Teacher Candidates as Writers: What is the Relationship Between Writing Experiences and Pedagogical Practice

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Teacher Candidates as Writers: What is the Relationship Between Writing Experience and Pedagogical Practice?

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Many teacher educators, composition studies scholars, and writing teachers themselves advocate the idea that "writing teachers must write" (Nagin, 2003). The concept of teachers as writers emerged in the 1970s and 80s from the process writing movement and the work of scholars such as Murray (1989), Graves (1983), Calkins (1986), and Atwell (1987). Since then, the National Writing Project, in particular, has promoted the idea of teacher-writers through its summer institutes where teachers write compositions, share their drafts, and discuss pedagogy (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). More recently, teacher educators have begun engaging preservice teachers in the writing process during undergraduate courses as a means of helping them learn about writing instruction (Batchelor, Morgan, Kidder-Brown, & Zimmerman, 2014; Hall, 2016; Martin & Dismuke, 2015). Thus, the idea that "writing teachers must write" impacts how both novice and experienced teachers learn to teach writing.

The case for writing teachers becoming writers has intuitive appeal. Whitney, Hicks, Zuidema, Fredricksen, and Yagelski (2014) argue that writing changes the perspectives that shape teachers' practice. Through the act of writing, teachers can gain insight into the writing process, the challenges that writers face, and strategies for overcoming those challenges. They can also gain empathy for student-writers' experiences and struggles as they "do what they require their students do" (Gooda, 2016, p. 271). This insight and empathy can inform both what and how teachers teach. As Smith and Wrigley (2016) argue, when teachers write, they often discover a "mismatch" (p. 23) between how they teach and how they themselves approach writing. Understanding writing from the "inside"—as a writer—provides a basis for designing effective writing instruction.

Despite the logical connection between writing and teaching writing, research on the pedagogical consequences of teachers as writers provides mixed results. Some studies have identified a relationship between teachers' writing

experiences, their identities as writers, and their writing instruction (Assaf, Ralfe, & Steinbach, 2016; Locke & Kato, 2012; McCarthey, Woodard, & Kang, 2014; Street, 2003; Woodard, 2015), but other studies have not (Brooks, 2007; Gleeson & Prain, 1996; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Robbins, 1996). This latter research indicates that neither teachers' out-of-school writing practices nor their identity as writers consistently impacts their teaching. The different findings across studies suggest that the relationship between writing and teaching writing is complex (Cremin & Oliver, 2016), and as a result, being a writer does not translate directly or smoothly into being a writing teacher.

The purpose of this study was to attempt to reconcile some of contradictory findings from the teacher-writer literature and further clarify the relationship between writing and teaching writing. While teachers' writing experiences likely influence their instruction, the connection between writing and pedagogy is sometimes difficult to pinpoint due to its complexity. Therefore, we reduced the complexity in this study by examining one slice of the writing/pedagogy relationship rather than attempting to examine it in its entirety (Cilliers, 2005). We investigated one specific set of writing experiences—composing a narrative in an undergraduate teacher preparation course—and its relationship to a particular pedagogy—reading and responding to a child's writing. We hoped that the close connection between the writing experiences and the pedagogy we studied would allow us to more easily identify and describe any relationship that existed.

The Relationship Between Writing Experiences and Pedagogy

Researchers have addressed various aspects of teacher-writers' experiences, including their attitudes toward writing, the extent to which they view themselves as writers, their personal writing practices, and, to a lesser extent, the pedagogical consequences of their attitudes, writing identities, and writing practices (Cremin & Oliver, 2016). Given that Cremin and Oliver provide an extensive review of literature addressing all aspects of the teacher-writer research, we limit our review here to the topic most pertinent to this study: the relationship between teachers' writing experiences and how they teach.

Research on teachers' personal writing outside of school demonstrates those experiences may or may not affect their writing pedagogy. Some teachers use their personal writing experiences to inform their teaching (Gleeson & Prain, 1996; Woodard, 2015). However, those who seldom write for personal reasons can be good writing teachers (Gleeson & Prain, 1996), and those who write extensively may not draw on their out-of-school experiences in the classroom (Robbins, 1996). These findings are perhaps unsurprising given that the types of writing that occur in daily life often bear little resemblance to the writing that occurs in K-12 schools.

As a result, teachers' out-of-school writing experiences do not necessarily connect to or impact their teaching (Brooks, 2007).

