Teaching the Writing Methods Course: A Multiple Case Study of Teachers’ Professional Journeys, Teaching Contexts, Theoretical Frames, and Courses

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TEACHING THE WRITING METHODS COURSE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS, TEACHING CONTEXTS, THEORETICAL FRAMES, AND COURSES

by

Kristin A. K. Sovis

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

English

Western Michigan University
April 2014

Doctoral Committee:

Jonathan Bush, Ph.D. (chair)
Elizabeth Brockman, Ph.D.
Susan Piazza, Ph.D.
Karen Vocke, Ph.D.
This study, situated within the fields of English education and writing teacher education, illustrates not only what is happening in writing methods courses but why in its examination of writing methods courses and instructor influences. The writing methods course is identified by English educators and writing teacher educators as “pivotal” in K-12 English teacher preparation, and the purpose of this study is to better understand multiple versions of this course and how teacher influences affect the design and implementation of the course (Grossman, 1990; Smagorinsky and Whiting, 1995; McCann, 2005).

This study builds upon scholarship that explores individual versions of writing methods courses and one study that provides overviews of multiple English methods courses (Cole, 1967; Foy, 1964; Gebhardt, 1977; Marshall, 1997; Nemanich, 1973; Reid 2009; Smagorinsky and Whiting, 1995). This study extends this research by offering detailed portraits of writing methods courses and in-depth illustrations of teacher influences on the course. In providing detailed portraits of writing methods courses, this study responds to calls within writing teacher education, specifically, for more research into K-12 writing teacher preparation and writing methods courses (Brockman & Lindblom, 2012; Bush, 2012; Tremmel and Broz, 2002; Tremmel & Tremmel, 2012).
The discussion and analysis of these detailed course portraits includes ‘common key characteristics’ across courses and ‘distinguishing features’ of individual courses. This analysis provides a model for writing teacher educators’ own self-assessment of their courses and illustrates for K-12 teachers, administrators, and educational policymakers the content and practices that prepare prospective K-12 English teachers.

Another major outcome of this study is a framework for exploring, understanding, and reflecting upon teacher influences as related to practice. This framework is applied to the participants of this study and identifies three strands that contribute to instructors’ teaching experiences: professional journey, teaching context, and theoretical frames. This framework, extending research into concepts of “pedagogical content knowledge” as defined by Grossman (1990) and “theoretical frameworks” as defined by Dewey (1916), is a tool for inquiring, understanding, and reflecting on the teaching practice of not only writing methods instructors, but of teachers of all disciplines and at all levels.
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Kristin A. K. Sovis
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Evolution of the Writing Methods Course: An Overview

In focusing on the secondary writing methods course, this project examines a point of intersection for English Education and Composition Studies, as this course is the intersection between English Education and Composition Studies. To understand the course, scholarship from both fields must be taken into consideration. And therefore, in chronicling the evolution of both the English methods course and what later emerges as the secondary writing methods course that prepares students in initial teacher preparation programs, scholarship from both fields is accounted for in the following review. Inherent in this body of scholarship is another major element of this project: teacher beliefs and frameworks and how these two factors have played into the landscape of the secondary writing methods course over decades and decades.

The Evolution of the English Methods Course and the Writing Methods Course

Establishing its academic space

Beginning in the mid-1960s, scholarship addressing the English methods course started appearing. One of the earliest comprehensive studies of the English methods courses was published in 1964 by Robert J. Foy of the State Teachers College in Lowell, Massachusetts. This study reports results of an evaluative survey taken by to English methods course graduates regarding their experience in the English methods course. Thirty-one of thirty-nine English Education graduates who earned a “B-” grade point average or better in a New Hampshire Teacher Preparation program, having taken the
course between 1950 and 1959, and who were teaching English in secondary schools at the time of the study responded to the questionnaire. In addition, 68 of 96 questionnaires were returned by middle and secondary principals to “determine administrative attitudes toward teachers with methods-of-teaching English training” (131). Questionnaires were also sent to instructors of “general methods-of-teaching” and “methods of teaching English” instructors to determine content of courses and duplication amongst the three participating institutions of higher education.

The study revealed several noteworthy findings, including that “methods of teaching English courses are held in fairly high regard” and “English teachers have some important criticism of their training” (132). For instance, respondents urged that teacher-preparation institutions give more consideration to the teaching of “written composition, oral composition, and grammar.” Based on responses, this study also names twenty-two features of the methods courses that were found to be common in all programs studied. “Observation of high school teaching, preparation of lesson plans, and preparation of units of instruction” are highlighted as three activities endorsed by over 50 percent of respondents (134).

This study is significant in that it is the first to carve an academic space for research and discussion into both perspectives and teaching practices associated with the English methods course. Because of this study and many that follow, the experiences of students in English methods courses—as well as the pedagogies and practices guiding the teaching of the courses—began to be viewed as both distinctive per individual course, but also as a common academic experience that was occurring across the nation and affecting many students in profound ways.
Important to note is that before the 1960s, most methods courses were general and offered (and typically required) of all secondary education majors, regardless of their subject-specific specializations. These students were not necessarily required to take “special methods” courses, referred to today as “content-area methods” or “subject-specific methods” course, as these courses were often not even offered in secondary teacher preparatory programs. In 1967, Tom J. Cole writes “Why the English methods Course?” in which he advocates for subject-specific methods courses, and particularly the English methods course. Cole highlights four lines of reasoning “for the inclusion of a special methods course in the teaching of English in a teacher training curriculum” (302). He argues that the English methods course does the following: “aid[s] in examining existing general objectives for elementary and secondary school English curricula and for exploring and possibly adding new objectives,” provides a space for the preparing teacher to demonstrate “abilities in teaching various content facets of the English course,” offers students a chance to become familiar with print texts that introduce new teaching materials and methods, and indicates a student’s strengths and weaknesses in content areas (303). While Foy’s 1964 study presented the English methods course as worthy of academic discourse, Cole’s perspectives capitalize on this notion, as he provides a succinct endorsement and rationale for the inclusion of the English methods course in teacher training curriculums.

Exactly one decade later, in 1977, Richard Gebhardt writes his seminal essay regarding the writing methods course, “Balancing Theory with Practice in the Teaching of Writing Teachers.” Since, scholars and educators have taken a variety of stances regarding how English teachers are taught and venturing as to how English teachers
should be taught. Essentially, Gebhardt’s notion of striking a balance between theory and practice in designing and teaching the writing methods course diverged from the work of previous scholars. Don Nemanich, for example, published “Preparing the Composition Teacher” just four years prior to “Balancing Theory with Practice,” in which he advocates for composition teachers’ knowledge of rhetoric. Students in his writing methods course, for instance, read books such as Baily’s *Essays on Rhetoric* and Corbett’s *Classic Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. He expects, furthermore, that his preparing writing teachers know of Aristotle and “what he has to say about persuasion” (47).

Nemanich grants minimal affordance to such work as Zoellner’s “talk-write” pedagogy; outside of this piece, the core texts of his course focus on theory rather than practice. While students may complete a course such as that described by Nemanich with sound knowledge of rhetoric, they would likely be lacking in knowledge of pedagogy and practice of teaching methods. Nemanich’s reading list certainly provides the “what” of rhetoric, but a course as described by Gebhardt provides the “how” and “why” in addition to the “what”—the latter of which, today, are generally considered more important in preparing composition teachers for the secondary school setting. Both Gebhardt and Nemanich’s works mark the birth of an academic field of study now referred to as “writing teacher education,” as their pieces focus on the preparation of the *composition* teacher versus the *English* teacher and even highlight features of such specialized preparation. Their works also highlight the ever-present tension between theory and practice, which is alive and well today in both the English education and writing teacher education communities. Today, research and discussion amongst English education—
and specifically writing teacher education professionals—often center on varying perspectives on theory and practice as related to the secondary writing methods course; for these discussions, today’s professionals owe thanks to the pioneering work of Gebhardt.

**Developing its academic space**

Smagorinsky and Whiting’s 1995 book, *How English Teachers Get Taught*, seeks to illuminate the writing methods course, acknowledging an absence of published scholarship about how preparing teachers of secondary literature and composition are taught. In publishing a collection of over 100 syllabi for methods courses taught in a wide range of public universities, Smagorinsky and Whiting hope to pick up the conversation that Cole, Foy, Nemanich, Gebhardt, and their contemporaries initiated in the 1960s and 1970s regarding how English teachers are prepared to teach. In analyzing the syllabi, the authors find that a “survey approach” to teaching methods, in which many issues and topics are covered in a single semester, is most common. Few syllabi reveal alternative approaches and those that do are anchored by workshop, experience-based, theoretical, and reflective approaches. While syllabi are revealing of course components and even instructor perspectives to an extent, this study is limited in scope, as investigation beyond syllabi analysis would certainly elicit a more holistic picture of what constitutes varying secondary writing methods courses.

This text, though, in conjunction with the work of Nemanich and Gebhardt does speak to the sheer mass of approaches that may guide the teaching of the writing methods
course, in particular. In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of varying approaches, Smagornisky and Whiting note, that:

“If a course effectively teaches pre-service teachers the value of collaborative, cooperative, or small-group learning, then it would need to consciously provide such experiences for the students so that they could appreciate the benefits themselves” (51).

This notion extends beyond the said collaborative approach to teaching the methods course, a course that in this instance values the social nature of learning; it implies that whatever is valued by the instructor—be it the belief that learning is social or otherwise—will likely come through in the course. Furthermore, it alludes to the fact that that which is valued, is in turn not only reflected in course readings that may be theoretical, such as a reading on social learning for a collaborative course, but also on the practice of collaboration and cooperation. This approach, for instance, indicates that teacher beliefs manifest themselves in the writing methods course and that the best of courses create opportunities and environments in which students can try out—or practice—that which theoretical readings may advocate.

And just two years later, in 1997, James Marshall and Janet Smith address institutional issues that just may be impacting that which Smagornisky and Whiting observed. Marshall and Smith note that “[university faculty] are teaching those who would teach how they ought to teach” and that these methods do not necessarily best prepare secondary English teachers for teaching in the context of the secondary public school classroom. The authors cite the secondary classroom as strikingly different from that of the university classroom with the question: “how realistic is the assumption that
high school teachers, operating with conspicuously less freedom, can learn in one context how to teach in another?” (265-6). This is certainly a question that an “experience-based” model, for example, that emphasizes teacher decision-making within authentic classrooms addresses, and it is certainly a question for which theory will do far less in preparing a teacher for taking action in a classroom. Without question, Marshall and Smith, as Smagorinsky and Whiting, locate the methods classroom within the preparing teachers program as critical in teacher development, as it may be the only classroom in which dimensions of literacy are expanded and the practical as related to teaching secondary literature and writing are explored.

**Diversifying its academic space**

Marshall and Smith go on to point out that traditional models of literature and writing courses, which constitute the bulk of preparing teachers’ programs and are rooted in the values of universities, provide teachers with dated models irrelevant to the secondary classroom. The standard argumentative essay of the literature course, for example, does not model for preparing teachers the incorporation of multiple genres of writing in the English classroom, genres that students will encounter in their post-secondary lives. Rather, the traditional model of argumentative writing about literature, for example, is that which is integral to the lives of scholars in the post-secondary environment, solidifying the fact that these teachers are “teaching as they are taught,” and in turn modeling for future secondary English teachers methods that are irrelevant to much of the work they will do with students in the 21st century classroom.

In the same year, 1997, Margaret Marshall elaborates on the changing landscape of the public school classroom and the fact that teacher preparatory programs must focus
on preparing teachers for this environment through an experience, or practice-based model. She advocates a cultural studies approach to the teaching of the writing methods course, reflective of her belief that student learning is impacted largely by linguistic, cultural, gender, and class differences. While Marshall is pleased to see cultural issues and their impact on teaching examined in writing methods courses, she is also concerned with supporting teachers to work effectively with students who may not be outwardly marked by their cultural backgrounds and who may not appear to composition teachers to be “on the margins” (232). She illustrates this point by arguing that writing teachers can no more assume they know the literacy practices or class status of a the white student in classrooms than they “can presume that the African American student speaks non-standard English or grew up in the inner city” (232).

Marshall’s concern for students who are “already constructed in the center” and who may be ignored for being neither exceptional or deficient writers extends the concerns of Marshall and Smith, as the preparing English teacher is often subject to traditional curriculums, curriculums not preparing them for teaching writing to a diverse population of students. Even with methods courses focusing on issues of diversity, Marshall encourages composition teacher preparation programs to work with students to “mark the unmarked” so as to avoid gross overgeneralizations of students based on that which is visible in marking their identity. And to do so, Marshall argues that preparing English teachers are supported with these valuable resources: time to collaborate with other teachers, opportunities to work with students one-on-one, time to design courses and write assignments, and time to study student writing while working with the student authors of the work, so as to debunk cultural stereotypes and elevate consciousness of
“unmarked differences.” Certainly, today’s public schools are complex and challenging environments in which to teach effectively, making “the preparation of English teachers anything but simple, especially English teachers” (Marshall and Smith 267).

Another model for the writing methods course is outlined by Shelly Reid (2009). Her course is a culmination of previous research regarding the writing methods course, as she seeks to offer preparing writing teachers the “balance” between theory and practice that Gebhardt proposed over 40 years prior. As the title suggests—and in congruence with Smagorinsky, Whiting, Smith and Marshall, and Marshall’s assertions that teachers’ values, beliefs, and practices are shaped in part by how they are taught—Reid believes that teachers should face difficult, exploratory, and critical writing tasks. Such tasks, she argues, will not only prompt the shaping of teachers’ beliefs but will model for teachers writing activities that may in turn do the same for their future students. Reid aligns her course with vision of the National Writing Project (NWP) and the first expectation listed in the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s (CCCC) position statement, which calls for providing composition teachers “the opportunity to write.” In doing so, Reid argues that secondary writing teachers are supported in becoming reflective practitioners through writing and reflecting on writing. Reid’s aims also include supporting teachers in becoming flexible and “engaged as learners, teachers, and theorists in the field of writing instruction” (197). Important to note, then, is that theory is not void in such a classroom, but that this theory is practiced, and that the emphasis is on practice.

Not only does a model such as Reid’s capitalize on the notion that students’ beliefs and experiences shape who they become as teachers, but also on the notion that
differentiated practices involving writing are in alignment with the researched position statements of not only NWP and CCCC, but also the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The 2003 position statement created by NCTE/NCATE for the “Preparation of Teachers of Secondary English Language Arts” cites repeatedly, in regard to the structuring of secondary English teacher preparation programs and courses, that preparing English teachers “explore a strong blend of theory and practice in their ELA preparation” (4). Furthermore, in regard to preparing teachers’ knowledge, the document asserts that one target for student knowledge is “to use both theory and practice in helping students understand the impact of cultural, economic, political, and social environments on language” (7). The document implies, then, just as the many scholars’ work discussed thus far, that methods courses which incorporate theory in informing practice (and practice in informing theory) are achieving “target” results in preparing English teachers to support their future secondary students with a balanced pedagogy and methodology. Specifics regarding how English teachers are taught and why they are taught as they are, though, continue to remain under-researched agenda items within the fields of English education and writing teacher education.

However, in 2002 Robert Tremmel and William Broz explore the questions, “What do writing teachers need to know? And what do they need to know how to do?”—questions that may eventually lead to a better understanding of what is done in the secondary writing methods course and why. Based on the works of contributing authors, which offer reflections about both the secondary writing methods course and the first-year composition methods course,
Tremmel and Broz share three common threads regarding preparing teachers to teach writing: that “writing teachers must be writers,” that “writing teachers must practice reflection,” and that “writing teachers must work together” which may include “the many aspects of both formal and informal, personal and distant mentoring” (26). These three themes, echoing those identified by many of the scholars and teachers cited in this text, are characteristic of an effective methods course and teacher preparation program. And these are the same practices that Gebhardt gave voice to in 1974 and that scholars and practitioners have practiced, reflected upon, and revised; in doing so, these scholars and practitioners model such practices for their preparing English teacher students, reflective of the understanding that teachers often teach as they are taught as voiced by Smagorinsky and Whiting, Smith and Marshall, and Smith. Furthermore, such practice illustrates Marshall and Reid’s beliefs in the power of reading and writing to explore and reflect and in teachers learning to teach by practicing teaching.

In more recent years, the conversation regarding the significance of the writing methods course in influencing new teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices continues. And perhaps more than ever, this conversation is necessary as the climate facing today’s secondary English teachers in public schools is as challenging, if not more so, than ever before. The issue of secondary English teacher attrition is directly addressed in McCann’s 2005 case book that explores the disconnect between experiences offered by English teacher preparation programs and the experiences of first year English teachers. Findings reveal these two generalizations: beginning teacher have a difficult time and beginning teachers need help in coping with these difficulties (1). The research questions that frame this book then become both “what are the significant frustrations that could
influence beginning teachers to leave the profession?” and “what supports, resources, and preparation influence beginning teachers to remain in the profession?” (2).

Several studies highlight the problem of attrition and it does not rest in a lower number of teachers being prepared to teach; in fact, Ingersoll and Smith found in 2003 that “more people than ever are in colleges and universities preparing the become teachers” (3). The problem is that new teachers leave the profession early; Darling-Hammond notes in 2000 that the rate of attrition among English teachers in their first two years “is at least double the average for teachers overall” (3). In framing their study, the authors also cite that prior research reveals district policy regarding assignments for new teachers, resources provided new teachers, professional environments, and teacher assessment have a great impact on new teacher satisfaction (4).

Moreover, studies conducted by Borko and Putman (1996) and Veenman (1984) report new teachers struggle to identify effective classroom management strategies, define themselves as teachers, and find ways to teach and assess their students (6). All of these studies of beginning teacher attrition hail those in English education and writer teacher education to continue to research and refine the secondary writing methods courses within their English teacher preparation programs to meet and exceed the needs of beginning teachers. Novice teachers need to become expert teachers; this occurs only when retention rates increase.

The abovementioned challenges and pressures on novice and experienced English teachers have only been extrapolated by recent economic challenges facing public schools with government funding being cut at all levels in almost every district. Teachers face larger class sizes than ever, increasingly diverse student populations, and have less
material and immaterial resources with which to effectively teach. Moreover, funding is increasingly tied to student achievement and in many states, such as Michigan, bills are being passed overnight (literally) that assess teachers based on student achievement on standardized tests. McCann conducted surveys, interviews, and case studies with beginning English teachers and found that the abovementioned pressures are manifest in the worries, fears, concerns, and questions that the beginning teachers shared. However, encouragingly, these beginning teachers also shared that which sustained them in their times of doubt, insecurity, and unknowingness in their classrooms and schools: the English methods course.

Namely, based on this study, it is recommended that English teacher education programs, specifically methods courses, “frequently and explicitly link theory and research about teaching to practical problems that novices will likely face” (129). Exclusively theoretical content will not prepare English teachers to teach writing in today’s public schools, and nor will a focus solely on practice; this text argues that the latter is void of theoretical backing and an understanding of theory, both of which help position teachers’ new identities (129). And to get authentic teaching practice, it is recommended that pre-service teachers are “provid[ed] with numerous occasions to assume the role of teacher” which requires an establishment of networks so that these new teachers will “immerse themselves in a teacher role and define their personas” (130).

These recommendations are echoed in the outlining of best practices for preparing English Educators recently featured in the Council Chronicle’s, “Successes in English Teacher Preparation: Preparing Tomorrow’ Teachers—What Are the Best Practices?” (Collier 2011). Collier recommends preparing English teachers “get into the field early
and often,” (6) become reflective practitioners and problem-solvers, and are granted mentoring relationships that have “a profound effect on teachers-to-be” (8). In solving problems and making decisions in both hypothetical and actual field experiences, preparing writing teachers will be able to respond, for example, to the parent that calls asking about why her child is not “learning grammar” with grammar drills, validate the incorporation of the multi-genre project into the teaching of literature to his or her department head, and explain to teaching colleagues how best practice writing instruction does prepare students for state-mandated testing. These are the daily decisions, in additions to hundreds of others demanded within the classroom each and every day that both the novice (and expert) teachers will be responsible for making. And the methods course, Collier argues, can be fashioned to engage students in thoughtfully scaffolded activities and projects that give them the theoretical knowledge and the confidence gained from practice to do so.

Since the 1960s, the English methods course has been discussed and researched as a course that is integral to ELA teacher preparation. More recently, the secondary writing methods course is discussed as a unique course that takes many shapes amongst varying teacher preparation programs and individual instructors. However, while the secondary writing methods course and its components that provide preparing teachers opportunities to practice teaching are generally agreed upon and agreed upon as important to writing teacher preparation, many question whether or not an emphasis on methods is adequately preparing teachers to be successful classroom teachers in today’s system of public education. “Are methods Enough? Situating English Education Programs within the Multiple Settings of Learning to Teach,” (Dickinson, et al) published in 2006 after the
CEE Summit Group met to focus on the methods course, argues for more programmatic coherence and collaboration between K-12 and post-secondary institutions. It also calls for more investigations into the effects of teacher preparation—“research that can help us and our students articulate the ways our work has import.” Furthermore, this article cites Grossman’s 1990 work, *The Makings of a Teacher*, that “argues that professional preparation, in the form of methods courses and fieldwork experiences, accounts for significant differences in the ways that beginning teachers approach their classroom practice” and found that a variety of practices and settings proved most useful to preparing teachers, making preparing teachers less apt to become discouraged and disenchanted.

In this review of the evolution of English methods courses, the secondary writing methods course is specifically highlighted as one of diversity, similar to the variance that Grossman cites for methods courses in general. This notion, combined with the call in “Are methods Enough?” for further research into English methods courses contribute to the framing of the proposed study. Without question, the methods course is a space of great potential as it can support preparing teachers in developing their identities as teachers; enable them to develop skills and confidence to persevere, problem-solve, and succeed; help them develop as reflective practitioners that carefully consider culture; support them in developing and refining methodologies grounded thoughtfully in theory.

It is now 2013, and in the most standards-driven public education system our country has ever seen, coupled with an urgency to support a diversity of students, investigation into the secondary writing methods is as critical as ever, if not more so, as the profession of teaching is more complex than ever.
The Writing Methods Course: One focus of the Writing Teacher Education Community

In recent years, the writing methods course has prompted, in part, the development of a community of writing teacher education scholar-practitioners. This community is represented largely by individuals who teach the writing methods course; these individuals have, in fact, even come together to create the Conference on English Education’s Commission on Writing Teacher Education, the commission that seeks to address the intersection of English Education and Composition Studies, often as manifest in the writing methods course. Many contributors to this specialized field of study include individuals already mentioned in this review such as Tremmel, Broz, and Smagorinsky. The work of other major contributors to writing teacher education is showcased in the inaugural issue of Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education (2012), a journal dedicated to “issues of writing teacher education—the development, education, and mentoring of prospective, new, and experienced teachers of writing at all levels.” This journal provides a space for the convergence of English Education and Composition Studies, a space to examine tensions amongst the two, as it seeks voices from not only these two disciplines, but also educators from K-12 settings. Jonathan Bush, co-editor of the journal, remarks that while the community of writing teacher educators has been publishing, there has not existed a “defined, rigorous academic outlet for scholarship on topics in this area” (6). This notion, of course, frames the aims of Teaching/Writing, which carves an intentional space for such publishing work that focuses on writing teacher education. This journal represents the work of an academic community that is not solely focused on composition nor solely focused on teaching, but rather that is focused on the teaching of writing and on teaching teachers of
writing. And the secondary writing methods course, the focus of this dissertation study, is one of primary interest to this community and should be of interest to all of those who are preparing to teach writing, who teach writing, and who teach writing teachers.

Other contributors to this journal and to this community who, like Bush, have been publishing for many years on issues associated with writing teacher education—in such journals as *College Composition and Communication, Pedagogy, English Education, and English Journal*—contribute valuable remarks to the inaugural issue of *Teaching/Writing* that not only comment on the past of writing teacher education. Tremmel and Michelle Tremmel recognize that not only has the field evolved from pedagogy and research in English language arts and English teacher education, but also from the body of composition studies work that dates back to the 1960s (much of which is discussed in this review). The Tremmels acknowledge the hybrid space that is writing teacher education, noting that “it has been only in the last ten years or so that the critical mass of English teacher educators has begun viewing writing teacher education as a practice rising to the level of a discipline” (9). One hope that the Tremmels have for the *Teaching/Writing* journal is that it “changes in the way writing is taught in classrooms everywhere…to uproot the stubborn persistence of current-traditional approaches that for at least 90 years have worked against the growth of writers” (9). This is a hope that also frames this dissertation study: that findings contribute to conversations amongst those in the writing teacher education community (and related academic communities) about pedagogies and practices in the secondary writing methods classroom that ultimately support preparing secondary ELA teachers,
and in effect, the secondary students that these preparing ELA teachers will eventually teach.

Also recognizing tensions that exist not only between English Education and Composition Studies, the two key fields that meet in the secondary writing methods course, but also the fragmentation within these two disciplines are Kia Jane Richmond and McCurrie. Essentially, they call writing education teachers to unite to address what is the result of both the expansion of literacy in the general public and the business interests that control how writing is taught—standardization (11). These tensions—these different ways of theorizing and practicing—are precisely those which Richmond and McCurrie call writing teacher education professionals to attend to, and exactly those that this dissertation study seeks to explore and understand.

Similarly, Elizabeth Brockman and Ken Lindblom call for the uniting of writing teachers as they support “creat[ing] a space in which a central purpose is mentoring teachers at all levels in well-informed practice in the teaching of writing” (15) and for improved writing instruction by encouraging “connection among professionals interested in teaching real—not just easily assessable—writing expertise even at a time when such connections are discouraged by so many cultural, institutional, and political boundaries” (18). This dissertation study fits into this “space” that Brockman and Lindblom describe as findings will contribute to the teaching and “mentoring” of pre-service secondary writing teachers. Moreover, this study will support professional connections amongst those teaching pre-service secondary writing teachers as it explores what is happening in secondary methods classrooms and most importantly, why these courses are constructed and practiced as they are.
The key scholar-practitioners who are mentioned above and active in the writing teacher education community are dedicated to carving space for and contributing to writing teacher education. These scholars and practitioners have championed collaboration amongst all parties associated with researching and practicing writing, the teaching of writing, and the teaching of writing teachers in what is, as commented on in their abovementioned work, an increasingly standards-driven era of writing education and teacher education. The writing methods course, the very focus of this project, is the pedagogical space in which the complexities, tensions, and possibilities these experts speak of reside together. Exploring this space through this project will undoubtedly capture the diverse range of issues, challenges, and choices that face the writing methods course instructor, as well as the exciting potential for better preparing and supporting writing teachers that the secondary writing methods course, pivotal in teacher education, offers.

