays (see Robbins, 1992; 1996).

The argument surrounding the efficacy of teacher-as-writers notwithstanding, the research overwhelmingly suggests that the majority of high school English teachers do not see themselves as writers (Cremin, 2006; Robbins, 1996; Yeo, 2007). Though teachers may write often, many do not write “beyond the job” (Robbins, 1996), most are not published writers (Cremin & Baker, 2014), and few say that have “written anything of great moment,” (Robbins, 1996) so they do not identify as writers. Even those who do identify as writers are often “largely

unconscious of [their] own habitual processes” (Robbins, 1992, p. 73) and focus more on the end product than the journey.

Cremin and Baker (2014) suggest that the way educators conceptualize themselves—whether it be as teacher-writers, writer-teachers, or some other combination—demonstrates which identity is privileged in their teaching. This identity expression is a shifting continuum for most teachers, and, overall, the literature shows that language arts teachers are less confident in writing than reading (Cremin, 2006; Gannon & Davies, 2007). My review of the literature and my own anecdotal experiences in various English departments suggest that, even though the process writing pedagogues encouraged teachers to be writers as early as the 1970s, we still have not seen an overarching impact on English teachers’ conceptions of themselves as writers.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms related to this inquiry must be briefly defined before we can go further, though I will provide more detailed definitions in Chapter 2.

Teacher/Teacherly identity. Historically, the definition of teacher identity has been contested and argued. In her ethnography of pre-service teaching, Britzman (2003) hearkens to the “cultural myths” surrounding teachers—namely that teachers look a certain way and act a certain way (see p. 28). Similarly, in her study of British primary and secondary teachers, MacLure (1993) echoes the existence of a cultural depiction, but she notes that, in our moment, teachers seem to be working against the old “culturally available iconographies of teacherhood” (p.

319). Gee (2000) situates his discussion in this place of uncertainty, conceptualizing identity as “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given context” (p. 99). For this inquiry, I combine these varying depictions of teacher identity (Cremin & Baker, 2014; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009) with Gee’s focus on context. As such, I define teacher identity as the version of oneself—to use Gee’s words, the “kind of person”—teachers present to students, colleagues, and administrators.

Writer/Writerly Identity. Barthes (1975) was perhaps the first scholar to consider this concept of “writerliness” in relation to texts, noting that “writerly” texts make demands on the reader and forefront style and language. A little over a decade later, in his foundational book on writers and writing, Donald Murray (1985) remarked that “writing is one of the most disciplined ways of making meaning and one of the most effective methods we can use to monitor our own thinking” (p. 3).

More recently, Ivanic (1998), McKinney (2017), and Locke (2017) extend this idea. Ivanic suggests that writing is a “representation of self” which goes beyond content, style, or genre. McKinney’s research with novice teachers produced four components of writing identities, namely “being a writer, what I write, the intellectual/academic side, and the creative side” (2017, p. 88). Finally, Locke explicitly states his own definition of the term; for him, writing identity is “the subscribed-to discourse or *story* (emphasis mine) about what it means to be a writer that is implicit in one’s own beliefs and practices” (p. 135). In short, an exploration of the literature surrounding writer/writerly identities uncovers a discussion as complex as writers themselves.

For my own definition of the terms, I first consider the implicit elements of writing identity as discussed by the earlier theorists: manifestations of voice and thought, a distinct representation of the 'self' (or selves), and the many types, contexts, and manners in which writers write. The stories we tell ourselves and others about our writing processes and products form our writerly identities; thus, an individual's writing identity is a compilation of stories about the act of writing.

Writer-Teacher/Teacher-Writer. Bishop (1999), one of the first researchers to name and explore the roots of writer-teachers/teacher-writers, applies the former label to Donald Murray and the latter to Peter Elbow. Noting that Murray is a "publishing journalist and creative writer" who teaches composition based on his writerly experience, Bishop draws a distinction between his approach and Elbow's who, in her words, exemplifies "that of a blocked dissertation writer who needed to finish and who studies his own writing process and eventually survives to tell us about it" (p. 14). She suggests that the writer-teacher (Murray) is "venerated for his expertise" and the teacher-writer (Elbow) is able to speak voice to text in such a skillful way that allows us to connect with him as a scholar, as a teacher, and as "folks just like us" (p. 14). Furthermore, Bishop notes (but does not agree with) the academic pushback against expressivists such as Murray and Elbow, suggesting that some scholars of rhetoric have discounted these skillful writer-teachers and teacher-writers as too personal and not scholarly enough. In coining the terms "writer-teacher" and "teacher-writer," Bishop asks us to consider when, why, and how these elements of teachers' identities are privileged.

To Bishop's discussion, I would add that these designations, like all designations related to identity exploration are never stable. They may shift within one story, one lesson, or one piece of writing. While some scholars (Cremin, 2017; Whitney, 2017) characterize any teacher who draws on her writing experience as a teacher-writer, I force a distinction between writer-teachers and teacher-writers to allow me to explore the shifting nature of teachers' identities.

Writer-teacher. Writer-teachers approach their practice through a writerly lens, privileging the *writerly* component of their identities and using their writing experience to carry out their teaching. Eyres (2017) suggests, "The practice of a writer-teacher has the potential to be grounded in their experiences as an author and therefore the social and cultural practices of authors" (p. 12). When she is acting as a writer-teacher, a teacher sees the world—and her practice—through the eyes of an author.

Teacher-writer. In contrast, teacher-writers approach their practice through a teacherly lens, privileging the *teacherly* component of their identities and using their professional identities to carry out their writing. It is true that all teachers are writers; however, teacher-writers view writing and instruction through the eyes of a teacher, rather than those of an author.

Writing-to-Learn. Sometimes called "informal writing" or "impromptu writing," writing-to-learn tasks are often ungraded. Their purpose is to help writers clarify thought and gather their ideas on a subject (Bean, 2011). Writing-to-learn is often contrasted with learning-to-write; the latter category brings with it a sense of

structure and correctness. Learning-to-write is what we generally consider the activities that take place in traditional composition classrooms (Bean, 2011).

Research Methodology

In their essay “Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry,” Clandinin and Rosiek (2009) discuss the tensions which often arise in narrative inquiry, and in doing so, they shed light on tensions I encountered when I attempted to situate my exploration of identity within the existing schools of thought. Clandinin and Rosiek highlight the differences between narrative inquiry and poststructuralism while accepting that many poststructural scholars also embrace narrative methods and methodology. Whereas poststructuralism tends to erase the individual by focusing on social and cultural contexts which often create oppression, narrative allows us to embrace the individual and social “living and telling, reliving and retelling” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20) as knowledge in its own right. Similarly, stories are forefronted in both poststructuralist and narrative approaches. However, the use of such stories differs according to the paradigmatic aims. The *posts* often use stories to generalize the “broader social discourses” that create/recreate the individual’s experience whereas narrative researchers see “lived experience as both the beginning and ending points of inquiry” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2009, p. 55).

As such, narrative inquiry exists in the borderlands, at the “bumping places” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) where it intersects with other ways of knowing and being. My inquiry is situated in one such “bumping place” as I am influenced by poststructuralist conceptions of identity (Baudrillard, 1994; Lifton, 1993), discourse

theorists' focus on language as creating/recreating identity (Bakhtin, 1981; Bahktin, 1986; Gee, 2000), and narrative's valuing of stories to build/rebuild individuals' identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008).

Realizing these borderland tensions and following Spector-Mersel's (2010) lead, I embrace narrative inquiry as paradigm, allowing me to explore ways in which the participants' and researcher's narratives create/recreate their identities. As an English literature scholar and a writing teacher, I recognize the ways in which the process of writing leads to knowledge creation; as such, I also draw on Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) writing as a method of inquiry to explore the writerly experiences of four mid-career English teachers.

Research Questions

More than a decade has passed since I, as a shiny new high school English teacher, first noticed the dual positions of "writing teacher" and "literature teacher" in departmental meetings, and now, as a fledgling academic, I still wonder about the experiences which divide and classify English teachers. I find myself interrogating both my own and my colleagues' experiences to examine what leads to our self-identification with one of these two camps. I ask every new teacher I meet *Do you consider yourself more of a writing teacher or a literature teacher?* I email my former colleagues to ask *Which do you like teaching more—writing or literature?* It is from this place of near-obsession that my research questions emerged.

To follow narrative paradigmatic assumptions, I created my research questions with the philosophy that they "are not meant to be fixed" (Kim, 2016, p.

97). In these questions there is room for modification as data collection requires. Schön (1983) tells us that research questions can arise from a gap in the literature or one's own reflective practice and, as I've demonstrated with my opening anecdote and literature review, my questions come equally from these two places.

Additionally, I have written them “not as [questions] that can be answered but as [questions] that call for exploration” (Josselsen, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003, p. 265) with the goal to “investigate [teachers'] life experiences in a descriptive way” (Kim, 2016, p. 97). Finally, it is my intention that these questions “forefront the *becoming* (process) rather than the *being* (endpoint)” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966-967).

This inquiry has been led by the following two research questions with related sub-questions to help me consider the intricacies of each participant's experience.

1. How do mid-career English teachers perceive their histories with writing?
 - a. What metaphors do they use to describe their experiences? What details do they include? What is the tone and mood of their stories?
 - b. What kind of outer/inner life, school, and professional experiences have contributed to their teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities?
 - c. How do their stories of writerly identity creation speak to the larger social and educational processes of writerly becoming?

2. In what ways are these teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities enacted and performed in mid-career English teachers' pedagogy?
 - a. What do these performed and enacted identities suggest about the practice of writing instruction?
 - b. What contradictions and tensions are apparent in their identity enactment?
 - c. Where are influences of the institutional context apparent? In what ways does the institutional context function to expand and/or limit the teachers' writerly identities?

Participants and Data

Emphasizing the role of the researcher in constructing narrative texts, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggest that since narrative knowledge is co-constructed between the participant(s) and researcher throughout the data collection process, the researcher-participant relationship is integral to narrative inquiry. Similarly, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) trace a change in the participant-researcher relationship in qualitative research from one that is static to one that is dynamic. Since “social reality is primarily a narrative reality” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 211), narrative inquiry often celebrates—and complicates—the role of the researcher.

Participant selection and recruitment. As I considered ways to explore my research questions, I knew that I would need a group of participants with whom I could easily establish rapport. Writing is a deeply personal act, and if I was going to ask participants to share their raw and polished words with me, I would need a comfortable relationship from the start. Therefore, I selected research sites where I either had (1) taught at some point in my career or (2) worked with teachers at the school.

Additionally, after a review of the literature surrounding English teachers’ writerly identities, I knew that to fill the gap in the current body of work, I would want to work with a population of teachers who were what I call “mid-career.” I defined mid-career teachers as those who have taught for 10-20 years. These teachers are often the most open to identity work because they are school leaders

who serve as mentors for the more novice teachers in their departments, but they do not yet have retirement in their sights.

With these considerations in mind, I solicited participation from teachers I had taught with in various Midwest high schools or met through work with branches of the National Writing Project, and three female and two male English teachers eventually joined my study. Four participants remained to complete the study. All participants teach high school in various locations around the Midwest; three teach in a small college town, and one teaches in a rural farm community. The participants teach a range of classes—from required sophomore English to dual credit literature and composition to senior Career English. The participants themselves have diverse backgrounds and extensive academic experience. All four hold completed master's degrees in literature or literacy and, since they have had years to hone their craft, all are highly skilled and exceptionally reflective about their teaching practices.

Data collection. Initially, I planned to begin data collection by holding two extended verbal interviews with each participant before gathering written artifacts and observing their teaching. However, in all cases, the length and depth of the first interview (more than two hours in some instances) provided me with a sufficient foundation to move to classroom observations more quickly than I had planned. In addition to this initial lengthy interview, the participants shared many examples of their academic, personal, and professional writing with me.

I observed a minimum of six instructional units in each participant's classroom (for a total of 50 hours of classroom observation across all participants),

collecting handouts from each class I observed and debriefing with participants on their lunch periods or at the end of the day. Additionally, each teacher produced journal entries on questions which arose from these observations and interviews. In some cases, it became clear that the participant preferred writing (rather than speaking) to think about these ideas. With this preference in mind, I followed the central narrative tenet of focusing on relationships rather than inflexible methods (Hendry, 2007) and adjusted the form of data collection to increase each participant's comfort level.

In my attempt to be a reflective researcher, I also kept a research notebook, noting big ideas and methodological choices from each interaction with my participants and journaling about my own journey through this strange and sometimes isolating process. This researcher notebook helped me to generate questions, but it also helped me to put ideas from my research into conversation with events in my life and books I was reading throughout the semester of data collection. On the process of writing, Flannery O'Connor remarked, "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say." In my own journaling, I embraced the notions that writing produces knowledge and that all research is political as I engaged in writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) *with, to,* and *about* my participants.

Throughout the fall 2017 semester, these participants welcomed me into their classrooms, email inboxes, lunch tables, and happy hour gatherings. They thoughtfully responded to my journal prompts and interview questions. Since I had taught in most of these high schools before undertaking this study, visiting the

participants' classrooms often felt like going home. All participants were gracious enough to let me interact with their students, respond to their classroom discussions, and become a natural part of their classrooms.

Analyzing the Data. In this inquiry, I undertook two stages of data analysis which paralleled my two stages of data collection: 1) Interviews, journals, and collected writings and 2) classroom observations. In the first phase of analysis, I moved between vertical and horizontal readings of the data to build the four teachers' narratives as W/writers¹, students, and teachers. Data analysis phase one produced the four narratives highlighted in Chapter Four.

As I was performing the data analysis while also continuing to read theory around narrative inquiry, I recognized the natural connection between the two parts of my own education history. With a master's in literature and a (soon to be conferred) PhD in education, I constantly sit at the juncture between literary studies and social science. This study, in many ways, exemplifies my own positionality. For example, while you will not see the subheading of Findings anywhere in Chapter Four or beyond, there are clearly findings situated within these participant narratives. Just like Faulkner or Twain require the reader to do the work of finding themes within their literary texts, so too does narrative inquiry ask the reader to take on some of the meaning-making work. In reading Chapter Four, I ask the

¹ The distinction between Writer (capital W) and writer (lowercase w) is discussed in detail throughout my conversations with each participant. I will use the combined form of W/writer when both identities are referenced at once or when it is impossible to tell which identity is being discussed.

readers to put on their literary analysis lens to explore the nuanced details of these participant narratives.

Through my analysis process, I also used writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) to write toward metaphors for conceptual understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). To help crystallize the identities suggested in the narratives, I concluded this phase of data analysis with creating a metaphor for each participant-teacher. The identity metaphors are listed below.

- Glen: The Craftsman
- Aspen: The Author's Apprentice
- Sylvie: The Quiet Philosopher
- Neal: The Serendipitous Editor

Stage two of data analysis focused on data collected during classroom observations. In this stage of data analysis, I set out to analyze the interaction between Research Questions 1 and 2 to explore how the teachers' W/writerly identities were enacted in their teaching. The outcomes of this stage of analysis appear in Chapter Five, but, in short, I built a continuum of process → product and situated the participants within that continuum. This model helped me to then find three identity insights to understand the mutability/stability of performed identities. These insights are listed below.

- Insight #1: Teachers who claim the label of Writer exhibit comfort in writing processes and in teaching writing processes.
- Insight #2: The desire to be seen as a "kind of W/writer or teacher" brings risk to writing instruction.

- Insight #3: Agency provides Writers a way to mitigate the risk of teaching writing.

These insights provide a view of writing teacher identity not otherwise found in the literature; namely, they suggest that there is power in claiming a W/writerly identity. This power helps to mitigate the well-documented risk surrounding the act and teaching of writing.

Conclusion

As I drove to the farthest flung location of my participant schools, deep in the middle of data collection and on the front end of a bleak Midwest winter, Frank McCourt read his book, *Teacher Man*, aloud to me through my car speakers. I had barely survived *Angela's Ashes*, his sorrowful childhood tale, and had chuckled my way through *'Tis* wherein he recounted his time at NYU, joking that future businessmen and lawyers stared at future teachers in disbelief that they would choose a life of poverty and teenage angst. When I turned on to the highway that would deposit me at my destination, I heard McCourt recall his days teaching at a prestigious New York City high school. He had just landed the job of creative writing teacher and felt—like so many teachers I know—that he was not at all qualified to teach writing. On his first day of the new semester, he laments, “It will be common knowledge soon that in the matter of teaching writing I don’t know my arse from my elbow” (p. 190). Hearing these words in the middle of this dissertation study made me chuckle, but it also made me focus on the implicit meaning of these words more intently than I might have otherwise.

It was striking to me that this author who would later win a Pulitzer Prize *still* thought he was unqualified to teach writing to a bunch of teenagers. The question I wrestled with then and continue to wrestle with throughout this inquiry is *why?* Why is writing such a daunting subject to teach? What in teachers' backgrounds lead them to feel comfortable (or uncomfortable) with the undertaking?

In that moment on a dreary November day with Frank McCourt telling his own story, I knew that the closest I could get to answering these questions was through a deep exploration of teachers' storied experiences. As I met with my participant-teacher a few moments later, I listened to her story through the lens of McCourt's; she became the memoirist and I the eager reader. It is from this place of eagerness, curiosity, and reverence that this inquiry was undertaken.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework

*Maybe stories are just data with a soul.
And maybe I'm just a storyteller.*
Brené Brown, "The Power of Vulnerability"

As an only child in a neighborhood devoid of other kids, my childhood companions were books. Summertime was especially solitary, so once a week, my mom would take me to the library where I would be given as much time and freedom as I desired to gather the ten books my library card would allow me to borrow. In those years, I read Pippi Longstocking tales as a gateway to Judy Blume's coming-of-age stories; Paddington Bear's adventures ran through my head as I encountered Beverly Cleary's *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* for the first time; when I was ready to abandon the girls of the Baby-sitters' Club in favor of something more adult, Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* appeared on a display just waiting for me. In short, the stories I read were more than a part of my reality; they created it. These characters' adventures mixed with my own life events—my real-life tales of growing up—and eventually, I began to see the world through stories. Reading and writing stories is generative, and in submitting to our stories, we create new understandings. It is no surprise, then, that my inquiry of teacher-writers embraces narrative as a path to new understanding.

This inquiry project was framed within a context of stories—stories as communication, stories as data, stories as performances—and underlying each step is my conviction that people understand themselves and the world around them through stories. As such, this chapter begins with a review of the literature surrounding teachers' reading identities to speak to the power stories have in

forming our realities. Then I overview narrative inquiry to position it as the foundation for my study. I continue with an exploration of the foundations of identity and writing pedagogy, providing theoretical lenses through which we can view the storied data. Finally, I end with establishing a metaphor to help synthesize these disparate parts and look toward analysis.

Literature as the Beginning of English Teachers' Stories

As I suggest in this introduction and as my participants suggested in their initial interviews, stories in the form of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry are often the earliest memories featured in English teachers' literacy identities—or what Gomez (2009) and Muchmore (2001) call their “literate lives.” Though my study primarily focuses on the writerly elements of these identities, when we are exploring English teachers' personal and professional histories, it is nearly impossible to separate their experiences with reading from their experiences with writing.

Furthermore, as I anecdotally explored in Chapter One, English educators often view our discipline as having two distinct halves: the teaching of literature and the teaching of writing. These halves of our literate lives build the literacy background from which educators approach classroom teaching (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Brooks, 2007; Gomez, 2009; McKool & Gespass, 2009). Therefore, in this section, I answer Judith Langer's (2000) call to move beyond the “schizophrenic split between the teaching of writing and the teaching of literature at every level of instruction” (p. 3). In doing so, I include here a short review of the literature on teachers as readers to demonstrate that W/writerly identities are

formed in conversation with—rather than independently from—teachers’ readerly identities.

Reading as transactional and transformative. Rosenblatt initiated this conversation about reading and identity nearly a century ago in *Literature as Exploration* (1938/1995) wherein she suggests that literature is the point from where all human beings in all walks of life interact. Since literature is the meeting point of human culture, experience, history, and education, Rosenblatt urges us to make the human experience the primary focus of the literary experience. In her transactional theory of reading, she extends the old paradigm (text → reader) to highlight the recursive nature of the reading process (text ↔ reader). Because reading is a two-directional process, “every time a reader experiences a work of art, [the work of art and the reader] are crafted anew” (p. 108).

Similarly, in his discussion of the reading/interpretation/criticism triad, Scholes (1985) reminds us that readers must first submit to a text before we can interpret it or criticize it. In this way, all literacy activities begin with the act of submission—an act which many English teachers remember experiencing as children when they stumbled upon the first book series they adored. As they submitted to these early books and lost themselves in their reading, the books became a part of who they are as readers, writers, thinkers, and teachers. Therefore, the power of the text resides not in the text itself, but in the negotiation between text and reader (Rosenblatt, 1938/2005; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994; Scholes, 1985).

Reading and identification. Janet Alsup (2015) speaks to her own personal experience with reading, an experience which, I imagine, is familiar to many English

teachers and literature lovers. She writes, “When I read a work of fiction, it’s often the extent to which I identify with a character that determines how much I like it . . . Finding a book with characters, settings, or events with which I can identify brings great pleasure. In short, reading fiction is very personal for me” (p. 21). This act of identification—of seeing oneself in a character of a novel—is one way in which texts impact readers’ identities. Identification is a two-way movement where the reader both adopts qualities of the literary character while also transferring her own beliefs and experiences onto the character (Alsup, 2015; Holland, 1975).

Identification is a transformative experience, one that allows us to “express our different identity themes” (Holland, 1975, p. vii) in relation to the text. Or, said another way, through identification, “a reader is both lost in a text (Nell, 1988 cited in Alsup, 2015) and, ultimately, found in one” (Alsup, 2015, p. 29). To help us think about the effect of identification on readers’ identities, Alsup provides a model (see Figure 1) of the identification process.

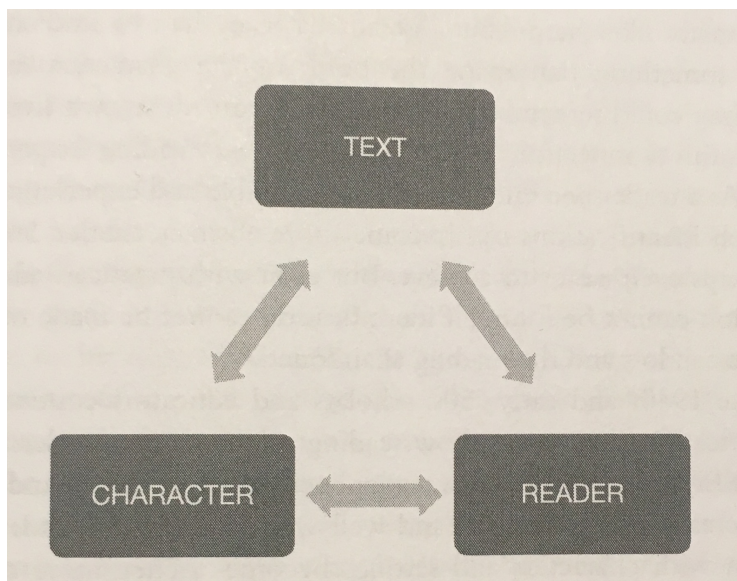


Figure 1. Alsup’s (2015) diagram on the process of literary identification.

Reading and academic discourse. In addition to the bidirectional process of identification, readers also internalize the language of the texts they read. In the reader's submission to a text, the language of the text becomes part of the reader's discourse and contributes to her identity development. Of this internalizing process of language, Bakhtin (1981) highlights the negotiation within the "heteroglossia" of a world that is "half-ours and half-someone else's" (p. 345).

To explore the negotiation of language and context, Bakhtin describes two types of language: *authoritative discourse* and *internally persuasive discourse*. For our discussion here, the language which is most connected to our readerly identities is Bakhtin's *authoritative discourse*. Bakhtin characterizes *authoritative discourse* as "religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers," noting that it is discourse whose "authority was already acknowledged in the past" (p. 342). If a published text features this authoritative discourse, when readers interact with the text, they are taking in the language in a distanced, unquestioning manner (Bakhtin, 1981).

In the process of transferring the language of authorial experts to our own discourses, readers "[populate] it with [their] own intention, [their] own accent, [and their] own semantic and expressive intention" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293). Through this negotiation—the movement between the *authoritative language* of the author and the *internally persuasive language* of the reader—we begin to build the academic discourses around literature and writing that build our teaching selves. In short, what we read affects how we speak about literature and how we position ourselves within the academic community of readers.

Moje, Dillon, and O'Brien (2000) expand on this process of discourse development within the literacy sphere. They write, "Because literacy practices are shaped by discourses, literacy can be considered a powerful tool that can be used to claim a space or establish an identity or voice in various social interactions" (Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2000, p. 16). Furthermore, through the navigation of these literary, social, and academic discourses, teachers' identities are created *in* and *through* the process of reading (Alsup, 2015; Gee, 2000). Or, to apply Gee's (2000) notion of Discourse communities, teachers become part of an academic Discourse community through reading—often from an early age.

Our earnest reading of texts leaves an indelible impression on the way we negotiate our relationship with the world and the language within it. Applying general semantics to her transactional theory of reading, in her later work, Rosenblatt (1978/1994) notes that during the process of reading a text, readers select the referent (often from their own experiences) to pair with the reference made in the text. This pairing of "external reference and internal response" (p. 11) makes reading "active, self-ordering, and self-corrective" (p. 11). And, because the text is "always read by a historical person" successful reading "opens the way to a critique of culture" ((Scholes, 1985, p. 47, 43). This intellectual work—the work of reading—further complicates and reinforces identities by allowing us to be confused (Blau, 2003) and by asking us to question or revisit what we know to be true (Alsup, 2015).

Reading/teaching connections. Though shifting contexts affect our discourses around texts, teachers' personal readerly lives transfer to their

classrooms in varying degrees (Alsup, 2015; Cremin & Baker, 2014; Hall, 2012; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2000). Speaking generally of identity creation, Moje, Dillon, and O'Brien (2000) write, "What one knows, does, or learns in one's family or church, for example, is not forgotten simply because one is situation in a classroom or school context" (p. 167).

It, of course, makes sense that our positions as teachers will necessarily be affected by what we've read over the course of our lives. Hall (2012) expands on this notion, writing that teachers' personal literacies affect how they present literacy in their classrooms. Like other elements of identity enactment (discussed later in Chapter Two), this negotiation of reading in teachers' personal life spaces and reading in their professional life spaces is a process fraught with tensions. Camp (2013) expands on this tension, noting that assumptions about reading and the role of texts can affect teachers' identity enactment as readers try to assimilate previous reading with their current reading and teaching.

Breaking down binaries. Through identification and language integration, reading is a major avenue through which English teachers claim a space in the profession. My review of the body of work around readerly identities provides further evidence that the positions of "literature teacher" and "writing teacher" are messily entangled in one another. Because texts are "cultural tools for establishing belongingness, identity, personhood, and ways of knowing" (Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2000, p. 166), reading (the consumption of language) contributes to teachers' W/writerly identities (the production of language). For this reason, it is impossible

to omit my own literary influences and the literary influences of my participants from their narratives. If, as we will explore in the next section, teachers' narratives encompass their entire life spaces, within those spaces are the influences of both writing *and* reading.

The History of Narrative

To situate us in the history of narrative inquiry, Kim (2016) relays the etymology of *narrative*, demonstrating how the term itself is inextricably linked to knowledge: "The word narrative is from the Latin *narrat-* ('related,' 'told'), *narrare* ('to tell'), or late Latin *narrativus* ("telling a story"), all of which are akin to Latin *gnārus* ("knowing")" (p. 6). Adding to this etymological history, Riessman explains that narrative thinking began with Aristotle who described the tragic narrative as "complete, and whole and of a certain amplitude" (cited in Riessman, 2008, p. 4). Clearly, throughout history, the telling of stories has been linked to the ideas of completeness and knowledge; these two aspects of narrative history provide the foundation of narrative inquiry I apply to my study.

Narrative ways of knowing. Also drawing from Aristotle, narrative historian Polkinghorne (1988) explores examples in literature, historical narrative, and myth to construct his definition of narrative logic. In his definition, narrative logic has two levels. He denotes first-order discourse as "facts," which are concerned with "whether the events have actually happened in the way [they are] reported in the sentences of the narratives" (p. 62). Polkinghorne's second-order discourse, or "plot," requires "coherence among the statements" (p. 63). For him, narrative truth

comes more from “literary coherence” than the traditional focus on “logical coherence” we see in the sciences (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 63). Thus Polkinghorne characterizes the narrative mode of thinking as a two part system containing both *descriptions* of experience and *explanations* of experience.

Scholars of narrative history (Kim, 2016; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008) note that early narrative theorists such as Barthes, Genette, and Todorov used narratology—i.e., the study of narratives—within the structuralist framework. This approach privileged the sign over the signified; therefore, content was less important than the language used to express it. However, as limitations of the structuralist approach to narrative came to light (see Kim, 2016), disciplines within the humanities and social sciences evolved narrative theory to suit their purposes. This evolution, later coined the “narrative turn” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), helped legitimize narrative as an accepted area of qualitative inquiry.

The narrative turn. In their discussion of the turn, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) trace the opening up of narrative inquiry. Though the narrative community allows for varied onto-epistemological beliefs and research methods, Pinnegar and Daynes suggest that all narrative researchers do agree on “the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience” (2007, p.4). Drawing on this fundamental assumption, scholars from literary criticism (Barthes, 1975; Martin, 1986) to educational research (Barone, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) have increasingly embraced narratives to help with literary, personal, school, and human understanding.

Four themes of the narrative turn. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) lay the theoretical groundwork for the emergence of narrative inquiry as its own distinct paradigm. To describe this onto-epistemological turn, they discuss four themes they gleaned from a review of the narrative literature.

Theme 1: A closer researcher/participant relationship. First, Pinnegar and Daynes witnessed a change in the researcher/participant relationship. In early qualitative inquiry, positivist influences led social science researchers to consider the researcher/participant relationship as distanced, distinct, completely knowable, and static. In the narrative turn of the late 20th century, however, researchers increasingly embraced a less authoritative role, considering the researcher/participant position as temporally-bound, subjective, and relational (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Theme 2: An expansion what counts as data. The narrative turn also fueled a discussion about the nature of data as researchers further legitimized stories as valid data forms. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) explain that this shift emerged from two distinct beliefs:

(1) Researchers realized “that in translating experience to numeric codes researchers lose the nuances of experience and relationship in a particular setting that are of interest to those examining human experience” (p. 15).

(2) Researchers increasingly believed that purely numeric data is “sterile.”

Accounts of failures in using numbers to capture experience are, ironically, numerous (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Theme 3: A focus on the particular rather than general. Additionally, within the narrative turn, the focus of research has shifted from the universal to the specific. Though generalizability is still valued among some areas of the qualitative research community, the narrative shift has allowed researchers to embrace the individual experience to provide readers with deeper knowledge of a topic. After the emergence of experimental and powerful works which included personal stories—Pinnegar and Daynes cite Sara Evans's (1979) social science text *Personal Politics* as one such example—narrative inquiry opened space for researchers to interrogate the power of the particular and specific.

Theme 4: A recognition of multiple ways of knowing. Finally—and most significantly—narrative inquiry allows researchers to embrace alternative ways of knowing. Within the narrative community, there has been a clear shift from recognizing a singular method of understanding to embracing multiplicity. Josselson (2011) explains, “Narrative research eschews methodological orthodoxy in favor of doing what is necessary to capture the lived experience of people in terms of their own meaning making and to theorize about it in insightful ways” (p. 225).

The narrative turn and education. Clandinin and Connelly further cemented the connection between narrative inquiry and education in the 1980s when they connected Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) focus on metaphor with Dewey's (1938) focus on experience. With its acceptance of stories as data, it is no surprise that narrative inquiry was alluring to a researcher like me who is situated in the juncture of English and English education.

Toward a Narrative Paradigm

Spector-Mersel (2010) marks the narrative turn as the “crystallization” point for the emergence of the narrative paradigm. Prior to this moment, narrative was framed as an approach within qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), a qualitative sub-type of research, a research methodology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), and a method of data collection or analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As recently as 2013, Savin-Baden and Howell Major discuss the complex nature of narrative. They write that narrative can be viewed as data, method, research approach, and research product. Thus, they note, there are many ways to “do narrative” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

To further muddy the theoretical waters, narrative inquiry is often viewed as having borrowed from other, more established paradigms. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue narrative inquiry borrows theory/methods from grounded theory. The interpretive nature of some narrative approaches suggests that it is influenced by constructivist and constructionist paradigms. However, the poststructural influences suggest a focus on power relations as they emerge in the social and cultural contexts. Because of its varied paradigmatic influences, the aim and method of narrative inquiry is often contested.

Narrative as origination. These clear onto-epistemological demarcations have paved the way for a movement toward a narrative paradigm led by Hendry (2010) and Spector-Mersel (2010). Hendry begins by resituating narrative as the beginning of all research traditions rather than a product of social science evolution. She encourages researchers to consider narrative as “the epistemological roots of

scientific and humanistic traditions” (p. 72), and she argues against the unnecessary “bifurcation” of scientific and humanistic research.

Conversely, in her argument for a narrative paradigm, Spector-Mersel (2010) works against this expansionist view of narrative inquiry. She notes, “Reading through the narrative literature, *diversity* appears to be the name of the game. Not only due to the actual variety in narrative studies but also because it is discussed as the main feature of the field” (p. 205). This *diversity*—while welcome and necessary—may also serve to “put in question [narrative’s] mere existence as an identifiable field” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 205). To work against the loss of semantic meaning, Spector-Mersel explores facets of narrative’s onto-epistemological uniqueness:

While the traditional approaches depicted narrative as a way of getting to a pre-existing identity, according to current perceptions, narratives do not *mirror* that seeming entity but *construct* it. Instead of a real, essential and objective reality *reflected* in narratives, it proposes a subjective and relativist reality largely *invented* by narratives. (2010, p. 208)

Narrative assumptions. Furthermore, in the narrative paradigm, reality is constructed and represented through stories. Since stories contain the power of representation, they hold with them four assumptions:

1. By nature, stories are always told in the present (Spector-Mersel, 2010) wherein man is a historical being (Mills, 1959 as cited in Kim, 2016).
2. Stories are always mediated (Abbott, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

3. Implicit and explicit choices are made in the construction (Spector-Mersel, 2010), so writing/telling, like reality, is always a simulation (Baudrillard, 1994).
4. Stories are always contextual which requires us to work against a “totalizing narrative” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) to focus on the particular.

These four assumptions undergird narrative’s particular ontology and epistemology, laying the groundwork for situating inquiries within a narrative paradigm.

Narrative as research. With my background in literary studies, I have always considered words—and the stories they build—to be *the* most pertinent data. After my time in secondary education where big data informs all decisions, I was even more convinced of the power of stories. As a public school teacher I realized that systems (districts, school boards, school buildings, departments) often used quantitative methods like End-of-Course exams, ACT scores, and common assessment data to make decisions whereas individual teachers used more qualitative methods to focus on students as individuals. In this environment, my own recognition of the power of the particular (the specific person, place, and situation) became more pronounced.

Early in my doctoral study, I often found myself asking “is that research?” This question was finally answered when I found my research home in the narrative inquiry community at AERA 2017. As I sat around a table with a diverse group of narrative scholars presenting their work, I realized that my own experiences in scholarly study and qualitative inquiry inevitably drew me to this paradigm which

celebrates stories as “both the method and phenomenon of study” (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 5). Therefore, I answer Spector-Mersel’s call to forefront the “paradigmatic lens” when approaching narrative inquiry, and I situate my study within this paradigm to more clearly understand the relationship between the events of our lives and the stories which relate them, celebrating the entangled, complex nature of the pursuit.

Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

A discussion of narrative as methodology must begin with Hendry’s (2010) assertion that “wandering, and perhaps getting lost, is key to the ongoing process of inquiry” (p. 78). As a natural wanderer, I appreciate the permission to carve out my own path. As a researcher, I appreciate narrative’s ability to take the long path toward understanding, celebrating the journey along with the arrival at the destination.

Furthermore, narrative as methodology highlights the incomplete and partial nature of knowing that exists within the narrative paradigm. As such, “narrative inquiry is grounded in the doubt that is essential to creating and re-creating” (Hendry, 2010, p. 73). In resisting the urge to make narrative methods more “scientific” (Hendry, 2010; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), narrative scholars achieve validity by focusing on the researcher-participant relationship (Kim, 2016; Spector-Mersel, 2010) and the wholeness of the narrative account (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 2008).

The holistic nature of narrative inquiry. In a break from more traditional methods of qualitative inquiry, narrative inquirers construct and interpret stories by keeping them whole. Riessman (2008) notes that narrative study “relies on extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units, rather than fragmented into thematic categories as is customary in other forms of qualitative analysis” (p. 12). Analysis can emerge from the construction of these narratives and from an exploration of how elements intersect and speak to one another. Thus, the narrative turn forces a focus on method rather than existing positivist assumptions to prove reliability of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Josselson, 2011; Kim, 2016; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Narrative terminology. Practically, a foray into narrative inquiry requires a few definitions.

Narrative. Bruce, Beuthin, Sheilds, Molzahn, and Schick-Makaroff (2016) define *narrative* as “the more formal, broader concept holding all discourses”

Story. The same authors define *story* as the “smaller expressions contained with(in) narratives” (p. 3). To highlight the role of the researcher in data co-construction, Spector-Mersel provides a distinction between stories “*collected* through observation” and those “*produced* during interview” (p. 213). In the *produced* data, the narrative “are embedded in the interaction” between researcher and participant (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 213).

The telling and the told. Much like Polkinghorne’s first-order facts and second-order plot, Bruce et. al require us to consider both the *telling* and the *told* as well. The *telling* refers to the language, method, and performances of the stories. In

other words, the *telling* is how the participants relate their stories to the researcher. The *told*, then, is the story's content and details. Both the *telling* and the *told* are co-constructed between the researcher and the participants as narrative researchers employ open interview questions to “[encourage] the flow of the story and [invite] a temporal account” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 214).

This distinction led me to think about the power of language to name and position the researcher within a theoretical framework, so throughout my study, I inject my own voice and experiences in areas where it can help us think about the research situation, phenomenon, or participants. Additionally, I recognize that, as a narrative researcher, analysis happens through my own lens of experience.

Methodological Influences for This Study

My study is grounded in the narrative approaches of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Riessman (2008), and Kim (2016). I recount a few philosophical and practical notes from each of the approaches below.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000). As the preeminent scholars of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly provide us with the most convincing reason to study education through narrative. I echo their declaration: “For us, life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (2000, p. 17).

These scholars have provided me with methodological structure for researcher reflexivity within narrative inquiry and justification for its necessity.

Their work provides examples of how to negotiate the interrelatedness of researcher and participants while realizing that narrative inquiry requires individuals to construct their own experience in relation to others and society. Additionally, they note that all research endeavors start with an experience which is then expanded upon or informed by theory to help further our understanding. In this way, I can see the role of theory within narrative inquiry as foundational, inquisitive, explanatory, and exploratory.

Riessman (2008). Beginning her text with an anecdote about a visit to her second grade granddaughter's school classroom, Riessman brings to narrative inquiry a focus on representing social inequities and giving a voice to marginalized populations. In simultaneously expanding and constricting the enactment of narrative in our world, she works against the "dominant Western narrative conventions" (p. 2) of storied personal experience. In the following chapters, she highlights the problematic nature of transcription (p. 27-50) and focuses on the performative nature of lived experience.

To my study, Riessman (2008) provides a structure for data analysis that encourages wholeness and a focus on metaphorical meaning in participant stories. In thematic analysis, "content is the exclusive focus," and analysis is "always case centered" (Riessman, 2008, p. 73, 74). In contrast to grounded theory or phenomenological approaches, during narrative thematic analysis, "scholars keep a story 'intact' by theorizing from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases" (p. 73). By working with one narrative field text at a time, the researcher "isolat[es] and order[s] relevant episodes into a chronological

biographical account” (p. 57). In doing so, narrative researchers “unpack’ the metaphors [in the stories], exploring their functions in the narrative text— analogous meanings they may carry” (p. 59).

Paired with this metaphorical exploration of narrative texts is the role of theory. In thematic analysis, theory is both in the forefront and in the background. Theory serves as a foundation to guide inquiry, but during analysis, researchers also “[search] for novel theoretical insights from the data” (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). Finally, because narrative thematic analysis focuses on the *told* rather than the *telling*, it is a useful method of analysis in a study such as mine—one which features many types of narrative field texts for data.

Kim (2016). Kim’s text is both engaging in content and thought-provoking in method. Of all the narrative scholars, she most effectively embraces narrative inquiry in metaphorical terms, imagining the narrative inquirer in separate instances as a quilter, a midwife, or an artist. Extending Clandinin and Connelly’s foray into the personal, Kim uses her own experience as both a student and a professor to demonstrate that narrative is simultaneously personal and collective.