In contrast to studies of out-of-school writing experiences, research on teachers writing within coursework or professional development programs often does find a relationship between those experiences and their reported (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011), enacted (Assaf et al, 2016; Locke & Kato, 2012; Street, 2003), or intended future (Cremin, 2006; Daisey, 2009; Gardner, 2014; Morgan, 2010; Whitney, 2008) pedagogy. For example, teachers in a professional development studied by Cremin (2006) experienced anxiety and discomfort while writing stories and reported more empathy for student writers as a result. This led them to identify ways to create a supportive classroom writing environment, such as allowing students more choice and agency about the topics and forms of their writing. TCs in Morgan's (2010) study came to value components of the writing workshop they experienced in class—such as writing regularly and having choice about writing topics—and reported that they planned to include these elements in their future instruction. Similarly, Gardner (2014) found that 75% of the TCs in his study made connections between what they experienced as writers in an undergraduate course and their future teaching. These studies demonstrate that writing experiences in teacher education courses have the potential to impact teachers' pedagogy.

While a relationship between course-based writing experiences and teachers' instruction often does exist, such a relationship is not guaranteed. Watts and Thompson (2008) examined how three teachers' writing processes influenced their writing instruction. The teachers were enrolled in a graduate course where they wrote personal compositions such as poems and nonfiction, but only two gained insight into teaching writing. The third teacher—even when required to analyze her writing process—did not meaningfully connect her own writing with her pedagogy until the instructor explicitly demonstrated how to do so. Similarly, Mahurt (1998) found that only some of the TCs who participated in a writing workshop in her course made connections between that experience and potential teaching strategies. When the TCs moved into their first year of classroom teaching, many did not implement the strategies they experienced in the class. Thus, even structured writing experiences in teacher education courses do not always have a strong relationship with teachers' future pedagogy.

One explanation for why some teachers draw on their writing experiences to inform their instruction while others do not is that the relationship between writing and teaching writing is indirect. Woodard (2015) studied two teachers' out-of-school writing practices and found they repurposed both language and textual practices from their writing experiences in order to make that knowledge useful in their classrooms. For example, one teacher-writer worked on "burying obvious parts" (p. 45) in her novel-in-progress so that readers could infer what was

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happening rather than being told. She translated this idea into the strategy "show, don't tell" when talking to her students, asking one student-writer how she might "show that Mother died rather than telling [the readers]" (p. 46). Similarly, Cremin and Oliver (2016), in their review of the teacher-writer literature, concluded that writing teachers must "*harness* their own textual practices in the classroom a *means* of sharing the complexities involved and possible strategies" (p. 23, emphasis added). Thus, while knowledge gained through writing experiences can be useful for teaching writing, it may need to be adapted to be pedagogically meaningful.

Another possible explanation for why the relationship between writing and teaching writing varies from teacher to teacher is that it may be mediated by affective factors such as attitudes toward writing, writing confidence, and writerly identity. Many teachers report negative experiences with writing (Cremin & Oliver, 2016), which may lead to negative views about writing that may, in turn, negatively impact instruction. Street (2003) found evidence of a relationship between student teachers' writing attitudes and confidence and their emerging writing instruction. A student teacher with a positive attitude and confidence conveyed to students a passion for writing, promoted a writing community within the classroom, and modeled how to write. In contrast, a student teacher with a poor attitude and little confidence conveyed negative messages about writing, did not promote students' creativity, and did not model how to write. Harward et al. (2014) similarly found a difference in the writing confidence of teachers who regularly engaged students in writing (high implementing teachers) and those who did not (low implementing teachers). High implementing teachers tended to perceive themselves as good writers, while low implementing teachers often perceived themselves as inadequate writers.

However, just as the relationship between writing experiences and writing instruction can vary from teacher to teacher, affective factors also seem to mediate that relationship in different ways. Brooks (2007), for example, found that writing confidence, identifying as a writer, and enjoying writing may or may not impact teachers' pedagogy. Similarly, both Robbins (1996) and McKinney and Giorgis (2009) found that teachers' identities as writers did not consistently influence how they taught. In addition, one confident writer in Woodard's (2013) study felt insecure about her teaching, while another teacher felt hesitant about her identity as a writer but confident about her teaching. Thus, affective factors related to writing do not consistently impact teachers' pedagogy.

In summary, research on the relationship between writing and teaching writing provides variable, sometimes contradictory, results, and it is unclear why writing experiences impact teachers in different ways. Recent research suggests that the writing/pedagogy relationship is complex (Woodard, 2015) and mediated by a variety of factors (McCarthey et al., 2014), which might explain why findings

differ across studies. More research is needed, though, to clarify this relationship and unravel its complexities. Given that both practicing teachers and TCs engage in writing as a way to learn about writing instruction, teacher educators need a better understanding of when, how, and why writing experiences influence pedagogy.

This study sought to extend and clarify current understandings about the writing/teaching-writing relationship by examining the question, *What, if any, relationship is there between the experience of writing a narrative in a preservice teacher education course and the way TCs read and respond to a child's narrative?* This very focused research question was useful because studying a particular writing experience and analyzing its relationship to a particular pedagogy allowed us to "reduce the complexity [of the phenomenon] in order to be able to say something about it" (Cilliers, 2005, p. 3). Rather than attempting to untangle the relationship between a wide range of writing experiences—such as those in an entire course or participants' personal writing outside of school—and wide range of possible pedagogies participants might enact in the classroom, we sought to understand if and how writing a narrative related to reading and responding to a student's narrative. The close connection between the writing experience and the pedagogy allowed us to more easily identify and describe any relationship that existed.

