

CHAPTER 4.

USING COMPOSITE NARRATIVES
TO EXPLORE WRITING
TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT
ACROSS THEIR CAREERS

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This chapter details our (four teacher educators') narrative inquiry study designed to investigate the following question: What is the developmental growth trajectory of writing pedagogy and content knowledge for K-12 in-service teachers? Interested in lifespan writing research, we aimed to understand writing teachers' development of pedagogical content knowledge of writing (PCKW), which encompasses writing teachers' understandings of what discipline-specific content to teach and how to teach it. Effective writing teachers have a profound impact on students' lifespan writing development (Murphy & Smith, 2018). Teachers enrich students' writing development through their instruction, influence, and identity as a writer, teacher-writer, and/or teacher of writing. We describe the steps we took to explore K-12 writing teachers' trajectories using an empirically and aesthetically powerful and flexible method: composite narratives, hereafter identified as composites. This narrative inquiry method permitted an exploration of shared experiences that highlighted K-12 writing teachers' development of PCKW.¹

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When teachers apply pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in their instruction, they thread together pertinent content and effective pedagogy to meet students' learning needs (Shulman, 1986; 1987); extending this research, Shulman and Shulman (2004) evolved the notion of PCK from an individualistic to a community focus. As teachers gain contextualized experience with PCK within communities, they acquire a growing sense of pedagogical content knowing (PCKg) defined as "*a teacher's integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning*" (Cochran et al., 1993, p. 266, italics in original). PCK or PCKg of writing addresses "the control of two crafts, teaching and writing" (Graves, 1983, p. 56). Along with Parr et al. (2007), Houghton et al. (2006) were some of the early scholars to write about pedagogical content knowledge of writing as "the special language of writing" and "how to enact that language" in the practice of teaching (p. 12). Writing teachers need a deep understanding of this pedagogical content knowledge of writing (PCKW) to support students' writing development (Parr et al., 2007).

K–12 WRITING TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT

As writing teacher educators, we want preservice and in-service teachers to develop strong teacher-writer or writer-teacher identities to support their students' writing development (Cremin & Oliver, 2017). Unfortunately, most K–12 teachers are never required to take a writing methods course (Morgan & Pytash, 2014) even though scholars advocate for required writing methods courses in undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs (National Commission on Writing, 2003; Sanders et al., 2020). Graham (2019) states many teachers do not teach writing well due to a lack of systemic structures designed to provide them with thorough preparation and ongoing learning opportunities to develop high-quality writing instruction across their careers.

Additional support for writing teachers may include both formal and informal learning opportunities. Formally, engaging with professional organizations such as the National Writing Project assists teachers in developing voice, ownership, and agency in their professional lives (Whitney, 2009). Informally, some teachers choose self-selected professional development (PD) that influences their instructional practices (Limbrick et al., 2010). Engaging in PD across a career span is necessary because just as students develop their writing skills year to year, teachers must also continue to develop their PCKW. Learning to write and learning how to teach writing take time (Schmidt, 1998). Every new context "makes new demands and requires new learning," and writers and writing teachers will need "time to

develop” and become familiar with the new expectations (Bazerman et al., 2018, p. 43). Because teachers are resilient, they work to formally and informally gain the experiences they need to develop as writing teachers. Understanding the various avenues teachers may take to develop PCKW is important for facilitating teachers’ growth intentionally, thus our focus on exploring the developmental growth trajectory of PCKW for K–12 in-service teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Using composites (Willis, 2019), we drew upon teachers’ stories of their professional learning experiences to understand the key components, critical events, significant actors, and transformational actions that led to their learning. As writing teacher educators, we believe story is a way of knowing and a method for conducting humanizing and humanized research; therefore, we used a narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that provided the “methodological flexibility . . . to meet the challenge of understanding writing through the lifespan,” namely K–12 writing teachers’ careers as they develop PCKW (Dippre & Phillips, 2020, p. 247).

In order to explore writing teachers’ developmental processes, we synthesized 19 teachers’ growth stories in four composites, presented in the findings. The data analysis and representation method are detailed in the previous chapter. Here, we briefly overview the methods and focus on the findings.

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

We invited 41 teachers, nominated by their colleagues as exemplary writing teachers (which we intentionally left open to the nominator’s interpretation of what constituted exemplary), to participate in the study. Twenty-seven teachers responded with interest, and 19 met our criteria as current K–12 classroom writing teachers. The 19 participants—four males and 15 females—taught four to 36 years, across ten states of the US, with teaching placements in nine high schools, three middle schools, and four elementary schools. We did not collect additional demographic data. Additionally, although the teachers permitted us to use their names, we chose to use pseudonyms to provide anonymity, a decision explained in the findings.