The Multiple Contexts, Titles, and Foci of the Writing Methods Course

The secondary writing methods course that has thus far been historicized and contextualized, will be characterized in this way for the purposes of this study: it is the course that prepares students in initial teacher preparation programs to teach writing in the secondary school setting. As discussed, this course takes on multiple forms and goes by a variety of course titles. It is also a course that is situated differently within individual English teacher preparation programs across the country; for instance, some of these courses are housed in English Departments and others in Schools of Education.

This multiple case study, based on the findings from a national online survey of writing methods instructors, will examine, in-depth, three specific versions of the course
taught by seasoned and accomplished practitioners. This multiple case study itself illustrates that this course serves different populations of students at varying points in their post-secondary academic careers, and that this course is positioned differently per institution.

For the purposes of this study, the course that is referred to as the secondary writing methods course, and that is the focus of this study, meets the criteria that follow. First, the course is taught at a post-secondary institution that is nationally accredited. Second, the course’s content centers on writing and the teaching of writing in the secondary setting. Third, the course is positioned and designed specifically for students in initial English teacher preparation programs. Therefore, all participants in this case study are those who teach a course that prepares initial English teacher candidates (in addition to practicing secondary English teachers, as one course illustrates) to teach writing in the secondary school setting.

Both the pilot survey and case study conducted for this project reveal that courses meeting the abovementioned criteria are not only situated differently per institution, but are also named and designed in a variety of ways. However, as different as varying versions of the course may be, there do exist like-features amongst courses. These findings will be reported in detail in subsequent chapters.

Varying theoretical frames and experiences of practitioners

Just as the institutional and programmatic context of the secondary writing methods course is diverse, so too are the theoretical frames and experiences of the instructors who teach this course. These numerous and varied theoretical frames from which instructors think and operate and which are evident in their varied experiences
ultimately inform how the course is theorized and, therefore, taught. The findings of this project reveal both common and distinguishing elements amongst the theoretical frames and experiences of the practitioners teaching this course.

Given this course is situated in a variety of contexts, taught by a variety of instructors, and that these instructors teach from a variety of vantage points influenced by their theoretical frames and experiences, it is critical that common definitions for terms used in this study be established. Therefore, following is an overview of significant terms and their meanings as used in the construction, implementation, and reporting of this project.

The term ‘pedagogical content knowledge,’ coined by Lee Shulman in 1986 refers to the knowledge “that is specific to teaching particular subject matters” (Grossman 7). This understanding of “teacher knowledge” transcends prior conceptions of the ‘general pedagogical knowledge’ and ‘knowledge of subject’ as the sole types of knowledge influencing teachers’ work (Grossman 7). The work of Schulman, and those who apply his terminology to subject-specific areas, hinges largely on the Deweyian notion that teachers must learn to “psychologize” their subject matter in their teaching as they think through disciplinary topics and work towards making material relevant to students. Grossman and Gudmundsdottir are the two most notable researchers to study ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ in the field of English. As defined by Grossman (1990), ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ is composed of four components: apprenticeship of observation; subject matter knowledge; teacher education; and classroom experience. According to Grossman, these four elements all provide preparing secondary ELA teachers to develop knowledge about the teaching of English. Also
noteworthy is that these four sources of knowledge interact and interact differently per teacher in influencing the teacher and his or her workings.

The terms ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ along with the four components that contribute to it as described above, are used in this study to not only discuss the teaching and experiences of survey and case study participants, all teaching practitioners of the secondary writing methods course, but also in discussing these practitioners’ perceptions of their students and courses. In addition, the terms are used in the interview protocols used in the case study component of the project, a primary instrument of the project.

The term ‘theoretical framework’ is also used in this report to discuss the perspectives from which teaching practitioners work. Per John Dewey, a ‘conceptual framework,’—also known as a ‘theoretical framework’—is a “commonly understood system of meanings” (Champlin 33). These frameworks serve to support work across the disciplines as they establish a common and understood meaning from which scholars and practitioners can work.

The term is used in two major ways in this report. First, it is used to describe my framing of this project in the second chapter of this project, “Chapter 2: Methodology.” Second, it is used in both the interview protocols and the discussing and reporting of case study findings in multiple chapters of this project, as the case study participants, seasoned and accomplished secondary writing methods instructors speak to and share materials that reveal and comment on the ‘theoretical frames’ from which they work as teachers.

The terms ‘institutional context’ and ‘programmatic context’ refer to the manner in which the secondary writing methods course is situated in both the institution at which it is taught and the program in which it is taught, respectively. The ‘institutional context’
in which a secondary writing methods course is situated, for instance, may entail which school (or department) houses the course, such as the School of Education or the Department of English. The ‘institutional context’ may also refer to institution-wide demographics or features, speaking to features of an institution on a macro-level. The ‘programmatic context,’ on the other hand refers the micro-level positioning of the secondary writing methods course within the program or programs of which the secondary writing methods course is a component. This may entail which programs of study require or offer the course as an option to students. For instance, whether or not the course is required, to whom the course is offered, and for whom the course is required are all considerations in understanding the ‘programmatic context’ of the secondary writing methods course. The ‘institutional context’ and ‘programmatic context’ will be referred to in reporting and discussing the case studies, as well as in presenting findings. While the positioning of courses varies amongst institutions and programs, there are institutions and programs that position the course similarly.

**The writing methods course and the K-12 context**

As K-12 education becomes increasingly standards-driven and student needs continue to be diverse in nature, K-12 administrators, K-12 teachers and English Educators are calling upon one another to make connections—connections between English teacher preparation and the K-12 environment. Amidst great reform and change in public K-12 education, from funding, accreditation, and policy to curriculum and student needs, changes within the field of English Education are occurring at an unprecedented rate; many of these changes involve the expansion of literacy as digital literacies evolve. Paper and pencil composition activities, once understood as a staple of
secondary ELA classroom and of the composition process, are rapidly being replaced by
digital and multimodal literacies, taking the shape of digital storytelling, online blogging,
and social networking, for instance (Richmond and McCurrie).

The overarching reform in K-12 public education along with the explosion of
technology that has impacted how students and teachers interact with texts and the types
of texts read and produced by students and teachers, make for a complex teaching
landscape for both novice and experienced secondary ELA teachers. Notable, then, is
that the changes in the K-12 ELA teaching situation affect how teaching practitioners of
the secondary writing methods course think about, design, and implement their own
curriculums in serving the best interests of their pre-service teachers.

**Learning About the Writing Methods Course: Goals of This Study**

This study seeks to understand the work that English educators are doing around
the country in designing and delivering instruction to prospective K-12 English teachers
in writing methods courses. Moreover, this study aims to discover how and why English
educators are doing the work that they do with students in these courses; English
educators’ professional journeys, teaching contexts, and the perspectives (or theoretical
frames) from which they work are the major ‘strands’ that are uncovered and discussed as
influences in the construction and teaching of the secondary writing methods course.

In learning about what is happening in secondary writing methods classrooms
around the country—and specifically in learning about how individual English educators’
perceive the course, situate the course, and design and teach the course—this study may
illuminate issues and topics for discussion within the field of English education, teacher
education, and writing teacher education. In discussing the findings of this study and the
larger issues such findings may address, these professional communities of educators may better understand ways to support their prospective K-12 English teacher students in secondary writing methods courses and English education programs for initial teacher preparation.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter Two, “Methodology,” briefly outlines the methodology employed in facilitating the pilot survey to secondary writing methods instructors and focuses primarily on the methodology used to conduct the in-depth multiple case study of methods instructors and their methods courses. The chapter closes with a discussion of the methods of data analysis and a graphic and written description of the theoretical frame for the study.

Chapter Three, “The Research Participants,” focuses on describing each case study participant through the building of their in-depth professional profiles. Before each profile unfolds, the framework employed in crafting these profiles is also described in detail. The framework includes these strands: professional journeys, teaching context, and perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers. Each participant profile is sub-titled to note a distinguishing feature that grounds his or her work as a writing methods instructors. These include: “Practice grounded in a ‘productive relationship’ theory,” “Practice grounded in an ethnographic frame,” and “Practice grounded in multi-modality.” The chapter concludes with a holistic, reflective discussion of participants’ professional profiles, the profiles intended to illustrate instructor influences on the writing methods course.
Chapter Four, “The Writing Methods Course: Illustrations of Influences,” focuses on the writing methods courses themselves, as it provides an in-depth portrait of each course. Each portraits begins with the individual instructors’ descriptions, reflections on, and analysis of the course. Discussion and analysis of the course syllabus and selected projects, assignments, and student activities rounds out each portrait. The chapter then highlights a ‘distinguishing characteristic’ per course and identifies and discusses ‘common features’ across courses.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, is entitled “Implications: Making Teacher Educator Influences Visible,” opens with a brief review of the study. It also offers key findings and discusses their importance to those in the fields of writing teacher education and English education, as well as to other stakeholders in the preparation of K-12 English teachers. These stakeholders include prospective and practicing K-12 English teachers and administrators, K-12 English teachers considering doctoral programs in English education, and educational policy makers. The chapter closes with discussion of recommendations, resulting questions, and future studies based on findings.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Understanding the Writing Methods Course and Its Practitioners

In order to provide a more holistic and complete illustration of the current state of the secondary writing methods course, along with how its context and instructor influences it, I will now outline the specific details of the multiple case study that I conducted. The in-depth, multiple case study design was influenced by a pilot survey that was distributed to secondary writing methods instructors in an open-electronic forum.

The purpose of this study is to further understand what is being taught in the secondary writing methods course and how instructors’ professional experiences, teaching contexts, and perspectives influence their teaching of the course. This study examines this—contextualized primarily by scholarship in teacher education, English education, and writing teacher education—on micro-level through detailed case studies. However, this study was influenced on a macro-level by a wealth and variety of responses to the electronic pilot survey. Survey responses revealed, as projected, that the course varies in content and positioning across institutions and programs. It also revealed that instructors of the course have varied and diverse professional backgrounds.

In order to explore the complex, diversified space that is the secondary writing methods course, I developed the following guiding question and sub-questions, which aided me in organizing the major foci of the study.
Guiding Questions of This Study

Guiding question

The following served as the guiding question of this study: What does the secondary writing methods course look like and why? To explore this overarching question, the following questions were considered:

- What is the writing methods course?
- What forms does it take at different institutions?
- According to various practitioners and theories, what is the goal of the writing methods course?
- Who teaches the secondary writing methods course and how did they come to this position? What is their background and what makes them “qualified” to teach writing methods courses?
- Which practices are common and which practices are unique amongst individual secondary writing methods courses?
- What do secondary writing methods teachers believe about writing? About teaching writing? About teaching preparing writing teachers? About learning and education? Which beliefs are common and which beliefs are unique amongst individual secondary writing methods instructors?
- How are teacher perceptions and experiences represented in course documents and design?

By probing into these questions, the primary aim of this study, which is to better understand the under-theorized pedagogical space that is the secondary writing methods course, remained the focus of the study throughout. While several existing articles (as
discussed in Chapter 1) outline and discuss a particular version of the course or a specific aspect of the course, few works outside of Smagorinsky and Whiting’s *How English Teachers Get Taught*, highlight several versions of the course. Furthermore, the articles written by scholar-practitioners do not offer a holistic view of the course. This in-depth case study fill these gaps in scholarship in detailing multiple, detailed versions of the course and highlighting influences on the course. In essence, this multiple case study reveals the pedagogies and practices at play in writing methods courses preparing prospective K-12 English teachers.

**The Pilot Study**

The survey, disseminated to secondary writing methods instructors across the nation, was comprised of thirty-three mostly closed-ended items and designed around three thematic strands: the instructors’ *professional background and experience*, *teaching context*, and *pedagogy and practice employed in teaching the secondary writing methods course*. I solicited participation from CEE members by sharing an overview of the study and a link to the electronic survey in these ways: 1) via an email invitation to all Michigan Conference of English Educators (MCEE) members; 2) via a verbal invitation to CEE members at the CEE Social at the 2012 NCTE National Convention; 3) via a verbal invitation to members of the Commission on Writing Teacher Education (CWTE) at the 2012 NCTE National Convention, and 4) via an electronically posted invitation to CEE members posted to the CEE Connected Community. In relying on “purposeful sampling,” sampling of “individuals and sites because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study,” members of CEE and CEE sub-groups served as my participant pool (Creswell 125).
I appealed to all CEE members via posting the survey in the CEE Connected Community, as CEE members—English Education academics and practitioners—are likely to teach or have taught a secondary writing methods course during their careers. I also appealed to two specific CEE sub-groups in conducting “purposeful sampling:” MCEE and CWTE. First, I sought the participation of MCEE members as I had personal relationships with many of them and believed they may be willing to support my work by participating in my study. Second, I sought the participation of CWTE members because this group is committed to writing teacher education, which often involves the teaching of the secondary ‘writing’ methods course.

I chose to design and conduct an electronic, anonymous survey for two reasons. First, the intended participant pool, CEE members, includes individuals living in different parts of the nation; because I “conceptualize the internet as a tool,” a web-based survey allowed me to complete qualitative research of participants in geographically diverse locations (Marshall and Rossman 25). Second, using an electronic survey “allow[s] for more reflective, participant-driven textual responses” (Flick, 2006; Garcia et al., 2009; Mann & Stewart, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2007 in Marshall and Rossman 25). By reaching out to participants from across the nation, all with varying professional backgrounds and experiences and who had recently or were teaching secondary writing methods courses at different institutions, I gathered a national “pulse” on the secondary writing methods course and its instructors.

The survey reinforced my projections: that the writing methods course is a dynamic and complex space in which student experiences and instructor backgrounds are diverse. The survey also underscored my motivation for pursuing this multiple case
study project, as results revealed that each responding instructor had a unique background and the courses they reported on were unique. I also learned that individual courses sometimes shared features with other courses, and I was interested in learning if this was in fact the case amongst the cases I would study. Finally, I was reminded of exactly why the English education and writing teacher education communities were calling for more research into the writing methods course, as this course is in fact so varied and, as scholarship shows, so very ‘pivotal’ in the development of prospective K-12 teachers.

**The Multiple Case Study**

I conducted a case study of three English Education scholar-practitioners of varying professional backgrounds who teach secondary writing methods courses in different institutional and programmatic contexts. This case study included open-ended interviews with the three practitioners and document analysis of syllabi, major project handouts, sample lessons, and other documents created for teaching the course. These interviews and documents allowed me to learn about the individual experiences, teaching contexts, and pedagogies at play in secondary writing methods courses of three accomplished scholars and practitioners. I investigated (through interviews and document analysis) these scholars’ professional backgrounds and experiences, the institutional and programmatic context of the secondary writing methods course they teach, the theoretical frames that inform these scholars’ work, and the secondary writing methods courses themselves.

I employed a case study methodology in order to explore, in detail and holistically, the individual pedagogies and practices of individual and accomplished English educators. While I could have relied solely on survey findings to report on
macro-level trends within the field of English education as related to the secondary writing methods course, I could not provide a holistic picture of the secondary writing methods course without enacting this case study research. Given the goals of this study, in-depth qualitative research was a must. I chose for this research to take the shape of a case study because a case study is the best way to investigate the complex issue at hand: the relationships between English educators’ professional backgrounds and experiences, theoretical frames, teaching contexts, and the secondary writing methods course they teach. As Creswell states, “in a case study, a specific case is examined, often with the intent of examining an issue with the case illustrating the complexity of the issue” (Creswell 93). In this case study, the “issue” is the secondary writing methods course and the “cases” are the holistic observations and descriptions of three English educators’ experiences and theoretical frames as related to their design and teaching of the course. This case study is, then, a “collective case study” (or multiple case study), defined by Creswell as a study in which “one concern or issue is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue” (Creswell 74).

This collective case study design allowed me to “purposefully select multiple cases to show different perspectives on this issue,” a goal of mine in discovering what accomplished practitioners, of diverse professional backgrounds and teaching contexts, were doing in their secondary writing methods courses and why (Creswell 74). The contexts for these three case studies are quite varied. (See Figure 2.1: Collective Case Study Demographics: Diverse Contexts).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Institution size</th>
<th>Institution location</th>
<th>Course location</th>
<th>Students in course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 1</td>
<td>9,400 students</td>
<td>Rural Midwest</td>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td>Secondary and Elementary English education undergraduates (pre-service teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 2</td>
<td>23,000 students</td>
<td>Suburban Midwest</td>
<td>English Department</td>
<td>Secondary English education undergraduates (pre-service teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 3</td>
<td>15,189 students</td>
<td>Urban East</td>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td>Secondary English education undergraduates and graduates (pre-service and in-service teachers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.1: Collective Case Study Demographics: Diverse Teaching Contexts

Case Study 1, for instance, focuses on a course taught at an institution in the suburban Midwest to secondary English education undergraduate students; Case Study 2 focuses on a course taught at an institution in the rural Midwest to both elementary and secondary English education undergraduate students; and Case Study 3 focuses on a course taught in the urban East to initial teacher candidates who are both English education undergraduate and graduate students. The professional backgrounds, experiences, and theoretical frames from which the three instructors teaching these courses operate are also diverse. (Common features across these cases also emerged and will be identified and discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this study).

In addition, I elected to rely on a case study methodology because case studies can provide for readers a complete and precise picture of a situation: “case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytical reporting formats” (Marshall and Rossman 164). While the survey provided an overview of characteristics of secondary writing methods course on a macro-level, the
case studies provide a much more holistic and detailed picture of individual secondary writing methods courses on a micro-level. Furthermore, the case study does what the survey can not as it “allows for multiple sources of information, such as interviews and document analysis,” both of which I relied on, to report “a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell 73).

The collective case study, then, allowed for this complex issue, including all of the abovementioned elements, to be explored through “multiple bounded systems,” or cases, as I enacted “detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell 73). In addition to discovering what English education scholars and practitioners were teaching in their classrooms, I explored why they were making the pedagogical and instructional choices they were, and this was possible through studying “multiple sources of information” (interviews and course documents) in order to report a “case description and case-based themes” (Creswell 73). Through analyzing these individual cases, then, my aim to better understand the secondary writing methods courses and how and why instructors conceptualize and teach it in the manner that they do was best achieved (Creswell 73).

In selecting the cases for this study, I employed both purposeful and convenient sampling, sampling that “can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem” and sampling that “saves time and money,” respectively (Creswell 125, Marshall and Rossman 111). Creswell cites that “purposeful maximal sampling” is that which he prefers as an expert researcher because it shows “different perspectives on the problem, process, or event [he] want[s] to portray” (Creswell in Creswell 75). In this vein, I selected case study participants of diverse backgrounds and experiences who
taught in diverse contexts so as to illustrate differing conceptualizations, rationales for, and versions of the secondary writing methods course, all of which were taught by active and accomplished scholar practitioners in the field of English education, and specifically the field of writing teacher education.

In addition, a preliminary criteria for participant selection was that participants were active and expert in the field of writing teacher education. Characterizing “active” and “expert” is that these participants regularly: 1) publish in reputable writing teacher education and English education journals; 2) attend and present at professional conferences; and 3) are leaders in professional organizations and the field of writing teacher education. In the words of Marshall and Rossman, the three individuals selected as participants are in fact “elites”: “individuals considered to be influential, prominent, and/or well-informed in an organization of community” and whom are “selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research and for their perspectives on, for example, an organization, a community, or specialized field” (155).

Convenience was also an element of participant selection, as the three participants were willing to collaborate with me despite time and money constraints. For instance, I conducted some interviews with participants via Skype versus in-person to save the time and cost of cross-state travel. In addition, all participants agreed to communicate with me face-to-face, via phone, and via electronic communication (Skype and email) in coordinating and conducting interviews. Likewise, all participants agreed to share course materials (such as syllabi, major project handouts, and lesson plans) electronically via email attachments and Wikispaces. Selecting case study participants purposefully, along
with conveniently, increased the “do-ability” factor of this study, allowing for meaningful interviews and the sharing of course materials (Marshall and Rossman 11).

In conducting this study, I utilized two data collection methods: open-ended interviewing and document analysis. I began first by sharing with the three participants an overview of the aims and methodology for the study, which led to informal discussions regarding the work that they do at their institutions and how their work is relevant to the study. From this point, I conducted two rounds of loosely structured, open-ended, one-on-one interview with the three English education scholar-practitioner participants. Because I was interested in not only what these instructors were doing in the classroom (the curriculum, content, design, and lesson plans of the courses) but also in why instructors were crafting their courses in particular manners, it was necessary to explore participants’ backgrounds, experiences, theoretical frames, and teaching contexts as related to their conceptions and teachings of the course.

Therefore, the two interviews were thematically organized so as to provide participants the opportunity to share thoughts, stories, and opinions on a variety of issues that impact their teaching of the course, including but not limited to: their institutional and programmatic teaching contexts; their students; their professional journeys; their theoretical frameworks for teaching, teaching writing, and teaching pre-service teachers; their personal and scholarly influences; their reflections regarding their teaching practice; their memorable teaching moments; and their thoughts regarding the current state of public K-12 ELA education and writing teacher education.

In speaking with these accomplished English educator participants during interviews, they referenced many teaching materials: projects students completed,
activities commonplace in their classrooms; course readings; online resources for students (and created by students); and even course planning documents. These materials, in addition to others, were those that participants shared, all of which provided me a more complete illustration of what happens in their classrooms and their influences in crafting their courses—the *what* of their courses and they *why* of their courses, respectively.

**The interviews**

I conducted two in-depth interviews with each of the three participants. The interview protocols used for each interview were designed in order to ensure consistency between interviews with different participants and in an effort to keep the interview focused on the goals of the study. All interviews were digitally recorded for accuracy (and future transcription) and before sharing an overview of each interview and beginning each interview, I stated the interviewees’ name, institution, date of the interview, and means of communication (Skype or face-to-face). After sharing an overview of the first interview with the participants, I voiced the following: “I realize that these topics may be personal in nature, so if at any time you would like to bypass a prompt, please feel comfortable doing so without question or judgment from me.” In included this precursor to the interviews, I hoped participants’ would feel respected and comfortable during the interview process, as I realized that “ethical considerations are much more than just ensuring informed consent and protecting participants’ anonymity” (Marshall and Rossman, 121). (While no participants bypassed prompts or expressed discomfort with prompts, it was my plan that should such preferences arise, participants
would be respected and findings would be based on both the accessible information and the participant’s decision to withhold information).

The first interview focused on participants’ professional experiences and philosophical views about teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers. In addition, the interview focused on the contexts in which the instructors taught the secondary writing methods course for initial preparation. In discussing these topics, participants were able to share the foundations of and influences on their teaching along with the institutional and programmatic parameters on their teaching. From these in-depth interviews, I was able to gain an understanding of how two very important foci of this study—scholar-practitioners’ experiences, contexts, perspectives, and the theoretical frames that influence their teaching—interact in shaping the pedagogy and practice involved in their secondary writing methods courses.

The interview protocol for the first interview was structured in such a way so as to focus on the abovementioned topics. Following is a sampling of prompts from the interview protocol per topic area:

- **Professional journey:** 1) What first drew you into the field of education? 2) Please continue describing your journey within the field of education; if you would, summarize your professional journey from its beginning to now. 3) Past research suggests four sources of pedagogical content knowledge: apprenticeship of observation, subject matter knowledge, teacher education, and classroom experience. Would you please discuss how these factors influence your pedagogical content knowledge as you reflect on your career?
4) Does any one element—apprenticeship of observation, subject matter knowledge, teacher education, or classroom experience—stand out as especially influential and how so?

- **Philosophical beliefs about teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers:** 1) At this point in your career, what are your guiding beliefs about teaching in general? About writing? About the teaching of writing? 2) In terms of teacher education, from which frameworks and perspectives do you operate and why? 3) How do the beliefs and perspectives you have shared manifest themselves in your secondary writing methods course? 4) Do you believe these beliefs limit your course in any way? Why or why not?

- **Teaching context:** 1) Please tell me about the demographics of your institution, and specifically your English Education program? 2) How does the secondary writing methods course fit into the curriculum or program for the “typical” student? 3) From your perspective, does the context that you teach in support your aims as a secondary writing methods instructor? In addition, does it limit the work you do or would like to do?

Learning about these scholar-practitioners’ professional influences and journeys, perspectives on teaching and writing (and, namely, on teaching writing teachers), and the theoretical frames that inform their teaching helped illustrate the *why* of this study: *why* what is happening in secondary writing methods classrooms is, in fact, happening. And learning about the institutional and programmatic context also adds to the understanding
of *why* the secondary writing methods courses taught by these participants are taught as they are.

The second set of interviews sought to respond to the question of *what* is happening in the secondary writing methods classrooms of these expert teachers. I wanted to learn about the course design and methodologies, as well as the pedagogies influencing the course. I sought to gain an understanding of anything and everything I could about the course, from the course objectives, materials, and pacing to student activities and projects. Furthermore, in learning about what was going on in these classes, the interview protocol elicited participants’ reflections and personal assessments of the course, and specifically their thoughts of how they believed this course did (or did not) prepare their students to teach English in the K-12 public schools of today.