Research Design

This qualitative, multi-case study sought to examine the relationship between TCs' writing experiences and their pedagogy by engaging them in a simulated teaching task—reading and responding to a student's writing—immediately following their completion of a *Writing for Elementary Educators* course. We chose to focus the study on TCs for several reasons. First, engaging preservice teachers in writing has become an increasingly common practice in courses about writing instruction (Batchelor et al., 2014; Hall, 2016; Martin & Dismuke, 2015; Morgan, 2010), and we wanted to better understand the relationship between TCs' writing in these types of courses and their developing pedagogy. Second, more of the teacher-writer research focuses on practicing teachers than on TCs (Cremin & Oliver, 2016). Yet, preservice teacher education programs provide an optimal opportunity to engage all future writing teachers in writing experiences that could guide their pedagogy, so this is an area that needs additional research. Finally, some researchers have noted that inservice teachers' writing experiences influence their teaching, but so do curriculum demands and professional development (McCarthey et al., 2014). Studying TCs allowed us to examine the relationship between their writing and their pedagogy before other influencing factors, such as school-based curricula and training, were introduced.

We chose to use a simulated teaching task—reading and responding to a narrative written by a second grader—as a way to investigate TCs' emerging writing pedagogy. Although writing pedagogy clearly involves more than reading and responding to student compositions, this task is central to the work of writing teachers. Teachers read and respond to student drafts during writing conferences, while circulating the room as children write, and after school to provide written feedback or plan future instruction. Furthermore, reading and responding plays a key role in student learning. Research suggests that the quality of teacher response impacts the quality of students' writing (Graham, Hebert, & Harris, 2015), so reading and responding is an important aspect of effective writing instruction. In addition, TCs took *Writing for Elementary Educators* early in their program and did not have a corresponding field placement or teach writing during the semester they took the course. Thus, we designed the reading and responding task to closely resemble an important aspect of writing pedagogy that could be studied outside of a field placement.

The Writing for Elementary Educators Course

The study took place within the context of a *Writing for Elementary Educators* course. The course was designed to (1) provide TCs with meaningful personal writing experiences and (2) help them connect those experiences to their future writing instruction. It fulfilled the university's requirement for an advanced writing seminar and therefore focused on TCs' own writing rather than how to teach writing per se. This course structure made it ideal for providing in-depth writing opportunities and time to deeply engage with the writing process. Unlike sections of the course for non-education majors, TCs were also given ongoing opportunities to explicitly draw insights about teaching from these writing experiences. However, they did not learn to implement any pedagogical techniques nor did they specifically learn how to read and respond to elementary children's writing.

The course was intentionally designed to facilitate connections between TCs' writing and how they would teach elementary children. For example, they wrote the genres they would teach: personal narrative, informational, and opinion. When writing the narrative, they learned to (1) choose a specific, focused event to write about; (2) include action rather than simply telling what happened; (3) use dialogue to draw readers into the story; (4) consistently use first or third person narration throughout the story; and (5) develop the story's plot and theme with well-chosen details—skills they would teach elementary students (Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) & National Governors Association (NGA), 2010).

TCs also experienced the writing process in ways similar to how they might teach it. For each composition, they spent several days engaged in content generation and planning activities and then moved through multiple rounds of

revision. Instruction focused on content, structure, and style more than editing and mechanics. Twenty-five class sessions were devoted to drafting and revising, while only four sessions addressed editing. In addition, TCs composed their texts using writing strategies that could be also be used by elementary children. During the narrative unit, they learned to (1) use heart maps (Heard, 2016) to generate ideas, (2) list specific memories as a way to focus their narratives (Calkins et al., 2003), (3) "explode the moment" (Lane, 1993) to extend their stories, and (4) "receive the piece" (Graves, 1983) during peer feedback. They also learned how to use mentor texts (Ray, 2006) as a strategy for exploring how authors craft their writing in intentional ways. Furthermore, the course instructor intentionally modeled writing strategies through thinking aloud because she wanted candidates to experience the power of "seeing inside the mind" of a more experienced writer. For example, she modeled how writers relive their experiences in their mind and unfold the action step-by-step as it happens so that readers can also live the experience through the story.