These 19 teachers consented and were interviewed in February–March 2021. We used the initial, semi-structured interviews to elicit stories about the teachers’ experiences of learning to teach writing from their preservice education through their current practices. Our goal for the interviews was “to ensure that the narratives we collected had a biographical arc” that conveyed “developmental

trajectories” (Knappick, 2020, p. 73). Donovan et al. (2023) detail the interview questions. The interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Additionally, we asked participants to complete a qualitative reading-response activity in which teachers read, responded to, and ranked our four composite narratives according to details with which they resonated most.

DATA ANALYSIS

As researchers in different locations across the US, we met for two hours weekly via Zoom to share analytic insights, develop analytic memos about the significant narrative elements of teachers’ experiences, and discuss and debate emerging findings. Our shared value of narrative ethics guided our analysis. In research that elicits narrative, Adams (2008) asserts it would be wrong to categorize or de-personalize accounts in presenting the data: “We must not approach stories with a prescription or typology for analysis; an evaluation of narrative must remain contingent on the stories, authors, and audiences as they interact” (p. 179). We kept this goal central as we transcribed and analyzed interviews.

Initially, each interview was open coded first by the interviewer and then by a second researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) applying four “commonplaces of narrative” to explore the teachers’ stories across their careers: temporality (time aspects), sociality (characters/actors), physicality (places), and continuity (chains of events) (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). In open coding, we used line-by-line micro analysis, coding for actions, actors, places, milestones, changes in thinking or practice, and any experiential moment that seemed important to each teacher’s learning-teaching journey.

As a group, we continued to open code the interviews and wrote analytic memos to develop an intimate knowledge of the narratives and triangulated emerging conclusions. We discussed any discrepancies in our individual understandings of the data and how we defined narrative elements. Once we reached agreement, we charted in a data table each teacher’s narrative elements, including settings, protagonists, antagonists, characteristics, and critical events. We maintained a sense of the whole by memoing the narrative elements of teachers’ experiences. As we analyzed our memos, patterns emerged across teachers that resulted in us grouping teachers with similar trajectories. We grappled with how to represent each teacher’s trajectory. Like Brandt (2001), we did not see individuals as the unit of analysis; rather, we focused on critical events and actors to identify the forces at work in their teaching trajectories. We created a matrix to chart each teacher’s major influential experiences, critical events, protagonists, and antagonists. We turned to composite narratives to represent the shared and divergent dimensions of the teachers’ experiences (Willis, 2019).

To create the composites, we grouped the open codes (using Dedoose) by the major experiences and influences in the teachers' trajectories. Each composite included four to five teachers who had similar timelines, social conditions that influenced their trajectories, actors or agents of change, and/or physical spaces that contributed to growth events. We created smaller matrices of critical events, attributes, and relevant quotations for each composite narrative group to keep our composites grounded in the teachers' stories.

Our aim was not to distinguish between individuals but to investigate how teachers came to and continue to become "exemplary" writing teachers. Thus, we found composites presented a compelling way to study the 19 individual stories and maintain cohesiveness through teachers' shared narrative arcs. Each of us wrote a first draft of a composite in third person voice to story four to five teachers' shared critical elements and themes to synthesize their teaching experiences. We added quotations from interview transcripts representative of the teachers' shared narrative experiences or attributes. Then we each read, revised, and edited the composites so that they represented our collective understanding. Composite narratives provided us with a generative and useful approach for exploring our research inquiry.

Because the composites highlighted the teachers' shared experiences in narrative format and provided a prime opportunity to conduct member-checking, we added another data collection step. Rather than conducting a second interview as initially anticipated, we asked teachers to complete an open-ended survey that acted as a reader-response activity. Eleven of the 19 teachers we interviewed completed this activity. We believe teachers' Fall 2021 workload while returning to the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic factored into the 58 percent response rate.

We first wrote the composites without verbatim language that teachers would easily identify as "theirs," because we wanted them to focus on the overall story, trajectory, and critical events. In the activity, teachers read each composite, without any direct quotes, and responded to questions about their personal resonance with each character's experiences. Teachers included phrases or details that illustrated their connections or differences. Then, they ranked the composites from one (most identified with) to four (least identified with) and provided explanations for their rankings. We charted the teachers' activity results in a data table to further explore their developmental growth trajectory of PCKW.

FINDINGS

The following composites of Alex, Melanie, Peyton, and Sam represent the 19 teachers' experiences as they iteratively learned to be effective writing teachers.