As with the first set of interviews, the interview protocol for the second interview was structured in such a way so as to focus on the abovementioned topics. Following is a sampling of prompts from the interview protocol per topic area:

- **The guiding pedagogies and methodologies of the course:** 1) What do you believe to be the primary purpose of a writing methods course that prepares teacher candidates to teach writing in secondary schools? 2) What methodologies do you employ in teaching this course and why? 3) In the first interview, we spoke about pedagogical content knowledge; would you comment on the pedagogical content knowledge you draw on most in creating this course and its objectives and in employing the methodologies you have shared? 4) Your course involves both theory and practice; do you think it is important to strike a balance between the two and how do you manage both?
• **The content of the course:** 1) What are the major learning outcomes that you want students to achieve in this course? 2) What materials do you incorporate into this course that most reflect this pedagogical content knowledge? 3) Would you please describe the opening sequence or project of the course? Would you please describe another major project that students complete? 4) You have mentioned particular theorists that influence the work you do with this course; are there others that you introduce to students or others that influence your work? 5) Do your students have opportunities to do demonstrate teaching in the classroom and/or the field? 6) What are the distinguishing characteristics of the course

• **The course and the K-12 situation:** 1) What do you think of the Common Core State Standards in general and how do you think these standards affect writing teachers and secondary writing students, in particular? 2) Do you engage your students in any particular activities that address these and other standards? 3) Due to an increasingly standards driven environment, the teaching of writing of often affected by standardized testing and curriculums; to what extent do you believe your course addresses this and how so?

• **Reflections on the course:** 1) What kinds of changes do you foresee making to the course in the next few years? 2) What do students gain from this course and how is it observable? 3) Much of what I have read, such as in Grossman and Marshall & Smith’s work, highlights that prospective teachers often bring their own experiences to English education programs and in learning to teach,
the rethinking of disciplinary assumptions occurs; do you observe this in your students and how does such an observation affect your teaching of the course? 4) If you could give your teacher candidates “teaching toolboxes” to take with them to their first secondary ELA teaching position, what would be in these boxes?

This interview certainly addressed the “what” of this study as interviewees were asked about their course and its design, along with what students do in the course. This interview also continued to explore the “why” of this study, as it sought to gather narrative and explanation regarding participants’ influences, motivations, and rationale for doing what they do in designing and teaching their courses. Notable is that many of the interview prompts for this interview could be placed in more than one of the four categories listed above. For instance, the prompt “Your course involves both theory and practice; do you think it is important to strike a balance between the two and how do you manage both?” is listed under ‘The Guiding Pedagogies and Methodologies of the Course’ because it addresses the theoretical frame from which the scholar-practitioner operates. However, this prompt also solicits instructors’ reflections and participants’ responses could also touch on course content and the course in relationship to the K-12 situation; the prompt, therefore, could be appropriate under any or all of the four categories. This is significant because it further illustrates the complex terrain that is the teaching of the secondary writing methods course and that this study seeks to explore and understand.
Document analysis

Aside from conducting interviews, I also collected course documents from each interviewee. I asked participants to share syllabi, major project handouts, conceptual or theoretical frameworks (or any other documents used to “ground” the course), and any other course materials the instructors were willing to share. The three case study participants were very gracious in collaborating with me for this study and even turned over assessment tools, in-class activity guides, and smaller assignment sheets in addition to the documents I specifically requested.

These documents further illuminated both what was happening in participants’ classrooms and how students were engaging in the course. In addition, these course documents were reflective of the individual instructors themselves—their professional journeys, their teaching contexts, their philosophical beliefs about teaching and writing, the theoretical frames from which they operate—which allowed me to further explore why that which is happening in the classroom is in fact happening.

Analytic Frame and Data Analysis

As data emerged from the survey, interviews, and collected documents, I continued to focus on the guiding question and sub-questions. I read, reread, and marked survey results, course documents, and interview transcripts with these questions in mind and as I did so, patterns emerged. These patterns became an important part of my analysis, as I was able to focus on commonalities amongst varying secondary writing methods courses and those who teach this course, as well as unique features and attributes of individual courses and instructors. I looked, specifically, for patterns in how scholar-practitioners approach the course, how their backgrounds and experiences
correlate to their approaches, and how these courses are designed and practiced. Such analysis, though “the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis [is] one that can integrate the entire endeavor [of analysis]” as it “link[s] people and settings together” (Marshall and Rossman 159).

In completing my analysis (of survey results, interview transcripts, and course documents), I relied on the same three strands that guided my inquiry in organizing and conducting both the pilot survey and case study interviews: curriculum, instructor, and context.

- **Curriculum**: In terms of *curriculum*, I sought to learn about the focus of the curriculum, and specifically the theorizing and practicing of the secondary writing methods course curriculum. In analyzing data, therefore, I focused on questions such as those that follow. Do courses have a composition focus or English education focus? Which pedagogies do instructors practice and how so; are students engaging in an experiential, collaborative, reflective, feminist, or rhetorical pedagogy, for instance? How is the course structured and organized? What are the major projects and activities that students engage in in the course? Which readings inform both the instructors’ course design and that students interact with? These questions helped me to “see” the individual courses and illustrate the common and unique features of the courses studied examined in the multiple case study.

- **Instructor**: In focusing on the *instructor* of the course, I aimed to better understand how the instructor’s professional background and journey, theoretical frames and perceptions, and research and teaching interests
influence the course and manifest themselves in the course. Following are questions that guided my analysis. How did the participant come to teach the course? From which theoretical frames and perspectives does the instructor operate? What are the instructor’s professional interests and experiences; are these experiences rooted in composition, English education, or another academic specialty? How does the instructor approach the course, theorize it, and practice teaching it? What does the instructor believe about teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers? These questions helped me to isolate data that was revealing of the individual instructor, which of course also relates to the individual teaching (and curriculum) or the course itself.

- **Context:** In analyzing the context of the course, I was able to better situate individual courses and then look for potential patterns in how the course was taught, to whom the course was taught, and by whom the course was taught depending on the “place” of the course within an institution, department, and program. Questions that helped me focus on how the context of the course influences the course itself include those that follow. Which students are required to take the course and which typically elect to take the course—graduates, undergraduates, secondary English education majors and minor, elementary English education majors and minors? Which department houses the course? How many sections of the course typically run each year and how many students are typically in a single section? What are the institutional demographics of the program and university that the course is taught within?
These questions kept my analysis focused, but as my study progressed, I learned that these questions alone were not the only ones to be considered. As I continued to learn about scholarship surrounding the secondary writing methods course, speak with professionals in the field, and craft data collection tools, I realized that the climate of K-12 education—and specifically the climate of K-12 English language arts education—must also be considered as an element that contextualizes the secondary writing methods course. I had to ask participants who were teaching the course how they believed the current state of public education affected the course they were teaching and the initial teacher candidates in those courses. And so, questions regarding the state of K-12 public education and the teaching of writing at the secondary level were asked of case study participants during interviews. In analyzing responses, I decided that these such responses were an extension of the instructor strand (as instructors’ perceptions were being elicited and analyzed) and also of the context strand (as these perceptions framed the purpose of the course and further contextualized the course in all case studies).

Important to note is that none of the three strands—curriculum, instructor, or context—are neat boxes in which information gathered during this study can be placed. Instead, the lines that separate these categories are blurry, as a single piece of data may actually illuminate the foci of more than one strand (and at times, all three strands). This is why the visual representation of my analytic frame illustrates overlapping circles, each representing one of the three strands; data that illuminated the context of the course, for instance, was also revealing of the curriculum and/or instructor of the course at times. Ultimately, the analysis of the interrelated relationships between curriculum, instructor, and context is revealing of the under-theorized space that is the secondary writing
methods course. What I learned about these three “strands”—curriculum, instructor, and context—along with my analysis of the relationships between these strands further illuminates the secondary writing methods course and its influences; I hope these illuminations contribute to common understandings, conversation points, more questions, and eventual progress within the fields of English education and writing teacher education.

In specific regard to the case studies, I used open-coding as part of the analysis process, lifting in-vivo text to form initial codes within each (and even outside of) the three abovementioned strands. From this coding, categories emerged that then helped me to establish themes and patterns in the data. As suggested by Yin, I also used cross-case synthesis as an analytic technique with which I created a word table to display the data from individual cases (Creswell 163). This table illustrated common features and distinguishing characteristics amongst the multiple cases, aligning with one aim of this study: to examine common characteristics and distinguishing characteristics amongst secondary writing methods courses. In representing findings, I aimed to “present an in-depth picture of the cases using narrative(s) and figures” (Creswell 157).

While this study does seek to highlight important thematic issues within the fields of English education and writing teacher education as related to the secondary writing methods course, it by no means seeks establish trends in the writing methods course that are transferrable to teaching contexts other than the three studied through the multiple case study. The language used throughout the remainder of this study and that relies primarily on narrative analysis, addresses my concern that findings from individual case studies are not generalized to suggest that the course is or should be taught in the same
way in other contexts. Certainly, as will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this study, the findings from this study have the potential to lead to further studies that could establish trends in the teaching of the writing methods course. This study, though, offers three in-depth, vivid portraits of writing methods courses and detailed professional profiles of those who teach the course.
CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The Participants: Kelly, David, and Jessica

In this chapter, I present professional profiles of the participants in this project; in doing so, I identify and define the categories used to build these professional profiles. The three participants in this project, all well-established English educators and writing teacher educators, possess unique personal and professional histories that brought them to their current professional contexts. This chapter relays highlights from the personal and professional histories of these three participants, histories gathered via interviews. These stories are bound by common threads which include the following: professional experiences; current professional contexts; and perspectives on teaching, writing, and teaching writing teachers. These three broad categories also served as guideposts in the interview protocols described in Chapter 2.

Before delving into these individual participants’ stories, I acquaint readers with them and provide a glimpse into who they are as a whole. These are educators who are committed to their profession on both a micro- and macro- level, as they are all active participants and leaders within their individual institutions, departments, and programs and in professional communities such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), NCTE state affiliates, the National Writing Project (NWP), and the Conference on English Education (CEE). These three individuals have also built their careers around developing students as teachers.
Most fascinating is that these three well-known English educators and writing teacher educators each employ significantly different pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies in their classrooms. In speaking with these participants, I was especially interested in learning about how their varying experiences relate to and inform their guiding beliefs about teaching and their approaches to teaching writing and to teaching pre-service and in-service writing teachers, specifically. I was also interested in discerning if there were commonalities in their stories, commonalities that brought them to their current contexts as well-established English educators.

Features of their professional narratives overlap. For instance, these teachers were all K-12 educators before becoming post-secondary English educators, these teachers are all closely associated with the NWP, and these teachers all credit particular individual scholars for their own professional development. Both these and other unforeseen commonalities and distinguishing characteristics of these participants’ stories will be discussed in the final portion of this chapter sub-titled: “The Theoretical Frame and Participants’ Professional Profiles: A Discussion.”

**The Professional Profile and Its Elements**

Learning about these participants’ professional influences and journeys, perspectives on teaching and writing, and the theoretical frames that inform their teaching help gets at the *why* of this study: *why* what is happening in secondary writing methods classrooms is, in fact, happening. And learning about the institutional and programmatic context also adds to the understanding of *why* the secondary writing methods courses taught by these English educators are taught as they are. This information also frames the subsequent chapter, Chapter 4, which centers on an in-depth examination of the actual
methods courses: its content, materials, foundational texts and projects, practices, and theoretical and methodological frames. Chapter 4, in essence, accounts for the *what* of this study—what is going on in English ‘methods courses’—and the motivations for this *what* are more fully understood through an examination of the *why*.

I will draw on these categories in building the professional profiles of the project participants: 1) professional journeys, 2) perspectives about teaching, writing, and teaching of writing and writing teachers, and 3) teaching contexts. Each of these categories is described below.

Before relaying these professional profiles, I want to introduce Kelly, David, and Jessica. Kelly is an associate professor of English at a regional teaching institution in the rural Midwest. She teaches and supervises pre-service elementary and secondary English education undergraduate students. Kelly teaches the equivalent of a 4/4 load with release for intern teaching supervision; her position is housed in the English Department.

David is an associate professor of English at a regional Master’s-level comprehensive institution in the suburban/urban Midwest. He primarily teaches pre-service secondary English education undergraduate students, along with the occasional graduate student. David teaches a 3/3 load and maintains a leadership position in a NWP site; his position is housed in the English Department.

Jessica is an assistant professor of English at a research intensive doctoral granting institution in the urban East. She teaches and supervises pre-service and in-service English education graduate students. Jessica teaches a research load, typically one or two courses per semester with a heavy research and advising load; her position is housed in the Division of Curriculum and Teaching.
Professional journey

Before they became English educators, Kelly, David, and Jessica all taught secondary English Language Arts (ELA). However, each came to teach in the secondary English classroom in different ways. David earned a degree in business before realizing he wanted to teach English and returned to school while teaching seemed innate in Jessica and she pursued a teaching degree beginning when she was an eighteen-year-old undergraduate student. These three individuals also made the shift from the secondary to post-secondary classroom via different paths. Their motivations for pursuing graduate degrees even contrast, as do their chosen specializations and fields of study. Kelly decided to go back to graduate school because of a significant shift in her personal life, whereas for Jessica, the “PhD was always the goal.” Though these participants all teach some version of a ‘writing methods’ course geared towards ELA teaching candidates, they came to do so in very different ways.

Their stories are important because these participants’ professional backgrounds—some of which are arguably personal in nature—help us as English educators and writing teacher educators to understand the personal motivations and influences behind choosing ELA, English education, and writing teacher education as a professional career focus, as well as understand what motivations are at play when developing a writing methods course. Because these participants traversed very diverse professional (and personal) paths, they also approach the teaching of their writing methods courses differently.
**Perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers**

Just as these teachers came to their current professional contexts via very different routes, their perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers are diverse. Kelly values a humanistic approach above all else when working with her students; David aims primarily to support his students in thinking about the consequences of writing, the reasons for writing, and to get his students to think; Jessica relies heavily on sociocultural theory in her work with students. Though these teachers do have common values—such as supporting all students who walk through their classroom doors—they are all different human beings with different perspectives regarding how to best support these students at their individual institutions.

Their beliefs are important because these individuals’ beliefs shape their perspectives and theoretical frames, all of which manifest themselves in the writing methods courses that they teach. A central focus of this study, and particularly this chapter, is to better understand why instructors do what they do in the secondary writing methods course. In order to better understand the courses, we must first better understand the instructor, his or her motivations, and his or her ways of knowing and operating. Certainly, what these English educators believe and value about teaching, writing, and teaching writing and writing teachers plays out in their methods classrooms.

**Teaching context**

These English educators all operate within diverse teaching contexts, contexts that certainly inform the teaching that they do. Figure 3.1, on the following page, encapsulates the diversity amongst the varying home-institutions of these individuals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution size</th>
<th>Institution location</th>
<th>Course location</th>
<th>Students in course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelly’s course (Case Study 1)</td>
<td>9,400 students</td>
<td>Rural Midwest</td>
<td>School of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David’s course (Case Study 2)</td>
<td>23,000 students</td>
<td>Suburban Midwest</td>
<td>English Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica’s course (Case Study 3)</td>
<td>15,189 students</td>
<td>Urban East</td>
<td>School of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1: Collective Case Study Demographics: Kelly, David, and Jessica’s Diverse Teaching Context

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, not only are the institutional contexts varied amongst these participants, but so too are the students populations that their writing methods courses service. Kelly and David, for instance, both teach undergraduates exclusively in their methods courses, but Kelly teaches both elementary and secondary English education students while David teaches secondary English education students exclusively. And Jessica teaches a hybrid course of sorts, aiming to meet the needs of both pre-service and in-service undergraduates and graduates in her writing methods course.

The responses and insights shared by Kelly, David, and Jessica all helped to illustrate the diverse contexts for the writing methods course. These varying ways that the courses are situated within students programs, within departments, within larger institutions, and within varying geographic locations certainly influence the manner in which these English educators approach and teach their courses.
Theoretical Frame for Analysis

The three overarching categories for building the professional profiles of these three participants as related to their teaching of the secondary ‘writing’ methods course are represented in Figure 3.2 on the page that follows. As illustrated in this figure with the notation, “Chapter 3: Professional Profiles,” this chapter focuses on the professional profiles of the participants. These professional profiles are built on the three categories identified in bold in the overlapping circles at the top of the chart: professional journey, teaching context, and perspectives on teaching. Below each of these bold headings is a listing of descriptors that characterize each of the categories.

For instance, ‘motivations for pursuing a Ph.D.’ and ‘specific courses of student and specialization’ are common topics that build the ‘professional journey’ categories of each participant’s professional profile. This chart also illustrates that participants’ professional profiles influence the secondary writing methods courses they teach. These courses will be discussed in Chapter 4, as illustrated with the notation, “Chapter 4 Focus: The Course.” The two-sided arrows on this chart are significant, illustrating that the professional profiles influence the course, just as the course influences the professional profiles of participants.

These three categories for building professional profiles of these participants’ are not mutually exclusive. Although I have created three categories for analysis, it is not as simple as this. Because human beings are the focus of this project, and their psyches in regard to teaching writing methods courses are being explored, in no way can one identified strand of influence, such as ‘teaching context,’ be deemed separate or
Figure 3.2: Analytic Frame for Building Professional Profiles and Understanding Courses
unrelated to another influence on the teaching of the course, such as ‘perspectives on teaching.’ Each of these categories informs the others in ways that are beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, these categories are being used only to help share the rich and complex stories of these well-known English educators, as they provide a language and lens through which to appreciate the stories. These categories will be referred to throughout the remainder of this chapter and subsequent chapters in discussing the ways participants’ teaching contexts, professional journeys, perspectives on teaching writing and teaching writing teachers inform the writing methods courses that participants teach. Conversely, the ways in which the courses themselves interact to create and inform participants’ teaching contexts, professional journeys, and perspectives will also be discussed.

I will now outline the specific format I will use in sharing these stories. Each participant is first introduced through an analysis of the metaphor used to title their story. A synopsis of each individual participant’s current professional and teaching context then serves as a prequel to a narrative account of his or her professional journey. (See “Teaching Context” in Figure 3.2). Next, the individual’s narrative highlighting how he or she came to this current professional context is relayed, reflecting the categories ‘professional journey’ and ‘perspectives on teaching, writing, and teaching writing and writing teachers’ (See “Professional Journey” and “Perspectives on Teaching” in Figure 3.2). In the interest of respecting participants’ anonymity, pseudonyms are used in place of potentially identifying people, places, and things in this chapter and all subsequent chapters.
**Kelly: Practice Grounded in ‘Productive Relationship’ Theory**

Kelly values the relationships of trust that she works to develop with her students and the safe and secure environment aims to develop and foster in her classroom. One of the things “[she] really tr[ies] to do is make sure that [students] have that element of trust in the classroom so that they can take a playful, ‘this isn’t going to hurt me if I try it,’ approach to the teaching of writing.” And Kelly sees this approach working because her students “say in their reflections: ‘this is the class where I took the most risk.’” Students taking risks in the classroom and field are also very important to Kelly, and she sees to it that her students connect their coursework with practice: in teaching demos, classroom scenario activities, and fieldwork in K-12 classrooms. Kelly’s approach to teaching stems largely from her belief in a variant approach to writing, made popular by Carl Rogers. Specifically, Rogers’ theory of productive relationships is one that Kelly draws on in her teaching; this theory will be discussed further as Kelly’s story unfolds in this chapter.

**Kelly’s Current Teaching Context**

Kelly is an associate professor of English at a regional teaching institution in the rural Midwest. Kelly maintains the equivalent of a 4/4 teaching load, typically teaching 3 courses per semester while overseeing pre-service teachers in their intern teaching experiences and advising students. She travels extensively throughout her geographic region to supervise pre-service teachers in their field teaching experiences. Her methods course is comprised of both elementary and secondary English education undergraduate majors and she describes her students as “typically white” and “typically female or gendered female.” These students are also generally between the ages of 20 and 25,
Judeo-Christian, and from the Midwest. She continues to describe her student
demographic as follows:

I have had occasional students who were African American, Native American,
and Hispanic. I had a student who was transgender. I have had student who were
male. I have had students who were older—nontraditional students. I have had
students who were atheists and Muslim. But in general it’s a lot of white people
up here.

Though Kelly’s student population may appear largely homogenous on the
surface, she goes on to describe the diversity of her students “underneath the layers”:

There isn’t a lot of what I call visual diversity here. You don’t see the diversity,
but if you look underneath the layers, you’ve got students who were raised in one-
parent homes, two-parent homes, rich students, poor students, students who were
raised Apostolic Lutheran, students who were raised Catholic, students who were
raised atheist, students who were raised in terms of what I call crunchy—you
know, being very nature oriented and organic and outdoorsy. So there’s a lot of
diversity here but because it’s a rural school, you know, the outside looks
homogenous but it’s not.

A seasoned veteran teacher, Kelly admits she is still trying to negotiate how to
best prepare such a wide-range of undergraduate students—both those majoring in
elementary English and those in secondary English. She is constantly revising her course
to meet the needs of her students and a Teacher Education Advisory Council, of which
she is a member, helps her to do this. This group is comprised of university supervisors,
methods teachers, and education faculty and it meets once per month. Kelly notes that “it
is amazing what you learn from other people who have your students after you have
them” and she uses what she learns in her pursuit to make her writing methods class one
of great benefit to her students.

Currently, the writing methods course that Kelly teaches is a 4-credit course that
both elementary and secondary major and minors in English and Language Arts are
required to take. Typically, students take this course before or while taking another
methods course that focuses “on linguistics and grammar in the context of writing.”
Kelly describes the 4-credit course as follows:

The course is intended to give students, future k-12 teachers, a baseline for
writing pedagogy and then also an introduction to specific assignments and/or
assessments that can be used in teaching writing in any grade and in any subject.
Students often take this course earlier in their programs than David and Jessica’s
students. Readers will learn more about Kelly’s course in Chapter 4, as the major focus
of the chapter is in-depth descriptions and analyses of participants’ writing methods
courses.

**Kelly’s professional journey**

Kelly knew she wanted to be a teacher since age five, when her sister was born
and her parents called on her to “co-care or educate” in their household. Kelly
remembers playing school with her little sister and eventually tutoring her own peers in
high school. And in regard to the high school classroom, Kelly recalls being called on by
her teachers, especially her English teachers, to work with writing and grammar tasks.

In selecting a major in college, Kelly “knew she was going to do English and
Psychology, but wasn’t sure about the teaching part.” Kelly graduated with an English
and Psychology degree before returning for her teacher certification two years later. Her certification focused on grades 6-12 and she student taught at the high school level, though took her first teaching job at the middle school level. For almost five years, she taught 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.

While Kelly enjoyed her budding teaching career, a turn in her personal life—a divorce—prompted her to go back to school to get her master’s degree. In reflecting on this time in her life, Kelly recalls the professional invigoration she felt:

I started teaching college composition and absolutely fell in love with the freedom that I had at the college level that I did not have at the high school or middle school level. So when I was seeking out a Ph.D. program—and I went directly from my master’s into my Ph.D. so I did six years of grad school all at once—I looked for a program that allowed me to do a variety of things because I get bored very easily.

Illinois State University became home to Kelly for four years as she pursued her Ph.D in English studies and majored in composition and pedagogy. Throughout her degree program, her emphasis was working with first-year writing students and writing program administration. Kelly fondly recalls the moment her professional aspirations shifted:

It was in my last semester that my program director said, “Hey, I have this reading methods course—literature methods course—would you like to teach it?” And I said, “Sure.” And she said, “By the way, you’re qualified to be an English ed professor.” And I said, “I had no idea.”
And so, drawing on her program director’s encouragement and her own research, Kelly positioned herself on the job marked looking for all jobs “with the dimension of composition:” writing program administrator, English education, and Writing Center Administration positions. Kelly ended up choosing and was offered a job at a mid-sized public Midwestern university. This job entailed co-directing the English education program and teaching composition and pedagogy courses. And it is the job she holds to this day.

The moment that Kelly’s program director invited her to teach a literature methods course undoubtedly changed Kelly’s career, as it led her to her career as an English educator rather than a Writing Program or Writing Center administrator. It is likely, though, that while her professional path would have unfolded differently had she known that studying English education as was an option before this pivotal moment, she may have very well positioned herself as an English educator at some other point. She recalls that she “later found out that one of my friends was actually doing English ed stuff while he was getting his Ph.D., and I didn’t even know that was an option or I would have been doing that all along.” Furthermore, she went through national board certification the last year she was teaching and received the actual board certification in 1995—after she had already left the classroom. This certification reveals Kelly’s dedication to secondary teaching, which, combined with her experience teaching secondary English Language Arts certainly, certainly influenced her chosen career in English education.

Kelly also notes that one of the greatest influences in her journey to becoming and English educator was classroom observation. While getting certified in her post-
baccalaureate program, she visited a nursery school, preschool, middle school, and high school to conduct classroom and teaching observations. Because she already had her bachelor’s degree during her certification program, she was allowed to substitute teach. As Kelly puts it, “I was actually working as a substitute teacher in grades 6-12 while I was taking courses on how to teach grades 6-12. So those experiences as a substitute teacher really, really shaped my experiences as a pre-service teacher.” This combination of field work—observation hours to fulfill class requirements in her certification program and substitute teaching—provided Kelly important lessons in her novice teaching career.

Kelly reflects on these “early days:”

I think it was a combination of things [that I picked up.] I know classroom management was part of it, and I know transitioning was a big part of it. But the other thing is I ended up teaching chemistry, PE, French, choir, and then, of course, English anytime they could get me in an English class. But, you know, teaching those other subject areas, I figured out that kids get excited about learning and putting them in leadership positions as much as possible helped them to learn.

**Kelly’s perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing teachers**

In reflecting on this invaluable fieldwork, Kelly makes an important realization that actually affects how she works with pre-service teachers to this day. In her experience, the field hours she put in for education courses were “very disjointed” and “more about doing clock hours that making any connections to the college classroom, the methods classroom.” Conversely, her experiences as a substitute teacher were meaningful and relevant to her coursework; Kelly comments that student teaching
prepared her for student teaching and even her first few years as a teacher. Today, she notes:

[This] kind of translates into why I do what I do here at X University too because I don’t want [students’] hours to just be clock hours. I want them to connect their field experiences to what we’re doing in class as much as possible. And I encourage them to substitute if they can.