Though she recognizes her own students’ desire for such a text, Kim does not provide a simple step-by-step approach to narrative research. She, instead, insists on working against a “boilerplate” approach to inquiry. Beginning with the permission to “flirt with data [and theories],” Kim encourages me to take chances, even if those chances sometimes lead to failure. Her notion of flirtation in data analysis “asks us to undo our commitment to what we already know and question its legitimacy” (2016, p. 187). In her epilogue, Kim signs off as a “perpetual

beginner” (2016, p. 300) which further provides me freedom for experimentation and failure within this dissertation study.

Narrative Inquiry as Research Product

Finally, scholars of narrative theory invite us to think of narrative as a research product. Bruner (1996) tells us most narratives involve “an Agent who Acts [character] to achieve a Goal [plot] in a recognisable setting [context] by use of a certain Means [plot]” (p. 94). This emphasis on plot allows narrative researchers to represent complexity of experience, narrative, and story in their written reports. By using the narrative research text to round, connect, and focus their plots, narrative inquirers are able to provide a multi-faceted, whole account of the participants narrative around a phenomenon. Since narrative relies on language, rather than numbers, as data (Hendry, 2010), there is an added emphasis on the form/function of the written report. For this reason, Creswell (2007) calls narrative a *literary* form of research.

At multiple points throughout my process of writing, while sitting in my office unsure how to move forward, I’ve channeled Alexander Hamilton in *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Hamilton—the ultimate academic with so much to say that he wrote reams more than the other Founding Fathers—sings, “I’ll write my way out. Overwhelm them with honesty . . . wait for it, wait for it, wait for it.” In weaving my own experience with my participants’ narratives, the books I’m reading, and the theories I’m studying, like Hamilton, I am hoping to write my

way to a robust, hesitant, literary, complex report which complicates the notion of a linear plot by generating new connections and forefronting tensions.

Since, as Yuval-Davis (2006) aptly states, “Identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about how they are (and who they are not)” (p. 21) there is a clear fit between the narrative research product and my exploration of English teachers’ writerly identities. Just as a quality literary work encourages us to read beyond the text, so too does a quality narrative report.

Narrative Inquiry Moving Forward

Bruce et al. (2016) envision a path for narrative inquiry moving forward. They encourage “divergences” from prescriptive research design which can “advance narrative research and sustain meaningful knowledge development” (p. 1). Narrative emergence calls for “open-ended, fluid, and less structured” research designs (Bruce et al., 2016, p. 2)—a philosophy this study embraces. As a novice scholar in the post-narrative-turn world of qualitative research, I appreciate the flexibility that narrative inquiry provides to the work of research, and I also feel the tension this newness brings.

Narrative both “legitimiz[es] people’s stories as important sources of empirical knowledge” (Hyvarinehn, 2010 cited in Bruce et al., 2016, p. 1) and encourages us to see the world through two lenses—that of science and the creative arts. Furthermore, since narrative research grew out of many different disciplines, it naturally lends itself to multigenre, multimedia, and multidisciplinary thinking, allowing researchers to embrace the multiplicity inherent within identities. The

tension arises, of course, in the practicalities of how to *do* this research, tensions which manifested for me at all stages of the planning, producing, and writing. Rather than erasing these tensions from this final product, I hope to embrace them as they created moments of new understanding. Josselson asserts that narrative inquiry “tries to maintain a view of how the person integrates multiple psychic realities,” and so I take up this challenge in considering my participants’ identities but also in considering my own process throughout the inquiry (2011, p. 227).

A Historical Review of Identity Theory

Much like Whitman’s conception of the self I used to open this chapter, the field of identity theory is extensive, shifting, and often inconsistent. In trying to understand the many different views of identity, I found it helpful to work historically through the field of identity studies. At the end of this section, I will crystallize, distill, and order these theories as they relate to my initial thoughts around teachers’ W/writerly identities.

The social and (relatively) stable self. Most scholars trace the beginning of identity study back to Mead (1934/2015) who, influenced by Darwin and Watson, focuses on the role of society in shaping the self, and in turn, the self shaping social behavior. He defines the self as “the reference point for events, emotions, and sensations” (2015, p. 136).

Though admitting the importance of the social environment in the development of personal identity, scholars noted the lack of individuality in Mead’s theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000) which led to Erikson (1968) characterizing the self

as a whole, stable entity, often using the terms “sameness” and “completeness” to describe personal identity. The pushback to Erikson’s theory came from many different directions as, in the 1970s, the field saw the rise of identity politics and a focus on social psychology.

Olsen (2008) tells us that the social psychologists theorize identity as “a more situated, dynamic process of individuals developing conceptions of themselves as rational beings over time” (p. 4). Sociocultural theorist Vygotsky (1978) views identity as situated within the language development process—a dynamic and recursive view of identity formation new to the field. Berger (1979) observes how the modern world’s “institutional pluralism” affects identity, effectively adding the characteristic of multiplicity previously absent from the literature. Cushman (1990) recognizes the lack of shared traditions in the increasingly more modern world, and as such, emphasizes the role of the individual and deemphasizes the role of the society in identity creation. In short, the role of society in identity development has been questioned nearly since the field of identity studies arose a century ago. However, one element these early theorists share is the concept of a stable self or a core identity that remains relatively fixed throughout contexts and situations.

The multiple and shifting selves. In the ideological shift from modernism to postmodernism/poststructuralism, constructions of identity only further diverged from the mostly singular interpretation of the early days. When the postmodernists, poststructuralists, and deconstructionists (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Baudrillard, 1994; Derrida, 1967/1978; Foucault, 1966/1994; Lifton, 1993) took up the discussion, they highlighted the multiplicity inherent in our identities,

consistently using the plural to represent a conscious move away from a singular identity.

Identity themes and tensions. The continuing tension in identity studies comes from whether a singular or core element of identity exists. Damasio (1999) argues for a “single autobiographical self [which is] constituted by implicit memories of multiple instances of individual experience of the past and anticipated future” (p. 174). The opposing view is embodied by Lippard (1997) who argues that identity is always relational as we situate ourselves in relation to something or someone else. Trinh (1991) supports a contextual view of identity, one which moves from *who* someone is to *where/when/why* someone is.

Since narrative inquiry can—and does—reside within both of these schools of thought, an early question I had as I entered this study was thus: *Is there an element of a stable W/writerly self which transfers from the teachers’ personal and professional contexts?* Entertaining this question allows me to experience my participants’ stories through many different entry points. These multiple entry points “[free] us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962), so I can explore the particular, striving for depth rather than breath. The following themes of identity construction provide starting points for *flirting with the data* (Kim, 2016) of this study.

Identities as multiple and shifting. For Baudrillard (1994), our world is composed of simulations which can never represent reality. As such, our identities are mere representations, neither false nor true, that can be put on and taken off like masks. Lifton (1993) also focuses on the impermanence of identity in the

postmodern world, calling identity fluid and many-sided. Latour (1987) depicts identity as “lamination”—multiple layers varnished over but able to be nicked, scratched, and added on to. However, the open and recursive nature of postmodern/poststructural work around identity has led more than one scholar (Olsen, 2008; Smyth, 2007) to declare *identity* a nearly meaningless term which must either be rescued or replaced.

Identities as discourse-bound. With the social nature of identity development comes the role of discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Gee, 2000). Since Bakhtin views our internal dialogue as a synthesis of the historical voices we have come into contact with, he highlights the role of internal dialogue in creating our personal identities. This means identity development is at the same time social and individual, though the process is always led by language. Furthermore, in his concept of novelness, Bakhtin (1981), embraces this messiness of identity and forefronts the dialogic (rather than monologic) nature of storytelling. His essential concepts—polyphony, chronotope, and carnival—help us to reimagine both how identities are created in social and individual spheres and also how those stories are represented in the language of academic research.

Identities as communal and contextual. Another theme in the literature is the connection between community, context, and personal identity. Most researchers (Cremin & Baker, 2014; McCarthy & Moje, 2002) depict identity as shifting and recursive based on context. Since literacy is generally seen as a socially-situated practice, this aspect of identity is especially prevalent in the teacher education and literacy field. O'Connor and Scanlon (2005) take the contextual

element further and proclaim teaching as “a political act combined with a personally engaging role” (p. 2). Connecting to the social-first approach of Mead (1934/2015), O’Connor and Scanlon (2005) also discuss the collective nature of teacher identity, a depiction furthered in McCarthy and Moje’s (2002) relational definition of the term. In all of these discussions, identity is situated within relationships (McCarthy & Moje, 2002) and is shaped by the variety of factors inherent in complicated human life (Cremin & Baker, 2014; O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005; Yagelski, 1999).

Identities as performative and positional. Because the contextual nature of identity is well-documented in the literature, recently, authors have begun to focus on identity as active and performative—aspects particularly prevalent in the research on teacher identity. Our social performances (Gee, 2000) and literacy performances (McCarthy & Moje, 2002) create multiple identities for each of us. These identities are enacted, modified, and performed through social interaction with other teachers, with our students, and within our personal lives (Cremin & Baker, 2014; McCarthy & Moje, 2002) where identity manifests and mutates according to our subject positions (Moje, Luke, Davies, & Street, 2009, p. 430). Muchmore (2001) further elaborates on the personal life/professional life connection that complicates teacher identity, saying identity is “developed” through life experiences and “activated” in the classroom. McKinney (2017) echoes this performative language, suggesting that we “do” identity (p. 85).

Identities as conflicted and recursive. These multiple identities and the elaborate performances which create and recreate themselves represent the tension inherent in identity study (Bernstein, 2014; Cremin & Baker, 2010; McKinney &

Giorgis, 2009). While some scholars see these multiple identities as creating a whole individual which represents the unified site of tension, MacLure (1993) rejects the holism strand in the literature, noting that “identity is always incomplete, alienated, or inaccessible” (p. 9-10). In this way, MacLure and others (Cremin, 2006; McAdams, 1996) work against the reductive nature of a holistic approach to identity—a conflict which reflects the tension inherent in the identity studies field of research.

Embracing the notion of tension, MacLure (1993) declares “identity as a site of struggle” (p. 2). This struggle often manifests in the examination of teachers’ professional and personal identity development. Gomez (2009), Muchmore (2001), and Bernstein (2014) studied the relationship between teachers’ various identities, noting how personal identities impacted professional ones. MacLure describes teachers’ identities as “less stable, less convergent, and less coherent” (p. 9) than often reflected in the literature. Kreber (2010) extends this view, questioning whether a teacher’s identities can be somehow “*uniquely [her] own*” and also connected to “*something significant that lies beyond [her]self*” (p. 172).

By negotiating the ground between these two entities—the self and the world outside the self—Kreber (2010) describes the recursiveness inherent in identity development. In his research on socially just pedagogy, Smyth (2007) also emphasizes the iterative nature of identity, calling it a “socially constructed ‘production’ which is never complete and always in process” (p. 409). Other education researchers (Bernstein, 2014; Britzman, 2003; Cremin & Baker, 2010, 2014) also explain the shifts that occur throughout the teaching and learning-to-teach process. Since schools are social communities, McKinney and Giorgis

(2009) further highlight the identity shifts that result from teachers interacting with others—colleagues, students, administrators, parents.

Identities as agentive and powerful. The literature suggests that agency is inextricably linked to identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cremin & Baker, 2010; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) explain, “What may result from a teacher’s realization of his or her performance . . . is a sense of agency, of empowerment to move ideas forward” (p. 183). Other scholars (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cremin & Baker, 2010, 2014; Gee, 2000; Smyth, 2007) also demonstrate the link between teacher identity and institutional influence as it impacts individual agency.

Furthermore, literacy specifically lends agency to individual identity, and certain literacy actions—most notably, writing—create even more agency within individual identities (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000). McKinney and Giorgis’s (2009) study about literacy specialists’ writerly identities demonstrates that most writers “believe they have something to say” (p. 143), so people who identify as writers have an increased sense of personal agency.

Teacher-Writers/Writer-Teachers: Identity in Literacy

Before exploring the intersection between my participants’ W/writerly identities and their teaching, I found it necessary to review the literature on teachers-as-writers. The following discussion serves to further support and complicate the depictions of teachers’ identities in the body of literature.

Capital T teaching and capital W writing. As a teacher-writer writing a book on the teaching of writing, Nancie Atwell (1998) defines capital T teaching as a sense of balance between process/product in student writing. She says, “I have become a teacher with a capital T...today I’m striving for the fluid, subtle, *exhilarating* balance that allows me to function in my classroom as a listener *and* a teller, an observer *and* an actor, a collaborator *and* a critic *and* a cheerleader” (Atwell, 1998, p. 21). This stance means she “expects students to experiment” (p. 25) and “gets [her] hands dirty showing [students] what [she] know[s] about how to do the work” (p. 25).

I borrowed from Atwell’s capital T teacher to think about the possibility of a capital W writer. This discussion—*Does a capital W writer exist? If so, what might make someone a Writer rather than a writer?*—began my first interviews with my participants. Their responses speak to the depictions of teacher-writers/writer-teachers in the master narrative of English teaching (see a more complete discussion of Writers/writers in Chapters 4 and 5.)

Conflict and duality in English teacher identity. The competing factors inherent in writing and teaching highlight conflict and duality in teachers’ identity construction—an always experimental process (Bernstein, 2014). Identity negotiation manifests in multiple ways, from the personal/professional negotiation (Gomez, 2009; O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005; Whitney, 2009) to the “dual personas” of teachers who “position themselves” or “are positioned as writers” in the classroom (Cremin & Baker, 2014, p. 5). As in personal identity creation, agency plays a considerable role in identity positioning in the classroom as well.

Teacher-writers, agency, and risk. Agency and institutional context serve to highlight the risk involved in writing identity construction and negotiation. No matter the level of professional writing accomplished or the amount of writing done with students, risk is inherent (Cremin, 2006). This risk can be further exacerbated by teachers' past educational experiences (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009), the institutional context (Beauchamp, 2009; Cremin & Baker, 2010), and the institutional expectations of the language arts teacher (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Whitney, 2009; Yagelski, 1999). Garcia and O-Donnell-Allen (2015) remind us that teaching is an inherently political act—a reality which only serves to further complicate educator identity enactment.

Teachers—and especially writing teachers—have what Yagelski (1999) calls a special situation. He explains, “Because writing as a social, cultural, and individual activity is wrapped up in complicated ways with epistemology and notions of the self, teachers of writing must negotiate some treacherous territory that other teachers may not traverse” (p. 44-45). Expanding on this notion, Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) suggest that, for English teachers, a writerly identity exists in the space between the personal and professional which is what makes it so problematic.

Alsup (2006), in her influential book on teacherly becoming, terms the conversation in this middle ground “borderland discourse” (p. 181) which occurs when teachers negotiate teaching and learning in their inherent recursive nature. Though Alsup studies pre-service teacher experiences, her idea of “borderland discourse” is easily applied to questions of identity as teachers negotiate their

personal writerly identities and the effect of those identities in their professional work.

Standardization and the teaching of writing. Further complicating the writerly identities enacted in classrooms is the increasing standardization of the writing process. High stakes culture has compromised teachers' pedagogy as they have sought to adjust what they *do* as readers/writers in the real world and what the institution or administration *tells* them to do in their classrooms. A variety of studies on reading and writing identities (Cremin & Baker, 2010, 2014; McDougall, 2009; McKinney, 2017; Smyth, 2007) reveal teachers' tensions with mandated programs. Gee's (2000) model of identity development over time includes an entire perspective attending to this institutional tension.

The Gap in the Literature

While the identity theory literature is vast and diverse, the research on writerly identities is limited, with much of the teacher-writer/writer-teacher identity exploration focused on primary school, pre-service, or novice teacher populations. However, there are a few studies which explore teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities in literacy classrooms (Cremin & Baker, 2006, 2010, 2014; McKinney, 2017; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Whitney, 2009) and provide a starting point for my own inquiry.

Cremin and Baker (2006, 2010, 2014). For example, in their collaborative case study, Cremin and Baker (2010) support the depiction of the writing classroom as an as yet unexplored place of tension. Their study of two primary teachers in

England consists of teacher interviews and a month of weekly observation data. Employing a grounded theory approach to analysis, they produce a continuum model demonstrating elements at work in teacher-writer/writer-teacher identity formulation. Overall, they find that the writing classroom “represent[s] a site of struggle and tension for practitioners as they [perform] and [enact] their identities as both teachers and writers” (p. 31).

Other studies by the same authors (Cremin & Baker, 2006; Cremin & Baker, 2014) extend this exploration, highlighting the multiplicity inherent in teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities and recommending best practices for teacher education and professional development programs. However, they admit the “small scale” (2010, p. 21) of their studies and call for more research on the effective “separation of these dual positions of teacher and writer” to “reduce the apprehension and disquiet” and to “improve the teaching of writing” (2010, p. 22).

Whitney (2009, 2017). Whitney (2009) adds to the body of literature on the writerly/teacherly dichotomy. In her work on the National Writing Project (NWP) Summer Institute, she investigates the tension that exists when this dichotomy is broken down, effectively highlighting the recursive process involved in combining teacher/writer identities and the tension as this negotiation plays out in an NWP Summer Institute. Her case study of one teacher-writer consists of interview and writing sample data produced over the five-week institute. Most notably, her study reaffirms the NWP’s emphasis on personal writing as she demonstrates how writing in one domain (the personal domain of motherhood, for example) leads to growth in other domains (i.e., professional). To further her study’s investigation, Whitney calls

for future research to “look not to the outcomes of any one kind of writing activity” but to explore the “value placed on relationships between personal writing, professional writing, and professional growth” (p. 255).

In a later article, Whitney (2017) thinks conceptually about the teacher-writer, seeking to answer the question as to why our classrooms do not feature more teacher-writers. She concludes that “being a teacher-writer, by its nature, means being a kind of teacher not anticipated or supported by a top-down, managerial, educational environment” (p. 77). This question of institutional pressure features prominently in my inquiry.

McKinney and Giorgis (2009). In their narrative study of four literacy specialists’ writerly identity construction, McKinney and Giorgis (2009) collected data (mostly from participants’ autobiographies) for over two years. They use Wortham’s (2001) process of recording to analyze these writing samples, and they find that “participants’ experiences with writing in school had repercussions on their identities as writers and teachers of writing” (p. 142).

They further highlight the moments of tension between how the writers desired to teach and the mandated programs required by some of their institutions. The authors note that their results “suggest that further exploration of writer identity and its impact on teaching may be a fruitful avenue of research and practice” (p. 145), and they make a case for future research within the narrative paradigm, stating, “the transformative nature of narrative inquiry enables teachers to make sense of their professional worlds and to inform their teaching practices” (p. 145).

McKinney (2017). Finally, McKinney (2017) considers the institutional factors as they intersect with teachers' writing identities in her qualitative study of six middle and high school Teach for America first-year teachers. Drawing from similar theoretical foundations as my study (McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Moje, Luke, Davies, & Street, 2009), McKinney explores how these novice teachers position themselves in the classroom, in their institutions, and in relation to the packaged curriculum they are required to deliver. Through open coding to theorize performance and building narrative profiles, she is able to see how accessing their writing identities helps new teachers make connections and navigate the challenge of first-year teaching in their particular institutional settings.

Like many studies on identity, this one concerns novice teachers and, as such, helps us think about the process of *becoming* a teacher, emphasizing the forward trajectory. My study helps extend this view by exploring mid-career teachers' identities in a recursive process, allowing us to look both backward and forward. Additionally, McKinney's performance lens helps me think about how the two stages of my study interact and speak to one another.

Furthering the discussion. My inquiry seeks to build on these studies as it is, to my knowledge, the first study which explores the writerly identities of mid-career English teachers. Additionally, it provides a more multi-faceted approach than many of these studies because it includes considerable time spent both interviewing the teachers to hear what they *say* but also observing the teachers in their classrooms to see what they *do*. This dual approach of examining the personal and professional components of secondary English teacher-writer/writer-teacher

identity formulation and enactment will add elements otherwise missing in the body of literature.

In a review of Cremin and Locke's (2017) fascinating new volume on the topic of writer identity, *Writer Identity and the Teaching and Learning of Writing*, Richard Andrews calls this the study of teachers' writing identities—the topic Cremin, Locke, the above researchers, and I share—a “new and emerging field.” Clearly, there is much possibility to deepen our understanding of the teaching of writing by exploring teachers' writing identities both personally and in their teaching.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Lenses for Analysis

I use a combination of theories (Benjamin, 1931/2015; Goffman, 1974; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) arranged hierarchically to explore how the teachers' narratives work independently and in relation to one another.

Frame Analysis (Goffman, 1974). The most important element for identity enactment according to Goffman's (1974) frame theory is each individual's primary framework. In defining primary framework, Goffman labels it a “schemata of interpretation” (p. 21) which affects what we find meaningful and how we react to such meaning. These primary frameworks help to create focus by bracketing what is relevant—that is, what is within the frame—from what is irrelevant—what is outside of the frame. They create meaning by providing a metaphorical picture frame through which we view our interactions. This theory helps me think about the teachers' narratives holistically; in defining each teacher's “primary frame,” I am

able to construct their identities (Research Question 1) and explore how their identities shift—or remain stable—as they are enacted in their teaching (Research Question 2).

Collecting and Collection (Benjamin, 1931/2015). Though he speaks about books and other tangible possessions, Benjamin's treatises on *collecting* and the *collection* can help us think about the nature of experience as well. In recounting his experience collecting books for his library, Benjamin makes clear that the collector determines the relationship with his collection, and in doing so, is able to define that relationship however he pleases.

I posit that the collector of experiences also has this choice. In her collecting, the collector is able to define and organize her experiences (her *collection*) temporally, relationally, or in some other fashion and, in many ways, the method of organization is just as meaningful as the experiences (or stories) themselves. Furthermore, just as Benjamin notes that books are a way to “see” a city, so are experiences and performances a way to “see” the writerly identities of teachers as they manifest and evolve. In this way, I—the researcher—may see the collection differently than they—the participants—do, but the meaning arises from the arrangement and discussion of the collection rather than in the collection itself. Through identity how the participants and researchers view this *collection* of experiences, I can deepen my exploration of identity construction.

Benjamin tells us that when items are incorporated into the collection, both the object and the collection itself are changed. In the sense of this study, we can consider the collection as built from experiences—from vignettes of happenings

that both have meaning separately, but also work as part of the collection, both interpretations forcing identity construction. Benjamin continues, “The true method of making things present is to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space). (The collector does just this, and so does the anecdote.)” (p. 206). In considering the manifestation and arrangement of these anecdotes, or *stories* as narrative inquiry names them, I can think about how identity interacts with context, position, and institution (research questions 1 and 2).

Metaphorical thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1992). These authors’ initial premise—i.e., that all conceptual systems are inherently metaphorical—extends metaphorical thinking beyond the realm of “literary” or “elite” language to include the realms of everyday language and experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Furthermore, in *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*, Lakoff later sets out to debunk “traditional false assumptions” of language, namely, that “all subject matter can be comprehended literally, without a metaphor” (1992, p. 4). As I work within the narrative paradigm (a paradigm which welcomes metaphorical thinking), I employ metaphors for knowledge construction throughout all phases of this study. Most pertinently, though, in Chapter Four, I conceptualize each teacher’s W/writerly identity by using metaphors (Research Question 1). In Chapter Five, I use an overarching metaphor as a framework for examining how these teachers’ personal and professional identities interact (Research Question 2).

Writing as a Method of Inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Within narrative inquiry especially and within writing studies generally, the writing of the text constitutes a form of research in itself. In their seminal text on the subject, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) assert that aesthetic merit should be a standard for narrative inquiry, and they remind us that the infusion of the humanities into the social sciences allows us to see the world through two lenses, providing more insight rather than less. They note that the humanities have long accepted writing as discovery; therefore, in order to infuse the social sciences with this alluring quality of the humanities, they call for a forefronting of voice in qualitative research writing, proclaiming that voice-centered writing “becomes more diverse and author-centered, less boring, and humbler” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 965). Furthermore, they suggest that writing—both in data collection and manuscript creation—serves as a “field of play” (p. 969), a method of discovery, and a way to document *becoming* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

In working toward a narrative paradigm, I embrace the messy, generative creativity of writing to not just express what I know but to propel me toward a deeper, more authentic way of knowing. Throughout this text, I employ writing as a method of inquiry through my transparent discussion of understandings that arise from writing about/with my participants.

Since we in English education are similarly situated in this in-between place—in the “blurring of the humanities and social sciences” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 964-965)—writing as a method of inquiry fits well into my study of writerly becoming and identity exploration. Practically, writing as a method of inquiry allows

data analysis to continue through the writing, forefronting within the research report how the writing itself added an additional layer to the data analysis.

Aesthetically, writing as a method of inquiry allows us to indulge in *jouissance*—intellectual pleasure or delight—in our data analysis and written reports (Kim, 2016; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). By seeking to accurately reflect the voices of the researcher and the participants, this method encourages playfulness and it forefronts people in the process, rather than disembodied data (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), adding an additional level of rigor and validity to the study.

A Preliminary Model for Exploring Teachers' W/writerly Lives

To help me (and my readers) integrate the many theories and propositions in this review of the literature, I have constructed a preliminary model to help us think about teachers' W/writerly identities in personal and professional spheres (see Figure 2 below). This figure represents my “best guess” at the ways in which the many theories and studies in Chapter Two are prioritized in my own study of English teachers' writerly identities. As we can see, the consumption and creation of texts, the role of agency, the negotiation between life spaces, and the presence (or absence) of a single stable identity thread are the most pertinent theoretical constructs for use in my later chapters.

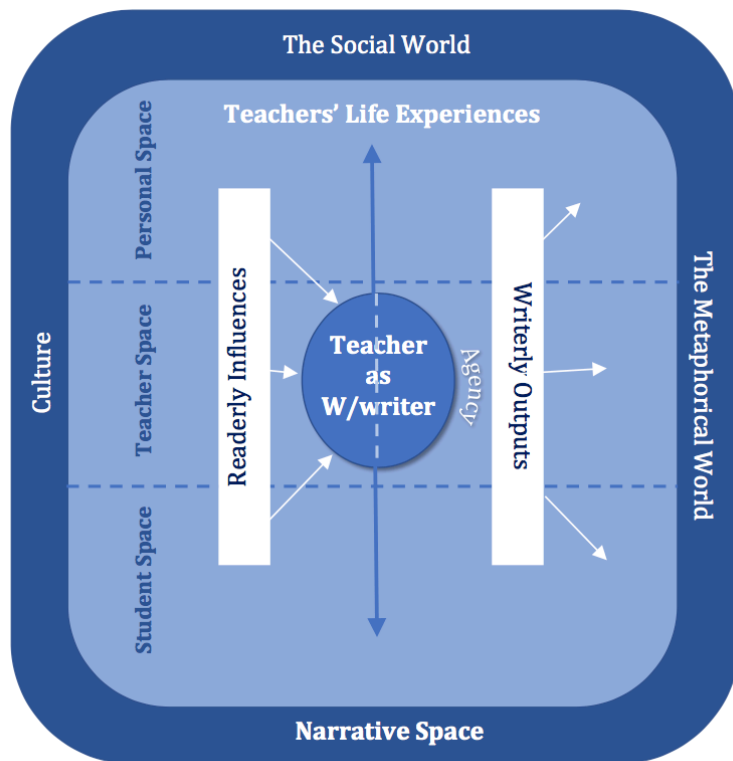


Figure 2. Teachers' identity construction and enactment in personal and professional spaces.

Exploring the model. Working from the outside dark blue square of this model, I represent our discussion of teachers' identities as situated in—and surrounded by—the narrative. I draw from the narrative theorists discussed above to establish that all narrative research comes from a foundation of stories. This space includes the narrative commonplaces (discussed in detail in Chapters Three and Four) of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2017). It also includes culture, metaphor, and the social world. In this way, a narrative foundation provides the groundwork for all parts of this identity study, and the stories they tell build the life spaces of the teacher-participants.

The lighter blue square situated within the narrative space represents the teachers' life experiences. Though I draw the three divisions (personal, teacher, and

student spaces) as distinct, I use a dashed line to represent the permeable nature of these spaces. As the body of literature suggests, teachers are rarely just one “type of person” at any point in time. The permeable nature of these life spaces—the spaces built by life experiences—is represented in my own participants. As we’ll later see, each of the teachers in this study is a close colleague or friend of mine (personal space). Additionally, our unequal subject positions—me as researcher and them as classroom teachers—sometimes forces an expert/novice relationship (student space). All of the teachers are parents (personal space) but many of the teachers have children who attend their high school (teacher space).

The oval in the middle of the figure represents the individual teacher, and the double-headed arrow demonstrates the teacher’s movement between these different spaces, though I centered the teacher in the teacher space since that is how I’m approaching identity discussion in this study. The light blue dotted line within the teacher oval is a main point of question in both the identity literature and this study. Namely, I seek to investigate if a stable thread exists as teachers move through these life spaces. Wrapped around the teacher oval is *agency* to forefront the importance of teacher agency in all of their life spaces. I am interested in further study of this question of agency when it comes to teachers’ personal and professional W/writerly identity (or identities).

Finally, in the parallel white rectangles we see the dual influences of the teachers’ reading and writing. These rectangles are stretched through all three life spaces as the literature suggests that teachers have influential reading and writing experiences as students, teachers, and in their personal lives. Also reflecting the

literature on readerly identities, I built the arrows to point from the readerly influences *to* the teacher oval, reflecting the impact reading has on teachers' identities. Also considering the literature on teachers-as-writers, I built the arrows moving outward *from* the writerly output rectangle. The movement of teachers producing writing in their various life spaces seems directly related to agency. This relationship is why the *agency* text appears on the W/writerly side of the teacher oval.

Conclusion

The collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories
Walter Benjamin, "On Collecting"

As I sit on my office floor, collecting my thoughts and documenting them on chart paper, I am surrounded by bookshelves and am instantly transported back to the quiet summer days of my childhood spent in the public library. My book collection displays my love of young adult literature likely developed in those old Carnegie Halls. Mingling with texts on identity theory are Laurie Halse Anderson's historical fiction young adult novels. Next to practitioner content area literacy texts sit *The Underground Railroad* (last year's National Book Award winner) and *The Art of Fielding* (one of my favorite debut novels). An old copy of *Fahrenheit 451* contains notes for my first ever classroom discussion as a novice teacher. The small set of gothic texts from the prestigious (and expensive) Broadview Press reminds me of my first graduate course, an experience which inevitably led to this day and this dissertation. On top of one bookcase just waiting to be shelved is a writing book just

given to me by one study participant—physically connecting our narratives which are already theoretically connected in this study.

My great aunt, once a school lunch lady and always a product of a different era, insists on giving me recipe books like *The Better Homes and Gardens* cookbook—the classic 1950s version, of course. Other family members force dog-eared Danielle Steel and Kristin Hannah novels on me. I take them all to be polite, and I read most of them, but I don't keep them. But the Broadviews? Those I keep. They fill the shelves of an old bookshelf my dad made in high school shop, showing a stark contrast with my blue-collar family and their shelves of paperbacks and old magazines.

Rather than serving a practical end, my collecting forms my identity. The books I collect are the ones with value, the ones that show I'm not just another daughter of a Midwestern phlebotomist and electrician. Every Broadview that graces my bookshelves shows the metaphorical distance I've traveled from Sedalia, Missouri. The essays that fill the binders stacked in my office might just be fire starters to someone else, but for me, they provide a stepstool to climb the social ladder—one rung, class, book, thought at a time.

This collection of books hearkens to experiences which define me. These texts each contain an element of my experience which I can draw from or add to as necessary. In the silent moment and space of writing this chapter, I realized that not only do I construct experiences through stories and view the world through my storied lens, but these books—this personal library—functions throughout my study as a metaphor for how English teachers build, organize, rearrange, and draw

from their personal and professional experiences. So I invite you to join me on a trip through the halls of these four teachers' personal libraries of experiences, revisiting elements of their collection and adding to the shelves as we explore how they construct and perform their writerly identities.

Chapter 3: Methods

*How this work was written:
rung by rung, according as chance would offer a narrow foothold,
and always like someone who scales dangerous heights
and never allows himself a moment to look around, for fear of becoming dizzy
(but also because he would save for the end the full force
of the panorama opening out to him).
Walter Benjamin, "On the Theory of Knowledge"*

Of his filmmaking, Jean Luc Godard once said, "Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form." As teachers and writers, stories give form to our lives and work, and as such, the best researchers are often the most engaging storytellers. In 1991, Clandinin and Connelly accessed the power of stories, making a case for narrative as a viable method of research. Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) describe this moment where researchers "mov[ed] forward from telling stories of our teaching practices to narratively inquiring into our teaching practices." The movement of narrative inquiry "situates teachers and teacher educators in the known and the familiar while it asks us to make the known and familiar strange and open to new possibility" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 33). As these stories unfold, both researcher and participants negotiate their sense of *self* and their place in the social contexts of personal and professional life.

This study employs narrative inquiry as paradigm, methodology, and method to explore the identity construction, (re)construction, and performance of English teachers' W/writerly identities. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) tell us that narrative inquiry "exists in an ever-shifting space" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 481) which situates it in the juncture of phenomenology, constructivism, and poststructuralism. The "ever-shifting space" of narrative inquiry makes room for an interpretivist

approach. In this study, I employ an interpretive narrative framework which allows me to make meaning from the participants' stories while also allowing room for tensions, contradictions, and multiplicity.

Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore high school English teachers' W/writerly identity construction and performance. In this two part inquiry, I sought to first answer the question: *How do mid-career English teachers perceive their histories with writing?* The following sub-questions guided this exploration of identity:

- a. What metaphors do they use to describe their experiences? What details do they include? What is the tone and mood of their stories?
- b. What kind of outer/inner life, school, and professional experiences have contributed to their teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities?
- c. How do their stories of writerly identity creation speak to the larger social and educational processes of writerly becoming?

In the second stage of this study, I investigated the interaction between the English teachers' perceived W/writerly identities and the W/writerly identities enacted in their classroom teaching. In this stage, I sought to answer the question: *In what ways are these teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities enacted and performed in mid-career English teachers' pedagogy?* The following sub-questions guided the second stage of identity exploration.

- d. What do these performed and enacted identities suggest about the practice of writing instruction?

- e. What contradictions and tensions are apparent in their identity enactment?
- f. Where are influences of the institutional context apparent? In what ways does the institutional context function to expand and/or limit the teachers' writerly identities?

Narrative Inquiry as Paradigm

When I first began this study, I spent much time reading and thinking about the research paradigm from which I sought to approach my chosen phenomenon. My reading made me realize that my ontological and epistemological beliefs surrounding identity fell somewhere between constructivism (identity as socially constructed and socially expressed) and poststructuralism (identities as plural, shifting, incomplete, and unknowable). Pinnegar and Daynes' (2007) writing on the narrative paradigm as a distinct method of qualitative inquiry helped to resolve these issues. Researchers working within the narrative paradigm are able to "embrace the power of the particular for understanding experience and [use] findings from research to inform themselves in specific places at specific times" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 24). Therefore, I approach my study's design, data collection, data analysis, and writing from a narrative perspective (see more detail on narrative as paradigm, method, and analysis in Chapter Two).

The narrative paradigm requires a "three dimensional inquiry space" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 156). Onto-epistemologically speaking, narrative inquiry—unlike other similar qualitative methods—embraces the impact of the research-participant relationship. Narrative knowledge comes from many sources,

especially those other than quantitative sources, and most importantly, this paradigm allows us to embrace the power of the individual experience to create new understanding (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This allows us to consider identity as both individual *and* social, as both stable *and* shifting. In her dissertation, Jean Dickinson (2012) describes narrative inquiry as “the story of stories.” Through embracing stories as data and as an alternate way of knowing, I am able to build robust narratives of the participants as W/writers and teachers.

The Research Context

The questions of identity I wanted to investigate are delicate questions—ones tied to our deeply held beliefs about who we are as writers, teachers, and humans. For this reason, I knew that I needed to select participants for my study with whom I already had a positive rapport so I could continue to cultivate that relationship and, through the comfortable participant-researcher relationship, access stories that the participants may not have otherwise felt comfortable sharing.

Because I had identified the gap in the writerly identity literature prior to recruiting participants, I also knew that much was written about pre-service or novice in-service teachers. Because my area of experience and research interest is in English education (grades 9-12), I wanted to explore that particular area of secondary education. I then identified my population of interest as mid-career teachers who had 10-20 years of experience in the classroom. This population was selected because they have had time to establish themselves as teachers and experiment with their pedagogy, curriculum, and classroom management to find

what works best for them. In many ways, mid-career teachers are comfortable in their classrooms and have the time and space to consider who they are as people, writers, and teachers.

Having decided that I would work with mid-career high school English teachers with whom I already had a relationship, I identified three Midwestern high schools with teachers who fit these categories.

Central High School.² Central High School is located in a town of approximately 13,000 residents, though many of the students at the school live in nearby rural areas. The town's main features are a hospital, a large meat processing plant, and a small private liberal arts college. One participant in the study—Glen—teaches at Central High School, and he described the economic situation of the town in our first interview: *There's a lot of haves and have-nots. There aren't very many jobs for the middle income*³. He explained that, because of the town's industry and the expansive farmland, there are many doctors and wealthy farmers but also many low wage industry and farmworkers.

The unique economic situation of this town also means that Central High School is rather diverse for a rural Midwestern town. In the 2017 school year, of the 802 high school students, 69.3% identified as White, 18.5% identified as Hispanic, and 6.7% identified as Black. Glen tells me that his classes have a large El Salvadorian and Micronesian population, and approximately 25% of students in the school speak a second language at home.

² All teacher and school names are pseudonyms.

³ Throughout this text, I use italics (rather than quotation marks) to denote my participants' words and to distinguish them from other source material.

There is a great interest in soccer in this small town, and the soccer team does well each year. However, as with most towns in the Midwest, football still reigns supreme. Glen laughs and explains, *This is a football town. We've always been a football town . . . but we didn't win a game in football at all last year. But there's a lot of people who remember that, back in the late 1980s, they won a state championship* so there's hope to return to the glory days.

Midwest High School. The second school featured in this study—Midwest High School—is located 55 miles southwest of Central High School in a town of approximately 18,000 residents. Three of my participants—Sylvie, Aspen, and Neal—teach high school English here. Though this town “feels suburban” according to my experience as a teacher there from 2006-2013, Aspen told me the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education classifies it as rural. The main employer in this town is the regional Division II college known for its teacher education, aviation, and business programs. There is a lively downtown area where on a Friday night, townspeople and college students can enjoy live music, a good meal, and two-for-one drink specials.

The regional college provides Midwest High School with a slightly more diverse student body than comparable nearby towns, though its population is considerably more homogeneous than Central High School. In 2017, of the 914 students in grades 9-12, 78.9% identify as White and 21.1% identify as Black (6.6% or another minority class (in such small numbers that the census doesn't provide percentages). However, though it is admittedly more diverse than many rural Midwest schools, I remember that, until a few years ago, the high school had an

annual FFA-sponsored Drive Your Tractor to School Day. Additionally, in his first interview, Neal told me that the school—and the teachers—are *very traditional*.

The third Midwest school district I selected is located 135 miles south of Midwest High School. A fifth participant—November Lynn—teaches at the junior high and high school in this town. However, due to scheduling and personal reasons, she had to withdraw from the study after the initial interview⁴, so I will not provide a detailed discussion of that site here.

Both of the sites which appear in this final product—Central High School and Midwest High School—feature supportive administrations. As such, the teachers in these English departments are allowed great flexibility to be innovative in their curriculum design and creative in their lesson planning. Both the teachers and I recognize that this institutional situation is not the norm in secondary education.

Gaining Access. Considering the English faculty of these high schools, I first identified four possible candidates (1) who fit the category of mid-career teacher, (2) who I thought would be interested in embarking on this work with me, (3) who taught some level of writing in their courses, (4) and with whom I already had a relationship. Because narrative inquiry requires both the participants and the researcher to be especially vulnerable in their storytelling, these four possible candidates are my colleagues, friends, and mentors. I have worked with a few of them for more than a decade.

⁴ I explain more about this situation in *The Participants* section below.

After deciding on my possible recruits, I contacted the administration of all three high schools to begin the process of gaining access to their schools. The schools had varying levels of requirements in their approval process, and I worked through their processes in the summer of 2017. All schools were alerted to my desire to audio and videotape classroom interactions, and each administrator worked with me to secure the appropriate permissions for these recordings. The table below reflects my actions to gain access in each school.