Each composite synthesizes four to five teachers' critical events sequenced across their career trajectories that shaped their writing-teacher development. All narrative details stemmed from one or more of the teachers represented in that composite, and direct quotes were included within the following findings to integrate the participants' voices, feelings, impressions, and tensions.

ALEX

Alex didn't necessarily plan to become a teacher, even though teaching in some form runs in the family. For undergrad, she studied communications where she did a lot of writing but spent a few years in the business world before finding her way to teaching. She moved to a new state where there was a teacher shortage and saw that she could get a provisional certificate while teaching, and so she did it. However, she would move a few more times before finding a school that was a good fit. She stated, "It was so hard, and I didn't feel supported or even know what I was doing. And I felt I was becoming somebody else . . . but at this school, I make sense here."

At first, Alex adopted writing practices she saw happening in her department—the five-paragraph essay and the traits-based rubric: "At that point in my career teaching writing, I feel it was very prescriptive. . . . I now view it as pretty formulaic and not authentic. It was guided by prompts that were not created by me, were not created for my specific students." When she was assigned the AP (Advanced Placement) literature course the second year, her colleague urged her to take advantage of the district's PD stipend to attend the local AP summer institute, where she learned some strategies for literary analysis. She stated, "The district sent me to a one-day training, which gave me a framework and a language for actually talking about writing with my students. . . . My training in college didn't prepare me for this." This intensive PD offered Alex much needed resources to support her students in critical reading and analytic writing, but she had also begun following educators on social media and had ideas of integrating peer feedback and blogging. Alex's principal noticed her creative take on the district's ideas and the student engagement that followed, so she was invited to do some teacher training in the district. The more she worked with colleagues, the better she understood that the focus of writing needed to be on the students and on supporting their individual progression.

So, in the subsequent years, Alex began self-PD, reading books and continuing to follow social media for the latest idea. She stated, "I'm self-taught. And I read everything. So, I bought every book that my budget would allow. . . . Some of my mentors are actually from books. . . . I just go find what I need." While some colleagues began to attend national and local conferences, she just didn't

have a lot of time for that given her growing family and side jobs. Throughout her teaching career, Alex would occasionally teach a class at the local college or run a community writing workshop. This engagement with different learning spaces and post-high school students offered Alex perspective on what writers in different stages of their lives may need from and experience through writing.

Last year, Alex found a new model for high school curriculum that offered an alternative to AP scope and sequence. This approach was more of a balance of reading and writing experiences that centered student choice and process over “covering” a set series of tasks. Alex proposed to her principal to buy her department a book so they could, together, begin to make shifts in their program. She stated, “One of the most revolutionary things for my life as a writing teacher I have seen is taking a skills-based approach and not necessarily a product-based approach. . . . I have seen more authentic writing for my students. . . . We are able to talk more about their writing lives and where they start out in the year and then where they end up.” She is so happy to have the support of her principal but would likely do it on her own anyway.

After a number of years in teaching, Alex, in some ways, feels like she is just finding her stride, understanding how the five-paragraph essay structure and Six Traits offer a framework that makes sense if the focus of writing is on the product and skills. From her teacher training, Alex was missing knowledge of how to develop writers’ identities and a capacity to make choices that writers need to make in school but also beyond. She is excited to navigate this book study and program shift with her department and students, but she continues to keep an eye out for other resources centered around her local school community. “We’re trying to cultivate a life of writing here, we’re trying to cultivate you as a writer and everyone can be a writer . . . as a daily practice that also includes conversation, that includes making mistakes, that includes making edits and changes and revisions. That you’re not in trouble for having to make edits. That’s part of the messy, beautiful process of writing.”

MELANIE

Melanie remembers positive experiences as a writer in her elementary and secondary school years, including an influential English teacher who encouraged her to keep writing. She chose English education as her college major because she enjoyed reading and writing and felt confident in those areas. Melanie has taught in the same school for nine years. She is one of the more experienced teachers at the school and has taken on some of the curriculum leadership work. “I’m one of the only teachers who’s still here from when I started,” she says. “So, I have my hand in a little bit in every curriculum.” The AP Literature students,

12th graders, are her favorite group to teach because they are equally as motivated as she is to engage in the reading and writing assignments. She also teaches 11th grade Language Arts and Literature and a “below level/remedial” Language Arts class.