Not only have Kelly’s field experiences had a profound impact on her professional path and even current practice, but so too has content-knowledge that she mastered in her graduate program. Kelly wrote her thesis on Carl Rogers, a psychotherapist and educator, whom she refers to as an “amazing person.” Carl Rogers made a variant approach to teaching popular and while Kelly’s thesis focused on Carl Rogers and composition, she draws on his theory of “productive relationships” as a “way of teaching.” She describes three main areas Rogers emphasizes:

One is unconditional positive regard, and that’s just acceptance, accepting the student where they are and appreciating the fact that they are who they are and that they come with a history…and that you accept them for who they are today with their faults and their depth. Another piece of the puzzle is empathetic listening, being able to and trying to put yourself in a position of empathizing with the student so that you understand where they’re coming from…And congruence—being who you are—and you know, if you’re unhappy, talking to them about being unhappy…Being you, the authentic you.

Kelly works these guiding principles of Rogers’ “productive relationships” theory into her teaching relationships in a pursuit to develop trust and intimacy. In doing so, she
believes “you can come at the problems that come up without losing sight of who you are and who the student is.” She believes that in getting to know students and developing trusting relationships with them, both teacher and students can take risks, risks that are necessary for growth as teachers, learners, and writers.

Also informing Kelly’s work with pre-service teachers is a feminist approach, an approach she did work with during her Ph.D. program and that she still works with today. “Looking at things from a cooperative, collaborative, non-war metaphor point-of-view and really trying to be aware of how teaching is gendered” is important to Kelly’s teaching. In addition to drawing on content-knowledge from her graduate program, Kelly also believes in de-centering her classroom. She tries to approach teaching as a co-learner with her students, and, with humor, describes her own role and her students’ roles in this way:

I’m there to learn too. And I don’t know everything. I just have more experience at finding things. And so letting students teach me, I think, is a big part of that and, again, putting them in charge, letting them take the lead role throughout the semester really helps to de-center my classroom.

In specific regard to teaching pre-service writing teachers, Kelly cites the work of Nancy Atwell and Jim Burke as influential:

One of the things I figure is that we need to give [pre-service teachers] a variety of perspectives about teaching. So, for example…I used Nancy Atwell’s In the Middle and I balanced that with Jim Burke’s Writing Reminders. Because Nancy is an idealist and works in a school that has no special ed students at all, you know, we look at that and we talk about the reality of Nancy’s program and
whether or not that would work here and other cities. Then we talk about Jim Burke’s points of view and whether or not his San Francisco Bay, California, multicultural, multi-language model...would work in our area.

**David: Practice Grounded in an Ethnographic Frame**

David values the notion that “all people can learn” and that, as a teacher, “[he] gets what [he] gets” and “it’s [his] responsibility to teach, work with that person.” In regard to his teaching and to teaching writing teachers, in particular, David comments that an ethnographic frame guides him:

I think as teachers, I think we need to prepare them on how to learn, learn how to observe, learn how to describe. And this is where the ethnographic frame that I learned in graduate school has become critical. I have learned a lot about how to observe, how to describe, how to contrast, how to triangulate. These principles of ethnography have helped me in my own teaching and they guide how I prepare teachers.

Specifically, this ethnographic frame works in conjunction with David’s experiences in the National Writing Project and as an editor, to inform a lot of what he does as a teacher of writing and writing teacher educator. This ethnographic frame that informs much of David’s work is discussed in greater detail as his story is revealed in this chapter.

**David’s current teaching context**

David is an associate professor of English at a regional Master’s-level comprehensive institution in the suburban/urban Midwest. He teaches pre-service
secondary English education undergraduate students. In addition to teaching a 3/3 load, David maintains a leadership position in his local NWP site.

David works with a student population that is largely white, though African Americans account for the second largest ethnicity on campus, and David believes this is due to being close to a large, Midwestern, urban city with a high African American population. The students in the English education program are “mainly white” and “mainly female,” according to David, and enrollment in the program is declining, reflective of a national trend. David discusses this decline:

We had 187 majors in the Spring. Now this Fall we have 156. When I first got here we had 400 and something, so we continue to lose students…It makes sense. I mean, everyone is telling the kids there are no jobs and our student’s aren’t getting jobs [in-state].

David is clear that “every student is different and has a different story,” but when asked about the general characteristics among his students he shares the following:

I think if you look at what they have to do, they have to do their general education, they have to have a 2.5 or something close to that to get into the initial teacher preparation program, they have to major in something and minor in something that they can get certified in—although it’s not a state requirement anymore, it’s still an institutional requirement. So we’re getting more people who are double majors. And we get minors; minors are mainly people who are special ed majors…some of them didn’t come up as readers and writers.

David has noticed a phenomenon that he is observing carefully and that he believes is related to declining enrollment in the program:
I think the only one thing I can really say is that the kids in the lower enrollment—we have fewer in our classes, and so we see more students—I don’t know how to explain this. I would say weak students have always been there. But when you have 25 in a class versus 14, well you know they’re working on it [in a class of 25]. But when [weaker students] are one-third or one-fourth of class, then you feel like there’s more of them. I don’t think there’s more of them. I just think, you know, it’s more obvious.

David comments that this topic is uncomfortable to discuss because he “believes that they can learn” and “there was plenty I didn’t know as an undergraduate.”

The majority of students who take David’s writing methods course, entitled “Writing for Secondary Teachers,” are junior or senior English education undergraduates. The institution is moving toward “a bit of a curricular model” and therefore, David notes that “our hope it to get people other than English teachers to take the class.” Graduate students who elect the course can earn graduate credit, but have to negotiate one extra project with the instructor; graduate students take the course occasionally. The course itself is taught by four different individuals in the English education program who all approach the class differently, though all use the National Writing Project as a model. David describes the course, per the National Writing Project model, as follows.

We expect people to…prepare curriculum and that kind of stuff, but also to take risks as writers, to keep going as writers, to not just think ‘I’m going to teach’—because people come in sometimes and just teach grammar.

He continues to describe the course as one “designed to prepare teacher candidates to develop as writers and to prepare to teach writing with secondary school
David’s professional journey

When David started college, he was unsure of what to major in so he chose to follow his father’s career path—one in business—and gave accounting a try. David soon realized, in his words, that “accounting wasn’t it” and put his energy into English classes so he could learn to read and write better. Interested in keeping his options open, he then retook all of his math classes and decided to pursue a pre-med route. Upon graduation, though, he decided that he didn’t want to be a doctor, but instead wanted to teach English. David then went back to get his teaching certification to teach secondary English and landed a teaching job in a California high school, a job he held for 11 years.

David remembers his first year of high school teaching well: “I taught six classes that first year, I had about 190 students, and I also coached basketball.” He also remembers wanting to earn his master’s, and he began doing so during the summer following this first year of teaching. He began with a five-week summer institute through the National Writing Project, an institute he reflects on as being much more important than he realized at the time. He was in a composition program at Y University, and both his graduate program and the Writing Project stretched his perspectives and thinking in new ways, as did his graduate coursework:

I started focusing a lot more on learning to teach writing, and I started thinking about my own writing, of course. My thesis was a collection of narrative based on certain important parts of my life, and I recognized right then that my students...
could do this kind of work, that the principles of what I was doing they could do, and that changed the way I started thinking about teaching writing.

David recalls another pivotal moment from his first years of teaching—a teaching moment—that influenced another of his interests to this day, which is assessing writing through peer evaluation:

For some reason, I had all six classes turn in an essay at the same time, and I was learning that that wasn’t the way to do it right. And I realized they had to write one more because they hadn’t written enough so I decided to have them do that. Well, I knew I couldn’t respond in any real way with that amount of time at the end of the year. So I decided to do a peer evaluation—I thought about it, I taught them how to do it, and I didn’t rely on their grades, of course not—but it gave me a start. Two things: logistically, they started the response to the papers which helped me feel more like I can do this. But then it got me really interested in how we go about assessing papers, and then peer evaluation became a very serious thing for me over time.

In reflecting on his first years of secondary teaching, David acknowledges that though he knew little about the concept of apprenticeship at the time, the notion of apprenticeship had been built into him. He played and managed sports his entire life and he became a high school basketball and volleyball coach, for instance. His “incorporating” (mentor) teacher also became “very instrumental” in helping David “think like an English teacher.”

She was one of those that are in all of our areas, hopefully somewhere where she’s not only respected but respected for all the right reasons, and was very much
a mentor. So she allowed me to make mistakes, but I watched her think about organization, those kinds of things, classroom management.

Around year seven of his teaching career, David reflects that he “was still relying on her to think about more conceptual ways of thinking about teaching.” He realized that people like her were needed to help him and the younger department of which he was part with curricular conversations. This is when David went to meet Sheridan Blau while considering a Ph.D. course of study focusing on English education. In fact he remembers sharing with Blau that he was “interested in having intellectual conversations that just weren’t really available at my school. To this Blau responded, “Well, I don’t think you’ll have a problem here.” Though a friend of David’s suggested he go back for his Ph.D. in English and then do education, David knew this was not the route for him, as he was more interested in education with English being the concentration.

And so, after applying to one place, based on knowing one person, Blau, David began his Ph.D. through the College of Education, focusing on literacy and English education. Congruently, David worked with the Writing Project and gained important perspectives on literacy, methodology, professional development, and the National Writing Project itself. While in this program, David tutored, organized workshops, taught literacy courses, and English education courses. Upon completing his Ph.D., David took a job as an English educator at a mid-sized Midwestern public university.

David’s perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers

In reflecting on his journey to becoming an English educator, David highlights classroom teaching experience, important individual mentors, graduate coursework, and the professional organization—namely the National Writing Project—each as
contributing to his journey. In articulating the theoretical frames from which he operates as a teacher, a more detailed illustration of his professional path becomes evident, and how this path and his perspectives go hand-in-hand also develops. David describes a couple of general premises that guide his teaching:

I believe that all people can learn. So I also believe as a teacher I get what I get, that whoever walks through my door, if the institution says he can be here, I think that it’s my responsibility to teach, work with that person. And then I also think that another main one is that I view students as people who are trying to learn how, or need to learn how to do the kind of work, whatever class I am teaching, that they will be expected to know how to do. So in other words, I don’t look at it as a deficit model.

David, significantly influenced by the Teachers’ Writing Project of the National Writing Project, aims to position his students as writers in the sense that they “are people who have experiences, they have something to say, they are learning or can communicate with people, they can write to learn, so they can use writing for the multiple reasons that I use writing.” Furthermore, David views writing as a process, commenting it is “recursive” and even “figurative:”

We might write something and get to a point where we realize this isn’t at all what we mean. So all of has changed the way I look at my students. So I look at most of their writings as works in progress. Even if they’re due today, I tell them these are really works in progress…[students] always have a chance to revise. This is pretty much the choice we always have too.
Enacting the Teachers’ Writing Project principles that teachers are “teacher writers, teachers of writers, and teachers of other writers,” David also applies his work as an editor to his work as a teacher of writing and a teacher of writing teachers. He reflects that his work as an editor influences the way he interacts with his student writers: “Once I saw how the [publishing] process works with these professional writers, then when I turned to look at my graduate students I’m working with, then it’s easier for me to see their value as part of a process, a larger process.”

Furthermore, David is interested in writing as social action. He aims to help his students think about the consequences of writing, the reasons for writing—that “sometimes it’s personal, sometimes it’s communal, sometimes it’s political”—and he aims to get his students to think. And in regard to the teaching of pre-service teachers, David refers to the ethnographic frame he relied heavily on in conducting his dissertation research and navigating graduate school. He marries his teaching of pre-service English teachers and this ethnographic frame in these terms:

So I think as teachers we need to prepare [pre-service teachers] on how to learn, learn how to observe, learn how to describe…I have learned a lot about how to observe, how to describe, how to contrast, triangulate. These principles of ethnography have helped me in my own teaching and they guide how I prepare teachers.

David continues to point out that his approach to working with pre-service teachers is to “think about what they are going to need to know:”

How can I help them be prepared to construct curriculum in the different types of environments they’re going to need to? How do I help them learn to select
curriculum for activities or content that I don’t even know they’re going to need to know? So, you know, what online are we needing to do, for example. This is changing quickly.

David’s experiences a doctoral student, in conjunction with his previous K-12 work as a teacher and coach were also very influential in shaping his perspectives on teaching writing. David observed and studied the classroom of a 28-year veteran studio art teacher as part of his dissertation project. This teacher positioned her students, who were of diverse backgrounds and ranged from freshmen to seniors, as artists. She did this very skillfully and deliberately, and David realized the effects on student learners were far preferable to the effects he observed in other high school classrooms. He reflects on his dissertation research experience:

[The studio art teacher] had a framework that I adopted when I taught creative writing. And then also as a coach we had a very similar thing. So I looked across at studio art, my own teaching as a creative writing teacher, and in basketball, all of them we positioned the students as, you know, studio artist, creative writers, basketball players.

David reflects that it is his job—as a learner, teacher, and coach—to pose, think through, and act on these sorts of questions and thoughts:

What kind of practices do those people need? What do we expect? How can we show them how to do it? What kind of language? Everything...Not just what they don’t know, that they’re idiots and why don’t they come to us smarter. None of that works—that’s totally useless.
Jessica: Practice Grounded in Multi-modality

Jessica recognizes that “writing is different” now than in the past. Jessica notes that “writing is digital now and that writing is different.” Jessica recently undertook a complete revamping of her courses to include multi-modal and multi-genre pieces, inspired largely by her participation in an NCTE workshop. The reinvention of her course is grounded in theory of multi-modality, and though Kelly acknowledges that this theory “is not at the core of what I believe,” it greatly affects her conceptualization of writing, and therefore, her teaching of writing methods courses. Kelly’s recent interest in digital writing and belief that “digital writing is a different kind of writing that is as important to teach as academic writing, or expressive writing, or any other kind of writing” highlights her past practice, rooted largely in the National Writing Project model and in demonstration. In addition, Haye’s *The Cognitive Theory of Writing* and Herlocks’, *Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice*, are largely influential in Jessica’s practice, which I will explore in depth in this chapter as I relay Jessica’s story.

Jessica’s current teaching context

Jessica is an assistant professor of English at a research intensive doctoral granting institution in the urban East. She teaches and supervises pre-service and in-service English education graduate students. Jessica teaches a research load, typically one or two courses per semester with a heavy research and advising load; her position is housed a graduate school of education.

All students in Jessica’s program are graduate students and need to have a master’s for certification. Therefore, students are post-bachelor students who have all graduated as English majors or majors in a related field that they could get English
Students in this program comprise two general camps: about half of the students come to graduate school with a bachelor’s and are seeking certification before they begin teaching while the other half are students who graduated with bachelor’s degrees, were placed in schools, and have come to the program seeking certification while teaching. Jessica notes this distinction between the two groups important: “They’re all pre-service teachers, but one group of them is actually in-service teachers, and they have very different needs, those two groups.”

The course itself has undergone a metamorphosis. When Jessica began working at the institution, a writing methods course did not exist. However, she piloted a course entitled “Writing Across the Curriculum” with the non-traditional, in-service, graduate student group—with whom there was more flexibility for in the program—and the course was a success. The course was recently worked into the “regular program” for the “traditional students” and retitled, “Teaching Composition to Adolescents in the 21st Century.” Essentially, this methods course was added to an already robust program, actually requiring once existing course be dropped. Jessica describes the program before the official adoption of the “Teaching Composition” course:

The program is very robust in the sense that we have an adolescent literature course, a language and literacy course, an integrated methods course, but all of our courses were pedagogical—I mean they were all methods course. We had an introductory literacy course—like a reading and writing across the curriculum that the English people got kind of a more robust literacy…so they’ve got five methods courses.
This course is one of the last students take in the program, typically along with their
‘integrated methods’ course. Jessica describes the unique population of students in her
‘methods course’ and program:

We have smart students, you know, they all come from highly respected undergraduate institutions. We have students who care about diversity, and they understand our mission is—we’re a Jesuit school—and our mission is social justice oriented. For us at the school that means that we are in urban contacts and we’re in high risk schools. That becomes a point of tension with some of our students who do not want to student teach in these kinds of schools. And we have been working hard to make them understand before they come that’s really non-negotiable.

Jessica goes on to describe another point of contention for some students in her writing methods course:

I would say another hurdle to be overcome in the philosophies of all of these students is a reliance on traditional pedagogy and traditional conceptions of teaching and learning writing. It’s interesting because I thought it was so bogus when I was an undergrad to hear about philosophy and theory, and now I realize that you actually live your theory. I try to connect theory to practice in really important ways because of that, because of my own experience of not having theory connected to practice. It’s a little easier for me to do in a graduate setting because…they are actually in a classroom.
Readers will learn more about Jessica’s course in Chapter 4, as the major focus of the chapter is in-depth descriptions and analyses of participants’ writing methods courses.

**Jessica’s professional journey**

Jessica came into teaching naturally. Her mother was a teacher and Jessica recalls that, at as early as four or five year old, she was playing teacher to a room full of stuffed animals. She also distinctly remembers her mother telling her, “You don’t want to be just a teacher, you want to get your Ph.D.” Jessica reflects that she “thinks this was something that [my mother] hadn’t done but always wanted to do so she was planting that seed.” And Jessica even got an early start assessing others’ work, grading her mothers’ students’ multiple-choice tests. In Jessica’s words, “I just always knew I was going to be a teacher.”

Jessica’s mom was also influential in the choices Jessica made as an undergraduate student. Jessica recalls,

I love history, and history was my passion. I was best at English, though, so I did a double major in history and English. And my mom, again, she was pretty savvy and said, “Look, you want to make yourself marketable and these two fields have a lot of people in them, so get both certification and then you can go either direction. Whatever school needs you, you can teach either way.

Heeding her mother’s advice, Jessica pursued a double major in both history and English. In becoming certified in these two content areas, Jessica realized she was just three credits short of an education major, so tacked that onto her program of study, and graduated with a triple major in history, English, and education. During her undergraduate degree program, Jessica became involved in the student sector of the
Pennsylvania State Education Association, the teaching union in the state, and was instrumental in reviving its declining impact in her community:

    The program was failing at my institution, and I said, this is ridiculous. You have got to create a pretty good, solid core of people who want to be teachers, you know, because we need to help the community. So I worked really hard to bring that program back so that people who wanted to be teachers had that network there.

Jessica continued to take action in the teaching community when she landed her first secondary teaching job in a different state. She primarily taught English, though she recalls being “tapped to do humanities programs and, when needed, to teach in the social studies department. So, you know, my mom’s kind of prodding worked out well for me there.” While there, she became in the National Writing Project, though she did not know she was participating in a national network of teachers at the time. She remembers that when “we were doing something well in our practice, we would run a series of workshops for our colleagues.” For her efforts, she either got paid or earned horizontal credit, an expectation of teachers in her district.

Jessica then went on to earn her Master’s in curriculum and teaching from Teacher’s College at Columbia, but recalls that earning her Ph.D. was always the goal: “I mean, I remember, in the back of my mind, I’m getting my Ph.D., right?” Unknown to Jessica, however, was which institution she would earn her degree from and how she would navigate the demands of a Ph.D. program and her full-time teaching job—a job she felt she much continue while working on her Ph.D. because it “was the best practice”
for her. She also recalls an important exchange between herself and an advisor at Teacher’s College at Columbia:

To get a PhD., you had to actually work with the people at Columbia and an Ed.D., you work with the people at Teacher’s College. And I really wanted the Ph.D. I wanted the research piece to it, and part of it was that I just wanted that degree as well. And so I told [my advisor] this and she was very honest with me. She said, “It’s going to be really hard for you to teach fulltime and play the politics you need to play, so this might not be the right place for you.”

This exchange ultimately guided Jessica to a brand new PhD. Program in education that had a literacy concentration at Rutgers. Practically speaking, this program was also closer to her home. While at Rutgers, Jessica worked as a National Writing Project teacher for the National Writing Project, the program that has profoundly impacted her career: “I bought it all. And my core philosophy of teaching comes out of what I experienced in the National Writing Project.” Upon graduating from Rutgers, Jessica pursued and accepted at position as an English educator at a small, Northeastern Jesuit school.

**Jessica’s perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers**

Jessica’s professionalization as a pre-service and practicing teacher shaped her journey in becoming an English educator. However, Jessica’s family life—and experiences with her mother, in particular—are also significant to how she conceptualizes both writing and teaching. Jessica reflects on how she learned to write:

So I learned to write through the red pen. This is my perception of it. Not from school teachers but from my mom. She would sit laboriously with me in
conference, and she would have her red pen in the conference and mark up my papers. She would also take the papers, and you know, read them separately as an English teacher would and mark them that way, and then she would sit and go over them with me. So that conferencing was a piece that I never had at school because I grew up in an era where that just didn’t happen. It was you got your paper back marked up, though actually my generation was allowed to rewrite on major assignments so that was an improvement. Conferencing [with my mom] was not an easy process; it was painful, it created tension between my mom and me, but it made me a strong writer.

In reflecting on her writing relationship with her mother, Jessica realizes that much of her successes as a high school and undergraduate writer were because of it. She also acknowledges that she realizes this now, but only because she now has “other knowledge, the pedagogical knowledge, that I gained later” to realize it. And rooted in her upbringing, Jessica also believed, as a novice teacher, that “it was all about form and mechanics, you know, structure. [My mom] helped me understand how you connect the pieces with the topic sentence…and so I though that’s what it was—to teach structure.” Jessica credits her Ph.D. program for shifting complicating and expanding her “content knowledge of writing” because when she got to this program she was “really passionate about teaching writing [and] wanted to know more about how to do it better” and the program provided opportunity for this to transpire. Her pedagogical content knowledge in regard to teaching writing grew as a result of both the National Writing Project and a course focusing on teaching writing to secondary students that “broke down [her] insistence” that teaching writing was rooted in structure by “asking [her] to be a writer:”
These fundamental experiences positioned me as a writer in a different way than I had ever been a writer before. So I reconceptualized what writing is and also then how I go about teaching that with my students. So then once I philosophically changed, I started applying it to my classroom more…and reflecting more.

Jessica also reflects that her doctoral work was timely in her development as a writing teacher. While her master’s affected the way she taught, it was more focused on social justice than writing. She believes that the coursework and teaching would have helped her evolve as a teacher, but that her doctoral work was critical in her development:

It was the theoretical and research base that I got with my doctoral studies [that] pushed me there faster...This is where classroom practice comes in…the more focused research that I did as a doctoral student I think really helped me to see what was working [in my practice] and what wasn’t.

In specific regard to theory, Jessica credits Hayes’ The Cognitive Theory of Writing for supporting the reconceptualization of her teaching practice. The piece had such a profound impact that she uses it in her methods courses today, and she has seen it have a profound impact on others. Jessica is also influenced by Herlock’s Teaching Writing as a Reflective Practice and his idea of gateway activities and procedural declared knowledge. Despite the fact that Herlock’s work is rooted in sociocultural theory, Jessica has not completely rejected the expressivist tradition:
…[students’] need to write…but especially in the academic world, there’s more to it than just writing and responding to writing. I think that there are some skills that need to be taught and we need to understand what those skills are. And in teaching students, namely pre-service and in-service teachers, Jessica describes her practice in these terms:

I would say my practice is grounded in demonstration, practice what I preach and, aside from asking my pre-service or my in-service teachers to really think about what a concept is and what that means for teaching, I do everything with them that I would do with my high school students. So again, the National Writing Project model that, you know, you’re demonstrating the teaching rather than just telling here’s what you need to do. So in order for that to happen, they write, they think about what writing is and what their process is, and then they think about what that means for other writers and, when we have 25 or 35 writers in our class, what that means for teaching all of those different writers.

Jessica goes on to comment that “writing is digital now. Writing is different.” And therefore, the theory of multi-modality, also greatly informs her work with pre-service and in-service teachers. Essentially, Jessica has completely revamped her writing methods courses based on a reconceptualization grounded in the belief that “digital writing is a different kind of writing that is equally as important to teach as academic writing, or expressive writing, or any other writing.”

**The Theoretical Frame and Participants’ Professional Profiles: A Discussion**

The three participants have very different stories. Their teaching contexts, professional journeys, and perspectives on teaching, writing, teaching writing, and
teaching writing teachers are very different. I use this project’s theoretical frame to
discuss salient highlights from the participants’ professional profiles and how they seem
to influence their writing methods courses.

**Teaching context**

Kelly teaches a writing methods course that is required for English education
majors, and that includes *both* elementary and secondary English education
undergraduate students. This adds a layer of complexity to Kelly’s approach to the
course. Instead of designing curriculum for solely elementary English education majors
or solely secondary English education majors, Kelly provides instruction that is relevant
to both of these student populations. Since Kelly teaches at an institution in a rural area,
most of her students move out-of-state—many to the neighboring state—for their first
teaching jobs. This has prompted Kelly to “do more with culturally responsive teaching”
in preparing students for teaching in varying geographic contexts.

David’s students are primarily English education undergraduate students, though
he teaches the occasional graduate student in his writing methods course. David strives
to create a course that values all students where they are in their academic journeys and
equips them with ethnographic ways of ‘seeing’ and thinking in practicing their writing
and the teaching of writing.

Jessica’s students are graduate students who are practicing teaching as either
intern teachers or in-service teachers. This affects Jessica’s course in that Jessica strive
to stay relevant in a digital era of literacy, crafting her course around the theory of multi-
modality. Since Jessica’s students bring actual teaching experience to the course, Jessica
creates a course that is aimed largely at helping students to marry theory with practice—
practice that they are actually doing while taking the course. This complicates the course, as many students are extremely consumed in their in-service responsibilities and are stretched thin between these duties and those associated with the writing methods course. This student need also guides Jessica’s teaching as she works to make her course relevant to their work in the classroom.

**Professional journey**

Kelly’s methods classroom is influenced by her childhood, marked by a love for teaching and a career in the K-12 classroom. Kelly reveled in the freedom she experienced in the higher education classroom upon embarking on her graduate studies and marketed herself for jobs “with the dimension of composition” after completing her doctoral work in Composition and Pedagogy and working with both the first-year writing (FYW) program and teaching a literature methods course. Interestingly, Kelly never even entertained a career in English education until an advisor showed interest in her skills and experiences, and offered her a teaching assignment in English education. In turn, Kelly seeks to take a personal interest in each of her students, working to make classroom materials relevant to their lives and their professional goals. Also influential in her professional journey was classroom observation. This, too, is reflected in her practice as an English educator as her students are constantly role playing various classroom situations, doing teaching demonstrations in class, and doing field work in local schools. Kelly oversees the K-12 fieldwork of her students across a large geographic area, illustrating the value she places on both observation and practice teaching. Similarly, Kelly’s National Board Certification (completed after she left the K-12 classroom) and
work with Teach for the Dream are reflective of her position that all students and teachers bring a diversity to the classroom that must be tapped for the greater good.