Table 1. Timeline of actions to gain access to sites

School	Contact Person(s)	Contact Type(s)	Date of Approval
Midwest High School	High School Principal and Superintendent	Email	July 14, 2017
Central High School	High School Principal	Email	August 7, 2017
Third High School	High School Assistant Principal and Central Office Director of Federal Programs	Email and phone	August 18, 2017

Because my third site required my proposal to go to the district's research committee, my contact at the my campus's Institutional Review Board (IRB) office suggested that I submit my proposal with the first two sites and amend it when I received approval from the third site. I did so and gained final IRB approval (see Appendix A) for my study on August 18, 2018.

The Participants. After gaining approval from my three chosen research sites, in August 2017, I sent a recruitment email (see Appendix B) to one possible participant at Central High School (Glen), two possible participants at Midwest High

School (Aspen and Sylvie), and one possible participant at the third high school (November Lynn). Each of these teachers agreed to participate in my study.

Throughout this time, I continued to read about the theory and method of narrative inquiry, and I realized the power of the particular experience in understanding identity construction and performance. As a result of my reading and considering my current pool of participants, I decided that there was one more teacher at Midwest High School whose unique experiences could add depth to my study. In late August, I sent the recruitment email to Neal, and he also immediately agreed to participate.

In September 2017, shortly after the study began, November Lynn chose to withdraw because of schedule conflicts, a chronically ill child, and a father battling cancer. Therefore, I completed this study with the remaining four participants.

Though I provide an in-depth picture of each participant as a student, a teacher, and a writer in Chapter Four, I want to include a few biographical details here to serve as an introduction to these teachers. Throughout this text, I discuss the teachers in the order of my first interview with each of them.

Glen. The 2017-2018 school year is Glen's tenth year of teaching which makes him the most novice teacher in this study. He has taught at Central High School for his entire career. Though he is not from the town, he attended the small liberal arts college there and met his eventual wife. After he landed a provisional teaching job at Central High School, they settled into the community and have made it their home. His wife is the high school library media specialist, and they have two children. Glen identifies as a White male and notes that he *looks like* most of his

students. On the weekend, you might find Glen and his family exploring a trail, visiting an art museum, or enjoying some time at the local public library.

Course	Students	Description
English 2	Sophomores	<p>A general language arts course which features reading, writing, speaking, and listening.</p> <p>Of this course and these students, Glen often says, "I have to make them readers before I can make them writers" (Initial Interview).</p> <p>Writing assignments ask students to demonstrate critical thinking skills and/or writing-to-learn.</p>
Sheltered English	Mostly freshmen but could include grades 10-12 as well	<p>For "students who come into the country or may have language issues based on their initial language test" (Initial Interview).</p> <p>Co-taught with the school's ESL teacher.</p> <p>*I did not observe any sessions of this course*</p>
English 130	Seniors (mostly honors students)	<p>Pairing with the local college, this is a dual credit English course.</p> <p>EN 130 is composition focused. Students write and revise multiple papers throughout the semester.</p>
Lit Myth to Modern	Varied	<p>Though this course is "a mash-up of a lot of different things" (Initial Interview), it's primarily a literature course.</p> <p>*I did not observe any sessions of this course*</p>

Glen currently teaches the following courses.

Table 2. Glen's current courses

Glen told me that, with the exception of the dual credit course, he has taught most of these courses for ten years. I first met him when he was finishing his master's degree in English in the summer of 2016, and after he completed that master's (more on the details surrounding his final project later), he became eligible to teach the dual credit courses. This is his second year teaching these dual credit courses.

In addition to the many courses he teaches, Glen is also part of a group of faculty members working to design and implement a Freshman Academy pilot test for the 2018-2019 school year. He is especially excited that this academy will feature flex schedule and student-driven curriculum. He also looks to this academy as another way he can apply his National Writing Project experience.

Aspen. The 2017-2018 school year is Aspen's thirteenth year of teaching, and she has taught at Midwest High School for her entire career. Though she did not begin her college education at the local university, she completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees there after the military transferred Aspen and her husband to the Midwest. Aspen's husband is a (now retired) Air Force mechanic with a specialty in repairing high-tech aircraft, so their lives have been inextricably connected to the location of the US's most advanced air squadrons. This means that Aspen has spent much of her teaching career as, in her words, *single mom* while her husband attended technical schools abroad or was deployed to other air fleet locations (Initial Interview).

Aspen identifies as a White female, and she has two children—one recently graduated from Midwest High School and one currently attends MHS. She has

formed close friendships with many current and former high school teachers, so it is not unusual to run into her at the local Tranquility Shop during a meditation class or to find her with a group of teachers on the patio of the winery a few miles down the road.

In her words, in her thirteen years, Aspen has taught *all the literature courses you could teach!* (Initial Interview). She currently teaches the following classes.

Course	Students	Description
Honors Communication Arts III	Juniors	<p>An honors language arts course which features a study of American literature from Native American oral tradition to the 21st century.</p> <p>This course is mostly a literature course, but it includes many writing and speaking activities around the literature.</p>
Honors English Literature	Varied	<p>A chronological study of selected works from designated periods in British Literature, aligned with a local community college's course expectations.</p> <p>Writing mostly appears in the form of short response pieces, extended essays, and test responses. Students can choose to take this course for dual credit.</p>
Honors Introduction to Literature	Varied	<p>An introduction to the genres of fiction, poetry, and drama as well as to the terminology used in literary analysis.</p> <p>Writing assignments ask students to apply their knowledge of literary terminology, literary analysis and/or theme.</p>

Table 3. Aspen's current courses

In addition to her teaching duties, Aspen is the co-sponsor of the MHS Speech and Debate Team. As the longest tenured faculty member in English, Aspen also the

English department chair. She is often asked to serve on leadership committees as well—namely the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Leadership Committee and the recent head administrator search committee.

Sylvie. The 2017-2018 school year is Sylvie’s eleventh year of teaching. She has spent her entire career at Midwest High School. Like Aspen, she also came to the area as a young adult, and she also identifies as a White female. After completing an associate’s degree in horse science and finishing an internship in the same field, she decided to go back to school to become a teacher and chose the regional college near Midwest High School because her parents had moved to the area. Sylvie has one daughter—a quiet, contemplative little girl who looks just like her.

For years, Sylvie commuted to Midwest High School from 45 minutes away, but she recently moved to town. She and Aspen completed their master’s degrees from the nearby university at around the same time and have since drastically increased the number of dual credit English classes in their department. Sylvie currently teaches the following classes.

Course	Students	Description
Communication Arts III	Juniors	<p>A language arts course which features a study of American literature from Native American oral tradition to the 21st century.</p> <p>This course is mostly a literature course, but it includes many writing and speaking activities around the literature.</p> <p>*I did not observe any sessions of this course*</p>
Dual Credit Composition I	Seniors	An honors composition course which features a study of the modes of writing with a special

		<p>focus on analysis, structure, and syntax.</p> <p>Sylvie teaches this course through two different colleges, and each college requires a slightly different curriculum.</p>
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Table 4. Sylvie's current courses

When she's not teaching (or grading the stacks of papers that come from teaching so many writing courses), Sylvie spends time riding and caring for her horse.

Neal. The 2017-2018 school year Neal's eighteenth year of teaching which makes him the most veteran teacher in this study. He taught for seven years at a small rural high school fifteen miles south of Midwest High School, and he has spent the last eleven years at MHS. He also came to the Midwest as a young adult, following his now ex-wife to town and then finishing his undergraduate degree at the same local university as the other MHS teachers.

Unlike his two colleagues in this study who have master's degrees in English, Neal's master's degree is in literacy education. Six years ago, the administration asked him to formally practice what he'd been informally doing for years—providing support for colleagues struggling with classroom management, curriculum design, or literacy implementation. He then became the school's first half-time instructional coach and half-time English teacher—dual roles he still fills.

Because of his skill in literacy education, Neal's courses include a specially cultivated group of students who may need extra assistance with reading, writing, or motivation. As a self-identified Anglo-Hispanic man, Neal told me that he notices the lack of diversity in student and staff at his mostly rural setting. His website

describes the focus of his classes as “reading, writing, thinking, working,” and he currently teaches the following courses.

Course	Students	Description
Communication Arts II	Sophomores	<p>A general language arts course which features a study of full literary works from different genres and eras.</p> <p>The writing in this course is focused on analysis and application at the word, sentence, paragraph, and essay level. Critical thinking is a constant focus.</p>
Career English	Seniors	<p>A course designed to provide a fourth English credit to seniors who will enter the workforce or technical school after graduation.</p> <p>Designed to help students navigate a variety of occupations, the writing in this course focuses on clarity, brevity, and audience.</p>

Table 5. Neal's current courses

Neal is surrounded by women in his life. He and his wife live in an old farmhouse outside of town. His oldest daughter recently finished her master's in library science and works in one of the libraries at Yale University. His youngest daughter has spent her last two years in high school in a selective program at a regional college where she earned her first two years of college credit.

The Position of the Researcher. As I mentioned earlier, working within the narrative framework requires the researcher to be the co-constructor of the story-data. Therefore, the researcher's voice—my voice—appears in the interviews, classroom observations, and written text.

Researcher voice in interviews. In narrative inquiry, interviews become more like conversations and less like question-and-answer sessions. In this study, particularly, because I have had a working relationship with these teachers for varying lengths of time, their stories around writing and teaching are inextricably bound with mine. As such, I participated in the creation of their stories during our many interviews. I also designed interview questions as a starting place for a two-way conversation rather than a checklist for recording participant answers. In this way, I recognized that my position of researcher was that of conversation-starter, and I encouraged participants to take the conversation in whatever direction they preferred (more on this tension later in the *Interviews* section of Chapter Three).

Researcher presence in classroom observations. Similarly, in my classroom observations, I was a noticeable presence in the classroom. I let each teacher decide what level of participation they'd like me to have in their classes. In some instances, a teacher would introduce me and that was the extent of my participation in their teaching. This was the case for Glen. On my first visit to his sophomore class in August 2017, he introduced me saying, "Remember how I told you I'm not a normal English teacher? She's one of the good ones too." Similarly, Sylvie provided students with a short introduction of my project and me and went on about her teaching.

Two of the participants, however, chose to make me a more obvious presence in their classrooms. On my second visit to Neal's Career English class in November 2017, he was finishing a unit on storytelling. In the lesson, he told the students that not only had I previously worked at Midwest High School, I had worked closely with him for years, and then he asked me to tell a story that would

provide his students historic knowledge of him and of Midwest High School. Aspen also chose to include me in her classroom, especially during my visit in September 2017 when she was leading writing tutorials. Early in the tutorial time, a student asked her a grammar question, and she replied, *Let's ask the professor about this one* and gestured at me. Later, a few of her students asked me to give their paragraphs a read-through, which Aspen was happy to encourage.

Researcher voice in the written text. As a teacher of writing myself, I value voice in all written texts. As I wrote this dissertation, I heard Dr. Roy Fox's words to not allow myself to be "be hogtied by the language" of research, and I also hearkened back to one of my first doctoral classes—an exploration of creative nonfiction—to provide justification for including my researcher voice in this text. I often tell colleagues and students that I found my voice during my doctoral coursework, and in many ways, this dissertation is the culmination of my process of voice-finding.

However, in deciding how to balance my own voice with the theory and the participants' voices, I also considered Clandinin and Connelly's writing around what they call the text's "signature." They caution that a "too flimsy" signature allows "other texts and other theories, rather than the writer, to sign the work." And a "too vivid" signature "runs the risk of obscuring the field and its participants" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 148). For this reason, each section of Chapter Four begins with my own story of physical movement to the interview or observation location. In these short interludes, I sometimes include discussion of the books I am reading, the music I am listening to, or other elements which impact my

thinking about how the participants live out their identities as W/writers and teachers. After these initial interludes, I construct each teacher's narrative with a focus on the teacher's voice, and I attempt to limit my own unnecessary intrusions.

I also infused my own voice in Chapter One to provide context for my experiences. I included a discussion of my own bookshelves in Chapter Two to physically demonstrate those authors who either intentionally or unintentionally impacted my thinking. And I conclude Chapter Six with a discussion of how my own identities as Writer and teacher have been affected by this work. Just like local author William Least Heat-Moon fills his bookshelves in his writing space with those texts from which he's currently drawing inspiration, these interludes help me to "find [my] place within the inquiry space" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 100). In the same way that any research provides some level of risk for the participants, the researcher is also "always speaking partially naked" in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 147).

Data Collection

Working from Mishler's position of "stories as identity performances" (1999, p. 147), I focused my data collection on recording stories of the participants' personal and professional lives that would speak to the types of W/writers and teachers they are. I began collecting data in August 2017, and I completed the official data collection process in December 2017. However, though the interviews and observations were completed by the end of the first semester, I still continue to

check in with participants, asking them to verify details for accuracy or to read their narratives to assess if they're representative (more on member-checking in the *Validity* section at the end of Chapter Three).

Field Texts. Clandinin and Connelly created the term “field texts” to represent the multitude of data collected in narrative studies. Highlighting the relational nature of narrative data, field texts are “selective reconstructions of field experiences and thereby embody an interpretive process” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94). In composing field texts, researchers both knowingly and unknowingly make choices—in what to notice during field observations, in how to arrange the camera during videotaping, in the questions they ask and the responses they provide in interviews. By creating “richly detailed” field texts, the data collected “allow[s] for growth and change” rather than creating a pseudo-objective relationship “between fact and idea” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 95). For this study, my list of field texts includes the following.

1. Interview audio recordings, transcriptions, and researcher notes
2. Classroom observation video recordings and researcher field notes
3. Participant and researcher journal writings (formal and informal personal writings)

Interview field texts. The first field texts my participants and I co-constructed were interview field texts. Though I had initially planned for multiple first-round interviews to explore the participants' W/writerly identities before watching them teach, each initial interview lasted for more than two hours. Therefore, I conducted just this one round of initial, in-depth interviews.

The initial interview. I discuss the specific context and setting of each participant's initial interview session in Chapter Four, but each session did have a similar general structure. After the four participants' acceptance of my recruitment email invitation, I emailed them individually to set a date, time, and location for their first interview. In order to show my appreciation for their time and to allow them to choose the atmosphere they would feel most comfortable, I offered to meet the participants in their homes, their classrooms, their favorite coffeehouse, or their favorite restaurant. I scheduled one interview at a time to allow me to fully immerse myself in each participant's specific experiences and to provide time/space for adjusting my interview approach if necessary.

Participant	Initial Interview Date	Initial Interview Location
Glen	August 24, 2017	His classroom at Central High School
Aspen	August 30, 2017	A happy hour location downtown
Sylvie	September 6, 2017	A downtown restaurant
Neal	September 12, 2017	A popular tea room

Table 6. Initial interview dates and locations

In this first meeting, I explained my study in more detail than I had in the recruitment email and provided each participant with a copy of the written consent form (see Appendix C). Each participant could choose between two levels of participation; they were able to choose which data sources they would permit me to use in this study, or they could consent to full participation with all data sources collected and analyzed. All four participants allowed use of all data collected during the study.

Additionally, in this first meeting, I gave the participants the opportunity to select their pseudonym. One participant chose his pseudonym right away, and the others emailed me at a later date to provide a pseudonym.

Their pseudonym choices also provide a peek into their identities as one participant chose a family member's name, one chose the famous person after whom he's named, and one let her daughter create hers.

After each participant chose their consent level and signed the written consent form, I provided them with a personalized Writer's Notebook to use for our work together. I, too, brought a Writer's Notebook with me to these interviews, and the participants' notebooks were of a similar style (see Figure 3).

I began each initial interview with either a written discussion (Glen) or a verbal discussion (Aspen, Sylvie, Neal) of the first question on the interview protocol (See Appendix D). This question—*How do you define a "writer"? Or a "Writer"? Is there a difference?*—served to access the participants' prior beliefs and begin opening them to telling their own stories around writing. From here, I used the rapport I had established through my previous work with these participants "as a means to generate data of high quality" (Kim, 2016, p. 162).

Though I put much time and thought into creating this interview protocol, when I arrived at the initial interviews, I set out to follow an open interview structure consistent with narrative interviewing (Riessman, 2008), allowing participants' stories to guide the flow of the interview. Kim (2016) describes

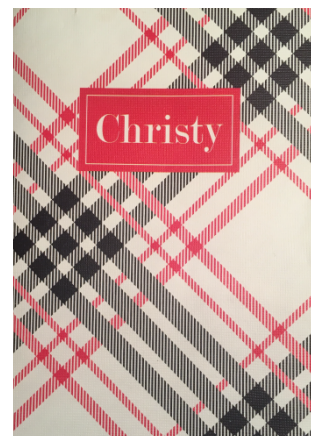


Figure 3. Personalized Writer's Notebooks for participants and researcher.

narrative interview procedure as having two stages: the *narration phase* and the *conversation phase*. In this first phase—the *narration phase*—the interviewer avoids intervening to allow the participant to provide as complete a narration as possible. In the second phase—the *conversation phase*—the interviewer draws from her active listening in the first phase to engage in a dialogue by responding to the participant's points and asking further questions.

Often the opening prompt (defining and explaining W/writer) would lead to a discussion of specific W/writers the participant was familiar with or an application of the participant's W/writer definition to his or her own practices. Throughout the initial interview, I tried to ask questions under each subheading on the protocol (initial questions, personal experiences with writing, experiences as a student of writing, and experiences as a teacher of writing) to encourage participants to tell stories of all aspects of their W/writerly lives.

While the participants talked, I jotted down quick phrases or time stamps in my researcher's notebook to allow me to revisit what seemed to be important at the time. At the end of each interview, I sat quietly in my car and wrote a list of 'big ideas' from the interview. Later, when I again listened to the interview, I noted which questions from the protocol hadn't been discussed so I could be sure to ask those questions in later de-briefing interviews (more on these short interviews in the *Classroom Observation Field Texts* section below).

Transcribing the initial interviews. It was my goal to complete transcription and initial analysis of each participant interview prior to conducting the next participant interview. I was able to meet this goal in the case of Glen's initial

Initial Interview Transcript

We wrote for 10 minutes on the top 4 interview protocol questions. The recording has a glorious ten minutes of silence where all you can hear is the scratching of pen on paper, the squeaking of the old wooden chair, and the ambient noise from the sports practice down the hall.

Transcription	Researcher Notes
<p>16:09 I start by asking Glen what qualities he wrote about when he defined a W/writer.</p> <p>16:37 Well, I kind of just started that everyone was a Writer. <u>And maybe that we don't write yet.</u> That's what I always see with kids. I've always thought it was daunting to stand in front of 25 people regardless of age <u>because they know something I don't know.</u></p> <p>16:59 Especially if they work together, I'm always outnumbered. It still frightens me. So to take that idea that we're all writers <u>just waiting kind of to be writers</u> and to find that voice.</p> <p>17:35 I've been reading several things about why writing instruction isn't working, and the big thing they say is because the people who are teaching writers aren't writers. The question I always have is like, okay, it kind of goes with this. What defines a Writer? We don't define a writer as somebody who's published. It's people who are in the <u>process</u> of writing. I shared with my 130 class . . . we were talking about writing and what that means . . . <u>I shared my writing notebook from last summer,</u> and it's all over the place. It's jumbled notes. It's not really linear.</p>	<p>Being a Writer is like potential and kinetic energy. It's there but it hasn't yet been put into motion.</p> <p>G values all knowledge--might be why he has open concept of Writer.</p> <p>Forefronts process</p> <p>Shares his own messy process with his students</p>

Figure 4. The first page of Glen's initial interview transcript

interview. Using a foot pedal and the Express Scribe transcription program, I transcribed all of Glen's initial interview in the days following the interview (see first page of this transcript in Figure 4). To help my reading and rereading, I added time stamps in blue, denoted my own words in red, and included Glen's words in black. As I transcribed, I underlined phrases/sentences that seemed related to Glen's W/writerly identities. These "extracts"—what Riessman (2008) terms the short bits of stories that provide meaning in narrative inquiry—would be my starting point for the multiple readings I would later undertake in the data analysis (see more on this point in the *Thematic Narrative Analysis* section of Chapter Three). When I finished transcribing each interview, I read through the transcript, fixing typos and adding notes in the "Research Notes" column to reflect why I underlined the corresponding words/phrases.

As reflected in the above transcript excerpt, I followed transcription norms accepted in thematic analysis. Since “language is viewed as a resource rather than a topic of inquiry” (Riessman, 2008, p. 59) in this style of narrative analysis, I removed extraneous false starts and verbal tics such as “like” or “um.” Riessman (2008) notes that, since narrative inquirers often include long excerpts of transcripts in their written text, “messy, spoken language is transformed to make it easily readable” (p. 58). I followed a similar transcription process for each of the remaining three participants, though by the end of the interview cycle, I was not able to complete transcription of the previous interview before conducting the next one.

Classroom observation field texts. After completing and transcribing initial interviews with each participant, I scheduled times for me to observe their classroom teaching. It was my goal to observe a minimum of six instructional units of each participant’s teaching. I spent an average of 12.5 hours in each participant’s classroom for a total of 50 hours of observation across all participants.

My classroom observation procedure was similar across all participants. The evening before I was to be in a teacher’s classroom, I would revisit the initial interview transcript, my researcher notes, and initial analyses to ground myself in that participant’s experiences around writing. The morning of the observation, I packed up two video cameras, my audio recorder, and a brand-new legal pad to allow me to capture the events of the day. While in their classrooms, the participants would provide me with handouts for the day and I would often take photographs of the whiteboard or PowerPoint presentation if applicable. During the observation

sessions, I would de-brief with participants whenever they were available—during their planning periods, their lunch time, or at the end of the day.

Field notes. To avoid disrupting the classroom environment any more than absolutely necessary, I took notes by hand, filling an entire yellow legal pad during each day's observation. I began each class period by naming the document with the teacher's name, the course, the date, and the page number (see Figure 5 for an example of these field notes). As I watched the participant's teaching, I noted elements which seemed to reflect their W/writerly identities. These elements could be actions that were in line with what they stated in their interviews, contradictory

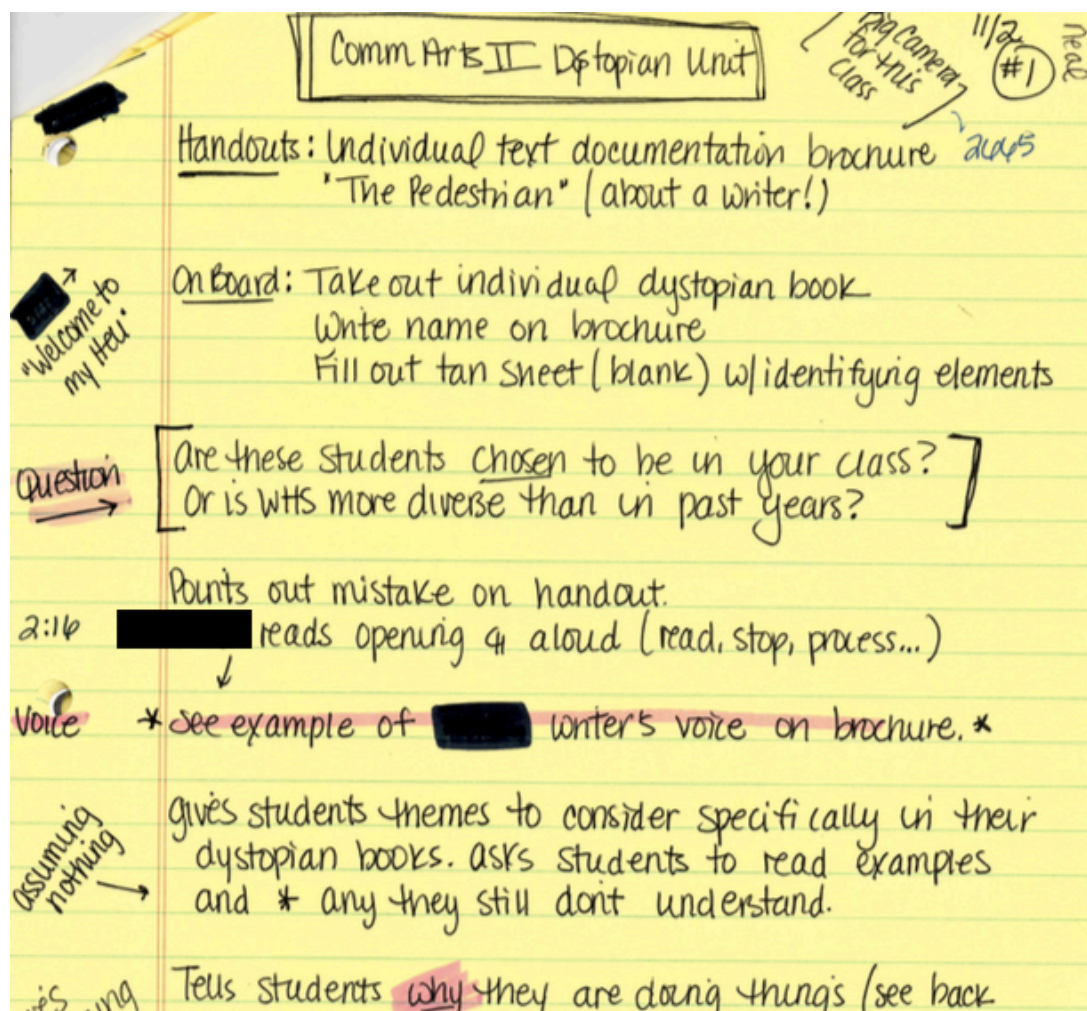


Figure 5. Example of field notes (Neal, November 2)

to what they stated in their interviews, or new concepts we hadn't discussed. I noted questions I had by highlighting them and later revisited these questions in de-briefing interviews or journal prompts. By placing time markers every few minutes, I was later able to match my detailed notes with the video recording.

At the end of each class period, I quickly decided which questions would be best answered verbally and extemporaneously and which would be better served by thoughtful writing. The former, in addition to my established de-brief interview protocol (see Appendix E), would become de-brief questions later that day. The latter, in addition to my established Writer's Notebook protocol (see Appendix F), would become journal prompts I asked the participants to write about, taking as much time and space as they needed to explore the question.

Writer's Notebook field texts. The participants and I both kept Writer's Notebooks throughout this process.

Participant Writer's Notebooks. While I anticipated that some of my participants—perhaps the ones who more strongly identified as W/writers—would use their Writer's Notebooks organically to write about our discussions or their own teaching and reading, that was not the case. One participant (who already keeps a detailed Writer's Notebook) did write in this organic manner, but the other three participants preferred that I provide them with prompts to write toward.

As such, I provided each participant with the same initial Writer's Notebook prompt: *After our talk today, how would you characterize your writing identity? Are you a writer/Writer/something else? Did you gain any insights on your identity as a*

writer that you hadn't considered before? All participants chose to type their “final copy” of this entry and send it to me via email at their convenience.

Other Writer's Notebook prompts came from questions which arose as I watched the participants teach. A sample of those questions appears below.

- Aspen, Journal Prompt #2: *How would you describe the institutional expectation of writing education at the department, school, and district level? How might institutional expectations affect your teaching of writing? How does your position as department chair affect/impact that institutional view?*
- Glen, Journal Prompt #2: *What was the purpose of the lesson? What elements of writing did you forefront? What elements did you choose to include/omit? How does today's lesson speak to your beliefs on writing?*
- Sylvie, Journal Prompt #3: *You taught students how to write academic titles today (loved your examples!). How do you see academic writing as different from non-academic (regular? Personal? Colloquial?) writing?*
- Neal, Journal Prompt #3: *What do you see as vocabulary's role in writing?*

Researcher's Notebook. In my similar Writer's Notebook, I kept narrative-style notes and reflections. I wrote in this notebook as I transcribed the initial interviews and de-brief interviews, asking myself questions I would like to explore later. I also noted elements of my observations which were impacting my own teaching (see Figure 6 below where I reflect on my transcribing of Glen's initial interview). Other times I would note contradictions between the participant's spoken and enacted identities or questions I had about what the literature might say regarding certain elements of identity. My Writer's Notebook became my way to

capture all of the disconnected thoughts flying around in my brain during this overwhelming process, and it served as an informal method of initial analysis.

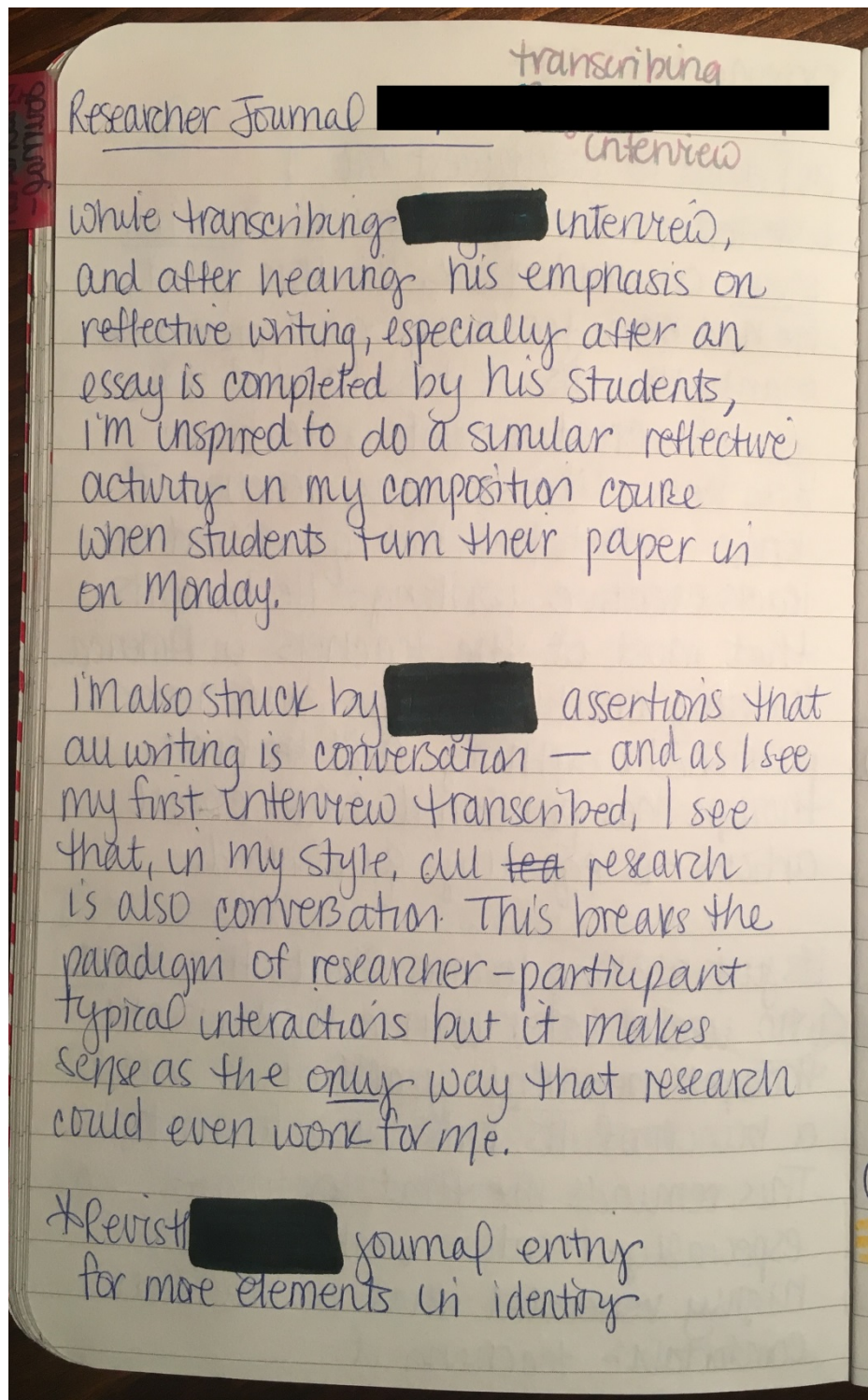


Figure 6. Excerpt of my researcher notebook writings

Collected field texts. In addition to the data collected from interviews, classroom observations, and journal writings, I asked participants for samples of their previous personal or professional writing. If the participant mentioned a specific essay in his or her initial interview, then I wrote a follow-up email requesting a copy of that text. In some cases, I read these documents but eventually decided they didn't provide any additional depth to the participant's narrative; this was the case with Aspen's master's thesis. In other cases, though, the text was clearly a large part of how the participant saw himself as a W/writer or scholar. This was the case with Glen whose master's thesis (what he calls an "object") features prominently in Chapter Four.

Organizing field texts. I created a three ring binder for each participant where I included paper copies of the written consent form, interview transcripts, field notes, and collected field texts organized in the order I collected them. This proved useful as it allowed me to view the participants as separate but also to assess the types/quality of data across all participants.

I kept a similar electronic organization system within Google Drive and, for data safety and security, on two external hard drives. I organized these electronic files by participant and then by data type (interviews, journal entries, etc). The only element the e-files included that the paper files did not were the audio and video recordings, organized by participant and labeled with the participant name, class name, and date of observation.

Data Analysis

In his writings on *collecting* and *the collector*, Walter Benjamin speaks to the collective nature of identity. He writes, “Everything remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property . . . the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of this object” (1931/2005, p. 487). It was my goal to view each participant as a sort of “magic encyclopedia” by analyzing the past experiences, current beliefs, and future possibilities which constructed their W/writerly identities. This approach was influenced by my reading of Benjamin early in my doctoral studies and by narrative scholars’ (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Josselsen, 2011) calls to approach the text as a whole rather than disassembling it into categories.

Considering the elements of identity I uncovered in my literature review and discussed in Chapter Two, I designed two stages of data analysis. The first stage dealt only with initial interview transcripts, journal writings, and collected field texts. The second stage dealt with field observations, field notes, and de-brief interviews.

Data analysis process: Stage One. In the first stage, I began with multiple readings of the initial interview transcripts, journal writings, and collected field texts. Since narrative analysis is “case centered” (Riessman, 2008, p. 74), the goal of these readings was to interrogate each individual case. In doing so, I considered elements of personal W/writerly identities and elements of process writing as they appeared (or didn’t) in each participant’s stories. I started with the initial interview

transcripts and then read through other data sources in stage one (collected data and journal writings) vertically, again identifying areas of focus.

Nominal analysis. During these vertical readings, I continued to underline and/or highlight stories which spoke to W/writerly beliefs or the participant's past experiences with writing, especially considering how the teachers considered process and product, authors they admired, and deeply held beliefs they held surrounding writing. Next to these highlighted sections, I wrote a word or two to distill the story into a theme which I could then later expand and complicate to build each teacher's narrative. Through this nominal analysis, I was able to note what was said and the "contours" and contexts of when it was said (Riessman, 2008, p. 71).

Spatial analysis. After thoroughly reading, highlighting, and notating each participant's stage one data, I read horizontally across participants, not to compare/contrast participants but to allow one person's stories to illuminate themes in another's stories. I made notes across all participant data sources as I completed this horizontal reading, particularly focusing on elements present in all teachers' stories and elements present in only certain teachers' stories. This spatial analysis (Riessman, 2008) allowed me to relate each individual's stories to larger social and institutional contexts. As I reread the transcripts, I was able to see how these nominal level markers intersected with each other and combined to create bigger concepts of the personal and the social.

Final vertical reading. To end stage one of data analysis, I turned once again to a vertical reading, revisiting each participant's data independently of one another. After this vertical reading, it was my goal to construct each teacher's narrative, so as

I read, I noted 5-7 themes in each teacher's stories. I placed these themes on large pink chart paper (See Figure 7 for a visual representation of this stage).

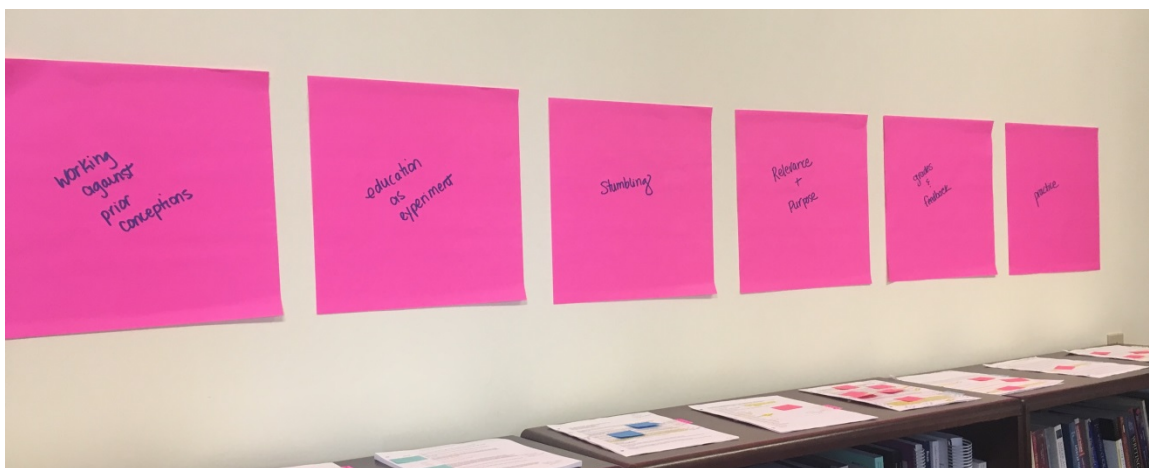


Figure 7. Neal's identity themes on large pink chart paper

And, in a final vertical read-through, I sat with a thick stack of post-it notes, writing story “extracts” which spoke to the participant’s W/writerly identities on these post-its. I then arranged the post-its on the large pink chart paper. See Figure 8 for an example of this completed stage. Through these readings, I hoped to be able



Figure 8. Neal's themes with post-it note story extracts

to examine how the many genres of data presented different voices of the *self* (Jossensen, 2011).

Thematic narrative analysis. The key distinction in thematic analysis is that prior theory both grounds and complicates. Additionally, the focus of analysis is always on content—on the *told* rather than the *telling* (Riessman, 2008). In this first stage of data analysis, I used Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) premise that our entire conceptual system is grounded in metaphor to help me think about these four teachers as W/writers. Pairing the tensions in the identity theory literature as I discussed in Chapter Two—the continuum of stability/multiplicity of identities—with metaphorical thinking and the process writing movement, stage one of data analysis culminated in my creation of a metaphor to represent each teacher’s W/writerly identity. In this way, my analysis was “theory saturated from the beginning” (Riessman, 2008, p. 66).

Additionally, my three-step process of analysis allowed me to consider the extracts within their larger stories. Rather than categorizing and coding from the start, using theory as a lens to read each data source provides a robust and whole view of each participant. This holistic approach, or as Clandinin and Connelly call it, “a reduction downward to themes,” in their view, “yields a different kind of text” (2000, p. 143). It also allowed me to “be sensitive to seemingly unimportant issues in the materials” (Riessman, 2008, p. 67) by forcing a focus on the continuity/discontinuity of identity.

Research Texts. Analysis of the many field texts ultimately ends in the creation of a research text—the “writing up” of the data. Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) remark on the unique nature of narrative inquiry as writing research texts happens “in the midst” of data collection and analysis (p. 145). Because I paired writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) with narrative inquiry, my process of writing was especially generative, recursive, and incomplete. Even as I write these last few pages of my dissertation, my analysis feels incomplete, and my writing leads me to believe I have so much more to say.

When I had completed stage one of data analysis, I began writing Glen’s narrative, keeping in mind that narrative inquiry feature data which “consists of action, events, and happenings but whose analysis produces stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6). In an attempt to step away from the theory to avoid it constraining the participants’ narratives, I used the Most Dangerous Writing App⁵ to force me to focus on my knowledge of the data, the participants, and their stories to just start writing. On this website, if the writer stops typing for more than five seconds, all progress will be lost, so I used it as a tool to embody writing as a method of inquiry. It “turn[ed] off my inner editor” (the website’s own statement of purpose) and forced me to walk away from the theory and sourcebooks which have guided my work thus far. In short, this was revolutionary to my writing process. In setting the Most Dangerous Writing App timer from two minutes and then, eventually, to twenty minutes, I was able to generate narratives that remained true to my voice and to the stories of each participant.

As I wrote these narratives, I arranged and rearranged the large pink chart papers, trying to discern which order of retelling would be the most representative

⁵ <http://www.themostdangerouswritingapp.com/>

for each participant. The post-its with notes about the extracts forced me to return to the original data source and allowed me to read the extract in context to fully understand the meaning. Throughout the research texts, I forefront each participant's experience, using varying lengths of direct quotes to build their narrative because "narrative analysts strive to preserve sequence and the wealth of detail contained in long sequences" (Riessman, 2008, p. 74).

My "attention to form and language" (Riessman, 2008) extends to the length of direct quotes included throughout the research, the reformatting of language for clarity within these quotes, and the focus on metaphors for understanding. In the writing up process, I struggle with tense, realizing that the social sciences ask for the text to be written in the past. But, because of my background in literary studies (and my writing of a research text that I consider to be creative nonfiction), I constantly felt myself drawn to write in the historical present. After much revision and editing, I come to a compromise by writing about physical actions in the past tense and writing about matters of identity and philosophy in the historical present. I realize this is a clunky solution, but I cannot consider the words of the narrative as past when we are always reinventing ourselves in the present.