Thinking back to her teacher preparation program, Melanie had a writing methods course, but the content is barely memorable. Most of her classes were literature classes focused on literature analysis. Instead, her student-teaching mentor and her colleague mentor have been her most influential writing teachers and helped Melanie work through pedagogical problems as they arose. She still uses many writing lesson ideas she learned from her mentors. “A mentor taught me a way of writing research papers using index cards for source cards. You would write one quote on one side, and then by the time you’re done reading all your sources, you have all these little index cards with different ideas. And then, it was just a matter of sorting them into categories, and your research paper came to life from that.” Having little memorable preparation in writing instruction led to a fair amount of struggle during her first few years of teaching. “I had to teach them and go back and teach myself analytical writing. Because they would write the most vague analysis, and I knew when I read it that something was wrong, but I had to go back and teach myself, why is that wrong? Why is that not quite hitting right?” Not only did she have to re-teach herself the ins and outs of academic, analytic, and argumentative writing, but she also had to figure out how to teach it to students at a variety of skill levels in an engaging manner.

Her instructional scope and sequence are fairly pre-determined with the literature anthology and novels that are part of the AP curriculum or the British literature historically taught. Most assignments are based on genres or skills that are on the AP exam and the kinds of literature-based analytic writing or argumentative writing that students are tested on, but she wants to begin including more creative nonfiction and fiction writing assignments. Melanie doesn’t usually write on her own time for personal enjoyment, but when students are given an essay assignment, she writes to the prompt with them and models her thinking for students. She also demonstrates choices in sentence structure and teaches sentence style as a focal point in her grammar instruction.

She believes it is important for students to be familiar with the academic essay structure, which often takes a five-paragraph essay form. “When I first started teaching writing, I said I was never going to teach the five-paragraph essay, ever, and that lasted—not very long—because I realized that students needed that simple structure.” Templates or structures like outlining the main idea and three details of a nonfiction essay, or including a claim/assertion, warrant, evidence, and examples for argument, are mainstays of her writing instruction and help

students who struggle to get their ideas on paper. There have been significant moments of reflection on her practice that have led to strategic changes in her instruction, including a move to help students be more independent writers who are less reliant on her as writers. Her instruction has evolved to include more explicit teaching of writing devices such as hooking the reader with a particular opener or backing up a claim as well as an explicit understanding of how to draw conclusions that answer the questions of “so what?” and “why?.” Now, she gets excited about seeing students’ aha-moments and writing breakthroughs and seeing their confidence grow as writers and skilled grammar users. She enjoys seeing them start to take on ownership of their revisions and help their peers problem solve in their writing. “What I love about asking them questions and offering them advice is that they will get to the point where they will offer up their own solutions. And . . . they just puzzle it out on their own.” She believes students need to be able to write clear and compelling arguments using an academic essay structure for their success in college and participation as active citizens.

Advanced PD isn’t accessible in her rural school community, with no nearby university or National Writing Project site. National Board Certification is accessible, however, and she is in the midst of that reflective process. She is also beginning to engage in process-oriented PD by reading books like Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher’s *180 Days* with colleagues and implementing conferencing and other approaches. Melanie plans to keep teaching for the foreseeable future. She loves being in the classroom; her students make each day interesting. Without them, what would she have to talk about with her friends and family?

PEYTON

Peyton identifies with the teachers as writers, teacher-writer, and/or writer-teacher philosophy inherent in teacher writing groups such as the National Writing Project and TeachWrite. She found writing communities to be supportive, not only for her writer identity, but also for her lived experiences. She stated, “The writing group that we write with on a weekly basis . . . that’s probably been the most significant, for me as a writer, that’s impacting how I instruct as a teacher, as a writing teacher.”

She would love to attend more writing sessions if time and opportunity would permit, but each session attended has added to her writerly experiences. She trusts serendipity to open writing opportunities, in-person or virtually, but did she discover the opportunities because she always loved writing or because she taught writing? Which identity centers her professionally and/or personally? She stated, “You don’t say, ‘I’m a teacher who writes,’ or ‘I’m a teacher writer’; you’re a teacher and you’re a writer.”

Childhood writing experiences such as school projects, writing festivals, or entering and maybe winning writing contests provided a strong foundation from which her writer identity stems. Peyton stated, “I think, for me, as someone who has always written since I was little, I still have books from when I was in elementary school, and I’ll show them to my kids.” Peyton has always enjoyed writing, aside from moments when a teacher, elementary through higher education, may not have given her the grades or feedback she felt she deserved. Still, she persevered, holding true to her voice as teacher-as-writer/teacher-writer/writer-teacher. She gravitated toward writing and loved reading and learning about published authors.