As TCs engaged in writing, the course instructor made explicit connections between those writing experiences and how to teach writing to elementary children. After experiencing a particular writing strategy, TCs discussed *why* that strategy was useful for young writers and *how* the strategy supported successful writing. For example, after a minilesson on replacing "be" verbs with actions verbs, the class discussed how to use the strategy with children. They considered why it might be challenging for children to write with action verbs and how they might structure the minilesson they experienced in a way that would support young writers. In addition, the instructor led discussions about how particular pedagogies—such as thinking aloud or having children analyze mentor texts—support young writers. Finally, TCs kept a "writing log" in which they periodically answered the questions, "What am I learning about writing?" "What am I learning about myself as a writer?" and "What connections am I making to teaching?" This log provided an opportunity for them to explicitly consider how their own writing experiences connected to their future teaching. In summary, the course provided not only targeted instruction to help TCs develop as writers, but also intentionally guided them connect their writing experiences to their work as future teachers.

Participants

Participants (n=19) in this study were TCs pursuing undergraduate degrees in elementary education. All had completed the *Writing for Elementary Educators* course during the same semester we conducted the study. Though we did not have access to participants' course grades, the instructor confirmed that each participant had used the writing strategies presented in the course to write a personal narrative that met or exceeded course requirements. Because the course occurred during TCs'

sophomore year, they had not yet taken any methods courses or participated in any official field placements, so the relationship between their writing experiences in the class and their ability to read and respond to a student's writing was not mediated by these experiences.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through one-on-one audio-recorded interviews during which participants read and responded to a second grader's narrative writing sample entitled *Reptile Story*. We selected this particular student text because it was a fairly well-developed narrative draft, yet still a work-in-progress offering multiple possibilities for instructional decision-making. In our own readings of this text, we noticed strengths and areas for growth on a variety of features, including character development, dialogue, action, details, organization, word choice, voice/tone, and mechanics.

Three oral prompts framed the reading and responding task: (1) *What do you notice about this student's writing?* (2) *Think about the features of a narrative that we learned during the writing course. Did you notice the child using any of those features in this writing?* (3) *What next steps would you take with this student?* The purpose of the first prompt was to elicit the full range of writing features participants attended to while reading the writing sample. Therefore, we repeatedly prompted "*What else do you notice?*" until participants stated they had nothing else to say. Because participants in our previous research (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018) noticed fewer narrative features than we expected given their experience writing narratives, we added the second question as an attempt to more explicitly elicit this information. The purpose of the third prompt was to determine what instructional decisions participants would recommend for the child.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) (Schreier, 2012), a process of analysis particularly useful for systematically describing qualitative data. We created our initial three coding frames inductively through open coding (Schreier, p. 87-88) and then refined codes through comparison to the text features and strategies taught in the course. We systematically applied the resulting coding frames to all transcripts. Each researcher coded the data independently and then resolved any coding conflicts through consensus.

The first coding frame, *Topic*, described the focus of participants' attention when reading the student writing sample. It was developed by analyzing the responses to the first two interview questions: *What do you notice about the student's writing?* and *Think about the features of a narrative that we learned*

during the writing course. Did you notice the child using any of those features in this writing? This coding frame included eleven different narrative features taught in the *Writing for Elementary Educators* course, as well as mechanics (Table 1).

The second and third coding frames, *Response Topic* and *Response Strategy*, were developed by analyzing participants' responses to the final interview question, *What next steps would you take with this student? Response Topic* described the areas of focus participants suggested for next steps. This coding frame was similar to the *Topic* coding frame, because it would not be possible to respond to a writing feature without first noticing that feature. Participants responded to a smaller range of features than they initially noticed, so this coding frame included only four narrative features plus mechanics (Table 2). *Response Strategy* referred to any specific instructional strategies or revision strategies participants suggested as part of their next steps (Table 3).

Table 1: Topic Coding Frame

Category	Transcript Example
Ideas	It was cute! I didn't know a snake would be stolen out of some kid's room by another kid!
Details	I can picture [it] in my mind. I got very excited, because it's a cherry pie. It's not just a pie, it's a cherry pie.
Focus	It said "Reptile Story" and then it started talking about a party. I was like, "OK, where is this going?"
Tone	He kind of writes sometimes how you would speak.
Organization / Structure	I like the organization. It's clearly organized because it's like, this is what I got, this is what it can do. This is what happened when I brought it in. This is what I did and then this is the ending.
Show Don't Tell	When you're doing a narrative you are telling a story to someone else. So, she does a good job of painting a picture for the reader. So this thing could have been written in five sentences if you think about it. but the way the writer is writing, brings you through all the steps she took.
Personal Moment	It's narrative, something he actually enjoys, he's happy about.
Active Voice	There's some action stuff like, "I invited", "They made", "They ate". So it wasn't all the "be" verbs that we were talking about.
Point of View	It was all first person, in terms of "I"
Dialogue	He's using outer dialogue.
Theme	There's kind of a moral of the story, I guess, when it comes to friendship and bravery, even.
Mechanics	They seemed to know how to use punctuation and commas and all of that.

Table 2: Response Topic Coding Frame

Category	Transcript Example
Details	Maybe if he says that he wants readers to understand that this boy was older than him, and he wasn't very nice, just elaborate on those factors.