David’s writing methods course is influenced by his work as a K-12 educator. David’s high school teaching and coaching serve as a metaphor for how he approaches work with his students: he seeks to meet students where they are and work with them. He also learned lessons regarding the assessment and evaluation of writing, in particular, as a high school teacher, and learned that he could not respond “in any real way” to students’ writing on his own. Therefore, he took a real interest in various models of peer review and peer assessment, and these have remained research interests of his to this day. He also began “focusing a lot more on learning to teach writing” once he began his graduate work, which certainly has played out in his writing methods courses. In addition, the ethnographic frame David learned about and worked with as a graduate student also have a great impact on how he approaches the teaching of writing and the teaching of writing teachers, as he seeks to support students in becoming observers, thinkers, and writers. And David’s work as an editor greatly impacted the way her viewed the writing process and the way he viewed his students: it became “easier for [him] to see [students’] value as part of a process, part of a larger process.”

Jessica’s approaches to teaching the writing methods course are largely influenced by her mother, a high English teacher, who modeled schoolwork as she graded papers and lesson planned in Jessica’s childhood home. Her mother also pushed her in her teenage years to see writing as a process, improve as a writer, and to pursue graduate school and earn a PhD; her mother did not coddle her but was hard on her in teaching her these lessons. Jessica, too, is not the “warm fuzzy” type in the classroom, and has created
a robust curriculum in her writing methods course. Though Jessica enjoyed a successful K-12 teaching career, she always knew she’d pursue a PhD, a decision that brought her to her current English education teaching context. In addition, work that Jessica did in in both her undergraduate and graduate program, as well as first K-12 teaching job, prompted change and had lasting effects on others. As an undergraduate, she resurrected the student affiliate of her state’s teaching union at her institution. As a graduate, she became highly involved in putting on workshops through the NWP for in-service teachers. As a K-12 teacher, she was pulled to do humanities and social studies teaching when necessary. Simply stated, Jessica was a go-to individual who got things done in these contexts, and continues with this role today as an English education faculty member, piloting and now revising the writing methods course to reflect multi-modal and digital literacies.

**Perspectives on teaching, writing, and the teaching of writing and writing teachers**

It is impossible to separate this area of discourse from the previous two (‘context’ and ‘professional journey’), but this section aims to provide a snapshot of participants’ perspectives that inform their writing methods courses. Kelly’s teaching of the writing methods course is influenced by largely by Carl Rogers’ variant approach to teaching, and in particular, his theory of “productive relationships.” She models this theory in her interactions with her students. Kelly’s feminist influences are also evident in her course as she works to position students as “co-learners” and creates a collaborative environment in her classroom. In terms of course content, Kelly’s students examine issues of power and diversity in teaching, and these topics also have roots in feminist theory. Kelly also points to the National Writing Project (NWP) model of “teacher as writer” as influential
in her writing methods course; it is commonplace for her students to *do* writing in her course and to demonstrate the teaching of writing both in her classroom and in their intern teaching experiences. Kelly works to make the theory “real” in her classroom by helping her students make connections between it and practice. In this vein, Kelly incorporates multiple perspectives on teaching into her classroom, including those of Nancy Atwell and Jim Burke, for instance. In doing so, Kelly aims to equip students with knowledge of varying teaching perspectives and strategies that they may adapt in their future teaching contexts.

David’s approaches to teaching the writing methods course are influenced largely by the ethnographic frame that he encountered as a graduate student and then adopted and adapted to his own learning and teaching. This frame grounds his teaching and writing methods course as he aims to empower pre-service teachers with *ways* of seeing and knowing. David course is also influenced largely by his participation (and now leadership) in the National Writing Project (NWP). David’s work on his dissertation as a graduate student, past and current work as an editor, and past work as a K-12 teacher and coach all align with this model of positioning students as doers. In his writing methods course, students are positioned as writers, teachers, and writing teachers.

Jessica’s writing methods course is influenced largely Jessica’s participation in the National Writing Project (NWP), which shifted her perspectives about writing and the teaching of writing by asking her to be a writer. Her writing methods classroom is based on the NWP model in that it positions teachers as writers and focuses heavily on reflection. Jessica’s emphasizes reflection with her pre-service and in-service methods students, a focus that can be traced back to her own doctoral experience during which she
was pushed to reflect on what was an was not working in her classroom. Writing theorists Hayes and Hillocks are each influential in Jessica’s construction of her course, a course grounded in sociocultural theory. Recent revisions to Jessica’s writing methods course are based largely in the theory of multi-modality, and her course reflects this in its valuing of digital literacies and writing. Students in Jessica’s course work to marry their work in the classroom, as they are all in-service or intern teachers, to their varying teaching contexts.

Chapter 4 details these three very different courses. The aim is that Chapter 4 provides in-depth portraits of the courses, allowing readers to see the courses, and subsequently see how the professional profiles (that illustrate the courses’ influences and that constitute Chapter 3) are reflected in the course. Conversely, to allow readers to see how participants’ professional profiles are influenced by the course is also an aim of Chapter 4. The chapter includes a course overview relayed largely in participants’ own voices, along with analysis and discussion of course syllabi, course projects and assignments, and classroom activities for each course. The three categories used in this chapter—professional journey, teaching context, and perspectives (or frameworks)—are also used to discuss the course materials and how these courses are illustrative of each participants’ context, professional journeys, perspectives, and the theoretical frames from which they work. A holistic discussion focusing on common features across courses and distinguishing characteristics of courses closes the chapter.
CHAPTER IV

THE WRITING METHODS COURSES: ILLUSTRATIONS OF INFLUENCES

Kelly, David, and Jessica’s Writing Methods Courses

Kelly, David, and Jessica’s professional profiles were presented in Chapter 3. Their stories were discussed in terms of their teaching contexts, professional journeys, and perspectives on teaching, writing, and teaching writing teachers. This chapter brings the focus directly upon the participants’ writing methods courses. Although there are many names, focuses, and contexts for courses that prepare teaching candidates to teach writing, I am referring to all of these as ‘writing methods courses,’ a term of convenience for this study. Beginning with Kelly’s course, and for each course, I provide an overview of the course infused with the participant’s description of and commentary on the course. I then briefly discuss the course syllabi to further frame the presentation of three “key features” of the course. The chapter concludes with a holistic discussion of the key features unique to each course and the key features common—though enacted differently—across these three courses. These findings are termed ‘distinguishing characteristics’ and ‘common features,’ respectively. Specific course assignments are discussed in illustrating the key features of the three participants’ writing methods courses throughout this chapter.

Figure 4.1, below, illustrates the manner in which this chapter presents participants’ writing methods’ courses. A grouping of three arrows—the overarching arrow identifying each participant’s individual descriptions and discussions of his or her course—illustrate how each story unfolds. Participants’ reflections, combined with
analysis of their course syllabi and gleanings of ‘distinguishing characteristics’ of their courses account for the in-depth portraits of each of the three writing methods courses. The box on the right-side of Figure 4.1 highlights that these three stories work together in the resulting discussion: a holistic discussion of the courses that showcases common features across the courses and distinguishing characteristics of each individual course. Critical to note is that multiple in-depth portraits of writing methods courses within a single study are scarce studies in the fields of English education and writing teacher education; the multiple portraits set the stage for the closing discussion of the chapter, a discussion that invites writing teacher educators to understand their colleagues’ writing methods courses and reflect upon their own. (The other parties to whom this discussion is relevant will be discussed in Chapter 5).

![Figure 4.1: Components Contributing to the In-Depth Portraits of Participants’ Writing Methods Courses](image-url)
Kelly on her Writing Methods Course: An Overview

Kelly’s course is entitled ‘The Teaching of Writing’ and both elementary and secondary education majors in English language arts are required to take the course. Students typically take this course before another required methods course entitled “The Teaching of the English Language,” which focuses on “linguistics and grammar” in the “context of writing,” though they can take it at any point in their career. Kelly describes the 4-credit course as follows:

The course is intended to give students, K-12 future teachers, a baseline for writing pedagogy and then also an introduction to specific assignments and/or assessments that can be used in teaching writing in any grade in any subject.

Kelly’s expectations for her students are numerous and focus on her students’ development as learners, writers, and teachers. Kelly thinks that the primary purpose of a writing methods course preparing teacher candidates is “to teach them how to create lessons and assignments and assessments that will allow their students to become better writers no matter what age they are” or what subject they are studying: “we want [students] to become better communicators through the writing process, and so that is the aim of this course.” She wants her students to be able to “walk into a classroom and look at the curriculum and say, ‘Ooh, I have a writing assignment that can go with that.’” Kelly describes the specific learning outcomes of her writing methods course in further detail:

Number one, they need to be able to know themselves as writers. They need to be able to create lesson plans for all grades, all subjects, that allow students to learn how to express themselves in writing. They need to be able to create assessments
whether that’s a rubric or a point system or a portfolio system. They need to be able to demonstrate in front of the class that they can teach a mini-lesson. They need to be able to create a unit plan for at least two weeks where there’s a sequence of lessons that go together around some issue or theme or literature, or you know, workout film, or whatever it is. They also need to be able to present information in their own writing in a way that is rhetorically sophisticated and grammatically sound. And they need to have fun.

And in working to achieve these learning outcomes with her students, Kelly begins the course with discussion of four major approaches to teaching writing: ontological, objectivist, expressivist, and dialogic. In doing so, Kelly aims to give her students “some language to talk about their experiences, so common language.” She describes working with her students to discover the approaches they have encountered in their own schooling:

We look at those four approaches and we actually talk about, ‘Have you ever had a teacher like this, taught like this? So I’m a user of experiences right off the bat, and they talk about their different teachers in all their grades, and professors, and everybody. And it gives us a place to start.

Kelly continues this opening, tone-setting activity by asking students to think about who she is as a writing teacher based on an examination of the syllabus. Kelly comments, “Usually they’re right, you know, I’m kind of a cross between expressivist and dialogian.” Kelly continues introducing her students to her writing methods course with discussion of the writing process approach. She describes the writing process and her process with her students:
We talk about writing process approach, and so, you know, pre-writing, brainstorming, using organizers, drafting, and revising and editing as two separate things, and then publishing. I’ve used a number of books, but lately I’ve been using Jim Burke’s *Writing Reminders* to start the conversation.

Kelly also uses Nancy Atwell’s *In the Middle* as her other main text. She uses this text to focus specifically on the writing workshop model. She also uses this text as a platform to discuss “reality versus the dream,” as Atwell’s classroom is not necessarily representative of the majority of America’s classrooms. Kelly believes that Atwell’s book is an especially good complement to Burke’s book, as her elementary English education students tend to gravitate towards it and her secondary English education students tend to connect most with Burke’s work. Kelly is also planning to use Mary Anna Kruch’s book, *Tend your Garden*, in the future either in place of or in addition to Atwell’s book. She describes Kirch’s book as one about “motivating young adolescent writers.” Rounding out the books Kelly commonly uses in her writing methods course is Mary Ehrenworth’s *Looking to Write*, a book that “connects art and writing.”

Early in the semester, Kelly’s students choose a chapter of Ehrenworth’s book to teach to the class: “They have to tell use the main concepts, they have to give us some kind of an example and they get to be the teachers. And so that give them rehearsal before they have to do a teaching demo.” Kelly describes another major assignment she has designed for this class:

I have them research an issue related to the teaching of writing. What I love about it is they go crazy and they start looking at things like dyslexia in writing, emotions in writing, therapy in writing. And then the elementary people
sometimes want to look at like inventive spelling in writing and using picture books in the teacher of writing. People in the upper grades tend to want to look at more theoretical things. So they might look at issues like depression in writing, or teaching in a test-driven society.

Kelly continues to discuss the product students create as a result of their self-selected research topics:

…and then they have to write, you know, basically a creative researched something that includes documentation and tells me something about the issue they’re studying. But they don’t have to be an expert on it, and they and include questions they still have. And I let them do that in a traditional paper format.

Others have chosen to do a blog or a power point or a website. One student made a digital story about digital stories and one made a blog about using blogs to teach writing.

Another major component of the course is field experience. Typically, Kelly’s students must spend 10 hours in a classroom where writing happens, and the classrooms students’ visit range from kindergarten to college classrooms. Kelly typically connects students interested in elementary and secondary experiences with administrators at K-12 buildings; she also has to coordinate such observations through the field experiences director at her institution. For students interested in college writing, Kelly provides students with the names of writing instructors at her institution; students then contact these instructors to coordinate observations.

Kelly talks with her students about “theorized practice.” She notes that “some people call that practice,” but continues to describe “theorized practice in her classroom:
[It’s the] idea that ‘I made and assignment and I have a reason for making it.’ I chose an assessment type and I have a reason for choosing that, and it’s based on my approach and theory of writing and my pedagogy. And so we can go back to those four main things from the beginning of the semester. I go back to them from time to time.

Kelly continues to describe how a conversation regarding “theorized practice” in relation to the opening semester activity goes:

Like with Nancy Atwell. Nancy’s writing workshop is an expressivist workshop. It really is. And so we talk about that, and we talk about how it’s often that she gives every single student these awesome letters about their writing, and wouldn’t it be cool if we only had 25 students and could do that. But the majority of teachers in 6-12 are going to be teaching 100+ students, and so you can’t write each student a letter for every assignment because you don’t have time. But you could develop some kind of a handout that would have some major categories and you could write to them about some things sometimes and others things other times. If you believe you have to write back to your students because you see it as a dialogue, which expressivists do, then you want to do that. If you believe, you know, if you’re coming for a dialogic approach, you might have students help you create a rubric.

Kelly highlights another element that is commonplace in her classroom regarding “theorized practice:” writing workshop. She gives students time to write, peer review, revise, and edit in her classroom and explains, “I think you put your money where your
mouth is and if I say I believe in a writing workshop, I should have writing in the classroom.” She continues to describe writing workshop:

I do have [students] give each other feedback as much as possible, both about their writing and also about their teaching. I actually have them volunteer to evaluate each other using a rubric that either is connected to the students teaching model or connected to ‘I’ve never done this before, please don’t freak me out with all the words’ model. And then I also give them feedback about their teaching, and for some of them it’s the first time they’ve ever pretended to be a teacher.

And Kelly provides feedback and creates teaching situations for her students in a variety of creative ways. Sometimes, for instance, Kelly role plays actual K-12 students during her methods students’ teaching demonstrations. She also plants other methods students to have particular issues.

In addition to providing students platforms for field work and teaching demonstrations, Kelly also incorporates service learning into her writing methods course. Kelly considers the emphasis she places on academic service learning a distinguishing feature of her writing methods and comments that “it’s academic service learning which I believe is a huge part of why my classes are successful. Hooking up with other teachers and helping them and /or helping students in some way makes my students know their stuff better.” Kelly also thinks that “letting [students] know that learning can be connected to service” is “so easy.” Kelly’s institution has an academic service learning committee that offers grants to students that “perform services that tie to class objectives.” Kelly has actually been on the board of this committee for a decade herself. Kelly describes the role of academic service learning in her course:
I introduce [students] to the concept of future teachers helping their students connect classroom ideas with service for the community. So, for example, sometimes when they make lesson plans they will say, ‘Can I do an academic service learning lesson?’ and I’m like, ‘Yeah.’ So a middle school teacher will be teaching a science lesson and so they want to write, they want to have the students write about the water cycle. So one of the things they do is they call the local water company and say, ‘If we had a class of students who are in middle school who were going to be studying the water cycle, is there anything that you need help with that we could do that you need written?’ And then the person would say, ‘Well, yeah we need a new brochure and so then maybe your class can help us create a new brochure.’ Or they might say, ‘No we don’t need anything’ and then you say ‘Well would you like people to know more about it? Could we do a public service announcement or maybe make a newspaper ad or something like that?’ You know, you want to make sure it’s something the client wants.

Recently, Kelly’s students were involved in creating lesson plans for local teachers’ use during a major local event that brings thousands of spectators to the area. Kelly called local teachers and offered her students’ lesson plans before the event and many incorporated them into the instruction. All of the lesson plans tied the event to writing for students at different grade levels and of diverse skill levels. Kelly points out that a key component of any academic service learning project is reflection and she emphasizes the “reflective piece” in her writing methods course.

Kelly also aims to support her students in ‘thinking like teachers’ and developing their teaching identities in a variety of ways. She considers this another distinguishing
feature of her course and tries to help students navigate “identity role assumption” and “think like a teacher and not like a student.” She describes a scenario from her classroom that illustrates this:

I have them create [lesson plans] as if I am their sub. And so they give me their lesson plan, and if I’m a sub is there everything on there that I need to do to have the kids not kill me while I’m in the room. You know, if the principal walks past will he know I’m a sub? So I give them, you know, give me your objective, give me your materials, give me the procedures, give me the evaluation. I need all those things on every single lesson plan you make. And we make tons of lesson plans, and we also evaluate lesson plans. We go online and pick somebody’s lesson and then we go well what works in this, well what could you do to make it for an older grade, a younger grade, could it be connected to creative writing if it’s research, could you connect it to technical writing if it’s poetry. And then also looking at—I also try to bring in connections to the other subject areas.

Kelly acknowledges that her students’ past experiences as students contribute to their teaching identities and development as teachers. One of her opening assignments, therefore, centers on students’ repositioning themselves as teachers in addition to their roles as students. Kelly’s students not only identify teachers from their own lives and discuss “what philosophy they’re coming from;” they also “talk about teachers in the movies and teachers on TV a little bit.” Kelly discusses the significance of such an activity and how it lends itself to other important conversations in her classroom about multiple intelligences:
So juxtaposing the ‘make believe teacher identity,’ the ‘what they experienced when they were in school’ identity, and the ‘what their professors are doing now’ is huge. And I tell them that my friend teaches economics here. He’s a lecture dude. He doesn’t care what your name is. If you can pass the tests, he doesn’t care if you come to class. It’s about the subject matter, you know, but they do no writing in that class whatsoever—none. So I talk to them about that and I’m like, ‘if you were taking economics would you prefer to learn some things through writing and other things through bubble tests, and other things through making a presentation or would you like to have it the same all the time because you know what’s coming? And then is it about the teacher being comfortable or is it about the students being comfortable?’ And then also knowing what your gifts are and what your limitations are. And we talk about multiple intelligences so I get them to try to think about themselves as teachers, and then what they could be, because you don’t have to be what was done unto you.

The culmination of students’ work in the course manifests itself in another major component of the course, students’ “references portfolio.” This project also exemplifies Kelly’s assessment practices employed in the course and ways in which she addresses the assessment of writing with her students. The “references portfolio” is a “collection of the students’ work from the whole semester” and Kelly “ask[s] them to include all of the assignments that [they’ve] done.” Students revise major assignments, such as the unit plan they create during the semester, for this portfolio, but Kelly expects others to be included in their original state (though many have undergone revision already). Other items in the portfolio include a description of and reflection on a classroom observation.
experience and reader response journals written in response to course readings. Students also create a “reflection at the end that talks about their growth as a writer and teacher of writing, and then also about how the assignment has helped them learn to teach writing better.”

Kelly describes how she assesses these portfolios and students’ responses to her assessment practices:

And I use a holistic approach to grading the portfolios, and I tell them what an A portfolio looks like, what a B portfolio looks like, etcetera, and that’s on the syllabus. It’s interesting, I don’t put grades on anything that I give them and at midterm I tell them what I call their ballpark grade so—it’s between an A and a B, or a B and a C, or a C and a D or a D and an F, and all of those can change, you know, if you’re sitting on an A but you don’t do anything you’re going to fail. But if you’re sitting on a C and you made improvement you can still move up to an A. And it’s really interesting because honestly they don’t care about their grade. It’s very, very interesting. In general, as long as they know they are making an A or a B, in general they don’t care.

Kelly attributes her students’ response to her assessment as reflective of the rapport she’s built with them. She also notes that discussion of her own assessment practices leads to important classroom discussions about the assessment of writing. Kelly and her students discuss the difficulty of “grad[ing] people’s experiences on a trajectory that’s different for everyone” as some writing methods students “come in having worked as a nanny or camp counselor, and others have never been alone with children of any age other than with maybe themselves.” This leads to other important discussions and
activities that involve reading K-12 students’ of different grade-levels’ work and even assessing actual K-12 students’ work with rubrics.

In discussing the constant evolution of her writing methods course and its future, Kelly reflects on how her students interact with technology in her classroom. All of Kelly’s students are issued a laptop as part of their fee if they are a full-time student and Kelly notes that most of her technological knowledge comes directly from students. Her students have taught her to use and create facebook, blogs, digital stories, tweets, and surveymonkey, and a variety of apps, among other things. Kelly invites students’ digital literacies in her classroom and tells them, “‘You know, if you want to try something in here that’s going to enhance student learning, go nuts.’” Kelly continues to reflect on technology’s role in her classroom:

I think the biggest thing for me with the technology is, in this particular class, we need to be able to adapt ourselves when we leave this class to teach writing no matter what we have in the room with us. So if you can do it on a computer you can probably do it on paper, or you can do it on paper, you can probably do it on a computer. Sometimes I make [students] go back and forth and so if they go, ‘Oh, I want to make a website about this,’ and I go, ‘you know, a website is just a fancy diagram with clicks on it.’ A power point is literally a bunch of index cards that you put in order.

Kelly continues to discuss technology in her classroom, and in particular, the importance of students’ adaptability and flexibility in interacting with technology as teaching professionals. She describes and problem-solves scenarios such as this with her students:
And so when you go to your classroom and you’re teaching six subjects and you have one overhead projector and the bulb is burned out, and you have your computer but nothing else and there’s a computer lab but you can’t get to it except once a month, you need to know how to be able to teach writing with what you have. But then you realize that every student except one has a phone, so then you figure out how to get that student a phone and then you can use phones in your classroom. So you have to—I teach them about flexibility and also, honestly, I talk to them about writing grants, you know, and all people can do is say no.

Discussions such as this are reflective of Kelly’s positioning herself as a co-leaner amongst her students. Kelly refers to Peter Elbow and Paulo Freire in describing this positioning: “I’m less Freirian. I’m much more Elbowian, you know, in terms of a fellow traveler along the way. I am a writer. It’s the Writing Project model—writing teachers, teachers who write, you know, and so I talk to [students] about that.”

Kelly’s reflections on her writing methods course position the course as one that emphasizes experiential and collaborative learning; this is a classroom in which Kelly positions herself as a co-learner with her students. Kelly and her students engage in the writing process in all of its stages and from multiple perspectives. Kelly’s students also are positioned in diverse roles in her classrooms, reflective of the National Writing Project model: they are students; they are teachers; and they are writers. Kelly creates and fosters opportunities for students to marry theory and practice; Kelly’s students discuss both theory and practice, put theory into action in practice, and reflect on the relationship between theory and practice. This writing methods course also values
diversity, as themes of multiple intelligences and diverse teaching contexts are central to the course.

**Kelly’s syllabus and teaching materials: Illustrations of influences**

Kelly’s course is carefully constructed, sequenced, and scaffolded, as evidenced in her syllabus. This is the obvious result of critical thought and reflection over the years. Kelly’s syllabus is an 8-page, 10-point font, landscape-oriented print document that opens with Kelly’s contact information, identifying course information, and a course description:

The Teaching of Writing 4 cr. Offered: Fall, Winter Prerequisite: EN XXX with a grade of "C" or better or instructor's permission. Study of the principles of teaching writing appropriate for teachers in all grade levels and subject areas. Emphasis on the process and product of writing and effective strategies for teaching it, achieved through varied and frequent writing assignments.

Underlined headings divide the document into these categories in this order: “Textbooks Required; Issues; Goals; Assignments; Attendance; Grading; Classroom Procedures; Description of assignments.” The contents under these headings account for 4-pages of the syllabus. A “tentative course schedule” is charted on the following 2 ½ pages. Following this chart is a listing of websites under the heading: “Web sites for your consideration.” The document closes with a one-page, 3-column concept map entitled, “Kelly’s Conceptual Map of Recent Theories of Teaching Writing.”

This course syllabus and Kelly’s course projects and assignments are all illustrative of Kelly as a person and professional; they are Kelly’s creations, and therefore, extensions of Kelly. I discuss these materials, in conjunction with Kelly’s
reflections on her course, as I present three features of Kelly’s course: 1) Kelly and students as co-learners: collaboration in Kelly’s classroom; 2) Kelly and students as a community of writers: process writing and the National Writing Project Model in Kelly’s classroom; 3) Kelly’s students as stance-takers: diversity in Kelly’s classroom. Included below is a preview of the discussion of these three distinguishing characteristics.

- Kelly and students as co-learners: collaboration in Kelly’s classroom
  - Kelly describes herself as a co-learner amongst her students and features of both her syllabi and assignments reflect this. I highlight portions of the syllabi and these three major course assignments and practices illustrative of this feature: Kelly’s academic service-learning project, responses to others’ writing assignment, and teaching story response and reflection assignment.

- Kelly and students as a community of writers: process writing and the National writing Project Model in Kelly’s classroom.
  - In addition to positioning herself as a co-learner amongst students, Kelly positions students and herself as students, teachers, and writers. She attributes this approach to the National Writing Project model and engages her students in work that pushes them to develop in these multiple roles. Portions of the syllabus and these assignments will be discussed as illustrative of this feature: Kelly’s portfolio assignment, journal entries assignment, and reflective introduction to portfolio assignment.
• Kelly’s students as *stance-takers*: preparing for varied contexts in Kelly’s classroom.

  o Kelly’s aim to develop her students as stance-takers is an undercurrent in this course. Her course materials reveal intent to professionalize students and engage them in the theoretical and practical work of a classroom teacher. Kelly’s students are both elementary and secondary pre-service teachers *and* there is limited opportunity to practice in the geographic region (wilderness and rural) of Kelly’s institution. Therefore, Kelly’s materials and practices engage students in varied professional scenarios that engage them in developing their own stances and practices related to issues in teaching writing in preparing them for a wide variety of teaching contexts. Portions of the syllabus and these assignments will be discussed as illustrative of this feature: Kelly’s research project assignment, lesson plan and teaching demonstration assignment, and opening writing theory activity.