As she learned to be a teacher, she would have enjoyed a writing methods course in her undergraduate or graduate teacher preparation program, but such opportunities were not made available. Still, because of her love for writing, she felt confident teaching writing. She modeled her messy writing process to be transparent and to show her students that the reciprocal writing process is hard work for everyone. She emphasized revision throughout the writing process. She stated, “I think you have to be a writer to be a writing teacher.”

She helped her students write about topics that mattered to them within genres she had to teach. She loved conferencing with her students, learning about the stories and topics that were important to them as individuals. She aimed to make writing as authentic as possible, ensuring the purpose and audience of her students’ writing expanded beyond the four walls of her classroom. She encouraged students to submit their writing to contests, magazines, the school’s publications, the local newspaper, or any authentic publication opportunity. She stated, “I’m trying to become a published author. I have a couple of manuscripts I’m working on. They’ve been rejected a bunch of times, and I tell my students that I’m willing to take risks. I want you too as well.” Supporting her students in seeking publication was rewarding, albeit the feedback process was a challenge she struggled to balance. Yet, still, she persevered.

In some seasons of life, she can focus more on who she is as a writer, while in other seasons, especially when the grading load is daunting, she focuses on her role as teacher. But when she teaches, she cannot help but model her writer identity, which informs how she teaches writing and impacts how her students view her as a writer. She stated, “I want to publish a novel and be able to give a shout out to my students, like in the acknowledgments or something, because I don’t think I would have continued to push myself if it weren’t for those students who got excited for me.” She would love to spend her time writing instead of providing feedback to her students, but she lives inspired by her students’ writing, which motivates her to continue to write. She wants to nourish her students’ writing identities to help her students understand the importance of not

only writing, but most importantly, the choice and need to identify as writers. She knows she teaches writing well because she knows what it means to live a writer's life.

Peyton dreams of publishing her own work. She embraces her writer identity within her genres of choice, for the purposes she chooses, for the audiences she seeks to influence, even if the audience is only herself. She awaits news of an acceptance for the piece she submitted recently, a piece she is confident will influence her audience. For now, living a writer's life is rewarding, even if she hasn't succeeded in publishing, yet. Still, she blogs, she journals, she reflects, and she writes, because not writing leaves a hole within the center of who she is, personally and professionally. And so, she writes.

SAM

Sam has been teaching for quite a while. Growing up, Sam thought about being a writer since that is truly what provided sanity and an escape from the hardships of life, but Sam ended up pursuing teaching.

There is a fire inside of Sam. It pushes Sam to be persistent and prevents him from taking no for an answer. Sam often pushes back when things do not go the way he thinks they should go. Sometimes this is well received; other times it is not. Over the years, Sam's confidence and voice have grown stronger and although he is now nearing the end of a teaching career, Sam has yet to give up and settle. It is, at times, exhausting. He shared, "I see retirement in four or five years, but that's okay because that's not going to stop me. So, between now and then, I will continue to be uncompromising. I don't intend to ever lessen my expectations. I don't ever intend to compromise on what to expect from kids."

Although Sam felt like he did not always fit in with his colleagues, he stayed strong in his belief that he must continue to teach in a way that benefits students. The role of choice in Sam's teaching has always been key. Sam shared his experience with choice as a student saying, "The fact that we could write about whatever we wanted to really ignited a sense of love of writing. I always appreciated words, but that ignited a huge sense of writing for me." Sam wants to develop students' love of writing, so they feel like he did about writing growing up. Sam values the writing process but knows that the product shows evidence to his students that they are, in fact, writers. That is why Sam encourages his students to enter writing contests, and over the years, his students have done quite well.

About mid-career, a principal suggested Sam present the information from a PD he led at a state literacy conference. Sam put in a proposal and it was accepted, much to his surprise. Sam loved talking to teachers about teaching almost as much as he loved teaching students. This started a pattern of presenting at state

and eventually national conferences. However, Sam's colleagues didn't understand—why go to the extra trouble of presenting? Why can't he just be happy doing what they were doing? He shared, "I think I've been true to my style of teaching to the best of my knowledge, but I think there's always that pressure early on to do what all the other teachers are doing."

Over the years, Sam has hosted numerous student teachers. He sees that he learns as much from them as they learn from him. In particular, his understanding and use of technology have grown exponentially from working with student teachers. For example, Sam stated, "using Google Classroom where their document I can enter at any moment, and we can talk through their piece. It has allowed such collaboration between student and teacher." Sam embeds various technology tools into his teaching in authentic ways, allowing his students to experience the various purposes of writing that he hopes are not only school based but also personal.