Focus	I would first ask them, "What is your story supposed to be? What are you trying to tell the readers? What is it about? What do you want the readers to understand, take away from it? What are you trying to say?" Then once I know that I can go into if he just wants to tell about how it was scary that his snake almost got stolen, I might say, "You shouldn't focus on talking about the birthday party as much, and focus more on details when the boy came to steal the snake."
Organization / Structure	I would probably just say work on putting everything in the proper order.
Show Don't Tell	You want to be in the moment for someone reading it. I feel like if he or she set a set time frame like present tense maybe, you'd be like oh, you can go through it with the story step by step and everything.
Mechanics	I would mark all the tenses that he did wrong and probably go through them.

Table 3: Response Strategy Coding Frame

Category	Transcript Example
No Strategy	I would first probably help them with the fixing of the order of the paper, and then I would probably have them start taking out like the unneeded words, fix the grammar.
Questioning	I would first ask them, "What is your story supposed to be? What are you trying to tell the readers? What is it about? What do you want the readers to understand, take away from it? What are you trying to say?"
Outlining	I think I would sit down and make an outline with him about where he wants to go with this story so it's not just going nowhere and making circles.

Findings

Noticing While Reading

Substantial differences existed between participants' responses to the initial prompt, *What do you notice about the student's writing?* and their responses to the second prompt, *Think about the features of a narrative that we learned during the writing course. Did you notice the child using any of those features in this writing*? When initially asked what they noticed about the writing sample, participants overwhelmingly focused on mechanics rather than the narrative features taught in the writing course. In fact, 89% (n=17) noticed more about the writing sample's mechanics than any other feature. In addition to mechanics, each participant noticed between zero and four narrative features, but, on average, noticed only 2.11 of the 11 narrative features they were taught to include in their own writing. All of the participants (n=19) noticed less than 40% of all the features they could have noticed and 58% (n=9) noticed less than 20% those features.

However, with specific prompting, participants attended more to narrative features. When prompted, *Think about the features of a narrative that we learned during the writing course. Did you notice the child using any of those features in this writing?*, participants noticed an average of 2.53 course-related narrative features that they had not noticed before. In fact, 89% percent (n=17) identified at least one additional feature, and 42% (n=8) noticed more narrative features in response to the second prompt than they had noticed in response to the first prompt. Thus, most participants knew more features of narrative than they could initially identify in the student writing sample, and nearly half knew several more features than they initially identified.

Kaitlyn, for example, only noticed mechanics in response to the first prompt, such as punctuation, use of singular/plural, and run-on sentences. However, when asked to think about the narrative features she had learned in the course, she noticed four additional features in the writing sample:

> [The student] use[d] the dialogue we talked about. They tried to give the story a beginning, a middle, and an end. They wrote from first person to make it more personal about their reptile. They chose to write it in a way that meant something to them, so they were actually interested in writing it. They probably enjoyed writing the story.

Each of the features Kaitlyn mentioned had been introduced during the narrative unit. Teacher candidates had been asked to write their narratives in first person and revise them to include dialogue. They had examined mentor texts to determine how authors created engaging beginnings and satisfying endings to their stories. The class had also discussed the importance of writing a narrative that was personally meaningful because doing so would allow them to enjoy the writing process and create a quality composition. However, Kaitlyn did not "see" these features in the writing sample until explicitly prompted to do so.

Although the second prompt tended to elicit TCs' noticing additional narrative features, there was considerable variability in the overall number of course-related features participants noticed—from 27% to 64% of the possible noticeable features. Five participants, including Cathy, noticed only 27% of the possible narrative features over the course of the two prompts. In response to the first prompt, Cathy said:

> It sounds like he is just rambling on. As if he was telling it in person, with his voice and... he's misusing, "I am making a party." He's using the wrong words and then somewhere he's mixing up when to use "are" and "is." And "made" and "make." Past tense and present tense, he's confused with how

to put it in writing. And run-on sentences everywhere. He can't figure out how to make it a complete sentence. He kind of reminds me of that commercial...“and then... and then... and then.” In the beginning, kind of sounds like he's starting off with what he's planning. And then he goes into what happened. So, the tense of the story changes.

Cathy initially mentioned the tone of the writing (“As if he was telling it in person, with his voice”), something that she had studied in the course. However, most of the features she noted were mechanical errors: unconventional wording (making vs. having), subject-verb agreement (are/is), verb tense, and run-on sentences. When specifically asked to identify features in the writing sample that she had learned in the course (prompt 2), she responded:

> I don't know if it's necessary for him to say, “I said” or “I responded” [in the dialogue]. The grammar of it is correct, for narrative. And he's saying “went... was... I said...” so it's like present or “we went” isn't... he changes [tense]. I guess he needs to go through and it's the “be” verbs, right? He needs to go through and change those.