The key features of Kelly’s course are discussed in greater detail and in relation to the key features of David and Jessica’s courses in the concluding discussion of this chapter.

**David on his Writing Methods Course: An Overview**

David’s writing methods is entitled “Writing for Writing Teachers” and secondary English education undergraduate students take the course. Typically, these students take the course in their junior or senior year and before intern teaching. David shares that the “course is designed to prepare teacher candidates to develop as writers and to prepare to
teach writing with secondary school students.” He discusses the purpose of the writing methods course:

For students, for the candidates, to continue to view themselves as writers, work as writers and see how their processes and experiences inform their teaching, while at the same time starting to learn theories and perspectives from the field of scholars who have studied this. So as they’re working on their writing, they’re building on their background as they’re gaining new information and trying to incorporate that.

David elaborates that as the landscape of education changes, he believes “more and more that [he] needs to prepare the teacher candidates to be able to observe their context in which they’re going to be working.” He wants his students to:

think about what kinds of outcomes or goals that either the district or school has, or their department, think about how to build curriculum around it, but at the same time think about principles of teaching writing that they can develop and incorporate even if there seems to be tension with what the district or state or whatever is demanding. So I see part of the job is helping them start to learn how to negotiate these contraries.

In preparing students for this teaching terrain, David works to develop a community of writers in his classroom. Citing the National Writing Project, David points out that integral to this community is that “whatever [students] write is going to go public.” David does not just want his students to write, but for them to “work within a community as responders to each other’s writing.”
David teaches at what he terms a “commuter school;” many of David’s students do not live a “traditional” undergraduate lifestyle as many do not live on campus. This makes it challenging to get all students to go visit classrooms, so outside of the 10-hour required practicum component of the course, David’s students exchange letters with secondary school students in an effort to gain access into the “student perspective.” David wants his students to think about the “kinds of experiences and opportunities [students] need and what it is students can do.” David uses this notion—what secondary students can do—to frame his course, as he and his students explore what they can do in their writing and what they can do in the writing methods course.

On the first day of class, David’s students engage in the concepts of “teacher as writer” and “teacher as responder.” On the first day of class, his students write, share this writing, and respond to others’ writing. He notes that “this becomes a sequence that is critical throughout” the course. Also on this first day, David’s students look at a secondary student paper and discuss how their own discourse shapes their perspectives on this student paper. David intentionally gives his students very little context for this secondary student paper, which elicits discussions about writing as contextual. David discusses this opening day activity:

I want them to learn to say, ‘wait, what’s the context? Who wrote this? Etcetera’ because I don’t’ believe there’s something called just good writing. I think there’s good writing within a particular context, and it’s how we compare it to whatever the standard is for that context.

David’s course is carefully sequenced and as the course unfolds, David makes it a
priority to keep everything he does as a teacher open for discussion: “I make visible what I am doing and why.” David identifies this element of his approach as challenging and as a common challenge that faces teacher educators: “One of the challenging things of teaching teachers is that I think we have an obligation and responsibility to make visible all of the stuff we don’t always make visible.” David outlines a sequence that illustrates this approach, and that also positions his students as writers and responders. His students write three pieces, all around a common theme. For instance, one year his students wrote a piece on “something that was important to [them] in [their] development as a writer.” They then wrote a second piece about their first pieces’ content from a different perspective. For their third piece, they chose one of the two pieces or combined the two pieces in thinking about their development as writers. David describes the “response piece” of this sequence that happens while students write these three papers:

At the same time, they’re working on responding to other people’s writing, and then they’re also working on revising their own writing, and so that as we go, these things start working together. They’re also seeing that writing is a social action but there are consequences, that it’s communal, that it’s collaborative…We’re kind of addressing that it’s okay for us to talk about things publicly. So part of the sequence that I’m showing them, I’m also showing them how to respond.

David uses the assessment stage of this sequence to address that institutional realities affect the way teachers work:

I’m the one responsible [for assigning a grade]. That the way our institutions work and I talk to [students] about that kind of stuff too. And I want them to
know from my perspective and what I know about writing, etcetera, you’re getting my grade. But at the same time I want them to see that’s one perspective.

And in practicing this approach and making the approach transparent to students, David engages his students in a communal grading process before he assigns a grade. He assigns this based on students’ “group grading” of one another’s writing after the writing has undergone many stages of the writing process and the class has worked together to create a project rubric. Even after David assigns a grade, his students have chance to revise based on responses:

They need to write a follow-up paragraph, or two, or three describing what they changed, how they changed it, why they think it’s better written than the other ones, and then they’re going to staple their responses to their assessments and their [new] final draft to their other final draft with all of the responses. Then they’re seeing more of a process.”

As a result of this process and the opening course sequence, David and his students discuss social practices and literacy practices and how they affect the work of writers and writing teachers. David notes that through the sequence, “[he and his students] have opened up ways to talk about sequencing, types of writing, purposes for writing, audiences, types of response, end response.” And throughout the process, David is modeling, but realizes “we’re not always talking about everything because we can’t talk about it all at once. But I’m modeling as I go.” David also believes this opening sequence “show[s] [students] that assessment is somewhat of a negotiated process.”
David discusses his belief that “theory informs practice and practice informs theory” and that as these two concepts play out in his course “the ethnographic frame” he seeks to teach students about and equip students to use is critical:

I’m finding that if I spend more time early on helping [students] learn how to observe and describe, then when we go to different articles—the *English Journal*, *Language Arts*, *Voices in the Middle*, even RTE—I can get them frames to think about them. What does it mean to read something from the *English Journal* or *Voices in the Middle*? Who are the people? So if this is a teacher saying, this will work for me, that’s fine. But just know that that’s a teacher’s story, saying it’s an anecdotal story, this is what happened and it may really work for you. But just know that’s what you’re looking at. If you look at RTE, then you’re looking at a research journal. And it doesn’t mean you’re going to be interested in it yet, but then, again, you’re not the audience yet. And so by helping them learn how to read the journal articles, observe what they need to observe…learn how to think through and envision, observe, describe, resolve issues…ethnography is important.

This ethnographic frame plays into three overriding aims David has for himself as an English teacher educator: that he equips students to see teaching as contextual and navigate these diverse contexts; that he promotes students attend to their students as individuals; and that he helps students see that writing is complex:

I want to give them ways to observe the expectations they’re going to face as a teacher so I want to make sure they understand the institutional demands and that they’re going to be expected to have a framework even if no one is going to ask
them about it. They’re going to need to sequence assignments. They’re going to need to think about how they’re going to assess, how they’re going to grade, these logistical demands of an institution. But at the same time to look at their students as fellow human beings who can write and need instruction in their earlier stages of emotional, intellectual development and how are you going to know what it is they know, what they don’t know? And how are you going to construct curriculum that’s going to provide opportunities for them to learn what you think they need to learn? …And then, also to look at writing to that they can start to see the complexities—that responding to writing becomes another rhetorical context.

In specific regard to his students’ future teaching contexts, David reflects on standards, and specifically the Common Core State Standards, as a “factor to consider” versus “something that gets in our way.” David makes it a priority to help students think about standards and standardized assessment in “principled ways that we can live with and [students] can learn from that go beyond the test.” And in meeting this responsibility, David sequences his course in such a way that students begin to foster their own “personal positions” as teaching professionals.

In order for his teaching candidates to develop these personal positions, David works to establish and foster a “safe place to take academic risks” in his classroom. David, as with other principles of teaching that he thinks are important, models this in his writing methods classroom. Related to this is David’s efforts to “helping [students] make more visible the assumptions they bring to class.” As students make contributions to class and teaching materials, he guides students in thinking through prompting such as:
So you need to look and understand more about the principles behind why you are a particular model, what is it you want students to get out of it? How do you know? What are you teaching now and how do you know they are going to learn? So we need to know more about the theories you’re operating from, more about the assumptions you have as a teacher of that literature, whatever, and what you know about your students.

As David reflects on his course and its future, he anticipates a need for the writing methods course and the field of English education as a whole to “really pay attention to other delivery models of education” in the future. He notes that there are “entire high schools that are online now” and asks, “Are we preparing our candidates to work there?” He shares his own response to this question:

Well, I would say we’re not. So we have to decide, are we going to be a part of that or are we just going to watch it? And of course I think more and more about the issues of composing online, of collaborative writing online.

**David’s syllabus and teaching materials: Illustrations of influences**

David’s course is a grounded in carefully and thoughtfully developed aims, as evidenced in the course syllabus. This syllabus is a four-page, 10-point font, single-spaced document that opens with David’s contact information and this mission statement:

The English Education program at [university], in collaboration with programs in the department of English Language and Literature and the College of Education, is committed to developing and sustaining knowledgeable and reflective teachers of literacy in diverse societies.
Along with this mission statement, this “course overview and goals” statement anchor the course:

English [course number] is a culminating methodology course designed to provide you with opportunities to engage with and discuss strategies and develop philosophies, materials, and methods for teaching English at the secondary school level (middle and high school).

Centered, bold-faced headings divide the document into these categories in this order: “Mission Statement, Required Resources, Course Overview and Goals, Overview of Assignments, and Class Policies.” The final category includes these “sub-categories,” noted in left-aligned, bold-faced headings: “Expectations, Grades, Class Participation, Attendance, Late work, students with Disabilities or Special Needs, and Plagiarism”).

This course syllabus and David’s course projects and assignments are all illustrative of David as a person and professional; they are David’s creations, and therefore, extensions of David. I discuss these materials, in conjunction with David’s reflections on his course, as I present three features of David’s course: 1) David and students as ethnographers: the ethnographic frame and transparency in David’s classroom; 2) David and students as a community of writers: process writing and the National writing Project Model in David’s classroom; 3) David and students as stance takers: professional development in David’s classroom.

- David and students as ethnographers: the ethnographic frame and transparency in David’s classroom
  - David not only plans this course using an ethnographic frame, but teaches his students to apply it as well. I highlight portions of the syllabi and these
two course assignments and practices illustrative of this feature: David’s reading and writing protocols assignment and David’s writing discourse classroom sequences. And in accordance with this ethnographic frame, David “makes[s] visible why [he’s] doing what [he’s] doing.” In doing so, he enables students to see “that writing is a social action but there are consequences, that it’s communal, and that it’s collaborative.” Portions of the syllabus and these assignments will be discussed as illustrative of this feature: David’s collaborative inquiry project and thematic unit assignment.

- David and students as a community of writers: process writing and the National writing Project Model in David’s classroom.
  - David positions his students and himself as students, teachers, and writers. He attributes this approach to the National Writing Project model and establishes and fosters this community of writers beginning on the first day of class. Portions of the syllabus and these assignments will be discussed as illustrative of this feature: David’s portfolio assignment and genre reflections assignment.

- David and students as stance takers: professional development in David’s classroom.
  - David notes that “[students] are going to be expected to have a framework” and that engaging students in developing theoretical stances as professionals is important. David’s opening assignment will be discussed as illustrative of this feature.
The key features of David’s course are discussed in greater detail and along with the key features of Kelly and Jessica’s courses in the concluding discussion of this chapter.

**Jessica on her Writing Methods Course: An Overview**

Jessica’s course is entitled “Teaching Composition in the 21st Century” and is designed for graduate students. All of Jessica’s students are graduate students, as the course is housed in the graduate school of education at Jessica’s institution, and all of these students need a master’s for teaching certification in Jessica’s state. Of these graduate students, about half are lead teaching in secondary public schools, and therefore, are ‘in-service teachers’ and about half are seeking certification before they teach in the field. Given this demographic of students, Jessica believes the primary aim of the writing methods course is two-fold. She believes the course should support students in “defin[ing] writing and what it means,” which she elaborates on:

I think this is a very important part of the course, particularly because we’ve got English majors coming in who have perhaps not been taught 21st century writing as writing, so they really need to think about that. But even beyond that, I think a lot of future teachers of English think that teaching writing is teaching a five-part essay… and so examining that philosophy will lead to writing and ‘what is a writing process,’ ‘what is my writing process perhaps.”

Jessica also believes “the second aspect is to develop, provide, explore instructional strategies that help [students] to turnkey that knowledge into practices that work for adolescents.” Stemming from these aims, Jessica describes the major learning outcomes for her students in her writing methods course:
I want them to write and develop as writers. I want them to understand that writing is a process that is individual to a writer. I want them to be able to participate in a community of writers. I want them to analyze the relationships between reading and writing and speaking and listening and all the other strands of English language arts that they have to deal with. I want them to research and identify effective practices for the teaching of writing…and to define writing.

In working to achieve these outcomes, Jessica’s student engage in a variety of methodologies; students engage in “peer practice,” which includes both face-to-face and digital workshopping, assume the role of “teacher as writer,” and engage in a lot of debate and discussion. Jessica describes her rationale for “peer practice:”

I do this to meet my goal of engaging students in a community of writers…because that’s what real writers do. And it’s also good practice for the classroom. It gives student writers, whether they’re graduate students or adolescents, an audience beyond the teacher…Most of my students have engaged in peer practice but that doesn’t mean it was effective, so I really try to create effective peer grouping and peer response groups so that they can then turnkey it. Jessica asserts that for “everything [she] does” in her class, “its purpose is to help students experience it so they can do it in their own classrooms under the right circumstances.” She goes on to describe how the concept of “teacher as writer” manifests itself in her classroom:

Students engage as writers—they write multiple genres, reflections on their writing and on their process. And then I also do demonstration lessons [in which
students] participate as adolescents would in a class…Whatever I would actually do with adolescents, I do with them so they participate.

In engaging students in discussion and debate about peer practice and demonstration activities, Jessica pushes her students to further explore writing in the 21st century and further develop their definitions of writing. Jessica also has guest speakers Skype into her classroom to speak about issues in teaching writing and facilitates students’ participation in group-generated Wikis and a classroom blog.

On the first day of class, students entertain the question, “What is writing?” and this question frames the course through its final day. When students walk into course, their exploration begins. Jessica asks students to do a freewrite in response to “What is writing?” and then builds on that freewrite by offering multiple perspectives on writing:

I give them a little theoretical 10-minute mini-lecture on the traditions of the expressivists, the socio-culturists, multi-modal perspectives, you know, that kind of path of writing theory over the last 50 or 60 years. I then ask them to go back to what they wrote and review it.

Students continue to revise this freewrite as Jessica continues to introduce varying perspectives on writing during this first day of class. Jessica’s students leave class with the assignment of writing a philosophy statement; this statement is revisited throughout the semester and frames the course. The opening activity also aligns with Jessica’s emphasis during the first portion of the semester, which is on her students as writers, as they generate drafts, do writing activities, and even mini-writers’ marathons.
Jessica’s opening day activity also illustrates her perspectives on the role of theory and practice in her writing methods course, as she believes both are important to her course:

There’s a piece of theory that what you believe is what you’re going to enact, and so from that perspective theory is the most important piece of the course. But in terms of what we do in the course, I actually think the instructional strategies help build the theory, so we focus on practice.

In other words, practice builds theory, and Jessica’s students practice and discuss practice in both practical and theoretical terms, thereby building theory. Jessica does continue to provide students with theoretical readings, concepts from which are discussed and debated in class, throughout the semester. Jessica pulls timely pieces from *The English Journal* in addition to such pieces as *Because Digital Writing Matters* (from the National Writing Project), a chapter from Smith and Wilhelm on argument, portions of Nancy Atwell’s work, and a chapter Chris Hanson writes on response.

These readings contribute to the completion of three major projects, or modules, that comprise Jessica’s course: the philosophy statement, a multi-genre research project, and a portfolio of writing—which includes several different genres such as an op-ed, an unfamiliar genre (usually the course-required multi-modal piece), and an evocative piece. Accompanying the writing portfolio is a ‘process narrative,’ a major assignment requiring students to research their own writing process.

The emphasis on 21st century literacy in the course presents a unique set of challenges to Jessica as an instructor, challenges she has adapted to and that influence her
positioning herself amongst the students in her classroom. She describes her approach to teaching with technology:

So first I offer a lot of choice, right? And because I offer choice, I don’t feel responsible for teaching technology. I show examples and say these are the kinds of things you can do, here are some good places to start if you’ve never done it. If you’ve never done [this], you can do a multi-modal piece on [this]…And then I open myself to learning from whatever my students chose to turn in. So, some of them have created podcasts because they’re good with that technology, and I say, ‘Challenge yourself in one of two ways. Challenge yourself in the content or challenge yourself in the technology, but think about the piece as a whole and what you can say when you add the technology to the content.’ So I just position myself as a learner, and I’m a writer, and I’m trying to write with them. I try to learn from them.

And in managing her course, Jessica has developed what she refers to as “electronic habits.” She only reads student writing in drop box, for instance, and she also “push[es] information to [her] classroom via blog” versus individual emails to students. She believes that in modeling these practices, she can “help teachers manage 21st century problems.” Clearly, Jessica has made a concerted effort to orient her writing methods course with technology, as reflected in the newly revised title: ‘Teaching Composition to Adolescents in the 21st Century.’ As the course continues to develop, Jessica wants to incorporate a strand on “digital responsibility” and “digital citizenship.” She also wants to develop a portfolio of multi-modal pieces that she knows very well for classroom use:
I need to more carefully scaffold and push students in those multi-modal pieces to think about writing and learn about it and how to teach it because I think it’s not just a matter of letting students to it or asking them to do it; it’s teaching the craft of those kinds of pieces so I think that’s going to be important [in the future].”

Not only does Jessica aim for her students to be equipped and confident to teach in digital classrooms, but also to navigate the standards-driven climate that pervades public education. Jessica discusses the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to illustrate how she does and will continue to support teachers in navigating standards in their classrooms:

We’re going to have to dissect the Common Core and what it means for writing and how it doesn’t really mean anything besides what I’ve already taught in the course. So I do a module on argument and if teachers teach argument well, the Common Core is taken care of, right? It just is, and I’ve been fighting for this since I started teaching in the late 1990s. So this is not something new to my course but I think I have to attend to the common core in a way that shows teachers in you just do good teaching, this is taken care of which means I have to bring it in and say, ‘Here’s what the Common Core says. Now let’s talk about argument and how you teaching argument in writing.’”

Jessica continues to reflect on the CCSS in regard to technology, asserting that the “Common Core does not really go far enough in thinking about technology and writing in the digital age, and so that’s concerning to me as well.” In fact, Jessica recently co-authored an article about this issue in preparing writing teachers:
[The article basically says] we haven’t come far enough in 10 years, and we’re hoping it’s published because we’re worried. It took us 30 years to put down a red pen, and I’m not sure we’ve even gotten there yet. We don’t have 30 years to catch up with technology, you know. If we’re not teaching digital writing soon, it’s going to be bad.

Jessica also comments on the unique challenges that her student population faces as her students are graduate students teaching in and preparing to teach in urban schools:

There are definite challenges in urban education that are global in nature as compared to classroom in nature. A lot of the teachers I work with have to fight super hard to overcome those as individuals. They’re going into schools that have limited access or they’re dealing with mandates that give them no freedom in the classroom, and so they are not seen as professionals. These are issues across the board, of course, but I think particularly in urban areas, that make the teaching of writing even harder. Not to mention the lack of attendance, lack of support at home, you know, the things that plague any discipline but particular with the teaching of writing.

Jessica believes, though, that her students are up for these challenges. In fact, she thinks most of them are ready for the challenges that face them in their careers, and that her course influenced to this preparedness:

I think that’s what my course did. It smacked a bunch of them in the face, right? I’m saying this just from the reflections at the end of the semester which I saw a little deeper analysis in…[students were like], ‘I’ve never thought about it before.’”
In response to prompting asking about distinguishing characteristics of her course, Jessica reflects on what she believes they gain from her course:

They gain a conscious understanding of their own process as a writer. They gain experience commenting on others’ writing in a way that is constructive and honest—and that’s important, you know, that response piece. They gain a—I’m not going to say arsenal because it’s actually not—but they gain some instructional strategies and some resources for finding others, those resources including their classmates and our Wiki page and everything else we’ve created. And they gain an understanding that writing is not what they think it is or what it used to be.

Jessica’s reflections on her writing methods course position the course as one that emphasizes debate and discussion amongst in-service teachers regarding issues in teaching writing, and especially the issue of technology and digital literacy in the writing classroom; this is a classroom in which Jessica positions herself as a co-learner with her students and as a resource and model teacher. Jessica engages students in the writing process as she would adolescent students, as well as inquiry-based and metacognitive writing assignments, discussion, and debate. Jessica’s classroom hinges on “teacher as writer” and “peer practice,” manifestations of the National Writing Project model. Jessica’s students discuss writing theory, but largely focus on practice, as they are in-service teachers, and build theory from this practice and their reflections on practice. Jessica’s writing methods course also values the diverse student population that teachers find in the classroom, as themes of diverse students and teaching contexts are central to the course.
Jessica’s syllabus and teaching materials: Illustrations of influences

Jessica’s syllabus illustrates a carefully sequenced and scaffolded course, the obvious result of careful reflection, thought, and planning. The course is entitled “Teaching Composition in the 21st Century,” and reflects Jessica’s teaching context. It is designed for graduate students who are in-service teachers and it offers content both digitally and face-to-face and incorporates technology; “Online Space,” even heads a section of the syllabus and describes the class Wiki students are expected to use in the course.

Jessica’s syllabus is a 5-page, 10-point font, single-spaced document that students access online through the class Wiki. The document opens with Jessica’s contact information, identifying course information and this course description:

This course will provide teachers of literacy the opportunity to explore writing as a process and to develop instructional practices that may lead to growth in all students’ writing abilities across the curriculum. For the TFA cohort the course will focus on the teaching of writing in the middle and high school English classes. Topics covered will include theories of writing and writing instruction, assessment of writing, and instructional practices in the teaching of composition.

Highlighted, bold-faced headings divide the document into these categories in this order: “Course Overview; Texts and Materials; Course Assignments and Grading; Plagiarism; Attendance Policy; Late Assignment Policy.” Under “Course Overview” are important bold-faced headings that serve as guideposts for the course: “Essential Questions; Assessment; and Goald and GSE Conceptual Framework (diversity, scholarship, community, reflection, technology, social justice).” The contents under the
This course syllabus and Jessica’s course projects and assignments are all illustrative of Jessica as a person and professional; they are Jessica’s creations, and therefore, extensions of Jessica. I discuss these materials, in conjunction with Jessica’s reflections on her course, as I present three features of Jessica’s course: 1) Jessica and students as 21st century teachers: digital literacies in Jessica’s classroom; 2) Jessica and students as a community of writers: process writing and the National Writing Project Model in Jessica’s classroom; 3) Jessica and students as stance-takers: professionalization in Jessica’s classroom. Included below is a preview of the discussion of these three distinguishing characteristics.

- Jessica and students as 21st century teachers: digital literacies in Jessica’s classroom
  - Jessica’s classroom is digital. Students receive course information via a blog, workshop writing electronically, and design teaching materials that incorporate digital technologies in developing digital literacies in secondary students.

- Jessica and students as a community of writers: process writing and the National writing Project Model in Jessica’s classroom.
  - Jessica develops a community of reflective writers in her classroom via both face-to-face and virtual forums. Jessica’s students are practicing teachers—either teaching as intern teachers or actual classroom teachers—and Jessica marries her course content and assignments to this reality,
hedging the gap between theory and practice. She attributes this community-based model or writing teachers to the National Writing Project model. Jessica’s classroom assignments and activities evidence that modeling is a key component to developing this community.

- Jessica and students as stance-takers: professionalization in Jessica’s classroom
  Jessica’s course challenges students to develop teaching philosophies beginning on the first day of class and her assignments engage students in developing professional stances on issues in writing.

The key features of Jessica’s course are discussed in greater detail and in relation to the key features of Kelly and David’s courses in the concluding discussion of this chapter.

Discussion: Distinguishing Characteristics and Cross-Currents Among Courses

The three participants’ are reflective, thoughtful, and deliberate in the creation and implementation of their writing methods course curriculums as evidenced in reflections on their courses and in their course design. I have identified three “key features” for each course, discerned from participants’ narrative responses and course document. Readers will notice that some key features are similar across the different courses; all courses, for instance, are marked by a focus on “a community of writers.” Readers will also notice that this element—“a community of writers”—plays out differently in each course. No one participant develops, facilitates, or positions “a community of writers” the same as another, for example.

Before I discuss common features across participants’ courses, I will discuss a distinguishing characteristic for each course. Following are the distinguishing
characteristics of each participant’s course deemed as such because they are both integral and unique in their implementation in the participants’ writing methods course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguishing characteristic for Kelly’s course</th>
<th>Distinguishing characteristic for David’s course</th>
<th>Distinguishing characteristic for Jessica’s course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Kelly and students as co-learners: collaboration in Kelly’s classroom</td>
<td>• David and students as ethnographers: an ethnographic frame and transparency in David’s classroom</td>
<td>• Jessica and students as 21st century learners: digital literacies and practices in Jessica’s classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Distinguishing Characteristics of Participants’ Writing Methods Courses

Notable is that these characteristics are illustrated to some extent in each of the three participants’ courses, but the manner in which they are approached, emphasized, and manifest in the course for which they are “key features” sets them apart, making them both integral and unique to the course.

**Distinguishing Characteristics of Participants’ Writing Methods Courses**

**Kelly and students as co-learners: Collaboration in Kelly’s classroom**

Kelly’s syllabus and course materials reflect Kelly’s positioning herself as a co-learner amongst her students. Several portions of Kelly’s syllabus, a tone-setting document that students receive on the first day of class, establish Kelly’s ethos and position her as a co-learner in the classroom. In discussing course goals, for instance, Kelly both invites students to develop their own goals and chronicles those she has for the course and students: “It is my hope that you will identify several goals for yourself—as a teacher, a writer, and/or an individual—that we might address in this class.” Kelly’s
use of the “we” in this sentence is powerful; she immediately establishes herself as a fellow learner as she invites students to develop goals that guide instruction. The idea that collaborative efforts will constitute the course continues as the syllabus unfolds. Of the seventeen bullet-pointed ‘Issues’ Kelly highlights as “Issues we may want to discuss,” several directly address collaboration, including “Groups and/or group work in the writing classroom” and “Writing teachers’ roles in the classroom [e.g. coach, parent, dialogue partner, mentor, writer, etc.].” And other issues listed indirectly touch on collaboration, such as “social constructionism” which is listed alongside “Dominant writing theories,” as “social constructionism” is based on the premise that meaning is constructed from social interactions, or collaborations.