Writing toward metaphor. As I analyzed the field texts at the nominal and spatial levels, and as I began to write the participants' narratives, I could see metaphors emerging for each participant. Some metaphors came directly from the participant's talk around his writing process (Glen and Neal). In other instances, I created metaphors after careful analysis of the participant's language and priorities (Aspen, Sylvie). These metaphors helped me to characterize the participants'

relationships with writing and how they situate their W/writerly identities in space, time, and place (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). I chose metaphors rather than labels to do this meaning-making work because with a metaphor comes an established system of meaning. Where labels are often reductive and over-simplified, metaphors can be expansive, offering us a new lens through which we can view the data and the participant. Of course, metaphors, too, can be limiting. For that reason, I create these metaphors in Chapter Four but, in Chapter Five, I complicate the metaphors, investigating the participants' enacted identities to reveal tensions and discontinuities.

Other narrative inquirers support the use of metaphors in narrative analysis and research texts. Jenson (2006) writes, "Methodologically, narrative inquiry relies on language devices such as image, metaphor, simile, and description as a means of data analysis, as these are the language tools most commonly used by participants to derive meaning from a complicated reality" (p. 40). Schön (1983) notes that metaphors are "generative" as they provide us new ways of looking at both the world and the objects of our research. And, of course, Hayakawa's (1990) work in general semantics suggests a necessity of pairing abstract language with concrete experiences—something which metaphors can uniquely accomplish.

In my writing of the research text that became Chapter Four, I paid attention to the language each participant used in their discussion of writing. In Glen's case, the language of craftsmanship was quite clear—he even likened the act of writing to the act of remodeling a house. After his metaphor and narrative emerged rather simply through the writing process, I set out to write all the remaining narratives in

the same format—establishing a metaphor and then listing the elements of that metaphor. However, right away, that did not work with my next participant, Aspen. So I wrote what I could, became stuck in how to represent her, and left it alone, deciding to come back to it at the end. After moving on to Sylvie and then Neal, I realized that, while thinking metaphorically and writing metaphorically helped me to characterize each participant as a W/writer and teacher, it was not possible to format each section of Chapter Four uniformly.

Employing writing as a method of inquiry paired with the Most Dangerous Writing App allowed me to write toward the *best* way to depict each teacher rather than forcing myself to follow an arbitrary format. This method also allows readers to easily see the distinct natures of each participant's narrative, and it resists a one-size-fits-all approach to the research text. My writing of the participants' narratives framed by my short researcher interludes (i.e., Chapter Four) concludes the first stage of my data analysis and representation.

Data analysis process: Stage two. After having written the extended participant narratives, I returned to the data to analyze the interaction between Research Questions 1 and 2, namely, to consider how the teachers performed the W/writerly identities they had described. In stage two of the data analysis, I revisited my observations of the participants' teaching and viewed them through the lens of each metaphor constructed in Chapter Four. Again, I sat with a stack of post-it notes near me, this time making notes of continuities/discontinuities in W/writerly identities as I watched the observation videos. As I made notes on each

individual participant's teaching, I placed the post-it notes on a large whiteboard to return to later when I could view them through the lens of theory.

The role of theory. While the teachers' narratives in Chapter Four featured very little theory, the goal for this phase of data analysis was to see how the teachers' personal and professional W/writerly lives interacted. Therefore, it was my intent to use theory in Chapter Five to help me understand which identity factors remained constant and which shifted based on social or institutional factors. Since narrative analysis "interprets and compares" (Riessman, 2008, p. 57) past and present life events to build and complicate identities, I wanted to analyze the complexity of identity enactment.

At the start of data analysis, I tried to unravel and extend the earlier metaphors I'd built. In doing so, I "tried on" many of the identity theories I had referenced earlier (and some I hadn't) including the following.

- Simultaneous Differentiation and Integration (Moffett, 1992).
- Appropriation and Ventriloquation (Bakhtin, 1986).
- Figured Worlds (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

None of these theories "fit" my analysis or helped me think about why some elements of these teachers' identities remained stable through multiple audiences and contexts or why some of these elements remained stable in all situations.

The last theory I landed on—Goffman's (1974) frame theory—finally helped me complete my analysis. The "articulation mechanisms" within Goffman's frame helped me understand why one story—or one set of meanings—is conveyed rather than another. With this frame in mind, I returned to my whiteboard full of post-it

notes with story extracts on them and arranged them looking for continuities and discontinuities in enacted identities.

Using Goffman's theory as the primary (or most abstract) level of analysis, I noticed the teachers' comfort with the role of process versus product seemed to be related to the stability or mutability of their identities. Secondly, I observed the role of agency and risk as mitigating factors in the teachers' W/writerly identities. So I put frame theory in conversation with my observation data and created a diagram to demonstrate the outcomes (see the process → product diagram in Chapter Five). This conversation between theory and data also led to three "identity insights" to further explain the relationship between W/writerly and teacherly identities.

Theory and the social context. Throughout my second stage of data analysis and writing of the research text, I considered the tensions in generalizing and thinking across participants—an aspect that is not generally a part of narrative inquiry. Rather than a generalizable text, I consider my research text to be ultimately focused on the particular through the Chapter Four narratives and the social through the Chapter Five discussion of identity enactment. Riessman (2008) notes that narrative inquirers often "use theory to link mundane daily life events with larger social processes" (p. 63). In using frame theory to understand aspects of these teachers' enacted W/writerly identities, I believe Chapter Five draws attention to the complicated social and institutional processes of everyday teaching.

Rigor and Validity

Since my study is informed by narrative paradigmatic practices of data co-construction, there is no need to perform positivist validity checks (such as independent video-recording without the researcher present) to reduce researcher interference. Regarding the interaction of the narrative researcher and validity concerns, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us:

When narrative researchers are in the field, they are never there as disembodied recorders of someone else's experience. They too are having an experience, the experience of inquiry that entails the experience they set out to explore . . . the narrative researcher's experience is always a dual one, always the inquirer experiencing the experience and also being a part of the experience itself. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 81)

Therefore, there is not a concern of the observer's paradox (Kim, 2016)—i.e., whether the teacher-participants change their behavior during my observations—but rather there is an embracing of this paradox within narrative inquiry.

Member-checking. According to Polkinghorne (2007), “textual interpretations are always perspectival” (p. 483), so the main validity check in narrative inquiry comes from the assemblage and context represented in the research report. As such, a narrative research report calls for a forefronting of the narrative construction process with attention toward the story (what the participants tell us) and what the participants are unable to articulate (the subtext, for example) (Kim, 2016). Polkinghorne (2007) also tells us that, for narrative inquiry, validation is “not a mechanical process but, instead, is an argumentative

practice” (p. 476). As such, the articulation of choices—such as appears throughout Chapter Three—is a check of validity for this narrative study.

To attend to the important element of validity in narrative inquiry, I also performed detailed member checks with the participants. When I wrote Chapter One, I sent it to the teachers so they could be informed of what was to come and verify their place within the study. After I had created each participant narrative (in Chapter Four), I sent each teacher his or her own narrative, asking them: “Is this you? Do you see yourself here? Is this who you want to be when read by others?” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 148). Each participant responded positively, and in my interaction with them and their stories, I sought to practice an “ethic of care” (Noddings, 1992), a validity check which further assures accurate representation (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 30).

Crystallization. Finally, the main validation process I employed in this study is crystallization (Richardson, 1994; Ellingson, 2009) wherein I embrace no single truth but, instead, provide multiple entry points to the narrative through multimodal/multigenre data, diverse voices, and layered representations. Ellingson (2009) describes crystallization as a three dimensional representation of validity that goes beyond the more traditional triangulation approach (p. 5).

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) first discuss the limits of triangulation, suggesting it “assumes a fixed point” or an “object that can be triangulated” (p. 963). The alternative approach of crystallization provides a more valid process of checks and balances because it aligns with the narrative (and constructionist and poststructuralist) philosophy of no single truth, of texts validating themselves, and

of inherent complexity (Kim, 2016; Polkinghorne 1998; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). By using crystallization, our resulting research is deeper rather than wider, and our understanding is similarly “deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial” (Riessman, 2008, p. 522).

Regarding increasing rigor in narrative inquiry, Hendry (2007) tells us “we need to be more faithful to our relationships and not impose more methods” (p. 493). Following Richardson and St. Pierre’s early call toward relational understanding and away from constricting methodology, Hendry, Polkinghorne (2007), and others suggest that we employ multiple analytical lenses, increase transparency, and justify our choices in the inquiry process. I answered this call through my use of metaphors, invoking literary concepts like the Romantic Sublime, and the layered and interconnected nature of these stories. Further, by beginning with multiple theories, “trying on” each theory until I found one which helped to illuminate the object of study, I employed additional levels of validity checks.

Coulter and Smith (2009) go further in suggesting that the artistic nature of narrative inquiry also increases rigor, and Kim (2008) encourages us to embrace postmodern rigor which requires “complexity, ambiguity, and openness” (p. 261). I have achieved these three elements—complexity, ambiguity, and openness—through layered, recursive analysis of field texts and through nuanced, voice-laden writing of the research text.

Chapter 4: The Teachers' Narratives

Since I knew all of my participants prior to undertaking this research, this study is both storied and historical. As I move between characters, settings, plots, and time periods, I strive to put the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality, and place—(Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) into conversation through the stories of these four teachers and my own story. Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) remind us that “events and people always have a past, present, and a future” and are “always in transition” (p. 23). This transitional approach to narrative inquiry manifests in my study in multiple ways. First, I quite literally spent my semester of research in physical transition as I drove (sometimes hours) from one research site to another to meet participants at various times of the day in their classrooms, in the local tea room, or at their favorite happy hour destination. More symbolically, this transition is represented in the curation I employ to construct this research text from the many field texts of my study.

Necessarily, I resist the urge to construct a simple chronological timeline because my experiences with these teachers are always in transition. Some (like Glen) know me only as a researcher working in a university setting while others (like Aspen) met me as a first-year high school teacher over a decade ago. Just as the process of identity construction is recursive, so is the process of creating a narrative research text; therefore, even when I try to start at the beginning (for example, with the above description of Glen's classroom), the writing resists linearity as I have to interject explanations and descriptions that came much later in the research process.

By seeking “authenticity. . . adequacy, and plausibility” in the writing of my research text, I strive to answer Clandinin and Connelly’s call to write a “good narrative” (2000, p. 1985). I echo Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr’s declaration that “in a different time, in a different social situation, and for different purposes, a different research text might be written” (p. 32). I strive for “resonance” (Hoffman, 1994) as an additional method of validity, and with this final note, I invite the reader to follow me through this particular research text situated in this particular time and space. The narrative in this chapter seeks to explore my first research question (see below) as we interrogate what it means to be a writer.

Research Question 1

How do mid-career English teachers perceive their histories with writing?

- a. What metaphors do they use to describe their experiences? What details do they include? What is the tone and mood of their stories?
- b. What kind of outer/inner life, school, and professional experiences have contributed to their teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities?
- c. How do their stories of writerly identity creation speak to the larger social and educational processes of writerly becoming?

Glen

On a muggy August afternoon just a few weeks after the excitement of a new school year had worn down and routines had been established, I traded in my comfortable, broken-in teacher subjectivity for a new, unfamiliar researcher one. A short drive would take me to a small Midwestern town where I'd interview my first participant—Glen, a high school English teacher of ten years—in his classroom. I piled my gear into my Toyota Corolla and set off, marking the distance from my university city in each expansive field of corn not quite ready to be harvested.

As I arrived at the city limits, I recognized this rural community's pride in their FFA success, evidenced by a prominent sign announcing the national award recently won by the organization. I continued down the town's main thoroughfare and saw more markers of small town America—a Casey's gas station, a few chain fast food restaurants, a grain elevator, a Wal-Mart—arriving at the high school a few minutes after the last bell rang. Dodging the stream of high school students driving away in their pick-up trucks and second-hand cars, I found a parking place, switched off my audiobook (this trip featured *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*), and took a deep breath before I disembarked into this unknown school and this unknown position of researcher.

I had met Glen two summers prior in our regional site of the National Writing Project summer institute I co-facilitated, so I knew he was a thinker (and I suspected he was a writer), but I knew little else of his pedagogy or philosophy. I did know, however, that he was considerate and kind, so I was not surprised when, before I had a chance to exit my car, I heard the *ding* of my iPhone and read his words in the

grey bubble, *hey! Let me know when you get here. I have to pick my daughter up from the bus, and I'll come find you.* And with that, I emerged from my car to embody this new role that still felt a bit uncomfortable—like a pair of new shoes not quite broken in. We met at the school's front door, and, after a quick stop-in at the media center to say hello to Glen's wife and meet his daughter, we arrived at his classroom and settled in for what would be a two-and-a-half-hour exploration of writing and teaching.

When I entered Glen's classroom, it was clear that this space was owned by the students, not the teacher. The walls featured student autobiographical poetry embossed on their silhouettes, the artworks' design and placement as varied as the students themselves. With its couch, beanbag chair, and shelf of books, the reading corner was a popular place for students to gather, chat, and most importantly, read. Even the handwriting on the whiteboard was the students' since, as Glen later mentioned, his board writing would be unreadable.

The room holds just a few hints at Glen's personality. Above his desk appears a small sign—a simple sheet of white printer paper laminated for durability. This sign reads, “We will strive to make academic and artistic greatness available to every student but to accept the Ewells of this world

refusing to allow their distraction.” When I asked Glen about this sign—a reference to the antagonistic family in *To Kill a Mockingbird*—he told me that it is his



Figure 9: Light poetry by Aram Saroyan found on Glen's classroom wall

classroom philosophy for the sheltered class he co-teaches with the ESL instructor. Because Glen frames his behavior management philosophy in terms of this literary text, I was reminded of his dual focal points. He clearly cares for both the success of his students and he values the literature he brings to them.

As I quickly scanned the room, I also noticed a curious poem that simply read “lighght” (see Figure 9). This Aram Saroyan amalgam poem—and the placement of it near the actual light switches—drew my interest and, as Glen later told me, led to at least one colleague making the sarcastic joke that he “spelled light wrong.” These touches of Glen’s reader/writer/teacher identity directly contrasted with the more traditional arrangement of the room: student desks in rows facing the front, a sturdy wooden teacher desk that had seen a few decades, whiteboards across the front of the room, and a computer with a projection screen. This space provided a comfortable starting point for our writerly identity exploration, positioning Glen as the knowledge-holder (it was his classroom, after all) and me, the visitor, as the knowledge-seeker.

As a novice researcher, I decided to start our first interview with a tried-and-true technique I use in the classes I teach, so Glen and I wrote our way into the day. I invited him to think about the first four interview questions (see Interview Protocol in Appendix D) with a focus on what it means to be a Writer and/or writer. Clearly excited for the time and space to explore these ideas prior to talking about them, Glen opened his already well-used Writer’s Notebook—a classic marbled composition notebook full of poetry fragments, notes, questions, musings—and I opened my new researcher’s notebook. For ten minutes, we wrote. The interview

recording of this time features a peaceful ten minutes of silence where all we can hear is the scratching of pen on paper, the squeaking of the old wooden chair I'm sitting in, and the ambient noise from the sports practice down the hall. (see Figures 10 and 11 for an excerpt from our freewriting experience)

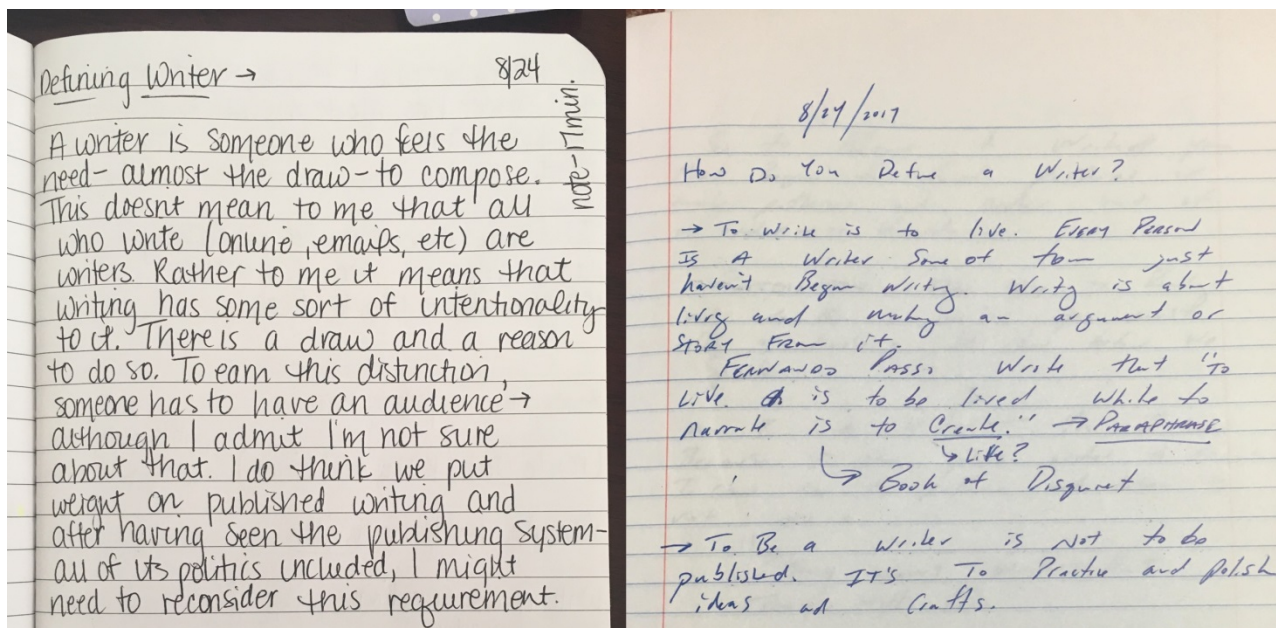


Figure 10: Christy (left) and Glen (right) write to explore definition of Writer/writer and writing in their first meeting

<p>Defining Writer→</p> <p>8/24</p> <p>A writer is someone who feels the need—almost the draw—to compose. This doesn't mean to me that all who write (online, emails, etc) are writers. Rather to me it means that writing has some sort of intentionality to it. There is a draw and a reason to do so. To earn this distinction, someone has to have an audience→ although I admit I'm not sure about that. I do think we put weight on published writing and after having seen the publishing system—all of its politics included, I might need to reconsider this requirement.</p>	<p>8/24/2017</p> <p>How do you define a writer?</p> <p>→ To write is to live. Every person is a writer. Some of them just haven't begun writing. Writing is about living and writing an argument or story from it.</p> <p>Fernando Passos wrote that "to live is to be lived while to narrate is to <u>create</u>."</p> <p>→ Paraphrase</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> ↓ ↓ Book life? of Disquiet </p> <p>→ To be a writer is not to be published. It's to practice and polish ideas and crafts.</p>
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Figure 11: Transcribed Writer's Notebook entries of Christy (left) and Glen (right)

Glen: The Craftsman

To write is to live. . . it's to practice and polish ideas and crafts
Glen, Freewriting, August 24, 2017

Throughout our time together, Glen frequently referenced his mentor, Mrs. Z, a former high school teacher whom he first encountered as the instructor of his Advanced Composition course, a required course for English majors at his alma mater. Mrs. Z is a staple in Glen's personal and professional life. In college, she renewed his enjoyment of writing by re-establishing it as a creative process. Upon his graduation, she helped him land his first teaching job, and, even ten years later, he draws on her pedagogical wisdom in considering how to structure his courses. Most recently, she joined him on a pilgrimage to Ole Miss to support him as he wrote towards his master's capstone experience. It is no surprise, then, that Mrs. Z. helped create the metaphor to describe Glen's writerly identity. He tells the story of a conversation they had last summer on the trip to Oxford, Mississippi as they sought to immerse themselves in the physical place of Faulkner:

I never find writing easy. Or very rarely. That's been a big thing I've been talking about with my mentor [Mrs. Z]. This summer, she's having remodeling done on their house, and this summer I spent working on a bathroom. She made the comment, "I think all true craftsmen are grumpy." And I said, "I get grumpy when I write. Because I can't figure out the right pieces or how to . . . and not like, grumpy, it's just frustrating." And so I never find writing easy. I find it worth my while, but the process isn't easy.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

In writing studies, we often talk about the writer's craft—elements of syntax, diction, and structure—and in this metaphor, Glen turns *craft* from the literal to the figurative, combining the images of fitting pieces together (as in tiling a bathroom) with the image of fitting sentences together (as in writing an essay). In this way, the action is the same, and the work is the same; only the physicalities of the process



Figure 12: The cover of Glen's object, a black Moleskine notebook with an image of Faulkner

differ.

The conversation which spurred this metaphor arose from Glen's work on his capstone for his master's in English. Considering how place, time, individual, and collective identity affect writing, he set out to create an *object*, one that, in his words, *was devised as a study in structure and impact of a single author in conjunction with place, time, and self*

(Glen, Object Defense, November 2016). What

resulted was an ergodic adventure in a simple black

Moleskine notebook (see Figure 12).

This notebook—this *curation*, Glen would say—is filled with images, photographs, poetry, prose, bits of others' writings (Faulkner, Burke, Salinger, Coleridge), ruminations on social injustices in our time, historical glimpses of the places which inspired Faulkner's work, and modern views of the places which continue to inspire Glen's work. The purpose of this *object*, he says, is *to give 'soul to the words' while recording my journey of thought and place. This is my 'something'... 'my anything'* (Glen, Object, Summer 2016). Glen proudly shared this piece with me

during our time together, warning me that it's *weird* and asking for feedback as I experienced it.

When I later asked Glen to explain a bit more about the philosophy surrounding this project, he explained that he considers the notebook (what he calls the *object*) a *representation of learning/thinking* (De-Brief, March 11, 2018). Since this project was to be the culmination of one of his final courses for his master's degree, he was required to write up a proposal for the independent study course. He describes the thinking process behind the course and the *object*:

When I was writing up the proposal for this class, I didn't really know what [the final project] would look like. It was just a 'something'. I called it an object because I wanted it to be something that a person could hold in their hand . . . and experience . . . literally when I started on my journey to create my object, I called it my 'thing'. I intentionally was vague in my description of the object.

Glen, De-Brief, March 11, 2018

This *object* is very much a physical representation of Glen's writerly identity, a product of his craftsmanship. It also gives us insight into his thinking process as he tells me he *was purposeful in calling it an object. It's not really a book. It pushes the boundaries of what we call writing. . . this is begging the question of "how do I know that I have written?" or "what constitutes writing?"* (De-Brief, March 11, 2018). So his *object*—his representation of thinking—asks us to question what we know to be writing and how we know it to be as such.

When I asked Glen about his influences in creating an *object* such as this, he immediately hearkened to Faulkner and mentioned the infamous feud between

Faulkner—Glen’s favorite author—and Hemingway. Glen explains how it was Faulkner, and not Hemingway, who inspired this project:

*Without a doubt Faulkner respected Hemingway, but he thought of him as scared to step outside the constructs or write ‘artistically.’ There was a famous instance in which Faulkner stated this idea to a group of college students asking him about Hemingway. Faulkner was later upset because he had been secretly recorded. I have to agree with Faulkner—and maybe that’s splitting hairs—but I don’t know that I can find anything that Hemingway wrote that would inspire a project like this. Or maybe I just don’t see Hemingway like that. Think about *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, or *Light in August*. These books are all over the place with multiple narrators and stream of consciousness, and that’s the reason I chose to put this object together the way I did.*

Glen, De-Brief, March 11, 2018

Glen’s desire to reflect Faulkner’s syntax and style in his own writing demonstrates that, to Glen, Writerliness lies in the construction of language. He challenges his readers to make the text their own, and it is this aspect of his literary hero which Glen took up in his own writing.

This object also reflects Glen’s interest in the many different ways readers experience texts; in fact, he was the first person who introduced me to the idea of ergodic literature a few summers ago. The originator of the term, Espen J. Aarseth, describes the reading process of ergodic literature where “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text.” In ergodic literature such as Glen’s

object, the responsibility for meaning making rests heavily on the reader and, as such, there are many ways to enter the text. It is non-linear, not plot-driven, and infinite. The *object* is constructed to be so.

The language of construction is threaded through the expository bits of this *object*, appearing first in the introduction to build the foundation of thought and process. Embracing the *weirdness* of his project, Glen writes,

All struggles of writing (and perhaps more so) were present in the construction of this product. If, as William Zinsser suggests, “All writing is ultimately a question of solving a problem,” I have tried to answer some complex questions (Zinsser 50). This process was a struggle against clutter and simplicity—and a journey in writing. Here is my journey—a product which I hope inspires a new journey—a search for “humanity and warmth” which connects past, present, and future.

Glen, *Object*, Summer 2016

These abstractions—clutter and simplicity, “humanity and warmth,” connecting past, present, and future—are ones which conjure

up a picture of an old house, much like Faulkner’s house (featured prominently in the *object*, see Figure 13).

A solidly constructed house is both the product of an era (i.e. we don’t see many Greek Revival homes being built these days), but it also endures into future



Figure 13: Glen's photograph of Rowan Oak—Faulkner's home

eras, bringing with it the associations, events, and happenings that surround it. His object suggests that Glen sees the craftsman's challenge as having to walk between *clutter* and *simplicity*, finding beauty in the in-between-ness. Again, we see this element reflected in the construction of Faulkner's home—from its tall white columns to its original antebellum mantelpieces which Faulkner himself restored.

To use Glen's word, this *thing* (a house, a book, an ergodic *object* master's thesis) is constructed by the craftsman and put out into the world where others (new owners, readers, professors) take it up and, using their own experiences and perceptions, make meaning for themselves outside of the craftsman's own intent. For Glen, perched on the edge of the past and the doorway to the future, any meaning in our products is fleeting, a *snapshot of a moving spirit. It is an artifact of the process to declare stance and self for a time—so brief a time that when it is finished, the time may have already passed* (Glen, Journal #1, August 25, 2017). This tension between the process as enduring and the product as fleeting emerges throughout Glen's narrative, building and rebuilding his writerly identities through different contexts, mediums, and time periods.

Elements of the Craft. When Glen shared his object with me, it did, in fact, inspire a journey of my own, and this chapter is my representation of that journey. After experiencing Glen's object and thinking about the craftsmanship involved, I began to view our other written and spoken conversations through the craft lens, noticing that he depicts the writing process as *experiential*, as *creative*, as a *design* process, and as *an expression of who we are as people* (Glen, Initial Interview, August, 24, 2017). Further extension of this craftsmanship metaphor arose from Glen's first

journal entry. In his exploration of what it meant to be a writer or Writer, he included a quote often attributed to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: *The work—the craft—isn't in the hammering and nailing; it's the yearning and dreaming and designing* (Journal #1, August 25, 2017). Glen does revise the translation a bit later (after possibly doing some research) and notes that, though words aren't the same, the meaning still holds.

For Glen, the craft is both in the process (the *yearning and dreaming and designing*) and the product (his *something...anything*). Therefore, in the following pages, I identify the following five elements of craftsmanship in Glen's teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities: a struggle with “doing the right thing,” messiness and nonconformity, feedback from other skilled craftsmen, individuality, and boundary pushing. As I build Glen's narrative, I keep in mind William Faulkner's take on writing a novel: “It's like building a chicken coop in a high wind. You grab any board or shingle flying by or loose on the ground and nail it down fast.”

Craft Element 1: “Doing the right thing” Early on in our first conversation, I asked Glen (who had already noted that his writing instruction values process) about the value of the product in such a philosophy. In response, he told me about an activity where he asks his students to define “good” writing:

It's up on my board (see Figure 14). I've asked the kids collectively: What are the traits of good writing? I've done this [activity] with kids all the way down to my little sister when she was in 4th or 5th grade, and she could come up with the traits of good writing, and it nearly matches [the traits listed in] Inside Out by Kirby and Liner . . . They come up with two things that make good writing.

Good writing is interesting, and it's technically skillful. They make those into sub-categories. Even down to my little sister or even younger kids, anytime they talk about writing, I ask them how they know they're doing it right. And they can usually come up with [traits of] good writing. The problem is that to reproduce those traits is difficult.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

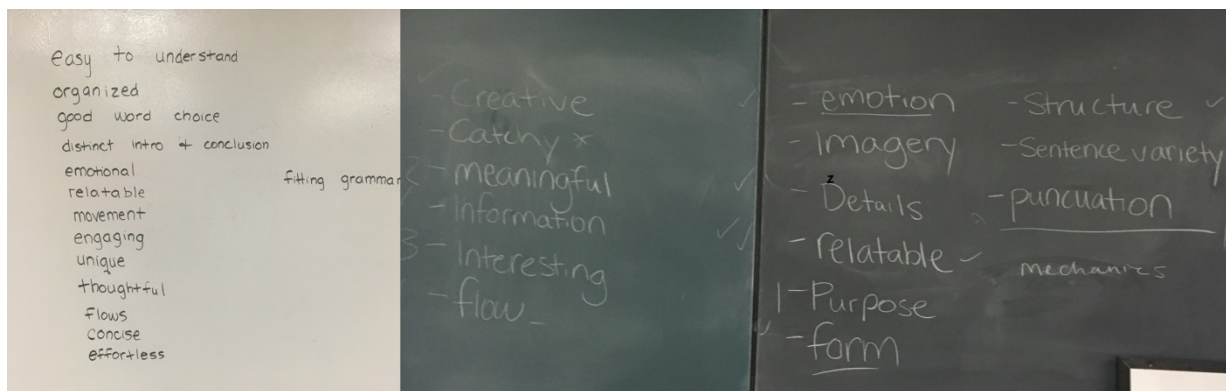


Figure 14: Traits of good writing as created by two of Glen's classes

In this story, Glen establishes his teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities in multiple ways. By giving his students the task of building their own list of good writing traits, he decenters himself as the knowledge-holder in the classroom. Because he is willing to consider alternative narratives to what “good” writing is and should be, he demonstrates his willingness to break from the mold of traditional writing instruction. Most notably, though, we can see Glen combining his students’ knowledge/experiences with his own knowledge/experiences as a writer, student, and teacher to situate what he believes to be “good writing” within/against the framework of what he knows to be traditionally “right” in English education.

The freedom Glen gives his students in the first story of “doing writing right” contrasts with the pressure he feels in his own personal writing. Reflecting on his

time in the Writing Project Summer Institute where he predominantly composed poetry, Glen remarks: *Anytime I felt like I'm in the right place writing, it's still just difficult. Like, last summer, or I guess two summers ago, when we did the Writing Project, I never felt like I was doing it right* (Initial Interview, August 24, 2017).

Because the Writing Project framework encourages experimentation and freedom in writing, this example is perhaps the most powerful representation of Glen's struggles with "doing writing right." Glen noted that he knew what he wanted to do, namely to create poetry which plays with form, function, and structure, and he compiled one of the most extensive portfolios in the Institute. However, there was still that tension between what he knew as "correct" writing (structured, formal, voiceless) and what he wrote (fluid in form, intimately personal).

Glen's tension extends to his discussion of "doing the right thing" in academic writing. Even in the essays he wrote for his graduate program in English, Glen worked against what is typically seen as scholarly, that is, against a prescribed format, structure, or school of thought. For example, in an essay during his MA coursework, he chose to write about Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*. He did a study of tautology, examining what he calls a *tautophrase* defined as *repetition of a statement that's self-defined*. He focuses on the author's use of phrase "it is what it is," explaining its function in the novel and pointing out its pervasiveness in pop culture through connections to Taylor Swift and articles in *The New York Times*. When his professor returned Glen's essay, he said, *I respect much of this paper, but I don't think*

*it's academic or scholarly*⁶ (Glen, Second Interview, September 14, 2017). Glen goes on to discuss this idea of *academic* or *scholarly* writing:

I struggle [with this idea of 'academic'], but I think I pushed him. And he said, 'I really like reading this, but it's not. . . academic or traditional.' And I think back to the conversation we had. I think he said 'literary theory,' like, it didn't have this direct 'literary theory' which was so big in academia, so I feel that's a cop-out. It's like we can say, 'That doesn't fit the mold' and so it's not academic writing. (De-Brief Interview, September, 14, 2017)

This story suggests that even when Glen knows what is considered “the right thing”—in this case, a traditional literary critique essay—even in a high stakes setting, he works against the traditional view, instead writing something that is engaging and boundary pushing (more on this craft element later).

Finally, when Glen talks about his teaching of writing, he continues to highlight the tensions he feels in “doing the right thing” as a mentor to young writers. We can see Glen working through the tension of “doing the right thing” in the teaching of writing in his first journal entry; while some English teachers see writing instruction as modeling, mimicking, and marking, Glen sees teaching “the right thing” in writing instruction much differently: *The writer [student] stands still for a moment and it is the job of the teacher, professor, and reader to provide perspective of that shell—or snapshot—of learning passed (although past works here too, it is the movement I want)* (Glen, Journal #1, August 25, 2017). As a writing

⁶ Glen couldn't remember if the professor used the term 'academic' or 'scholarly' so I've included both here.

teacher, the right thing for Glen seems to be exploring the learning—and especially the thinking—reflected in his students’ writing. He recognizes that this learning is fleeting (much like the act of writing itself) so “the right thing” looks different for each student in his classroom.

This theme of “doing the right thing” continues through our conversations as Glen demonstrates his desire to *make good art, do good work, write and think*. The *process, he says, is redeeming and gratifying* (Journal #1 comments, August 25, 2017). From these spoken and written stories, I see Glen’s writer-teacher identity manifesting from a place of tension. As a writer-teacher, Glen forefronts the struggles in his own personal and academic writing. As a teacher-writer, he works against a model of prescribed process and stable product, placing emphasis on the thinking displayed in the writing. As he shifts from talking about his personal writing to his academic writing to his teaching of writing, he works to negotiate his philosophies of “good” writing, “good” writing practices, and “good” writing instruction.

Craft Element 2: Messiness and nonconformity. Because Glen forefronts the thinking displayed in composition and backgrounds prescriptive structures in his own writing and his writing instruction, he embraces the messiness involved in trying to capture thoughts in words. He shared a story about his Writer’s Notebook with me:

[My dual credit composition class and I were] talking about writing and what that means, so I shared my writing notebook from last summer with them, and it’s all over the place. It’s jumbled notes. It’s not really linear. If you even look at

my writing notebook from last year, it's chaos. It doesn't make any sense. This was from the whole summer. I started it before the writing project, I wrote during the writing project, and I wrote after, but you can see that it's chaos. And I think that I like that idea of putting some kind of order to chaos.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

The images that arise from this story about Glen's Writer's Notebook—jumbled, non-linear, order to chaos—suggest that Glen thrives in the messiness of craftsmanship. In the early stages of writing (those that often appear in his Writer's Notebook), Glen embraces this messiness, repeatedly telling me that *thinking is messy* (Initial Interview, August 24, 2017; Text message, January 3, 2018). For Glen, his identity as a writer arises from his ability to deal with this messiness.

This idea of reveling in the thinking (and the messiness that comes with it) extends to flexibility in format. If thinking is messy, then it follows that a one-size-fits-all format of writing (an academic essay, a five paragraph essay, even a poem) is an impossibility. Glen spoke directly to the problems that arise when he tries to force messy thinking into such a format: *The form becomes a distraction...it's just not the way I'm wired, or maybe I'm just not a very good poet, but it's just that I like playing around with words and how they sound or they're arranged* (Initial Interview, August 24, 2017).

Glen extends his idea of writing as messy by labeling the act of writing as *curation*. He notes that *writing takes many different forms so there is a process of curation that is writing* (Freewriting, August 24, 2017), and *writing is a curation of ideas* (Initial Interview, August 24, 2017). As a verb, to *curate* is “take charge of, to

pull together, to sift through, and select for presentation”⁷ or “to select items from among a large number of possibilities for other people to consume and enjoy.”⁸ Like Glen’s focus on doing the right thing, *curation* is an action. It adds physicality to the writing process, making it more closely resemble the work of a craftsman in his workshop.

When these two ideas come together—working his way out of the messiness of thinking through *curation* via the writing process—Glen sees himself as a writer. He writes, *Am I a writer? Yes. I know because I can place order to disorder. I can see the pattern when it’s not there* (Freewriting, August 24, 2017). For him, success in writing comes from the ability to conquer the messiness, to view patterns that aren’t readily apparent, to sort ideas, to somehow convey what is inside his mind to an audience in whatever manner he sees appropriate for the context and content. In these ways, Glen’s view of thinking/writing as working his way from messiness through a series of choices (*curation*) is directly linked to how he identifies as a writer.

Craft Element 3: Feedback from other skilled craftsmen. Early in our work together, Glen spent time discussing our innate desire for feedback as students/writers/humans. As a devoted craftsman, he enjoys conversation with other craftsmen around the nature of this work—around the process, the materials, the product. He discusses a time when he didn’t receive this desired feedback and the frustration it caused:

⁷ *Dictionary.com* entry: curate

⁸ *Macmillan Online dictionary* entry: curate

When I was doing the education [classes] to get my certification [online through Brigham Young University], I remember what I wrote at the time. It was a...fifteen page paper, and I got it back in the mail. All it had written on it was an A and 'good job' and that was IT. And it was fifteen pages. Okay, I spent a lot of time, and that's all you can give me? I flipped through it. There were no marks. There was nothing. It was just 'good job' and that really frustrated me.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

Glen's experience as a student (during his first year of teaching) became a sort of pivot point in his discussion of feedback as related to writing craft. While some teachers see grades as the primary form of feedback for their student writers, Glen works against this traditionalist view, seeing grades as an inadequate tool for the task. Instead, as a student, colleague, and teacher, he desires authenticity in feedback, forcing a focus on the thinking exhibited within the written text.

In our work together, Glen ends many emails, interviews, or text messages with a request for feedback on the writing he shares with me. For example, after sending me his first journal entry for this research study, he wrote, *Any feedback, questions or thoughts would be appreciated. I'm not sure what the protocol for this is, but any response would help me work through my own thoughts and writing* (Glen, Email, August 30, 2017). Resituating writing from a solitary act to a conversation seems to help Glen work toward the authenticity—the conversation—he wants to take place around writing.

In addition to authenticity in his writing conversations, Glen desires an acceptance on the complexity of the craft. Realizing that voice, format, and content

necessarily different for each writer, he works against feedback which only expresses a binary like/dislike or good/not good. Drawing on his own experience in primary and secondary school, Glen strives for *personalized learning and differentiation* in his own teaching, and he connects feedback to this aim:

The best teachers I had helped me see how [feedback] was a benefit to me and how I could be unique. I've always enjoyed collaborative work. I think good feedback is in that vein or thought. I remember feedback [on my own writing] but it was never the like or dislike kind. The more I think about the 'like' and 'dislike' idea, I've come to realize those terms have a finality to them. Like and dislike are not terms of growth and they reveal personal taste and preference. I like sauerkraut, many people don't. I'll have students who do not like sauerkraut, but that does not mean my personal tastes should limit their experiences. Writing—and learning—is an art, not a science.

Glen, Journal #1 comments, August 25, 2017

Glen's discussion of feedback adds another layer to his writerly identity. Few teachers would say that feedback is unimportant, but Glen sees it as the most important method for growth in writing. He does not separate his own desire for feedback on his personal writing with his methods of giving feedback on his students' writing and, as in his attempt to do the right thing in writing and writing instruction, he forefronts authenticity and individuality.

Craft Element 4: Individuality. Implicit in the conversation around the first three elements of craft is Glen's insistence on individuality in both process and product. However, since this topic came up so often in our writing and

conversations, it must be noted as a prominent element of Glen's writerly identities here. He told a story about his historical struggle for individuality:

And I've always kind of been. . . I wouldn't say a rebel, but I don't want to jump through hoops just to jump through hoops. It's always frustrated me. It's always bothered me. [In response to my master's research problem object], there was a little bit of complaint about what I was doing . . . because it was different. But I want to be different [he hits his hand on table for emphasis]. I don't want it to be like anybody else's. It shouldn't look like anybody else's so that strain has always been there. I'm going to do something different.

I can remember this even when I was in wrestling [in high school and college]. I didn't wrestle the way everyone else did. Like I was always funky and weird and doing things differently. Every sport I've ever played, I've always been doing it [my own way]...and it's not like I want to disrespect anyone, it's just I want to do it my way. I want to accomplish the objective or goal, but I want to do it how I want to do it.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

This story suggests that, for Glen, a well-crafted product demonstrates an attempt at solving a problem in a creative way. His focus on individuality connects to his intrinsic motivation to do the work, but because he values unique craftsmanship, he strives towards a solution that is his own (and if he isn't offered the freedom to do so, then he'd rather strive for no solution at all).