Here, Cathy noted two features of narrative taught in the course: using tags (I said; I responded) in dialogue and using action verbs rather than “be” verbs. Over the entire course of reading and responding to the sample, she noticed only three of the narrative features that had been highlighted in the course.

Nine participants noticed between 36% and 45% of the possible narrative features over the course of the two prompts. Taylor, for example, initially responded by saying

> Just overall needs to work on the tenses. I think the student kind of separated the paragraphs correctly, but I mean, some of them could ...The snake could have been added into this second paragraph when they talk about the tricks and stuff. Something else I noticed is that they're very telling the story as it happened. This happened. “I got lots of presents. My friend ate the doughnuts. I talked to my friend.” That's just exactly what happened…I mean, it first started from the birthday party, which was really descriptive, and then it moved into the show and tell, and then the story about how this boy was trying to steal the snake.

In addition to some mechanical aspects of the writing—tenses and paragraphing—Taylor noticed the student “telling the story as it happened,” a feature that she had been asked to include in her narrative. A significant portion of the narrative unit

was devoted to "show, don't tell" and "unfolding the action just like it happened," and Taylor noticed that feature in the writing sample. She also noted the descriptive beginning of the child's story, another feature discussed in the course.

In response to the second prompt, Taylor noted several additional features:

> We're taught to tell the story as it happened. He definitely does that, but it needs to flow better. I think that the student should start out with more of an outline to tell how the sequence of events goes, and focus on which ones need more information, or what should be actually talked about. We learned that most narratives have an underlying message. Here it's a little confusing to know what the student is trying to tell us. I would definitely make sure that he knows that we need to come to one conclusion on an underlying message. This obviously was something personal to him. He really wanted to explain how he got the snake, and that the party was really a cool idea, or cool thing to happen.

The sequence of the story events, the "underlying message" (theme) of the narrative, and the author's personal connection to the story topic were all features that Taylor was expected to include in the narrative she wrote. In total, she noticed five of the features that were taught in the course.

Five participants noticed between 55% and 64% of the possible narrative features, and Meghan was typical of participants in this category. Even in response to the first prompt, she noticed several features taught in the writing course. For example, she noted the ideas in the writing sample, saying she liked "the reference to the Pokeman stuff." She also commented on the composition's organization and focus. She mentioned "the part where the boy just comes randomly to his house to take the snake. It just came out of nowhere" and "[the title] said 'Reptile Story,' and then it started talking about a party. I was like, 'OK, where is this going?'" During in the writing course, significant attention was given to helping participants generate and focus their ideas for their narrative, and Meghan was able to recognize those features in the child's writing.

In response to the second prompt, Meghan noticed several additional course-related features:

> There was dialogue included. It was all first person, in terms of "I." There's some action stuff like, "I invited," "They made," "They ate." So it wasn't all the "be" verbs that we were talking about. The only thing is that now that it's all in past tense; sometimes narratives are in present tense. Just so that it seems more "in the moment" but now it's like telling a story that happened already.

The features Meghan noted—dialogue, first person, action verbs, and present tense to make readers feel as if the story was "in the moment"—were all features she had been asked to include in her own writing during the course. In total, she noticed seven different course-related features in the child's writing.

Responding to the Writing Sample

Just as the participants noticed more mechanics than narrative features when reading the writing sample, they focused on mechanics more than narrative features when describing how to respond to the student's writing. Fifty-three percent (n=10) suggested responding solely to mechanics rather than the narrative features, and another 42% (n=8) suggested more responses to mechanics than to narrative features. In fact, when describing how they would respond to the writing sample, some participants confused revision and editing. Katie, for example, said

> I would probably sit down with him, break it up paragraph by paragraph and revise it alongside with him and show him these rules of not starting the sentences with "and" or obviously correcting the first opening sentence, sentences like, "and everyone go home and I open all my present." I would revise sentence by sentence for every paragraph.

Although she was clearly focusing her response on editing the mechanical aspects of the writing, Katie described the strategy she suggested as "revis[ing]."

As they framed their responses, participants rarely named specific strategies for teaching. Most used words such as "fixing," and "going over" to describe their next instructional steps. Only 26% (n=5) mentioned anything that might be considered a teaching strategy. Two recommended using an outline, which was not a strategy used during the narrative unit. Four gave examples of the questions they would ask the student, which might occur in a one-on-one writing conference—a strategy the teacher candidates experienced in the writing course. However, beyond that possibility, no one suggested any of the revision strategies they used in class, such as adding strategic details or changing some "be" verbs to action verbs. In fact, even though they focused their next instructional steps on editing, no one suggested any of the editing strategies, such as peer editing or the teacher modeling how to edit, taught in the course.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study both confirm and extend current understandings of the relationship between teachers' writing experiences and their writing instruction. Like several previous studies (Gardner, 2014; Gleeson & Prain, 1996;

Robbins, 1996; Woodard, 2013), our results indicate that writing experiences affect pedagogy to varying degrees and in different ways. The variability in the number of course-related features noticed by the participants—between 27% and 64% of the narrative features visible in the child's writing—suggests that some TCs were better able than others to draw on their experience writing narratives to inform how they read and responded to a child's narrative. This finding converges with Watts and Thompson's (2008) finding that only two of three teachers gained insight into teaching writing by composing in a teacher education course and with Gardner's (2014) finding that only 75% of the teacher candidates made connections between what they experienced as writers in an undergraduate course and their future teaching.