Kelly continues to use inclusive and collective language throughout the entire syllabus. In discussing ‘Classroom Procedures,” for instance, Kelly presents students with this invitation: “I invite you to be an active participant in whatever activities we undertake.” Kelly also elicits students’ ideas for classroom discussion: “If you think of some issue or strategy that we should (or could) investigate or discuss, please let me know.” In asking students to be deliberate in reflecting on their participation, Kelly offers prompts, including:

Have I contributed to my own growth or that of others through my questions or comments? Did I challenge myself or others to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate knowledge? Am I listening to others in class as much as I am talking?

These metacognitive prompts reflect Kelly’s valuing of collaboration, as prompts are phrased to engage students in thinking about their contributions in regard to the
collective progress of the class; Kelly doesn’t just prompt students to think about “I” in these prompts, but to think about “I” in relationship to “others.”

In this portion of the syllabus, Kelly further develops her position as co-learner amongst her students, all while relaying expectations that students participate and a collaborative classroom. Kelly also notes her belief that “most days can be constructed as ‘good’ if we work to become more consistently aware of our own actions and feelings (and those of our partners in this class)” to close her expectations involving students’ self-reflection in her course. Here, Kelly once again uses inclusive, collective syntax and diction to promote thoughtful collaboration amongst her students, as she asks students to be aware of their classmates’ feelings and positions these classmates as “partners.”

Kelly’s course assignments and activities are also grounded in collaboration, illustrative of Kelly’s valuing of collaboration and her positioning herself as a co-learner amongst her students. Kelly’s Academic Service Learning Plan Assignment, for instance, engages students in “doing work online to help a teacher and her students in the public schools.” Kelly works along with her students and teachers in the community to connect them to one another as they pursue a mutually beneficial professional collaboration; Kelly’s students are provided with an actual teacher and actual K-12 students for whom to design service-learning lesson plans related to a community need and classroom teachers and K-12 students are supported in a community-based project that supports their learning objectives. K-12 students win. Classroom teachers win. Kelly’s students win. And most importantly, the greater community wins.

This assignment illustrates Kelly positioning herself as a co-learner and prizing collaboration within and beyond her classroom walls. And commonplace activities in
Kelly’s classroom, such as “responses to others’ writing,” an assignment highlighted on Kelly’s syllabus also reveal that collaboration is central to Kelly’s course. Kelly’s description of this “assignment,” a reoccurring activity that students engage in in her classroom, is as follows:

You’ll be asked to respond to your peers’ writing in this class. Those responses, like all your writing, should be the result of engagement with the text(s). I request that you direct your comments, questions, suggestions, and/or critiques directly to the author, using first and second person pronouns (I, me, my, you, yours, your). In addition, remember that your response is going to be used to help the author make decisions about revising his/her text for the portfolio, so you might want to focus your response(s) toward helping him/her meet that goal.

Kelly’s expectation that students’ collaborate in supporting one another to achieve the common goal of “help[ing] the author” and explicit instructions for how students should provide feedback to one another in support of this common classroom goal of “help[ing]” one another professionally certainly highlights Kelly’s championing of collaboration. This collaborative pedagogy is certainly supported by Kelly’s positioning of herself as a co-learner amongst her students, which begins on the very first day of class when Kelly and her students examine different approaches to teaching writing together. Kelly immediately asserts herself as a learner amongst her students:

I’m a user of experiences right off the bat, and they talk about their different teachers in all their grades, and professors and everybody, and it gives us a place to start. And then I ask them to think about, looking at my syllabus, can they tell
what I am, and they guess and usually they’re right. You know, I’m kind of a cross between and expressivist and a dialogian. So it gives us a place to start…”

Beginning in the first class and in every class that follows, Kelly and her students work as a collective unit to achieve common aims. Kelly refers to her students and herself as “us” in reflecting on her course, and a sense of collaboration—which leads to a community of writers, a key feature of Kelly, David, and Jessica’s classrooms that will be discussed later in this chapter—is achieved through Kelly’s deliberate positioning of herself as a co-learner amongst her students.

**David and students as ethnographers: An ethnographic frame and transparency in David’s classroom**

Critical to David’s course is an “ethnographic frame,” the frame that not only guides his conception of the course, but also his implementation and facilitation of course curriculum. David reflects on this “ethnographic frame” and how it is significant to his own professional development and to his work with teaching candidates in his writing methods course:

So I think as teachers we need to prepare [students] on how to learn, learn how to observe, learn how to describe. And this is where the ethnographic frame that I learned [in graduate school] has become critical. I have learned a lot about how to observe, how to describe, how to contrast, triangulate. These principles of ethnography have helped me in my own teaching and they guide how I prepare teachers.

While the term “ethnographer” is not used in David’s syllabus, the notion that students become critical observers, inquisitive and critical thinkers, and thoughtful and reflective practitioners grounds most every portion of this document. The “Mission
Statement” that opens the syllabus asserts that the English Education program at David’s institution is “committed to developing and sustaining knowledgeable and reflective teachers of literacy in a diverse society.” The ethnographic frame that David works to engage his students in understanding and using for themselves as they think through issues in writing instruction and English education certainly supports students becoming “knowledgeable and reflective teachers of literacy.”

The “Expectations” that David lists under “Class Policies” in his syllabus also reflect the ethnographic frame David uses in approaching the course. Students can meet expectations such as “Be curious and inquisitive” and “Take academic risks” when an environment that values and fosters careful observation, description, and reflection is established and maintained. Another expectation—“Share beliefs and opinions about education and turn these into theories that include evidentiary support gathered from literature and experiences in the field”—most certainly requires students be careful observers, describers, and reflectors in their interactions with scholarship and fieldwork.

The ethnographic frame so important to David and his work with prospective teachers lends itself to the transparency that he values and demonstrates with his students. David models for students thinking and practices that are supported by an “ethnographic” way of perceiving and as he does so, he makes visible to students what they may not necessarily see on their own. David believes teachers “have an obligation and responsibility to make visible all the stuff that we don’t always make visible” and he acts on this belief: “I make visible why I’m doing what I’m doing.” David notes that “everything I’m doing is open for discussion.”
The course syllabus, a tone-setting document for the course, illustrates David’s transparency with his students. The “Late Work” section, for instance, notes:

You should arrive to class prepared to discuss course readings and to participate in all activities. Our goal is to “do it now” and punctually complete assignments. Teachers face similar time constraints daily. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period.

Here, David makes transparent his rationale for this “late work” policy by likening the policy to the professional context that his students will partake in as actual classroom teachers. He explains that work is due at the “beginning of the class,” just as daily “due dates” will be part of students’ future work as teachers.

David addresses his students in the second-person throughout the syllabus, as exemplified in the “Late Work” section of the syllabus. This use of second-person (along with David’s use of first-person) is a rhetorical choice that allows David to clearly and directly identify and explain expectations to his students, also reflective of his David’s deliberate aim to be transparent with his students. David does not simply tell students what they will do in the course in the “Course Overview and Goals” section of the syllabus, but rather shows students what they will do by explaining and framing the goals. For instance, the syllabus tells students: “You will learn to make visible and support your beliefs and theories about teaching English in secondary schools, develop principled, research-based methods of instruction” and “become reflective educators” and shows students these aims will be met through “collaborative” work as “teaching appears to be an individual act, yet teaching is largely collaborative.” Such transparency—a deliberate and carefully calculated choice to model for students and show students what he is
thinking and why—is a trademark of David’s pedagogical approach and it is certainly established in David’s syllabus.

David’s ethnographic practices, and specifically that of transparency, are also illustrated in David’s class assignments. David’s opening sequence (showcased earlier in the chapter) models for students ‘best practices’ in teaching writing as students are engaged in the writing process as students. In this carefully scaffolded sequence, David models for students ethnographic ways of thinking and doing; essentially, David models ethnographic ways of teaching. David models for students that writing is public and that “it’s okay for us to talk about things publicly” when he responds to his students writing in this opening sequence. He describes how he would speak with a student about his or her writing: “Well, here’s what I’m reading and here’s what I can say back to you—what I’m seeing.” Important is that David is not critiquing students’ work, but rather seeing students’ work, and modeling for students how to respond to writing per an ethnographic frame:

When we exchange papers, the first thing I’m going to do is go through and see what I think is done well and be able to say back to [the student] what I see. I’m not going to critique. There is no critique at the beginning. It’s just—here’s what I see and I want them to learn to describe.

Also important to note is that transparency, supported by modeling and open discussion and reflection, is critical to teaching students about ethnographic ways of thinking and doing. The opening sequence establishes ethnographic practices that David’s students engage in throughout the semester—workshop-based and process-based
writing—and that his students are expected to become proficient in approaching course assignments as ethnographers.

The final major project, students’ Unit Plan Project, requires students make visible—or transparent—their thinking and pedagogical choices, just as David has modeled for students all semester. For this “thematic unit,” grounded by Diana Mitchell and Linda Payne Young’s 1997 *English Journal* article, “Creation Thematic Units,” students create a four-five week unit plan that they could use in their student teaching or future teaching around a self-selected theme. David’s expectations of students for this project reflect the course’s focus on an ethnographic frame, as students are not merely responsible for a unit overview, daily lesson plans, and teaching materials, but much more complex work. Students are required to include a detailed “rationale for the unit,” a detailed description of the “instructional context” and how the plan will “meet students’ academic needs, and an identification and detailed explanation of “beliefs, objective, actions-activities, assessments, and standards” and how unit objectives reflect each of these. The 2-page single-spaced project assignment sheet describes in detail each component of the unit plan project and also provides prompting to engage students in carefully thinking through their rationale and how to make transparent their pedagogical approach, the very sort of prompting David and his students have worked with all semester.

Beginning in the first class and in every class that follows, David and his students work as a collective unit to achieve common aims that are rooted in an ethnographic frame. David notes to his students in his syllabus: “Together we can gain a deeper understanding of our beliefs and instructional methods and become advocates for our
classroom practices and students.” This statement not only reflects David’s expectations, but also that these expectations will be met collaboratively—which leads to a community of writers, a key feature of David, Kelly, and Jessica’s classrooms that will be discussed later in this chapter—and through “deep understanding,” understanding supported by an ethnographic frame and transparency.

**Jessica and students as 21st century learners: Digital literacies and practices in Jessica’s classroom**

As implied by the course title, “Teaching Composition in the 21st Century,” Jessica’s writing methods course engages students in becoming digitally literate and effective 21st Century English Language Arts teachers. Kelly’s syllabus and course materials reflect the technological-orientation of the course. The course syllabus, a tone-setting document that students receive on the first day of class, asserts this technological and digital orientation. In fact, Jessica explicitly links three of the ten goal statements included in the “Goals and GSE Conceptual Framework” portion of the syllabus to the technology strand of the conceptual framework for the course. These three goals are: “Engage in writing and develop pieces of writing through various stages from brainstorming to publication; expand personal definitions of writing in the 21st century; evaluate and use technology resources in the teaching of writing.” And though not explicitly noted, important to note is that technology is certainly an element that relates to each of the other goals of the course. For instance, the goal statements “participate in a community of writers” and “develop the ability to involve students in helping one another grow as writers” may certainly involve Jessica’s students’ understanding, own use, and instructional use of technology.
Both Jessica’s instructional use of technology and the expectation that students develop digital literacy is highlighted throughout the entire syllabus. Three portions of the syllabus, in particular, communicate that technology is used to relay course content: “Required Materials,” “Online Space,” and “Course Schedule.” A “Wikispace account” is a required material, as it is a space through which course content is “pushed” and for Jessica and her students to “share ideas and materials throughout the semester.” This purpose for the Wiki and a note that the Wiki is a public space is included under “Online Space.” Four of fifteen courses also transpire online (and the other eleven meet face-to-face) as noted in the “Class Schedule” and the online meetings generally involve workshopping, and specifically, response and feedback. The “Class Schedule” further illustrates the technological-orientation of the course in that many readings are noted as digitally accessible and several assignments are submitted digitally. Students’ multi-genre project proposal, for instance, is submitted via email and students’ process narrative, multimodal piece, multigenre project, and portfolio of writing are all submitted via the Wiki.

Most certainly, Jessica and her students rely on digital communication and literacy in navigating the course content. In addition, technology becomes the course content in Jessica’s course as students create multi-modal writings and focus on reading about, discussing, debating and practicing teaching writing in the 21st century. Chapters 1 and 2 of *Because Digital Writing Matters: Improving student writing in online and multimedia environments*, published by the National Writing Project, is in fact a required reading in the course. The course syllabus also directly addresses expectations regarding online discussion, a mandatory component of the course. Under “Participation and
Practice,” Jessica notes that “participation in online work is necessary for [students’] learning in this course” and expects students “consider the various roles [they play in face to face discussion and attempt fill each of these roles in the course of discussion online.”

Also illustrating that technology and digital literacy constitute as major content in Jessica’s writing methods course is the “Portfolio of Writing” assignment that students engage in throughout the semester. The course syllabus describes the assignment:

This assignment invites you to engage in a process approach to writing, to participate in a writing community, and to write for various audiences and purposes. Throughout the semester you will be given prompts for writing. You will select several of these drafts to workshop into final pieces. As you collect these pieces, you will reflect on your process as a writer. Required categories of the final portfolio: Op Ed, Evocative Genre, Unfamiliar Genre, Process Narrative, Multimodal Piece, and Learning Reflection.

The Multimodal component of the project is described in greater detail on the course Wiki. This Wiki page begins with a wordle created by Jessica’s students using their Google Doc on Writing Workshop from a class session. The wordle includes terms such as “students,” “peer,” “process,” and “accountable” in larger print and terms including “workshopping,” “active,” “appropriate,” and “response” in smaller print. Below this wordle are directions for student to explore the National Writing Project’s “Digital Is” website and connect its resources to two digital stories—one Jessica’s first attempt at a digital story and one created by a teacher working with the DigiTales project—in brainstorming for the multimodal component of the Portfolio or Writing
assignment. Students’ compiled posts account for the “Resources for Multimodal Writing” section of this Wiki page.

In reflecting on her course, Jessica comments that the “Portfolio of Writing assignment and instructional consciousness” are “what I’d like them to produce” to show they’ve met the learning goals of the course. In specific regard to the multi-modal component of the Portfolio of Writing assignment, Jessica reflects that many students chose to do their process narrative in multi-modal format: “[Students] would use digital stories and things like that to be able to show the multiple drafts and how the piece evolved and what their process was through that.”

Jessica also reflects that this project is “heavily scaffold[ed]” but also “offer[s] a lot of choice.” Because she offers a lot of choice, she does not feel responsible for teaching the technology itself. Instead, she provides students with examples of multimodal pieces and resources to get them started in thinking about different types of multimodal pieces. Jessica “opens [herself] up to learning from whatever her students choose to turn in.” As the course evolves and Jessica’s repertoire of multimodal texts expands, she aims to “more carefully scaffold and push students in the multimodal pieces” because “teaching the craft of those kinds of pieces” is important. Jessica also wants to continue to address “digital responsibility” in her course, and as she continues to develop this project and the course as she continues to learn with her students: “I just position myself as a learner, and I’m a writer, and I’m trying to, I write with them, and I try to learn from them.” This statement not only reflects Jessica’s ongoing goals for the technology and digital centering of the course, but also her positioning herself as a co-learner and co-author amongst her students. This positioning leads to a community of
Crosscurrents Among Participants’ Writing Methods Courses

Kelly, David, and Jessica’s writing methods courses are each marked with a distinguishing characteristic, a characteristic both integral and unique in how it is approached, emphasized, and manifest in the individual course. Previously mentioned is that these distinguishing characteristics are illustrated to some extent in each of the participant’s courses. Other characteristics of each course, however, are integral and common to all participants’ courses; these are termed “common key features.” Readers will notice that these “common key features” are noted with different sub-headings, meant to illustrate that each of the two features plays out differently in each participant’s course.

- Common Key Feature #1: Participants and students as a community of writers
  - process-writing and the National Writing Project model in participants’ classrooms

- Common Key Feature #2: Participants and students as stance-takers
  - professionalization in participants’ classrooms

Figure 4.3: Common Features Across Participants’ Writing Methods Courses

Common feature #1: participants and students as a community of writers

Kelly, David, and Jessica all value, establish, and foster a community of writers in their classrooms. They all value this community and the process-based writing that supports its development, just as the community supports the writing. Readers will recall from Chapter 3 that Kelly, David, and Jessica all reflect on the significance of the
National Writing Project (NWP) to their development as writers and writing teacher educators. It is no surprise, then, that “teacher as writer,” foundational to the NWP professional development model, is a common key feature across Kelly, David, and Jessica’s writing methods courses.

Per the “teacher as writer” approach, participants’ writing methods courses champion a community of writers and the courses’ syllabi, major projects, and classroom activities reflect this. All courses require students submit a writing portfolio—a collection of the student’s writing from various points in the semester and stages in the writing process and a reflective piece of writing. And in all courses, this portfolio work is supported by a community of writers, as all courses expect students to participate in collaborative classroom workshopping of their writing. Establishing and developing a community of writers is so important to participants that each discuss explicit expectations that foster this community in their syllabi. Jessica’s course syllabi states, “This course is designed for students to participate in a community of writers” and aligns this goal with the “community” component of her program’s conceptual framework. And Kelly’s syllabi clearly states that a goal of the course is for students to “gain confidence as a teacher of writing through practice, peer response, and reflection.” In other words, Kelly’s course aims to engage students in the writing process. Kelly even makes specific requests that students “direct [their] comments, questions, suggestions and/or critiques directly to the author, suing first and second person pronouns” and reminds students that their responses to others’ writing “help the author make decisions about revising” so responses should “help him/her meet that goal.” David’s syllabus implies that a community of writers is integral to students’ success in the course and in their teaching
careers in this statement under “Course Overview and Goals: “Teaching appears to be an individual act, yet teaching is largely collaborative (with students, peers, administrators, parents, members of professional organizations, etc.)” In other words, to be successful as a teacher, one must collaborate with various communities, one important one being peers.

David’s syllabi also notes that “becoming a teacher is a process” that “demands [students] take academic risks, struggle, and strive.” This process is also foundational to the NWP’s notion of “teacher as writer,” a notion all participants align themselves with. Teachers must write, teach, and collaborate with their teaching peers. And this process mirrors the writing process, also integral to NWP’s “teacher as writer” approach. All participants incorporate process writing and develop communities of writers in their classrooms, but despite this common grounding of practice in a collaborative, process-based pedagogy—an approach influenced by varying experiences with the NWP—each participant conceives of and shapes community differently in their classrooms.

Their reflections on their courses illustrate points of importance in regard to process writing and a community of writers in their classrooms. Kelly reflects that “getting [students] stories and figuring out who they are,” and “working to build that trusting relationship in the classroom” is critical to enabling students to take risks, risks she believes necessary to grow as a teacher and writer. Certainly, Kelly’s reflections on community and the trust it requires align with the key feature of her course discussed earlier in the chapter, “Kelly and students as co-learners: collaboration in Kelly’s classroom.” And both David and Jessica’s reflections on their courses reveal that modeling is fundamental to the community of writers they seek to foster in their classrooms. Readers will recall that the distinguishing feature of David’s course is that
David is transparent with his students in engaging them in ethnographic ways of seeing and doing. It is fitting, then, that David remarks, “We’re going to learn not only to write but to learn how to work within a community as responders to each other’s writing and to examine whatever it is we have to be focusing on at the time.” Modeling for students how to “work within a community” to “examine” using the ethnographic frame stands out as unique to David’s development of a community of writers in his classroom, though Jessica too, champions modeling in supporting her classroom community of writers. Jessica both positions herself as a co-learner amongst her students, much like Kelly, but also models classroom writing behaviors. She describes the scenario her students are faced with on the first day of class, a day of important tone-setting and development of ethos:

They walk into the class the first day, and I really threw them off because I was just sitting there at my computer and on the board I had a sign that said, ‘I’m writing. Will you please join me?’ And I wouldn’t look at them and wouldn’t say a work for 15 minutes—I was just typing away. And they did—a lot of them eventually sat down and joined me.

From here, Jessica began to foster community by opening up the discussion of how her introductory activity made students feel and to begin discussions of students’ writing experiences and beliefs about the teaching of writing. Evident is that while Kelly, David, and Jessica are all influenced by the NWP’s “teacher as writer” notion, all enact a process-based pedagogy, and all create and foster communities of writers in their classrooms, they all have a trademark way of doing so. Furthermore, these “trademark
ways” are oftentimes reflective of the “key characteristic” of their course discussed in earlier in the chapter.

**Common key feature #2: participants’ and students as stance-takers**

Kelly, David, and Jessica’s courses aim to support students in developing informed stances on issues in teaching writing and in English education. All three participants want their students to be “stance takers.” Kelly, David, and Jessica see their courses as vehicles to acquaint and immerse students in concerns and issues in the teaching of writing. Participants’ syllabi, assignments, and reflections on their courses reveal this. Kelly’s syllabus begins, in fact, with a listing of sixteen issues related to the teaching of writing that may be discussed in her course. And Jessica begins her “course overview” with three “essential questions” that hail students to take a stance: “1) What is writing and what do writers do? 2) Who am I as a writer? As a teacher of writing? 3) What works in writing instruction?” David’s opening statement under the same heading in his syllabus states that his course is “designed to provide you with opportunities” to “develop philosophies.”

Participants’ assignments respond to their aims to professionalize their students. Readers will recall that all participants require students write a reflection on their growth in a process essay or reflective piece, a component of the writing portfolios the participants assign. While the focus of this reflective component is the student as a writer, it also often becomes a forum for students to articulate how their own writing process and reflections on the process shape their beliefs about or approaches to writing and teaching writing. Jessica’s students also write a “philosophy statement” early in the semester, which they revise throughout the semester. This is certainly a professional
piece, one often required in teachers’ application materials and professional files, that Jessica engages students in writing—one that requires they reflect on the course and their experiences in articulating and explaining their stance.

Participants’ reflections on their course certainly speak to the different teaching contexts they operate within, which in turn affects their methods and expectations in regard to their students becoming stance-takers. Readers will recall that Jessica’s students are graduate in-service teachers, either completing their intern teaching or lead teaching in classrooms; it is more developmentally appropriate that Jessica’s students develop a philosophy than David or Kelly’s, as David or Kelly’s writing methods course is often students very first writing methods course and many of their undergraduate have more limited, if any, actual teaching experience in contrast to Jessica’s teachers who are in the field while taking her course.

Jessica’s working to develop her students “instructional consciousness” through the course and her students have an actual context in which they are teachers to work on developing this. In conjunction with reflections on classroom experience, Jessica and her students return to the three essential questions (mentioned above) as they develop their actual philosophy statements and professional stances in regard to issues in the teaching of writing. Also notable is that many of Jessica’s students work in economically-disadvantaged schools with high populations of at-risk students, providing a shared (though different per individual) experience from which her students develop their “instructional consciousness.”

In contrast to specific developing of philosophies, Kelly and David’s student are undergraduate students, and in Kelly’s case, some are elementary majors and others
secondary English education majors. Kelly’s students have a wide-range of experiences and given her institutions’ rural, wilderness location, many of her students move to various locations upon graduation for their first teaching jobs as jobs are in high demand in Kelly’s area. Kelly’s goal in professionalizing her students is to prepare them for navigating a variety of teaching contexts in their future careers. Kelly wants her students to “think like a teacher” and in doing so, rationalize their choices as teachers of writing in completing the course assignments.

The same is true for David, though his student population is largely secondary English education majors and minors. An assignment in David’s class is to attend a professional event and write a response to the event; David, like Kelly, encourages his pre-service teachers to become acquainted with professional organizations and activities that are important to the teaching of writing. David feels strongly that it is his responsibility to engage students in discussions of institutional realities in scaffolding students’ thinking about professional issues in the teaching of writing. The ethnographic frame that guides David’s work also comes into play in equipping his students to be stance-takers; David wants students to “develop a better awareness of their own theoretical framing” and models and scaffolds this for them in engaging them in ethnographic ways of thinking and doing throughout the course. David reflects that his students are “going to need to have a framework” in their profession “even if no one asks them about it” and one of his primary aims is to equip students with this by the end of the course. Of course, this requires students become stance-takers.
A Closing Thought

Kelly, David, and Jessica’s writing methods courses are all carefully and deliberately mapped out and are the result of thoughtful, critical, and ongoing reflection and work. Each of these courses is unique, as illustrated in participants’ reflections on their courses and in the identification and discussion of the courses’ varying distinguishing characteristics. However, these courses are also alike in their valuing and fostering of a community of writers and in preparing prospective English teachers to be stance-takers. Chapter 5, the final chapter of this project, focuses on several different discussion strands framed by this project and intended to provide a lens for others’ pedagogical decision-making and teaching practice. Discussion strands include a focus on the following: 1) what this project does (and does not) tell us about writing methods classes; 2) the project’s significance to the fields of English education and writing teacher education; 3) the project’s significance to other stakeholders in the preparation of secondary English teachers; 4) alternative ways the project’s data might be viewed and projected outcomes of such viewing; and 4) potential “next steps” and extensions of this project.
CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS: MAKING TEACHER INFLUENCES VISIBLE

This Study in Review

I set out to investigate what was happening in writing methods courses and why. This is a complex situation, and upon initial reflection on the pilot study results along with careful examination of case study participants’ interview responses and course materials, I developed a framework for analyzing this situation. This framework involves three major strands: instructors’ professional journeys, teaching contexts, and perspectives (or theoretical frames). (This framework, in fact, accounts for one key finding of this study and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter). My original motivation for pursuing this study was simple and personal: my own undergraduate methods courses most influenced my practice as a high school English Language Arts teacher and I wanted to learn about these courses. In doing preliminary research which included the pilot survey for this multiple case study, I learned that I was not alone in recognizing methods courses as critical to my development as a classroom teacher: other English educators and writing teacher educators also pointed to the methods course as pivotal in English teacher preparation, and specifically, writing teacher development.