In his conversations with me, Glen detailed a few pivot points in his writerly development which particularly speak to his insistence on individuality. As in other

instances, he hearkened to our time in the Writing Project Summer Institute as a moment when he had a realization about who he is as a writer and what he believes writing should be:

The more I write and understand my process, the more I realize that it's unique. Even in the Writing Project, when I see your process or the other people's, it's like, okay, we're not the same, and that's okay. [It's made me] be okay with difference.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

In the same bit of this conversation, Glen immediately connects this realization—that difference in writing process and format is desirable—to his teaching, marking it a crucial element of his teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities. He followed up his realization with a story about one of his former students:

And I think that [realization] has helped me think about teaching. I can have 25 different processes or how they go [about writing]. One of the coolest ones I saw last year, I had a kid who made headings for each of her paragraphs. When her essay was done, she deleted those headings, but that was to keep those paragraphs focused. Well, I didn't teach that. She said, I didn't really learn it from anyone, it just made sense to me. So it was like, if you look like a textbook, it was like textbook headings, and she bolded those, so it was kind of an outline, and then she would go and make sure everything in that paragraph was back to that central idea.

Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017

Not only does Glen celebrate individuality in his own craftsmanship (even when he receives pushback from authority figures), he extends that celebration to his students' unique processes.

Craft Element 5: Boundary pushing. All the prior craft elements work together to culminate in this final element which serves as the best summary for Glen's writerly identities. It perhaps makes the most sense to start with Glen's abstract example of this element. He writes, *The writer must be a transient thinker who leaves markers on his journey of thought* (Journal #1, August 25, 2017). This sentence is not only indicative of Glen's writer's voice (one that lives in the juncture of poetry and philosophy), but it also forefronts his goal in writing, namely, to demonstrate a *journey of thought*. He later provided a more concrete story to represent this same concept, remembering his experience having won "Outstanding English Major" in his undergraduate program:

I received this award, but it could have easily gone to [name removed]—who in now my wife. She was taking risks and writing some really cool stuff. Her thesis was over Frank Miller's The Dark Knight. This was back in 2008. I don't think graphic novels were academically accepted the way they are now. It definitely ruffled feathers across the department, but it was academically sound and pressed the boundaries. The Dark Knight has political, literary, and structural significance. People just weren't writing academically about stuff like that. All that to say, she could have gotten the award.

Glen, Journal #1 Comments, August 25, 2017

This award—one meant to represent the best undergraduate English major—is (or should be), for Glen, a recognition of work which provokes thought and *presses the boundaries* of the discipline.

Clearly, Glen cultivated a value of boundary pushing early in his academic career, and that appreciation has only deepened as he's gained experience in writing and teaching. Speaking against classifying writing into the traditional modes (narrative, argument, etc), he said, *I think we can be so strict to define what a piece is and then we can't think outside the box. We can't allow movement out there* (Glen, De-Brief Interview, September 21, 2017). As I listened to Glen describe his perspective on writing modes, I imagined this movement as a fluid boundary between the genres, sometimes bending, sometimes totally disappearing to allow the genres to mix with one another as they please. As he continued his discussion, he noted that not every reader will understand every piece, and he allows for this reality, realizing that pieces which don't adhere to one mode or genre require more work on the part of the reader.

Overall, in his own personal and professional writing, Glen pushes the boundaries, even if it sometimes comes to his detriment. The best example of his boundary pushing in writing is the aforementioned *object* written towards and around Faulkner and Glen's own experiences. His boundary pushing in this master's capstone led to an additional requirement that he write a more "academic" essay justifying the form and function of the *object*. However, Glen sees these two texts as two parts of one conversation, again pushing the boundaries of how we view individual texts (Initial Interview, August 24, 2017).

Glen's boundary pushing transfers to his teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities as well. He lays the foundation for this transfer, telling me that he *always thought that a little bit of teaching is subversive* (De-Brief Interview, September 21, 2017). His teacher-subversiveness comes through in how he approaches setting rules for his students' writing, as he discussed in this story:

*Learning and writing and thinking are inherently paradoxical. I can give a kid the limitation of a 6 word memoir. And that limitation sparks creativity, but yet I give other things, and somehow those limitations squelch that creativity. Another would be the magnetic poetry. You're limited to these words, and it sparks creativity. But you tell a kid that they can't use the personal pronoun or they can never use the word 'thing' [in their essays]—these rules or guidelines that are ultimatums...and I think I've talked about it but...Coleridge uses ['thing' effectively]: "I looked up in the sky there was a something." Salinger uses it all over. It's the sublime concept, right? A thing can be anything. But they're limiting guidelines [for students]. I would love to see a kid write what should be a formal research paper and somehow **sneak in** breaking the rule if it serves his purpose. I think it's those ultimatum rules that limit creativity.*

Glen, De-Brief Interview, September 21, 2017

This story depicts Glen's boundary pushing in writing instruction paralleling the concept in his own writing. The words *sneak in* (emphasis mine) are telling. Glen's intentional word choice here illustrates that he positions himself and his writing classroom as outside traditional writing pedagogy and traditional boundaries. He encourages his students to push these boundaries, but to do so in the subversive

way, making their own essays unique without disrespecting established genres (such as he mentioned in his discussion of individuality earlier).

Conclusion. Glen, the craftsman, consistently forefronts thinking, individuality, student choice, and individual discovery in his stories around writerly identity. These craft elements combine to depict him as an intentional author and teacher, one who focuses on the “organic” development of writing in his classroom by providing many opportunities for students to write on different topics in different formats (Glen, Initial Interview, August 24, 2017). He’s highly committed to developing his students’ *taste* in reading and writing because *the better we develop our taste, and the wider our scope of writing becomes, the better feedback we can provide. It’s also keeping up with our craft. Thinking, writing, reading, and scholarship are craft. These skills have to be consistently polished and improvedx* (Glen, Journal #1 comments, August 25, 2017). Instances of Glen’s commitment to his craft are threaded through his writing and interviews, showcasing his continually shifting identities.

Aspen

A week later, I piled back into my tiny car to drive a different direction from Glen's school, again through Midwestern cornfields but this time toward a small college town where Aspen has taught for thirteen years. The audiobook featured on this trip was a beautiful dual perspective novel, *The Kitchen House* by Kathleen Grissom. Since my meeting with Glen the prior week lessened my apprehension at the new researcher skin I have climbed into, I was able to enjoy the story this time, and throughout the peaceful drive, my mind was transported to antebellum Virginia in the kitchen house with Livonia and Belle.

Listening to this richly layered and beautifully voiced audiobook served to put me in the frame of mind necessary to meet with Aspen—a teacher who prides herself on approaching literature critically, analytically, and intellectually. I first met her twelve years ago when, on one of my first new teacher workdays, she walked into my classroom with a smile on her face and an outstretched hand.

Now, over a decade later, I have moved on to a new profession, and Aspen has moved across the hall, inhabiting the classroom that was once mine. Though the bright yellow wall of cabinets reminds me of my time teaching in this room, Aspen has decorated the space to reflect her dedication to her students and her reverence of the literature she teaches. A few years ago, students began decorating ceiling tiles as a component of their independent literature projects. As a result, she has a beautiful ceiling filled with mermaids and austere warnings about humanity a la *A Clockwork Orange*. Tinkerbell's fairy dust leads to glimpses of Neverland. It is a

beautiful celebration of art, literature, and the students who have passed through this space (see Figures 15 and 16).

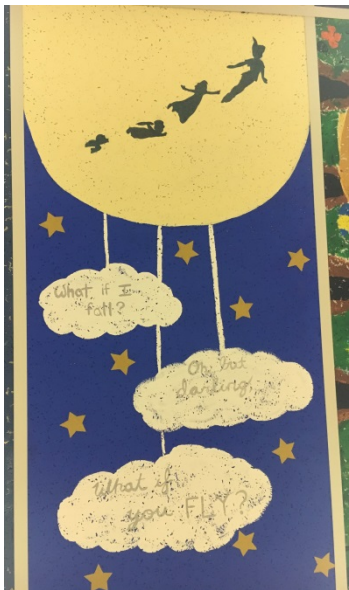


Figure 15. A ceiling tile in Aspen's classroom depicts themes from *Peter Pan*.



Figure 16. Aspen's classroom ceiling features a collage of student-created artwork inspired by literature.

Adding to the pleasant environment is the soft lighting. Small lamps are placed around the room and clear Christmas lights are strung around the walls. On my first visit to Aspen's classroom, her students were in the middle of presenting independent book projects. These student projects tucked in every corner only added to the joyful cacophony of colors and texts featured on the ceiling.

When I visited Aspen's classroom, much like when I visited the other teachers in this study, it wasn't unusual to see students stopping in to say hi or to finish up some homework prior to the first bell. Even more often, though, I would happen upon another teacher in Aspen's classroom. Aspen regularly visits with a colleague in social studies, joking that she loves to "argue" about social or

educational issues with him—and win, of course. With her classroom neighbor, Aspen often entertains lively discussions about books or the debate team they co-sponsor. As the English department chair, she entertains informal conversations about writing and the curriculum with Sylvie, Neal, or any of the other teachers in the department. She is a leader in the school, both in pedagogy and in personality.

Aspen: The Author's Apprentice

*Don't be sad for long;
my experience with writing has allowed me to
sympathize with those who can't write without toil and strife.
I get it! I toil! I strive!*
Aspen, Journal #1, September 18, 2017

For our first meeting, rather than her classroom, Aspen chose to meet me in a hometown spot that the college students refer to as the “townie bar.” It is a place we both frequented often in the last decade and one that felt a bit like going home. Since Aspen was coming from school—and since her daughter was using her brand-new driver’s permit to practice—I reached our happy hour meeting first. I settled into a booth near the exposed brick wall in the historic building and waited to meet my second participant.

Just like her classroom, Aspen’s personality is warm and welcoming. Still dressed in school clothes—a brightly colored cardigan and long skirt—she entered the pub, said hello to a former student, and greeted me with a hug. After a few minutes of catching up on life events, we ordered drinks and snacks and got down to the work of the day.

We started at the beginning, as it were, with a conversation about Aspen's education and background. She calls her high school experience "*weird*."⁹ Aspen attended an affluent high school—the same one Neil Patrick Harris calls his alma mater—and, even as a high school student, she noticed the income disparity between some of her classmates' families and her own. She recounts a story about her experience with literature that both illuminates this social gap and grounds her academic identity in literature:

My [high school English] teacher would put a list of books on the board and expect our parents to buy them, and so my mom would get mad because she didn't have a lot of money (we just happened to be the lower middle class at the upper class school), but she would buy them all. Come to find out—and this is so stupid, but I just made the list and took them home—there were different books for different classes. So I was buying the books for all the classes [my teacher] taught, not just the ones I was taking [she laughs]. But I read them all so it was okay. It was okay. And it ended up getting me a scholarship for \$250 in literature from this bookstore because I was the reader. I read all the things.

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

In this story, we can see Aspen building her identity as a reader, as someone who *read all the things*. It is well-documented in the literature that those who read widely and often are more likely to be proficient writers. However, Aspen notes her relationship with writing was always a tangential one, one that she didn't

⁹ This is an interesting word choice that parallels Glen's use of the same word in regard to his writing and a point which we'll return to in Chapter 5.

necessarily cultivate but that just sort of happened. She describes her high school writing experiences:

I was noted as a good English student in high school, but I never was formally taught how to write. We were just told to write. . . In high school, no one wanted to teach grammar, and they didn't . . . they would say, 'use conventional grammar' and they would assume we did.

Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

While her teachers were intentional in their literature choices (developing specific lists of texts for each course), they were much less so when it came to writing instruction. As such, Aspen accessed her natural ability to *just do it* when it came to writing but later learned she did not have a full conceptual understanding of syntax, mechanics, or structure. Even this early in her academic development, her identification as a reader—as a lover of literature—contrasted with her more distanced, almost accidental, relationship with writing.

Though she does not remember much specific writing instruction, the content of the writing assignments from her high school experience remain with her. She tells me about those assignments:

There were very few book reports. [The essays] were literary analysis and they fit in with my [classes in] Shakespeare, World Literature, Classics. In my Shakespeare class, I can remember we had to write an essay with each play analyzing something, and then we had to write a research paper on Shakespeare. And I researched his bird imagery.

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

Her high school teachers' focus on content and depth of thought sticks with Aspen even to this day. After reflecting on the topic of her Shakespeare paper—his bird imagery—Aspen admits that the expectations were advanced for high school, but they certainly influenced her love for literature. With a chuckle, she tells me about her teenage desire to purchase a compilation of Shakespeare's greatest works but was horrified when she learned that it cost \$25. She remembers exclaiming, *Oh geez, mom!* and her mom replied, *Yeah, honey, books are expensive* (Initial Interview). This realization made her appreciate her mom even more, especially for using her limited income to purchase books for classes beyond those Aspen was enrolled in.

Wife/Mother/Student/Teacher. Aspen's life has always featured a complex entanglement of literature, family, and education. Interestingly, she is the only participant who told me that she *had always wanted to be a teacher*. Since her seventh grade year, she had wanted to become an English teacher, and so she was *always working toward that* (Initial Interview).

Her desire to become an English teacher continued past high school graduation when she began college coursework at a regional university. However, when she met her soon-to-be husband, their marriage and his position in the Air Force added complexity to her new adult life. She tells me the story of those first few years of adulthood:

So I got married, and then three months later, we were pregnant. I wasn't prepared for that, and then he got orders [to the Midwest] . . . and I was not done with college. I was having a baby, and it was crazy. When we moved . . . I

lost 30 credit hours . . . a year's worth of tuition. . . I lost all of my education credits, and I need[ed] to get out of school [to] support my family.

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

Despite her desire to be an English teacher, Aspen's position as a wife and mother rerouted her path to a degree. Since her education credits were lost in the transfer from one college to the other, she decided she would complete an English degree instead. Balancing her newborn son and other family obligations, Aspen enrolled in the regional college a few miles from their new Air Force base. In a year and a half, she had completed a Bachelor of Arts in English, much to the pride of her parents and her husband.

After graduation, Aspen took a job at a financial planning office near the military base, but a few years later, the death of a very good friend who was only 22 years old led to a "come to Jesus" meeting with her husband. She remembers, *It was devastating, and we talked about living life, carpe dieming, you know. So [my husband] said, 'Aspen, I would eat macaroni and cheese every day for the year that you had to go to school full-time to become a teacher'* (Initial Interview). And so she did.

Since Aspen already had a bachelor's, an academic advisor suggested she complete a Master's of Arts in Teaching (MAT) for the smoothest route to gaining her own high school English classroom. Satisfied with this opportunity, she enrolled in the program, but on the first day of class, she had a shocking exchange with her professor. She tells me about that day: *So I have my first day of Methods of Teaching English to be a student teacher and [my professor] said in our class of five, "I hate the MAT. I think it's a bunch of crap, and I don't really like the idea of just anyone willy*

nilly being able to teach English.” Aspen’s eyes widen and she covers her mouth to reflect the shock she felt when she heard this declaration thirteen years ago. Then she continues, *I am like, I had just gone back to class after four years, and this is a master’s, and I know the MAT isn’t highly respected, but to me, I was like, I had no idea* (Initial Interview).

This professor—the English Education department chair at the time—was notorious for his desire to elevate the profession of English teaching while also being unscrupulously hard on the future English teachers. However, it turns out that he was a New Mexico native and was quite familiar with the area of Aspen’s childhood. Soon, Aspen and this professor forged a working relationship, and each time he went to New Mexico, Aspen would *tell [him] to say hi to [her] mother* who still lived there (Initial Interview). When the professor decided that Aspen was a good one—and a benefit to the English education profession—he helped her create an individualized plan to earn her full teaching degree rather than the MAT.

After this second bachelor’s degree that brought with it her teaching certification, Aspen still desired to obtain her master’s in literature. So, after teaching for a while, she returned to the same college to work on her Master’s Degree in English, which she says is *“one of the things [she’s] always wanted”* (Initial Interview). She finished that degree one full year ago.

As a wife of a career military man (now retired) and the mother of two children, Aspen’s identities as student and teacher and writer are interwoven with her personal identities. Her stories of *becoming* a teacher intersect with her stories of *becoming* a wife and mother. Just as she learned to crank out essays in high school

without much guidance in the writing process, she learned to teach and parent through 'on the job' training (which is perhaps part of the *weirdness* she mentions in her path to teaching). Conversely, her skill in literary analysis demonstrates her comfort with the final product of writing. This juxtaposition, vulnerability, and comfort emerges in her stories around her own writing and her teaching of writing, and it led me to characterize Aspen as the Author's Apprentice.

The Author's Apprentice. In her stories of her high school literature classes, Aspen establishes herself as someone who *read all the things*, and this identity transfers to her teaching. Early in her teaching career, Aspen read *As Simple as Snow*, a young adult mystery novel by Gregory Galloway and decided she wanted to teach it. The book is written unlike any other YA book. The mystery is never explicitly solved, but the author insists that, if the readers pay careful attention to the clues, they can discern what happened to Anna. After her students read and studied the text, Aspen invited the author to visit the school with the understanding that he'd answer questions about the inferences but he wouldn't tell the students if their theories were correct.

On the day of his visit, Galloway facilitated an open-ended discussion that mainly ran on a question and answer dialogue where the students asked text-based questions to try to discern the answer to the book's mystery. He ate lunch with Aspen and her class during third block, and they got to know him as a person and a writer. While he focused on fiction, some of his suggestions appealed to the students with their academic writing as he answered their questions about organization,

editing, and rewrites. Even though her class didn't solve the mystery, Aspen remembers how much she and her students enjoyed spending time with him.

The effort she placed into planning and implementing this author visit reflects the importance Aspen places on learning from writing experts. Galloway holds two MFAs from the Iowa Writer's Workshop and is, by all accounts, a successful author. By bringing him to her classroom, we can see the value Aspen places on working alongside experts in the literary community and letting her students do the same.

The Community of Readers. Because she is the English department chair but an apprentice in the act and teaching of writing, Aspen constructs the writing community as a structured, striated one with tensions that arise from her multiple positions as student-writer-teacher. Her position of lead teacher (as department chair) and eager student (as a learner in the process and teaching of writing) makes her discussion of W/writers conflicted and recursive. Her depiction of the writing community stems from her deeply held beliefs on what bestows merit in a writer, a point which she established early in our interview and which threads through her journal entries and classroom teaching as well.

Since she is so well-versed in literary texts, when I asked Aspen questions about writing, she often discussed the authors she admires, accessing their writerly knowledge to supplement what she feels is her own deficiency. Throughout our other conversations, in addition to Galloway, Aspen mentions or alludes to eleven additional authors. To consider the definitions of W/writer as they make sense to her, Aspen defaults to these authors, discussing the characteristics of their texts

which help her think about the nature of “good writing.” She divides these authors into categories based on the complexity of their writing joking, *I do agree [there are levels of writerliness], and I’m the boss of categorizing them . . . because I’m arrogant*¹⁰ enough to do that (Initial Interview).

Writers. For Aspen, the most esteemed category is the Writers (capital W, underlined) whose work demonstrates substantial literary merit, a command of stylistic devices, and nuanced themes. In this category, she places Faulkner, Hemingway, and Plath. Writers are those authors whose work is universally acknowledged to be worthy of study by the literary community.

Writers. The category of Writers (capital W) features a broader definition for Aspen. She says,

“For me, the Writer is published . . . Because [when you’re published] you’re acknowledged by your peers as someone who has the ability of communicating through the written word. It would have to be somewhat scholarly for me to respect . . . I would not acknowledge commercial fiction.”

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

As with most broad brush strokes, this wide categorization troubles Aspen. She continues,

But some of the shit I’ve read that’s published, I’m like hmmmmm [she scowls in disapproval]. Like the guy who wrote about how when the sky got mad, it’d

¹⁰ The gendered nature of this assumption—that she is ‘arrogant’ in claiming expertise—is something certainly not coincidental.

turn into a freakin' dinosaur. My mom read that. It's published. I'M not published. That's a book, but I really struggle with that.

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2018

Aspen wrestles with this idea of merit throughout the next few minutes of our conversation, throwing around the terms *academic*, *classic*, and *literary merit* to extend and question her definition of Writer and *Writer*—the experts of the field to which she is apprenticed. Even though she struggles with the metric of publication in denoting *Writerliness*, she decides it is the most useful metric for thinking about the diversity of texts in this category.

For example, she tells me that the author of *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins, is a *Writer*, but the text is meant for an audience of kids. She suggests that even though *Little Women* may not be academic, *it's definitely an American classic* (Initial Interview) so it can help us think about American identity. This earns Louisa May Alcott the label of *Writer*. She mentions *White Fang* as, again, not necessarily as having literary merit but allowing us to think about the nature of what it means to be American. It was also widely published and widely read, so she calls Jack London a *Writer*. These authors—Collins, Alcott, and London—have written classics, or perhaps great works of American literature, but they are merely *Writers* (not Writers) because their command of the language is not to the level of Faulkner, Hemingway, or Plath.

writers. The final category of writers (lowercase w) includes those people who put pen to page or fingers to keyboard but who produce writing of little *literary or rhetorical merit* (Initial Interview). After thinking for a moment about this

category, Aspen decides, *So if someone wrote a Harlequin romance, I would call them a writer, because there's no merit to it, or there's very little merit, and I like merit in my Writer* (Initial Interview).

In our discussion about W/W/writers, Aspen claims her space in the literary community, and extends her already established identity as a reader, forefronting her knowledge of what makes a quality text. When I visited her classroom a few weeks later, Aspen told me she even brought this same question (*What makes a writer?*) to her independent study student, inviting him into the discussion and, in a way, apprenticing him to the community as well.

As these stories of reading suggest, Aspen clearly considers herself an expert in the community of readers—and rightly so. While my study surrounds writerly identities rather than readerly identities (and while an entire career could be taken up exploring the idea of English teachers as readers), in the case of Aspen, understanding her foundation in literature is a crucial first step in understanding how she constructs herself as a writer.

The community of intellectuals. Another foundational element important to Aspen's identity as the Author's Apprentice is her authentic devotion to intellectualism and originality. In her first journal entry, Aspen proclaims, *I want to be profound. I need to know more. I want to know more* (Journal #1, September 18, 2017). This *need to know* represents a key element in Aspen's conception of writing.

More than once, she moves our conversations to the idea level, noting that she was proud of one of her essays because she thought her *idea was cool* (Initial

Interview). She also *believe[s] in writing about literature in and of itself*, a point she contrasts with writing about literature from a historical approach (Journal #3).

The values she places in the intellectual pursuit associated with writing influences Aspen's writing process. She tells me her writing process begins with the thinking on the front end. However, her planning is rarely visible since she eschews outlining or brainstorming. Again, the idea is of the utmost importance in her writing process, and once that is solidified, she can *sit down and pound it out, leave it alone for a day, and then fix it and be done* (Initial Interview). She has only written an outline *twice in [her] life*, most recently, for an essay she found to be the most difficult of her master's program. Aspen explains that this most difficult essay was a literary analysis of Middle Age romantic poetry. The difficulty arose both from the content, but from the expectations of her professor:

[The essay] was a study of the placement of the direct address in . . . a Middle Age romance. It's cute. There are very specific times in the poem that [the poet] interrupts his text to say 'now you listen.' And that's when he introduces a moral, but the moral sometimes is more subtle than not.

She continues to tell me that she found it difficult to analyze this aspect of the poetry because it was so subtle and because of the poet's nuance.

*So anyway, I wrote that and it was **hard** [her emphasis]. My professor was like, 'I want you to do research. . . And put this in there and that. . . I had to expand my idea, which that didn't make me mad, but it was painful because I couldn't at first wrap my head around what she wanted. But now I know.*

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

This story about a time when Aspen struggled in writing represents a *duality* (her word) of motivation. Intrinsically, she is passionate about her writing, especially when she values the ideas she is portraying. Extrinsically, she is deeply affected by feedback from experts in the field, in this case, her advising professor. The above story about her most difficult essay represents this duality. She describes her idea—an original and insightful one—and suggests that the difficulty came when she had to diverge from that original idea and could not understand the direction her professor wanted her to take.

Vulnerability and risk. In thinking about the vulnerability that writing brings, she quotes Gregory Galloway (the author who visited her classroom all those years ago). He told her: *Another author said, 'Giving someone else a piece of your writing is like walking into a room naked because everyone's going to judge you and you're baring everything.' And I was like, yeah, that is exactly how writing is* (Initial Interview). The suggestion that writing brings with it risk certainly isn't a new idea. However, for Aspen, it seems that even the *process* of writing and talk *around* writing also adds to the vulnerability.

The vulnerability inherent in talking about writing is perhaps best exemplified in a story about her department discussing writing instruction. She tells me she models her writing process and instruction after her colleagues who she views as extraordinary writers and teachers, but she finds tension in their expectations.

Here's my problem: Their standards keep changing. In structure! In all of it!

They're like, 'everyone must teach a five paragraph essay' and [someone's] like,

I still think the paragraph structure should be PIE (point-information-explanation), but you can add some Is and Es in there. So I've focused my writing and instruction on making sure I have the PIE structure. But then the other day, because we're going to do a data study together on teaching kids to write the E (explanation) in PIE, we couldn't agree on what we should grade within the E.

Aspen, De-Brief, September 28, 2017

The frustration featured in these conversations led me to conclude our first interview by asking Aspen if she relates writing and risk. Interestingly, she responded, *I didn't use to, but I do now* (Initial Interview). This shift was a fascinating one for me (as someone who has always associated writing with risk), so I asked when that change happened for her. She replied,

Probably when I was working on my master's degree because I gave a shit about what people thought about my writing, and I always wanted an A. I can remember asking Sylvie to proofread [she pauses] and you! And I know that you guys were shy to comment, but I wanted it so badly for you guys to comment. But I also wanted you to think I was a good writer, so that puts you guys in an awkward situation.

Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

The risk continues beyond her experience as a student of writing; it also manifests in her early experiences as a teacher of writing. In the decade I have known Aspen, I have heard her remark on her inability to teach writing, and because we have the rapport to do so, I asked about the elephant in the room.

Christy: “So, why is that block there? I’ve always known you to have that block.”

Aspen: *I think because I didn’t teach writing well. . . initially. Okay, my first year teaching [a senior level writing course], I had a couple of kids in there that I gave As to. And then, like a year and a half later, I pulled [these students’] writing up to show [my current students] what good writing was . . . and I was like, OH MY GOD. This isn’t good [she laughs]. Change it. This is what NOT to do.*

Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

This memory situates Aspen as an Author’s Apprentice to those she perceives to have more writing expertise (her professors, her colleagues, me). It highlights her pride as a member of the literacy community, her tricky position in the writing community, and her innate desire to excel in all aspects of teaching/learning. These stories encapsulate Aspen’s relationship with writing. She revels in the ideas and, as such, her essays are intimately connected to her personal and professional identities.

Discussing the process of writing—with all of the hesitation and uncertainty that brings—makes Aspen feel especially vulnerable. The conflict between her position as expert in the literary community and her position of apprentice in the writing community results in her finding the writing process more frustrating than judging the written product. Her desire for consistency represents her place as an apprentice—as one learning the trade—and in this position, the frustration at a moving finish line is not only understandable but expected.

The Community of Writers. Contrasting with the vast number of literary texts she's read, Aspen notes that she's *not read* *Elements of Style*, the seminal writing text by Strunk and White, and even goes further to say she's *not read anything* related to writing theory (Initial Interview). As the previous stories suggest, her knowledge of what constitutes "good writing" comes from her experience with literature.

This narrative culminates in Aspen placing herself within the hierarchical writing community she has built. She wrestles with her self-characterization as W/writer for weeks after our first interview, finally deciding on her classification in her first journal entry. Aspen writes, *I don't think I'm a Writer because I don't have a natural voice or sophisticated voice* (Journal #1). Her talk around writing—and her focus on the product of writing rather than the process—suggests that, for Aspen, a *sophisticated* voice and a *natural* voice are one in the same. This sophisticated, natural voice is one that comes easily to the top level of Writers in her hierarchy; it is one where the Writer has command over rhetorical and literary devices while also creating a text that is enjoyable to read¹¹.

And when deciding where she fits in the writing community, she concludes,

So when confronted with the question: can anyone be a writer? I believe people can; however, I am seriously pondering whether anyone can be a Writer. This

¹¹ See Aspen's concluding statements on Hemingway and Atwood as further explanation of this stance.

question or issue makes me sad because I lean to the negative answer, and I am afraid that I want to be a Writer, not just a writer.

Aspen, Journal #1, September 18, 2017

Her desire to be a Writer—to claim a legitimate place in the writing community—is fueled by Aspen’s passion for learning/reading/thinking, which she has great confidence in. This desire comes into direct conflict with her lack of confidence in the act of writing. She wistfully concludes in her first journal entry: *I don’t think I will ever be Hemingway or Atwood. This matters; I love to read their writing and let it envelop me in color and swirls as I emerge myself into their diction and syntax. I feel that I will never be able to do this for someone else using my words* (Journal #1).

It is possible that we can trace the beginning of Aspen’s hesitancy to call herself a Writer to her high school experience where she learned to be a critical reader but didn’t remember any specific writing instruction. However, regardless of when she began questioning her skill in writing, a specific incident a few years ago seems to have cemented Aspen’s feelings around her writing skill.

She describes a peer—another English teacher—challenging her already delicate relationship with writing:

I almost feel a little bitter about the way I feel about writing. You know what [another English teacher] told me one time?

I said, ‘I know I’m not a born natural writer like [you are].’

She said, ‘You’re not really. You’ll never be great.’

And I’m like, ‘I don’t know if I believe that! I’ve seen people who have taught themselves how to write, and they’re beasts!’

That hurt. Oh my god, I was so upset.

Aspen, Initial Interview, August 30, 2017

This rejection looms in the background of Aspen's conversations around writing, and it affects her discussion of her place in the writing community. This trauma compounds her earlier feelings around her own writing, and it perhaps explains why she doesn't feel confident teaching writing.

Conclusion. In her writing and conversation, Aspen refers to her confidence—or lack thereof—a dozen times. Her confidence in performing literary analysis comes into conflict with her lack of confidence in her writing. Likewise, her confidence in teaching literary analysis comes into conflict with her lack of confidence in teaching writing. In her hierarchically structured model of the writing community, it appears that confidence, rather than skill, is the attribute required for vertical movement within the structure. As an Author's Apprentice, Aspen's relationship with writing is a negotiation with how experts grant approval and how novices take up the guidelines of the community. While she can confidently bestow the labels of W/W/writer on completed, published work, she is frustrated by the messy process of production—the recursiveness of writing, thinking, rewriting, and rethinking.

This conflict is reflected in her own writing process as she is able to ponder her thoughts and then sit down and “*pound it out.*” She verbalizes this conflict of process versus product: “*I really struggle. . . because I can recognize good writing, but I can't teach it*” (Initial Interview). As a result, she thinks about her own writing and her students' writing through the lens of others' craft.

Sylvie

Picking up the pen to engage in a process that requires the whole self even when plagued with doubt takes courage.

Writing takes courage.

Sylvie, Journal #1, December 27, 2017

Walking through the halls of Midwest High School, it is not unusual to see Aspen and Sylvie clutching coffee mugs, laughing, and supervising students during passing periods. As two of the long-time teachers of the school, they are a dynamic presence in the English department and leaders in the school. However, Sylvie would be the first to tell you that she's not a "normal" teacher. Teachers, by nature, are often extroverts. They usually thrive on being in front of a crowd, and they're quite often more comfortable in the verbal realm than the written one. Sylvie, on the other hand, has the most delicate, soft-spoken voice. During a conversation, she'll often glance off into the distance, carefully pondering the topic, putting her whole effort into listening to the other person speak before formulating her response. In the terms of this study, she preferred writing her responses to speaking them, writing that *words often feel clumsy coming out of [her] mouth but elegant on the page* (Journal #1, December 27, 2017). She is, on all accounts, a person who thrives in silence, in introspection, and with a pen in her hand.

Stepping into her classroom, you'd never know this. Each time I visited her, I encountered one of her students camped out in her room working on homework, asking for help on a paper, or just saying hi. Clearly students feel comfortable in her classroom, and the room decorations help to create the welcoming atmosphere. A former student's project—a papier-mâché sculpture covered in seven deadly sins

references—stands in the back corner (see Figure 15). Laughing, Sylvie told me that this sculpture was previously in a different location, but, after it fell over on a student during class and caused quite a scene, she moved it to the corner to not cause any more scares. Visually demonstrating her diverse set of interests, the giant posters on the back wall feature a motley collection. From the satirical (and hilarious) novel *Catch-22* to the cult classic film *Labyrinth* to the Harlem Renaissance great Langston

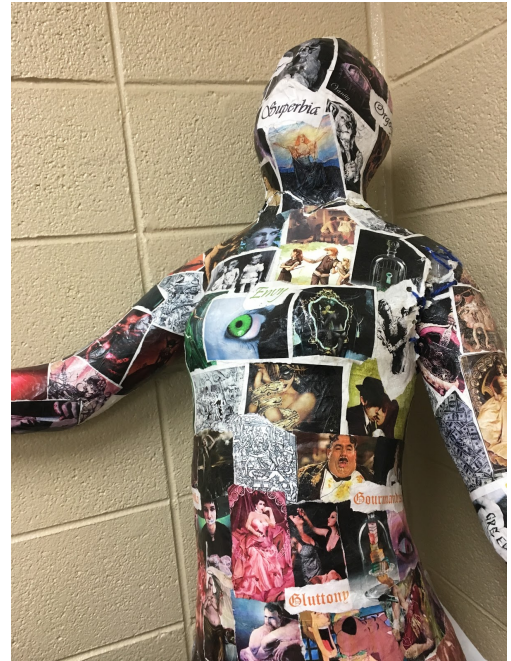


Figure 15: A former student's sculpture representing the seven dead sins

Hughes, her posters concretely suggest a dedication to diversity and inclusion that I felt while watching her interact with ideas, students, and colleagues.

Featured prominently next to her desk at the front of the classroom are three photos: one of her and her colleague at their master's graduation, one of her riding her horse, and one of her and her hallway friends dressed up for a school spirit day. Above all, the room and her persona exude kindness. Whether she's talking to other teachers, her students, or me—a colleague turned friend turned researcher—she smiles, listens, and makes others' opinions feel valued.

Sylvie: The Quiet Philosopher

For our first conversation around writing and identity, Sylvie chose to meet me at another town staple, a downtown restaurant just down the street from where

Aspen and I had chatted the week prior. When I arrived, I found her settled into a booth in a quiet dining room where the only other patron was one of our former college English professors. This particular spot is a popular happy hour meeting place because of its 2-for-1 drinks, but both drinks have to be delivered to the table at the same time. So even though Sylvie was losing her voice, we each enjoyed a handcrafted skinny margarita and settled in to become reacquainted as colleagues, thinkers, and writers.

The Student. Similar to Glen and Aspen, Sylvie begins by talking about her nontraditional entrance into the teaching world. As we sip our margaritas, she tells me the story of her school experience in Wisconsin where she graduated from a tiny high school in a class of 52. Though I know her as a dedicated and serious student, she tells me that, as a teenager, she cared only about getting good grades in classes she actually liked.

I remember back then I wasn't . . . studious. Well, I was studious, but I was only studious in the classes that I really enjoyed . . . [like] comp or psychology. I loved those classes [but] gym class [or] a lab class I got Ds . . . and I was perfectly satisfied with those.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

When our conversation comes back around to this subject an hour later, Sylvie tells another story about her high school experience—about a time where she wasn't exactly studious. We'll save the full story for later as it provides insight into multiple aspects of her writing identity. Here I want to focus on her parenthetical interruption within that extended story. She interrupts her narrative to say, *By the*

way, I ended up getting a C- in that [science] class which makes me very angry now because I'm such a different student now (Initial Interview). Sylvie moves back and forth through time, characterizing herself as a student *then* very differently than herself as a student *now*, and in doing so, we can see how her shifting student identities inform her teaching (more on this point in Chapter Five).

Even though Sylvie establishes herself as a sometimes less-than-studious teenager, her discussion of books suggests that her desire for literature with female protagonists started early. Even from a young age, she didn't like 'boy books' or *anything that has to do with a boy coming of age in the wilderness, boy kills deer and comes of age in the wilderness, boy has plane crash and comes to age in the wilderness*. She continues, *I totally get that they're wonderful books, but that's all that we read at some point, with some boy coming of age in nature* (Initial Interview). Sylvie tells me she has *always loved reading and writing* (Initial Interview), but in her reading—both for school and for pleasure—she finds diversity in gender, ethnicity, religion, and experiences necessary.

Feminism. Sylvie's dislike of 'boy books' provides some insight into how her identity as a student connects with her identity as a teacher and, less explicitly, as a writer. Her words about disliking these *boy coming of age* books as a student directly echo her discussion of the local college's One Campus One Book as a teacher. This year, the college through which she teaches dual credit composition chose *Children of the New World*, a collection of science fiction stories set in the near future written by Alexander Weinstein. She is using the text in a writing course this

semester, but when she discusses this particular book, she hesitates, eventually drawing attention to the perspective which bothers her. She describes the text:

It's a collection of short stories . . . there are parts of it that are good. It's science fiction. It's a lot of relatable issues that we'll be able to talk about, the technology and, you know, but it's a very male book. All the characters are male. It's very obviously from the man's perspective, and all the female characters seem to be either the angel to help save the guy from the technology that's taking over and be a reminder of family, or they're non-existent.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

After her point about problematic or absent female characters, Sylvie ends this short aside by reasserting, *I mean, it's good. And there's some environmental stuff in there too . . . that I really liked* (Initial Interview). While Sylvie never calls herself a feminist or an activist, as we can see her in discussion of this particular text, these ideas are definitely in her thoughts and speech.

Environmentalism. Though Sylvie off-handedly mentions her interest in *environmental stuff* in the above book talk, her environmental activism is well-established in her school community. She is the sponsor for a small but dedicated group of students who call themselves the Environmental Club. This group was responsible for expanding the recycling program at Midwest High School from paper products to all forms of recyclables. I remember this group's inception nearly a decade ago, and during one of my visits to Sylvie's classroom, I saw that they were still going strong. The students came to empty the recycling bins while Sylvie was

having a class discussion, so she paused, scurried to her desk to gather her own personal recycling bin to empty, and then continued on with her discussion.

The story of this small interruption serves as a link between Sylvie's student identity, teacher identity, and her writing identity. As a student, she prefers her texts to have a greater social message. As a teacher, she sponsors the Environmental Club and, as her wall of posters demonstrates, she intentionally chooses diverse texts to make these abstract beliefs concrete. And, as a writer, she prefers genres which allow her to share her thinking with a particular audience, forefronting the possibility of change that good writing can bring.

Activist writing. When I ask Sylvie what she prefers to write, she responds, *My preference is to write, I mean, this is probably dorky, but essays. Like, creative types of essays that have a purpose or maybe have a message* (Initial Interview). For her, these *essays with a message* often have an environmental focus, even from a young age. Laughing, she tells me an example of an elementary school writing assignment she really enjoyed but perhaps her teacher did not quite understand:

I think we were in fifth or sixth grade, and we had to make our own children's books. You know, where you color and write the stories. And so I chose to write my story about a puppy that needed to get adopted [from] the shelter, and the end message of the book was that you should neuter or spay your cats and dogs. My teacher was like, "Well, I think maybe we should use different language." I don't know. I don't know. I don't remember what it was exactly that she thought maybe I shouldn't have.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

Remembering that she felt misunderstood and confused that her teacher did not understand her story's moral, Sylvie remarks that, even from a young age, she has spent much of her time in her *own little world, just think[ing] about a lot of things* (Initial Interview). In this short memory, we can see her negotiating two realities: (1) that she enjoys writing as a way to capture her thinking and display her beliefs and (2) that she often sees the world differently than those around her. In her inability to remember what was objectionable about her call to spay and neuter pets, this story provides an example of Sylvie's belief that she's *thinking about things that . . . it didn't seem to [her] many others were thinking about* (Initial Interview).

Introspection, independence, and solitude. These themes of introversion and introspection also emerge in Sylvie's story of college. She tells me that, though she loved reading and writing, when she was growing up, she never wanted to be a teacher. She wanted to be *an environmentalist, and maybe a scientist, or a firefighter* (Initial Interview). When she was ready to graduate high school and still didn't have a direct career path in mind, she followed her major passion and attended a small college in Illinois known for their Horse Science program. Sylvie remembers that she thought, *Well, I'll do this for a couple of years, and then figure [a career] out while I'm doing this* (Initial Interview). As an eighteen-year-old, she moved states away to attend this school and then, later, to experience a summer internship in Georgia riding horses. She valued her independence, telling me that she was *very excited to be off on [her] own [to] start living life* (Initial Interview).