Due to a long career, Sam is at the top of the pay scale and has no intention of leaving the district. Although he did not choose to earn another degree, Sam kept moving forward in terms of professional growth, finding mentors while attending conferences and through networking on social media. In addition, Sam never considered moving into higher education or becoming a principal, although many have described him as a natural leader. Sam recently began writing professionally and has published a few articles in academic journals. He shared, "About five years ago, I started writing myself, at first just for myself, but then, about writing pedagogy and then, people started to read it slowly, but surely, and so, that's been a lot of fun to do that now." This work has been well received, and it compels Sam to engage in continued inquiry. Plus, he loves sharing what he knows about teaching with other educators. When attending conferences, Sam makes sure to connect with other teachers. That is how he met the co-author of the first book he is now writing. Sam truly values the interdependence of both scholar and teacher identities.

READER-RESPONSE ACTIVITY: CONNECTING TO THE COMPOSITES

As writing teacher educator researchers, we were curious if the composites we created would resonate with the teachers whose narratives were embedded in them, so we asked the teachers to order the composites from one to four, most identified to least identified with, respectively, and provide a written explanation of their rankings. Per Table 4.1, of the 11 teachers who completed the reader-response activity, the following is evident: (a) 45 percent ranked the research-team-identified composite as most strongly resonating with their own experiences (five teachers); (b)

37 percent chose the research-team-identified composite as the second most relatable composite (four teachers); and (c) 18 percent ranked the research-team-identified composite as the third most relatable composite (two teachers). Because some teachers connected more strongly with a different composite than the one in which we represented their story, we chose to use pseudonyms to convey our analytic agency and rendering of the final composites.

The reader-response activity provided an opportunity for us, as researchers, to see if the composites we created truly were a synthesis of the teachers' individual experiences. Since nine teachers resonated strongly with the research-team-identified composite as first or second, we felt confident that our composites accurately represented the teachers' experiences and provided a valuable member-checking method. If, for example, none, or very few, of the teachers had identified themselves in a composite, as a research team we would have revised the composite to better represent the teachers' experiences. Overall, the reader-response activity allowed the teachers the opportunity to affirm whether or not the composites' data reflected their views, feelings, and experiences with teaching writing, thus, improving the findings' accuracy and credibility.

Table 4.1. Research-Team and Teacher Composite Identification

Teacher (Pseudonym)	Research-Team-Identified Composite	Self-identified Composite Ranking
Alexandra	Alex	Melanie, Alex, Sam, Peyton
Ester	Melanie	Melanie, Sam, Alex, Peyton
Katie	Melanie	Melanie, Alex, Sam, Peyton
Ann	Melanie	Sam, Melanie, Alex, Peyton
Doris	Peyton	Peyton, Sam, Alex, Melanie
Heather	Peyton	Sam, Alex, Peyton, Melanie
Jolynne	Peyton	Sam, Peyton, Alex, Melanie
Samantha	Peyton	Sam, Alex, Peyton, Melanie
Chelsey	Sam	Alex, Sam, Peyton, Melanie
Drew	Sam	Sam, Peyton, Alex, Melanie
Michael	Sam	Sam, Peyton, Alex, Melanie

Several teachers saw themselves strongly represented in two or more composites, indicating that these narratives collectively, rather than individually or typologically, describe writing teachers' trajectories. To illustrate, Jolynne stated:

There were aspects of each teacher that felt like me (almost like each one was a "that's me"), except for the last . . . I'm

really a combination of . . . three. I have moved the furthest from Melanie's approach, which seems solidly traditional and geared toward an outcome of placement rather than individual student growth.

Connecting with two of the four composites, Doris stated that, like Peyton, she enjoys "writing in community . . . conferencing with [her] scholars and reading their writing." Doris shares Sam's passion for teaching, choice to advocate for students, and connection with social media. Heather stated, "I feel like Peyton and Melanie are more structured in their teaching whereas I felt more connected to Sam and Alex who seemed a bit more led by passion." Ann stated, "Sam and Melanie both reminded me of beliefs and practices I have as an educator." This phenomenon of finding oneself in multiple composites shows that these PD pathways are not discrete or exclusive of one another. While the composites were assessed as resonating and representative by the teachers, most felt their experiences were broader than one composite, indicating that the composites provide insights as separate narratives and as a collective account, an anthology of sorts, of writing teacher development. We anticipate future research with additional participants will reveal new and complementary composite experiences.