These survey results also underscored that which I understood from the limited scholarship that details writing methods courses—that the courses take on a variety of forms and are taught across diverse contexts by individuals of varying professional backgrounds. The details as to how and why these courses were conceptualized and
taught, though, became of greater and greater interest to me. For instance, the pilot survey revealed writing methods instructors held varying advanced degrees in specializations ranging from Children’s Literature and English education to Writing Studies and Linguistics. It also revealed that writing methods courses were taught in a variety of contexts—some housed in English departments, some in Education departments, some at large institutions, and some at small institutions. In addition, the pilot survey highlighted different influences on and pedagogies affecting individual courses; some were influenced by expressivist pedagogy, some collaborative, some sociocultural, and some feminist. And the common practices of individual instructors varied, as some emphasized digital writing, some collaborative exercises, and some demonstrative teaching, for example. However, *how* varying features of professionals’ profiles and their courses interacted was not clear from the survey. Therefore, my interest in pursuing a multiple in-depth case study of writing methods instructors *and* their courses was solidified.

As I reflect on my research process, I recall my reviewing of the pilot survey results to be the point at which this project truly took shape. Prior to this, I had wanted to study the effects of the undergraduate writing methods courses on beginning teachers as they pursued their first lead teaching experiences in secondary ELA classrooms. However, upon examining survey results, I realized that I must first better understand the writing methods course itself—the course that is a complex, under-research pedagogical space—before doing informed, quality research into the effects of the course on individuals. (Doing such research is one extension of this project that is discussed later in this chapter).
As I became immersed in scholarship that focused on teacher education, writing teacher education, and methods courses, I learned about several individual versions of English and writing methods courses. Typically, these were first-person reflections written by methods instructors themselves (Marshall, Reid). I also came across a large collection of English methods course syllabi in *How English Teachers Get Taught* (Smagornisky and Whiting). And I encountered work that hedged at why English teachers teach as they do in an article nearly two decades old: “Teaching as We’re Taught: The University’s Role in the Education of English Teachers” (Marshall and Smith). In all of these pieces though, there were gaps, and these are the gaps that influenced this study’s design and that I hope this study addresses. I could not locate detailed descriptions or accounts of multiple writing methods course, let alone single courses; I hope that the portraits of participants’ courses in Chapter 4 of this study offer such descriptions. I also could not locate work that detailed writing methods instructors’ influences and rationales for their course design and implementation; I hope that the framework developed and used to discuss participants’ influences on their methods courses in Chapter 3 clearly articulates why these instructors teach as they do.

I will conclude this study by summarizing key findings and making recommendations for future endeavors involving research into and the teaching of writing methods courses. These findings and recommendations are especially important for the stakeholders in English teacher preparation: English educators and writing teacher educators, teaching candidates, K-12 administrators, and K-12 teachers, and educational policy makers.
Key Findings: Their Importance in the Fields of Writing Teacher Education and English Education

Because of the limited size of this intrinsic case study, no generalizations about teacher candidates, K-12 teachers, English educators, writing teacher educators, or education can be made based on this study. This is an inherent limitation of the study, and a gap in the study that prompts further studies. However, the study’s three key findings that follow are important in igniting and developing discussions about the writing methods course, its role in preparing K-12 English teachers, and how writing teacher educators might reflect on and revise their own practice.

Key finding #1: Multiple, in-depth portraits of writing methods courses

First, this study shows that while common features bind varying versions of the writing methods course, distinguishing characteristics set them apart. This study offers three detailed portraits of writing methods courses, along with identification and discussion of their distinguishing characteristics and common key features. Readers will recall that Kelly and students are distinguishable as collaborative co-learners, David and students as transparent and ethnographic thinkers, and Jessica and students as 21st century learners. Readers will also recall that participants’ courses are bound by common features: participants and students are communities of writers working to take stances on issues in English education.

This study offers in-depth portraits of writing methods courses that help stakeholders in English teacher preparation and development understand what is happening in methods courses. These portraits are derived from participants’ personal thoughts, reflections, and assessments of their courses, as well as close-study of their course materials. These in-depth portraits build on the work that Smagorinsky and
Whiting did as detailed descriptions of writing methods courses from their aims and content, to the strategies and practices of their instructors, to the assessment and evaluation materials that guide instruction, are featured. Where Smagorinsky and Whiting’s work offers a snapshot view of many courses—based solely on syllabi of courses—from which trends can be proposed, other studies offer singular, often personal accounts of an aspect of or project from individual methods courses. Such accounts are discussed in Chapter 1 and include those of Margaret Marshall who employs a cultural studies approach to the English methods course and Shelly Reid who aligns her writing methods curriculum with CCCC position statements and NWP beliefs. These and other such singular, self-narrated descriptions and rationales for English methods courses exist and provide the English education community with varying versions of methods courses that may serve as models and lenses for deconstructing English educators’ own practice.

The portraits of participants’ methods courses, however, combine to illustrate detailed descriptions and commentaries on more than one singular version of the course and through a third-person perspective. Based on close-study of participants’ interview responses and course documents, I provide three in-depth, detailed portraits of writing methods courses and accompanying analysis in the hopes that readers can see the course; the bulk of this work is done in Chapter 4. (I also hope readers can see why the individual courses are constructed and taught as they are—and this is why Chapter 3 and its exploration of instructors’ influences—is so very important).

This work, then, also responds to calls in the writing teacher education community, in particular, to better understand what is happening in writing methods courses. The CEE Summit Group called for two actions in regard to the methods courses
in English education programs in 2006: 1) that more programmatic coherence and collaboration exist between K-12 and post-secondary institutions, and 2) “research that can help us and our students articulate the ways our work has import.” The in-depth portraits of writing methods courses that I provide, along with the framework that helps us to make sense of why courses are taught as they are most certainly “help[s] us” in the writing teacher education community “articulate the ways our work has import.” Participants articulate, through interviews and course materials, what they do in the writing methods course and why they do what they do; and all three of these participants do their work in very specific ways and for very specific reasons. This study may, in fact, be the first in the field of writing teacher education that examines more than a singular course (such as those by Marshall and Reid) and that does so through a third-person perspective. It may also be the first in the field to examine writing methods courses and their influences in such in-depth detail. This approach to examining the writing methods course is so important because the detailed portraits of courses allow all in the writing teacher education community to reflect on their own courses and to pull from participants’ courses in considering adaptations and revisions to their own courses.

The distinguishing characteristics of each of these courses and the common key features across these three courses each serve as points of critical consideration and discussion amongst those in the writing teacher education community. This study itself focuses on a very small sector of the writing teacher education community—the work of just three individuals. But the work of these individuals has the potential to influence the many, many members of this professional community; as individuals and on a micro-level, we can consider our own work in light of the work of Kelly, David, and Jessica.
As a community of writing teacher educators, we can share these individual examinations with one another and discuss our work much like I attempt to share participants’ reflections on their own work in this study. In doing so, we may come to better understandings of our work as a single community and a greater appreciation for both the common key features of our courses that bind and focus our efforts and the distinguishing characteristics that differentiate our work. These distinguishing characteristics, in particular, illustrate the differentiation within our field and push our community to continue to evolve along with our students, our contexts, and the changing landscape that is English education and K-12 education. I hope that participants’ stories inspire all of us in the writing teacher education community to ask, ‘What is the distinguishing feature of my course?’ and to continue developing it.

We may be struck and inspired by the distinguishing characteristics of these three courses: Kelly and students as co-learners; David and students as ethnographers; and Jessica and students as 21st century learners. We may see pieces of ourselves in Kelly, David, and Jessica—as well as pieces of our work in their work—and we may also see gaps in our work that are made apparent by their work. And in seeing and understanding common key features of participants’ courses—participants and their students as communities of writers and as stance-takers—we may consider how our courses also illustrate these features, as well as how our courses may be revised to embody these features in seeing how such features may support our students as preparing and in-service teachers.

In addition, participants’ courses all highlight these common key features in different ways, and this reveals an important takeaway from this study: that there is
common ground among us as individuals in our community, and therefore, the potential for our community to come together collaboratively to pursue positive actions and have positive impacts on English education, K-12 education, and in the lives of pre-service and in-service teachers. This also responds to a call within writing teacher education to unite writing teachers. If the common key features and distinguishing characteristics of writing methods courses that this study reveals ignite critical discussion amongst writing teacher educators and make their way into the critical reinventions of writing methods courses, then work on a macro-level may transpire as many, many pre-service and in-service English teachers will be impacted to do critical work in K-12 classrooms with K-12 students.

Key finding #2: A framework for understanding teacher influences on course design and implementation

Second, this study underscores the notion that teacher influences are multi-layered and complex and provides a framework for understanding teacher influences and decision-making. In applying this framework to participants’ interview responses, this study offers three in-depth illustrations of teacher influences. To an extent, this study supports what Marshall and Smith assert: that English teachers to teach as they’re taught. Participants’ do, in fact, teach courses that reflect their own experiences as learners in academic settings. This finding is illustrated as participants’ writing methods courses are rooted in their professional stories, stories that can be analyzed in terms of their professional journeys, teaching contexts, and theoretical frames, all peppered with learning experiences. For instance, participants are all National Writing Project fellows (and David is even a site coordinator); each of these participants reflect that their work with the NWP is work that impacts how they teach their writing methods courses. All
three participants aim to create classroom communities that reflect the NWP value of “teacher as writer,” responding to Robert Tremmel and William Broz’s 2002 recommendation that “writing teachers must be writers.” Reflection is also a key component of all participants’ courses, which links back to the reflective work these participants did as NWP fellows and doctoral students.

This study, however, also expands on Marshall and Smith’s work in that it provides a more in-depth, detailed framework for understanding why teachers teach as they do, and in particular, why writing teacher educators teach the writing methods course as they do. Based on participants’ interview responses, I developed three major categories for discussing influences on their work: professional journey, teaching context, and theoretical frames. I found that these three categories house a large volume of rich, detailed responses from these participants that illustrate what they do in their courses and perhaps more importantly, why they do these things in their courses.

A key happening in Kelly’s professional journey, for instance, influences her approach with her writing methods students to this day. Kelly studied rhetoric and composition in graduate school, but was prompted by an advisor to consider work in English education; before this point, Kelly had not realized that work in English education was a viable option for her considering her formal training as a composition scholar. She taught an undergraduate methods course thanks to this advisor’s prodding, and then secured an English education position (the one she still holds) upon graduation. Kelly has not forgotten the special interest that this advisor took in her and her situation and is conscious to support her methods students individually and as people, just as Kelly’s advisor supported her. This is seen in much of what her students do in her
writing methods course: they are allowed choice in all assignments, reflecting Kelly’s valuing of the individual and individual interests. Kelly also differentiates instruction to accommodate the varying learning styles of her methods students, and differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences even serve as content in Kelly’s course. In these ways, a single moment from Kelly’s professional journey plays out in her current teaching of her writing methods course.

Jessica’s teaching of her writing methods course is strongly impacted by her teaching context, as discussed in both Chapters 3 and 4. Jessica teaches a methods course that serves both pre-service and in-service graduate students, all of whom have some degree of K-12 teaching experience, whether as intern teachers or lead classroom teachers. Therefore, Jessica’s course hinges on valuing the teaching experiences and teaching contexts her students bring to her methods course; this valuing is illustrated in Jessica’s positioning herself as a collaborative learner amongst her students as they explore digital literacy in the class. This context contrasts Kelly and David’s in that Kelly and David primarily teach pre-service undergraduate students, students with little to no lead teaching experience. In this way, Jessica’s teaching context (and Kelly and David’s contexts) impact the prior knowledge and common knowledge of their respective student bodies, thereby impacting their respective teaching of the methods course.

Finally, to illustrate how these three categories serve as a useful structure for discussing why methods teacher do what they do in their methods classrooms, the theoretical frames that guide David’s teaching are noteworthy. In David’s graduate program, he learned about and developed an ethnographic way of seeing not only teaching, but learning and the world. This ethnographic frame grounded the work he did
in his doctoral program and in his dissertation, and even serves as a frame for his own writing methods course to this day, as he aims to empower pre-service teachers with ways of seeing and knowing. David’s adaptation of the ethnographic frame that supported and guided his graduate work to his own writing methods course exemplifies how theoretical frames of instructors can have a strong impact on how they teach their writing methods course.

Important to note is that each of the above examples illustrating how participants’ professional journeys, teaching contexts, and theoretical frames influence why they teach as they teach also illustrates that these three categories are not exclusive. These three categories overlap and lines are blurry; the discourse involved in this project is far too complex to claim otherwise. David’s ethnographic frame from which he operates as a thinker, learner, and teacher, for instance, could also be discussed as an element of his professional journey, as he became familiar with and adapted this frame to his own experiences as a graduate student and as a K-12 teacher. And Kelly’s valuing of individual students and their individual needs could also be discussed as an element of the humanistic theoretical frame she discusses operating from as a teacher, and therefore part of a discussion of her theoretical frames.

This framework, though, for discussing participants’ influences is just that—a frame. It offers writing teacher educators and English educators a language and structure for reflecting on their own conceptions and implementations of writing methods courses. In learning about participants’ influences, we as writing teacher educators have models for reflecting on, analyzing—and maybe even revising—our writing methods courses,
which involves careful consideration of our own professional journeys, teaching contexts, and theoretical frames.

This framework, the second major finding of this study, can help us as English educators and writing teacher educators to be more mindful of how and why we choose course materials, design course materials, enact methodologies and practices, and reflect on our practice. It can also help us to be reflective and mindful of our interactions with individual students and of how our own identities affect our interactions with students and the courses we teach. As workloads increase at many universities, it is easy to fall into ‘old habits’ when teaching writing methods courses semester after semester. The stories of the participants in this study serve as a reminder that courses are constantly evolving and require intentional and consistent critical reflection, reflection that models for our pre-service and in-service English teachers the difficult and important work of English educators. All three participants discussed revisions to their courses in recent years, and all three discussed future revisions that are already in the works for their courses. In this way, we are all reminded as writing teacher educators that our work must continue to adapt to the changing landscape of public K-12 education and the expanding dimensions of literacy.

Participants’ reflections illustrate the time, energy, expertise, and critical thought that underscores their work with students in their writing methods courses at their respective institutions. As discussed previously in this study, these participants all shared detailed information about their professional journeys, on which they encountered, adopted, and adapted theoretical frames that guide the work they do to this very day as writing methods course instructors. In addition, these three participants all spoke to their
teaching context and how this context influences the conceptions and implementations of their courses. It is clear that these instructors of writing methods courses are experts in their fields and experienced teachers. Therefore, as mentioned above, commonalities in their work may be elements of writing methods courses that other writing teacher educators may consider adapting and implementing into their own writing methods courses. Again, these common features, discussed in great detail in Chapter 4, are as follows: Kelly, David, and Jessica and their students as communities of writers and as stance-takers.

**Key finding #3: Specific themes common among cases**

Specific commonalities among cases, in addition to the ‘common features’ of courses that are identified and discussed in this study, exist. These commonalities, perhaps less obvious because less stressed in participants’ interview responses, bind these cases together to a degree and are important to the writing teacher education and English education communities.

First, each of these three participants value reflection and the NWP practice of “teachers as writers,” and such valuing comes through in the work their writing methods students do. Teachers as reflective-practitioners and teachers as writers are both prized by the NWP, and all participants are NWP fellows who identify the NWP as important to their development as teachers and to how they teach their writing methods courses. This insight may inspire those in the writing teacher education community to either continue investing their time and efforts in the NWP and aligning their courses with the mission of the NWP or to begin doing so.
Second, each of these teachers recognize that the dimensions of literacy are expanding and that their courses will need to adapt with digital literacies that are developing at a rapid rate. Jessica’s course, in fact, is specifically oriented towards digital literacies and 21st century learners, as evidenced in the new course title and in Jessica’s remarks regarding the recent revamping of her methods course. Kelly and David also recognize that digital literacies are an important factor influencing the work of K-12 English teachers, and therefore their work as methods instructors, and are taking steps to incorporate work with digital literacies into their classrooms. The participants are responding to the call in English education to “stop waiting for the technology of tomorrow to compel [teacher educators] to do the work of today” as they are working with the digital media at their disposal, learning about digital media use from students, and modifying curriculum to integrate digital media and teaching with digital media (Hicks, et al). Digital literacies and the constantly evolving education required to keep pace with these new literacies, however, is a daunting task to many pre-service and in-service teachers. In fact, adapting curriculum to account for the digital literacies of K-12 students instills fear in many, many practicing educators. Therefore, the risks that Kelly, David, and especially Jessica are taking to not only recognize the need for adapting methods curriculum to account for important discussions and work with digital literacies, but also their actual adaptations in curriculum to meet this need may inspire us all to consider taking even small steps towards doing the same. Such small steps, even, respond to the call to improve writing instruction by encouraging “connection among professionals interested in teaching real—not just easily assessable—writing expertise” (Brockman and Lindblom).
Stakeholders Outside of Writing Teacher Educators and English Educators

The primary audience for this study is teacher educators—particularly writing teacher educators and English educators. However, K-12 administrators, K-12 teachers, and educational policy-makers can also use this study to make gains in their professional work. Thanks to Kelly, David, and Jessica’s transparency in discussing their writing methods courses and their influences, these communities might develop a common understanding of issues and challenges in English teacher preparation and how methods courses address these issues and challenges. K-12 administrators and expert teachers seeking to support intern, first-year, and early career English teachers may better do so in understanding how these novice teachers are prepared in their writing methods courses. This study offers three different versions of the writing methods course for administrators and teachers to examine in trying to support novice teachers in making the transition from being students in English education programs to classroom ELA teachers in K-12 buildings. The common key features seen across these three different versions of the writing methods course, in particular, may provide administrators and teachers with a starting point for discussing teaching with novice teachers. This may, in turn, lead to novice English teachers being more supported as professionals and to decreases in English teacher attrition, a startling trend that has increased in the past decade (McCann, et al).

Specifically, practicing K-12 ELA teachers considering doctoral studies in English education, writing teacher education, teacher education, and related fields may
find this study of specific significance. This study offers three unique professional
profiles of accomplished writing teacher educators, all of whom have come to their work
as writing teacher educators via different paths; perhaps prospective doctoral students
will see elements of their own stories in participants’ stories and be inspired to pursue
important work in higher education. This study also showcases three detailed versions of
the writing methods course, providing illustrations of the critical, complex, and
innovative teaching those considering doctoral studies could do with prospective K-12
teachers; this provides a glimpse into the professional development these educators may
wish to cultivate in pursuing doctoral work. Conversely, this study may influence some
practicing ELA teachers to continue teaching in the K-12 setting, as the professional
profiles and portraits of methods classes may illustrate that doctoral work is less
applicable or intriguing to them than they previously thought.

Educational policy-makers may be less interested in the contents of Chapter 4 that
provide portraits of actual writing methods courses and more interested in the contents of
Chapter 3 which present and illustrate a framework for understanding and discussing how
instructors’ experiences influence their courses. This framework may prove very useful
in engaging pre-service and practicing teachers at all levels in critical reflection regarding
their pedagogical beliefs and teaching practice. As illustrated in this study, the
examination of one’s professional journey, teaching context, and theoretical frames lends
itself to very rich reflection and thought regarding decision-making as a teacher. Such
critical reflection may lead to very practical outcomes, including revision and expansion
of teaching frameworks which may in turn influence teaching practices and
methodologies, as well as curriculum and content selection and development. Certainly,
the collegial and professional conversations within individual teaching communities and amongst teaching communities using a common framework may even lead to collaborative efforts that will better the experiences of students at all levels.

The writing methods course, specifically, is positioned amongst swiftly changing backdrops, such as the expanding, digital dimensions of literacy and the changing landscape of K-12 public education. In this environment, a framework for better understanding teacher influences and decision-making is as important as ever. Over 70 years ago, John Dewey noted, “There is the same sort of advantage in having conceptual frameworks manufactured and on hand in advance of actual occasions for their use, as there is in having tools ready instead of improvising when the need arises” (Champlin 33). Given the dramatic and quick rate at which k-12 education and teacher preparation policies and situations change, this statement is of great relevance today. Certainly, the framework here provides practicing teachers a structure for reflection on and assessment of their practice. Perhaps those making decisions that affect these teachers (and their students)—from K-12 administrators to educational policy makers—may examine and consider the reflections, assessments, and expertise of teachers who use this frame to guide their teaching. Or perhaps administrators and policy-makers may even use these frames themselves in reflecting on and assessing their own work or the work of classroom teachers, as this framework aims to account for holistic reflection and assessment versus standards-driven assessment that has become increasingly common in K-12 education.

Kelly, David, and Jessica’s reflections on that which influences their courses—their professional journey, teaching contexts, and theoretical frames—can also bring
these communities together to support preparing and in-service K-12 English teachers in two distinct ways. First, participants’ reflections on their influences and courses bring to light the complex situation that is English teacher preparation and English teaching. Just as Kelly, David, and Jessica grapple with complex theoretical and pedagogical questions in designing and implementing their courses, so do K-12 English teachers. Kelly, David, and Jessica’s insights and stances on issues in writing teacher preparation and English education mirror the complex work that preparing, novice, and expert K-12 ELA teachers do. In understanding Kelly, David, and Jessica’s influences and development as teachers, the multiple communities that support English teachers may have more insight into how to best help teachers navigate the complex terrain that is English teaching. Second, Kelly, David, and Jessica’s reflective work—illustrated via the framework developed for this study—models for all stakeholders in English teacher preparation a critical framework for teacher reflection. In other words, the framework used to convey the reflections of Kelly, David, and Jessica in this study may also be used to support pre-service and in-service teachers at all levels and across all disciplines in thoughtful self-reflective practices. Such reflection has the potential to impact what teachers do and why they do it.

**Recommendations, Resulting Questions, and Future Studies**

While this study attempts to fill gaps in research on the writing methods course by centering on what is taught in the writing methods course and why, this study has limitations. This study only examines the work of three individuals, and therefore, none of the findings should be considered exactly transferrable to any other teaching context other than the ones they are associated with in this study. Additionally, three case studies
are not enough to make generalizations or to pinpoint trends in writing methods courses. Also, in regard to the three specific writing methods courses examined in the study, the contents of this study provide only one interpretation of these courses, though based on data collected from course instructors and course materials. This study does not provide complete pictures of these writing methods courses.

In fact, the data gathered via interviews of participants and document analysis of course materials could be viewed through varying lenses, lenses which may prove useful to writing teacher educators or general educationists. One examining how a particular pedagogy manifests in these courses would have rich data for doing so; detailed accounts of how each course does or does not illustrate an expressivist pedagogy or a socio-cultural pedagogy, for instance, could make for a very rich, and interesting take on the data that may ignite important discussions about what is most and least valued amongst these courses and what this might mean to the field of writing teacher education and to K-12 education.

Another potentially meaningful way to look at this data would involve studying the writing methods students in participants’ courses. Doing so might respond to such questions as the following: 1) Do students’ perceptions of the course align with instructors perceptions and what does this mean? 2) Do students teach as they were taught in their methods courses? 3) Were instructors aims met according to students’ assessments of the courses? 4) How might instructors adapt their writing methods courses based on their past students assessments of the course?

Specifically, mimicking the methodology used in this project with participants’ students who are lead teaching in K-12 classrooms would respond to the abovementioned
questions. In interviewing these teachers using interview protocols very similar to the ones used for this project, in analyzing responses with the frame I developed and discussed in detail in Chapter 3, and in collecting these teachers classroom materials, an important study that marries the micro (this study of three participants teaching writing methods classes) with the macro (how these participants’ writing methods courses influence K-12 English teachers, and therefore, K-12 students) would result. The findings of such a study—which would reveal actual K-12 teaching contexts and teachers’ decision-making processes within these contexts—could have a major impact on how writing teacher educators teach their writing methods courses and even on how English education programs are structured.

Further research into the work the participants’ of this study do would also likely yield insights further illuminating the relationships between participants’ professional profiles and the courses they teach. Examining how participants’ writing methods courses evolve semester to semester, for example, would paint a more complete picture of both writing methods courses and their influences than this study provides. Such a study would reveal important information such as how and why writing methods courses evolve as their situation changes with the passing of time.

Another future project stemming from this study will be to repeat the methodology developed and utilized here with more participants who teach the writing methods course. This will build on the findings of this study, and a larger participant pool will allow for trends and outliers to be identified and classified amongst writing methods courses. Doing this will fuel such discussions amongst writing teacher educators and English educators as: 1) what is valued and not valued by the field; 2) what
is and is not practiced in the field; 3) how these values and practices support and/or limit the success of teaching candidates; 4) how these values with the K-12 environments that teaching candidates go on to work in; and 5) how reassessing and revising theories that inform the work of teacher educators can better support teaching candidates.

Such a project would also gather more information on that which distinguishes one methods course from the next, thereby highlighting the unique perspectives each writing methods instructor brings to his or her course. In recognizing, sharing, discussing, and celebrating these differences—many of which manifest in distinguishing traits amongst individual courses—writing teacher educators and English educators can continue to grow from one another’s unique talents and strengths as this professional community forges ahead to support preparing English teachers.

Underlying these findings and recommendations is the belief that writing teacher education matters, that writing teacher education is a worthy field of study, and that there are important opportunities for research to contribute to the field. The realm of English teacher education is vast and diverse, but this and other focused studies on writing teacher education contribute to the larger field of English education. As writing teacher education continues to gain more attention within the English education community and from other fields of study, scholars and practitioners will see that the work done in writing teacher education has merit outside of this specialized community. As illustrated in this study, the work of writing teacher educators offers teacher educators, English educators, K-12 teachers, K-12 administrators, and educational policy-makers illustrations and frames for better understanding what teachers do and why they do it.
APPENDIX A

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: September 11, 2012
To: Jonathan Bush, Principal Investigator
    Kristin Sovis, Student Investigator for dissertation
From: Amy Nangle, Ph.D., Chair
Re: HSIRB Project Number 12-08-05

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "The Secondary Writing Methods Course: Teacher Beliefs and Practices" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study"). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: September 11, 2013

Witness: Nangle, Ph.D., Chair

Print: (259) 387-8275; Fax: (259) 387-8276
WORKS CITED


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