Sylvie values her experiences as important to her development and, even as a young adult, she was able to gauge her own educational readiness. After a full-time stint working with a quarter horse trainer in Illinois, she realized that she “*just felt like there was something else [she] should be doing*” (Initial Interview). Since she enjoyed the teaching aspect of her current job, she headed to Missouri to attend college to become a teacher. She recalls,

I'm glad I actually waited that long to go to what I call 'big girl's school' because I feel like I wouldn't have been ready any sooner. I had to go off and have lots of experiences, so I was ready to settle down and really learn. By the time I got [to the teachers' college], I was all in. It was all about school, and I had done the hanging out with my friends and partying thing. I was done with that. I was completely focused on school, and I think that was integral to me.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

During her time at the regional Midwest college known for its quality teacher education program, Sylvie tells me she *loved her classes* and *loved her professors* (Initial Interview). However, even with her enjoyment of her program and instructors, the theme of being a solitary student—even a sort of outsider—follows through to her undergraduate experience. She remembers,

I have my minor in philosophy. I loved my philosophy classes, and I probably would've majored in it if I would've known ahead of time that that's a thing you could do—double major. Because I didn't know. I was stupid about all that stuff.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

She—much like this researcher—values experiences as integral to intellectual and scholarly development, and these early school stories clearly establish her as both a thinker and a Writer.

These stories surrounding Sylvie as a student characterize her as thoughtful, introspective, and introverted. While others talk more than they listen, Sylvie listens (and thinks) much more than she talks. Her enjoyment of her college philosophy courses further represents her penchant for thinking deeply about topics concerning epistemology and ontology—topics others aren't often considering. For these reasons, I use the metaphor of the Quiet Philosopher to think about how Sylvie's writerly identities are formed and performed in her own personal, educational, and professional experiences.

The Writer. The common thread through Sylvie's stories of teaching and writing is the tension that comes from her physical presence in a space with her mind wandering to all sorts of exciting *other* places. She comes to her understanding in her own time, and as she tells me later, she went home the night of our first conversation to scribble more thoughts on the W/writer divide in the new personalized journal that I gave her as a gift of gratitude. These handwritten scribbles marinated for a few months and turned into her first journal entry. In this journal entry, Sylvie speaks a bit about her physical presentation, drawing a dichotomy between public (spoken) language and private (written) language:

I suppose I consider myself a Writer because I write better than I speak. If the primary goal of communication is to transfer thoughts and ideas as clearly as possible to another being such as the self, then I have to admit that I'm fairly

clumsy with the vocal kind and even more so with the body language bit. What I believe is my I had a good day—let me tell you about it face gets met with a “What’s wrong?” inquiry. What I imagine to be a hilarious and well-placed witticism transcribes as a face-value comment given out-of-place and weirdly presented. But the written word I have time to craft. I can practice its effect and revise its structure and content until I am at least partially ready to present my inner world to the outside one.

Sylvie, Journal #1, December 27, 2017

I chose to begin this section on Sylvie as a Writer with a bit of her own writing because, composed throughout the few months after our first meeting and during my time in her classroom, these words represent her polished thoughts on the topic. This journal entry also forefronts her beautiful writer’s voice and, at the same time, celebrates her natural awkwardness.

Tensions and contradictions in defining W/writers. As a Writer, Sylvie places great value on silence as the breeding ground for thought. She also considers silence necessary to work out—or to become comfortable with—ideas and tensions. Further, she suggests that it was in silence that she became a Writer:

I also suppose that my writing, at least partially, comes from silence. My words come from more thinking than speaking and more observing than reacting. My sentences stem from spending more time as a young woman staring out windows, sitting near grazing horses, and leaning against sturdy trees than laughing with peers and shouting chants at the high school basketball games.

Sylvie, Journal #1, December 27, 2017

This short bit of her journal entry led to how I think about Sylvie's writerly identities. She is, in all ways, a writer of quiet contemplation, a deep thinker, and a theorizing philosopher. And with these identities comes an acceptance of the natural tensions of writing and the teaching of writing. Whereas other writers express frustration in the shifting nature of grammatical and structural rules, Sylvie welcomes the contradictions inherent in writing.

For example, immediately following her above discussion of her own high school experience devoid of *shouting chants at high school basketball games*, she writes, *I'm also sure other Writers do shout at basketball games* (Journal #1). Here she works against the traditional cultural depiction of Writers as lonely, pensive souls spending more time in their solitary offices or quiet library carrels than at dinner parties. In breaking the binary classification of writer, she demonstrates that, while she is admittedly an introverted Writer, there are certainly extroverted Writers as well. The discussion around the identity of Writer is full of tensions because, as she suggests, there is not a one-size-fits-all way of *being* a Writer. If writing is complex and contradictory, then so too must be Writers.

This wrestling with contradictions also appears in her attempt to define and describe W/writers. When I first asked her if there was a difference in her mind between Writers and writers and, if so, to define those differences, she responded, *Gosh, it's a hard question*. As testament to her true nature, Sylvie takes a bite of French fry and a sip of margarita while she silently ponders the distinctions in these two terms. After a few moments of thinking, she decides that two main

characteristics surround Writers that perhaps don't accompany writers. She explains,

I feel like, in some aspects, what makes a Writer is, I think, just identifying yourself as a Writer . . . calling yourself a Writer. Because . . . most of us write something, even if we never consider ourselves writers, are writers at some level. But I think maybe a Writer is someone who writes and is reflective about it.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

These two elements—labeling yourself a Writer and being reflective in your practice—are both clear-cut and tension-laden, as Sylvie later discusses. Later in our conversation, she doubles down on the idea that Writers have *some self-awareness in consciousness that's going in the written word that includes thinking about choices and syntax and content that maybe others aren't doing*. But, she also notes that, *at some level, quality doesn't matter* in the W/writer distinction, and the self is a perfectly valid audience for writing (Initial Interview).

On the necessity of Writers being published, she writes, *Many may argue that published writers deserve the classification of Writer, but such a denotation does not account for the remarkable Writers who do not ever see their words in print on a bookshelf or who may not even attempt to share their work with a wider audience* (Journal #1). In her ruminations on publication and quality within writing, Sylvie again situates herself comfortably in the tensions.

She extends her discussion of audience, saying, *I think quality matters when you have an audience, when you have a specific purpose for writing that is above and*

beyond yourself (Initial Interview). However, she also recognizes (and repeats in our conversations and her journal entries) that being considered a Writer doesn't require publication. As such, audience is both everything and nothing. Quality is both important and nonessential. Furthering these tensions is the pressure she puts on herself to *produce a quality piece of writing* (Initial Interview) any time she picks up a pen.

Risk and confidence. Because of her desire to produce a quality piece of writing anytime she picks up a pen, writing also brings with it much risk. Upon sending me her first journal entry, Sylvie writes, *I had some fun with my response, but I have to admit, I am also a bit nervous about sending it along* (Personal communication, December 27, 2017). Though Sylvie and I have known each other for more than a decade, and though we've engaged in many heated debates on topics of curriculum and teaching, she still feels risk in sending me a bit of her personal writing because it is so connected to the self.

Ironically, because writing is so intimately connected to the self, it is able to produce confidence in the Writer as readily as it is able to produce risk. Even while acknowledging the risk (and fear) that comes with sharing writing with an audience, Sylvie admits that writing has been a great source of confidence for her. She explains,

I think writing has been a part of who I am since I can remember. Even as a kid, you know, quiet and awkward and kind of strange, I liked my books and my horses and things I'd jot down on paper. As I said, going through school, I began to recognize that, hey, some people think I'm kind of good at [writing] too,

especially in the academic sense. And I think that helped give me some confidence in myself too, so a big part of my confidence has also come from my ability to write, which is a big thing for an awkward loner girl like me.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

The ability of writing to bestow confidence (even when it also causes great fear) again demonstrates Sylvie's comfort in the tensions and contradictions.

The self as Writer. When I ask her how she labels herself (as a Writer/writer/or something else entirely) she immediately responds, *It might sound arrogant¹², but I'm guessing I'd give myself [the label of] Writer because I think writing has been a part of who I am since I can remember* (Initial Interview). She remembers a time when she first found legitimacy in writing, and it comes in the most unlikely of situations, in a high school science project that she all but abandoned:

The most memorable [piece of teacher feedback] for me was actually in high school. It was in this biology class. It was an advanced biology class, and I was really excited for it. The assignment was to make and design your own experiment, so I did mine on acid rain, of course, right? (She laughs.) I planted these corn plants, and they had different PHs of acid. Except I was going to

¹² A short aside here: It seems significant that the only two participants who claim their identities as Writers and fear they'll sound arrogant are the female ones. Surely this is no coincidence. More on this commonality later.

water them, and then I didn't realize all this biology stuff is that statistics were involved, and I found that very boring.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

She tells me that she enjoyed hearing the statistics surrounding the effect of acid rain, but creating them was *not the thing [she] enjoyed* so she slowly abandoned her science project. She would dutifully go to the greenhouse each day, but she mostly just spent time there to escape being in class, and her experiment ultimately failed.

However, in her abandonment of this science project came the first time she remembers being recognized for her writing. As a final assessment for the unit, the science teacher required the students to submit written paragraphs in response to his prompts. Sylvie tells me about the day the teacher returned the graded responses. The next day in class, the biology teacher provided the class with one student's paper as a model for good writing. When she received a copy of the model paper, presented anonymously with student identifiers removed, Sylvie remembers,

I looked at it, and I was looking at my paper. [Without saying my name], he said that [my paper] was full of exceptionally clear writing, and that the author of that paper should not let that kind of writing go to waste . . . I never forgot that, particularly because it was from a teacher who I knew was very frustrated with me and my lack of motivation to water my acid rain plants. But that stuck with me . . . because I had no idea that I was an okay writer, you know?

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

As she told me earlier, she always loved reading and writing. She would write little stories and essays, but this public labeling (even if anonymous) of her as a Writer by

a teacher who might not have otherwise seen her in a positive light was a powerful moment in her writerly development.

The power of labels. A few times in our conversation, Sylvie asserts that, in some ways, being a Writer is merely labeling yourself as one. She speaks to the power of labeling to access an identity and connects how labeling works in her own Writerly identity to how it also manifests in her teaching. She says,

I think there is [power in labeling yourself as something]. I've been doing some reading about growth mindset, like the new thing at school. It's very trendy. I was thinking about my students who all too often come to class and they either think of themselves as Writers, because maybe they write some poetry on the side, or they think of themselves as bad writers. And it seems sometimes there's leeway in between but I think in general, I try to get across . . . the fact that you're writing at all [makes] you a writer. You just have to recognize that writing is tough.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

The influential moment in her own writerly development as a high school student connects with how she handles the concept of “good” and “bad” writer with her own students. Focusing on the positive power of labeling and all W/writers’ *room for growth*, Sylvie expands the W/writer label, creating space for everyone within it.

Returning to how her experience as a student contributed to her Writerly identity, Sylvie describes a moment in her readerly development which elevated the practice of writing for her. She explains the influence of Ms. L, her dual credit English instructor:

She introduced me to the world of ideas. [Her class] is where I first met Henry David Thoreau and Emerson. I was from a small town. It was the first encounter I ever had with that. There were different ways of looking at the world, and that was really eye-opening for me. We learned about existentialism, and I was like, oh my gosh. This is amazing. . . I think it made me appreciate writing more.

Sylvie, Initial Interview, September 6, 2017

Sylvie recognizes the power of teachers in helping students work against the false dichotomy of writers as either good or bad. Her active movement against a simplistic depiction of writers suggests that she's comfortable in the tensions inherent in writing—in the grey area between the two poles of “good” and “bad.” Additionally, as her own story here suggests, she sees literature as a way into ideas—the ideas that writers (herself, her students) take up in their compositions.

A 'formal' definition of W/writer. In our first meeting, Sylvie simply defines a Writer as *someone who writes and is reflective about it*, extending the idea we discussed earlier that much of the power of the label comes from simply bestowing it on someone. Then, in her first journal entry, she thinks more about what a Writer *is* and what a Writer *does*. As she revisits her earlier thoughts, she reinforces that she is a Writer (*someone who writes and is reflective about it*). She also reminds us that she prefers to cultivate her thoughts in writing rather than speaking, again highlighting her introspection.

This section of her journal entry features a voice shift where she moves from contemplative to snarky. Sylvie declares, *If pressed for [a definition of Writer], I*

might come up with a loosely strung and partially muddled attempt . . . but such a definition materializes as a pretentious attempt that can only fall short (Journal #1). In her attempt to work through the definition, language falls short, and she remarks, *Admittedly, I don't know what exactly constitutes a Writer, and an assertion that states the distinction between writers and Writers as purely individualistic criteria feels like a relativist cop-out* (Journal #1). In this negotiation, I see Sylvie floating comfortably in the muddy waters between relativism and absolutism. She's comfortable approaching writing with an "anything goes" attitude, but she also sees how meaning can be lost if some absolutes aren't accepted. Perhaps this comfort in the tension is a quality she owes to her minor in philosophy, or perhaps her lifetime of contemplation has made it a comfortable place to rest. Either way, it certainly colors her depiction of Writers in general and her own Writerly identities.

The negotiation of definition continues when Sylvie shifts from thinking about what Writers *are* to what they *do*. Of the performance of Writers, she writes, *A Writer brings the inside out and makes the inner life more tangible. A Writer shapes, organizes, folds, and then reshapes, reorganizes, and refolds the un-shapeable, the un-organizable, and the un-foldable (apparently, writers may also choose to make up words). A Writer creates that which did not exist before. A Writer writes with the intention of connecting and communicating—even if it is just with the self. A Writer looks back on her musings of what makes a Writer and thinks what drivel and considers wiping out her new creation to try again before she realizes she can't completely erase every word because those words now exist as extensions of the self. Instead, a Writer revises.*

Sylvie, Journal #1, December 27, 2017

The thinking, the structure of the writing, and the self come together in Sylvie's meditation on the performance of writing. There is an element of the sublime in her characterization of writing's connection to self. Allow me a short detour here to provide a brief discussion of the Romantic sublime and Sylvie's background in philosophy to help us further think about her discussion of writing and the self.

The Romantic Sublime. The Romantic sublime landscape, often represented in Caspar David Friedrich's (1817) *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (see Figure 16), suggests an at once terrifying and beautiful scene. Some British Romantics considered these opposing elements—for example, the awesomeness of an angry ocean juxtaposed with the reality of its destructive powers—the source of our strongest sensations. Edmund Burke writes of the sublime's power:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling . . . When danger or pain presses too nearly, it is incapable of giving



Figure 16: Caspar David Friedrich's (1817) painting *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*. This piece is often used to represent the Romantic sublime landscape.

any delight, and is simply terrible; but at certain distances and with certain modifications, it may be, and it is delightful.

*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our
Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757/1844), p. 51-52*

Burke's notion of the sublime as at once awe-inspiring and horrifying is timeless. We can still see the sublime in the allure of a roller coaster, the snowboarding feats undertaken in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, or attempts to scale Yosemite's El Capitan monolith without safety ropes. And, as Sylvie's journal entry above suggests, we can experience the sublime in the act of writing.

My connection of the Burkean sublime to Sylvie's journal entry is not entirely tangential; it arises from her position as a Quiet Philosopher. Not only did she mention that she would have become a philosophy major if she had known that existed in college, she also teaches an Introduction to Philosophy elective. Entirely of her own creation, this course *was just something [she] always wanted to do. That was [her]thing, and this class is [her] baby* (Initial Interview). In this course, she asks her high school students to *just try* to read Plato, Kant, Camus, Descartes, Russell, and, of course, Burke. She calls the class *fun* and tells me that she is *so jealous* of how prepared her students are for their future college philosophy courses (notoriously difficult courses with esoteric texts). Therefore, it is only fitting that Sylvie, a student *and* teacher of philosophy and a contemplative Writer, evokes Edmund Burke in her depiction of writing and selfhood. In fact, in the quote that opens this chapter, Sylvie lays the foundation for experiencing the sublime in the act of writing. The act of writing can include sheer terror (as she notes here) and the ultimate joy (as she discusses elsewhere): *Picking up the pen to engage in a process that requires the*

whole self even when plagued with doubt takes courage. Writing takes courages
(Journal #1).

For Sylvie, writing and being a W/writer is filled with tensions and oppositions. A Writer can, at once, be silent and vociferous, emotional or academic, actively writing and passively pondering, fearful and confident. Despite these tensions (or, perhaps, because of them), Sylvie finds writing an important and worthwhile act.

Neal

And down the rabbit hole we go . . . we go . . . we go.

Neal, Journal #2, November 3, 2017

If you peek your head out of Sylvie's classroom and look toward the commons area—perhaps to search for a student taking a bit too long for a restroom break—you might catch a peek of a Neal disappearing into his classroom. As a part-time instructional coach and a part-time English teacher, Neal spends much of his time running from one classroom to another, working with colleagues and students in all corners of Midwest High School. Clad in a button-up shirt, mismatched tie, and red Converse sneakers, he's unmistakable for both his fashion sense and his inexhaustible energy.

My professional path crossed with Neal's over a decade ago when we met at new teacher orientation. Since I was freshly out of college and a true newbie, I quickly looked to Neal as a mentor. Though he was new to the district, he had taught a few years at a small school down the road, so he had some sense of what this teaching gig would entail. It turns out that we'd be teaching partners; for my entire tenure at the school, we shared the sophomore English courses. As we became acquainted, I realized that he was—and is—a genuine person and a singularly-motivated teacher.

Perhaps the best representation of Neal begins not in his classroom but in his home, a small farmhouse a few miles from town surrounded by woods on one side and cropland on the other. On my first visit to his home, Neal began the grand tour by introducing me to the life-size Richard Nixon cut-out peering out from the corner of his living room. A relic from a different time (and a different style of political

campaigning), the cardboard Nixon is only one element creating intrigue in his personal space. Visitors following Nixon's gaze will notice a woodstove, the home's main heat source. And if that same visitor dropped by on a fall evening, she would often find Neal in the woods behind the house, chopping logs to stockpile for the cold Missouri winter. Above this stove is a wall full of souvenir plates from various decades, collected and displayed for their (sometimes problematic) eccentricities. These details might suggest that Neal is a prototypical rural Midwesterner. However, his stories of a childhood in San Francisco and a youth spent traveling Europe (often resulting in him missing the first days of school) complicate this depiction. A glance at the pile of classic books waiting to be read or a discussion about 1940s radio shows further complicates any attempt to distill Neal into a tidy label.

These peculiarities which make his family's home a warm and inviting place also transfer to his classroom. When I asked him about the most important quality in a classroom environment, he replied, *Is this a place that you feel safe?* (De-brief Interview #2). With a bit of pride in his voice, he followed up by asking me if I'd heard one of his students ask, *How long can we stay here?* This simple question let me know that, not only do Neal's students choose to spend time in his room even when they aren't required to do so, he also spends many hours there, far beyond those contractually required. Using this short exchange as the lens through which I experienced his classroom, I began to recognize the elements that were entirely his personality while observing how he welcomes all of his students into his weird and wonderful world.

Peeking around the corner of the whiteboard adorned with colorful diagrams to help students organize their reading of the day's text is a plush Domo Kun doll (see the top right corner of Figure 17). This doll represents Japan's public broadcaster NHK, and like most of the objects in Neal's home and classroom, there is a hilarious story

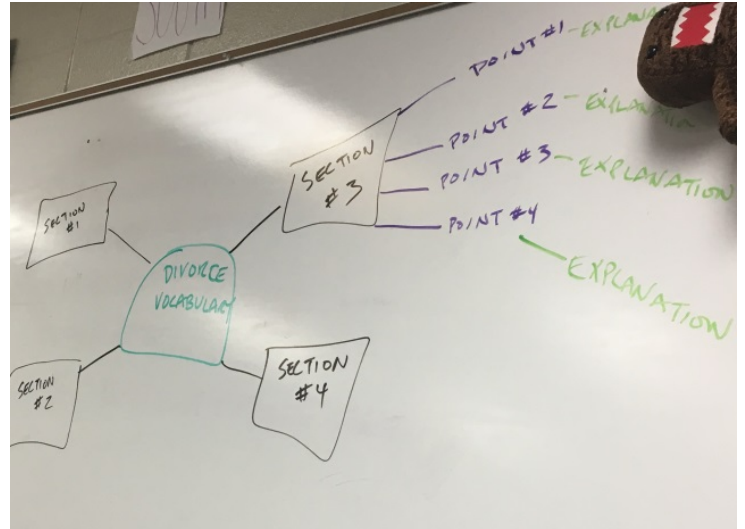


Figure 17: Domo Kun doll peeking around the corner of the whiteboard in Neal's classroom.

surrounding how it came to live (well, actually, how *they* came to live—there are two of them) in this space. On the back wall is a row of quotations on the topics of reading and books. At first glance, this doesn't seem to be anything out of the ordinary, but these quotes aren't of the normal English teacher variety. I asked Neal about them:

The students are all thinking . . . it's going to be motivational. [But] they're not! Some of them are lines about, you know, this book's only good to throw at people . . . and never judge a book by its movie. So when I put those together years ago, I put them almost as an inside joke for myself to make the kids think, 'These are supposed to drive me to read more.' No! It's supposed to make you question the validity of what you might be reading.

Neal, De-Brief Interview #1, October 27, 2017

Neal: The Serendipitous Editor

In addition to his unique room decorations, Neal's energy is unmatched. Even though he often wakes up before his 5 am alarm sounds, and even though he only drinks coffee in the afternoons, his interactions with students and colleagues are consistently spirited. Our conversations, for example, always began with a question from my interview protocol or an inquiry spurred from the day's observation, but Neal's responses rarely followed a linear pattern. A question about his own personal writing ended up in a conversation about *Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt who, Neal says, *I look at him and go, wow, you were really a mediocre teacher* (Initial Interview). A journal entry about writing and teaching turns into a beautiful short story about a first date, fast food, and theatre. Much like this study and the narratives within, Neal works against linearity, welcoming the descent into the rabbit hole and knowing that we won't emerge the same teachers/thinkers/writers.

His classroom procedure also reflects his unequalled energy. Drawing on his theatre experience, as soon as the bell rings, the curtain goes up, and Neal opens the show with humor and spectacle. As the hour continues, students have no opportunity to fall asleep or stray from the task at hand. He's constantly asking them to stand up and organize into a line by the length of their pinky fingers, the color of their shoes, or some other silly metric that forces students to interact with one another. A lesson might move from a dystopian book discussion to a history of Thanksgiving food to a vocabulary lesson, and his audience of teenagers is with him all the way. It's no secret that Neal has a unique approach to teaching, and the risk that brings always seems to be in the back of his mind.

Working against tradition. Neal exemplifies his nontraditional approach as he tells me the story of how his Horror Literature course came to be:

[The principal] was looking for summer school classes . . . Originally I was going to do credit recovery. That was my game . . . and they said, okay, but we need more classes. Do you have something else to offer? . . . So I wrote down Horror Literature . . . thinking it would never go anywhere. [When summer came] my credit recovery class wasn't going to make . . . and neither was my horror literature, so they said, 'Let's combine them.' And I [did] credit recovery with this group focusing highly on horror literature, thinking it would never go anywhere [past this one summer course]. Second semester of the next school year, I was teaching Techniques of Writing, and they said, 'what we're going to do is take all of those people [enrolled in Techniques of Writing] and disperse them in other classes.' So I thought I'd been fired.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

At this point, he interrupts himself, joking that he thought he'd been fired *so many times, so so many times* in his career, but this story ends happily. The administration canceled his Techniques of Writing class to ask his help with a specific population of freshmen—those failing multiple classes. He would take them through a semester-long version of Horror Literature for reading/writing intervention:

[The principal] asked, 'Can you get this going? And I said, 'when do you want it going?' Again, [I had] no curriculum, no nothing . . . and [she says], 'It's Monday now. I want it by Thursday.' It was insane. . . I had 28 people all of a sudden

overnight for a class that didn't even exist three days prior. [The course became so popular] that I teach two forms of it now."

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

Though he mentioned to me a few times that he's sure his nontraditional approach to teaching, curriculum, and professional development will eventually lead to his firing, the administration trusts him. Not only is he the school's first instructional coach/English teacher combination, but he is clearly well-respected in both positions.

In his recent annual review for the instructional coach position, the new head principal simply said, "*What you're doing right now. Yeah. Keep doing it*". . . *That was [the] entire conversation*" (De-Brief Interview, October 27, 2017). He often stays after school with students who are struggling to complete assignments at what students have come to call "Quality Neal Time," and if his own students are not with him after school, it is common to see him tutoring other kids who need help with reading or writing. Neal realizes that *he gain[s] nothing* (Initial Interview) from all of these extra hours at school and all of this curriculum work. He also knows that his particular population—unmotivated readers without the external supports necessary for successful high school careers—benefits in ways unquantifiable.

The red Converse sneakers, the timely (if seemingly haphazard) lesson components, and his insistence that *all* students can be successful have contributed to what is known as "The Legend of Neal," and with it, he has become a larger than life figure at Midwest High School.

Neal's 'stumbling' path to teaching. To the audience, Neal's teaching is much like a Broadway play. They have a finely-tuned script complete with musical interludes, and his movements are blocked with precision to create the intended audience response (more on these performances in Chapter Five). However, when I sat down with Neal to talk about his personal and professional experiences, the theme which kept emerging was one of *stumbling*.

In direct opposition to his seemingly polished moves in the classroom is his path *to* the classroom. As a high school student himself, Neal notes that he didn't care about grades or SAT scores. He *stumbled* into college at 18 and, other than a few theatre classes which he enjoyed, didn't have a good experience.

I got into San Francisco State, and I think I had just a high enough grade and high enough SAT. . . It might have been one of those pity things because [my] mom died [when I was in high school]. I have no idea. But I suddenly found myself in a bunch of classes. Met some really fun people, some goofy people . . . and then I had a bunch of crappy classes. Then a bunch of crappy jobs.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

As a college student, he decided to go into public relations—a fitting choice since Neal truly can sell anything to anyone, and he's always the center of any room he's in. However, as he landed an internship in the field and began to realize what the career would entail, he knew he couldn't do it. So, degree unfinished, he dropped out of San Francisco State, and, in his words, *lived a vagabond life . . . having a fun time in Golden Gate park [before meeting] my ex-wife, who wasn't my ex-wife at the time, and follow[ing] her [to the Midwest]*. (Initial Interview). Again *stumbling*

through life, he ended up in a rural Midwestern town and, upon a visit to the regional college nearby, realized that, *purely by accident*, (Initial Interview) he was just a few credits short of a speech and theatre degree. So he completed his degree and *stumbled* into his first teaching job at a tiny rural school nearby.

The first year. He was lured into this first teaching job by the promise of teaching theatre, but, as it turned out, he would teach only one theatre class and, instead, was responsible for teaching all classes in the small English department. He *was* the English department. Completely unprepared for this endeavor, Neal tells me a story about how he approached the overwhelming experiences common to first year teachers, especially at small rural schools:

The pay was a pittance, and the responsibilities were psychotic. I didn't know any better. I didn't know what the heck to do. . . Should I swim? Should I drown? Should I do something? I went over to Casey's and got an application that first year, and I really seriously thought about [working there instead]. But, I'm always one of those individuals who just kind of stumbles through life, and so I was already kind of stumbling, so I thought, I'm already doing this. I'll just keep doing it for a little while longer, thinking I'd be out of [the teaching profession] before long.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

In that first year, he also realized that, when it came to the teaching profession, he didn't really know what to expect. He thinks back and realizes, *You don't know it's a nightmare unless you've experienced it before* (Initial Interview). As a student teacher during the horrific mass shooting at Columbine High School, he

experienced seven bomb threats in one semester. Knowing no different, he thought, *So this is what education is like* (Initial Interview). During his overwhelming first months at his first job, he again thought, *So this is what education is like*, (Initial Interview) and he just kept showing up to work and doing what he thought was best.

Neal notes that, if it weren't for those in his professional and personal life who encouraged him to make big moves, he *would have stayed [at that first school] for the rest of [his] life*. He tells the story of how he ended up at Midwest High School:

I'm not one of these individuals who . . . tries to beat their own path. It just kind of happens. My former principal . . . contacted me and said, 'You need to apply for this job.' I was like, 'No, I can't do that because I've already got a job here.' . . . It just worked out. I've literally stumbled in my entire life. There's no question.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

This theme of *stumbling* continues: He *stumbled* into a master's in literacy, and then he *stumbled* into his position as instructional coach. Through all of this movement, though, one element remains static. Neal remarks, *I assume that I don't have the right answer on everything* (Initial Interview). It is from this place of not knowing—of being willing to practice, to experiment, to fail, and to try again—that Neal approaches writing and the teaching of writing. Once again, though, an observer of Neal's teaching or a reader of his writing likely sees only the polished product.

Writing as following a trail of ideas. Just as I did with Glen, Aspen, and Sylvie, I began our discussion of writing by asking Neal to define W/writers and to

place himself within a writing community. He first establishes purpose as the starting point for all of his personal and professional writing, saying that he is *very purpose-oriented*. Second to purpose is audience which allows him to adapt his *thinking and writing in an entirely different way* (Initial Interview).

Defining W/writers. His primary focus on audience and purpose frames Neal's definition of W/writers. It shouldn't come as a surprise that the theatrically-trained Neal characterizes Writers as those rare authors who provide a message an audience needs to hear. He explains,

When I think of a Writer I think of somebody who is audience focused. I think of somebody who is producing something that the world needs to find, embrace, and respond either positively or negatively. Even if they hate [the Writer's] writing, it doesn't really matter, as long as there's an audience that sees it.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

In his definition, Writers write because audiences have something they need to *read*. In contrast, Neal says that writers write because they have something they need to *say*.

I think of a lowercase writer as somebody that will produce something because it feels good, because it is just there. I put this on the page. If you like it, if you happen to stumble on my writing and comment on it, hey that's great and I can go up to other people and say, "Look, this person liked my writing!" But it isn't as important.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

Perhaps this intentionality in the act of writing came from a childhood of creating—and starring in—one man shows *portraying heroes of [his] own creation* (Journal #1). Possibly the focus on audience was finely tuned by auditions in his young adulthood, ones where, *from Shakespeare to Sophocles to Swados, [he] performed endlessly, [each piece] tagged with a professional sounding pseudonym* (Journal #1). Or maybe a lifetime of listening to audio productions like 1940s radio dramas and 21st century political podcasts trained his ear to listen for purpose and audience in composition.

Neal writes his way to a small epiphany on this subject in his fourth journal entry. First, he suggests that while his home featured bookshelves and while his father had a myriad of interesting experiences to share, those aren't the stories he remembers immersing himself in as a child:

Given free reign with the idiot box when I was young meant I could spend hours with programs which pandered to those who saw the PBS acronym as meaning "Pretty Boring Stuff." The Love Boat, Fantasy Island, Laverne and Shirley, Happy Days, and a long line of other Aaron Spelling created drivel flowed freely from the living room screen, keeping me happy and satiated. Although an entire wall of my living room was filled with books, as was an entire wall in the upstairs hallway, we were never formally introduced. Julie, my Love Boat cruise director, introduced me to more nautical terms than my father, who regularly crabbed in the San Francisco bay.

Neal, Journal #4, December 4, 2017

He continues writing towards understanding, and, by the end of this journal entry, he realizes that that radio—rather than literature—was the text most instrumental to his literary development. He concludes this journal entry with an exclamation:

You'll have to excuse me here, but I just had a major epiphany!
Escaping to my room when I was little, I spent countless hours listening to rebroadcasts of old radio programs which a local AM station would play in three hour blocks. Lights Out, Suspense, Inner Sanctum, and Fibber McGee & Molly were my favorites, allowing me a television experience when no television was available. No matter the quality of the program, the writers expected their audiences to understand their references and word plays, and played to these presumptions. . . It's probably nothing stunning to you, but it's a major denouement for me in relation to the canyon between words which I know, and words which I've read. Arch Oboler and Don Quinn put me to bed every night, not my parents.

Neal, Journal #4, December 4, 2017

These childhood radio shows continue to impact Neal's personal and professional writing. Because the radio show *writers expected their audiences to understand their references and word plays*, Neal's writing functions in a similar fashion.

Allusions, titles, and the importance of purpose & audience. Neal's compositions and conversations are loaded with allusions, carefully placed to elicit a particular reaction. His journal entries alone contain allusions to the following places, people, and texts: Pandora, *Transvestia* magazine, Thomas the Tank Engine, Charlie Rose, Jack London, the Tivoli, Applebee's, and The Fat Boys. These

references are sprinkled liberally through his writing, like breadcrumbs leading the reader through the dark and twisty woods of Hansel and Gretel, toward his meaning buried within. But he doesn't expound on them. Like the radio shows he cut his teeth on, Neal expects the reader to understand both what these allusions are and how they add meaning to the piece. As writer, Neal embodies the oft-taught writing technique of show-don't-tell.

Regardless of the motivation, in his discussion of his most recent writing events, Neal allows purpose to lead his process. He tells me a story of one of his most unconventional writing tasks: *This is really funny. It started out with [the speech and debate teacher]. She said, 'Here's a name for my new summer class, and I looked at it and said, 'You need to sex this up. No one is going to take this class. It's just boring as all get out'* (Initial Interview). Always the helpful colleague, Neal decided to help her create *sexier* titles, and after getting more information about the class, he produced a list of ten titles for her summer school course.

Since she's classroom neighbors with the speech and debate teacher, Aspen overheard the conversation where Neal presented his new and exciting titles for the summer class. While he considered the titles he created *fun, total batshit kind of crazy stuff*, Aspen realized the creativity involved in the title creation and the manner in which they appealed to an audience. So she *turned around and said, 'You need to do the same thing for me.'*

Before long, another colleague got wind of this service, so she came to Neal to get help writing a title for a conference presentation proposal. Shaking his head,

Neal laughs and finishes this story: *I have become the go-to person when it comes to original titles and sexed up versions of what they're trying to say* (Initial Interview).

A selection of his title creations follows.

First, titles for the summer debate class.

- You Had Me at Hello
- Reflections with Smarter People
- Best Party Guest
- Army of Darkness

Then, titles for a conference presentation on classroom management and writing.

- Wrangling the Wreck with Words
- Writing on the Slate: From Smacks to Symbiosis, Moving Beyond the Punishment Model in Communication Arts.
- The Dude Abides: Establishing Alpha Status Through Student Writing
- I Wish I Knew How to Quit You: Validation Instead of Criticism

These titles not only further exemplify Neal's use of allusions to create meaning, they also demonstrate his forefronting of audience and purpose. The first set of titles were carefully crafted for their audience of busy, high-achieving students who might value the social and intellectual outcomes offered in the summer course. The second set of titles were written toward a similarly specific, though quite different audience of English teachers at a professional development conference with more intriguing session options than time to attend them. In comparing these two lists of titles—and these two very different audiences—we can see evidence of Neal's dedication to reaching a particular audience. As he notes at the end of our first interview, *If you don't have somebody that wants what you're throwing then you're just sitting at the end of the beach with the fishing hook in the water and nothing is going to happen* (Initial Interview).

Neal's focus on audience as a primary consideration for all writing is also exemplified in his pursuit to write a unique and practical professional development

(PD) book. He tells me that *90% of the PD books out there are never meant for an audience* and, if they are, they seem to be *meant for each other as professor*, not to practicing classroom teachers (Initial Interview). With these realities in mind, he tells me the process of writing a draft of his own original professional development text:

A couple years ago, I started but never finished (and luckily I didn't because I thought it was crap when I went back to it) writing a book on classroom management based on [Sun Tzu's] The Art of War... I had a student teacher, so it was the opportunity for me to do it, and so I wrote and I wrote and I wrote. I wrote probably 100 or so pages on it... this was a very different writing process. That was me, thinking, speaking to somebody like myself: a fairly new teacher who needed a toolbox. What can I use that is directly applicable? [I strove to] speak in the words that are easily manageable and easily consumed.

Neal, Initial Interview, September 13, 2017

As the above stories suggest, Neal's writing begins with an emphasis on purpose and audience. But his thought processes that lead to these opportunities for writing are much more abstract and imaginative.

Teaching as social activism. Framing teaching (and writing about teaching) as directly connected to social improvement, he tells me that teaching is *totally social activism. Because if you do not make the world a better place, then why the hell are you doing this in the first place?* (Initial Interview). This worldview frames our final example of Neal's recent writing which fuses the practical and the ideological.

When we sat down to lunch at the eclectic tea room Neal chose for our meeting, he told me that his school day had been rather bizarre, and interestingly, this bizarre day was a result of a short piece of his public writing. Right after the Charlottesville white supremacist rally in August 2017, a colleague (and former mentee) sent him a link to the *The New York Times*. This colleague said that the *Times* was looking for teachers who are addressing it in their classrooms, and she thought Neal might have something to contribute.

So Neal clicked the link and wrote a short message to the newspaper. Though the newspaper's prompt asked teachers how they were addressing the summer's events in Charlottesville in their classrooms, Neal's message was quite different than what most would expect. A short excerpt of his writing provides us insight into his teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities. He begins by explaining the sophomore research papers he's assigned for ten years:

My sophomores have to write a research paper on individuals and/or groups in which the SKOLL foundation has recognized as social entrepreneurs who are driving large scale change in a positive way. While learning how to write a comprehensive research paper, they become immersed in a world of which few are familiar and discover the limits of their own knowledge.

Neal, Message to the *New York Times*, August 13, 2017

He continues to describe his intent—exposing his rural students to their own circumscribed existences.

Being I work in a small [Midwest] town, where most will never move away from the county, let alone the state, are the crux of my academic philosophy.

On my wall hangs a poster of the state of Oklahoma, not because I am from there (I grew up in San Francisco), but to remind me that Timothy McVeigh was once a teenager from the Midwest. I would love to chalk this most recent incident [in Charlottesville] to an unstable individual armed with a deadly weapon, but like Dylann Roof and James T. Hodgkinson, they were reacting with the tools they had, to a world where only their view existed. It's not just my job to present alternate views, but to rip off their blinders. I refuse to stand by and answer a reporter's questions with "but he was such a quiet student..."

Neal, Message to *The New York Times*, August 13, 2017

For Neal, writing and the teaching of writing are always situated within real world contexts—as he mentioned before, purpose comes first and then audience. He uses writing to *rip off the blinders* so his students are presented with views other than the ones they see in their families or small towns.

The most interesting aspect of this submission to *The New York Times* (part of which was later published in the newspaper) is that initially Neal did not view this submission as writing. It was only when I asked him for an example writing that he was pleased with that he realized this submission *was* writing. He has a small revelation during our initial interview: *You asked about what kind of writing I'm doing [and I said] I don't know [that I'm writing] anything, but I guess I do . . . write these kinds of things.* And even after this revelation, Neal views this submission that ended up as a few paragraphs in a *New York Times* article as *lowercase w writing* which he produced because *it [felt] good [to] . . . put this on the page* (Initial

Interview). However he classifies this piece of writing, Neal does tell me that he is happy with the publication because *this [topic] is a necessity that we all need to embrace* (Initial Interview). Neal's definitions of W/writer and W/writing feature an emphasis on the message rather than the medium. Because he characterizes a Writer as writing what others need to *hear* and a writer writing what he needs to *say*, Neal works against the more traditional system of characterizing Writers by publication.

Lowercase writer to the nth degree. Despite being seen as an “idea man” by his colleagues and despite the numerous examples of writing he described to me, Neal doesn't see himself as a Writer. Without hesitation, Neal places himself in this second category, saying he is a *lowercase writer to the Nth degree*. Laughing, he also says, *When I do get praised for my writing, I get confused. I really get confused* (Initial Interview).

If another English teacher said he was “confused” by praise for his writing, it might be viewed as false humility, but Neal's reaction is truly genuine (as is his humor). In fact, after seeing a social media announcement about his recent mention in the *New York Times* and his conference presentation acceptance, I sent Neal a note of congratulations. His reply both demonstrates his view of his own scholarship, and it provides a bit of insight into his humor:

I keep having folks congratulate me, and every time, I honestly cannot figure out why. It usually takes two beats until I figure it out . . . I go to [my wife's] work to pick her up for an early dinner, and she says, 'So now you're on the

district's Facebook page. That's something.' *My paranoia sinks in, and I immediately think of the county sheriff's website's current inmate page.*

Neal, Personal Communication, December 20, 2017

As he continues to think about these definitions and later expands on them via his first journal entry, he shares how he came to the realization that he is, in fact, a "little w" writer.

A stumbling "little w" writer. The following story is a lengthy one, but because it showcases those qualities which contribute to "The Legend of Neal," I want to include it in its near entirety here¹³. Note his trademark use of literary and cultural allusions and the fact that he is a natural storyteller (a quality which will re-emerge in our discussion of his teaching of writing in Chapter Five). In this story, Neal establishes a key foundation of his own writerly identity.