DISCUSSION

Learning to write and learning how to teach writing are journeys that require "well-practiced and deeply understood capacities working together . . . that can vary in their realization and developmental trajectories from one individual to another" (Bazerman et al., 2018, p. 16). To support K–12 in-service teachers through their individual developmental growth trajectory of PCKW, this study's findings highlight three key ideas that warrant further discussion: (a) PD requires an intersection with people and events that bring about changes, (b) PCKW empowers teachers to move away from scripted curricula and toward writing engagements that foster student choice and voice for authentic audiences, and (c) teacher identities are networked across activities in mutually nurturing ways for teachers and students.

Our data showed teachers are resilient, willing to work with available opportunities; however, especially when teachers are not provided necessary preparation, stakeholders need to facilitate networking opportunities, access to PD (Graham, 2019), and participation in writing communities (Whitney, 2009). To support K–12 teachers' PCKW development, teacher educators, teachers, and administrators must intentionally facilitate positive-change events for writing teachers across their careers. As writing teachers develop their teaching

repertoire, their views toward writing instruction evolve, impacting their PCKW development. Bazerman et al. (2018) describe teachers' development as a process of reorganizing or realigning one's experiences and knowledge in a way that results in an action, change effort, and/or a new relationship with writing, not simply a measurable achievement. Because "writing trajectories are complex and ultimately highly individual," teachers need opportunities for positive-change events to impact their identities as writers and their self-efficacy for teaching writing (Bazerman, 2019, p. 327).

These positive-change events must extend to teacher preparation programming. Graham (2019) stated colleges need to "become a reliable and trusted partner in improving writing instruction in the future" (p. 298). We argue teacher education programs must empower preservice and in-service teachers to teach writing strategies and processes while they also develop as writers. For better or worse, ideally better, students' writing trajectories are intimately connected to teachers' writing trajectories (Murphy & Smith, 2018). Teachers need to nurture a writerly teacher identity beyond their initial teacher preparation programs and into their career trajectories to enrich their students' writing development.

Our findings also suggest that as teachers experience positive-change events, grow their teaching repertoire, and claim a writer identity, they are empowered to move away from prescriptive curricula. As Murphy and Smith (2018) identify, "[T]eachers play a critical role as the key architects in designing or remodeling curriculum for their students" (p. 228). As teachers gain PCKW, they move toward writing curricula and engagements that foster student choice and voice for authentic audiences. This study illustrates that as teachers and students engage with authentic writing curricula with conferencing, feedback, and support as a classroom writing community, teachers and students reciprocally develop their writer identities.

Writerly identities need to be supported within classrooms across teachers' career spans, which in turn supports teachers' and students' lifespan writing development. For example, although Alex was not taught how to develop writers' identities in her teacher preparation program, she read books to learn how to teach "the messy, beautiful process of writing" that requires her students to make mistakes, revise, edit, and converse about writing as writers. Melanie's teachers supported her writer identity as a child and her mentors supported her identity as a writing teacher who empowers students to take ownership of their writing. Peyton always loved writing and identifies as a teacher-writer, an identity she uses to support her students' active engagement with authentic writing opportunities. Sam rekindled his love for writing as he taught his students to live as writers. Inspired by his students, Sam's writing evolved into writing for teachers. Thus, across their career spans and through their PCKW, these teachers

impacted their own and, at least, the initial stages of their students' lifespan writing development.

Our data also showcase how teachers' writer identities—teacher-writers, writer-teachers, teacher-scholars—are networked across contexts. Contexts for writers' lives include myriad elements such as place, histories, development, genres, culture, experiences, and relationships (Bazerman, 2019). Ivanič (2006) argued, "People's identities are networked across the activities in which they participate" (p. 26); thus, varied experiences across teachers' careers need to be orchestrated to develop their writer identities related to their "own beliefs and practices" (Locke, 2017, p. 135). Through such social contexts, teachers as writers and teachers of writing experience positive-change events that help them continually evolve and re-construct their teaching repertoires to impact their own and their students' writing development (Dippre, 2019). "Writing and teaching are . . . intertwined, essential ways to construct meaning in life" (Schmidt, 1998, p. xi). Our data support the notion that teachers' beliefs and practices connect with their teacher identities across their career span, but those identities are strongly influenced by and developed through networking opportunities and critical life events; therefore, time in the field must include intersections with people and positive-change events that influence writing teachers' and students' developmental change.

IMPLICATIONS

USING COMPOSITES AS RESEARCHERS

We aimed to understand 19 writing teachers' shared narrative arcs across their developmental growth trajectories. Because nine teachers ranked the research-identified composite as first or second in the reader-response activity, we felt the data speak to the commonalities across teachers' experiences and/or PD needs, even though trajectories were different.