The results also align with research showing that teachers often notice and respond largely to the surface-level features of student writing (Dinnen & Collopy, 2009; Glasswell, Parr, & NcNaughton, 2003; Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdes, & Garnier, 2002). What is significant, though, is that all the TCs in this study had engaged in writing experiences that highlighted content and style over grammar and mechanics. Twenty-five of the 29 class sessions involved TCs in generating content, identifying elements of author's craft, and experimenting with genre features in their writing. Yet, when first asked what they noticed, most identified primarily the child's mechanical errors.

Furthermore, the course emphasized revision over editing. TCs wrote three drafts of their narratives before the final draft and revised some sections as many as four or more times. In contrast, they edited their final drafts once in class and once on their own. Yet, they seemed to frame reading and responding as an editing rather than a revision task. Thus, even after experiencing writing as primarily a process of generating ideas and revising for meaning and genre features, they approached reading and responding with an eye toward editing grammar and mechanics. It seemed, at least initially, that little relationship existed between TCs' writing experiences in course and their pedagogy for reading and responding to student writing.

However, with prompting, most of the participants made a connection between their experience writing a narrative and reading the child's narrative. When explicitly asked to consider what they had learned in the course, 89% noticed at least one feature, beyond grammar and mechanics, that they had included in their own writing, and many noticed numerous additional features. This finding suggests that a relationship between TCs' writing experiences and the pedagogy of reading and responding *did* exist—once it was explicitly prompted. Notably, the single prompt *Think about the features of a narrative that we learned during the writing course. Did you notice the child using any of those features in this writing?* seemed to help most of the participants draw on their writing experiences as a source of

insight about the child's composition. The simplicity of the prompt and the difference it made in TCs' abilities to notice genre features in the child's writing suggests that it might not be difficult to help novice teachers draw on their writing experiences in their writing instruction—if teacher educators are explicit about how to make those connections.

What surprised us about these findings is that we thought the *Writing for Elementary Educators* course *had* been explicit about the relationship between the writing experiences and TCs' future instruction. As TCs wrote, they discussed how and why the strategies they used were applicable to elementary classrooms, how the minilessons and mentor text activities could be used with children, and what they would teach children about writing narratives. Why did they not initially draw on these insights to inform how they read and responded? It is possible that their many previous school experiences led them to read and respond in the way that teachers had read and responded to their writing (Lortie, 1975). It is also possible that, because this was the first time most of them had engaged in a teaching task related to writing, they needed an explicit cue to draw on their writing experiences. However, the fact that they did not initially use those experiences to inform their reading and responding caused us to re-think our assumptions about the relationship between the writing that occurred in the course and the pedagogy of reading and responding to student writing.

In an effort to better understand the findings, we turned to research on the knowledge needed for teaching. This research, often undertaken in science (e.g. Schneider & Plasman, 2011) and mathematics (e.g. Hill, Ball, & Schilling, 2008) education, has identified different domains of teacher knowledge that we believe are useful for understanding what writing experiences do, and do not, contribute to teachers' writing instruction. Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) argued that six domains of knowledge undergird mathematics teaching, four of which seem relevant for clarifying the relationship between writing and teaching writing: common content knowledge, specialized content knowledge, knowledge of content and students, and knowledge of content and teaching.

Common content knowledge (CCK) is applicable in settings other than teaching. In the case of writing, it is the knowledge used when composing emails, personal writing, or other everyday texts. Specialized content knowledge (SCK), in contrast, is unique to teaching. In writing, it might include knowing how to craft genre features, such as dialogue, that children must incorporate into their school writing—features that are not typically used in everyday writing situations. It might also include metacognitive knowledge about the writing process, knowledge that might be implicit for non-teachers but that teachers must make explicit for students. Knowledge of content and students (KCS) integrates knowledge of students with knowledge about content and includes such things as knowing children's typical

patterns of understanding and common misconceptions at various points of development. For writing, it might consist of knowledge of the features that 1st graders typically include in their persuasive texts or knowing what is challenging about organizing ideas into a logical sequence. Finally, knowledge of content and teaching (KCT) combines content knowledge with teaching knowledge. For writing instruction, KCT might include knowledge of how help children generate appropriate content for their compositions or how to help them learn to evaluate and revise their own writing.