Born shortly after the end Beat Generation in San Francisco, Neal's free-spirited parents named him after the legendary Beat writer Neal Cassady. Because of his namesake, it's almost as if Neal was connected to the literary world from the moment of his birth. This connection seems to have spurred an identity which he has been working both toward *and* against for most of his adult life. The following journal entry demonstrates Neal's motivation for his "little w" writing, which, as he says, *just kind of stumbles out, just like my entire life, it just kind of stumbles out* (Initial Interview).

Some time in the 1890's, author Jack London worked at a boy's school laundry in Oakland, California.

¹³ This journal entry is single-spaced and written in smaller font for the sake of continuity.

He referred to this period as part of his alcoholic days, which is strange in the fact he died 20 years later from kidney disease and dysentery, both commonly associated with excessive alcohol consumption. The "non-fiction" book, John Barleycorn, based on this period of his life, must have found its way into my father's hands, which is no surprise as he frequently referenced London's books and activities, although I never knew why. [My dad] was an unknown artist and unpublished cartoonist, but in 1979, he was a produced playwright, having adapted this footnote of London's life into a one-act titled Sheets, taking place in the private laundry of the Oakland landmark. The show was well received, and [he] returned to painting, never again, to my knowledge, finding an audience for his written word.

Beat poet, Dick McBride wrote extensively about his and my father's relationship, but I never again heard an utterance regarding my father's own prose, just how he became a character in other people's stories. His travels and tales became legend, even though most were assumed false, later to be found real. Boris Karloff sleeping in his bed when he was 7 and Tom Mix waving at him from a train, being tossed ashore in Australia at age 14 for being a general shit, and being engulfed in four weeks worth of trash after an attempted mugging in Paris. He was an anecdote and little else.

Even though I dressed up for a night of theater, where my father's words drove actors across the stage, I never considered him a writer. Years later, going through his possessions after a death dramatically impacted by alcoholism, just like his hero, I could not find anything he wrote.

He wasn't a writer.

Even now, I have a hard time associating him with the complexities of the English language, instead his control of the brush is ever present in my house.

To his pride I wrote picture books, much like most little boys, about superheroes which I created, but these became quickly forgotten with time. Instead, I let other creators fill in the gaps of my imagination with comic books like Richie Rich and Batman, and television adaptations like The Incredible Hulk and Wonder Woman. The radio play I wrote, heavily cribbed from the 1940's radio dramas I grew up with, came in second in a statewide competition, but I knew others were much more talented, and radio's day had long past. This dance with the humanities halted when I discovered the grandstand was empty. Occasionally, while cleaning my room, a box of simple pictures and monosyllabic text would surface, the rusted staple in the corner giving its age and abandonment. Back into whatever shoebox it came, they were also forgotten, and finally tossed.

I stumbled forward into theater, this time letting other people's words move me around. . .

Because, I wasn't a writer.

Today, much like my father, I am a character in other people's stories.

His goal was not to write like Jack London, or even to emulate Jack London, but to BE Jack London. He lied about his age and joined the Merchant Marines, years later crying on his parents' front lawn when he thought he would be drafted to Korea. He bought shares in a gold mine, and we spent weeks in the middle of nowhere with a group of angry drunks digging for nothing. He traversed Europe with my mother, following the path of both artists and writers alike, abandoning my siblings and I for months, while a handful of hippies occasionally checked on us. Unbeknownst to me, his desire to be a fictionalized version of his favorite big "W" laid the groundwork for my little "w" self-realization.

... My father thought he might want to be a big "W" writer, but in the end settled for being a little "w" writer, even abandoning that when the alcohol and drug use did too much damage. At one point, I thought I might want to someday become a Writer, but wondered what the point of it all might be. Too many others have written what I find I'm most qualified to write, and most run circles around me. I'm a teacher of little "w" writers, providing them tools to have better life choices, where they're not so quickly judged by their big "W" counterparts. Many big "W" writers who stumble into my profession continually seek like-minded individuals whom they can mentor towards professions which would respect and herald their writing ability, while I seek just the opposite. . .

I am more than happy being a character in Writer's stor[ies], and would be thrilled if they mined my past for inspiration in writing a forgotten one-act.

Neal, Journal #1, September 17, 2017

This composition had to be included both for its beauty and for the insight it provides us regarding Neal's identity development. It also had to be included for its irony; though Neal asserts that he isn't a Writer, his short piece brims with voice, nuance, and the rich imagery we often associate with those who have mastered the art of storytelling.

Most significantly, Neal's journal entry demonstrates the main quality of writers for Neal. As a writer (rather than a Writer), his compositions often arise from *something that's in [his] head* which he *throws out there to see what [the audience] thinks* (Initial Interview). He draws an intentional distinction between how he approaches the teaching of English differently than Writers who may share the same profession. Returning to one of his primary focuses for writing—i.e. purpose—he values *just getting words on the page* as a valid process for writing (Initial Interview).

After he *gets words on the page*, Neal considers where he ended up. He tells me that his writing starts in one place and very often ends up far from where he'd began. In fact, sometimes where he ends up is more interesting than the place he

started, so he scrubs the original starting point and resituates his writing. Finally, he clears out unnecessary references that perhaps won't speak to a general audience. A Contemplating a journal entry he wrote on writing procedure, he tells me he would edit it for publication by *abandoning many of the transgender references, clearing away the realty dreams and East Coast ambitions* (Journal #2, November 3). By editing away the extraneous references, he *pat[s] down the dirt to appear as if [he] had never taken those paths in the first place* (Journal #2, November 3).

He concludes the entry with an apt metaphor of teacher as film editor, saying, *I want no one to notice my student's writing, just like movie audiences don't notice great film editing* (Journal #1, September 17). And, in doing so, he fuses his own experience as a writer with his experience teaching writing, thus creating the metaphor through which he can view his writerly experiences—Neal as the Careful Editor.

We first embarked on Neal's narrative by hurling ourselves into the rabbit hole, and in doing so, we've learned about Neal as a son, a student, a teacher, and—most notably—as a writer. Though Neal repeatedly tells me that he *stumbles* through life, taking each adventure and opportunity as it comes, his stories, interviews, and compositions suggest an underlying intentionality.

This intentionality appears when Neal carefully trims away the scraps of his writings and his lesson plans, leaving bits of film on the cutting room floor. Perhaps he trims away a false start or an unnecessary allusion, tightening his metaphor and solidifying his point. Maybe he chops an entire story, splicing the film back together

so seamlessly that the audience would never know a cut was made. We'll conclude his narrative with his own words about this editing process:

The road will wend its way to the starting point sooner or later. Many of the root filled dead ends will now be ignored, and the most apparent and purposeful route will be followed with fewer diversions . . . If I were to write this [journal piece] for publication, I would probably fill in the cavern behind me . . . finally patting down the disturbed dirt to appear as if I had never taken those paths in the first place. No one needs to know where I've been hiding.

Neal, Journal #2, November 13, 2017

Conclusion: Remarks on the Teachers' Writerly Narratives

In the pages preceding this conclusion, the reader might feel tensions between the particular details of each participant's narrative and the general phenomenon of writerly identities. As I wrote my way toward analysis (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), I found myself wondering how much detail to include in these narratives. I questioned which stories most accurately represented the lived experiences of these teachers, and I examined the necessity (or not) of a uniform structure in representing the narratives. Often, I questioned the role of theory in my understanding of these narratives.

In the end, I decided that to hold true to my understanding of narrative inquiry it was necessary for me to forefront the participants' experiences in this chapter. The writing and analysis of these narratives culminated in my creating a metaphor for each teacher. These metaphors helped me—the writer—and hopefully

helped you—the reader—think about these teachers’ unique experiences and identities intersect within our profession. There is always room for theory, of course, and in Chapter 5, I will move from the particular to the general, looking across participants and applying theory to help interrogate these commonalities and contradictions.

In Chapter 4, I have followed the intellectual vein of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and attempted to access the power of metaphor to interrogate how teachers’ writerly identities are formed and re-formed. Lakoff and Johnson suggest that “our conceptual system is largely metaphorical” and, as such, “the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (1980, p. 3). Furthermore, since the participants in this narrative inquiry are English teachers, it stands to reason that they are also comfortable in the realm of metaphor. As Aspen told me, English teachers and their students *analyze everything . . . It’s almost like a curse* (Initial Interview, August 30, 2017). Therefore, metaphor appears not only in language or in literature; it structures what we think and how we think it.

If as Lakoff and Johnson write, the *essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another* (1980, p. 5), then I have attempted to understand these teachers’ writerly identities through thinking about them as craftsmen, apprentices, philosophers, and film editors. These metaphors arose from my writing about the data. However, they are neither random nor systematic; in their intentionality, they speak to the culture and profession the participants and I share. Metaphors—like knowledge—are inherently linked to context, place, and time.

If metaphors helped me to think globally about these participants' identities, then Hayakawa's (1990) work in general semantics, specifically his Ladder of Abstraction, helped me think about the role of concrete experiences to define/describe the metaphor. Hayakawa (1990) writes that human communication gives us the ability to "make anything stand for anything" (14) and, as such, "no word ever has the same meaning twice" (p. 39). Because language is slippery—and since the abstract language of metaphor and theory is even more so—this chapter highlights experiences over ideas.

To study the "object of experience," (Hayakawa, 1990, p. 85) the researcher must move down the Ladder toward the concrete event which our senses can perceive before we can again climb the ladder toward theoretical concepts. Lakoff and Johnson's writing on metaphors paired with the aims of narrative inquiry served as my justification to simply tell the participants' stories in this chapter.

Of course, though these stories may appear to be written colloquially and though their themes may seem straightforward, writing about research is inherently tension-laden. I found it necessary to carefully curate the participants' experiences and stories to craft their narratives. In doing so, I worked to pair experiential elements (from the bottom of the Ladder) with abstract elements like theory (working to the top of the Ladder). These elements provide different entry points into the data, allowing me a more complete view of the participants' identities.

In her discussion of writing as a method of inquiry, Richardson (2005) writes, "I am convinced that in the story (or stories) of becoming, we have a good chance of deconstructing the underlying academic ideology—that *being* a something

is better than *becoming*" (p. 966-967). In the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that I am in the process of *becoming* a researcher; throughout the chapter, my participants suggested they were in the process of *becoming* writers and teachers-of-writing. Reflecting this process of becoming is my process of writing about the phenomenon.

Following St. Pierre's (2005) call to work against traditional academic training of "writing as representation, as repetition" (p. 967), I often sat down to my computer without any idea of what I would write. When I became stuck, I defaulted to writing about physical movement. After all, I was driving my car around the Midwest while undertaking data collection, and I was moving my stacks of books and papers from home to office to coffee shop while writing these chapters. My physical movement, my writing about this movement, and my thinking about the data all converged in the participants' narratives in Chapter Four and the study insights in Chapter Five. Working against a methodology of inductive or deductive coding, I used Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) writing as a method of inquiry to generate the narratives on the preceding pages. After all, "writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery" (St. Pierre, 2005, p. 967). And, in their words, "I doubt that I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone" (p. 970).

Chapter 5: Building the House

The Teachers' Performed Writerly Identities

In this study, I first set out to think *with* these English teachers as we explored how their identities as W/writers were built, rebuilt, complicated, and extended. The previous chapter reflects my attempt at answering **Research Question 1: How do mid-career English teachers perceive their histories with writing?** By building complex and representative narratives of the teachers in this inquiry, I have examined the particular nature of the recursive process of *becoming* W/writers. I sought to answer Mishler's call that "primary attention be given to the process of identity formation . . . rather than to an individual's identity at particular times" (1999, p. 9).

The resulting narratives included aspects of the participants' home lives, educational experiences, and classroom personas. However, those individual narratives were mostly focused on the personal realms of these teachers as I explored who they are as individual writers, scholars, thinkers, and people. In Chapter Five, I hope to enter their narratives from a different direction, using a more global lens to view their teaching and to examine the nature of identity enactment for these four W/writers.

Chapter Five will be focused on **Research Question 2: In what ways are these teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities enacted and performed in mid-career English teachers' pedagogy?** Rather than again discussing each participant in detail, in this chapter, I include pertinent stories from teachers in conversation with one another to help illustrate the interaction of identity construction and

identity performance. Because narrative inquiry is inherently case-centered (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008), the narratives I built in Chapter Four serve as the specific, focused method of analysis for this inquiry. However, because it is also a goal of this study to effect change in the teaching of writing in secondary settings, Chapter Five will include some cross-case analysis. For the sake of space and to preserve my paradigmatic aims, this phase of analysis will necessarily be more general.

In Chapter Five, I will address the following sub-questions of Research Question 2:

- What do these performed and enacted identities suggest about the practice of writing instruction?
- What contradictions and tensions are apparent in their identity enactment?
- Where are influences of the institutional context apparent? In what ways does the institutional context function to expand and/or limit the teachers' writerly identities?

Negotiation of Personal and Public Writerly Identities

Current studies (Cremin & Baker, 2014; Gomez, 2009; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009) suggest that teachers' personal identities impact their teaching in some way. Zembylas (2003) goes further, stating that "identity is formed in the shifting space where narratives of subjectivity meet the narratives of culture" (p. 221). Other researchers like MacClure (1993) work against these notions, finding "some

teachers [insist] that their ‘real lives’ and identities lay” outside of their classrooms, “in their leisure pursuits, in their families; in their religious beliefs and activities; in their community works or political affiliations” (para. 49).

Throughout the process of designing, implementing, and writing this inquiry, I have struggled with the stability or mutability of identity. It is a question I kept pushing to the back burner, hoping that an answer would emerge from my data, my reading, or a divine intervention at just the appropriate time. I believe, as McCarthy (2002) does, “that we may be more than an incoherent mass of contradictions” (p. 230). However, I resist the idea of a single “core” identity put forth by earlier theorists such as Erickson and Mead. This struggle is represented in my compilation of the identity theory literature and reflected in the graphic I created in Chapter Two (see Figure 2). After my exploration in this inquiry, I echo Elizabeth Moje’s question: “At some level the stability of an identity allows us to act—we would not be able to get through the day if we didn’t have some sense of self (here’s Mead speaking). And yet I know that the self I present or perform changes in different relationships. So what is the self?” (p. 232).

There is certainly some stability in who Glen, Aspen, Sylvie, and Neal are as writers and as teachers of writing. However, when I analyzed their teaching of writing in light of their earlier expressed W/writerly identities, I observed some discontinuities. And thus, I was left with more questions than answers. These questions continued through my writing of the previous chapter. However, the conversations I had around my writing of Chapter Four—conversations with my participants and my academic mentors—led me to insights regarding these

teachers' writerly identity negotiation. As I engaged in writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2005) and analyzed the W/writers' teaching, I noticed the single thread that connected personal and professional identities was the teachers' comfort in the writing process or product.

It turns out that, just as in my previous chapter, all I required to massage my understanding was a final metaphor. Throughout this study, metaphors have provided a concrete illustration of the abstract nature of the *self*. And I realized that the common thread was not, as Moje suggested, a "gel" that held these identities together, but rather (metaphorical) wood, nails, and bricks.

Hemingway's House

"Prose is architecture, not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over."
Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*

Hemingway's famous statement on the form and function of prose calls to mind the process of planning and building a house—a process not unlike those involved in the construction of writing and identities. This metaphor invokes a continuum of process and product. Just as the process of building moves from the blueprint and material-gathering stages to the physical construction and, finally, the furnishing, so too does the process of writing. Based on their comfort with the process and product of writing, we can think about these participants' teaching of writing on a continuum (see Figure 18).

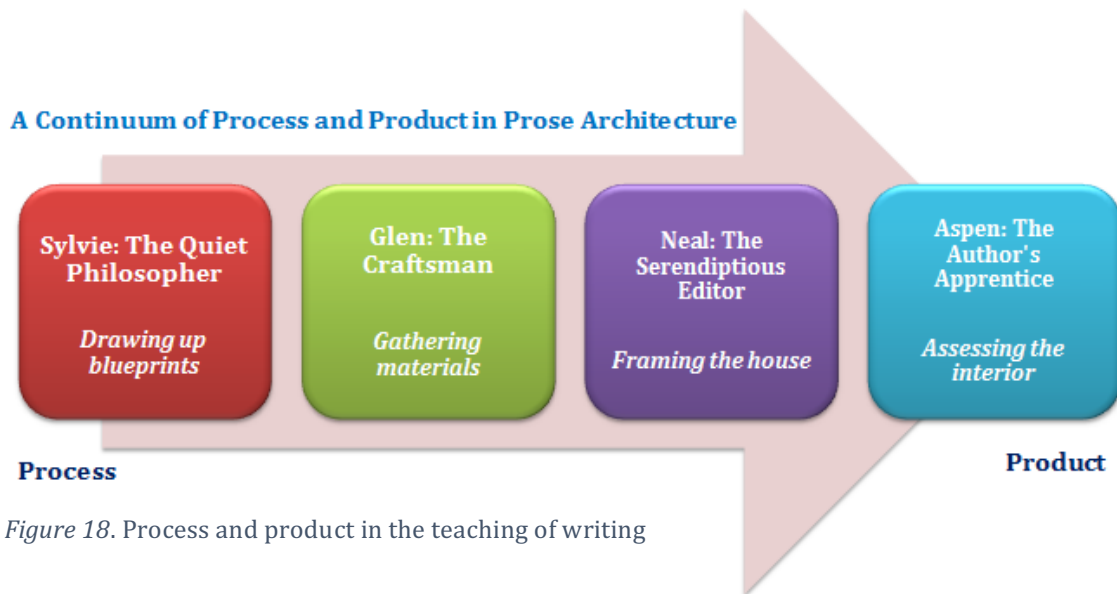


Figure 18. Process and product in the teaching of writing

Identity Situation and Negotiation

This chapter will explore how Glen, Sylvie, Neal, and Aspen negotiate their personal and professional W/writerly identities. These findings resulted from my comparison of the teachers' constructed identities (the narratives in Chapter Four) and their enacted identities (my observations of their teaching). Later, we'll examine how risk and agency are related to identity enactment, but we'll first begin with a discussion of the role of process and product in the participants' teaching. To allow us to think about these topics robustly, this chapter will contain data not discussed previously, specifically elements of the participants' teaching.

The Continuum of Process → Product. If we view identity as situated within the poles discussed earlier, as “an on-going process of weaving together multiple streams of activity over time” (Roizen, Prior, Woodard, & Kline, 2015, p. 206), then

thinking about the nature of home-building and remodeling as layered, recursive, and constantly on-going connects clearly with how these teachers negotiate their personal and professional identities. Roozen et al. name this process of *becoming* “laminated trajectories” situated in teachers’ and students’ “sociocultural lives” (p. 206).

As Figure 18 represents, the teachers whose personal W/writerly narratives focus on the messiness of writing and thinking (Sylvie, Glen) demonstrate comfort in teaching the process of writing. Conversely, the teachers whose personal W/writerly narratives place a focus on the more polished ends of writing (Neal, Aspen) demonstrate comfort in teaching either the final stages of the writing process (Neal) and or judging the final product (Aspen). I’ll follow the continuum from process to product through my discussion of each teacher-W/writer.

Sylvie: The blueprint. In her philosophical approach to writing, Sylvie finds the thinking and planning processes of writing as both enjoyable and frustrating. Like an architect working on building plans, she tentatively sketches out her compositions, thinking and imagining what they will become while, at the same time, accepting that they are constantly in process. As a Writer, Sylvie situates herself comfortably in the tensions of syntax, grammar, and content.

In the process of planning a building, an architect is forced to weigh the options presented to her and make choices according to the context and situation. In the same manner, Sylvie forefronts choice-making in her teaching of writing. In her dual credit senior composition courses, she challenges the idea of “correctness.” In one class period, she designed an exercise where students matched Pinterest boards

and Pinterest board titles to help students think about creating interesting titles for their essays. While the groups were working, she walked around to assess their progress, telling one group, *I think [this] is the correct answer. But [this] would also work. Why?* (Observation, October 26, 2017).

During another class session where students were revising their essays, she told them *you can get away with making stylistic choices* in comma use (Observation, October 26, 2017). And in yet another class, she addressed the major tension in writing classrooms: that the process of writing is hard. She told one student, *It's really hard to paraphrase* (Observation, October 26, 2017) and reassured another that she *also struggles with* a particular stylistic skill (Observation, November 2, 2017).

However, through her engaging activities around writing and the freedom she provides her students, she demonstrates that the process can be fun and messy too. She assigned Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts" to her dual credit composition students—an essay which highlights the necessity of getting the thinking on the page. In the classes I visited, she referenced this text on a handout and in a class discussion, noting that her process was different than a colleague's writing process.

She also provided students with different ways to think about essay components. She explained, *My favorite way to think about topic sentences is that they function like mini-thesis statements but you can also think of them like signposts* (Observation, October 26, 2017). Her instruction is less prescriptive than others as she allows her students to come up with their own method of creating the blueprint,

encouraging them to *let [the traditional rules] go* (Observation, October 26, 2017) to satisfy their particular purpose and reach their particular audience.

By bringing these tensions to the forefront and allowing her students to make their own choices in the writing process, she enacts a Writer-teacher/teacher-Writer identity that places an emphasis on planning, choice-making, and growth. The permission she gives her students to make stylistic choices, to consider alternative answers, and to struggle in the difficulty of writing mirrors her own process of writing—one that she described in her journals as *a really messy process* (Initial Interview, September 6, 2017).

Glen: The materials. As the Craftsman, Glen's narrative represents his comfort in the process of production. His final master's project—what he calls *the object*—suggests his focus on materiality as it contains photographs, handwritten notes, and typed passages physically arranged and glued within a tangible notebook. His discussion of his own writing demonstrates that he enjoys the flexibility of thinking with materials and the ability to try out different arrangements.

The second craft element in Glen's Writerly narrative—messiness and nonconformity—reflects his focus on the material production involved in the writing process. This element is one Glen reiterated throughout our many meetings, and it is one that he finds most integral to who he is as a Writer and thinker. His narrative demonstrates that, in his own writing, he rejects the idea of a one-size-fits-all format for writing. Glen instead prefers to showcase the thinking as it develops, in whatever manner or material necessary, and his focus on thinking transfers to his teaching.

On visits to Glen's classroom, I observed him teaching writing to both his sophomores and his dual credit seniors. In his unit on literary analysis for sophomores, his handout included eight "why" questions to encourage his students to focus on the thinking inherent in the process of analysis and writing. His assignment design and his focused instruction allowed students should write their answers in whatever format best helped them to think about the analysis they were performing. Glen's writing instruction allowed his student-writers the freedom to move between stages of their drafts, between ways of thinking, and between modes of composition. As he walked around the room helping them with their paragraphs, I heard him say, *I think your thinking is in the right place and I know you know this stuff. Keep thinking!*(Observation, September 14, 2017). His feedback further emphasized the importance of thinking and learning—rather than format or structure—in his students' writing.

In his dual credit senior course, Glen undertook a much riskier proposition when he decided to abolish grades two years ago. In this way, he experimented with the traditional materials of writing instruction—grades—and decided to try a different way to "build the house."

In his attempt to remove grades from the writing process, Glen's writing prompts also focus on process rather than product. His assignment for this class's first paper reads, *Your writing assignment for the week is to evaluate your work and thinking for the school year* (Observation, September 14, 2017). In his removal of grades, he is able to teach students to be metacognitive about their own writing, analyzing their own and their peers' thought processes as they emerge in language.

This first writing assignment—like all of his essays in this class—received feedback from him, from the authors' own self-reflections, and from multiple peer editors, but it won't receive a grade.

In fact, Glen desires to remove grades altogether, but realizing that he works within an institutional system where this is not possible, he has created an elaborate self-evaluation system for his students to assign their own course grades at mid-term and the end of each semester. When the parents inevitably called and the principals inevitably visited his classroom, he was armed with traditional materials (evidence from his students and support from writing and assessment pedagogues) to defend his approach. And that was all it took for the administration to grant him another year of gradeless senior writing courses.

Situated on the process end of the architecture continuum, Glen takes chances in his teaching of writing, something much easier to accomplish because of his comfort in the raw materials of writing. His writing instruction encourages students to use the raw materials of writing—different modes of composition and different lenses for thinking—to build sentences, paragraphs, and essays.

Neal: *The framed house*. As we move in our continuum from a focus on teaching the process with Glen and Sylvie to a focus on teaching the product, we see that Neal's teaching strips writing down to the studs and support beams. He focuses only on what is necessary to *his* students and removes all extraneous material. His goal in the teaching of writing is to create a solid foundation so, as he told me in his journal writing, *no one notice[s] [his] students' writing, just like movie audiences don't notice great film editing* (Journal #1, September 17, 2017).

His teaching—and his teaching of writing—sits on the foundation that all learning begins with storytelling. Of course, his writerly narrative demonstrates the influence stories (radio programs, especially) had on his literary development, so it comes as no surprise that his teaching follows a similar pattern. On one visit to his classroom, I witnessed a discussion of the (sometimes quite unappetizing) traditions surrounding Thanksgiving meals (Observation, November 20, 2017). On another instance, I watched his lesson on business writing begin with a podcast on the competitive community of Tennessee walking horse breeding. He calls this strategy of including a strange aside a *novelty element . . . [which causes] their minds to go in a completely different direction*. It provides students a *complete reset* (De-Brief, October 27, 2017).

These novelty elements are a constant part of Neal's writing lessons, functioning in unique and purposeful ways to expose the structure of his stories and, by extension, of written texts. In both of these examples, Neal concluded his stories by asking his students: *Why did this story work? What elements made it successful?* In this way, he asked his students to strip the stories down to their rafters, to remove the “wallpaper” of funny jokes or weird trivia, and to decide what elements formed the foundation of these stories.

To further help his students gain a solid foundation, Neal constantly assessed even their informal, in-class writing. Using his exhaustive energy to bounce from one student to another, he provided a focus on revision in their short writing pieces, and students are able to revise their writing as many times as necessary.

In one business writing class session, his students wrote a short discussion of business ethics terms. After they'd written a rough draft, he asked them to first read the drafts aloud to their neighbor and make revisions. Then he switched their seat partners and, again, they read aloud and made revisions. Finally, as they finished this second round of revisions, Neal walked around and suggested edits to continue polishing these short pieces of writing (Observation, November 20, 2017). By routinely assessing even informal writing for structure and readability, Neal demonstrates his focus on helping his student-writers build a solid foundation and supportive rafters for their compositions.

Because he views his teaching of writing in much the way technical writers view their own writing, Neal removes the ornate decorations of language, stripping stories and compositions down to their frames. Though in his own writing he indulges—and celebrates—the rabbit trails of thought, in his teaching of writing, he focuses on the nuts and bolts of both content and syntax. By revealing underlying structural support, he demystifies the nature of “good writing” for his students and reinforces his goal of teaching students to write so well that.

Aspen: The interior decorator. As her narrative suggests, Aspen is skilled in the practice of literary analysis and considers herself an apprentice in the act of writing, looking to the authors she admires to provide models of exemplary writing. She is most comfortable judging the completed house, assessing how the throw pillows compliment the drapes or how the granite countertops accent the tile. We can see this preference for the product, rather than the process, in her teaching of writing.

As a teacher of writing, Aspen expects her students to choose just the *right* accent for their compositions. These expectations are found in her approach to teaching content, structure, syntax, and language. Her penchant for polished, structured writing is best represented in a handout she provided her students during one of my classroom observations (see Figure 19).

Native American Unit Writing Assignment

Consider the underlying meanings in both "Don't Drink the Water" and "Run to the Hills." Which one is more compelling in making its point? To answer this question you need to consider several things: 1. What were the meanings of each of the songs? 2. Do the lyrics support the visual text? Does this help or hurt the song's projected meaning? 3. Which one did a better job to convey its meaning through both images and lyrics?

Your assignment is to write one well-developed PIE paragraph answering the initial question: Which song, "Don't Drink the Water" or "Run to the Hills," is more compelling in conveying its projected meaning. You must cite the lyrics in order to prove your point. You must use MLA format for you final draft. Your paper is due _____.

Steven Percy Harris wrote the lyrics to "Run to the Hills."

Dave Matthews wrote the lyrics to "Don't Drink the Water."

Example of song lyric citation: The speaker states, "No room for both / Just room for me" when he considers the colonialists perspective (Matthews).

Figure 19. Handout explaining Aspen's Native American unit writing assignment

As the summative assessment for her Native American literature unit, she asks her honors juniors to analyze song lyrics by Dave Matthews and Steven Percy Harris. Her teaching of literary analysis essays is intricately structured, and her directions for her students demonstrate a focus on the finished product. The handout provides a specific point of analysis: *Which [song] is more compelling in making its point?* It also provides a specific list of questions to answer in the analysis, a specific format for the response, and specific evidence to access and cite—a stark contrast from Glen's much more open-ended writing assignment.

As a writer who recognizes that structure is her own authorial weak point, Aspen provided her students with a detailed list of instructions surrounding the one paragraph literary analysis essay they are to write. To help them create a final product they—and she—feel comfortable with, she focused on the specific elements necessary for the task. By focusing on the details, much like an interior designer highlights the flattering qualities of a building, she taught her students to do the same for their writing.

This focus on the finished product continues in Aspen's talk around writing with her students. When she visited with students individually about their writing during in-class tutorials, she often defaulted to talking about grammar or syntax before talking about content. After one student asked her a question about his thesis statement's main idea, Aspen first replied, *How about let's add a comma and then . . .* before she moved onto discussing the main idea (Observation, September 26, 2017). Additionally, as she guided students through the writing process, she often provided absolutes that force a focus on the finished product. In one class session, she exclaimed, *No! Never use second person!* (Observation, September 28, 2017).

Aspen's confidence in judging the final product—in assessing the nuances of rhetorical devices, literary meaning, and grammatical correctness—are reflected in both her writer and teacher identities.

Framing the House and Framing the Identities

While the above discussion of Sylvie, Glen, Neal, and Aspen provides just a few examples of their teaching, the stories included are carefully curated from the

many hours I spent in their classroom. The evidence is representative of their approaches to teaching writing.

A stable identity element. In Chapter Two, to make sense of the literature, I created a figure to represent my “best guess” of the ways in which the various elements of teachers’ lives interact to build their W/writerly identities. In that discussion, I noted that my primary question of identity enactment centered on the presence—or absence—of a stable thread woven through the teachers’ personal and professional identities. As I analyzed the participants’ teaching in light of their narratives, I came to a conclusion regarding this thread.

I discerned that there was, in fact, a stable element to these teachers’ identities—the “gel” in Moje’s conception or the nails and bricks in mine. For my study, that stable element emerged as the teachers’ relationship with process and product. However, as is often the case in qualitative inquiry, that stable element might present differently in a different context or through a different lens. This outcome, then, is contextual and representative of these participants and the academic year wherein I enacted this inquiry.

To represent this consistent element, I made one adjustment to my previous version of the identity graphic. This revised graphic (see Figure 20) features a solid line running through the center oval. As a representation of the stable identity element, the solid white line provides comfort and reinforces teachers’ agency as they move through the life spaces.

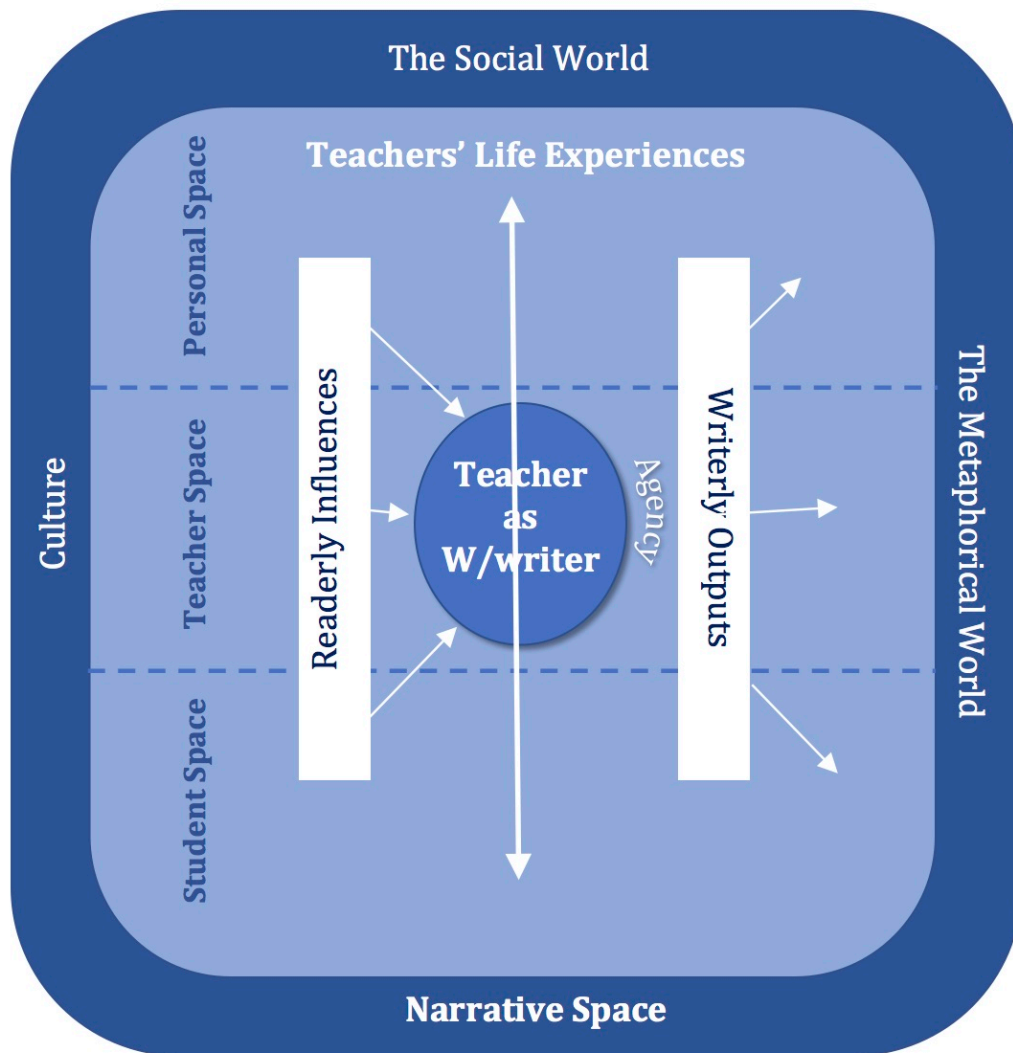


Figure 20. A revised representation of teachers' identity construction and enactment in personal and professional spaces.

To help me think about *why* the teachers' relationship with process and product appears to be the stable thread through these participants' experiences, I applied Goffman's (1974) frame analysis.

Primary frameworks. Goffman provides two designations for primary frameworks: (1) natural frameworks which "identify occurrences seen as undirected, unoriented, unanimated, unguided, 'purely physical'" (p. 22). The study

of these natural frameworks is mostly situated in the hard sciences. Those of us in social sciences more often consider the (2) realm of “social frameworks.” Goffman explains social frameworks as those which “provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency” (p. 22).

It is this latter category—the social framework—that helps us think about our teachers’ Writerly identity enactment. The primary frame for our investigation is the way in which these teachers see writing in their personal lives—what they see as the focus, the method, and the purpose. Some—like Sylvie and Glen—frame the practice of writing as incomplete, messy, in-process. Others—like Neal and Aspen—focus on the structure, syntax, and correctness of the writing product.

For some people, primary frameworks are “neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates and rules” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Applying this description to our teachers’ views of writing, we can see a “neatly presentable” primary frame reflected in Aspen. She is someone who has a well-defined sense of what is “good writing,” and in her judging of final products, she is able to employ her primary framework to help her respond accordingly.

However, for most people, Goffman writes, primary frameworks “appear to have no apparent articulated shape, providing only a lore of understanding, an approach, a perspective” (1974, p. 21). This more ethereal primary frame is reflected in Glen, for example. He doesn’t define “good writing,” but rather describes it using words like *thinking*, *movement*, and *process*. This indecisive definition of “good writing” occasionally bothers Glen, a reality which is reflected in his Writerly

narrative. He also tells me that, for the first few weeks of school, his students are frustrated with him because he won't give definite answers on the subject. Glen tells me they constantly question what he—the teacher—wants from their writing, and he refuses to give them a definite answer.

Goffman continues his description of frame analysis by identifying the “object of orientation.” The object of orientation is, perhaps to oversimplify, the event or experience we are training our frame on. If we were imagining an actual framed photo, the object of orientation would be the focal point of the picture. We confront numerous objects of orientation in our daily lives. For our discussion in this chapter, the “object of orientation” is writing instruction, and each teacher uses his or her primary framework of personal writing beliefs to discern what is in-frame and out-of-frame within that instruction. As a result, we see this framework reflected in the stories of their teaching.

I will conclude this discussion of the teachers' enacted identities with a discussion of three identity insights apparent in the narratives. While, as a narrative inquirer, I am interested in the individual and social experience, and while I acknowledge these findings are not generalizable, I do believe we can learn about the process of identity construction and negotiation through these teachers' stories. Following Ellingson's (2009) call for social science research which allows “multigenres and many ways of knowing” (p. 5), I present the following insights as another way of knowing about W/writers, teachers, and the practice of writing instruction, not as generalizable findings.

Identity Insights

- *Insight 1: Teachers who claim the label of Writer exhibit comfort in writing processes and in teaching writing processes.*
- *Insight 2: The desire to be seen as a “kind of W/writer or teacher” brings risk to writing instruction.*
- *Insight 3: Agency provides Writers a way to mitigate the risk of teaching writing.*

Insight #1

Teachers who claim the label of Writer exhibit comfort writing processes and in teaching writing processes.

Considering the teachers’ primary frames as their beliefs and practices around the writing process allows me to examine the impact of the personal on the professional. As we can see in the earlier discussion, the participants who are comfortable being in process as writers are comfortable with teaching process. Considering how these teachers apply their primary frames to their teaching provides a tangible connection between **Research Question 1**—How do mid-career English teachers perceive their histories with writing?—and **Research Question 2**—In what ways are these identities enacted and performed in their pedagogy?

Claiming Writerliness and Process→Product. Glen—a self-proclaimed Writer—teaches his writing lessons with the same emphasis on process as he discusses in his interviews and journals. He is gentle with students who struggle to know if they’re “doing writing right,” and he spends much class time on student-led revision work (Observation, September 14). These aspects of his writing instruction

demonstrate his primary framework of writing, namely, that writing is thinking made visible.

Sylvie, another self-labeled Writer, transfers her primary writing frame which privileges thinking, time, and revision to her teaching of writing. In her tutorials with her composition students, I often saw her mark sections and paragraphs to come back later so she could have *more time to think about that* and I often heard her encouraging her students to ponder a difficulty until they worked their way out of their “stuckness” (Observation, November 2, 2017).

Our other two participants, Neal and Aspen, as we saw above, have primary frameworks which frame writing as product rather than process. These lowercase ‘w’ writers employ writing lessons which focus on creating polished, final drafts. Neal encourages his students to remove their rabbit trails—something he noted in his own writing that he would do if his writing would have had a wider audience than just me. He provides time for his students to read their work aloud to one another to listen for problems (Observation, October 30, 2017).

Aspen’s talk around writing as discussed above also demonstrates her primary frame of writing-as-product. In our early conversations, Aspen noted that while she did not remember any specific grammar lessons in her high school writing classes, she could always *just do it*. Her ability to *just do* grammar correctly was a point of pride in her writing process, especially when she considered her struggles in other aspects of writing such as structure. As such, in her work with student writers, she begins conversations around grammatical correctness, only moving to content after noting errors in mechanics or syntax.

These teachers' primary frames—how they view the process of writing— affect how they approach writing in their high school classrooms. The teachers who claim the label of Writer (Sylvie and Glen) correspond with the teachers who spend much time and effort teaching the process of writing to their own students. Conversely, those teachers who call themselves (lowercase w) writers find more comfort in the product of writing and their teaching of writing also reflects this comfort.

Insight #2

The desire to be seen as a "kind of W/writer or teacher" brings risk to writing instruction.

In our era of standardized tests, data-driven teacher evaluations, and packaged curriculum, the act of teaching is riskier than ever (Beauchamp, 2009; Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009). Adding complexity to this institutional situation is the reality that writing itself is a risky proposition. Cremin (2006) writes, "Composition . . . involves a willingness to take risks, explore alternatives, and accept a degree of doubt and disorder as words and meanings emerge and are selected, shaped, and reviewed over time" (p. 418). Since W/writers wrestle with tensions, contradictions, and doubt during the process of composing, writing is an act which naturally challenges the W/writer's own values and preconceptions.

Because of the intellectual, cognitive, and emotional nature of writing, W/writers are more in tune with their identities, comfortable with the aspects of *self* that reside on the page. Yagelski (2011) suggests that "the writer at the moment of

writing is experiencing him or herself *through language*" (p. 117). The process of expressing themselves through language allows Writers to explore—perhaps more objectively—the *self*. It also forces a constant vulnerability and a perpetual negotiation of risk.