Based on our analysis of the reader-response activity data, we contemplated revising the composites because some teachers focused on narrow details as their reason(s) for not connecting with the research-team-identified composite. For example, Ann did not connect with Melanie's composite due to specific details such as rural education and National Board certification, even though the research team used her data to craft, in part, Melanie's composite. We felt inherent tension in deciding whether or not we should remove such distracting details that inhibited some teachers from identifying with a composite as a whole. Ultimately, we decided to not edit the composites for this study.

We believe composites highlight the varied trajectories teachers experience. Teachers connected with multiple composites, even though their data were used to

support the crafting of one composite. Certainly, we did not expect every teacher to connect with each composite, but Samantha resonated with three composites. Like Alex, she engaged in self-selected PD on her own. She connected most with Sam's personality and years of experience. Like Peyton, she desired high-quality feedback but felt she did not receive the feedback she always needed.

Overall, we believe the composites are useful for researchers in understanding writing teachers' trajectories, but these four composites are not exhaustive. Because understanding writing through the lifespan is riddled with challenges (Dippre & Phillips, 2020), future research needs to highlight other composites of writing teachers' trajectories. Such a collection of composites will provide a growing data set from which lifespan writing researchers, especially, may explore writing trajectories. For teacher educators of writing, such composites provide myriad opportunities as well.

USING COMPOSITES AS TEACHER EDUCATORS

Specific to supporting K–12 writing teachers' growth trajectory of PCKW, teacher educators may use the composites to explore case studies within required writing methods courses. As teacher educators, we look forward to using the composites with our K–12 preservice and in-service teachers. Exploring these trajectories will provide case study data to discuss steps teacher educators need to facilitate and/or K–12 teachers need to complete across their career spans to develop their PCKW. As participants shared, improving their PCKW later impacted their students' writing (e.g., motivation, choice, revision).

Teacher educators also may replicate the positive-change events evident in PD opportunities that this study's participants experienced. Professional development, such as participating in non-profit organizations (e.g., National Writing Project, TeachWrite), served as positive-change events for some of the teachers in this study, especially in developing their teacher-writer or writing-teacher identities. The teachers also noted the importance of (and sometimes critically questioned) PD they received through AP programs or 6+1 Traits workshops. Professional development must not only focus on the content but also on how to assess and tailor instruction to meet students' needs (Bazerman et al., 2018). Thus, through the composites, teacher educators may gain an understanding of the positive-change events they may orchestrate to connect K–12 teachers within shared networks of PD.

Participants also mentioned the role of mentors in initiating positive-change events in their writing teacher growth trajectory. Whether teachers sought or were assigned mentors, they noted mentors' beneficial feedback, encouragement, and guidance. These critical encounters occurred along their career paths, from their student teaching experiences through their early career phases.

For example, Alex completed PD her mentor suggested and implemented the five-paragraph essay and the traits-based rubric. Alex also committed to self-PD, reading authors she identified as her mentors. Melanie's mentors—from student teaching and her first years of teaching—supported her through pedagogical challenges related to writing. Sam is committed to mentoring new teachers. Facilitating positive mentor/mentee relationships and understanding how mentors may support teachers' PCKW are pertinent to writing teachers' development.

Using the composites, we created a writing teacher development model that highlights teacher-training experiences that support teachers' participatory PCKW development of process pedagogies to support student writing communities. "We define participatory PCKW as the process of actively, agentively, and iteratively seeking and engaging in critical experiences to learn and grow as writers and teachers of writing in ways that tackle self-determined problems of practice" (Donovan et al., 2023, p. 18). Teachers' PCK and effectiveness to teach writing impact student achievement (Murphy & Smith, 2018), and we found through these composites that the more positive-change events teacher educators and other stakeholders facilitate for preservice, student, and in-service teachers, the more K–12 writing teachers benefit, which we believe benefits their students as well.

In closing, composite narrative methods supported our analysis of the developmental growth trajectory of 19 in-service writing teachers' development of PCKW across their career trajectories. The composites highlight the shared experiences and narrative arcs teachers described in their interviews and reader-response activities. However, these four composites are not the end of the story, and lifespan writing research will benefit from collecting additional composites to understand and support teachers' and students' writing trajectories.

Composites offer a context-rich method for presenting experiential narrative data. When dealing with large data sets such as one person's writing lifespan or several writers' development over time, composite narratives are one valuable tool for synthesizing those data into a format that can be published or presented. Overall, composite narratives provided us with an invaluable tool for understanding writing teachers' writerly and pedagogical trajectories across their lifespan.

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