Arguably, any writing experience provides opportunities for teachers to develop their common knowledge about writing (CCK)—a general understanding of the writing process and how to generate usable text—while intentionally designed writing experiences, such as those in the *Writing for Elementary Educators* course, can provide opportunities to develop specialized knowledge (SCK) that might be useful for teaching. However, engaging in writing, even in situations designed to develop teachers' SCK, does not necessarily offer opportunities to develop knowledge of content and students (KCS) or knowledge of content of teaching (KCT). This may particularly be true for novice teachers who have few experiences with students or teaching, so it is difficult for them to expand the CCK and SCK they gain through writing experiences into the KCS or KCT necessary to teach writing.

As we considered the results of this study through the lens of "knowledge for teaching writing," we realized that the *Writing for Elementary Educators* course focused on developing TCs' common content knowledge (CCK) and specialized content knowledge (SCK), but less so on developing knowledge of content and students (KCS) or knowledge of content and teaching (KCT)—which might explain why they did not initially draw on their writing experiences to inform their reading and responding. Reading and responding requires KCS and KCT (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018), domains of knowledge these TCs had fewer opportunities to acquire. However, the fact that, after prompting, they did draw on their knowledge of narratives to look for narrative features in the child's writing suggests that the prompt may have sparked the emergence of a type of KCS—an understanding that the child included developmentally appropriate narrative features in his text. While this explanation is speculative, it does offer a way to understand why a single, simple prompt seemed to make such a dramatic difference in how the participants read and responded to the child's narrative.

Framing our conception of teaching writing through common content knowledge (CCK), specialized content knowledge (SCK), knowledge of content and students (KCS), and knowledge of content and teaching (KCT) is useful for writing teacher educators for several reasons. First, related to the question about the relationship between writing and teaching writing that was the focus of this study,

it allows us to explain why writing experiences do play an important role in teachers' pedagogy. It is difficult to imagine how, other than engaging in writing, teachers would develop the CCK or SCK they need to teach writing. The idea that "writing teachers must write" is valid in that it describes how teachers can gain some of the knowledge domains necessary for effective writing instruction. Furthermore, understanding writing experiences as developing CCK or SCK allows us to clearly articulate what writing can and cannot contribute to teachers' writing instruction.

Second, conceptualizing a difference between common content knowledge (CCK) and specialized content knowledge (SCK) demonstrates why teachers need specialized writing experiences. The situation we studied was unique in that the university required a writing course that allowed TCs to develop SCK for teaching writing. Often, though, TCs take only a "Composition 101" course as part of their general education requirements. However, those writing experiences are unlikely to provide the SCK teachers need because they do not ensure TCs write the genres they will teach or use writing strategies similar to the ones their students would use. These courses also rarely make explicit the metacognitive knowledge about writing that teachers must explain to students. While some TCs might be able to transform CCK into SCK on their own, it seems important to provide intentional opportunities for them to develop the SCK needed for writing instruction.

Third, recognizing that effective writing instruction requires common content knowledge (CCK), specialized content knowledge (SCK), knowledge of content and students (KCS), and knowledge of content and teaching (KCT) provides a framework for ensuring TCs have opportunities to develop all aspects of the knowledge they need to teach writing. Often, writing teacher educators must try to develop TCs' SCK, KCS, and KCT in a single methods course—one frequently devoted to both reading and writing instruction (Myers et al., 2016). An awareness of the different domains of knowledge for teaching writing can help teacher educators carefully plan to address each domain in an efficient, systematic way.

Although conceptualizing what writing teachers must know through the domains of common content knowledge (CCK), specialized content knowledge (SCK), knowledge of content and students (KCS), and knowledge of content and teaching (KCT) holds promise, more research and theorization is needed. Subject areas such as math and science have long traditions of conceptualizing and researching the knowledge needed for teaching, but little such work exists for writing. Our previous study (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018) provided empirical evidence that KCS and KCT undergird reading and responding, but more research is needed to establish the knowledge domains that support other specific pedagogies as well as how the different domains interact when teaching. Furthermore, we have argued here that specialized writing experiences offer a way

to develop teachers' SCK for writing instruction, but it would be useful to further identify what specific understandings SCK might entail and how teacher educators could design writing experiences that most effectively develop it.

This is a small study, and one of its limitation is the small number of participants. The 19 TCs who participated are not necessarily representative of all TCs, though demographically they reflected the majority of elementary teachers in the U.S.: largely female, white, and middle class. In addition, we examined only a small slice of their potential writing pedagogy—reading and responding to an unknown student's narrative—that approximated a typical pedagogical task. However, we argue that this sort of approximation is useful for investigating the developing pedagogy of very novice teachers who have had few opportunities to work with children. Despite these limitations, the results of this study do provide additional evidence about the relationship between writing and writing instruction, and our interpretation of the results offers a potentially productive way to conceptualize what writing teachers must know and how to prepare them to be effective writing instructors.

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