Personal authorial identity and risk. The risk inherent in writing seems to be paired with a sense of personal authorial identity. Gee (2000) suggests that people build their identities based on the “kind of person” they want to be seen as in any given context. For our participants, this “kind of person” can be extended to the “kind of W/writer” or “kind of teacher” the participants present to the researcher, their colleagues, and their students.

Connecting the risk inherent in writing and the risk inherent in being a “kind of person” acting on a situation, Goffman writes that “all social frameworks involve rules, but differently,” and that these frameworks can be “coaxed, flattered, affronted, and threatened” (1974, p. 22, 24). The primary frame—the focus, method, and purpose of writing—when enacted in an institutional and cultural context (i.e. the classroom) leads to what Mishler (1999) terms the “discontinuities” and “disjunctions.” I appreciate Mishler’s semantic choice to frame identity in the terms of continuity rather than the more negative terms of contradiction or tension. I will adopt his use of continuity and discontinuity here.

The Writers. In exploring both the discourse-bound and performed narratives of the four teachers, I noticed that those who feel comfortable in their identity as Writers and who claim the capital ‘W’ label—Glen and Sylvie—demonstrate high levels of continuity between their personal and professional

identities. The “kind of Writer” they present themselves as remains relatively stable through their interviews, journal writings, and teaching. Their Writer primary frames overlap with their Teacher primary frames.

Glen. To many teachers, Glen’s nontraditional approach to writing instruction may seem especially risk-laden. There are no five paragraph essays and no completion grades for his writing assignments. But Glen’s foundation as a Writer and a thinker allows him agency to disregard this risk in favor of what he knows to be strong pedagogy: valuing process and metacognition as a way to develop his students’ writing abilities.

When his students help one another revise their essays, they are, as Glen instructs, *looking at the ideas of the paper, not marking for those grammatical things* (Observation, September 21, 2017). Students often interact with one another about their writing through conversation. Reflecting his focus on the materials of building (or the small bits of text that work as the building blocks for larger compositions), Glen’s writing instruction zooms in on *parts* of essays, *parts* of sentences, and *parts* of thought, working with his students on these the pieces of their writing before integrating them into the larger composition.

As we saw in Chapter Four, Glen has already established himself as a Writer through his risk taking in academic and personal writing situations. His risk-taking in personal spheres of writing transfers confidence when he discusses other writing teachers’ methods—especially those within his *more traditional English department* (Initial Interview).

Sylvie. As another self-proclaimed Writer, Sylvie uses her confidence in being “the kind of person who writes” to mitigate the risk involved in teaching writing. In her mechanics and grammar instruction, she forefronts choice and context over correctness. She works against the institutional norm that all legitimate writing be structured and graded with a heavy emphasis on freewriting and informal writing.

Sylvie begins nearly every class session with a quick write, writing with her students to demonstrate her belief that Writers simply write. After everyone has written a few paragraphs, she and her students move around and comment on their peers’ informal writing. These informal writing activities bring risk with them; just as we can’t tell where a class discussion will lead, we often can’t tell what will come from informal writing activities. The unknown factor paired with the lack of immediate improvement in writing structure or grammar makes informal writing risky. However, supported by her identity as a Writer—as a “kind of person” who writes and is reflective about it—Sylvie makes room for risky, unstructured writing instruction.

The writers. In his study on the identity formation of craftartists, Mishler (1999) calls for us to define identity as “a collective term referring to the dynamic organization of sub-identities that might conflict or align with one another” (p. 9). Further defining this multiplicity in identity becoming, Moje, Dillon, and O’Brien (2002) and McCarthy and Moje (2002) propose that literacy performances especially function to create multiple identities, recognizing that each performance and identity brings with it inherent risk. Or, as Goffman would suggest, the primary frame of writer comes into conflict with the primary frame of Teacher.

In this study, I observed that those who are hesitant to claim the label of Writer and instead called themselves writers (Aspen), or in Neal's case *a writer to the nth degree*, exhibit discontinuities between their personal and professional identities. Said another way, the "kind of writer" they present shifts between their interviews, journal writings, and teaching.

Aspen. In her interviews and journal writings, Aspen hesitated to claim the label of Writer and, with much self-negotiation, finally settled on calling herself a writer. In doing so, she distinguishes between *learned* and *gifted* saying, *I would characterize my writing identity as skilled and learned, but not gifted* (Journal #1, September 18, 2017). This dichotomy is intentional, forefronting the work—and struggle—involved in her writing practice. It also draws a distinction between Writers (gifted artists) and writers (students who can be taught to exhibit the skills but to whom the work of writing will never come naturally). By dividing Writers and writers in this way, Aspen places the legitimacy—and the agency—of writing on the shoulders of those who are naturally gifted in the art.

As we saw in Chapter Four, Aspen identifies herself as a "kind of writer" who can just sit down and type out an essay with no outlining required while Sylvie, for example, identifies herself as a Writer who requires time to think, brainstorm, and plan before picking up the pen. Her pride in the ability to pound out an academic essay with minimal brainstorming or outlining presents Aspen as a "kind of person" who is a competent academic writer. However, to me, she also expresses vulnerability surrounding her fear of professors' judgment and her desire for her colleagues' approval.

In her classroom, there is a marked shift from the hesitant language and fear of judgement she expresses as a writer. As we observed earlier in this chapter, in her teaching, she often makes declarative statements around the process of writing. This discontinuity suggests that that, for Aspen, there is risk involved in being seen as a weak writer in front of her students.

Neal. Neal's narrative in Chapter Four frames his identity as a writer and teacher who 'stumbles' forward into success. His beautifully voiced journal entries displayed his appreciation for his circuitous routes to meaning-making—his appreciation for the *rabbit holes* that lead to adventures.

His teaching of writing, however, is as structured as his own writing practices are fluid. In the introduction to his narrative in Chapter Four, I likened his teaching to a Broadway play—scripted from the first bell to the last with downtime neither for the students nor the teacher. His writing assignments are just as carefully crafted. For example, the writing which followed the Tennessee walking horse *novelty element* described earlier was a short assignment, but it reflected his intentionality in writing instruction. The short paragraph was carefully crafted to display content knowledge (the business ethics tenets they were learning), reflective thinking in the style of John Dewey (individual ethics assessment), and language growth (with the required word count per response) (Observation, October 27, 2017).

The discontinuity between his tediously crafted writing assignments and his more wandering personal writings seems to reflect the time he invests in reading and writing in his personal life—a nearly immeasurable amount of time—compared

to the time he is granted with his students in the classroom. He is hesitant to take the risk to focus on the process and to allow writing to take the winding road in his classroom because, as he told me, his population of students were far behind grade level in their reading and writing skills. As a teacher who willingly takes on the most challenging students, Neal uses every moment in his writing instruction to move his student-writers toward a competent product that will help them gain legitimacy in their post-secondary lives.

The varying degree of W/writerly continuity or discontinuity exhibited by these four participants seems related to the risk involved in writing instruction. In claiming the title of Writer, Sylvie and Glen were able to transfer their personal identities to the classroom, even in risky situations. This isn't to say that Aspen and Neal are *unable* to transfer their personal identities to the classroom; they're both genuine, caring teachers. It is to say, though, that the risk in showing writerly weakness seems to challenge Aspen and Neal as teachers of writing.

Insight #3

Agency provides Writers a way to mitigate the risk of teaching writing.

Allan Luke (2009) writes that as we gain social capital, we gain agency and stability in our identities. Clark and Ivanic (1997) apply this concept of social capital to the situation of writing. They suggest that writers claim social and linguistic capital as a result of their life/educational experiences, and this impacts the ways in which they see themselves as writers.

I would like to extend these authors' (Luke, 2009; Clark and Ivanic, 1997) propositions to suggest that, in the case of writing teachers in this study, the social capital that provides agency is the self-designation of Writer. Agency allows teachers to "claim a space" (Moje, Dillon & O'Brien, 2000), and, as we can see through the discussion of these teachers' classrooms, this space-claiming both mitigates the risk inherent in writing instruction and provides continuity in the negotiation of personal and professional identities.

For example, as a Writer, Glen "claim[s] the space" of expert in his implementation of peer revision in his senior composition classroom. After a day of observation, I asked him of the purpose of the lesson. He quickly replied with an air of certainty:

I cannot think of any writing class I have taught in which [students providing feedback on each others' papers] did not happen organically, but it can only happen if they really care about their writing and their classmates' writing—that takes time.

Glen, Observation De-Brief, September 21

Though we saw him struggling to "do the right thing" in his own writing in Chapter Four, as a teacher of writing, Glen's language about his lesson planning and his students' abilities displays his confidence as a Writer-teacher. This confidence leads to increased agency in his teaching of writing as he designs lessons to do what he *knows* his student-writers need.

Similarly, Sylvie demonstrates her confidence in designing lessons to address the particulars of writing which helps her to conquer the risk inherent in writing

instruction. After one observation of her senior composition class, much like I did with Glen, I asked her of the lesson's purpose. In her reply, she clearly elaborated on her objectives, telling me that her lesson on academic titles *provides students with an opportunity to master a writing skill quickly and easily* (Observation, October 27). She realizes that writing is hard and that sometimes W/writers need a confidence-booster. Through her intentional lesson planning, she seeks to transfer that realization to her students. Using her own experience as a Writer, Sylvie is able to empathize with her student-writers which contributes to her confidence and agency in teaching writing.

Conclusion: Framing houses, Framing Metaphors, Framing Stories

I realize that these two chapters surrounding the participants' personal and professional identities have many moving parts. They include much discussion, multiple metaphors, and few concrete outcomes. However, each frame provides a different doorway through which we can enter the narratives of Glen, Aspen, Sylvie, and Neal—crystallizing (Ellingson, 2009) and problematizing their performances.

The individual teacher metaphors constructed through our conversation and writing in Chapter Four provide insight into the “kinds” of W/writers the four teachers present themselves to be. Through the continuum of process → product in Chapter Five, we explored how these personal identities are represented in the professional contexts. And, by employing Goffman's frame analysis, we looked at each of these teachers whom we've come to know well to explore how claiming

Writerliness (or, writerliness) affected teachers' risk and agency in the teaching of writing.

In many ways, these pages are a *collection* of participant experiences, my experiences, influential theorists, and metaphors. The completeness, then, comes in the *collection*—in the gathering of seemingly disparate parts. Walter Benjamin provides some closing thoughts on the properties of the *collection* and the inability to achieve completeness:

“What is this “completeness”? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system—the collection. And for the true collector, every single thing in this system becomes an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the epoch, the landscape, the industry, and the owner from which it comes” (1999, p. 205).

In Chapter Six, I will continue to pull these metaphors together to discuss the *collection's* implications for composition studies, pre-service teacher education, and in-service teacher professional development.

Chapter 6: Implications and Future Research Directions

*“The simple truth is this:
Every story you choose to tell by necessity omits others from the larger narrative.
One could write five totally different stories from Hamilton’s eventful singular American life
without ever overlapping incidents. . . This act of choosing the stories we tell versus the stories
we leave out will reverberate across the rest of your life.”*
~ Lin-Manuel Miranda,
2016 commencement address

Just as Lin-Manuel Miranda suggests about his own creative process, in the act of producing narrative research, we inevitably have to make choices. For this study, the sheer amount of written, audio, and video data required me to carefully choose which pieces of these teachers’ personal and professional lives to share with my readers. My view of validity as crystallization (Ellingson, 2009) and as an “ethic of care” (Gilligan, 1982) led me to curate, arrange, and then complicate these teachers’ narratives with what was, I hope, a trustworthy representation of their life spaces.

Of these processes of construction and concerns of validity, Riessman (2008) writes:

One could make an analogy to art: When evaluating the depiction of a landscape, viewers ask not whether it looks like a place, but whether it evokes the appearance of a place (verisimilitude). Put differently, a painting or poem does not depict a “reality” but constitutes one. (p. 192-193)

So, while some scholars may view this “verisimilitude” as a limitation of the narrative approach, I (and other narrative researchers) view it as a benefit.

Revisiting the Research Questions

This inquiry has been sought to answer the following two research questions and related sub-questions.

Research Question 1

How do mid-career English teachers perceive their histories with writing?

Sub-Questions

- What metaphors do they use to describe their experiences? What details do they include? What is the tone and mood of their stories?
- What kind of outer/inner life, school, and professional experiences have contributed to their teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities?
- How do their stories of writerly identity creation speak to the larger social and educational processes of writerly becoming?

To explore the W/writerly identities of these four teachers, I first built their narratives and invoked a metaphor for each teacher. In some cases such as Glen, I drew on a metaphor the teacher made in relation to his own writerly identity. In others such as Sylvie, I crafted a metaphor to represent the wholeness of their experiences with writing. The outcomes of these narratives were robust as they allowed me to understand how each teacher situated themselves in a community of writers.

Research Question 2

In what ways are these teacher-writer/writer-teacher identities enacted and performed in mid-career English teachers' pedagogy?

Sub-Questions

- What do these performed and enacted identities suggest about the practice of writing instruction?
- What contradictions and tensions are apparent in their identity enactment?
- Where are influences of the institutional context apparent? In what ways does the institutional context function to expand and/or limit the teachers' writerly identities?

To analyze the connection between these teachers' personal W/writerly identities and their writing pedagogy, I first built a continuum of process → product, employing Goffman's (1974) frame analysis. This continuum represented the stable thread that continued through the teachers' personal and professional identities. Namely, those who claimed the label of Writer were more comfortable in the messiness of the writing process both in their own writing and in their teaching of writing. The identification of this stable thread led to three identity insights which allowed me to explore risk, agency, and contradictions in the teaching of writing.

Reframing the Limitation of Narrative Inquiry

From the start of this study, I had intended to share each step of the process with the participants, and that member-checking element necessarily framed how I approached the narrative construction. Adding to this tension was my rejection of the body of education research which denigrates classroom teachers, so I remained steadfast in my desire to celebrate these skillful and caring teachers. Therefore, after I wrote, revised, and shared each participant narrative with my advisor, I also shared the narrative with the participant-teacher. The responses I received from two participants not only confirmed the verisimilitude of their narratives (and thus conferred validity), they furthered my thinking about narrative teacher research.

I wrote Glen's narrative first, so he was the first participant to receive 20+ pages of my writing all about him. Just a few hours after I emailed the narrative to Glen, he responded with a few sentences that were revelatory to me as an education

scholar. He began his message with a note about how emotionally moving he found his section to be, and then he wrote,

It feels good to be understood. Being the weird, unusual, and non-traditional teacher often leads to being misunderstood. Reading your writing made me feel understood. As I think and reflect on this, I believe maybe this is one of the purposes of writing—to be heard and understood. I appreciate what you've done in this writing. Surely it is an unusual task to write about someone and then share that writing [with] them. Thank you. I've spent most of my teaching career as an outsider doing strange things.

Not only does Glen's response remind me of the importance of narrative and identity work, it reminds me of the power of writing to validate identities and approaches.

I again found member-checking to be revolutionary when I sent the last participant narrative to its subject. Though Neal is well-respected at his school—he is a teacher mentor and an instructional coach, after all—his response to his Chapter Four narrative is strikingly different than Glen's response. Neal's reaction reflects the gap between how his colleagues view him and how he views himself. A few weeks after I emailed his narrative to him, Neal emailed me a response to his narrative:

In my mind, it all seemed so completely unrealistic and inaccurate, that I really had no clue how to respond, even though they're obviously my words and actions staring back at me. I'm a ditch digger whose image was captured by a premier artist, and has been raised in stature by the inclusion. I sent your

writing to my daughter, asking for her input, and she agreed with your summation, making me feel even more uncomfortable. I haven't shown it to [my wife], and hesitate to do so.

Neal's suggestion that he's *a ditch digger* is so at odds with his narrative here. The books he reads are more academic than the books *I* read as an academic; for example, he shared insights of his reading of *White Trash* with me during one interview. And his actual teaching is so masterful that he's become *the* go-to person for those at his school who need support in curriculum writing, instruction, or classroom management.

In characterizing himself as a "ditch digger," Neal conjures up images of blue collar work—of the grave diggers in *Hamlet* who feature the burly language of the working class and the comic relief that comes with their lack of "culture." In reality, however, Neal is perfectly at home in the world of culture. I saw my first traveling Broadway musical sitting next to him, and even though it was an awkward production of *Spring Awakening* (a musical known for its forthright treatment of teenage sexuality), it was *him* who taught *me* how to navigate the world of theatre.

Glen and Neal's reactions suggest additional purposes of narrative teacher research. For Glen, the narrative is justifying; it confirms his nontraditional approach and reassures his motives. For Neal, the narrative is revelatory, and for the first time, he is able to see himself the way his friends, family, and colleagues view him. As a result of these outcomes, the study points to several implications for composition studies, pre-service teacher education, and in-service teacher development.

Implications for Writing and the Teaching of Writing

Implication #1: Narrative research. Because of its ability to confirm and resituate teachers' depictions of themselves, I call for more narrative research around classroom teachers' W/writerly identities. In my extended conversations with these four teachers around their own writing and teaching practices, I was repeatedly reminded of how in-service teachers desire personalized professional development work. As Glen and Neal suggest, this identity work can be either confirming (as in the case of Glen) or profound (as in the case of Neal). This sort of teacher-as-writer work is being done through sites of the National Writing Project (Whitney, 2009, 2017), but there is power in localized researcher-participant work in which both researcher and participant are transformed.

Through our work around teacherly and W/writerly identities, I was able to validate approaches (Glen), provide conversation around elements of writing instruction (Sylvie), encourage a broader definition of "writer" (Aspen), and shine a more accurate mirror on the teacher-writer (Neal). This identity work has real and concrete outcomes for the teacher, the classroom, and the profession. These outcomes can only be increased through more personal and professional research *with* teachers (rather than *on* teachers).

Implication #2: A renewed focus on process writing: Since comfort in the process of writing reduces the inherent risk in writing instruction, I recommend a renewed focus on process writing in the teaching of writing at all levels. In the competitive atmosphere at the secondary and post-secondary levels, each year seems to feature an increased focus on grades as the end-markers of success in

writing tasks. However, as we saw with Glen and Sylvie, those Writer-teachers who were willing to eschew the product-focus of writing instruction gained agency in their classrooms.

Additionally, within this implication, I would like to nurture a conversation on how we grade writing. Glen's gradeless classroom suggests that he—and his students—focus more on what Writers *do* than what Writers *are*. When we remove or resituate the place of grades in the writing process in favor of providing feedback from a community of writers, we see a lessened risk in writing and the teaching of writing.

This reframing also increases the role of support in the writing process—an element all participants noted was important in their own W/writerly development. Of course, this shift away from a focus on the end result (the paper grade, the GPA, the standardized test) is an inherently tense process. It requires work toward this implication in both teacher education programs, professional development programs, and with the institutions of power within the state such as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Implication #3: Redefining “good” writing. Prescriptive grammatical and structural approaches seem to limit the teachers' W/writerly identities and teaching practices. As the teachers (especially Glen and Aspen) wrestled with the idea of “good writing,” the risk of writing and teaching writing increased. Therefore, I recommend a thoughtful redefinition of “good writing” in composition and education classrooms. Working against the reductionist or prescriptivist approach to writing instruction re-emphasizes the roles of planning, purpose, structure, and

audience in writing. In working outside of this prescriptivist grammar paradigm, Glen teaches his students to focus on the thinking inherent in writing. Sylvie highlights the choice inherent in grammatical constructions, and Neal forces a focus on audience (particularly, his specific student population).

Implication #4: Further interrogation of W/writerliness. Unanticipated outcomes of this inquiry were the robust conversations around Writers/Writers/writers. When I set out to begin this study, I hadn't considered asking questions around classification of W/writers. But, when my advisor suggested that perhaps I could explore 'Writing with a capital W' in the vein of Atwell's 'Teaching with a capital T', I found it an intriguing proposition. Little did I know that, by framing the initial interviews with this question, the concept of W/writer would become a constant presence throughout all the participant narratives. This conversation proved to be an illuminating and robust one which spoke to identities and teaching practices.

Therefore, I call for an expanded discussion of W/writerliness in all levels of writing classrooms and professional development settings. A few days after our first meeting, Aspen told me that she proposed the same question to her own independent study student, and the conversation which resulted both extended and complicated the nature of writing. Interestingly, she told me that her student said, that, while anyone can write, not everyone can write *well*, and he went on to provide a few categories for judging what *writing well* means. Engaging this conversation around W/writerliness with our own students could prove useful in increasing agency and minimizing the risk they find in the writing process.

Additionally, both Glen and Sylvie expressed to me that they tried to get their students to see themselves as writers, but this task was often a daunting one. If we interrogate this idea of W/writers, we not only get at the processes involved in writing, we also make transparent the act of writing, which reduces risk for students and teachers alike. This conversation also makes obvious the connections between learning to write and the act of teaching writing, demystifying an often mysterious process.

Limitations in Content and Discussion

While I do not consider the nature of narrative inquiry to be a limitation because I value the subjective and the particular nature of the paradigm, I do recognize that there are a few content-level limitations to my study.

Limitation #1: Institutional settings. My second research question includes the following sub-question: *Where are the influences of the institutional context apparent? In what ways does the institutional context function to expand and/or limit the teachers' writerly identities?* Considering the localized nature of our education system, this question is an important and necessary one. However, in my study, I observed only how the instructional context functioned to expand the teachers' W/writerly identities.

At one school site, we see the trust of Glen's administrators at work in his classroom practices when he felt comfortable in sending his students out on a writing marathon with few specific objectives and, on a larger scale, we see that trust in his work to abolish grades in his senior writing courses. At the other school

site, we see how the institution supports Neal's nontraditional approach to teaching writers who struggle—even giving him free reign over his own curriculum and how he mentors other teachers. It is certainly possible that Central High School and Midwest High School feature an unusually supportive administration and school environment which provides these teachers the room to experiment. It's also possible that these mid-career teachers are so respected in their individual settings that they have earned more freedom than perhaps their other colleagues.

Therefore, it is possible that my population of skilled, mid-career teachers and the two research sites I chose did not provide me the material to fully explore the negative side of this sub-question (namely, how the context limits W/writerly identities). In my future research, I'd like to expand the sites of inquiry to first investigate other contexts of a similar mid-career teacher group to investigate if the freedom I observed is a result of institution, tenure, or the skill of these particular teachers.

Limitation #2: The role of students in the exploration. An intentional omission of this study was the role of students. I knew that, since my inquiry featured two phases of data collection and an extended time in the research context, my study would be appropriately ambitious. If I added students to this mix, it would make the process of data collection and analysis overly cumbersome. However, that also means there is a missing component to this work. While we can see how these teachers approach writing in their own lives and in their classrooms, we cannot observe how those approaches are taken up by their students. Teaching is not

teaching if there is not also learning, so a necessary second step in my inquiry will need to take place in these teachers' classrooms with their students.

For example, Glen ran multiple "hands off" revision sessions where students read their peers' essays and gave conversational feedback to one another. It would be useful to see if what I observed in Glen's teaching of writing (a focus on the thinking, a move against prescriptivism) emerged in students' conversations with one another. Since I have cultivated a relationship with these teachers and spent much time thinking about their W/writerly identities, this next step of involving their students seems practical, possible, and useful.

Lingering Questions

Though I have tried to be as thorough as possible in my analysis and writing, I have three lingering questions—questions which I did not have enough time or data to explore but to which I'd like to return.

Genderedness. In Chapter Four, I hint at how three of the participants' W/writerly identities seem to be gendered in different ways. First, as Dr. Fox mentioned in his reading of my chapter, Glen's metaphor—The Craftsman—brings with it implications of gender, and, I would add, class. Additionally, the two female participants, Sylvie and Aspen, both use the word "arrogant" in their talk around their own W/writing identities. Sylvie suggests that it is "arrogant" for her to claim the label of Writer, but she does it anyway. Aspen calls it "arrogant" that she—as the respected literature teacher—is able to decide which books have earned the title of "literature" or which authors have earned the title of "Writer." In fact, she even

created a third category of Writerliness (Capital W, underlined) that was absent in the other participants' narratives. The idea that it is "arrogant" to claim this ability seems related to the gendered nature of expertise.

In my future work, I'd like to examine the gendered (and perhaps, classed) nature of W/writerliness. I'm unaware of work on this subject, but it does immediately call to mind the literary canon which, as it stands now, is largely populated by white male authors. Perhaps this exploration of gender constructions with W/writing teachers can add to the conversation around text choices in secondary and post-secondary classrooms.

Weirdness. Early in my data analysis, I noticed that all four teachers depicted their stories around writing as "weird" in some way. Glen calls his object weird. Aspen calls her college story weird, as does Sylvie. Neal calls most of what he does inside and outside of the classroom weird. I'm interested in how this idea of weirdness works in the writing classroom, specifically how it might function as an opposing force to the cultural narratives surrounding the teaching of writing. But, in this first study, there wasn't space or time for such an exploration. Therefore, I'd like to undertake this work examining teacher-writer/writer-teacher positionality in the future.

Alternative stable threads. As I write in Chapter Five, the clear stable thread that remains through these teachers' personal and professional W/writerly lives is the comfort each teacher feels in the process→ product continuum. Certainly, though, if viewed through different lenses, it is possible that there are other stable identity threads or that, perhaps, this stable thread breaks down in

some way. This is a question I will continue to investigate as I re-enter the data and search for other points of crystallization.

Intimidated by greatness. In my time with these teachers, our talk often returned to the works of literary giants found on their classroom bookshelves. In these conversations, the teachers positioned themselves against the perceived “greatness” of these authors, a point best exemplified in Aspen’s lamentations that she will never be Atwood or Hemingway. The varying degrees to which these W/writers place themselves *outside* or *inside* this circle of literary giants seems to affect their own conception of themselves as W/writers. In short, those who are most impressed by the canonical authors (Aspen and Neal) seem the least likely to also call themselves Writers—two outcomes which must surely be related.

In my future work with this data, I hope to continue to investigate this question of literary intimidation, perhaps by examining the process of simultaneous differentiation and integration (Moffett & Wagner, 1991) in these teachers’ identities. Simply speaking, *differentiation* refers to how an individual is separate—or different—from others while *integration* refers to how an individual is a part of—or integrated with—others in a similar group (Moffett & Wagner, 1991). In their association with authors of classic literature, other English teachers, or other W/writers, participants reveal the ways in which they (re)define their own W/writerly identities. Studying how/when/why these teachers place themselves in *agreement with* or in *opposition to* literary giants or other English teachers might further explain the interaction of teachers’ personal writing identities with their professional ones.

Questions from the teachers. Finally, a few questions emerged in my many conversations with these teachers. These questions are not only applicable to the secondary classroom environment, but they speak how we might reposition the teaching of writing in our pre-service teacher education programs. Those questions are as follows:

- What is “good” academic writing?
- What is “good” feedback on writing?
- What is the most important—structure or voice? Which should we teach first?
- What is the role of opportunity (or practice) in writing improvement?

While these questions certainly are not new questions for the field of writing studies, they could provide fruitful starting points for co-researching and co-authoring with these participants.

Consolidating the Metaphors

Throughout this inquiry, I’ve provided a variety of metaphors to help us think about the ways in which teachers’ W/writerly identities are formed in their personal spaces and performed in their professional spaces. I believe the variety of metaphors provide a robustness to the study. However, these metaphors have some commonalities which lead to a worthwhile final discussion.

Writerly becoming is gradual. Whether they identify as Writers or writers, the four participants suggest their writerly becoming happens incrementally. For some like Glen, the Craftsman, the becoming is never complete. Just as a craftsman

consistently works to better the craft, so does Glen work to improve his writing. For others like Sylvie, the process was gradual but features a few memorable transition points such as when her high school science teacher praised her writing. The gradual nature of writerly becoming is reflected in how these teachers talk about the process of writing, of learning to write, and of teaching writing.

Writerly becoming is on-going. Even those writers who feel most comfortable in the product of writing (like Aspen) recognize that there is no end in the process of becoming a W/writer. Aspen notes how, in her master's work, she asked her colleagues for feedback on her academic essays so she could continue to improve.

I recognize this outcome in my own writerly becoming. Though it wasn't a stated aim of this study, as I undertook this work and as I wrote these 285 pages, I, too, reflected on my own process of becoming a Writer. Before I entered this doctoral program, like Aspen and Neal, I never would have claimed the Writer label. Writing was, in many ways, just something I did because I liked school and I desired to do well. As I stand on the precipice of becoming a PhD, though, I am unintentionally self-reflective, and I hear the syntax of my own influences reflected in these sentences. There is room in future pieces of writing for an examination of the ways in which doctoral writing led to my own W/writerly becoming.

Conclusion

As I close this dissertation, I think back to the physical movement with which I framed the opening pages. In my driving around the Midwest to visit these

teachers, I am able to highlight the metaphorical thinking we produced around the act and teaching of W/writing. Though my tiny car will soon be traded for a newer, nicer SUV, the metaphorical movement sparked by my work with these teachers will endure. In my new physical and professional place, I wish to continue the discussion I began within these pages. And I am comfortable in the perpetual incompleteness.

From this space, echo Mishler's words on completing research:

Authors often rely on a rhetoric of authority, offering definitive summaries of what was done to suggest the work is finished and complete. This closure of the conversation with readers is something I wish to resist. (1999, p. 145)

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Appendices

Appendix A

IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-
Columbia

190 Galena Hall;
 Dc074.00
 Columbia, MO 65212
 573-882-3181
 irb@missouri.edu

August 18, 2017

Principal Investigator: Christy Dianne Goldsmith
 Department: Learning Teaching & Curriculum

Your Exempt Amendment Form to project entitled Enacted Identities: A Narrative Inquiry into Teacher Writerly Becoming was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2009036
IRB Review Number	229485
Initial Application Approval Date	August 14, 2017
Approval Date of this Review	August 18, 2017
IRB Expiration Date	August 14, 2018
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Risk Level	Minimal Risk

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

Good afternoon! I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study taking place in the 2017-2018 school year. This study attempts to better understand how English teachers' identities as writers and teachers are constructed through personal experiences and enacted in the classroom. This study is open to any English teacher who has taught 7-10 years in Missouri public schools.

Participation in this study is entirely optional, but if you choose to participate, and with your consent, I would like to spend the Fall 2017 semester involving you in interviews and short writing activities to explore your personal and professional experiences with writing. I would also like to observe you during your normal teaching activities in the Fall 2017 semester to see how your identity as a writer manifests in your teaching. Finally, in the Spring 2018 semester, I would like to hold a focus group with all interested participants to allow for reflection on your study participation. If you choose to participate, I would also like you to keep a Writer's Notebook during the 2017-2018 school year to record your informal reflections, thoughts, and wonderings as you embark on this identity work. Overall, data production for this study will begin in September 2017 and end no later than May 2018.

Your participation in this study is not expected to cause any risks greater than those encountered in everyday life and normal professional interactions. To lessen any possible risk, I will protect your identity and the location of your school and community in all publications and presentations from this study. While there is no monetary reward for participating in this study, you may gain a deeper awareness of how your own writing background impacts your teaching, thus impacting your future teaching of writing. There is also a possibility of co-authoring pieces from this study, if you choose. If you choose to participate in this study, you can remove yourself at any time without penalty.

If you are interested in participating in this study or if you have further questions, please contact me directly via email or phone. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope have a great school year.

Sincerely,

Christy Goldsmith

Primary Investigator--Enacted Identities: A Narrative Inquiry of Teacher Writerly Becoming
English education doctoral candidate

University of Missouri--Columbia

(660) 553-0037

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Appendix C

Written Consent Form

MU Campus Institutional Review Board Consent Form for Research Study

Project Title

Enacted Identities: A Narrative Inquiry into Teacher Writerly Becoming

Purpose of the Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring teachers' writerly identities. This study attempts to better understand how English teachers' identities as writers and teachers are constructed through personal experiences and enacted in the classroom. This study will help secondary English instructors, pre-service English education instructors, and professional development program developers better understand how educators' writing experiences interact with their professional pedagogies.

What am I going to be asked to do?

Throughout the 2017-2018 academic year, Christy requests your involvement in extended interviews, short de-briefing interviews, and writing activities to explore your personal and professional experiences with writing. Early stages will be 60-90 minute interviews; later stages will be entire days of classroom observation. On these days of classroom observation, there will be 10-20 minute de-briefing interviews as well. With your consent, she will audio-record these interviews and talk during writing activities in the Fall 2017 semester. If you are willing, Christy would also like you to keep a Writer's Notebook during the 2017-2018 school year to record your informal reflections, thoughts, questions, wonderings as you embark on this identity work. She would like permission to view this Writer's Notebook and record it as data periodically throughout the 2017-2018 academic year.

Additionally, Christy would like to observe you during your normal teaching activities in the Fall 2017 semester. You need not alter your teaching in any way; Christy would just like the permission to watch you teach to explore how your writing identities manifest in your regular classroom activities. With your permission, these observations will be video-recorded and would span 25-35 hours during the semester. These observations will include only teacher moves; there will be no student involvement in the research study.

In addition to these interview, writing, and observation activities in the Fall 2017 semester, if you are willing, Christy would like to hold a focus group in Spring 2018 to talk with you about your experience in exploring your writerly identities. Christy will audio record the focus group meeting with your consent, and it will last no longer than 45 minutes.

Length of Study

This study will take place primarily during the Fall 2017 semester with focus groups in the Spring 2018 semester. Data collection will end no later than May 31, 2018.

How many people will be a part of the study?

There is potential for any Missouri experienced (defined as having taught English for 7-10 years) English teacher to be a part of the study. Participants must be 18 years old.

Types of Data Collected

With your permission, Christy would like to produce a variety of data including interview audio recordings, Writer's Notebook reflections and the Writing River (a large concept map noting your many experiences with writing), informal writing activities, classroom observation video recordings, classroom observation field notes, and focus group audio recordings. As this study seeks to explore the totality of your writing experience, Christy will work with you to produce different modes of data to aid in that exploration.

What are the risks of participating?

Your participation in this study is not expected to cause any risks greater than those encountered in everyday life and normal professional interactions. There is a minor risk of personal embarrassment or feelings of imposter syndrome when you discuss your writing histories and identities. There is a minor risk of embarrassment and/or classroom disruption when I observe your classroom lessons. To mitigate these risks, I will protect your identity and the location of your school and community in all publications and presentations from this study.

What are the potential benefits of participating?

You may gain a deeper awareness of how your own writing background impacts your teaching, thus impacting your future teaching of writing. If you seek to co-author research pieces with me, you may choose to be a participant-researcher which brings with it an entry point into authorship and the satisfaction of adding to the field of education research.

Confidentiality

Your identity and participation will remain confidential. All participant names will be given a pseudonym (which you will have the option to choose) when research is presented at conferences or published in journals. Only general geographic information will be given (i.e. small Midwestern college town or midsize Midwestern high school). Only members of the research team (i.e. Christy and Dr. Lannin) will know the identity of

participants and have access to data. All data will be stored in Christy's locked office or in a password protected Google Drive folder shared only by members of the research team.

What will I receive for being in the study?

Christy would like to offer the opportunity for co-authoring pieces evolving from the data produced in this research study. Whether or not you choose to co-author, you will have time and space within the research study to reflect on your own writing identity construction and to explore how it affects your teaching--resulting in individualized, informal professional development.

Will the researcher tell me if something changes in the study?

Informed consent in an ongoing process that requires communication between the researcher and participants. You will be informed of any new information during the course of this study that might influence your health, welfare, or willingness to be in this study.

Who do I contact if I have questions, concerns, or complaints?

Please contact Christy Goldsmith or Dr. Amy Lannin if you have questions about the research.

Christy Goldsmith
(660) 553-0037
christygoldsmith@mizzou.edu

Dr. Amy Lannin
(573) 882-1798
LanninA@missouri.edu

Who do I contact if I have questions about my rights, concerns, complaints, or comments about the research?

You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have questions about your rights, concerns, complaints, or comments as a research participant. You can contact the Campus Institutional Review Board directly by telephone or email to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input, or complaints about the research study.

Campus Institutional Review Board
483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211

Phone: (573) 882-9585
Website: <https://research.missouri.edu/cirb/>
Email: umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu

Signatures

Please read each statement below and indicate which ones you approve by initialing the line next to the statement and then sign the bottom of the form. Please keep one copy for your records.

_____ I consent to be a part of the study and give permission for **all data** produced during the 2017-2018 academic year—classroom observation video recordings, classroom observation field notes, Writer's Notebook reflections, informal and formal

interview writing activities, interview audio recordings, and focus group audio recordings—to be used for data analysis, publications, and presentations. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problem.

_____ I consent to be a part of the study but **only wish for the following data sources** to be used (check the ones you give permissions to be used for analysis, publication, and presentations). I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problem.

- _____ classroom observation video recordings
- _____ classroom observation field notes
- _____ Writer's Notebook reflections
- _____ informal and formal interview writing activities
- _____ interview audio recordings
- _____ focus group audio recordings

If you'd like, choose the pseudonym you'd like Christy to use in publications/presentations:

Signature

Date

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Initial Questions

- How do you define a “writer”? Or a “Writer?” Is there a difference?
- What does a person have to do to earn the distinction? Tell me about a person who, to you, is most definitely a writer and one who is most definitely not a writer.
- Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?
- Tell me about any deeply held beliefs you may have regarding writing.

Personal Experience with Writing

- Describe something you have written.
- Describe something you are proud of writing and something you’re not satisfied with.
- Tell me about a time when you found writing to be easy and/or enjoyable. Tell me about a time when you found writing to be tough and/or painful. What similarities/differences do you notice within these two stories? (adapted from Shagoury, 2011).
- When did you write something and felt like you were “in the flow”? Did you see that flow experience during the writing experiences you found easy or difficult?
- Tell me a story about how writing is involved in a typical day at work.
- Tell me a story about how writing is involved in a typical day at home.
- Do you associate writing with risk? If so, in what ways?
- Describe the way in which you write in the “real world.”

Experiences as a Student of Writing

- How do you describe yourself as a student?
- What have your teachers told you about your writing? When? How did it affect you?

Experiences as a Teacher of Writing

- In what ways has teaching affected your personal writing? How you identify as a writer? Can you give me an example?
- Which area of English education would you say you are most confident teaching? Why?
- Thinking about your teaching of writing, when do you put on your “writer hat” and when do you put on your “teacher hat”?
- How do you describe yourself as a teacher of writing?
- Do you think your colleagues and/or administration view you as a writer? Why or why not?
- In what ways do your interactions with colleagues and administration affect your conception of yourself as a writer? In what ways do they affect your method of teaching writing?

Appendix E

De-Briefing Interview Protocol

De-Briefing Interview Protocol

- Spend 5 minutes writing about your experience with writing and/or the teaching of writing in today's lesson.
 - Questions you might consider: What elements of writing did you forefront? What elements did you choose to include or not to include? What was the purpose of today's lesson? How does that purpose connect to your beliefs about the teaching of writing?
- What elements of today's lesson felt most successful to you? What areas felt like they needed improvement to you?
- What role would you say writing played in today's lesson?

Appendix F

Writer's Notebook Protocol

Participant Writer's Notebook Protocol

- Write about your experience with writing in your teacher education program.
- Write about the first experience with writing you can remember.
- Write about the best story you ever read.
- Write about a time when you felt anxiety or happiness surrounding writing.
- Write about a time you had a conversation with colleagues about writing.
- Write about your favorite literary genre.

Vita

Christy Goldsmith grew up in Sedalia, Missouri—a small town in central Missouri known for being the home of the Missouri State Fair and for its infamous Guberburger. She spent summer days soaking up the smell of books in the Carnegie library downtown and summer nights reading with a flashlight under the covers. From the time she was old enough to understand school, even though she was painfully shy, Christy knew she wanted to be a teacher. So, after being the 5th generation of her family to graduate from the historic Smith-Cotton High School, she embarked on an education degree.

She graduated from Central Missouri State University with a Bachelor of Science in English Education in 2006 and quickly landed a job teaching English at Warrensburg High School just down the road. During her first years of teaching high school English, Christy lost her shyness and, through friendships with other teachers, found her love of the Kansas City Royals. Then in 2012, when Jacob, her significant other, landed a job in Southwest Missouri, Christy begrudgingly left Warrensburg High School for a new adventure teaching English at Ozark High School. As her “teacher voices” suggests, the eight years she spent in the high school English classroom became the lens through which Christy viewed the world.

In 2014, Christy left the high school English classroom to satisfy her dream of one day being able to teach English teachers how to teach. She came to the University of Missouri and hit the ground running in her typical overzealous fashion of taking too many classes, teaching too many classes, and becoming a part of the Missouri Writing Project. She likens her entrance into the academic world as her

admission into Hogwarts—and the assimilation still isn't complete. For the last four years, Jacob and Christy have lived in Columbia, Missouri with their Scottish terrier, Beans.